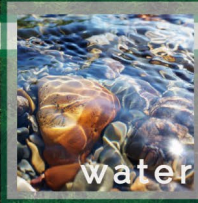


NEW MEXICO TREE FARM

BULLETIN



THINNING THE FOREST

WHY AND HOW

Written by: Todd Haines, NM Tree Farm Program, Inspector Coordinator



One of the most effective strategies for managing your forest is tree thinning. Most forest management plans include specific thinning recommendations tailored to the unique characteristics of the land. In this article, we'll explore the concept of thinning, how stocking rates are determined, how thinning supports forest health and growth, and the long-term benefits it offers.

Forest Thinning is used to promote tree growth in high quality trees within a stand while using removed trees for various forest products. The higher quality of the "Site" the greater the benefit is derived from thinning.

"The primary objective of thinning is to concentrate the increase of wood volume in a smaller number of trees." -- The Woodland Steward by James Fazio

1ST & 2ND QUARTERS 2025

OUR MISSION

To promote the growing of renewable forest resources on private lands while protecting environmental benefits and increasing public understanding of all benefits of productive forestry.

The American Tree Farm System (ATFS), a program of the American Forest Foundation, is committed to sustaining forests, watershed and healthy habitats through the power of private stewardship.

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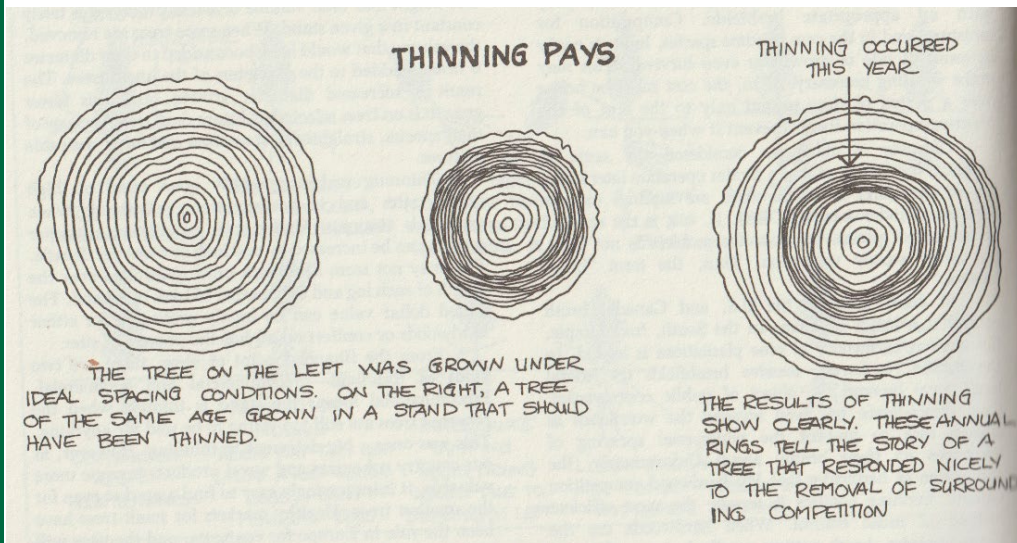
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Resources to help empower landowners
Learn about MyLandPlan.org
Spring edition of the American Forest Foundation magazine



Below is a graphic from the book *The Woodland Steward* showing a tree growing under ideal conditions, a tree that is suppressed in a dense stand and the result of “releasing” a stand through thinning.



George Duda showing two of his "Wood Cookies" of different ages. The smaller one is around 120 years old while the larger one is 57 years old. Grown under different conditions.

The top photo in the left sidebar shows a real-life example from New Mexico—a tree that was “released” during a thinning operation back in 1977. If you look closely at the growth rings, you’ll notice they closely match the third tree illustration in the graphic above, clearly demonstrating the impact of thinning. I came across this stand near Red Canyon in the Manzano Mountains while field-checking a stand exam contractor. Since then, “Tree Cookies” were made from a few sample trees in that same area that show the results from this thinning. These samples, taken between 1998 and 2010, illustrate how the remaining, or “residual,” trees responded to the thinning by increasing their growth. This method of thinning is a powerful tool foresters use to grow large, healthy trees as efficiently as possible. It helps maximize the land’s productivity by keeping just the right number of trees per acre ensuring each one has the space and resources it needs to grow at its optimal rate.

Old Growth vs. Big Growth: What Are We Really After?

We’ve all heard the term “Old Growth,” but when it comes to productive forest management, the real goal is often Big Growth. As mentioned earlier, forest management—particularly thinning—creates the ideal conditions for growing large, healthy trees in the shortest time possible. The comparison to the left highlights this perfectly. The two wood cookies were taken from different trees: the smaller one comes from a tree that’s nearly 120 years old but grew under poor conditions. The larger cookie? It’s from a 57-year-old tree—less than half the age, but twice the size. The takeaway here is simple: a tree’s age isn’t the best measure of its value—its growing conditions are. With proper thinning, we can give trees the space, light, and nutrients they need to thrive and reach their full potential.

Making Smart Thinning Decisions

When thinning a forest, several key factors come into play—providing optimal spacing between trees, ensuring each tree has enough crown space, and selecting the highest-quality trees to retain in the stand. While there are sometimes

exceptions made for wildlife habitat, the overall goal is to promote a healthy, vigorous forest. There are several tools available to help landowners decide which trees to remove and how much thinning is appropriate. We'll cover these tools in more detail in an upcoming article.

In the meantime, the best place to start is by reviewing your property's forest management plan and following the specific recommendations laid out for your land.

FOUR YEARS, FOUR SPRAYS... AND NOW, AN ALBINO SURPRISE

Written by: Charlie Wicklund, NM Tree Farm Program Treasurer

Over the years, I've had my fair share of skunk encounters, including the occasional opportunity to trap and release them. Even my Doberman got in on the action—meeting them like clockwork, twice each spring and fall for over four years—before dashing back home for his well-deserved tomato juice bath.

This past December, I discovered a white skunk on my porch. After some patience, I finally managed to snap a photo and realized it was albino—its eyes and nose a distinct pink. I've since learned that albinism is incredibly rare, with only a small percentage of the skunk population exhibiting this unique trait.

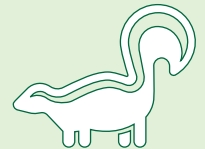
Albino animals have held a special place in various cultures and mythologies, often symbolizing sacredness, transformation, peace, enlightenment, and purity.

It felt like a privilege to witness something so rare—so imagine my surprise when, just last night, the albino skunk returned to my porch once again.



Submit your story, along with your name, and a photo to macka0320@gmail.com and it may be featured in a future edition of the NM Tree Farm Bulletin.

The Powerful Message of Encountering an Albino Skunk



An albino animal's rarity reminds us that beauty can be found in the unusual, and their presence often signals a time for reflection or a call to embrace personal growth. To encounter one is to be reminded that the extraordinary may be closer than we think, offering messages of change and insight.

If an albino skunk crosses your path—especially more than once—it might be more than just a rare visitor. Some would say it's a gentle nudge from the universe to pause, reflect, and maybe embrace a new perspective.



TAX TIPS FOR FOREST LANDOWNERS

IF YOU OWN FORESTED LAND, YOU SHOULD UNDERSTAND HOW U.S. TAX LAWS PERTAIN TO YOU.

How you treat income and expenses associated with your forest property for tax purposes depends on your purpose for owning the property, your actual use of it, your taxpayer classification with respect to the property, and the nature of the income or expense itself.

[Tax Tips for Forest Landowners: 2024 Tax Year](#) can help forest owners understand the basics of forest-related federal tax provisions and how that relates to income tax planning. This is an annual information and educational publication developed by the Forest Service in partnership with the Warnell School of Forestry & Natural Resources, University of Georgia, and the Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences Extension at the University of Florida.

NEW MEXICO REPRESENTED:

2025 AMERICAN FOREST FOUNDATION NATIONAL LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

In March 2025, representatives from your New Mexico Tree Farm Committee traveled to Portland, Maine, for the annual American Forest Foundation (AFF) National Leadership Conference. This conference brought together forest stewards, landowners, and conservationists from across the country to discuss vital issues facing forests and land management.

Attendees participated in workshops, panel discussions, and networking sessions designed to strengthen leadership in forest conservation. Topics covered included Building Your Own Planned Giving Program, Grassroots Advocacy, Legacy Planning for Family Forest Owners, and Mapping in the ATFS Database. The NM Communications Chair gave a presentation on Effective and Engaging Communications for State Tree Farm Programs. In the next issue of the NM Tree Farm Bulletin, we will share information we learned on the results from the latest iteration of the National Woodland Owner Survey coming out soon.



HELPFUL RESOURCES

[New Mexico Tree Farm Program website](#)
[New Mexico Tree Farm Committee Members](#)
[National Association of State Foresters | NM website](#)
[Guide to Resources for Private Forest Landowners in NM](#)
[NM Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department \(EMNRD\)](#)
[American Tree Farm System | National website](#)
[American Forest Foundation website](#)
[National Woodland Owners Association \(NWOA\)](#)
[U.S. Forest Service](#)
[Forest Management map viewer](#)
[MyLandPlan.org](#)
[Family Forest Research Center](#)



MAXIMIZE YOUR LAND'S POTENTIAL WITH MYLANDPLAN.ORG

Join thousands of woodland owners who are already using [MyLandPlan.org](#) to create personalized, high-quality maps of their property. This free tool helps you set goals for your land, provides activity recommendations, and allows you to track your progress with a task list. Plus, you can document and share special moments with your family in the forest journal. Watch the [Instructional Video - What is My Land Plan? | My Land Plan](#) or visit <https://mylandplan.org/> for more details.

READ THE SPRING EDITION OF THE AMERICAN FOREST FOUNDATION MAGAZINE

[Woodland: Your Connection to America's Forests | Spring 2025](#)

Woodland Magazine is a publication by the American Forest Foundation, dedicated to connecting readers with the importance of sustainable forest management. This issue highlights the resilience of family-owned forests, explores legislative updates impacting forest stewardship, and shares inspiring stories of forest conservation, with a special focus on climate change solutions and community engagement.

**N M TREE FARM
COMMITTEE**
www.treefarmsystem.org/new-mexico



DOUG BOYKIN | CHAIRMAN
1118 Hope Farms Road,
Socorro, NM 87801
Phone: 575-838-3027
Email: Diboykin61@gmail.com