

21 June 2021

Letter from Rural Education Advancement Program to BLM

On behalf of New Mexico's Rural Education Advancement Program (REAP), we write today to voice our enthusiastic support for SunZia's Southwest Transmission Project and the enormous economic, educational and environmental benefits it will bring to New Mexicans young and old.

By virtue of our organization's mission, we'd like to emphasize how important this project will be to advancing educational opportunities for our state's youth, particularly as they relate to STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) programs and, ultimately, STEM-related careers.

At REAP, we bring STEM programs to K-12 students in rural parts of the state who might not otherwise have access to STEM education. As you can imagine, the COVID pandemic created huge challenges for our organization, but we see promising days ahead for New Mexico, in large part because of the prospects for the renewable energy industry.

Safely and responsibly leveraging New Mexico's abundant wind and solar resources will serve as a welcomed economic development stimulus for communities across the state, particularly in many of the rural areas that REAP serves.

We see multiple benefits for New Mexico's youth. The income and tax revenue generated by thousands of new jobs will help REAP increase its reach and expand its STEM-related offerings. In turn, we hope students will gravitate to STEM-related courses of study in high school and beyond and, in turn, choose a career in one of these high-paying, high-demand fields.

And let's not forget the environmental benefits of renewable energy development. By investing in these projects today, we're creating a cleaner, more environmentally friendly future right here at home for generations of New Mexicans to come.

Like REAP, we hope the Bureau of Land Management recognizes the promise of the renewable energy sector to New Mexico's economic future and will support the SunZia project.

Yours for a safe, clean, prosperous New Mexico,

Kim Berlat and Creighton Edington