



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Washington, D.C. 20240
<http://www.blm.gov>



In Reply Refer to:
1295 (560)

Mr. Andrew Smallhouse, Chairman
Redington National Resource Conservation District
P.O. Box 585
San Manuel, AZ 85618

Subject: Appeal of Decision Concerning Correction of Information in the Scoping Documents for the Sun Zia Southwest Transmission Project

Dear Mr. Smallhouse,

This letter is in response to your January 20, 2012, appeal for correction of information under the Information Quality Act (IQA). The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) convened a panel of experts to consider this appeal. The panel consisted of members of the BLM, Department of the Interior (DOI) Office of the Solicitor, and DOI Office of the Chief Information Officer.

We disagree that there has been a “gross misrepresentation of the purpose of and need for the proposed SunZia project in BLM scoping documents.” However, after careful review of your request, the panel did recommend that the New Mexico State Office provide additional context for certain statements on its website in light of information obtained through the ongoing National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. I have accepted the panel’s recommendation. The New Mexico State Office will modify active documents and website information in accordance with this letter. However, your request for a new, 45-day comment period is not appropriate under the Information Quality Act.

Your request and appeal focused on statements made available at the start of, or during, the NEPA scoping period. The purpose of the scoping period is to identify issues that should be addressed and/or analyzed in a Final Environmental Impact Study (EIS). Scoping information is not decisional. Scoping information represents what is known by the BLM, in good faith, at the time of that initial stage. All information obtained during that stage, such as public comments, is considered by the BLM in constructing the Draft EIS. This Draft EIS is then publically released and a formal public-commenting process ensues—to further assist the BLM in formulating the Final EIS before any agency action is approved.

During the scoping period for the SunZia project review, the BLM received comments seeking clarification on issues raised in your appeal. The Draft EIS for the Sunzia project will address the purpose of, and need for the project, and will describe the rules that govern non-renewable and renewable-energy generators' ability to access and place power on transmission lines. We expect the Draft EIS to be released shortly.

Should you have any concerns with the discussion or analysis presented in the Draft EIS, I encourage you to express them during the EIS commenting process.

A similar letter has been sent to Mr. William Dunn, Chairman, Winkelman Natural Resource Conservation District.

If you have any further questions regarding the IQA appeal and process, please contact The BLM IRM Governance Division Chief, Paulette L. Sanford at 202-912-7560 or by e-mail at psanford@blm.gov.

Sincerely,

Signature on file

Robert V. Abbey
Director