

PROJECT UPDATE – OCTOBER 2009

PROPOSED STUDY AREA EXPANSION ADDITIONAL PUBLIC SCOPING MEETINGS IN NEW MEXICO FOR SUNZIA SOUTHWEST TRANSMISSION PROJECT

Additional Scoping Meetings in New Mexico

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is holding an additional three public scoping meetings to discuss with the public the proposed study area expansion (for map of study area expansion, see Maps section of this Project Website) of the SunZia Southwest Transmission Project (SunZia Project) in the following New Mexico communities:

- Las Cruces, October 26, 2009 Court Youth Center, 402 West Court Avenue
- Alamogordo, October 27, 2009 First National Bank, 414 Tenth Street
- Chaparral, October 28, 2009 Chaparral High School, 800 County Line Drive

As a result of proposed study area expansion, the BLM has opened an additional public comment period which will run through November 27, 2009.

Background

The Sunzia Project is a proposed high-capacity transmission line project planned between New Mexico and Arizona. The SunZia Project would include the construction, operation, and maintenance of up to two 500 kilovolt (kV) lines and new intermediary substations within a 460-mile or greater corridor. The project is focused on delivering renewable energy resources to the western United States by providing an expected 3,000 megawatts or more of new transmission capacity. The BLM is evaluating a right-of-way application submitted by the project proponent, SunZia Transmission LLC, and is preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA). Cooperating Agencies include the Army Corps of Engineers, New Mexico State Land Office, Arizona State Land Department, New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, Arizona Game and Fish Department, White Sands Missile Range. Other federal agencies and/or other federal stakeholders have also been invited to participate in the EIS process. Consultation with local, state, and tribal governments will continue.

Public Scoping Overview

The Notice of Intent to prepare the SunZia Project EIS was issued May 29, 2009, followed by a formal scoping comment period that closed August 28, 2009. Nine scoping meetings within the preliminary study area were held June 22 through July 9, 2009, to gather public input. During the initial scoping process for the SunZia Project, the BLM received numerous comments regarding the proposed and alternative transmission line routes. The results of scoping are being used to determine the appropriate study plan for the EIS. In order to address the issues identified by the public and agencies, the scope of the study must include an adequate range of reasonable alternatives. Alternative routes or sub-route segments will be added, modified, or deleted from further study.

Primary Topics Addressed in Comments

Of the comments received thus far, the primary topics were the following:

- The purpose and need for the project
- Potential impacts resulting from the proposed transmission line(s) in the area of the San Pedro River Valley, Aravaipa/Klondyke, AZ, Bosque del Apache /San Antonio, and Rio Grande River corridor, NM.
- Support for location of the proposed transmission line project within existing linear corridors
- Potential impacts to wilderness, grazing/ranching operations, and private lands/property values
- Potential for unauthorized off-road traffic and impacts to wildlife habitat and corridors due to proposed project's new access roads
- Potential visual impacts as a result of new transmission lines and related structures in scenic areas
- Potential effects on biological resources, especially waterfowl/migratory birds, special status species, and vegetation/grasslands
- Potential impacts to cultural resources
- Potential economic impacts as a result of new transmission lines
- Requests for extending the initial 45-day comment period beyond the July 13, 2009 deadline.

The last item above was addressed by the BLM, which extended the public comment period for a total of 90 days, which closed August 28, 2009.

Comments on Arizona Study Area

Numerous comments were received that expressed concern for key areas in the Arizona portion of the SunZia Project's study area, namely the following:

- San Pedro River Valley
- Galiura Wilderness
- Sulphur Springs Valley
- Aravaipa/Klondyke
- Mt. Graham/Safford
- US 191 Corridor/San Simon Valley

To address these concerns, the proposed and alternative routes are undergoing a review to adjust the routing of alternative transmission lines to avoid or reduce impacts to these areas. The resulting modifications will be evaluated in the EIS.

Comments on New Mexico Study Area

Among the many public agency and comments received to date regarding the New Mexico portion of the SunZia Project, numerous comments noted concerns regarding the location of the proposed route crossing the Rio Grande River in the vicinity of the San Antonio community, north of the Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge. Also included were many requests to consider alternative routes that would avoid those areas. Suggested transmission line corridors for consideration are:

- A route along the western boundary and in the northwest corner of the White Sands Missile Range (WSMR).
- A route south of the WSMR in Dona Ana County and along the eastern boundary of the WSMR in Otero and Lincoln counties.

These corridors in the New Mexico area could provide alternative routes between the proposed alternative routes between the proposed Midpoint Substation site near Deming, and the proposed SunZia-East Substation termination site in Lincoln County. In response to these comments, additional alternative transmission line corridors for the proposed SunZia Project will be considered within the expanded study area, as shown on the Map section of this Project website.

Public Participation Sought

The EIS for the SunZia Project will address the construction, operation, and maintenance of the proposed 500 kV transmission line(s). Studies undertaken as part of the EIS process will

determine the final configuration, route, and substation location. To be addressed in the EIS are potential impacts to environmental resources, including: land use and recreation, visual, biological, cultural and historical, paleontological, geological, water (including floodplains and wetlands, and air.

The BLM is seeking to discuss the proposed study area expansion with the public, especially those potentially affected by the SunZia Project. Three additional public scoping meetings have been scheduled (as stated earlier and above) within the expanded study area for this purpose, and the public's attendance is welcome.

Project Mailing List

During the course of the SunZia Project, updates will be sent to individuals on the mailing list. To have your name included in the mailing list, forward your information to:

BLM Project E-mail address at: NMSunZiaProject@blm.gov

Project Website at http://www.blm.gov/nm/st/en/prog/more/lands_realty.html

BLM New Mexico State Office Relocation Update

Effective October 26th, 2009, the Bureau of Land Management's New Mexico State Office (BLM SunZia Project Office Lead) will be relocating to a new office building, and telephone numbers will be changed. Below is existing location contact and new location contact information.

- **Existing Location** BLM New Mexico State Office
SunZia Southwest Transmission Project
1474 Rodeo Road, Santa Fe, NM 87502
Adrian Garcia, BLM Project Manager (505) 438-7424

- **New Location** BLM New Mexico State Office
SunZia Southwest Transmission Line Project
301 Dinosaur Trail, Santa Fe, NM 87508
Adrian Garcia, BLM Project Manager (505) 954-2199