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BLM Seeks Additional Public Input on Proposed SunZia Southwest Transmission Project

Santa Fe, N.M. – The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is holding additional public scoping meetings to seek input and discuss with the public a proposed study expansion area for the SunZia Southwest Transmission Project. The project is a proposed 460 mile high capacity 500 kilovolt (kV) transmission line (or two parallel lines) across New Mexico and Arizona. The project proponent, SunZia Transmission LLC, is proposing to transport electricity generated primarily renewable resources, to western power markets and load centers.

The BLM is the lead Federal agency which will oversee the preparation of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that will identify environmental impacts and evaluate alternatives for the project.

The BLM initially held 12 public scoping meetings in 2009 in New Mexico and Arizona throughout communities along the proposed transmission line route and project study area. The purpose of public scoping is to allow the public to share comments and concerns, and identify issues and alternatives to be considered during the EIS process. During the initial public scoping process, the BLM received numerous comments regarding the proposed and alternative transmission line routes.

The results of scoping will aid in determining an appropriate study plan and analysis for the EIS. In order to address the issues and concerns identified by the public and agencies, the scope of the study must include an adequate range of reasonable alternatives.

Alternative routes or sub-routes will be added, modified, or deleted from further study.

Among the many public and agency comments received to date regarding the Arizona portion of the SunZia proposal were concerns regarding the location of the proposed routes in the San Pedro River Valley area. In response to scoping comments, preliminary studies, and consultations with interested parties and governmental resource agencies, the BLM has made a decision to consider the potential for additional reasonable and feasible routes in two specific areas in Arizona and New Mexico as outlined below:

Arizona – Alternative routes within Pima County in the Tucson area, and west of the San Pedro River will be evaluated. These potential routes are in addition to the initial range of alternative routes located in the vicinity of the San Pedro River Valley and Sulphur Springs Valley. The additional alternative routes are in response to scoping comments, which included support for locating the proposed transmission project within the existing Interstate 10 Highway corridor. Other comments expressed concern for potential environmental impacts to grazing/ranching operations and private lands/property values; biological resources (especially waterfowl/migratory birds, special status species, and wildlife corridors); cultural and visual resources, local economics; and unauthorized off-road traffic on the proposed transmission line access roads.

New Mexico – Alternative routes within Lincoln, Torrance, Valencia, and Socorro counties, north of Socorro, New Mexico will be evaluated. These potential routes have been suggested as optional routes to the initial proposed and alternative routes, north of the White Sands Missile Range (WSMR), in the vicinity of State

Highway 380, to avoid impacts to military training and testing operations at WSMR, Holloman Air Force Base, and Ft. Bliss Army Base.

The BLM announces the expansion of the project study area so that these potential transmission line routes can be considered in the EIS process. (For a map of the Expansion Study Area, see BLM Project Website at address below) The BLM is holding these two additional scoping meetings to discuss with the public the proposed study expansion area and subsequent alternative routes being considered. The scoping meetings will provide the public an opportunity to learn more about the project's proposed study expansion area, and share comments and concerns. As a result of the proposed study area expansion, the BLM has opened an additional 45-day public comment period ending June 10, 2010. Please focus your comments on issues relating primarily to the proposed study area expansion so that BLM may provide a timely review and evaluation of comments.

Two open-house public scoping meetings along the expanded study area will be held in the following New Mexico and Arizona communities. Technical and environmental information about the EIS and the proposed SunZia project will be available. Agency and Project staff will be available to answer questions and we look forward to your attendance. Both meetings will be from 5:00 pm to 8:00 pm.

<u>Community</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Meeting Locations</u>
Socorro, NM	April 27, 2010	Socorro County Fairgrounds, 1 Fairgrounds Road
Tucson, AZ	April 29, 2010	Holiday Inn, 4550 South Palo Verde Road

In addition to comments given at each meeting, comments can also be made to the BLM via the BLM Project Website at http://www.blm.gov/nm/st/en/prog/more/lands_realty.html via the project email address at NMSunZiaProject@blm.gov or in writing to the Bureau of Land Management, SunZia Transmission Line Project, P.O Box 27115, Santa Fe, NM 87502-0115. Deliveries will be accepted via courier/hand delivery to the Bureau of Land Management, SunZia Transmission Line Project, 301 Dinosaur Trail, Santa Fe, NM 87508. To be added to the mailing list or if you have questions, please contact BLM Project Manager Adrian Garcia at (505) 954-2199.