

Entergy wants to build power lines for Meta's data center. These landowners are fighting back.

[nola.com/news/entergy-meta-data-center-expropriation-eminent-domain/article_23b903c4-ec08-421d-b00f-1ec0b4f7ef95.html](https://www.nola.com/news/entergy-meta-data-center-expropriation-eminent-domain/article_23b903c4-ec08-421d-b00f-1ec0b4f7ef95.html)

BY SAM KARLIN | Staff writer

September 11, 2026



CALHOUN BRAKE, La. — A baby alligator scrambled off a log as Parnell Perry weaved his mud boat through the swamp, bumping into the occasional cypress tree. Dragonflies buzzed lazily in the August afternoon heat. Parnell's father, Harvey Perry, sat on the bow.

As the boat arrived at a clearing, the landscape changed abruptly. Towering electrical transmission lines — "high lines," as Parnell calls them — came into view above.

The swamp is more than 30 miles northwest of [Meta's \\$50 billion "Hyperion" data center](https://www.nola.com/news/entergy-meta-data-center-expropriation-eminent-domain/article_23b903c4-ec08-421d-b00f-1ec0b4f7ef95.html), in Holly Ridge. But the effects of the massive data center are already being felt here. Contractors turned a property down the road into a dirt pit, and they've been hauling earth to a site next door to the property, where Entergy is building a new substation.

Now, the Perry family is fighting in court with Entergy over whether the utility should be able to use eminent domain laws to overtake land and force its way through the Brake — and Parnell's backyard — to build a series of new transmission lines to power Meta's data center. Doing so would require clearing part of the swamp. Ultimately, Entergy would extend the clearing to build another set of lines next to the existing ones.

"We feel like they're taking private land for private gain," said Parnell, 56, who works in telecommunications.



Parnell Perry drives a boat under power lines carried by transmission towers Calhoun brake in Ouachita Parish, La., Tuesday, Sept. 1, 2026. (Staff photo by Sophia Germer, The Times-Picayune)

STAFF PHOTO BY SOPHIA GERMER

The data center and electric build out are bringing dramatic changes to the landscape across a large swath of northern Louisiana, where some residents have long prized the space and quiet of rural life, and where others rely on farming for their livelihoods.

Gov. Jeff Landry and most other elected officials have welcomed the data centers, transmission lines and gas-fired power plants, saying the investments will create an economic boom of new jobs and businesses that will transform the region.

That's creating tension in pockets of north and central Louisiana, where some affected landowners are fighting back.

"People talk about the Meta site," said Harvey Perry, 82. "That's just a small part of the impact."

Most landowners settled with Entergy after the company's consultants offered buyouts for the rights of way needed to build more transmission lines. The Perry family is among a group of several dozen property owners across at least 15 tracts of land who are taking the matter to court instead. Some of the tracts are family properties with subdivided interests among a large number of family members, some of whom are deceased. Also, some landowners who suspect Entergy will soon seek access to their land are forming a group to oppose the company's plans.



Harvey Perry rides on a boat through Calhoun brake in Ouachita Parish, La., Tuesday, Sept. 1, 2026. (Staff photo by Sophia Germer, The Times-Picayune)
STAFF PHOTO BY SOPHIA GERMER

The Perrys are asking the courts to block Entergy's expropriation of their property. If Entergy is successful, they plan to run new transmission lines next to existing ones in Calhoun Brake, requiring them to clear part of the brake where the family hunts ducks and watches wildlife. Another line would run through Parnell's backyard, he said, citing permitting records that he obtained through a Freedom of Information Act Request. He said Entergy hasn't formally approached him about that line.

Harvey Perry grew up in a house built by his grandfather on the property, a stone's throw from a red shack that used to store sweet potatoes and a large persimmon tree that's older than him.

A retired longtime lawyer for the north Louisiana telecommunications giant CenturyLink — and later the company's chairman — Harvey said he doesn't believe the law is on Entergy's side.

"They can negotiate," Harvey said. "We feel like they don't have the legal right to expropriate."

Entergy declined an interview request for this story and declined to provide maps showing where the lines will run, saying they're confidential.

Spokesperson Brandon Scardigli said in a statement that the company is working to find routes that balance power reliability and affordability with "reducing local impacts wherever feasible."

"We recognize the concerns raised by property owners and remain committed to meeting with them individually to address those concerns where we can," he said.

Meta declined to comment.

Parnell has become obsessed with the case. He's filed dozens of Freedom of Information Act requests with the Army Corps of Engineers, amassing thousands of pages of permitting records for Entergy's plans.



Transmission towers span over Calhoun brake, owned by the Perry family, in Ouachita Parish, La., Tuesday, Sept. 1, 2026. (Staff photo by Sophia Germer, The Times-Picayune)

STAFF PHOTO BY SOPHIA GERMER

Both Harvey and Parnell say they're "not anti-Meta." But they say there's been a lack of transparency about Entergy's plans, and the utility has not altered where they want to build the new lines. The family filed a lawsuit last fall against Entergy seeking to stop the expropriation, and their lawyers wrote that Entergy is not acquiring the property to "benefit the public at large."

Seven months later, Entergy filed suit against them and the other landowners in Ouachita and Richland parishes, saying the current transmission system in north Louisiana can't handle Meta's power needs. Entergy lawyers wrote in court filings that they made "good faith" efforts to buy the rights of way. A small electric cooperative — the Northeast Louisiana Power Coop — is also suing several landowners in Richland Parish to acquire land to build lines to the Meta site.

Parnell lives on the property where Entergy wants to build the transmission lines, and said he's enjoyed a quiet life on the farm for decades, where he's surrounded by ducks, alligators and even a black bear that's recently began moseying around.

"Since I was 22 I never had a neighbor," he said. "Or noise."

Now, the activity by contractors is already bothering him. A property owner down the road agreed to let contractors turn his land into a dirt pit, and workers haul earth down the street to the site of a new switchyard next door to the Perry family property. On the other side of the Entergy site, a neighbor posted a sign to his fence that reads, "NO ENTERGY ACCESS."



A gate says, "NO ENTERGY ACCESS" on a property near where a new substation will be built in Ouachita Parish, La., Tuesday, Sept. 1, 2026. (Staff photo by Sophia Germer, The Times-Picayune)

STAFF PHOTO BY SOPHIA GERMER

Parnell drove his truck to the property line, where a cluster of trees separates his family's land from the new switchyard. Muddy water seeped through the trees onto his land, something he's complained to environmental regulators about. He pointed to a trail of water leading into the swamp, which he says is the result of the workers next door.

“We’ve never had this happen,” he said.

Are transmission lines for a ‘public purpose?’

Fights between landowners and utilities aren’t new. Utilities have faced legal battles to obtain rights of way to build transmission lines for years.

But Randall Smith, a New Orleans attorney representing the Perry family and others in their fight against Entergy, noted that the rapid build out of data centers is a relatively new phenomenon. He said the key question is whether Entergy is building the transmission lines for a “public purpose.”

“You can debate data centers, the pros and cons of it,” he said. “That’s not really the issue here. The issue is do they have the right to take private property because they need more power? There would be no need for a lot of these power lines if Meta wasn’t coming in.”

The governor and other Republican leaders — including a majority of the Public Service Commission that regulates Entergy — have welcomed the projects, citing jobs and tax revenue. The PSC has even set up a “Lightning Amendment” that lets Entergy skip some of the normal regulatory steps when building the billions in new gas-fired generators, transmission lines and other infrastructure for Meta.



The site of an Entergy power substation photographed in Ouachita Parish, La., Tuesday, Sept. 1, 2026. (Staff photo by Sophia Germer, The Times-Picayune)
STAFF PHOTO BY SOPHIA GERMER

Entergy wrote in court filings that because north Louisiana hasn't historically attracted significant industrial development, the transmission system there offers "limited capacity for connecting new industrial size customers to the existing system." And they said that because of Meta's huge power needs, customers would be "exposed to unreasonable reliability risks" if the transmission build out doesn't happen.

"The new infrastructure associated with this project will strengthen power reliability for all customers, support future economic growth, and reduce congestion across the regional grid," said Scardigli, of Entergy. He added that regular customers "will not see their rates increased" because of the new lines.



Electrical lines lead to the Meta Hyperion Data Center site in Richland Parish, La., Wednesday, Sept. 2, 2026. (Staff photo by Sophia Germer, The Times-Picayune)

STAFF PHOTO BY SOPHIA GERMER

More residents are starting to speak up in response.

Dustin McAnn, a middle school teacher who lives near Jena, in LaSalle Parish, started getting calls from neighbors about a month ago after they got requests for permission to survey for a transmission line. McAnn also heard from surveyors.

So McAnn started looking for other people who own property Entergy wants to build transmission lines through, and assembled a group of disaffected landowners.

“After I printed out a map and put everyone’s dots on the map, I started to realize this is a pretty big deal,” he said.

The more he dug into the plans, the more disturbed McAnn became. He said nondisclosure agreements signed by Landry’s administration and some elected officials — as well as the PSC’s lightning amendment — have “short-circuited our landowner rights.” He began calling elected officials and

advocates and is working to recruit as many affected landowners as possible to build a coalition to oppose Entergy's plans, before the company begins filing expropriation lawsuits.



Zoe the horse stands in a field on the Perry family property in Ouachita Parish, La., Tuesday, Sept. 1, 2026. (Staff photo by Sophia Germer, The Times-Picayune)

STAFF PHOTO BY SOPHIA GERMER

"So far, I'm not impressed," said McAnn, who has a farm with cattle. "I could care less about Meta or making Mark Zuckerberg richer at the expense of stealing my land. A billionaire is telling politicians what to do."

'Threatening me with eminent domain'

Public Service Commissioner Mike Francis, a Crowley Republican, said he's been getting calls from disaffected landowners for weeks.

Francis, who supports Meta's data center, said he plans to attend an upcoming town hall organized by landowners affected by the transmission build out, where he plans to cite the economic development potential of the data center.

But he added that he's sympathetic to landowners who are facing off with Entergy in court over expropriating their property.



A dirt road is made to the site of a future power substation in Ouachita Parish, La., Tuesday, Sept. 1, 2026. (Staff photo by Sophia Germer, The Times-Picayune)

STAFF PHOTO BY SOPHIA GERMER

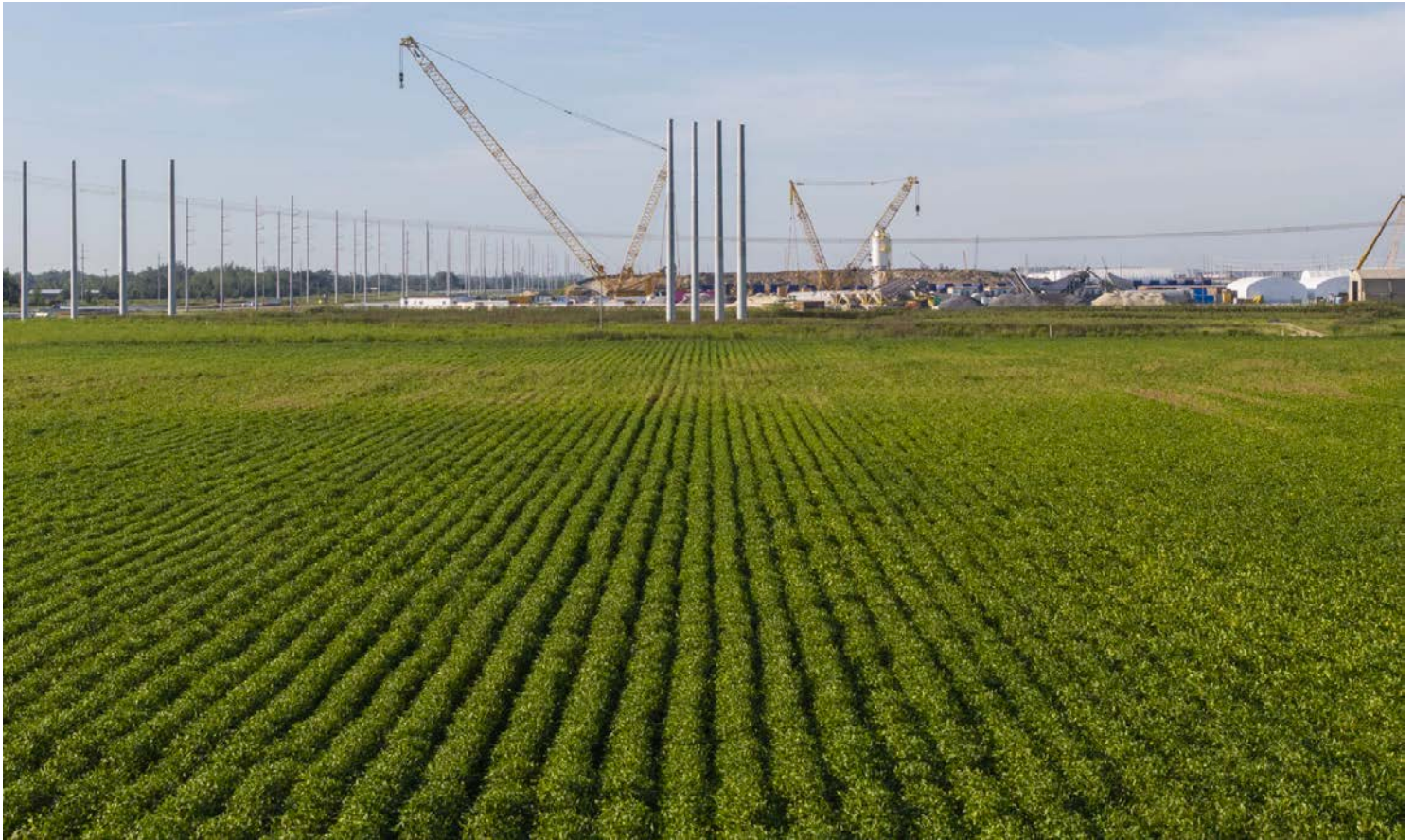
"I hate it for a landowner that has a beautiful piece of land that's going to have to look at a dang transmission line," Francis said in an interview. "I don't know what else to tell the people. You need to get organized, hire a lawyer and fight for your rights."

Francis said he asked Entergy to send a representative to the town hall with him to talk to landowners.

"You have to look at why we are doing this and what are the benefits for all the Louisiana citizens. It's a sacrifice to some. In the same way putting in an interstate or transmission lines or pipelines."

State Rep. Gabe Firment, R-Pollock, said in a statement that he has been contacted by several concerned property owners about a proposed transmission line by Entergy to power Meta. He said landowners across a large swath of north and central Louisiana have "legitimate concerns" about Entergy using expropriation to obtain rights across their properties.

Firment added that he supports “economic development and the tremendous opportunities that new investment can bring to Louisiana.”



Crops grow next to the Meta Hyperion Data Center construction site in Richland Parish, La., Wednesday, Sept. 2, 2026.

(Staff photo by Sophia Germer, The Times-Picayune)

STAFF PHOTO BY SOPHIA GERMER

“But economic development cannot come at the expense of the fundamental private property rights of the people who already live, farm, work, and raise their families here,” he said. Firment added that he has not signed a nondisclosure agreement about the deal.

Down the street from the Parnell family property, Mike Riley posted a sign on his fence telling Entergy to keep out.

Riley, 73, owns a pipeline company and has obtained countless rights of way around the state, he said. But Entergy’s build out has come without much notice. He called the local police juror and his state representative, but both were in the dark about Entergy’s expropriation in the area.

Entergy’s consultants had offered him compensation for a small right of way on his property, and Riley said he didn’t have time to “go to court with Entergy,” so he reluctantly agreed.

"I finally had to sign on the dotted line," he said. "I didn't want to. They were threatening me with eminent domain."

Riley said he's "always" voted for Republicans, but he's preparing to vote for the Democrat, Jamie Davis, in the U.S. Senate race, citing Julia Letlow's support for data centers. Riley said Republican politicians are "shoving this crap down our throats."

"We're all aggravated," Riley said. "The Republicans better wake up."