



Winkelman Natural Resources Conservation District Mammoth Arizona 85618

Bureau of Land Management
SunZia Transmission Line Project
P.O. Box 27115
Santa Fe, NM 87502-0115

As a public entity charged by the Arizona Legislature to, "provide for the restoration and conservation of lands and soil resources of the state," the Winkelman Natural Resources Conservation District (WNRCD) cannot endorse the routing of the proposed SunZia power transmission lines through the Aravaipa watershed in southern Arizona . The introduction of major infrastructure in this pristine area is unnecessary, given that less impactful alternatives are available. We strongly encourage consideration of alternative corridors that already have access roads and/or infrastructure in place.

We understand that a major power line project in the Aravaipa region would require the construction of new access and construction roads. We oppose the construction of new roads crossing the Galiuro Mountains in this region. In addition to the land disturbance problems associated with the propagation of invasive plant species and soil erosion, these roads would become routes for all-terrain vehicles. This would inevitably lead to a web of off-road vehicular routes, causing degradation to the natural landscape and damaging long-term conservation efforts in one of the most important wilderness areas of the state. With many of our members working as ranchers in this region, we understand the impact of new road development in remote areas, as well as the ineffectiveness of gates and fences in controlling unauthorized use of these roads.

The San Pedro River Valley supports the last major free-flowing river in the desert southwest, the main migratory corridor for neo-tropical birds in the West, and the greatest diversity of mammal species in North America . The Rocky Mountains, Sierra Madres, Sonoran and Chihuahuan deserts all merge here to create the greatest biodiversity of any landlocked area in the U.S. The Middle San Pedro River Valley, adjacent ranges and areas is one of the largest intact landscapes in the lower 48 states. Landscape fragmentation, which this power corridor would affect, has been shown to negatively impact wildlife and ecosystem sustainability.

It is not accidental that so many natural resource conservation efforts are concentrated in the lower San Pedro River and Aravaipa wilderness region. Development throughout the state has rapidly degraded riparian areas and diminished wildlife habitat, with critical mitigation projects and conservation efforts ending up in our region. We cannot allow the degradation of this area with the introduction of a major infrastructure project when there are alternative routes available that have already been disturbed by development. The proposed area was utilized as a mitigation region, recognized in exchange and used in consideration for other developments that impacted the environment in Arizona . To now consider the proposed area for any development when it was previously reserved as an established environmental mitigation region is both inappropriate and unethical

William Dunn, Chairman

Mary Mercer, Supervisor

Langdon Hill, Treasurer