



United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
New Mexico State Office
301 Dinosaur Trail
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87508
<https://www.blm.gov/new-mexico>

February 4, 2025

In Reply Refer To:
2800 (9300)

John Welch
Archeology Southwest
281 N Stone Ave
Tucson, AZ 85701

Dear John Welch,

This letter is to notify you of the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) approval of the partial assignment of the SunZia Transmission Line (SunZia) right-of-way (ROW) from SunZia Transmission, LLC to El Rio Sol Transmission, LLC (RioSol), a subsidiary of Southwestern Power Group. The SunZia ROW, Serial Number NMNM106038865/NM114438 (cross reference BLM AZAZ105998580/AZA33058), was executed by the BLM in September 2016 and amended in 2023 ("Amended ROW Grant"). The Amended ROW Grant approved construction, operation, and decommissioning of two nominal 500 kilovolt (kV) transmission lines (Line 1 and Line 2) within a 400-foot-wide ROW area and 174-miles-long located on BLM-managed lands. Lines 1 and 2 would run parallel to each other, per the Amended ROW Grant. The Amended ROW Grant also authorized appurtenant facilities and ancillary access roads on BLM-managed lands.

In May 2024, the BLM received RioSol's partial assignment application for SunZia's Amended ROW Grant. RioSol, in coordination with SunZia Transmission, LLC, requested to bifurcate the two authorized transmission lines within the existing ROW, i.e., to obtain the right to Line 2, without seeking any new or additional rights within or outside of those rights granted by the existing ROW. As proposed, each ROW holder will be bound by the existing terms and conditions. The effect simply allows for two entities, as opposed to just one entity, to construct, operate and maintain, and decommission one line each within the 400-foot ROW area. Areas shared by the SunZia and RioSol lines will be included in each grant, as previously authorized in the Amended ROW Grant. Further, the permitted routes, included in the Amended ROW Grant, originate in Torrance County, New Mexico, and terminate in Pinal County, Arizona (see attached map). The proposed RioSol assignment traverses Grant, Hidalgo, Lincoln, Luna, Sierra, Socorro, Torrance, and Valencia counties in New Mexico and Cochise, Graham, Greenlee, Pima, and Pinal counties in Arizona. The route alignments will not change through this action, regardless of the BLM's decision.

The BLM determined the review and approval of the partial assignment application was administrative. The BLM identified an applicable categorical exclusion for purposes of the

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (516 DM 11.9 - E.9) and determined no extraordinary circumstances exist for the proposed action (i.e., approval of the partial assignment). Further, the BLM determined that approval of the partial assignment would not require additional review under the National Historic Preservation Act (no potential to affect historic properties) or the Endangered Species Act (no effect) because partial conveyance to RioSol provides only existing rights and obligations and would allow for RioSol to conduct only those activities previously analyzed and authorized in accordance with the requirements and stipulations established through National Historic Preservation Act and Endangered Species Act compliance as part of the 2015 and 2023 decisions, e.g., the stipulations in the Programmatic Agreement. Consequently, the BLM has approved the partial assignment (DOI-BLM-NM-0000-2025-0001-CX; signed on February 4, 2025, by BLM New Mexico State Director Melanie Barnes), will amend the SunZia Amended ROW Grant, and will issue a separate ROW Grant to RioSol.

The BLM will refer to each line separately to avoid any confusion.

As noted above, the bifurcation of the two lines within the ROW does not change any obligation in the PA. RioSol, however, will assume responsibilities to satisfy the stipulations in the PA relating to Line 2. The BLM has notified the signatories to the amended PA from 2022 of the inclusion of RioSol to the PA. The BLM anticipates that RioSol or its contractors may contact you directly as it begins the process of planning for construction of Line 2. Your involvement will continue as a consulting party with the BLM for the continued consultation on the two transmission lines' project efforts.

If you have any questions or concerns on this administrative action or project efforts, for either the SunZia or RioSol transmission lines, please reach out to Project Manager Josh Freeman at JFreeman@blm.gov or 505-263-2720. We appreciate your partnership and collaboration on the SunZia and now RioSol transmission line projects.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Melanie G. Barnes". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Melanie" being the most prominent part.

Melanie G. Barnes, State Director

Attachment: SunZia and RioSol Alignments Map