



Biological Resources

Vegetation, Wildlife, & Rare Species

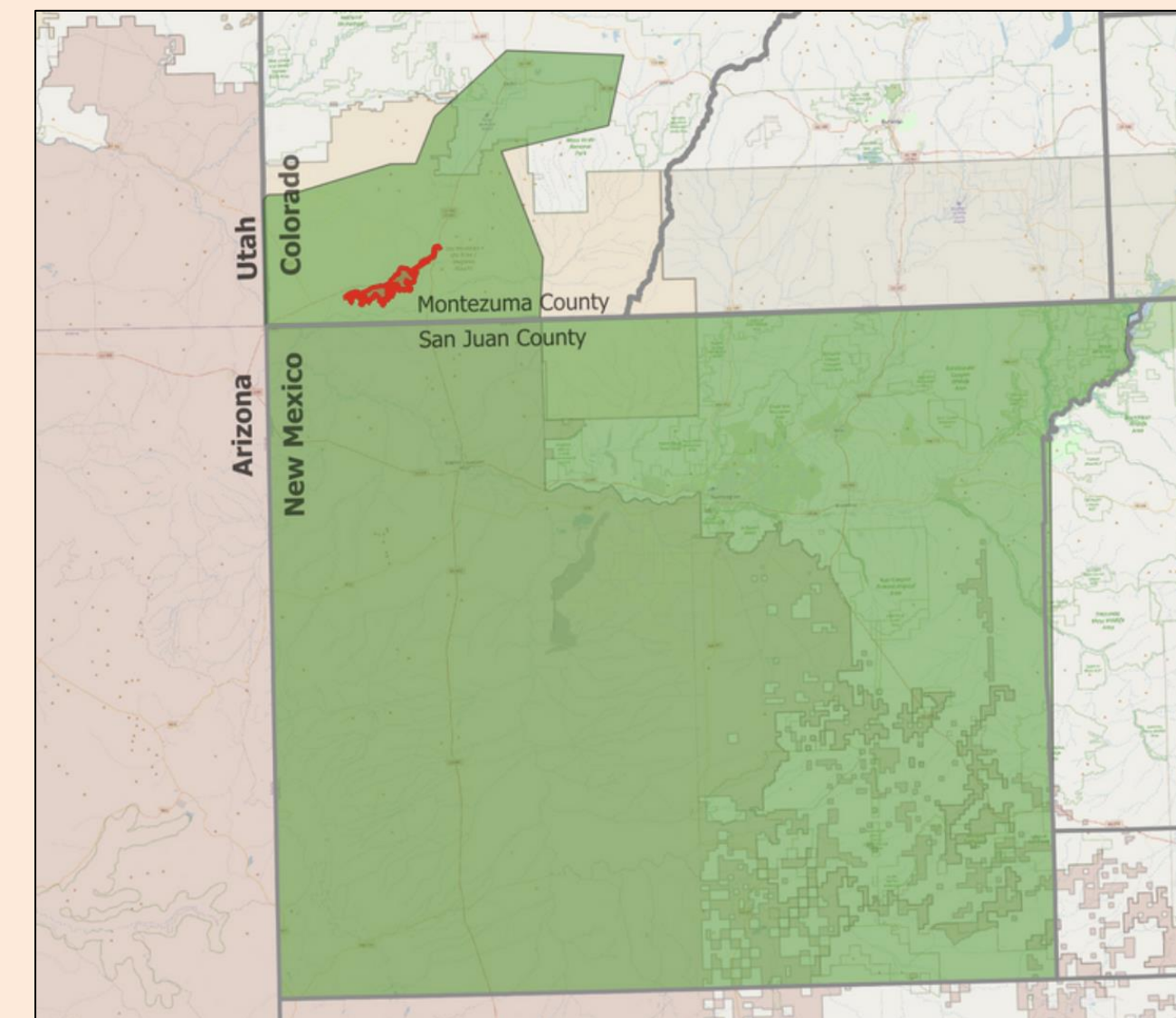
THREATENED, ENDANGERED, AND SPECIAL STATUS SPECIES

NEPA Issue #7

MESA VERDE CACTUS

(Sclerocactus mesa-verdae)

- Rare – **Federally Threatened**
- Only found in Four Corners region.
- 400+ found during surveys.
- With guidance from USFWS, a Mesa Verde Cactus Plan was developed **to limit impact on species.**
- Sun Bear may affect the species, but **will not adversely affect the species.**



Map of Mesa Verde Cactus Range

Mitigation: 200-meter no-construction buffer around each cactus; “Best” habitat removed from project area; Occupied habitat removed from project area



BURROWING OWL

(Athene cunicularia)

- **Threatened with the State of Colorado**, but not Federally.
- Found throughout the Western U.S. in open areas with short grasses and shrubs.
- **Observed in the project area** at five locations.

Mitigation: Active nests will be buffered by 400 meters during nesting season

VEGETATION

NEPA Issue #5

- Panels will be built on top of existing topography and plants.
- Species composition might change from increased shade of panels.
- Invasive weeds are present already but will be regularly monitored for the project.

Mitigation: limited grading and vegetation removal, reclamation, invasive weed monitoring, stormwater management



Common Plants:

Desert scrub dominated by saltbush species, with scattered forbs and grasses.

Sparsely vegetated.

WILDLIFE

NEPA Issue #6

- Birds can be electrocuted or collide with solar panels or infrastructure resulting in injury or death.
- Burrowing animals such as prairie dogs could be harmed during construction.
- Construction and maintenance may deter animals from using the area.
- Long-term loss of available habitat.

Mitigation: limited grading and vegetation removal, abundance of adjacent habitat, pre-construction nest surveys

Common Wildlife:

- Coyote and Fox
- Jack rabbit and cottontail
- Prairie dog
- Badgers
- Crow and Raven Golden
- Eagle
- Horned Lark
- Red-tailed Hawk
- Rattlesnake
- Lizards
- Feral horses

