

# CALIFORNIA ENERGY MARKETS

## Group Plans 500-Mile Line for Southwest Green Power

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John Edwards

Southwestern Power Group of Phoenix Monday announced that four partners are helping it develop a 500 kV, 500-mile transmission line that would stretch from windy southeastern New Mexico to sun-baked central Arizona.

The partners are Salt River Project, Tucson Electric Power, Energy Capital Partners and Shell WindEnergy as well as SWPG. The partners signed a memorandum of agreement and agreed to share costs in seeking permits for the project, said spokesman Ian Calkins.

SWPG, an energy-development subsidiary of MMR Group of Baton Rouge, La., will oversee permitting, environmental review and engineering design of the SunZia Southwest Transmission Project.

The power line primarily would provide access to wind, solar and geothermal power for utilities in Nevada and California as well as New Mexico and Arizona, said Chuck Russell, principal planning engineer at Salt River Project.

“We emphatically believe that SunZia creates new, additional opportunities for renewable developments that did not previously exist,” Calkins said.

TEP spokesman Joe Salkowski said Arizona does not have great wind resources, but the state could tap into them in eastern New Mexico. The route would also run through a prime geothermal region that stretches from Safford, Ariz., to Las Cruces, N.M., he said.

While it is a partner in the project, TEP’s “final role remains to be determined as the project is fleshed out,” Salkowski said.

“We see some potential for better expanding our access to renewable resources and enhancing the flexibility of our regional transmission grid.”

The project also may offer power delivery options for the Bowie Power Station, a 1,000 MW, gas-fired plant that SPWG is building near Bowie, Ariz.

Calkins noted the transmission line cannot discriminate against power generated with convention fuels at other plants, as per federal policy.

The transmission line would run from the area southeast of Alamogordo, N.M., then along Interstate 10 from Las Cruces to Deming, N.M., and on to Tucson, Ariz., turning northwest and terminating in the rapidly growing region south of the Phoenix metropolitan area.

However, the developers have not designated the exact route for the transmission project.

Some of the partners may build renewable projects near the line, but spokesmen acknowledged it is difficult to build a transmission line without commitments from renewable-power plants and tough to finance renewable power projects before SunZia gives them access to the Southwestern electrical grid.

The first phase of the project is scheduled to be in use by 2013, but SunZia partners have not made final decisions about what work the first phase will include.