



# La Mesa Solar Interconnection Distribution Line Project: Fact Sheet

Las Cruces District Office, New Mexico

## What is the La Mesa Solar Interconnection Distribution Line Project?

El Paso Electric Company (EPE) is proposing the La Mesa Solar Interconnection Distribution Line Project (Project) to construct, operate, and maintain 5.6 miles of 24-kilovolt (kV) three-phase overhead distribution line to connect a solar facility being developed near Berino, New Mexico to the existing Anthony Substation near Anthony, New Mexico. The distribution line route would cross public land managed by the Bureau of Land Management – Las Cruces District Office (BLM LCDO) and private land within a 50-foot-wide right-of-way (ROW) corridor. A portion of the Project would rebuild an existing powerline within an existing ROW and a majority of the line will be new construction. Once built, the distribution line would connect the solar facility to the electrical grid to transmit power generated by the solar facility to the existing grid.

Additional details on the La Mesa Solar Interconnection Distribution Line Project are provided below and in the Plan of Development (POD) on file with the BLM.

## Where is the La Mesa Solar Interconnection Distribution Line Project located?

The Project is located in the Anthony, NM USGS 1:24000 Quadrangle in T26S, R3E, sections 2, 11, 13, 14, 23, 24, 26. The Project is located east of Berino and Anthony in Doña Ana County, New Mexico on a mix of federal and private lands. Approximately 2 miles of the alignment is located on BLM managed lands; the remainder is located on private lands. See Map below.

## What is the purpose of the La Mesa Solar Interconnection Distribution Line Project?

EPE is required to make the above mentioned improvements to the distribution system in order to accommodate an interconnection agreement for a Small Generation Facility (SGF) being developed by a third-party. EPE is obligated by regulations to connect this solar facility to the local electrical grid. The SGF is a 20-megawatt (MW) solar facility under development on private land near Berino, New Mexico.

## What decisions will be made by the BLM – Las Cruces District Office?

Consideration of the application to grant the requested ROW for the La Mesa Solar Interconnection Project is a federal action requiring compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969. The BLM LCDO would decide whether to grant the requested ROW on public land, as established by Title V of Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA; 43 United States Code [USC] 1761-1771). The Authorized Officer for the ROW grants is the BLM LCDO District Manager. Based on the information provided, the District Manager would decide whether to grant EPE the requested ROW for the purpose of constructing, operating, maintaining, and terminating the La Mesa Solar Interconnection Project, and if so, under what terms, conditions, and stipulations.

## How will the La Mesa Solar Interconnection Distribution Line Project be constructed?

**Distribution Line.** For the distribution line, EPE would primarily use guy-anchored wood monopoles. Some monopoles used in the Project may be constructed of weathered steel. Weathered steel poles are mainly used

for angle, corners, and dead-end structures. They can also be substituted for wooden poles where engineering requirements make guy-anchored poles infeasible or where the need to span greater distances arises for engineering purposes or to mitigate resource impacts. The structures design and construction would comply with industry and company standards; see Figures 2.1 – 2.5 in the POD. The poles would range in height from 45 to 60 feet, spaced approximately every 250- to 280-feet. The span between each pole may vary depending on terrain or to meet resource impact mitigation or engineering requirements.

Pulling/tensioning sites for the distribution lines would be located at the beginning and end of distribution line segments, at turns or directional changes in both directions of angles, and approximately every 4,500 feet. These areas would be used to setup equipment and install the new conductor on the distribution structures. Pulling/tensioning sites would each be approximately 50 feet by 300 feet; these areas would be cleared of vegetation and be made relatively level. Pulling/tensioning sites would be utilized as temporary work areas during construction. Pulling/tensioning sites would be restored per BLM standards upon completion of construction.

EPE would also temporarily use a 100-foot by 100-foot staging area to store constructed-related supplies and equipment. This work area would be cleared and leveled at the beginning of construction and restored per BLM standards upon completion of construction.

**Access Road.** Project activities would be restricted to the ROW corridor and EPE will use existing roads to the maximum extent possible. A permanent service road would be cleared and constructed for the length of the distribution line. The service road would have a maximum travel surface width of 14 feet and would be located entirely within the ROW boundaries. Vegetation within the ROW would be crushed or removed where necessary to allow for adequate passage by equipment. At each pole location, the ROW would be leveled and graded to allow safe access and operation of equipment. The permanent service road within the ROW corridor would be used post-construction for operation, maintenance, and inspection of the distribution line. The ROW corridor will be accessed via existing roads to the maximum extent possible.

### **What preliminary issues have been identified by the BLM?**

An environmental assessment (EA) is being developed to analyze and disclose the potential effects of EPE's proposed La Mesa Solar Interconnection Project on the human environment. Resources being evaluated include cultural resources, paleontological resources, soil and water resources, special status species, vegetation, visual resources, and wildlife.

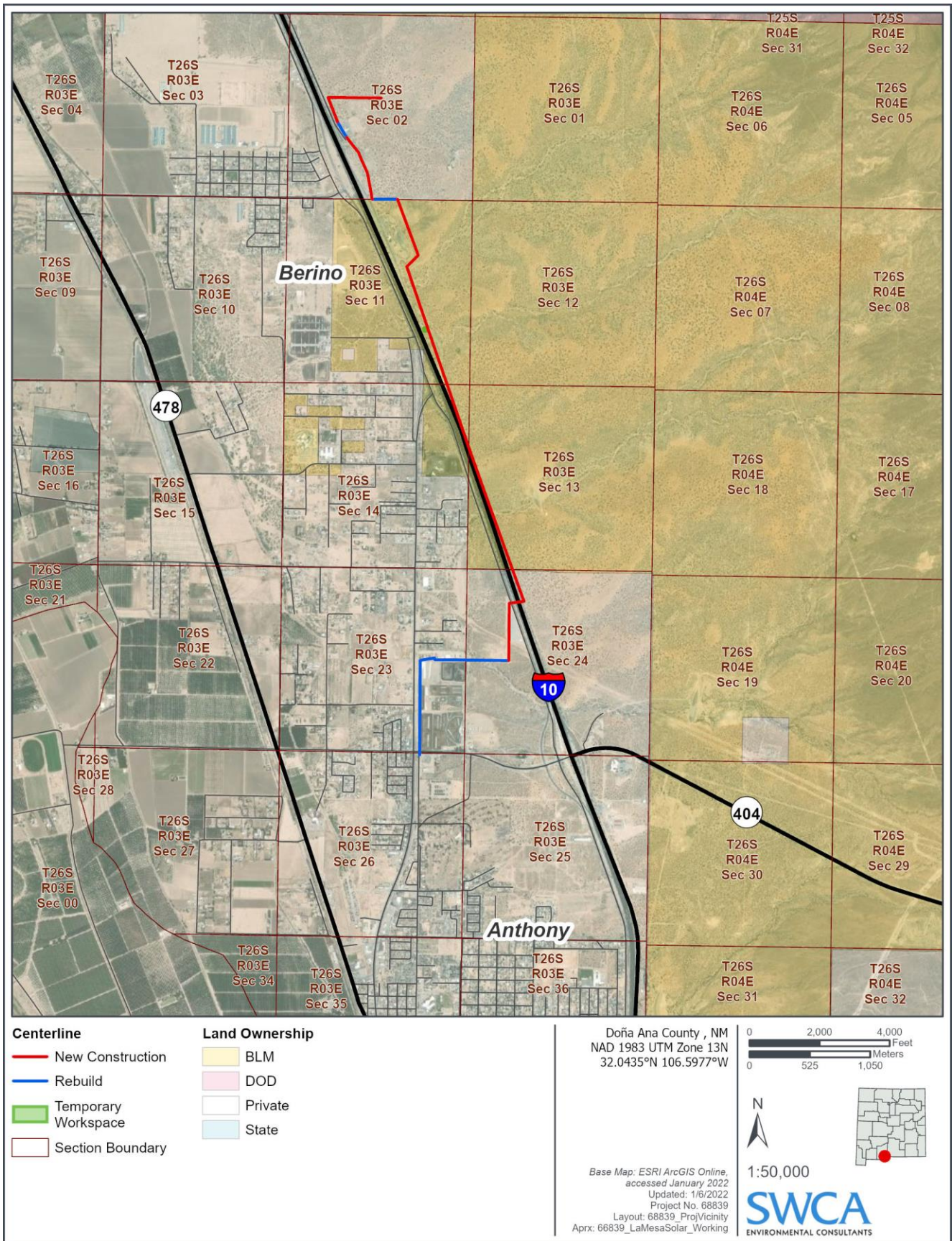
### **When is the estimated completion date for this project?**

The La Mesa Solar Interconnection Project would require approximately four to six months to complete construction. EPE would need to begin construction in Fall 2022 to meet the in-service date requirement of the solar facility of April 2023.

### **How can I submit comments to the BLM?**

The BLM will accept comments on issues, impacts, and alternatives to the proposed action. Public feedback on issues in the project area improve BLM's decision-making process. **The public scoping period closes on March 2, 2022.** To review project information and provide scoping comments, follow these instructions:

1. Visit the ePlanning website at <https://eplanning.blm.gov>.
2. Locate the input field named "Enter a NEPA #, Project Name, or Document Name." Click in the field and type the following project number: **DOI-BLM-NM-L000-2022-0009-EA**
3. Click the orange-colored button on the right to begin the search. In the search results, click on the blue project number located in the central "Project Name" column.



## Project Map