

# Benefits seem overstated for SunZia project

## ■ Study questions job projections for transmission system

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The initial rosy economy benefits projected for the two-state SunZia high-voltage transmission project were too rosy.

So asserts Arizona resident Norm Meader, who has been monitoring the project's development as a member of the Cascabel Working Group, a watchdog of the San Pedro River Valley in southeastern Arizona.

To be sure, Cascabel's group is trying to prevent the route of the project — a 500-mile-long transmission system linking New Mexico and Arizona to deliver electricity principally generated by renewable sources — from intruding into the valley because of its environmental uniqueness.

But Meader, a retired University of Arizona geoscience department staff member, says SunZia's widely reported claim — including in the *Journal* — that the project would

create 6,200 construction jobs and spin off 36,700 renewable-energy jobs is badly overstated, which he attributes to labeling errors on data tables in the report and misinterpretations of what the label actually means.

One of the report's authors concedes Meader is right.

"Of course, there's an economic upside to it," said Meader of the project. "It just isn't nearly as big as it's been portrayed — maybe a third."

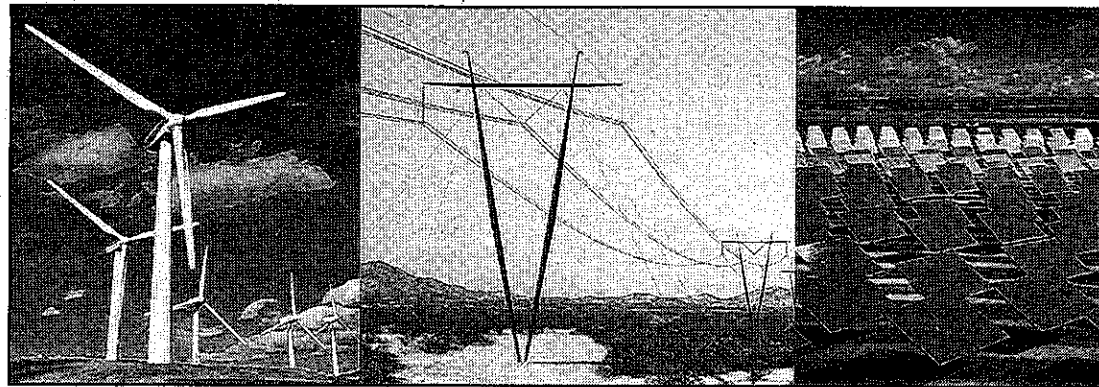
### Jobs vs. FTEs

Meader also provided a copy of the critique to report co-author Alberta Charney of the University of Arizona, who confirmed the report intended jobs to mean job- or man-years. She said "jobs" is commonly used in economic reports, but could see how it might be confusing.

"Sometimes people misinterpret jobs to mean, oh, it's going to be 6,000 people working for the full duration of this project," she said. "That is the common usage, so I sympathize with you."

She said man-years are used in economic studies because of uncertainties about the actual jobs.

"If you have three jobs, you don't know for sure whether that's three guys working for



These are renewable energy components that would be in play in SunZia's proposed, 500-mile-long transmission project linking New Mexico and Arizona.



SunZia's logo suggests New Mexico-Arizona linkage.

one year, or one guy working for three years," she said.

Meader said the projection of 36,700 "jobs" related to renewable generation development is also inflated; though not as dramatically because construction times are shorter, one to two years. Converting the figure to actual jobs would reduce the number to 31,090, he said.

### An unrealistic mix?

He contends the study, however, relies on an

unrealistic mix of renewable projects — 10 solar and 12 wind projects, though wind is far more economical and wind-energy producers are likely expecting to use far more than the projected 1,200-megawatt capacity used in the SunZia study. A more realistic mix of four solar, one geothermal and 19½ wind farms to match the amount of renewable generation in the economic study would reduce the job numbers to 17,547, Meader

said.

But the number shrinks even more because of the high number of job-years projected to complete solar PV projects. While the model said it would take 890 job-years to complete a 100-megawatt plant, Meader said a survey showed it would actually be in the range of 200 to 300 job-years, making the SunZia number a factor of three to 4.5 too high. Decreasing the photovoltaic numbers by a factor of three would reduce the number of renewable-generation jobs to 13,878, he said.

A draft of the environmental impact statement identifying the preferred route is due out in April.

## LETTERS TO OUTLOOK

Investment income

over \$10,000, or some other

Playing 'victim' card

the deficit increased, the

if they so choose, in this land