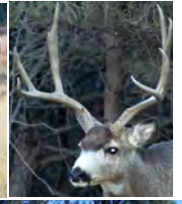

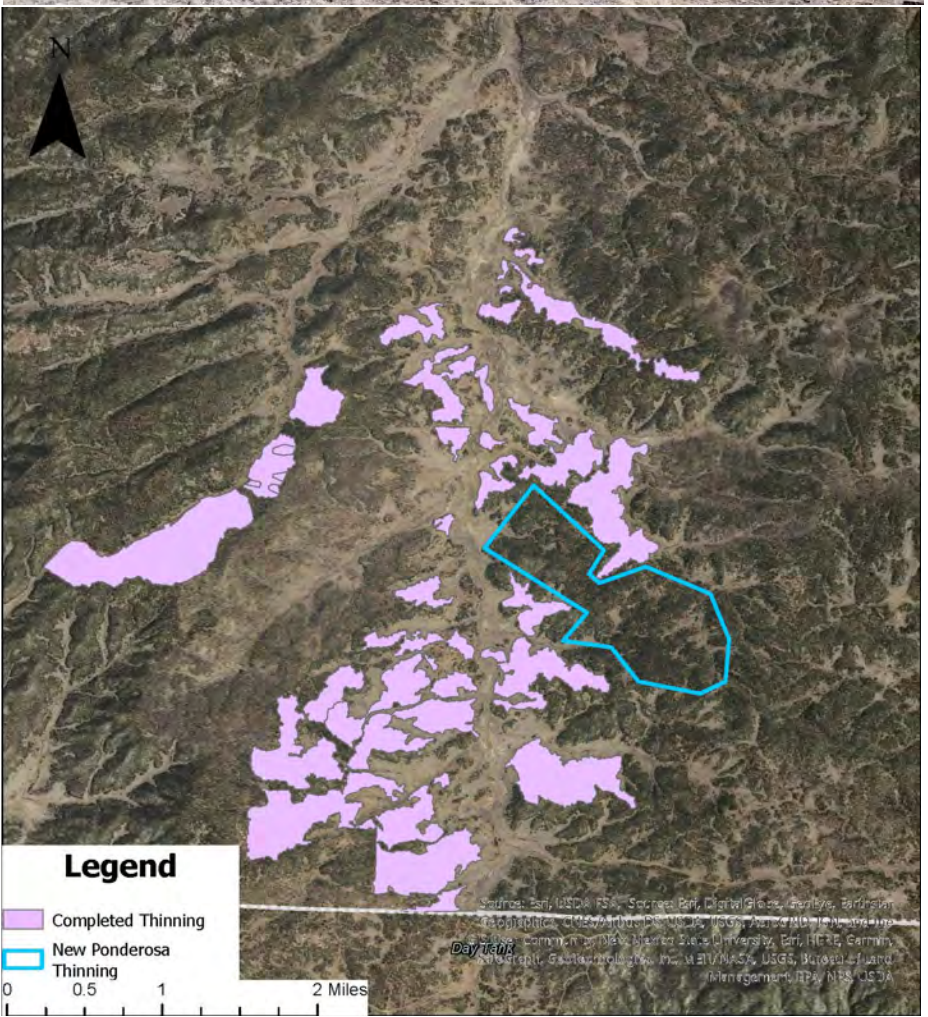


# Mertz Ranch Forest and Habitat Improvement (Ponderosa Pine Thinning)

### Background Information

- The Mertz Ranch landscape managed by the Rio Puerco BLM has been a location for extensive forest restoration activities over the past several years. The BLM and NMDGF have worked together for over a decade to thin thousands of acres of Ponderosa Pine forest in an effort to reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire, improve and restore wildlife habitat, and allow for fire to be used as a management tool.
- As a continuation of these efforts, an additional 300 acres of Ponderosa Pine dominated forest have been identified for more thinning efforts.
- These forests will be thinned to promote health and resilience. In addition to tree thinning, the shrubby browse will also be trimmed back to promote new growth of fresh shoots, which will provide an abundance of highly nutritious browse for mule deer.
- These efforts are paving the way to expand prescribed burn activities and use managed wildfires to maintain wildlife habitat health on this landscape.

**Project Contacts:**

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### Proposed Management Action

- NMDGF, in collaboration with the Rio Puerco BLM, will secure a contract for forest thinning across 300 acres within this landscape.
- Current costs are projected at $500/acre, but this metric has risen steadily over the past 6 months and it may end up costing more.
- Rio Puerco BLM and NMDGF will share inspection duties, and will collaboratively finalize the prescription with the contractor on site prior to implementation.
- Google earth link

**Estimated Budget for HSP: $150,000**