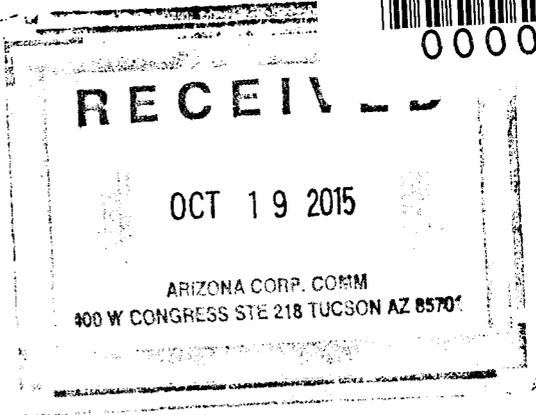


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Comments Regarding SunZia Project

Re: Docket #L-00000YY-15-0318-00171

Power Plant and Transmission Line Siting Committee
Arizona Corporation Commission
1200 West Washington Street
Phoenix, AZ 85007

To the Committee and Commissioners:

Until February of this year, I had never heard of Cascabel, of the San Pedro River Valley, of this beautiful desert wilderness. Through a remarkable set of circumstances, we found it, and having found it, we could not ever be content with merely dreaming about it. We found a spot on the river, and we bought it, and now this unexplored place is our home.

We have yet to even walk the perimeter of our property, it is so huge. And it is huge because it was land set aside by The Nature Conservancy some years ago to protect the integrity of the river, the habitat of the native flora and fauna, and the wholeness of the place itself. This wilderness has somehow been permitted to remain a more or less intact ecosystem despite this culture's appetite for capturing the pristine places of this country and without much thought at all to what a place means (to the wildlife, the soil, the resources, the people who call it home, and the long history it has enjoyed without encroachment), plant upon it the most unnatural things.

Derrick Jensen and George Draffan wrote in *Strangely Like War*:

What is your relationship with the future?

....Those in power won't stop deliberately. Never forget Red Cloud's warning: "They made us many promises, more than I can remember. But they never kept but one. They promised to take our land and they took it."

What, then, can you do if you are of good heart? You can fight to keep this particular tree standing, this particular forest functioning. You can help open your friends' and coworkers' eyes to the wonder and intrinsic value and legitimate standing of forests and forest-dwellers.

We don't need to stop the forest crisis. Nature will stop it. As the global economy becomes more chaotic and the societies addicted to it become more impoverished, the best we can do is to keep some doors open, prevent those in power from causing those we love to go extinct. Defend what is important, undermine what is superfluous, and destroy what is destructive. (Emphasis mine.)

Jensen and Draffan were speaking specifically of global deforestation, yet they also speak for wilderness everywhere. Every place that is threatened with the profound changes that human interests (be they economic or political) invariably bring is worth defending. Change is good, but not all change. Change happens in nature at every level and without ceasing. This SunZia proposal will bring large and unnecessary changes to this sensitive landscape which will absolutely interfere with the natural processes of this ecosystem. There are some who say that the environmentalists' concerns are overblown. God, I hope so. But even if what this SunZia project brings is less than the worst it can be, make no mistake, it will never improve this remarkable place, it can only diminish. How much are we willing to lose, even if we don't lose it all?

The residents of my community have a job to do, and it is one which they (we) take very seriously. We mean to defend what is important and to undermine what is superfluous. What is important is protecting the wholeness of this place with everything we do, whether that is living small and unobtrusively here, or resisting those who would diminish that which we love. We mean to help prevent the fractionalization of a land that contains ant freeways and bear trails, very private and even invisible connections that traverse this desert dust everywhere. None of what SunZia is proposing will come with minimal impact, because there is no such thing as minimal impact when every thing matters.

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And we mean to undermine what is superfluous. It is neither warranted nor necessary to transmit energy (clean or otherwise, and I have heard some rumbling that it just may be otherwise) to the state of California which has made it very clear that they are capable of generating ample clean energy of their own, enough to serve the entire state with some to spare. And even if SunZia persists with this initiative, it does not have to run roughshod over a pristine wilderness in order to do so. It can reduce the amount of environmental harm done simply by utilizing the I-10 corridor. The destruction they intend to bring to this place is superfluous.

The Nature Conservancy has called the Middle San Pedro one of the last great wild places on earth. This makes me think of something Jared Diamond said in an NPR interview I heard one time. He wondered what might have been going through the mind of the person who cut down the very last tree on Easter Island. We're not there yet, but I wonder what is going through the minds of these individuals that are willing to sacrifice one of the last great wild places on earth to transmit energy to people who may not even buy it. It begs the question, *What is really going on here?*

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