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Navajo Tribal Utility Authority, Edison Mission Energy Selected by SRP for New Wind Project in Coconino County

Salt River Project has selected the Navajo Tribal Utility Authority (NTUA), a Navajo Nation enterprise, and Edison Mission Energy (EME) to build and operate an 85-megawatt wind farm that would be the first green-energy generation project that is majority owned by an American Indian tribe.

SRP would purchase 100 percent of the electricity generated from the proposed Boquillas Wind Project, which would be located on the Aubrey Cliffs north of Seligman and Interstate 40 in Coconino County. A proposed 25-year contract calls for the delivery of energy to SRP by Dec. 31, 2012. The parties are currently negotiating the terms of that contract.

The wind turbines would be constructed on the Boquillas Ranch, which is owned by the Navajo Nation. According to the project's designers, the area where the wind farm is being considered represents one of the best wind resources in Arizona. The NTUA and EME entered into an agreement to jointly develop, build and operate the project in October 2010.

The Boquillas project's output is about enough energy to power more than 19,000 average residential homes in the Phoenix area.

"This project was conceived with the goal to develop and introduce an energy economy for the Navajo Nation that will directly benefit the Navajo people. With this project, the process has started," said NTUA General Manager Walter W. Haase. "We are thankful that SRP understands our mission and supports the Big Boquillas wind farm project, it's the beginning a new economy for the Navajo Nation.

“This project will have a large impact on the region by providing 25 years of lease payments to the Navajo Nation and 25 years of lease/tax payments to the state of Arizona. At the height of construction, 300 to 350 people will be building the wind farm and eight to 10 people will work at the project permanently when construction is complete.”

“We are excited about the opportunity to partner with the Navajo Nation, NTUA and Edison Mission Energy on this major new wind project in Arizona. The Boquillas Wind Project could be an important addition to SRP’s continuing pursuit of new renewable-energy resources,” said John Coggins, SRP’s manager of Resource Planning & Development. “If agreed to, our customers will benefit from a wind resource with zero-fuel costs and zero emissions while the state and the Navajo Nation will benefit from the jobs needed to build and operate this facility in Arizona.”

Pedro Pizarro, president of EME’s parent company, Edison Mission Group, said, “As one of the leading developers of wind power in the country, Edison Mission Group is pleased with our partnership with the Navajo Nation and looks forward to continuing to advance the Boquillas project. This first-of-its-kind business relationship can increase the use of renewable power and help Native American nations expand their economic base.”

Construction of the Boquillas project is pending completion of the power-purchase agreement and permit and construction approvals from federal, state and local agencies.

Combined with the output of the existing Dry Lake Wind Farm near Snowflake and the proposed Yavapai Wind Project, the Boquillas Wind Project would bring SRP’s purchase of Arizona-based wind energy to about 310 megawatts – by far the most by any utility in Arizona.

Under SRP’s Sustainable Portfolio, which was revised last month by its publicly elected Board of Directors, SRP must secure sustainable and renewable resources to meet 20 percent of its retail energy needs by 2020.

The NTUA is the largest multi-service utility owned and operated by an American Indian Tribe. NTUA supplies and extends electricity, natural gas, water, wastewater treatment, renewable energy and telecommunications services to homes and businesses throughout the 27,000-square-mile Navajo Nation and neighboring communities.

Edison Mission Group is a subsidiary of Edison International of Rosemead, Calif. Edison Mission Group, through its operating companies, is one of the leading operators of electrical power generation in the U.S. Based in Santa Ana, Calif., EMG companies own operate or lease 48 power generating facilities in 14 states that generate more than 10,000 megawatts of electricity through coal, natural gas and wind. EMG has 29 wind projects in 11 states totaling nearly 2,000 megawatts of generation capacity and is a subsidiary of Edison International, which also is the parent company of Southern California Edison.

SRP is the third-largest public power utility in the nation, serving nearly 950,000 electric customers in the greater Phoenix metropolitan area.