



For Immediate Release

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**Contacts: Sandy Bahr, Sierra Club Grand Canyon (Arizona) Chapter (602) 253-8633
Randy Serraglio, Center for Biological Diversity, (520) 784-1504**

SunZia Transmission Project Advances Despite Its Significant Environmental Harm

Phoenix, AZ – The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) issued a final Environmental Impact Statement on Friday for the proposed SunZia Southwest Transmission Project, which entails constructing two 500-kilovolt transmission lines across Arizona and New Mexico. Despite strong opposition from a broad range of environmental and community groups, BLM chose a preferred alternative that will cause significant environmental damage to the San Pedro River Valley. The BLM says the proposed line is needed because it will “encourage the development of additional renewable energy.”

“Sierra Club strongly supports a timely transition to clean renewable energy production, but continues to question whether this particular proposed transmission line will facilitate additional renewable energy resources and whether the dollars being considered for this project could not have a greater impact in a project that focuses on transmission line upgrades, energy efficiency measures, and generating the electricity closer to where it will be consumed,” said Sandy Bahr, chapter director for Sierra Club’s Grand Canyon (Arizona) Chapter. “Trying to site this proposed transmission project in some of Arizona’s most sensitive and unfragmented areas is totally unacceptable. It will do irreparable harm to sensitive lands and plant and animal species, cultural resources, and will result in major fragmentation of wildlife habitat.”

The proposed route will cross the San Pedro River Valley north of Benson, Arizona and then cuts north following along the west side of the river. The San Pedro River has long been a key conservation area and is currently being considered for additional protections by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service due to the significant habitat it provides for a variety of plants and animals.

“SunZia is another unnecessary conflict waiting to happen,” said Randy Serraglio, conservation advocate from the Center for Biological Diversity. “Ultimately, this project is not likely to significantly advance the production of renewable energy. In fact, it likely will have a lot more to do with peddling fossil fuel than wind or solar. The duplicity inherent in this proposal threatens another embarrassing setback for our nation’s desperately needed transition to clean energy. Sacrificing the wild beauty and rich biodiversity of the San Pedro River or Aravaipa Canyon for this bogus project would be a tragic mistake.”

The Sierra Club's mission is "to explore, enjoy, and protect the wild places of the earth; to practice and promote the responsible use of the earth's ecosystems and resources; and to educate and enlist humanity to protect and restore the quality of the natural and human environments." Sierra Club members have a significant interest in the proposed SunZia Project and its impacts on natural resources, and enjoy watching wildlife, hiking, backpacking, and other outdoor and educational activities on the lands affected by this proposed project. Sierra Club has more than 1.3 million members and supporters nationwide. There are 12,000 members in the Grand Canyon Chapter.

The Center for Biological Diversity is a national non-profit conservation organization headquartered in Tucson, Arizona, with more than 500,000 members and supporters, more than 10,000 of whom reside in Arizona and New Mexico. The Center is dedicated to the protection of threatened and endangered species and their habitats. Members have a keen interest in the SunZia project and its impacts on the species and places we work to protect.

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