

SunZia Southwest TRANSMISSION PROJECT

SCOPING REPORT

Prepared for:

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
New Mexico State Office

Prepared by:



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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND TERMS

AC	alternating current
AFB	Air Force Base
Applicant	Entity submitting a SF-299 right-of-way application to the BLM
ASLD	Arizona State Land Department
AZGFD	Arizona Game and Fish Department
BLM	Bureau of Land Management
BOR	US Bureau of Reclamation
CEQ	Council on Environmental Quality
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
DC	direct current
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
EMF	electric and magnetic field
FLPMA	Federal Land Policy and Management Act
FO	[BLM] Field Office
LUP	Land Use Plan
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act
NMDFG	New Mexico Department of Fish and Game
NMSLO	New Mexico State Land Office
NMSO	[BLM] New Mexico State Office
NOA	Notice of Availability
NOI	Notice of Intent
NWR	National Wildlife Refuge
Proponent	The entity proposing the project
RMP	Resource Management Plan
ROD	Record of Decision
RPS	Renewable Portfolio Standard
SRP	Salt River Project
TNC	The Nature Conservancy
USACE	US Army Corps of Engineers
USFS	US Forest Service
USFWS	US Fish and Wildlife Service
WSA	Wilderness Study Area
WSMR	White Sands Missile Range

1. PURPOSE AND NEED

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) New Mexico State Office (NMSO) is conducting an environmental impact statement (EIS) for the proposed SunZia Southwest Transmission Project in response to a right-of-way application submitted by the SunZia Southwest Transmission, LLC (Applicant). The purpose of this EIS is to provide informed decision-making by the BLM, which will determine whether to grant the right-of-way (the action) for the construction, operation, and maintenance of the proposed transmission line(s) on public land administered by the BLM. The need for this action is set forth in the Title V of Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) of 1976 (43 USC 1761-1771) that authorizes the BLM to grant rights-of-way for the construction of transmission lines. The BLM will make its decision on the issuance of right-of-way in accordance with the Rights-of-Way Under the FLPMA (43 CFR 2800) and the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA).

2. DECISIONS TO BE MADE

2.1. BLM, Federal Lead Agency

2.1.1. Right-of-Way Decision

The BLM must decide whether to grant right-of-way on BLM lands for the construction, operation, and maintenance of the proposed transmission facilities. Further, the BLM will determine the terms, conditions, and stipulations in which the grant will convey in the public interest. The BLM employs a comprehensive process for right-of-way grant determination. The process assures compliance with NEPA and Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations as well as BLM planning regulations, manuals and handbooks, land use plans (see below), and applicable policies.

2.1.2. Land Use Plan(s) Conformance Decision

As part of the decision making process for right-of-way, the BLM must determine if the proposed SunZia Project is in conformance with BLM land use plans (LUP), including agency resource management plans (RMP). In the event that the proposed project is not in conformance with an existing LUP, the proposed project, if possible, may be modified to conform, or the LUP may be amended. A LUP amendment will be subject to NEPA analysis and will be incorporated into the SunZia Project EIS.

Any such amendments are subject to the NEPA process. The process will proceed in parallel with, and incorporated into, the SunZia Project EIS process. The SunZia Project notice of intent (NOI) issued in the May 28, 2009 *Federal Register* included the notification of possible BLM land use plan amendments. (Refer to Section 4.1 of this document regarding the NOI.)

2.1.3. Decision to Adopt Final EIS

The BLM will make a decision to adopt the Final EIS after it determines that the SunZia Project EIS meets the standards for EIS adequacy under NEPA. A minimum of 30 days must pass between the notice of availability of the Final EIS in the *Federal Register* and the decision to adopt.

2.1.4. Record of Decision

Following the adoption of the EIS, the BLM will make a decision on the proposed project, to be formally prepared in the Record of Decision (ROD). The ROD is a public record that will explain the BLM's decision.

2.2. Cooperating Agencies

2.2.1. Federal Cooperating Agencies

Each federal cooperating agency must decide independently whether to adopt the Final EIS and issue a ROD.

For the proposed SunZia Project, these decisions would be made by the following federal cooperating agencies: US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), and White Sands Missile Range (WSMR).

2.2.2. State Cooperating Agencies

The adoption of the EIS and issuance of ROD is not a requirement of state cooperating agencies. Independent of their participation as cooperating agencies, the of the Arizona State Land Department (ASLD) and the New Mexico State Land Office (NMSLO) will be required to make a decision to issue permits for right-of-way on state land within each agency's respective jurisdiction.

2.3. Other

It is possible that a BLM land use plan amendment to the current McGregor Range RMP will be required for conformity. If the BLM decides that a McGregor Range RMP amendment is necessary, the decision would require concurrence by the Secretary of the Army as prescribed in P.L. 106-65¹.

¹ The National Defense Authorization Act of 2000 was enacted as P.L. 106-65. The McGregor Range of Ft. Bliss is located on BLM lands in New Mexico that are withdrawn for use by the Department of the Army

3. PROJECT BACKGROUND AND PROPONENT PURPOSE AND NEED

The proposed project, known as the SunZia Southwest Transmission Project (SunZia Project), will consist of up to two 500kV transmission lines, with key interconnections to the existing electrical grid, along a 460-mile or greater corridor between central New Mexico and south central Arizona (Figure 1). Configuration options under consideration are either (a) two alternating current (AC) transmission lines or (b) one AC and one direct current (DC) transmission line. The overall transmission line route would be located on BLM, state, and private lands.

The project proponent, SunZia Transmission LLC, proposes to transport electricity generated primarily by renewable resources to western power markets and load centers. The SunZia Project would enable the development of renewable energy resources, including wind, solar, and geothermal generation, by creating access to the interstate power grid in the Southwest and providing increased transfer capacity. The proposed project would also increase power reliability across the southwestern United States, allow communities in southern Arizona and southern New Mexico to economically access energy generated from renewable sources, provide power to help meet growing demand in the western United States, and enhance domestic energy security.

The Southwest Area Transmission Group, a regional transmission planning organization, identified a need for a 500kV transmission line project between New Mexico and Arizona. Its importance is demonstrated by the abundance of proposed projects that have been submitted, interconnection requests to transmission owners within the proposed project area, and the potential for renewable energy sites within the SunZia Project area. Additional transmission would be required to support development of potential renewable energy projects in Arizona and New Mexico. In addition, the requirement of each state to meet Renewable Portfolio Standards (RPS) and national interests in energy demonstrates the need for the proposed project.

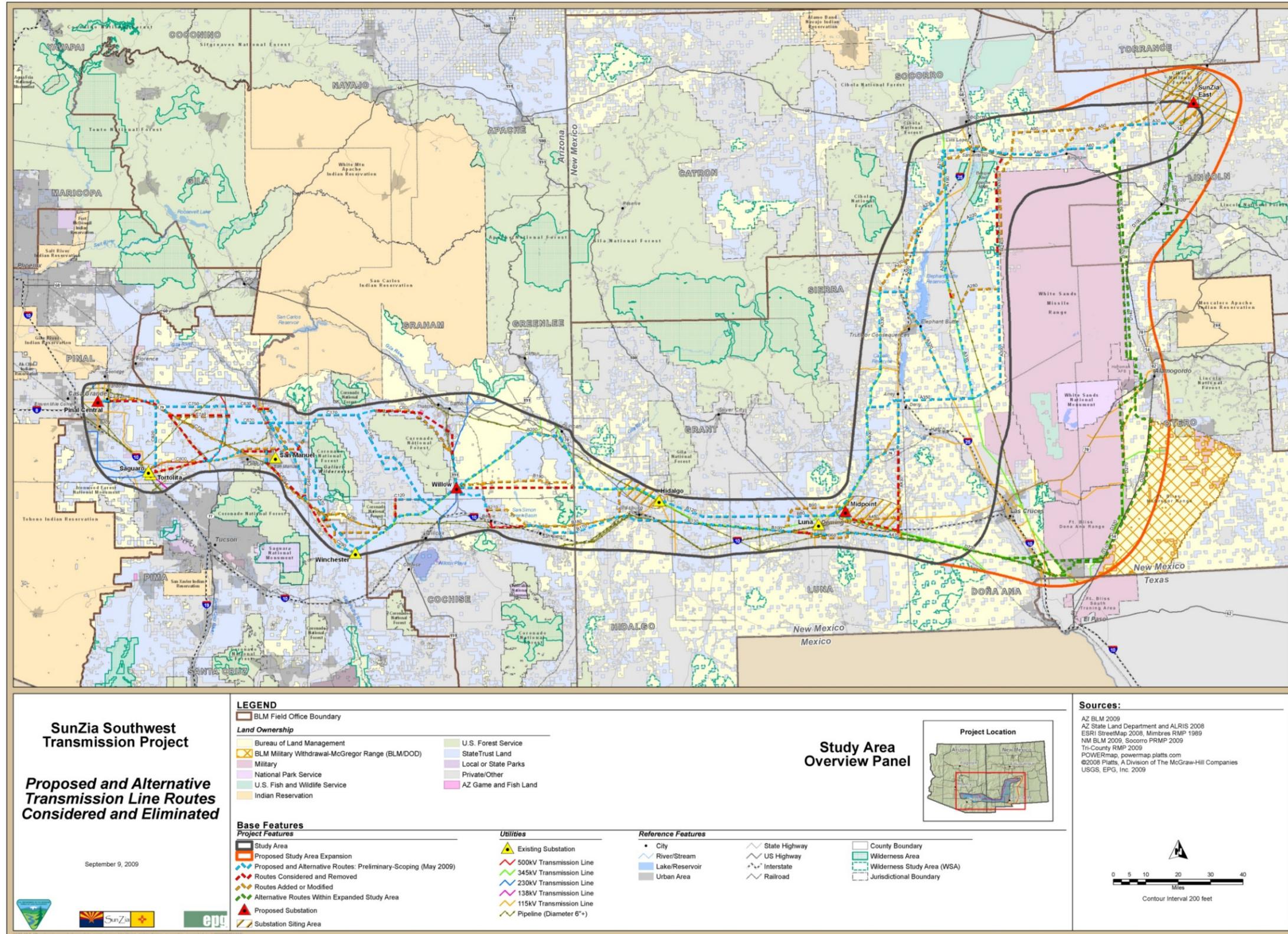


Figure 1 Proposed Project

4. SCOPING AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT PROCESS

The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations require scoping meetings to be conducted in support of the EIS process pursuant to NEPA. Scoping is the process by which the BLM solicits input on the issues, impacts, and potential alternatives that the SunZia Southwest Transmission Project EIS will address, as well as the extent to which those issues and impacts will be analyzed. Scoping helps to ensure that a reasonable range of alternatives, as required by CEQ NEPA regulations, will be evaluated in the EIS.

This Scoping Report outlines the efforts undertaken by the BLM to solicit scoping participation, summarizes the issues raised during the scoping process, and informs the public of the decisions that have been made during the scoping process.

4.1. Notice of Intent

The BLM issued the *Notice of Intent To Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement and Possible Resource Management Plan Amendments for the SunZia Southwest Transmission Project in Arizona and New Mexico* in the *Federal Register*, Vol. 74, No. 102, dated May 29, 2009. The Notice of Intent (NOI) formally initiated the project's EIS 45-day public scoping period (an extension of this scoping period is discussed in Section 4.2.1.1). The NOI can be viewed in Appendix A.

Concurrently, the BLM issued a news release announcing the NOI via the BLM New Mexico and Arizona state offices' media distribution lists, as outlined in Table 1. Furthermore, the BLM launched a SunZia Southwest Transmission Project EIS website on May 29, 2009, located at http://www.blm.gov/nm/st/en/prog/more/lands_realty.html, that introduced the proposed project and provided a link to the NOI. Screen shots of the project website are located in Appendix B.

Table 1 BLM News Release Media Distribution, May 29, 2009

New Mexico Media Outlets	
Albuquerque Journal	KSWV Radio, Santa Fe
Albuquerque Journal – North	KUNM Radio, Albuquerque
Albuquerque Journal – City Desk	KVIA TV, El Paso
Associated Press, Albuquerque	Land Letter
Carlsbad Current Argus	Las Cruces Bulletin
Cibola Beacon	Las Cruces Sun News
Deming Headlight	Lordsburg Liberal
El Paso Times	Los Alamos Monitor
Entravision TV, Albuquerque	Magdalena Mountain Mail
Farmington Daily Times	Mountain View Telegraph, East Mountains
Hobbs News	New Mexico Independent
KASA TV	New Mexico Department of Tourism
KCHS Radio, Truth or Consequences	Prime Time Christian Broadcasting
KCKN Radio, Albuquerque	Quay County Sun
KCRX Radio, Roswell	Roswell Record
KDCE Radio – Espanola	Ruidoso News
KDEM/KDOT Radio, Deming	Sandoval Signpost
KGRT Radio, Las Cruces	Sangre Chronicle – Angel Fire
KKOB Radio, Albuquerque	Santa Fe New Mexican
KNFT/KSCQ Radio, Silver City	Silver City Daily Press
KNME TV, Albuquerque	Silver City Press and Independent
KNUW Radio, Santa Clara	Silver City Sun-News
KOAT TV, Albuquerque	Socorro Daily Chieftain
KRQE TV, Albuquerque	Taos News
KRST Radio, Albuquerque	The Herald, Elephant Butte
KRWG Radio, Las Cruces	Western Livestock Journal
KSFR Radio, Santa Fe	
Arizona Print Media Outlets	
Arizona Capitol Times	
Arizona Daily Star, Tucson	
Arizona Informant Newspaper	
Arizona Republic	
Eastern Arizona Courier, Safford	
Kingman Daily Miner	
The Sun, Yuma	
Today's News-Herald, Lake Havasu	
Tucson Citizen	
Tucson Weekly	
Winter Visitor News, Yuma	
The Spectrum, St. George (Utah)	

4.2. Notice of Scoping

The public scoping process for the SunZia Project occurred in two phases:

- Initial Scoping
- Scoping for Expanded Study Area

4.2.1. Noticing of Initial Scoping

Public noticing of the proposed project's scoping meetings was accomplished through the distribution of a project newsletter and display ads in local newspapers.

Newsletter #1, May 2009, provided an overview of the project, including project participants, project description, purpose and need, project timeline, and a list of opportunities for public participation in the EIS process. This newsletter included a pre-addressed comment form and a letter from the BLM NMSO announcing the project and inviting public participation. The newsletter and enclosed documents, collectively referred to as the scoping packet, are provided in Appendix C.

The newsletter and enclosures were direct mailed on June 3, 2009, to a mailing list containing approximately 1,200 contacts. This mailing list was compiled from contacts provided by the BLM NMSO, Safford Field Office (FO), Tucson FO, Las Cruces District Office, Socorro FO, the third-party consultant (EPG, Inc.), and the Applicant.

Paid display advertisements announcing the time, date, and location of the public scoping meetings were placed in local newspapers throughout the project study area by the Applicant a minimum of 15 days prior to the scoping meetings. The newspaper publications are listed in Table 2.

Table 2 Newspaper Display Advertisement: Announcement of Scoping Meetings		
Publication Date	Newspaper	Geographic Target
June 3, 2009	San Manuel Miner	San Manuel, AZ
June 3, 2009	El Defensor Chieftain	Socorro County, NM
June 3, 2009	Truth or Consequences Herald	Truth or Consequences, NM
June 4, 2009	Eloy Enterprise	Eloy, AZ
June 4, 2009	Lincoln County News	Lincoln County, NM
June 4, 2009	Deming Headlight	Deming, NM
June 4, 2009	Mountain Mail	Socorro, NM
June 5, 2009	Hidalgo County Herald	Hidalgo County, NM
June 5, 2009	Sierra County Sentinel	Sierra County, NM
June 7, 2009	Eastern Arizona Courier	Safford, AZ
June 10, 2009	Arizona Range News	Willcox, AZ
June 10, 2009	Copper Era	Greenlee County, AZ
June 17, 2009	Arizona Range News	Willcox, AZ

Due to the duration between the publication dates of the initial display advertisement and the scheduled meetings in New Mexico, the Applicant reissued the display advertisement at a time closer to the meeting dates in the newspapers listed in Table 3.

Table 3 Reissuance of Newspaper Display Advertisement: Announcement of Scoping Meetings		
Publication Date	Newspaper	Geographic Target
June 22, 2009	Copper Era	Greenlee County, AZ
June 26, 2009	Hidalgo County Herald	Hidalgo County, NM
July 1, 2009	Truth or Consequences Herald	Truth or Consequences, NM
July 1, 2009	El Defensor Chieftain	Socorro County, NM
July 2, 2009	Lincoln County News	Lincoln County, NM
July 2, 2009	Mountain Mail	Socorro, NM
July 3, 2009	Sierra County Sentinel	Sierra County, NM

Copies of the display advertisement sheets in each newspaper publication are available in Appendix D.

4.2.1.1. Noticing of Initial Scoping Comment Period Extension

On July 16, 2009, the BLM issued a news release announcing the extension of the initial scoping comment period from July 13, 2009 through August 28, 2009 (available in Appendix E). The extension was granted in response to requests from members of the public and organizations. Public dissemination of the extension announcement was accomplished via:

- The BLM project website
- News release distributed to the media distribution lists for the BLM New Mexico and Arizona state offices listed in Table 1
- Paid display advertisements placed in local newspapers throughout the project study area, as listed in Table 4
- Direct mailing of the news release on July 21, 2009 to a project mailing list of approximately 1,700 contacts, including members of the public who had already submitted scoping comments
- Email distribution by the BLM NMSO to members of the public who had submitted a comment and/or requested to be added to the project mailing list via the BLM project website who provided only an email address

Table 4 Newspaper Display Advertisement: Extension of Scoping Period		
Publication Date	Newspaper	Geographic Target
July 22, 2009	Arizona Range News	Willcox, AZ
July 22, 2009	Eastern Arizona Courier	Safford, AZ
July 22, 2009	San Manuel Miner	San Manuel, AZ
July 22, 2009	Truth or Consequences Herald	Truth or Consequences, NM
July 23, 2009	Lincoln County News	Lincoln County, NM
July 23, 2009	Deming Highlight	Deming, NM
July 23, 2009	Eloy Enterprise	Eloy, AZ
July 24, 2009	Hidalgo County Herald	Hidalgo County, NM
July 24, 2009	Las Cruces Bulletin	Las Cruces, NM
July 24, 2009	Sierra County Sentinel	Sierra County, NM
July 27, 2009	Mountain Mail	Socorro, NM
August 1, 2009	The Oracle	Oracle, AZ
August 8, 2009	El Defensor Chieftain	Socorro County, NM

4.2.2. Noticing of Scoping for Expanded Study Area

Responding to public comments received through the initial scoping period to consider transmission routing away from the Rio Grande corridor and the Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), the BLM chose to expand the project’s study area eastward. The expanded study area includes land to the south and east of, and including, the WSMR (Figure 2).

Public noticing of the scoping meetings for the expanded study area was accomplished through the distribution of a BLM news release, project newsletter, and display ads in local newspapers.

Newsletter #2, October 2009, provided an overview of the project, a summary of the comments received from the initial scoping period, and the announcement of three additional public scoping meetings to address the expanded study area. As with Newsletter #1, a pre-addressed comment form was enclosed. A copy of Newsletter #2 and the BLM news release is included in Appendix F.

The newsletter and enclosure were direct mailed on October 7, 2009 to the entire project mailing list of approximately 1,800 contacts. The recipients, in addition to the original mailing list, included those individuals and organizations that commented on the SunZia Project during the initial scoping period or requested to be added to the project mailing list.

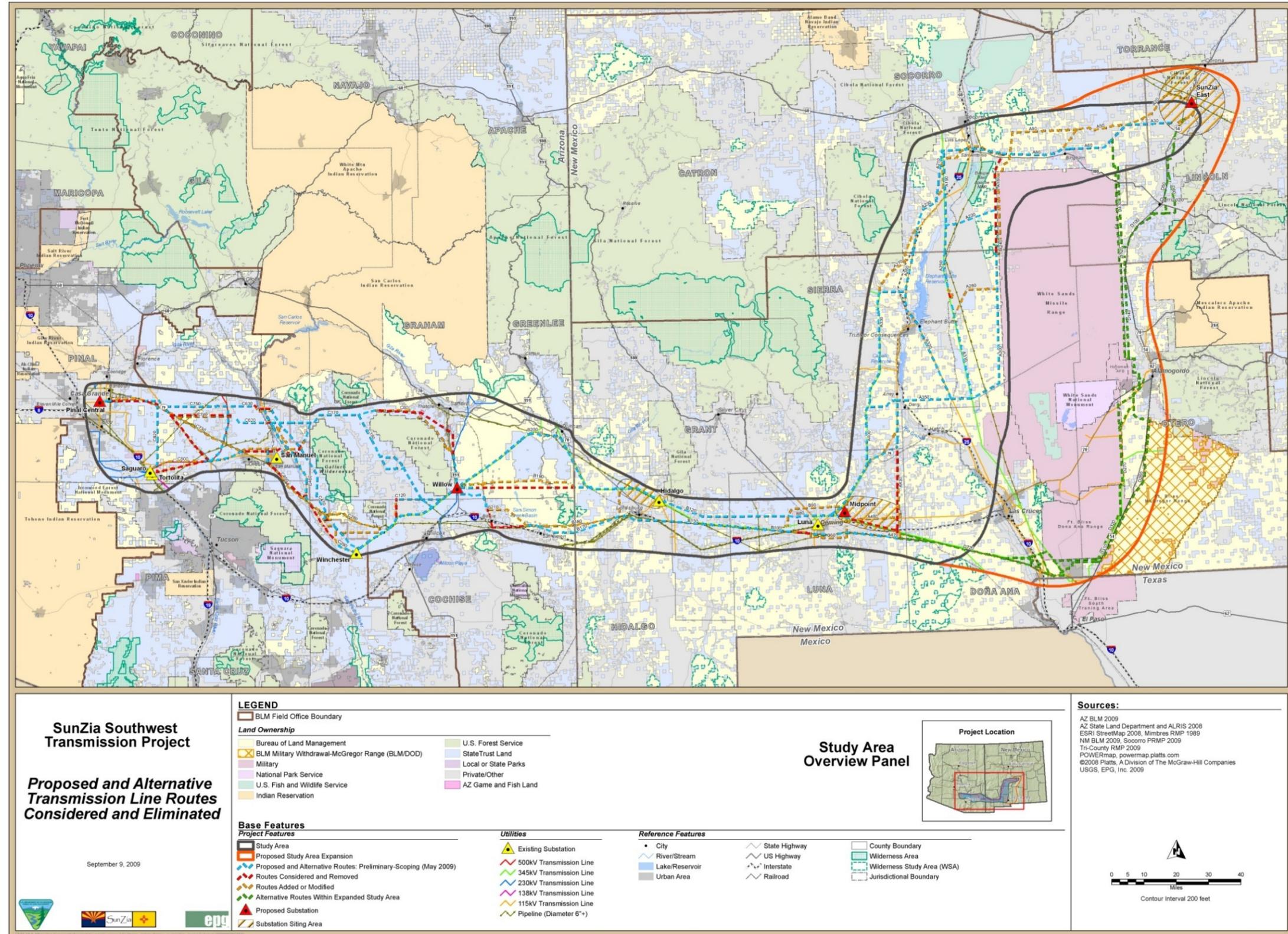


Figure 2 Initial and Expanded Study Areas

Paid display advertisements announcing the time, date, and location of the three additional public scoping meetings were placed in local newspapers within the project’s expanded study area by the Applicant approximately 7 days prior to the scoping meetings. The newspaper publications are listed in Table 5, with copies available in Appendix G.

Table 5 Newspaper Display Advertisement: Announcement of Additional Scoping Meetings		
Publication Date	Newspaper	Geographic Target
October 14, 2009	Las Cruces Sun-News	Las Cruces, NM
October 15, 2009	Alamogordo Daily News	Alamogordo, NM
October 15, 2009	Fort Bliss Monitor	Ft. Bliss, TX
October 15, 2009	Las Cruces Sun-News	Las Cruces, NM
October 15, 2009	Lincoln County News	Carrizozo, NM
October 15, 2009	Missile Ranger	White Sands Missile Range, NM
October 16, 2009	El Paso Times (Northeast Zone)	El Paso, TX/Southwestern NM
October 16, 2009	Las Cruces Bulletin	Las Cruces, NM
October 22, 2009	The Hollogram	Holloman Air Force Base, NM

Concurrently, the BLM issued a news release on October 7, 2009, announcing the expanded study area and additional scoping meetings. The BLM also provided an update to the project website.

4.3. Scoping Meetings

4.3.1. Initial Scoping Meetings

The BLM conducted nine initial scoping meetings that were attended by 243 members of the public. The scoping meetings were held in an open house format during evening hours (5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.), Mondays through Thursdays. A summary is presented in Table 6.

Table 6 Initial Scoping Meetings		
Meeting Date	Location	Public in Attendance¹
Arizona Communities		
June 22, 2009	Santa Cruz Valley Union High School 900 N. Main Street Eloy, AZ	16
June 23, 2009	Oracle Community Center 685 American Avenue Oracle, AZ	39
June 24, 2009	Manor House Convention Center 415 E. Highway 70 Safford, AZ	30
June 29, 2009	Valley Telephone Company 752 E. Maley Willcox, AZ	21
New Mexico Communities		
June 30, 2009	Special Events Center 504 2nd Street Lordsburg, NM	13
July 1, 2009	Mimbres Valley Special Events Center 2300 E. Pine Street Deming, NM	31
July 7, 2009	NM Institute of Mining and Technology 801 Leroy Place Socorro, NM	26
July 8, 2009	Carrizozo Municipal Schools 800 Avenue D Carrizozo, NM	52
July 9, 2009	Elephant Butte Inn 401 Highway 195 Elephant Butte, NM	15
Total Attendees		243
¹ Members of the public for purposes of this report exclude project-related individuals (e.g., BLM resource specialists, Applicant staff and project engineer, EIS contractor personnel, and cooperating agency representatives.)		

4.3.2. Expanded Study Area – Additional Scoping Meetings

To accommodate the scoping process for the expanded study area, the BLM conducted three scoping meetings that were attended by 58 members of the public. The scoping meetings were held in an open house format during evening hours (5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.), Mondays through Thursdays. A summary is presented in Table 7.

Table 7 Additional Scoping Meetings		
Meeting Date	Location	Public in Attendance¹
October 26, 2009	Court Youth Center 402 West Court Avenue Las Cruces, NM 88005	29
October 27, 2009	First National Bank 414 Tenth Street Alamogordo, NM	17
October 28, 2009	Chaparral High School 800 County Line Drive Chaparral, NM 88081	12
Total Attendees		58
¹ Members of the public for purposes of this report exclude project-related individuals (e.g., BLM resource specialists, Applicant staff and project engineer, EIS contractor personnel, and cooperating agency representatives.)		

An open house approach was selected to allow ample opportunity for the public to discuss their issues and concerns with project staff in one-on-one communications. Exhibits were prepared and organized in stations around the meeting room to display project information. A GIS specialist, with a PC equipped with aerial mapping capabilities and a 19-inch color monitor, was stationed at each meeting to permit meeting attendees to view their areas of interest in relation to the proposed project route and alternatives.

The following meeting materials were available to scoping meeting attendees:

- Scoping packet – newsletter, BLM scoping letter (initial scoping only), comment form
- Welcome sheet
- NOI
- Electric and Magnetic Fields (EMF) summary

Copies of the materials, excluding the scoping packets which are available in Appendices C and F, are available in Appendix H.

Attendees were encouraged by project staff to comment on the proposed project in writing by:

- submitting a comment form before leaving the scoping meeting
- speaking with the attending court reporter
- submitting a comment online at the BLM project website at http://www.blm.gov/nm/st/en/prog/more/lands_realty.html
- submitting a comment by mail

4.4. Public Agency Actions

Although not part of the formal scoping process, it should be recognized that a number of public agencies have adopted resolutions concerning the proposed project in response to the NOI. As of November 27, 2009, resolutions were adopted by the following jurisdictions:

- City of Deming
- Hidalgo County
- Sierra County
- Socorro County

In general, the resolutions stated general support for the proposed project. Resolutions adopted by both the counties of Hidalgo and Socorro also identified a transmission line routing preference that would cross the Rio Grande in the vicinity of Arrey, NM, and then continue along the western border of WSMR to Highway 380.

Copies of the resolutions are available in Appendix I.

4.5. Next Steps

The results of this scoping report form a basis for the project alternatives that will be further analyzed in the Draft EIS by the project team. When the Draft EIS is available for public review, the BLM will issue a Notice of Availability (NOA). The NOA will initiate a 90-day comment period. The BLM will hold a public hearing(s) on the Draft EIS if there is (a) substantial environmental controversy concerning the proposed action, (b) substantial interest in holding a public hearing, or (c) a request for a hearing by another federal agency with jurisdiction over the proposed action. Following the 90-day comment period for the circulation of the Draft EIS, the BLM will review the comments received, respond to any substantive comments (individually or collectively), and publish the Final EIS (incorporating responses to comments.) An NOA will be issued by the BLM in the *Federal Register* announcing the availability of the Final EIS. The Final EIS will circulate for 30 days prior to the BLM making a decision on the proposed project. Following this 30-day period and upon determining that the Final EIS meets the standards for EIS adequacy, the BLM and any cooperating agencies may adopt the EIS. Once adopted, a ROD is issued that either approves or denies the proposed action.

This EIS process and its associated time frames for the SunZia Project are summarized in Figure 3.

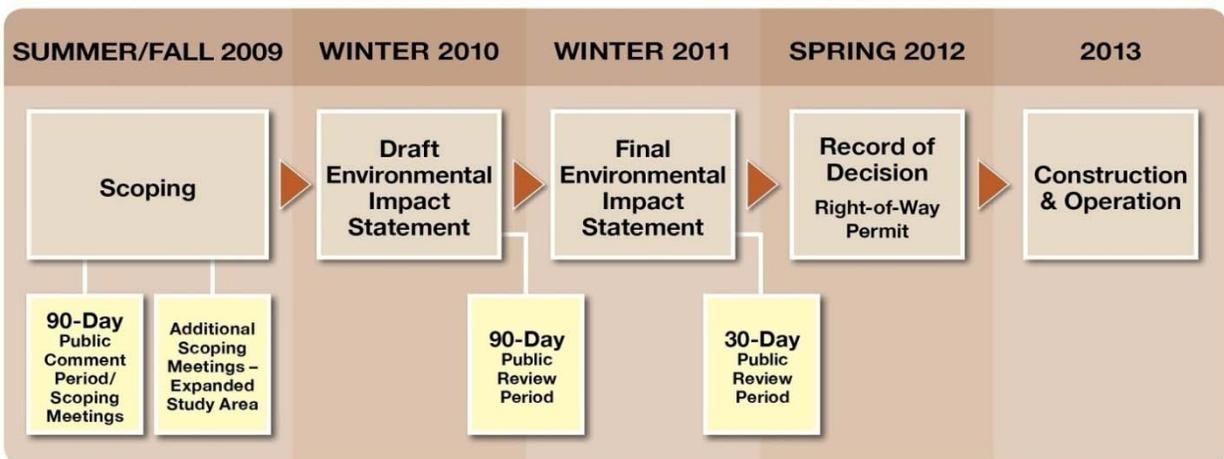


Figure 3 EIS Process Timeline

5. COOPERATING AGENCIES AND TRIBAL CONSULTATION

5.1. Cooperating Agencies

The BLM NMSO is the federal lead agency for the proposed project EIS.

Each of the following agencies has been invited by the BLM to participate as a cooperating agency:

- The Bureau of Reclamation (BOR)
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
- New Mexico State Land Office (NMSLO)
- Arizona State Land Department (ASLD)
- White Sands Missile Range (WSMR)
- Fort Bliss
- Holloman Air Force Base (Holloman AFB)
- Arizona Game and Fish Department (AZGFD)
- New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (NMDGF)
- Native American tribes (23 tribes – see Section 4.3 Tribal Consultation)

As of November 27, 2009, each of the following agencies has agreed to participate as a cooperating agency in the SunZia Project EIS:

- USACE
- NMSLO
- ASLD
- WSMR
- AZGFD

Copies of letters of invitation and acceptance are available in Appendix J.

5.2. State Agency Cultural Resources Consultation

In accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), the federal lead agency and cooperating federal agencies are required to consider the effects of the agencies' undertakings on properties listed in or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Eligible properties can include a diversity of archaeological, historical, and traditional cultural resources. The Code of Regulations (CFR) of Protection of Historic Properties (36 CFR 800) implement Section 106 and define a process for federal agencies to use in consulting with State Historic Preservation Officers and other interested parties as they assess the effects of their undertakings.

Pursuant to those regulations, the BLM will send letters to initiate consultation to the State Historic Preservation Officers of New Mexico and Arizona.

5.3. Tribal Consultation

The BLM has contacted 23 Native American tribes (those officially recognized by the federal government) whose reservations are within the project area, or that claim cultural affiliation with the project area, to inform them of the project and to inquire of their interest in the project. A list of these tribes follows:

- Hopi Tribe
- San Carlos Apache Tribe
- Tohono O'odham Nation
- Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community
- Gila River Indian Community
- Ak-Chin Indian Community
- White Mountain Apache
- Tonto Apache Tribe
- Yavapai-Apache Nation
- Pascua Yaqui Tribe
- Comanche Indian Tribe
- Fort Sill Apache Tribe of Oklahoma
- Kiowa Tribe of Oklahoma
- Apache Tribe of Oklahoma
- Ysleta del Sur Pueblo
- Mescalero Apache Tribe
- Pueblo of Isleta
- Navajo Nation
- Alamo Chapter, Navajo Nation
- Pueblo of Acoma
- Pueblo of Laguna
- Pueblo of Zuni

A copy of the tribal consultation letter and complete tribal contact information are available in Appendix K.

Also, in recognition of the special relationship with the United States government, the BLM will consult with the appropriate tribal governments at an official, executive level consultation (government-to-government), in accordance with the NHPA. The BLM will provide opportunities for government officials of federally recognized American Indian tribes to comment on and to participate in the preparation of the EIS. The BLM will consider comments, notify consulted tribes of final decisions, and inform them of how their comments were addressed in those decisions. At a minimum, officials of federally recognized tribal governments will be offered the same level of involvement as state and county officials. Coordination will begin before official notifications are made. Coordination will address (1) consistency with tribal plans, as appropriate, and (2) observance of specific planning coordination authorities (including Section 101(d)(6) of the NHPA, American Indian Religious Freedom Act, Executive Order 13007 [Indian Sacred Sites], and Executive Order 12898 [Environmental Justice]). The tribes contacted were identified through the internal scoping process. Further, the initial tribal

consultation letters prepared by the BLM included an invitation to these tribes to participate as cooperating agencies in the SunZia Project EIS.

The following tribal consultation meetings have occurred to date:

- Arizona Four Southern Tribes – July 21, 2009
Tohono O’odham Nation and the Ak-Chin Indian Community representatives were present; however, the Gila River and Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Communities were not represented.
- Pueblo of Zuni – August 13, 2009
- Pueblo of Isleta – August 25, 2009
- Fort Sill, Mescalero, and San Carlos Apache Tribes – October 16, 2009

Tribal consultation by the BLM is an ongoing effort throughout the EIS process. Through the government-to-government consultation process, the BLM may obtain additional data regarding Traditional Cultural Properties and other locations of concern to be considered in the EIS. The tribal consultation process for the proposed SunZia Project will be addressed in the EIS.

6. COMMENTS RECEIVED AND ANALYSIS

Per CEQ NEPA regulations (1501.8), it is through the scoping process that the lead agency will (a) determine the scope and significant issues to be analyzed in depth in the EIS and (b) identify and eliminate from detailed study the issues which are not significant, narrowing the discussion of such issues to a brief presentation in the EIS as to why they will not have a significant effect on the human environment. In brief, the scoping comments must be reviewed to determine which issues are or are not significant in the context of NEPA and conducting an EIS.

For the SunZia Project, all comments were reviewed. Comments identified for consideration in development of the EIS must relate to one of the following categories:

- Project purpose and need
- Alternative development – comments indicating another alternative should be evaluated
- Alternative description and mitigation measures – comments suggesting modifications to already defined alternatives to reduce or avoid potential impacts
- Effects analysis – comments specifying concerns over the effects on resources or suggesting effects to be considered and disclosed

6.1. Scoping Comments Submitted

6.1.1. Initial Scoping Period

By the close of the initial scoping comment period on August 28, 2009, the following comments were submitted to the BLM:

Source	Comments Received
Scoping meeting submittals	69
Mailed comment form/letter	154
Electronic submittal	414
TOTAL	637

6.1.2. Expanded Study Area

By the close of the scoping comment period on November 27, 2009 for the expanded study area, the following comments were submitted to the BLM:

Source	Comments Received
Scoping Meeting Submittals	7
Mailed Comment Form/Letter	67
Electronic Submittal	128
TOTAL	202

6.2. Comment Processing Methodology

All comments received during the final scoping period were entered and managed in a comment tracking database system. Each comment was entered into the database, reviewed for content, and then coded by issue categories (with many comments receiving more than one issue code). A list of issue categories for the proposed SunZia Project is presented in Table 8. Key issues per category are summarized in Section 5.4 of this document.

Code	Category	Code	Category
010.00	Purpose and Need	044.00	Private Lands/Property Values
020.00	Engineering/Design	045.00	Access
030.00	Corridor Alignment/Alternatives	046.00	Military Considerations
031.00	Avoid/Concerns for Area	050.00	Scenic/Visual/Landscape Character
031.01	Eloy	060.00	Recreation
031.02	San Pedro River Valley	070.00	Biological Resources
031.03	Galiuro Wilderness	071.00	Waterfowl/Migratory Birds
031.04	Sunset Mountain	072.00	Other Wildlife
031.05	Sulphur Springs Valley	073.00	Aquatic
031.06	Aravaipa/Klondyke	074.00	Vegetation/Grasslands
031.07	Cluff Ranch	075.00	Invasive Species
031.08	Mount Graham/Safford	080.00	Water Resources
031.09	I-191 South of Safford	090.00	Cultural Resources
031.10	Deming	100.00	Airspace
031.11	Bosque del Apache NWR/ San Antonio	110.00	Noise/Interference
031.12	Rio Grande Corridor	120.00	EMF/Electrical Effects
032.00	Use Existing Linear Corridor	130.00	Economics
033.00	Modifications to Alignment	140.00	Social Issues
040.00	Land Use	150.00	Environmental Justice
041.00	Agency Land Management Plan	160.00	Other NEPA Issues
042.00	Wilderness	165.00	Extend Scoping Comment Period
043.00	Grazing/Ranching		

6.3. Comments Summary

A total of 839 comments were submitted by agencies, organizations, and individuals.² These comments are compiled in Appendices L through M.

Agencies and organizations providing comments are listed below:

6.3.1. Federal Agencies

- United States Department of the Interior
 - Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge
 - USFWS – Region 2
- Department of Defense
 - Arizona Air National Guard
 - Cannon Air Force Base
 - Fort Bliss
 - Fort Huachuca
 - Holloman AFB
 - Kirtland AFB
 - WSMR

6.3.2. State Agencies

- AZGFD
- Arizona Department of Environmental Quality Water Quality Division
- Arizona State Parks
- NMDGF
- Arizona Department of Transportation, Safford District

6.3.3. Local Agencies

- Pima County, Arizona
- City of Eloy, Arizona
- Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District, New Mexico
- Otero County, New Mexico

² The Wilderness Society (TWS) established an online automated comment response form for members to submit in response to the proposed SunZia Southwest Transmission Project. Approximately 16,000 responses were thus generated and compiled by TWS, then submitted to the BLM. The TWS response form included the following issue categories: 010.00 Purpose and Need, 020.00 Engineering/Design, 030.00/031.00/031.11 and 031.12 Corridor Alignments/Alternatives Avoid/Concerns for Bosque del Apache/San Antonio and the Rio Grande Corridor, 032.00 Use Existing Linear Corridor, 0420.00 Wilderness, 071.00 Waterfowl/Migratory Birds, and 140.00 Social Issues. The TWS member responses are included in the project comment database as comment ID No. 0828 (available in Appendix M.)

6.3.4. Organizations

- Aravaipa Property Owners Association
- Arizona Archaeological Council
- Arizona Native Plant Society
- Blue Goose Alliance
- Continental Divide Trail Alliance
- Cascabel Hermitage Association
- Cascabel Working Group
- Center for Biological Diversity
- Center for Desert Archaeology
- Corona Public Schools
- Duke Energy
- Earth Justice
- Electrical District #2
- Energy Capital Partners
- Eureka Springs Property Owners Association
- Friends of the Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge
- Frio Ridge Energy Development Association, LLC
- Frio Ridge Landowner Association
- Gila Conservation Coalition
- Gila Resource Information Project
- Jaguar Habitat Campaign
- National Trust for Historic Preservation
- New Mexico Archeological Council
- New Mexico Gas Company
- Natural Resources Defense Council
- National Trust for Historic Properties
- Redington Natural Resources Conservation District
- Rio Grande Agricultural Land Trust
- Sonoran Institute
- Socorro Electric Cooperative
- Salt River Project (SRP)
- The Gamez Cemetery
- The Nature Conservancy
- The Peyote Way Church
- The Wilderness Society
- University of New Mexico
- Windmill Ranches Home Owners Association
- Winkelman Natural Resources Conservation District

6.4. Summary of Comments

This section provides a general overview of the public scoping comments received. The issues listed herein are main points distilled from all of the comments received and summarized by issue category.

An expanded version of the comments per issue category is provided in Appendix L. This accounting of comments was excerpted directly from written comments, with only minor edits for grammatical and/or clarification purposes. Duplicate comments per issue category are not included.

Appendix M presents each comment in its entirety as submitted.

6.4.1. Proponent's Purpose and Need (Code 010.00)

Per Section 1502.13 of CEQ NEPA regulations, the EIS must explain “the underlying purpose and need to which the [Lead] agency is responding in proposing the alternatives, including the proposed action.”

- The proposed project is necessary in the shift to renewable energy resource generation
- Renewable energy is needed to address growing concern over greenhouse gases and climate change and serves the national and public interest
- Alternative energy is necessary to develop national energy independence
- The project is not needed as a reduction in energy consumption would serve the West's energy needs
- Decentralization of energy production negates the need for a new interstate transmission line
- Energy production should be accomplished locally – solar energy produced in Arizona should be delivered to Arizonans, wind power in New Mexico should be delivered to New Mexicans, and California needs to provide energy for Californians

6.4.2. Engineering/Design (Code 020.00)

- Line burial would protect all concerned (farmers, birds, other wildlife) and prevent visual impacts
- Constructing the project in mountainous terrain should be avoided – difficult construction, expensive, environmentally degrading, and undesirable for maintenance activity. Difficult terrain is a major reason why there are no roads or transmission lines presently crossing this area
- Any concern about placing lines where they could in a storm come down and ignite the gas lines?
- Construct lines/structures big enough and obtain enough right-of-way big enough for future expansion

- Design and construction of transmission line structures should be done in a manner limiting potential avian impacts – install bird diverter devices and lighting, no use of guy lines, bury transmission lines
- Consider using superconductor and alternative technologies for line burial

6.4.3. Corridor Alignment/Alternatives (Code 030.00)

- Expand range of alternatives to include route south then east of WSMR, thus avoiding the Rio Grande Corridor and the Bosque del Apache NWR in the vicinity of San Antonio, New Mexico
- Include an alternative that avoids all impacts to special status species
- The DEIS must provide a meaningful range of alternatives that avoid significant impacts
- A No Build alternative should be considered that analyzes reducing the need for a new transmission line through localized, small renewable energy systems and real conservation measures to be implemented by providers of energy

6.4.3.1. Avoid/Concerns for Area (Code 031.00)

- In general, avoid wilderness areas and wildlife habitat
- Concerns for potential routing through Windmill Ranches near Carrizozo, New Mexico
- Concern for the disruption of Oracle’s (Arizona) small-town, rural feel

6.4.3.1.1. Avoid/Concerns for Area – Eloy (Code 031.01)

- Place lines on east side of Picacho Mountains to avoid impacts to development and visual resources
- Coordinate placement with Tucson Electric Power’s Tortolita-to-Pinal Central line east of Picacho Mountains
- City of Eloy and Pinal County have adopted resolutions for transmission line siting to occur east of Picacho Mountains

6.4.3.1.2. Avoid/Concerns for Area – San Pedro River Valley (Code 031.02)

- Avoid Cascabel and river valley area to avoid impacts to Arizona’s only free-flowing river and its ecosystem, including listed endangered species habitat

- Concern for impacts to conservation properties managed by one or more of the following: The Nature Conservancy (TNC), BLM, AZGFD, U.S. Forest Service (USFS)
- Some landowners have existing conservation easements
- Placement of transmission lines should avoid impacting Cascabel private airport
- Threats to visual resources could impact business owners (ranchers, photographers and filmmakers, museum-movie set) and livelihoods
- The river valley has been identified as a wildlife corridor
- Project access and maintenance roads will create opportunities for off-roaders to invade the wilderness
- Project would interfere with institutional and physical conditions established by the BLM and USFS to allow natural burns to run their course for ecological health
- Remove the Saguario-Oracle-San Manuel route from consideration
- Placement of lines here could affect SRP off-site mitigation lands in the valley

6.4.3.1.3. Avoid/Concerns for Area – Galiuro Wilderness (Code 031.03)

- Avoid all routes identified crossing the Galiuro Mountains, a region where wildlife and the human experience of wilderness have benefited from the almost total lack of through roads. The unintended effect would be an significant increase in off-road travel
- Project would interfere with institutional and physical conditions, established by the BLM and USFS, to allow natural burns to run their course for ecological health
- Collocating project with existing All-American Pipeline through southern Galiuro Mountains (through Muleshoe Ranch) is not problem-free. While the collocation is favored by the county, and normally supported by TNC, this corridor is problematic as a source of erosion, unauthorized off-road vehicle traffic, and invasive plant dispersal
- Construction of maintenance roads should not be permitted
- Running power lines and its associated services through this area is not necessary and is contrary to the conservation aspect of the Renewable Energy Standards
- Locating the project through environmentally sensitive areas will negate the value of green power
- Remove this route from consideration

6.4.3.1.4. Avoid/Concerns for Area – Sunset Mountain (Code 031.04)

- Sunset Mountain has nondenominational Christian religious significance and should be avoided
- Transmission lines will disturb the mountain's and nearby canyon's wildlife and pristine scenic beauty
- The huge easement and access road is believed to increase human activity and traffic immensely, thus endangering animals and children and increasing vandalism and crime

6.4.3.1.5. Avoid/Concerns for Area – Sulphur Springs Valley (Code 031.05)

- Route would disrupt area wildlife (pronghorn, Ornate box turtles, and Sandhill cranes.)
- Route will negatively affect visual and land resources for visitors to the Coronado National Forest

6.4.3.1.6. Avoid/Concerns for Area – Aravaipa/Klondyke (Code 031.06)

- Would severely impact visual resources and rare serenity
- Access created by construction of project maintenance roads would result in harm to wildlife, propagation of invasive species, and harassment to livestock
- Property owners purposefully located in the area to get away from the sight of transmission lines and other signs of urbanization
- Erosion from power line construction in the watershed upstream of Aravaipa Canyon would likely cause additional sedimentation that degrades one of the most important native fish habitats in the Southwest
- Aravaipa Valley is prone to severe flooding and could affect the proposed transmission lines
- Would damage numerous archaeological sites
- Would negatively affect ranchers, hikers, visitors, campers, and hunters by ruining area's rugged beauty and tranquility
- If lines must be sited here, they must be buried
- Project is not "green" if it goes through and impacts the pristine wilderness
- Use existing power line corridors to avoid Aravaipa Valley and Klondyke

6.4.3.1.7. Avoid/Concerns for Area – Cluff Ranch (Code 031.07)

- The proposed routed would conflict with AZGFD *Management Plan for Cluff Ranch* by potentially decreasing wildlife and recreation values
- Need to consider prehistoric cultural sites
- Would impact present and future generations use for public hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing, education, and other wildlife oriented recreation

6.4.3.1.8. Avoid/Concerns for Area – Mt. Graham/Safford (Code 031.08)

- Would adversely affect Safford’s tourism industry by hurting the visual aesthetics of the nearby mountain ranges and designated forest
- Would increase access for unauthorized off-road travel, thereby increasing pollution and vandalism and damaging the ecosystem
- Project would hurt property values
- Would violate Indian ruins and burial grounds

6.4.3.1.9. Avoid/Concerns for Area – I-191 South of Safford (Code 031.09)

- Transmission line should not parallel I-191 to avoid close proximity to residences and monastery
- Would cause visual impacts
- Instead, place parallel to I-10 and skirt Mt. Graham on western side
- Place along existing utility corridor away from homes

6.4.3.1.10. Avoid/Concerns for Area – Deming (Code 031.10)

- Town has enough issues without adding unsightly transmission towers
- Siting should be north of Deming to avoid impacts to tourism

6.4.3.1.11. Avoid/Concerns for Area – Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge/San Antonio (Code 031.11)

- Avoid the Bosque del Apache NWR at all costs due to impacts to migratory birds and special status species – or bury the line there

- Lines running across the Rio Grande at San Antonio would plow through two Wilderness Study Areas (WSA) and violate the intent of the Wilderness Act
- The impact of establishing transmission lines in this area would be deleterious to the area's tourist industry (the NWR has an estimated economic impact of \$4.3 million) that relies on the migration spectacle that is dependent on an unmarred viewscape and an obstruction-free flyway
- The proposed transmission lines will ruin the viewscape of the Socorro Valley and the refuge
- There are too many transmission lines running across Highway 25 between San Antonio and the Rio Grande River
- It would be better to run the lines east of the Bosque del Apache NWR along the western boundary of the WSMR to avoid the Rio Grande River corridor and the migratory flyway
- Avoid San Antonio by dropping the line through the WSMR and Armendaris Ranch along the County Road 153, which has public access
- Rights-of-way, traffic for maintenance would disrupt crop production in the rural farming community
- Prehistoric Indian pueblo ruins dot the west bank of the Rio Grande and would unavoidably damage artifacts
- The project would affect other nearby designated waterfowl areas and refuges
- The Middle Rio Grande habitat is already in decline due to urbanization, water use, invasive species, and other changes in land use – this project would further degrade the area
- Cutting diagonally across the WSMR northwestern boundary (minimal use of military lands) to spare the NWR is reasonable since the area has already taken a horrific beating – not much left to spoil there
- The transmission lines will hurt property values. Since there is no obvious economic benefit of this project to the area, there is no excuse to compromise our community with this project
- BLM land in the area contains very fragile soil (gyp, alkaline) – when the crust is broken it erodes constantly and results in permanent damage

6.4.3.1.12. Avoid/Concerns for Area – Rio Grande River Corridor (Code 031.12)

- Keep lines out of migratory path of the Rio Grande by following the I-10, going south of the WSMR then up the eastern WSMR border

- Cross at Derry then head east through BLM land and then north through the WSMR, thus avoiding Willow Fly Catcher and Silvery Minnow habitat and the north-south migratory corridor
- The central Rio Grande River valley is one of the few places left where farming can be done and where it is beautiful and where people can travel to see pleasing vistas
- An alternate route passing through a remote portion of the WSMR can have minimal impact on their operations and serve to avoid impacts to the NWR, migratory, and WSAs

6.4.3.2. Use Existing Linear Corridor (Code 032.00)

- Support for a route that has existing road access, existing transmission lines, and is not environmentally sensitive [Aravaipa]
- Avoid siting in open spaces [Aravaipa] and erect the line(s) where other transmission lines already exist, such as along the I-10
- A preferable alternative would be to use the existing 345kV alignment from Vail to the Winchester Substation
- Go along I-10 instead of I-25 to avoid the Bosque
- Avoid alternatives through the San Pedro and Aravaipa valleys by siting in/along existing utility corridor east of Highway 191
- Suggest using existing corridors as much as possible to minimize disturbance to more pristine areas and also make construction and maintenance easier
- Much of the proposed route in this area has never had an infrastructure corridor, and much of it has never even had a dirt road. There are alternative routes that already have the impact of roads and infrastructure
- The Arizona Corporation Commission's designation of the route with a permanent Certificate of Environmental Compatibility Corridor was granted before 1972 when supporting data would be deemed inadequate using current standards – its consideration as an existing corridor is questionable
- Why not locate along existing transmission corridors since the viewsheds are already destroyed?
- In relation to the Continental Divide Trail, the identified alternative route that would locate the proposed transmission lines near the I-10 corridor in Hidalgo County through Lordsburg, New Mexico, appears preferable

- Add a transmission line alternative in Arizona that follows the I-10 corridor westward and either (a) goes through Tucson northward to Pinal Central, and/or (b) skirts Tucson in its entirety to the south then proceeds northward to Pinal Central

6.4.3.3. Modifications to Alignment (Code 033.00)

- Fragmentation of the Nutt Grassland would be minimized if the proposed route were moved to follow the existing corridor for New Mexico State Highway 27
- Although not preferred, a route at least 2-3 miles east of the San Pedro River may well be acceptable to minimize impacts to residences

6.4.4. Land Use (Code 040.00)

- The project would greatly affect the unique wildlife as well as the lifestyles of humans living and visiting here – it would negatively affect how people come to view their relationship to the land around them and how they come to feel about where they live
- Opposition to this project if any of the BLM managed Public Lands in Sierra County are to become restricted or withdrawn from any and all present or future mining activities
- In the Corona, New Mexico area, property owners feel that they would rather see wind farms and transmission lines than subdivisions, and ranches are no longer sustainable under agriculture
- Transmission lines should not pass through undeveloped areas – these areas need to be saved
- Keeping the lines on BLM and state lands seems like a good idea as there would be fewer people impacted
- People who once lived in small communities will now have to unfairly share a burden of living under or near large power lines, mostly for cities miles and miles away

6.4.4.1. Agency Land Management Plan (Code 041.00)

- Since neither the Aravaipa Ecosystem Management Plan nor the BLM Safford District Resource Management Plan designated the proposed or alternative routes as utility corridors, AND since the lands between the Aravaipa Ecosystem Management Plan and the Coronado National Forest (Galiuro Mountains) were designated for BLM acquisition due to their high resource values, the transmission line routes are not suitable
- Consider the project in the context of federal, state, and local area planning – specifically, on public lands along with any proposed Resource Management Plan amendments, the DEIS must consider how the piecemeal designation of a new energy corridor in this area

may undermine long-term planning given that many of the Resource Management Plans at issue are outdated

6.4.4.2. Wilderness (Code 042.00)

- Transmission lines that will invade that environmentally sensitive pristine virgin land defeats the purpose of “clean energy”
- Should pursue a Congressional “exception” to the Antelope Wilderness Study Area to permit proposed transmission lines along eastern edge since the BLM doesn’t think its wilderness values qualify for a congressionally designated Wilderness
- Undeveloped lands adjoining designated wilderness areas (e.g., Aravaipa Canyon Wilderness Area) should be considered valuable wilderness, and thus avoided
- It is particularly troubling for any route that crosses the Galiuro Mountains, a region where wildlife and the human experience of wilderness have benefitted from the almost total lack of through roads
- The proposed and alternative routes will bisect the ecoregional conservation area known as the "Bosque Wilderness Area" (please note: this is not a federal designation)

6.4.4.3. Grazing and Ranching (Code 043.00)

- The transmission lines, width of associate rights-of-way, and traffic from new access roads will interfere with ranching operations
- The lines will pose health hazard to the ranchers who have to work around them as they take care of their stock and the land on which their stock depends
- Ranchers should be very carefully considered on (1) disruption of grazing, (2) loss related to cattle being displaced by helicopter movement, (3) consider gates, rights of way, etc.
- We lease grass (grazing rights) from the BLM – will we be compensated from the loss of feed?

6.4.4.4. Private Lands/Property Values (Code 044.00)

- We purchased the land with our life savings due to the incredible views and untouched desert. Please do not ruin our plans and dreams for the future
- People do not care to look at a view of high voltage transmission lines and towers, nor do they care to live near them – property values will decline in the immediate area

- The currently proposed alternative route through the San Pedro River valley is a very poor and destructive choice – many living in this area would lose their homes, their land, and their livelihood
- There are people that live all over the United States who plan to retire in central New Mexico who would be affected by the impact to their views and the noise
- Many Corona, New Mexico ranchers are eager to lease their land for the project for the potential earnings

6.4.4.5. Access (Code 045.00)

- Project will cause habitat fragmentation due to the proposed line as well as the roads that would be put in place for construction and maintenance of the line
- New roads built alongside the lines would make easy access for many more people to invade and impair the wilderness (vehicular traffic leading to soil erosion, air pollution, noise pollution)
- Linear disturbance features such as utility corridors become avenues for the spread of invasive plant species
- Use existing utility corridors to avoid the need for new access roads
- Public recreational access to the SunZia transmission corridor should be allowed without locked gates on public lands

6.4.4.6. Military Considerations (Code 046.00)

- The project poses potential impacts to Department of Defense airspace operations, weapons systems testing, and ground maneuver training
- Potential conflict with WSMR microwave activities, security projects, and evacuations
- To avoid impacts to the Bosque del Apache NWR, the town of San Antonio, and the migratory flyway:
 - Go through WSMR
 - Go south around WSMR
 - Go along the western border of WSMR
- The project could infringe upon existing military co-use agreement(s) with private land owners for the right to use the airspace over ranches

6.4.5. Scenic/Visual/Landscape Character (Code 050.00)

- Transmission wires and towers will ruin the viewscape for residents

- Placement of the corridors in wilderness areas will spoil the experience for recreationists
- A marred viewscape will negatively impact ecotourism and filming/photography businesses dependent upon a pristine landscape
- New transmission lines and their towers will obstruct the sky thus affecting the stargazing opportunities.
- The power lines should be kept from public view as much as possible, thus avoid placement along highways.

6.4.6. Recreation (Code 060.00)

- Placement of the corridors in wilderness areas will decrease the recreational values for bird watchers, hikers, campers, hunters, and the casual visitor
- Need to limit impacts to designated scenic trails

6.4.7. Biological Resources (Code 070.00)

- Siting conflicts between renewable energy projects and the rare and endangered resources should be avoided through careful planning and a robust NEPA process
- The proposed and alternative routes would negatively affect wildlife corridors and increase habitat fragmentation

6.4.7.1. Waterfowl/Migratory Birds (Code 071.00)

- Transmission lines in the vicinity of the Rio Grande River corridor and the Bosque del Apache NWR would decimate migrating waterfowl (e.g., Sandhill cranes, snow geese), and pose a threat to the Aplomado falcons
- Transmission lines through Sulphur Springs will negatively impact Sandhill cranes
- Transmission wires should be clearly marked (poles equipped with perches, etc.) to avoid lethal collisions and/or electrocutions of raptors and other large migratory birds

6.4.7.2. Other Wildlife (Code 072.00)

- The project line and new roads would negatively impact Aravaipa Canyon and its watershed, which supports two federally threatened fish species, and all of its native fish species, three bird species, the desert tortoise, and the desert bighorn sheep
- Placement of the project through the Aravaipa ecosystem would negatively impact the document wildlife there: 529 plant and 353 animal species, including 233 birds,

50 reptiles, 48 mammals, 12 fish, and 10 amphibians. The area includes five species currently listed under the Endangered Species Act, 13 BLM sensitive species, and 14 species on AZGFD's list of Wildlife of Special Concern in Arizona

- Placement of the lines through San Pedro River valley would impact breeding habitat for the endangered Southwestern Willow Flycatcher
- The transmission lines would pose hazards to raptors

6.4.7.3. Aquatic (Code 073.00)

- Aravaipa Creek is home to two federally threatened fish species, the spokedace and the loach minnow, and is the only Arizona waterway to also have all other native fishes (longfin dace, roundtail chub, desert sucker, and Sonoran sucker)
- Concern for the project affecting the federally listed Silvery Minnow in the Rio Grande River

6.4.7.4. Vegetation/Grasslands (Code 074.00)

- Project needs to avoid grasslands, including Chihuahuan Desert and Nutt Grasslands
- Coordinate plant salvage efforts with the Arizona Department of Agriculture in accordance with the Arizona Native Plant Law, and revegetate following the applicable land management agency's guidelines
- Aravaipa and San Pedro River valleys have important riparian habitat that would be affected if the proposed project were placed there
- Unauthorized off-road vehicle travel would damage native vegetation due to new access roads

6.4.7.5. Invasive Species (Code 075.00)

- New access roads would introduce and propagate invasive species
- Minimize the spread of invasive plant species by prompt revegetation and limit future access to maintenance roads

6.4.8. Cultural Resources (Code 080.00)

- Sunset Mountain has nondenominational Christian religious significance and should be avoided

- Sensitive archaeological resources should be avoided, with special attention in San Pedro and Aravaipa valleys and along the banks of the Rio Grande River
- The history of Klondyke, Arizona should be considered a resource
- Contrary to your poster of the Cultural and Paleontological Opportunities and Constraints on display at the scoping sessions, the San Pedro Valley is not a "low" area of concern. The BLM, BOR, TNC, Pima County, Center for Desert Archaeology, and others have invested heavily here because they recognize it as an area of critical environmental and cultural concern

6.4.9. Water Resources (Code 090.00)

- Erosion caused from tower construction would increase sedimentation of rivers, negatively impacting water quality
- Construction of the lines in mountainous areas will negatively affect/alter watersheds and habitat and wildlife those watersheds support
- The EIS analysis should also include effects on water as a result of solar development and population growth
- Placement of the corridor west of the Picacho Mountains could interfere with the city of Eloy's McClellan Wash Watercourse Master Plan, a nearly \$1 million dollar project that is ongoing in an effort to implement a master flood solution for large swaths of land in this area

6.4.10. Airspace (Code 100.00)

- The project poses potential impacts to Department of Defense air operations
- Construction of high-capacity power transmission lines, especially within 3-4 miles of the Cascabel Road, could seriously endanger air traffic using the private airstrip
- [Windmill Ranches] property has been purchased with the intent to build a private airstrip and any nearby nighttime illumination or tall obstructions could interfere with the intended use

6.4.11. Noise/Interference (Code 110.00)

- Concern that the 500kV lines would interfere with radio reception, Mt. Graham Observatory operations, and pacemakers and other electronic health devices
- Traffic for construction and maintenance would be noisy, and the access roads would create noise pollution from off-roaders

- The hum from the transmission lines will create stress for nearby residents and livestock and run off wildlife
- Siting of the lines in New Mexico should be coordinated with the Long Wavelength Array radio telescope project to avoid radio-frequency interference

6.4.12. Electric and Magnetic Fields/Electrical Effects (Code 120.00)

- There needs to be further studies performed on the effects of the human and animal health from high-power transmission line EMFs, as existing studies are inconclusive or contradictory
- Is EMF being considered as to its effect on people and animal populations?
- Opposition to transmission lines for the resulting EMF and its effects on cancer and human reproductive systems

6.4.13. Economics (Code 130.00)

- The project should go through because it will be a positive money maker for central New Mexicans
- This project would be a great opportunity for New Mexico because it would create revenue and jobs in a time when jobs are few and far between
- Tourist-based businesses and economies in/along the Rio Grande and the Aravaipa and San Pedro River valleys will greatly suffer if these lines go through these areas
- The proposed project will alternately (1) create a development boom in central New Mexico from job creation, or (2) hurt development because no one wants to live near or in sight of transmission lines/towers

6.4.14. Social Issues (Code 140.00)

- The choice to live quiet lives in remote or sparsely developed areas is unfairly threatened because unidentified entities seem to find it feasible and economically attractive to turn the remaining pristine areas of Graham County into just one more place on the way to urbanization and exploitation
- It is through all the sacrifices and hard work that comes with ranching and living and working the land that our ranches have flourished here for four generations, and we intend on the same lifestyle for years with visions for the future with great pride – the proposed project would endanger this by marring views and creating access for more people and the trouble they bring

6.4.15. Environmental Justice (Code 150.00)

- Consider environmental justice impacts to the residents in the San Antonio area – these residents’ lives will be impacted by development designed to enhance the quality of life for others living hundreds of miles away

6.4.16. Other National Environmental Policy Act Issues (Code 160.00)

- The EIS needs to take into account **cumulative** and **indirect impacts**
- The project must address **mitigation for unavoidable impacts**
- Concern for the **general health** and safety of residents, ranchers, livestock, and wildlife
- Construction of new transmission corridors in undeveloped areas will only open up the areas for more objectionable engineering projects [**cumulative impacts**]
- Need to address the **temporary impacts of construction activities**
- Consider all impacts of the project in conjunction with other threats to the environment [**cumulative impacts**], including (for example) impacts to species and habitats due to **climate change**
- Adequately evaluate all foreseeable **actions connected to and cumulatively occurring** from the proposed project that may affect cultural resources
- New maintenance roads will encourage the use of **off-road traffic** potentially resulting in **noise pollution, soil erosion, and vegetation** impacts
- The transmission line corridors would require the **management of wildfire** fuels under the lines, causing widespread negative impact in both the uplands and along the river
- The increased risk of **wildfire** following the spread of invasive species in disturbed areas
- **Fugitive dust and erosion** would accompany construction and operation of power lines and additional wind turbines
- Address if the **foreseeable cumulative impact** of constructing this power line [western and northern routes] will be the eventual development of wind turbines to take advantage of this project. Those wind turbine fields will pose an even greater threat to our [Kirtland AFB and WSMR] training and testing missions
- The huge increase in human activity will bring an increase in **vandalism** and crime
- Lines that intersect riparian areas will require removal (**fuels mitigation** of tall vegetation) of the very trees that provide habitat for endangered species, bank and floodplain stabilization for **soil** and water quality, and the valued global ecoservices of transpiration and **carbon exchange**

6.4.17. Extend the [Initial] Scoping Comment Period (Code 165.00)

- Extend the [initial] scoping period from July 13, 2009, to allow more time for commenting following the scoping meetings [the last scoping meeting was conducted on July 9, 2009, in Elephant Butte, New Mexico]

7. ISSUES THAT WILL BE ADDRESSED

The public scoping process identified numerous issues to be addressed in the SunZia Project EIS. With the exception of issue category 165.00 Extend the Scoping Comment Period, the issues summarized in Section 5.4 and Appendix J will be addressed within of one of the following major elements of the Draft EIS:

- Purpose and Need
- Project Description and Alternative Technologies
- Transmission Line Routes Alternatives
- Resource Inventory, Impacts, and Mitigation

Issue category 165.00 Extend the [Initial] Scoping Comment Period has already been addressed as a matter of NEPA procedure. The proposed project's initial 45-day scoping comment period was extended to a total of 90 days to allow the public and organizations sufficient opportunity to address their concerns relating to the purpose and need, project description, alternative technologies, proposed and alternative transmission line routing, and resource evaluation, impacts, and mitigation.

7.1. Purpose and Need

An EIS must explain the “underlying purpose and need to which the [Lead] Agency is responding in proposing the alternatives, including the proposed actions” (40 CFR 1502.13). The statement of the purpose and need explains why the federal agency and the project proponent are undertaking the proposed action and what objectives are to be achieved by that action. Alternatives need not be considered that do not achieve the purpose and need.

The purpose and need for the SunZia Project will address why the project is being proposed (documented need for renewable energy transmission between New Mexico and Arizona) and what it expects to achieve (providing renewable energy resource transmission to meet states' RPSs, enhance domestic energy security, etc.)

7.2. Project Description and Alternative Technologies

Concerns relating to AC and DC transmission technology and the physical requirements for transmission line construction, maintenance, and operation thereof will be addressed in the EIS project description. Included in this element will be a discussion regarding transmission line burial and/or Superconductor technologies. Technical feasibility and constructability of the proposed project and alternative technologies will also be introduced in this EIS element.

Alternatives that do not meet the project's purpose and need, or are not reasonable and feasible, will not be evaluated within the scope of the EIS.

7.3. Transmission Line Routes Alternatives

Numerous comments were received requesting additional alternatives to be considered. NEPA does require a "range of alternatives" to be discussed in environmental documents. The range is to include all reasonable alternatives, which must be rigorously explored and objectively evaluated, as well as those other alternatives which are eliminated from detailed study with a brief discussion of the reasons for eliminating them. According to CEQ guidance memo *NEPA's Forty Most Asked Questions*, reasonable alternatives "include those that are practical or feasible from the technical and economic standpoint and using common sense."³

Notably, as a result of the initial scoping comment period and in response to comments received for a reasonable range of alternatives, alternative routes located to the east of the WSMR have been added to the project study area for consideration in the EIS. As a result, additional scoping to accommodate the expanded study area was implemented into the project. Further, discussions with the Department of Defense have been initiated and are ongoing to address the potential effects of the routing alternatives on military operations primarily with the WSMR, Fort Bliss, and Holloman AFB. While military operations in the area are broad and diverse, the key concerns with potential transmission line routing include:

- Impacts to aircraft take-offs and landings at Holloman AFB
- Airspace conflicts with low-level (200-feet above ground level) military flight training, including helicopters and unmanned aviation systems
- Interference with radars, weapons defeat testing, and missile testing on and in the vicinity of WSMR
- Airspace conflicts with low-level military aircraft approaching a bombing range located within the northwest corner of WSMR
- Restrictions upon Ft. Bliss battalion-level training and maneuvering

Concerns for avoiding any and all environmental impacts will be addressed as the No Action Alternative, which is also a required alternative under NEPA regulations.

Through initial and ongoing meetings with BLM resource specialists, cooperating agency staff, and environmental organizations with pertinent resource data, siting of the proposed and alternative routes are being refined – transmission line segments may be added, deleted, or modified to address resource and engineering concerns. Substantial focus will be given to alternative siting in the sensitive areas in the vicinity of: Eloy, San Pedro River Valley, Galiuro Wilderness, Sunset Mountain, Sulphur Springs Valley, Aravaipa/Klondyke, Cluff Ranch, Mount Graham/Safford, Deming, Bosque del Apache NWR, Rio Grande corridor, Windmill Ranches, and WSMR. For example, the BLM has met with TNC and obtained GIS land use data (e.g., TNC conservation lands, easements, allotments) in the area of Cascabel and the lower San Pedro

³ NEPA's Implementing Regulations at 40 CFR 1500 – 1508. Printed in: *Federal Register* Vol. 46, No.55, 18026-18038, 3/23/81

River Valley. This information is being analyzed by the EIS third-party contractor to recommend the modification of alternative routes to avoid the lands under TNC stewardship.

Where reasonable and feasible, routing will be located using existing linear features, such as established utility (transmission and pipeline) and transportation (freeway and railroad) corridors.

In addition to documentation in the Draft EIS, alternatives both (a) carried forward into the EIS for further evaluation and (b) identified but eliminated from further consideration will also be identified and documented in a Feasibility Siting Study published following the scoping phase of the project, but prior to the Draft EIS.

7.4. Resource Inventory, Impacts, and Mitigation

A large volume of scoping comments received concern the environmental resources within the study area, especially relating to: migratory birds, listed species, habitat fragmentation, preservation of wilderness and wilderness-like areas, cultural resources, aesthetics, private property/property values, and local economies. Although these key issues were frequently cited in the scoping comments, all resources relating to the natural, human, and cultural environment will be addressed in the EIS.

First to be addressed is the identification of the environmental resources, or resource inventory. Scoping comments received that identified specific resources potentially affected by the proposed project merit further investigation. GIS data will be requested, if needed, and the inventory for each resource will be documented in the Draft EIS. GIS data coordination with TNC and the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District, for example, has been undertaken as a result of scoping.

Due to the significance of the Rio Grande on migratory birds in New Mexico, as identified through the scoping process, a special avian study in support of the EIS has been designed. Further, other biological surveys, breeding season issues, and permits will be addressed in the biological resources section of the EIS. Any biological impacts and mitigation, in coordination with state and federal resource agencies, will be detailed in the EIS.

Inventories, impacts, and mitigation to cultural resources will be addressed in the EIS. To this end, and as discussed in Section 4, consultation with state cultural -resource agencies and Native American tribes, pursuant to Section 106 of the NHPA, was initiated during project scoping. Section 106 consultation will be ongoing throughout the EIS process.

Regardless of the specific resource(s) identified in any specific scoping comment, the issue of cumulative impacts as a result of the proposed project was reiterated. Pursuant to NEPA, all resource impacts – direct, indirect, and cumulative – will be addressed in the resource sections of the Draft EIS. Any required mitigation will also be addressed in the EIS resource sections, as well.

8. ISSUES THAT WILL NOT BE ADDRESSED

Not all comments with issues received during the proposed project's scoping period will be addressed in the development of the SunZia Project EIS. Such issues are those that fall outside of the scope of an EIS, or are otherwise not subject to environmental analysis. Pursuant to CEQ's NEPA regulations, the scope of an EIS includes the extent of the action, the range of alternatives, and the types of impacts to be evaluated (40 CFR 1508.25). Thus, comments that are not focused on the purpose and need of the proposed action, the proposed alternatives, the assessment of the environmental impacts of those alternatives, and the proposed mitigation are beyond the scope of the EIS.

The following out-of-scope comments (*italicized*) were received and will not be addressed in the EIS. The rationale for considering these comments out-of-scope is included.

- *Institution of a requirement for annual compliance reporting of verifiable renewable energy sources.*

The proposed project's purpose and need clarifies that renewable energy sources are the focus. Verification requirements, however, is not within the purview of the BLM and is not applicable to the BLM's decision to grant right-of-way for the project Applicant.

- *It would be better to strive to not build more power plants, and instead encourage less consumption (conservation). The replacement of electrical generation from fossil fuel sources with electrical generation from renewable sources in the Southwest [is favorable], but only if the large energy markets in this region are also subject to rigorous conservation standards [and] if [the project] is carried out in the context of rigorous residential and commercial energy conservation programs.*

Regional and national energy policy relating to conservation requirements are not within the purview of the project Applicant nor the BLM. The project proposal does not either support or negate the merit of energy conservation, a policy issue that is beyond the scope of this EIS.

- *What is needed is local-level power generation instead of interstate transmission; electrical power should be decentralized; energy production should be accomplished locally.*

As addressed in the proposed project's purpose and need, interstate transmission specifically between Arizona and New Mexico is a documented need. The Applicant's proposal is serving an unmet need. The project proposal does not either support or negate assertions relating to local-level power generation or decentralization/centralization, which is beyond the scope of this EIS.

- *The project should provide a direct tie into small communities.*

The Applicant's purpose and need is to provide transmission capacity for primarily renewable energy sources to be delivered to utility companies. It is the role of utility companies (private or public) in the U.S. utility market to serve the end users in

communities. Service to end-users (communities) is not part of the proposed project's purpose and need, and is thus outside the scope of this EIS.

- *Government money would be better invested in schools, etc.*

The proposed project has no government funding at this time. However, the issue of discretionary funding by governmental organizations is not within the purview of the BLM and is not applicable to the BLM's decision making concerning the Applicant's right-of-way grant application. Further, fiscal policy issues are not addressed within the NEPA regulations, and are thus out-of-scope for this EIS.

- *General for or against "vote" for the project.*

As noted in the CEQ *A Citizen's Guide to the NEPA*, "Commenting is not a form of "voting" on an alternative. The number of negative comments an agency receives does not prevent an action from moving forward. Numerous comments that repeat the same basic message of support or opposition will typically be responded to collectively. In addition, general comments that state an action will have "significant environmental effects" will not help an agency make a better decision unless the relevant causes and environmental effects are explained."⁴ This comment is not relevant within the context of NEPA analysis.

- *I wonder about our mental health if we live with and must always look at the "monster marchers" which carry high voltage. The "monsters" create a feeling of unease and perhaps even fear in some people.*

NEPA requires the analysis of a proposed project's effects on the quality of the human environment. Per NEPA guidelines, the human environment refers to the natural and physical environment and the relationship of people with that environment (40 CFR 1508.14.) Psychological effects are not considered to be within the realm of the physical environment under NEPA. Thus, mental health issues are outside the scope of the EIS.

- *I am extremely opposed to all of the proposed and alternative routes.*

A general sentiment concerning the proposed project does not lend itself to the analysis of the potential effects on the physical environment as required under NEPA. This comment is not within the scope of the EIS.

- *Concerned about AC, want DC transmission line.*

The project proposes either two AC transmission lines, or one AC and one DC transmission line. The EIS will provide an overview of these types of transmission. However, the general nature of this comment does not specify what the concern is and does not provide the necessary context needed to address any environmental issue.

⁴ Council of Environmental Quality *A Citizen's Guide to the NEPA – Having Your Voice Heard*. December 2007. p. 27.

- *There are too many transmission lines running across Highway 25 between San Antonio and the Rio Grande River.*

The general nature of this comment does not specify what the concern is and does not provide the necessary context needed to address any environmental issue. However, an impact analysis that addresses cumulative impacts of multiple transmission lines (new and existing) will be included in the EIS.

- *Transmission lines that will invade that environmentally sensitive pristine virgin land defeats the purpose of “clean energy.”*

The nature of this comment is subjective. Development of clean energy is a matter of national and international policy, the merits of which are not debatable under NEPA. However, the effects of a renewables energy project on the physical environment will be addressed in the EIS. Because a project may have significant environmental effects does not mean the project should or should not be approved under NEPA.

- *Many Corona, New Mexico ranchers are eager to lease their land for the project for the potential earnings.*

In general, land use will be addressed in the project EIS. However, the acquisition of specific privately owned right-of-way for the construction and operation of the proposed transmission line is an issue for the Applicant and not the BLM.

- *I am not in favor of the proposal for the New Mexico SunZia Project. Most especially, I am against the so called the Mason Draw solar field. The basis for my objection to the location of the field is that it will be destroying valuable grassland habitat.*

The Mason Draw solar field is an unaffiliated, unrelated project to the SunZia project, and is thus outside the scope of the SunZia EIS. The BLM's decision on granting right-of-way for the proposed transmission line project is dependent upon the particulars of the SunZia EIS analyses, which will evaluate any impacts to grasslands within the project's study area. As a matter of process, cumulative impacts to grasslands will be included.

- *This project lends itself to the perpetuation of centralized power grids which pose a threat to national security.*

The purpose and need of the proposed project is to provide transmission capacity of renewable energy sources in New Mexico and Arizona, thereby enhancing domestic energy security. The merits of centralized or decentralized renewable energy transmission is not subject to NEPA analysis, and is thus not relevant to the BLMs' decision to grant right-of-way for the proposed project.

- *The SunZia Project should be buried.*

The project proponent is not considering burial of the transmission lines as an alternative. Excessive costs, technological and design issues, excessive ground disturbance, and

operation and maintenance concerns are among the factors that would make undergrounding the entire project infeasible.

- *The SunZia Project should be buried at the Rio Grande River crossing.*

The Applicant is not proposing burial of the transmission lines as an alternative to overhead lines for crossing the Rio Grande River. However, in response to public comments, an evaluation of a buried crossing of the Rio Grande River near San Antonio, New Mexico is being conducted and will be included as part of the engineering and environmental analysis, in addition to the consideration of other potential mitigation measures for the river crossings.