Omer K. Holcomb
5613 Mt. Hebron Rd.
Boaz AL 35957
(256) 840-9363

January 2, 2008

John Sloan
US Fish and wildlife Service
2105 Osuna NE
Albuquerque, NM 87113

Mexican Gray Wolf Scoping

Sir:

I'll be brief. My family ranch is located next to the White Sands Missile Range (WSMR) along the El Paso highway south of Alamogordo, NM and has been in my family since 1956. I am opposed to the introduction of any wolf into that area in the way it is currently done.

You cannot turn back the clock to 1850. I know that many people think that the ranchers grazing Federal land are the only ones blocking the wolf recovery. It is a problem, but the real problem is the number of settlements surrounding the WSMR. These people have pets, animals, and children and they are much more numerous than the ranchers. We are assured by environmentalists and the FWS that the wolves will avoid human contact. Mountain lions do not, bears do not, coyotes do not, why does any rational person think that wolves will not?

There has to be a better way to accomplish your goals in reintroducing the wolf than you have now. The FWS method to control losses is to bully, intimidate and threaten with jail time and fines and to place blame on the rancher for livestock losses. It appears that this system is not working well for you since you are still losing wolves and prosecutions are rare. But if you insist on putting the wolves there and you guarantee that the rural people are safe, why not make a cooperative arrangement with the ranchers? Pay them in advance for livestock losses and their cooperation. This is not a subsidy; it would be compensation for their losses. If you paid enough, ranchers would be much more sympathetic to your cause. Yes, the environmentalists would scream, but what is your goal, to make them happy or have a secure wolf population?

Remember, you cannot "re-wild" the American West no matter what you think. Pandora's Box has been opened and there is no going back and you are going to have to work with the people that live there.

Omer K. Holcomb

JAN 3, 2008

MR SLOAN,

My APOLOGIES for the first LETTER ON the ROADS IT WAS APIECE of SCRAP PAPER. I KNOW you don't have jurisdiction. However, you can see we have had a continuing battle with government bullying.

THANKS

OMER HOLCOMB

(256) 390-9363

Saskia Baur
1925 46th Avenue #139 , Capitola, California 95010

December 28, 2007 09:43 PM

Dr. Brian Millsap, State Administrator
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
2105 Osuna Road NE
Albuquerque, NM 87113

Subject: Attn: Mexican Gray Wolf NEPA Scoping

Dear Dr. Millsap,

The opportunity to comment on the rule-change for managing reintroduced Mexican gray wolves comes not a moment too soon. Fish and Wildlife Service management, with its heavy reliance on predator control targeting the wolves, has suppressed the wolf population and contributed to inbreeding. The solution must comply with the conservation mandate of the Endangered Species Act and not allow loss of wolves - from any and all sources, including government take and illegal poaching - to keep the population from rapid growth and genetic rescue.

To this end, please develop a Conservation Alternative to be analyzed in the draft environmental impact statement that would upgrade the legal status of the reintroduced Mexican wolves from their current "experimental non-essential" standing to a fully protected endangered status.

Please do not include any alternative for analysis that would increase take of wolves, set any limits on wolf numbers, restrict their movements, or in any other respect infringe on the potential of establishing additional Mexican wolf populations, one of which is already called for in the 1982 Mexican Wolf Recovery Plan and more of which will likely be required in a future revision of that plan.

The Conservation Alternative should include the following provisions:

1) Allow release of wolves from the captive breeding population directly into New Mexico. This is particularly important to enable the Fish and Wildlife Service to release genetically valuable animals into areas in which no wolf packs have established territories.
2) Allow wolves to roam freely outside the boundaries of the Blue Range Wolf Recovery Area and not be geographically constrained by any other politically derived restrictions - just as other endangered species are allowed free movement.

3) Require livestock owners using public lands to remove or render inedible the carcasses of non-wolf-killed stock so as to prevent wolves from being attracted to areas where domestic animals are vulnerable and habituating to preying on stock. This could be accomplished, at least in part, by holding blameless for subsequent depredations any wolf that has scavenged on dead livestock - and protecting such wolves from any governmental or private "take" or predator control.
4) Authorize release of wolves into the White Sands Wolf Recovery Area, which is just a few dozen miles to the east of the Blue Range Wolf Recovery Area. White Sands has already been analyzed for its suitability for wolves and could serve as a home for genetically valuable wolves that might not otherwise be released. White Sands has only been found "unsuitable" if wolves are required to stay within its boundaries, but as part of a population that interacts with wolves in the Gila, it would serve an important role.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Saskia Baur
1925 46th Avenue #139
Capitola, California 95010

How to Submit Comments

Written comments accompanied by name and address will become part of the formal record of the scoping process. While you may provide your ideas verbally during the meeting, we want to make sure your input is formally captured in your own words. You may submit written comments in three ways:

- Fill out the comment portion of this brochure and leave it in the drop box
- Take the brochure with you and return it by mail
- Provide comments via e-mail. For your convenience, you can do that here at the computer station, or visit www.mexicanwolfeis.org
- Faxed comments may be sent to (505) 346-2542

Please note: In order to be considered part of the formal record, your comments must include your name and address. Comments may be submitted through December 31, 2007.

Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment--including your personal information--may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

Comments:

We are against expanding boundrys for Wolfs.

There is no need for more wolves. It is a waste of time & money for the DOW.

Wolves kill livestock & dogs & cats. Children are not safe when hiking in the woods.

Please do not extend their boundy's.

Name: Harley & Norma Gressley

Street: 30135 CR 5.6

City, State, Zip: Dolores Co 81323

Tape closed with address on outside, and add a stamp.

DO NOT STAPLE
Thank you for your input!

I too live "on the land" - an 80 Acre plot saved from the tractors of farmers because of the rocky outcroppings surrounding deep canyons, cutting the Colo. Plateau in S.W. Colorado. This place, like all the surrounding properties encompassing canyons and their riparian corridors, has been decimated by livestock grazing. Following our first visit to the property, we threw out our cheat grass & thistle seed filled socks. It's taken 12 yrs. to eradicate and control the noxious weeds, shrubs & trees that overlook the native vegetation; mowed down by cows. Mountain lion & coyote are still trapped here, by ranchers protecting their herds.

Meanwhile complaints against rodent & prairie dog infestations continue & especially from the mouths of "old timers." The west has been ruled by ranchers too long. It should be obvious even to the dimmest wit that this environment in the west cannot support the livestock inflicted upon it.

Wolves are native, they're predators and the Endangered Species Act is law. Please stop the intimidation inflicted by Cabron Cnty. ranchers. They live on this planet with the rest of us and are obeying our rights. Please enforce the law according to the science & regulations supporting healthy wolf recovery.

Sincerely
Betty Ann Kolner
10592 Rd. BB
P.V., Co 81331

6620 E. Mississippi #4
Denver, CO 80224
December 24, 2007

Brian Millsap
USFWS New Mexico Ecological Services Field Office
Albuquerque, NM 87113

Dear Mr Millsap:

I am writing to ask that you act to follow the intent of the 1982 Wolf Recovery plan whatever the current political climate of the immediate area encompassing the wolves current habitat, the vast majority of people in the United States have consistently said that they want the wolves back.

The area that you manage is an ecological treasure house - lets keep the wolves in the area, in fact, lets work to increase their population.

Sincerely,
Janice M. Zindel

"Todd Hilson"
<todd@thhilson.com>
11/04/2007 10:08 PM

To <R2FWE_AL@fws.gov>
cc
bcc
Subject Attn: Mexican Gray Wolf NEPA Scoping

As an interested party of endangered species, in general, and the Mexican Gray Wolf, in particular, I would like to extend my approval for most of the proposed issues suggested in the amendment. I am in full agreement with issues: a, b, c and f. However, I disagree with the Fish & Wildlife's suggestions for issues d and e, as I believe these suggestions will result in the injury and/or death of increasing numbers of wolves. If additional harassment methods and the authority to "take" wolves are granted to private citizens, this will prove to be detrimental to the endangered wolf population. Better suggestions might be to provide additional training for the public (e.g. public service announcements, etc.) and to post additional warning signs throughout the BRWRA, where the majority of conflicts will arise. As long as private citizens have been educated and warned about the potential conflicts the Mexican Gray Wolves pose, it is their responsibility to avoid engaging in behavior that might attract these animals to encroach on their private land. In other words, if you own a domestic dog and live near the BRWRA, don't leave your dog unsupervised in your yard. Similarly, if you are a farmer and have livestock near the BRWRA, it is your responsibility to protect your livestock from predation using non-lethal means of deterrence. Farmers located in this area will need to keep a closer watch over their livestock. What is the point of spending all of the time and resources into reintroducing an endangered species if you are going to let a private citizen or farmer kill the endangered species because that animal encroached on their land?... isn't this a violation of the Endangered Species Act?
Sincerely,

Todd H. Hilson
1N119 Wheatberry Drive
Carol Stream, IL 60188
todd@thhilson.com

Kitlyn Rescinito
2865 Lincoln Park Drive , Galesburg, Illinois 61401

December 28, 2007 04:56 PM

Dr. Brian Millsap, State Administrator, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
NM

Subject: Attn: Mexican Gray Wolf NEPA Scoping

Dear Dr. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service,

The opportunity to comment on the rule-change for managing reintroduced Mexican gray wolves comes not a moment too soon. Fish and Wildlife Service management, with its heavy reliance on predator control targeting the wolves, has suppressed the wolf population and contributed to inbreeding. The solution must comply with the conservation mandate of the Endangered Species Act and not allow loss of wolves - from any and all sources, including government take and illegal poaching - to keep the population from rapid growth and genetic rescue.

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Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Kitlyn Rescinito
2865 Lincoln Park Drive
Galesburg, Illinois 61401

US Fish and Wildlife Service

NMESFO

2105 Osuna NE

Albuquerque, NM 87113

12-27-07

Re: New Mexico Wolf Mgt Public Comment

Dear Officials:

The Subject of New Mexican Wolf management is an emotional one.However the solution must be logical. As former residents we want to say this- The amazing miracle in Yellowstone where wolves have been allowed to become integral once again shows nature/Creation will balance itself without the hand of man interfering.

Wolves keep balance for the herbivores and a healthy ecosystem. They were designed for that.

Our piublic comment is that the New Mexico wolf should be allowed 10 years' freedom in the Gila Wilderness area or one like to it . With a "no bait law" in effect to prevent luring the wolves outside the wilderness area(s). Should there be verified , non manipulated/ non - staged "cattle/livestock kills" outside the designated areas/park (provided there is ***no grazing up next to the park boundaries***) then there should be fair compensation made at the market rate of beef on the hoof.

Wolves were here before the white man. They should be allowed a small part of their ancestral home once more to be free in. Give them 10 years , then re- evaluate. That is wisdom , and humility.We are praying.

Sincerely, Rev. Marc + Leslie

Reverend Marc and Leslie Beauchamp

123 N. Spring ST, Geneseo, Il 61254

(formerly residents at 909 No. Butler, Farmington, NM)

8014 Sedgewick Place
Fort Wayne, IN
46835

Brian Millsap
State Administrator, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
New Mexico Ecological Services Field Office
2105 Osuna NE
Albuquerque, NM 87113

Dear Mr. Millsap:

Please accept the following as my formal comments in regards to each of the proposed amendment to the rulemaking as published on August 7, 2007 [1], followed by a set of my own proposals and recommendations. I am a biologist who worked for 5 months this year as a volunteer wildlife technician on the Mexican Gray Wolf Interagency Field Team (hereafter "IFT"), so I feel that I can provide a fairly realistic perspective drawn from on-the-ground experiences I had with the Recovery Project. Where possible, I will endeavor to provide specific, on the ground examples, evidence, and references to claims made; however, some data are deficient, "classified", or unfeasibly obtainable by me or by the IFT.

When the Mexican Gray Wolf Recovery Program (hereafter referred to as "project") was formerly finalized, projections of a wild population of gray wolves numbering approximately 102 individuals by 2006 were idealized[2]. Clearly, the project has fallen far short of maintaining a population of this size for various reasons. Just as, if not more importantly, the project has failed to develop a productive and viable relationship with many of the most significantly impacted stakeholders in the project area. If and when management of the Mexican gray wolf population in Arizona and New Mexico is handed over to the states, a healthy relationship with those stakeholders living and working within the wolves' range is essential to the long-term success of the project.

These are abrasive criticisms no doubt, but are shared by many. However, hope exists in most of the proposed amendments to the rulemaking that are in scoping now. The amendments are not perfect, nor do they address all of the critical issues that need to be tackled to realize the goals of the recovery project; several of them could even harm the project or further degrade project relations with the public. But overwhelmingly, most of these amendments can provide an overhaul needed to realize success for the gray wolf in the southwest.

PART I

Comments on "Issues Related to the Scope of the NEP" [from Federal Register Vol. 72, No. 151, 8/7/2007, pgs. 44065-44069][1]

Issues (a)-(c):

(a) Mexican gray wolves have repeatedly demonstrated the ability to successfully establish themselves outside of the BRWRA (for example, the San Mateo, Nantac, and Frisco packs). These packs did so with little or no human impacts and even produced successful pups. Where prey, suitable denning sites, and little or no opportunity for human persecution exist, wolves will thrive. The recovery project is in critical need of much larger landscapes possessing these three criteria—areas contained within the MWEPA. Removing wolves that do range outside of the imaginary lines of the BRWRA only impedes the recovery process and places unnecessary stress on the IFT (example: the Frisco and San Mateo pack relocation and removal incidents). **The recovery area should be expanded to encompass the entire MWEPA; wolves should not be removed, hazed from, or relocated after establishing home ranges within the greater MWEPA (unless unusual circumstances merit these actions). Additionally, as will be illustrated below, initial releases should be allowed over the entirety of the MWEPA to increase genetic robustness and viability and improve the chances for persistence of the wolf population.**

(b) Mexican wolf recovery has been significantly impeded by the prohibition on initial releases in the secondary recovery zone. Constraints on genetic diversity, possible inbreeding depression, wolf removals, and public distrust of and misconceptions about the project have all been exacerbated by the release limitations placed on the secondary recovery zone[1,2,3].

The secondary recovery zone provides as suitable and, in many cases, more suitable habitat for Mexican gray wolves than the primary recovery zone[2]. Furthermore, Fredrickson et al. highlight the vital importance to genetic stability that cross-breeding between Mexican wolf lineages produces; this stability can be achieved by allowing initial releases into the secondary recovery zone and the greater MWEPA, and by allowing wolves to range throughout the secondary and MWEPA zones[2]. Additionally, releasing more naïve wolves and fewer translocations from Arizona into the secondary recovery zone and MWEPA may very well dispel the misconceptions about these animals prevalent among many in the secondary zone.

In summary, the prohibition on initial releases into the secondary recovery zone should be lifted. Initial releases and translocations should also be permitted within suitable areas in the greater MWEPA. The project should aid in completion of continuing studies and initiate new studies, where needed, of areas within the secondary zone and MWEPA to consider for initial releases.

(c) The White Sands Missile Range should be removed from the project as a recovery area as it provides limited biological value to the Mexican gray wolf and restricted logistical feasibility (e.g., distance from the IFT; conflicts with the Department of Defense; low and/or endangered prey base).

Issues (d)-(e):

Current harassment processes are adequate for dealing with nuisance and depredation behaviors. Increased lenience for harassment could build trust in the project among a few (ranchers, some rural residents) and potentially decrease nuisance behavior. However, allowing more serious harassment actions, or take, by the public without simultaneously increasing wolf release numbers and decreasing removal frequency will likely impede wolf recovery and anger many people ("serious harassment actions" mean allowing individuals to throw objects or discharge conventional or less-than-lethal projectile weapons at wolves, or to otherwise attempt actions that could injure wolves, during interaction incidents already defined on the official Project handouts).

Serious and direct harassment can kill a wolf or permanently injure it, removing it from effective pack participation and disrupting pack dynamics. Finally, the wolf-dog interactions that have been documented have resulted in due compensation by Defenders of Wildlife; few dogs have been killed by wolves. **Therefore, unless wild Mexican wolf numbers are somehow dramatically increased, no changes should be made to the current harassment or take policies.**

Issue (f):

I believe the current definition of "breeding pair" to be arbitrary and unacceptable. Just because a male and female wolf did not successfully produce a litter or pups does not therefore mean they were or will not be "breeding". Through the use of radio-telemetry, aerial and ground observations, and best available data, the IFT can determine if a pair of wolves is a potential "'breeding pair". **That is, if a male and female wolf are known to be associated in time and space for a significant amount of time, especially during winter pre-breeding and subsequently thereafter, they should be considered a "breeding pair".**

As for the definitions (and therefore management implications) of "depredation incident" and "threshold for permanent removal", these are currently impeding project success and are addressed in my further comments section **below**.

Issue g

The Center for Biological Diversity's 2004 petition contains important recommendations for the project to consider. Two of these have been considered in issues (a) and (b). The third was not, and should be. I address it **below**. It should be

noted that the Rulemaking does not state what parts of or how to consider the Center's petition, creating confusion for the public commenter.

PART II: Additional Issues that Need to be Added to the DRAFT EIS for Consideration

1. Education and Community Outreach

Significant benefits to wolf recovery could be realized by a concerted effort by the project to reach out more to affected parties with an educational intent. Realistically, the project will never succeed without improved community knowledge about and acceptance of wolves: if and when a viable population is finally established and the agencies scale back their management activity, wolves will be at great risk if they are not well-understood by those who share the landscape with them.

As I worked at the IFT this year, I became aware that the IFT's public relations officer spent the majority of her time dealing with ranchers-whether or not there were wolf problems to discuss. **It is essential to direct the public relations members on the project, both at the IFT and within the broader agencies involved, towards a more educational approach aimed at dispelling myths about the Mexican gray wolf and teaching all ages about the wolf's biology and importance on the landscape. This approach must be applied in the rural communities closest to and potentially most affected by wolf recovery.** If people in wolf country are more knowledgeable about wolves and the project protocols, response to nuisance behavior and depredations will become more manageable and productive.

2. The Particulars of Controlling Wolves That Have Depredated upon Livestock

Mexican wolf recovery is and always has been a controversial issue replete with contradicting ideas of what recovery is and how it should be accomplished. However, most anyone would agree that the first step to establishing a viable, lasting population of a wildlife species is to introduce more individuals than you lose to natural and/or management causes. Indeed, the wild Mexican gray wolf population in the recovery area grew steadily through 2003, yet diminished for 2004-2005 until its all time maximum in January of 2007 [4]. This record high, however, was quickly eroded over the year through a combination of illegal shootings and lethal removals and captures related to livestock depredation incidents[5].

One may hypothesize that the Mexican wolf population will continue to grow in the same haphazard manner that it has since the project's inception. However, it may take many more costly, stressful years to achieve a management goal anywhere near 102 healthy, genetically distinct individuals in the wild that can be turned over to the states' exclusive management. To speed up the project, save money and effort, and to assuage and possibly avoid further lawsuits and overall distrust of the project, it is critical to consider the following issues in the **DRAFT EIS**:

- **"3 Strikes in 365"[6]:** Removing wolves that have depredated 3 times (or sometimes less) within a 365 day period is a great detriment to wolf recovery; more wolves are permanently removed for this reason than for any other[3]. Depredating wolves are only following their natural instincts by killing cattle. Often, wolves are removed after a string of related depredation incidents occurring over a short period of time; the wolves barely have a chance their first days on the ground. It has not been shown that wolves with depredation histories will necessarily do so again. However, it has been shown that hazing problem wolves and/or removing certain individuals that are likely causing the depredations can alleviate the problem[7a/b]. Therefore, it is vital to allow more time for the IFT to attempt hazing and/or relocation of the cattle or wolves in question. **Depredation incidents occurring over a relatively short time period and within a small geographic area should be treated as one incident, allowing the IFT more time to correct the issue. Additionally, the time period after which a wolf or wolves that accumulated depredation strikes is again treated as a "new wolf/s" with no strikes should be halved to 180 days.**

  This basic concept of allowing more time for the IFT to alleviate a negative situation, regardless of the # of strikes accumulated by a wolf or pack during a short time span, should be applied to nuisance incidents as well.

- **Leave breeding females alone even if they have depredated upon cattle 3 or more times.** Removing breeding females inflicts a costly toll on pup survival (for example, the Hon-dah Pack incidents of 2006). Allowing pups to be wild-raised by their mothers in their natural setting free of any human intervention is essential to ensuring pup survival and development and, hence, establishing a healthy wolf population. If necessary, the female can be removed after the pups have grown mature enough to join the traveling pack or be relocated to a captive facility.

- **Wolves depredating on livestock not legally present should be granted amnesty from the "3 strikes" process.** Legal occupancy is a term of business that all livestock operators must obey when grazing animals on public land; wolves should not be sentenced for killing these illegally present animals.

- **Develop a new regulation within the FEIS that addresses the issue of wolves drawn into depredation incidents by improperly disposed-of livestock carcasses on public land–from issue (g).** The "Mexican Wolf Recovery: Three Year Review and Assessment" states:

  At least 3 packs were removed from the wild because they scavenged on dead livestock left on national forest lands. Such scavenging may predispose wolves to

eventually prey on livestock. Accordingly, reducing the wolves' access to carcasses will greatly facilitate coexistence between ranchers and wolves in this portion of the recovery area carcasses.

While some predation on livestock is inevitable, reasonable means of reducing the frequency of occurrence will enhance wolf recovery so that is respectful of the needs and concerns of livestock producers. Consequently, livestock producers using public land in occupied Mexican wolf range should be required to exercise reasonable diligence in finding livestock that have died to either dispose of the carcass or enable the Service to do so. Such diligence will probably reduce predation on livestock, which in turn will improve the cost-effectiveness and certainty of the reintroduction project[8]

Several other biologists have also recommended these changes[9, 10]. Clearly, properly removing livestock carcasses from public lands could reduce the number of livestock depredation incidents and thus the number of wolves removed. Proper disposal may be a point of debate, but would probably include the use of lime, burning carcasses, or the physical removal of carcasses from public land.

A new regulation consideration should:

1st, place the burden of properly disposing of livestock carcasses upon the livestock operator; livestock operators unable or unwilling to dispose of a carcass properly should be required to notify the IFT immediately so it can note the location and time and respond accordingly by either removing the carcass or by exonerating area packs from any subsequent depredations and,

2nd, remove from culpability wolves that have depredated upon livestock after being drawn to the livestock by an improperly disposed-of carcass.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate the promise inherent in the porposed amendments to the Mexican wolf recovery program. However, these amendments alone will not spell success for the Mexican wolf, nor help in any significant way to alleviate tension amongst involved parties. Please add to the DRAFT EIS the additional recommendations I have included to allow the public a chance to provide input on these important issues. Thank you again for taking and considering my comments.

Sincerely,

Andrew M. Bennett

Literature Cited

1. Federal Register Vol. 72 No. 151, 50 CFR Part 17; RIN 1018 AV40. "Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Notice of Scoping Meetings and Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement and Socio-Economic Assessment for the Proposed Amendment of the Rule Establishing a Nonessential Experimental Population of the Arizona and New Mexico Population of the Gray Wolf (Mexican Gray Wolf)"

2. Hedrick PW, Fredrickson RJ (2007) Captive breeding and the reintroduction of Mexican and red wolves. *Molecular Ecology* 17, 344-350.

3. Povilitis A, Parsons DR, Robinson MJ, Becker CD (2006) The bureaucratically imperiled Mexican gray wolf. *Conservation Biology* 20, 942-945.

2. Table 1. Minimum population count and number of breeding pairs of Mexican wolves within the Blue Range Wolf Recovery Area, compared to projections in the 1996 Final Environmental Impact Statement, 1998 to 2006. Source: Mexican Gray Wolf Recovery Project Official Website < http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/mexicanwolf/>; accessed December 18, 2007.

5. Official monthly updates (October 2006-October 2007) from the Mexican gray wolf recovery program website.

6. Standard Operating Procedure 13.0: "Control of Mexican Wolves.Final.20051010.doc Adaptive Management Oversight Committee, 2005.

7. a: Mexican Wolf Recovery Program Progress Report #8 (January 1-December 31 2005). Prepared by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
b: Mexican Wolf Blue Range Reintroduction Project IFT Annual Report for 2006 Prepared by the AGFD, WMAT, and USAPHIS.

8. Paquet PC, Vucetich JA, Phillips MK (2001) Mexican Wolf Recovery: Three Year review and assessment. Prepared by the Conseration Breeding Specialists Group for the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, 86 pp.

9. Vucetich JA (2006) A statement about recent developments concerning Mexican gray wolf recovery; 11 December 2006. from http://centerforbiologicaldiversity.org, accessed November 29, 2007.

10. Parsons DR (2006) Statement of David R. Parsons, retired Mexican wolf recovery coordinator (1991-1999) December 12, 2006, from http://centerforbiologicaldiversity.org, accessed November 29, 2007.

RECEIVED
DEC 9 8 2007
USFWS-NMESFO

Jose Carmona
2120 Old Daytona Rd., Port Orange, Florida 32128

December 28, 2007 05:11 PM

Dr. Brian Millsap, State Administrator, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
NM

Subject: Mexican Gray Wolf NEPA Scoping

Dear Dr. Millsap and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service,

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Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jose Carmona
2120 Old Daytona Rd.
Port Orange, Florida 32128

Geri Vistein
16 Bayview Street
Belfast, Maine 04915

December 4, 2007

To U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:

I am writing this letter to express my deep concern for the endangered Mexican wolves. I am a wildlife biologist and I have lived and worked in Montana where issues regarding the endangered wolves in the Northern Rockies continue to be contentious. Here in Maine where I reside now, I practice as a conservation biologist focusing on the return of our endangered carnivore population in the Northeast, and the protection of those already present. I collaborate with Federal, State, and University biologists, developing projects that engage the community of people here in Maine regarding carnivores. The following are my comments regarding the treatment of the Mexican wolves and suggestions for change.

The intervention into the natural processes of wolf ecology that have been taking place since the first wolves were released is not in keeping with the constructs of the Endangered Species Act and have no basis in sound science. Wolf ecology has by no means been the basis of wolf management activities. I gravely disagree with the PREDATOR CONTROL practiced against these endangered wolves. It is of utmost importance that these wolves have the opportunity to build strong packs with a solid social order including time to teach the pups and establish territories. Every time an alpha male or female is killed for "control" purposes, the pack is thrown into confusion and loss. The pack is weakened and the potential for cohesive hunting of wild prey is greatly disturbed. ..thus setting up a very real potential scenario of livestock predation.

I completely disagree with Benjamin Tuggle who made the decision to trap Wolf AM 863 (alpha male) and F 1046, and stated that it was "in the interest of the overall reintroduction efforts". How was this action in the best interest of these wolves? His suggestion that killing the alpha male would lead to the fact that the alpha female and her pups (who have no experience in hunting) will return to feeding on wildlife is pure speculation...speculation with no basis in solid science. Scientific wisdom would speculate the opposite.

I disagree with the concept that populations are important and individuals do not matter. Individuals are important...each brings unique genetics, behavior and personality to the pack, thus making it strong and supporting its survival. Future management practices should keep wolf packs intact and the leaders alive. The trapping and killing of these wolves and sending them back to captivity must stop!

When making decisions regarding wolf/human interface, you cannot place all the contraints upon the wolves. Aldo Leopold said, "We are one organism on the land." Therefore, ranchers need to understand that for them to live with wolves, they must actively participate in responsible husbandry and good stewardship of the land. This is not just something that should just be encouraged. It must be expected, it must be required. When ranchers participate in this process, they will find themselves surprisingly more empowered and seeking means of non-lethal protection for their domestic animals. Using lethal means dis-empowers ranchers and destroys wolf populations.

Another vital aspect of wolf ecology is that of dispersal. Wolves need to disperse, often traveling long distances to find their own territory. The current management practice of removing any wolves who attempt to create home ranges outside the Blue Range Wolf Recovery Area and re-releasing them back into the BRWR or into captivity, is both ecologically in contradiction of what a wolf is about, and what the Endangered Species Act mandates. Nowhere else in the lower 48 where wolves are recovering is such an odious practice occurring. It is time to end these POLITICAL constraints that are in direct contradiction to the ecology of wolves and their successful recovery.

Another POLITICAL management practice that is in direct contradiction to the science of wolf ecology is the mandate to release wolves only in the primary recovery zone of the BRWR, which already supports resident wolves. Instead, release wolves in several already known excellent sites in the Gila National Forest, which contains 700,000 acres that are roadless and free of livestock.

Finally, continued removal of wolves from private land where there is no conflict only creates an atmosphere of separation ...of a zoo-like attitude...an attitude of control. Instead, encourage and support private landowners who are good stewards.

Sociologically, the Recovery Team needs to be fully engaged with highly qualified individuals to work as team leaders in the human/wolf relationship. Collaboration on all fronts need to be encouraged: scientists need to learn from the expertise of the sociologists, native Americans, non-profit organizations, local governments and local businesses, private landowners, and universities.

Ranchers need to understand that they are part of the land and that they need to be responsible for what happens to the livestock. For example, when a cow dies on public land, the land owner must be responsible for removing it. However, wolves are a new predator for these private landowners and FEAR runs high. The recovery team must be out there on the land to teach and guide landowners in non-lethal protection. All the federal money being spent on predator control should instead be directed to assisting and supporting private landowners. The wolf recovery team needs to be out on the land in a pro-active manner...not a reactive one...one that entails killing.

In conclusion, the ultimate factor that caused the near extermination of the Mexican wolf was human attitudes ...and the ultimate factor that will determine the healthy, vital lives of wolves into the future ...is human attitudes. Don't look the other way! Stretch your professionalism and science into the future. Einstein once said, "You cannot solve a problem by thinking in the same way that caused the problem in the first place." STOP THINKING CONTROL...STOP THINKING KILL. Rise above old politics and the violence of control and move into a time of honoring our wildlife and their rightful place on the land.

Respectfully,

Geri Vistein

Geri Vistein

December 7, 2009

To the Mexican Wolf Recovery Coordinator,

I am writing you to express my concern about the plight of the Mexican gray wolf.

SOP 13 (Standard Operating Procedure 13.0) is negatively impacting the wild and reintroduced Mexican gray wolves.

I am requesting a moratorium on the implementation of SOP 13 until the scientists' recommendations are incorporated into an updated wolf Recovery Plan.

Sincerely,

Melody Baime
27 Oak Park Drive
St. Louis, Missouri 63141

Mrs. Gano Stilwell
9287 Cinnabar Dr
Saint Louis MO 63126-3301

12-9-07

Fish + Wildlife Service
2105 Osuna Rd. NE
Albuquerque, NM 87113

Dear Sir:

I am begging you to reassemble the Mexican wolves recovery team & place a moratorium on the implementation of SOP 13 until the scientists' recommendations are incorporated into an updated wolf recovery plan. Please do not be swayed by the vocal minority of wolf haters.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Joyce Stilwell

31 December 2007

Mrs. Cynthia Pitsinger
999 Mulberry Lane
Barnhart, MO 63012-2015

John Morgart
Mexican Wolf Recovery Coordinator
New Mexico Ecological Services Field Office
2105 Osuna Road NE
Albuquerque, NM 87113

Dear Mr. Morgart:

I have long been a proponent of endangered species recovery – particularly that of the Mexican gray wolf *Canis lupus baileyi*. As a founder of the Wild Canid Center and member of the original Mexican Wolf Management Group under Norma Ames of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, I have worked for many years to see the sound application of science and the Endangered Species Act to the successful recovery of this species in the Southwest.

I wish to add my voice yet again to those requesting that this species be soundly supported by the federal government using science to recover it in an expedited manner.

I would urge that the recovery team be reassembled. Endangered species recovery is a federally mandated process. I agree that states should be brought along to be able to manage recovery once the species is down listed but ultimately all decisions must rest in federal hands until that recovery is achieved. We should not "adaptively manage" this species to extinction in the wild yet again. I firmly believe in compromise but, in my opinion, politics has been driving decisions regarding the wolves in the field more than science has. It is time for the federal government to again take the lead in this program.

The wolf recovery plan needs to be updated in an expedited manner. Until that time, SOP 13 needs to be put aside or frozen with a moratorium. Haphazard application of "any" wolf removal is doing nothing to appease the vocal few nor is it lending itself to curtailing depredation real or perceived. Instead SOP 13 is adding to the instability of the wolf populations and removing genetically valuable individuals to the detriment of the entire species – in the wild and capitivity.

I appreciate this opportunity to speak in favor of the recovery of the most endangered wolf in the world. I wish you all the best in your efforts to make recovery a reality.

Sincerely,

Cynthia Pitsinger

Cynthia Pitsinger

31 December 2007

Nolan B. Pitsinger, M.D.
999 Mulberry Lane
Barnhart, MO 63012-2015

John Morgart
Mexican Wolf Recovery Coordinator
New Mexico Ecological Services Field Office
2105 Osuna Road NE
Albuquerque, NM 87113

Dear Mr. Morgart:

I wish to express my strong support for endangered species recovery – particularly that of the Mexican gray wolf *Canis lupus baileyi.* As a founder of the Wild Canid Center, I have worked for many years to see the sound application of science and the Endangered Species Act to the successful recovery of this species in the Southwest.

As a scientist and a physician, I believe that we all have the most to gain from taking sound science and applying it to the recovery of this species. I am very troubled by some of the reports coming out of the Southwest and feel that the Mexican gray wolf is bearing the brunt of many politically motivated agendas. I want my federal government to step forward in a strong manner to again take control of this recovery effort.

I would urge that the recovery team be reassembled. Endangered species recovery is a federally mandated process. I agree that states should be brought along to be able to manage recovery once the species is down listed but ultimately all decisions must rest in federal hands until that recovery is achieved. We should not "adaptively manage" this species to extinction in the wild yet again.

The wolf recovery plan needs to be updated in an expedited manner. Until that time, a moratorium should be put in effect on SOP 13. Haphazard application of "any" wolf removal is adding to wolf population instability, removing genetically valuable individuals to the detriment of the entire species , and effectively doing nothing to appease the vocal few opposed to the presence of the federal government on federal lands or wolf recovery in general. The recovery team and the recovery plan should address innovative methods to place this species securely back in the wild while working with the local minority but remaining true to the desires of the majority of U.S. citizens who wish the recovery of the Mexican gray wolf to be a reality.

I appreciate this opportunity to speak in favor of the recovery of the most endangered wolf in the world.

Sincerely,

Nolan B. Pitsinger, M.D.

Fish and Wildlife Service
Mexican Wolf Recovery Coordinator
New Mexico Ecological Services Field Office
2105 Osuna Road NE
Albuquerque NM 87113

December 11, 2007

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter in regard to Standard Operating Procedure 13.0 (SOP 13). This guideline is being arbitrarily applied and is resulting in the endangerment of the Mexican wolves.

As it stands now SOP 13 contains no threshold provisions based on population numbers or trends which would trigger a reduction of agency-authorized taking of Mexican wolves. SOP 13 must be revised to achieve new population growth objectives and to bring it into compliance with section 10(j) of the Endangered Species Act.

These wolves are endangered and need more protection not less. Wolves are being killed that are not "problem wolves". The "three strikes and out" rule within a 365-day period is being applied improperly.

This land belongs to all citizens not just the ranchers. They chose to run their cattle on this land if they do not like the wolves on the land they can choose not to run their cattle there.

There should be a reassembling of the recovery team, a moratorium on the implementation of SOP 13 until the scientists' recommendations are incorporated into an updated, comprehensive wolf recovery plan. These wolves should be reintroduced based on science and left in the wild based on science.

Wolves enrich our country and our lives.

Sincerely,

Teresa Wills

Teresa Wills
1316 Woodhill Drive
Lebanon, MO 65536

Conservation
Congress

December 26, 2007

Brian Millsap, State Administrator
US Fish and Wildlife Service
NM Ecological Services Field Office
2105 Osuna NE
Albuquerque, NM 87113

Email: R2FWE--AL@fws.gov (incorrect address in Fed. Reg.)

Dear Mr. Millsap:

The Conservation Congress (CC) appreciates the opportunity to provide scoping comments for the proposed DEIS to amend the 1998 final rule that authorized the establishment of a nonessential experimental population of the Mexican gray wolf (MGW) in Arizona and New Mexico.

It is clear an amendment is needed considering after 10 years the program is by any measurement an abysmal failure. A reasonable goal of 100 wolves was initially established yet 10 years later there are only 59 wolves and 3 breeding pairs. We believe a major obstacle to recovery is the designation of the MGW as a nonessential experimental population. This designation gives far too much leniency in managing the population. Ranchers have been catered to despite their irresponsible management of leaving livestock carcasses available for scavenging. We support making the MGW population an essential non-experimental one with full protection under the ESA.

Regarding the "Issues Related to the Scope of the NEP" identified in the Federal Register Notice – in general:

(a) We support allowing wolves to establish territories outside the boundaries of the BRWRA.
(b) We support the FWS releasing MGW from the captive breeding population into NM *as long as they are genetically pure.*
(c) We agree the White Sands Wolf Recovery Area is not of sufficient size nor does it have sufficient prey density to function as an independent recovery area.

PO Box 5
Lewistown, MT 59457
406-538-4220

(d) We do not support the general public having the authority to lethally control the MGW. We believe if the general public and livestock ranchers in particular, took responsibility for their actions there would be little if any need for lethal control. We absolutely do not support aerial gunning as a lethal control tool, nor do we support poisoning.
(e) We do not support 'take' authority for private individuals whose dogs have been attacked or killed by wolves. Again, if individuals took responsibility for their dogs there shouldn't be a problem with wolf depredation.
(f) The FWS should insist that livestock ranchers dispose of livestock carcasses immediately. This should have been a requirement in the 1998 final rule. Ranchers have no right to complain about wolf depredation when they leave dead livestock carcasses lying around.

The CC fully supports the provisions in the ESA under Sections 9 and 7 and they should be enforced in their entirety without the exceptions provided under section 10(j) that inhibit the FWS ability to recover the MGW. The MGW is a native species whereas livestock are not. The CC does not support public lands grazing that is basically a welfare program that provides advantages to public land ranchers at tax payer expense. We believe this issue should be included in the socio-economic analysis because it is one of the greatest obstacles to achieving MGW recovery.

We also believe the socio-economic analysis should look at the benefits of recovery of the MGW including Aspen and Cottonwood restoration that are depleted by ungulates both wild and domestic in meadows and river corridors; increased tourism; and the benefits to MGW and tax payers of retiring livestock grazing allotments on public lands.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide scoping comments and please keep the Conservation Congress on the mailing list for the DEIS.

Sincerely,

Denise Boggs

Denise Boggs,
Executive Director

PO Box 5
Lewistown, MT 59457
406-538-4220

December 21, 2007

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Southwest Regional Office
500 Gold Avenue SW
Albuquerque, NM 87102

RE: Mexican Gray Wolf NEPA Scoping

As a supporter of scientifically sound wildlife management who understands the value wolves can bring to ecosystems, I am writing to urgently ask you to take a more balanced approach to Mexican wolf recovery efforts in the Southwest.

After ten years of reintroduction efforts, there are fewer than 60 wolves in the wild lands of the Southwest, more than 40 short of the reintroduction goal of establishing 102 wolves in the wild by 2006.

Mexican wolves are one of the most endangered animals in the world and play an important role in restoring balance to Southwest forests. But despite these facts, the Service hasn't made much progress in restoring them.

There are millions of acres of public land in the Southwest where wolves could thrive, but Mexican wolves continue to be confined to a much smaller, politically defined recovery area. These wolves are routinely shot or returned to captivity for killing livestock by federal agents, or illegally killed by poachers.

The rules as they stand do not live up to the promise of the Endangered Species Act.

I deeply admire and respect America's wildlife and I am ask you to make the following changes in the reintroduction rule:

- Uplist the Mexican wolf to Experimental Essential status. This will preserve the management flexibility of the rule, but require that other agencies consult about impacts on wolves.
- Allow the wolves to disperse beyond the recovery area, and to be released where biologists say is best.
- Do not limit wolf numbers, or allow any new reasons to kill them and ensure that any authorized removals take into account individual wolves' genetic value, the size and health of the population, the number of breeding pairs, and whether progress toward recovery is being made.

I am confident that if you make all of these changes, the Mexican gray wolf recovery program will get back on track and these wolves will have a real chance at recovery in the wild lands of the Southwest.

A few weeks back, federal officials captured key members of the genetically-valuable Aspen pack and returned them to captivity. Three members of the Durango pack that disappeared under mysterious circumstances, remain missing.

Please stop removing wolves until the population has a chance to stabilize. Please work with state officials to ensure that wolves have access to enough territory to flourish in the wild.

Thank you for your help on behalf of America's wolves.

Respectfully,
J. Capozzelli 315 West 90th Street New York, NY 10024

Dec. 15, 2007

Fish and Wildlife Service
Mexican Wolf Recovery Coordinator

I am concerned for the Endangered Mexican Wolf Recovery Program.
I urge for the reassembling of the recovery team, a moratorium on the implementation of SOP13 until the scientists' recommendations are incorporated into an updated wolf recovery plan
I urge for the science of reintroduction.
Let us have a future for the wolves in the wild of Arizona and New Mexico.

Sincerely,
Roberto A. Nobes
22 Antoinette Dr.
Rochester, N.Y. 1462

RECEIVED

DEC 1 2 2007

USFWS-NMESFO

Dear Bill milsAp,

please save the wolvos
And dont kill them.
And other Animals., espically
the wolvos,, skay wolvs
IN New mexico And
And arizona, theese
creature of wild are
dear to me And others
to enjoy And Hear., I
know from my sister
you is ski alliance
programer, that
the ranchers are
angers And want to
kill them for killing
their livestock, sorry
I canet not come
to the meeting for
I am up north, Please protect
the wolves,

Sincerely yours

Bernadette Przybyl
55 Alder Place
Kenmore NY
14223
(716) 876-6455

17

12.08.01

RECEIVED
DEC 11 2001
USFWS-NMESFO

Dear Mr. Millsap

Re changes to the Final Rule — Mexican Gray Wolf - Really them!) - Make it Positive, Productive & meaningful!

Lia Garvey
29 S. 24th
Clinton, OK
73601

It's inappropriate (highly) to have them stay within the Blue Range - when it's natural for them to spread to good habitat beyond. Relocating, capture (captivity) & killing is unacceptable. New Rules need to require ranchers using Public lands to remove livestock carcasses (better yet - get them off Public lands - wasting our tax $ & killing the land/waters/predators). We have to live with wolves. They are vital to ecosystem balance. After 10 yrs. & a stagnant - highly stressed pitiful 60 wolves (dismally) - current Rules have disgustingly failed - are not working.

Expanding wolf populations to healthy, sustainable levels require new approach that respects them and demands a change in ignorant human (mis) behavior.

Do your job! Protect Our Public lands, waters & wildlife!

Your attention to this most urgent matter would be much appreciated by all present & future generations of all species.

Thank you

Let our relatives howl again - it will be our gain

CAT CLINIC AND HOSPITAL

ROBERT BEBKO, VMD.
5170 LIBERTY AVE.
PITTSBURGH, PA 15224
681-1122

December 12, 2007

To whom it may concern,

I am asking for a moratorium on the implementation of SOP 13 until the scientists recommendations are incorporated into an updated wolf recovery plan.

Thank You

Dr. Robert Bebko

December 17, 2007

U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Attn.: Wolf Program
New Mexico Ecological Field Office
2105 Osuna NE
Albuquerque, NM 87113

SUBJECT: REINTRODUCTION OF THE MEXICAN GRAY WOLF

Years ago, wolves were nearly extirpated by federally-funded programs which benefited ranchers. Today, we realize the value of a natural balance in ecosystems everywhere.

About ten years ago, an attempt was made to reintroduce the Mexican grey wolf in the western U.S. The reintroduction plan was confined to the "Blue Range Wolf Recovery Area". However, wolf restoration was blocked by the rancher community which urged the USF&W Service to ignore the Endangered Species Act.

Indeed, ranchers pay grazing fees to use public lands, but this does not legally give ranchers total ownership rights to those public lands. In addition, ranchers who lose cattle to wolf packs are compensated by the organization Defenders of Wildlife.

I urge the USF&W Service to restore the wolf to the wild areas of the west.

Sincerely,

Kenneth S. Warren

Kenneth S. Warren

105 Evans Lane
Oak Ridge, Tennessee 37830

Wineglass Ranch

Bobby & Pat Jones
P.O. Box 599
Dell City, TX 79837

505-963-2314 – Home
505-963-2300 – Fax

TO: Brian Milsap

FAX: 505-346-2542

PHONE:

RE: Mexican Gray Wolf NEPA Scoping

NO. OF PAGES INCLUDING COVER PAGE: 4

MESSAGE:

Hard copy to follow.

Comments submitted on the scoping phase for the proposed expansion of the Mexican Gray Wolf Recovery Area

December 30, 2007

Brian Milsap
State Administrator, US Fish & Wildlife Service
New Mexico Ecological Services Field Office
2105 Osuna, NE
Albuquerque NM 87113 Fax: (505) 346–2542

Dear Mr. Milsap,

First of all, let me state unequivocally that I am against the expansion of the wolf recovery area. I fully support Otero County New Mexico and the ordinance banning the re-introduction of the wolf into the county.

Due to all the myriad problems of habituated wolves and the outright refusal of U.S. Fish and Wildlife personnel to adhere to their own rules, I believe the project to be seriously flawed and all introduced wolves should be confined to the uninhabited portions of the central Gila Wilderness in New Mexico. The wolf re-introduction has not been treated as a 10j experimental non-essential population, to say the least, and has been abusive from the beginning.

The livestock industry has been a major economic factor and extensive tax base for Otero County. Ranching and livestock are a large part of the historic custom and culture of the county and NEPA requires the federal government to help maintain and not destroy customs and cultures of an area with federal actions. Executive Order 13132 requires that the federal government defer to county land use plans when there is one in place. Otero County has an active document and attendant ordinances in place. Another controlling factor to be adhered to is the fact that the Endangered Species Act applies only to the territories, insular possessions and enclaves of the United Sates of America as the Endangered Species Act has not been enacted into positive law (Title 1 Section 204 United States Code). New Mexico has not been in territorial status and U.S. government control since 1912.

Due to the meteoric rise of operating costs in the livestock industry in recent years that has put considerable stress in livestock operations in Otero County, and elsewhere, any increase of depredation on livestock will seriously jeopardize our operations here. Because the expansion of the wolf recovery area is a major federal action, this triggers Executive Order 12630 that requires the federal agencies to do a complete takings assessment and NEPA requires a complete economic impact analysis to be done.

During my attendance of the wolf meeting held in Alamogordo, NM on December 3, 2007, it was readily obvious that the meeting was a complete fraud and farce. A scoping meeting, according to NEPA, is for the express purpose of identifying the parameters of the intended federal action and also identifying any additional associated actions that need to be addressed. There was no open forum for serious questions to be asked and answered for the public record. This flawed process U.S. Fish and Wildlife has engaged in to be called "scoping" is a complete fraud and essentially cuts the public out of the beginning process.

The current criteria that are required to be met before an attack or predation filing can be documented entirely too stringent and burdensome to be of any use for anyone to protect their property or personal safety. This is the reason I believe the wolf should only be in the central Gila Wilderness where there are no livestock or people. Outside this area, any wolves that are a threat to people, pets, or livestock should be eliminated or taken by lethal means if necessary.

The wolf is configured by nature to be a most efficient predator and that is the reason they were hunted and trapped throughout the world in order for people to produce livestock and use their property. It is remarkably transparent that the wolf re-introduction personnel refused to address the dangers wolves pose to people, property, and lively hoods when the U. S. Fish and Wildlife began to expand the recovery ranges of the wolves. Eventually government employees are going to find themselves outside the boundaries of the controlling statutes and regulations. At that time they will lose the umbrella of federal immunity and can be sued individually. USFW has a chance to restructure the wolf program and avoid these legal actions.

It is my understanding that comments which do not address expanding the wolf recovery area will be disregarded as no other alternatives will be addressed. This in itself is a direct violation of the NEPA process and the attendant CEO regulations. All relevant alternatives for or against the expansion of the wolf recovery program must be considered for they alone determine the "scope" of the program in question.

If everyone who thinks and views the wolf as a beautiful cuddly creature has seen the manner in which a wolf (or wolf pack) takes down a large animal suck as an elk, deer or perhaps a cow and does not evince feelings of horror for the suffering and misery prior to death, of the animal attacked, has some part of the human essence for compassion missing. Death is not instantaneous and multiple bites ands slashing of the flesh ensues until the prey weakens to the point of the coup de grace. This torturous activity only ends when the attacker perceives it is safe to close in for the final kill. This may take a number of hours. These tactics by wolves are reason enough not expand the recovery area and create more conflicts with humans or other historic prey animals.

Sincerely,

Bobby Jones

Bobby Jones

cc:

Senator Pete Domenici
Senator Jeff Bingamin
Representative Heather Wilson
Representative Steve Pearce
Representative Tom Udall

How to Submit Comments

Written comments accompanied by name and address will become part of the formal record of the scoping process. While you may provide your ideas verbally during the meeting, we want to make sure your input is formally captured in your own words. You may submit written comments in three ways:

- Fill out the comment portion of this brochure and leave it in the drop box
- Take the brochure with you and return it by mail
- Provide comments via e-mail. For your convenience, you can do that here at the computer station, or visit www.mexicanwolfeis.org
- Faxed comments may be sent to (505) 346-2542

Please note: In order to be considered part of the formal record, your comments must include your name and address. Comments may be submitted through December 31, 2007.

Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment--including your personal information--may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

Comments: TO PROTECT THE MEXICAN WOLF, YOU MOST:

1. INCLUDE A "CONSERVATION ALTERNATIVE" THAT WILL CHANGE THE CLASSIFICATION FROM "EXPERIMENTAL, NONESSENTIAL" TO "EXPERIMENTAL ESSENTIAL" OR endangered TO GIVE WOLVES MORE PROTECTION.

2- ELIMINATE all RESTRICTION TO WOLF dispersal AND MOVEMENTS.

3. EXPAND THE AREA FOR INITIAL RELEASES.

4. PLACE NO CAP ON THE NUMBER OF WOLVES IN THE WILD POPULATION.

5. MAKE RANCHERS THAT USE PUBLIC LANDS, TO CARRY INSURANCE IN CASE THEY LOOSE ANY ANIMALS TO WOLVES OR ANY OTHER PREDATORS. THEY CAN BE COMPENSATED.

RECEIVED
DEC 26 2007
USFWS-NMESFO

Name: Ralph Gomez - Silverman

Street: 2200 N. Yarbrough #14

El Paso, TX. 79925

City, State, Zip: 915-593-7821

Silverman12@earthlink.net

Tape closed with address on outside, and add a stamp.

DO NOT STAPLE
Thank you for your input!

Bob Brister
<bbrister@greens.org>
10/17/2007 07:29 PM

To r2fwe_al@fws.gov
cc
bcc
Subject wolves

Please require ranchers to remove or render inedible dead cattle in wolf territory.
Thank you.
Sincerely,
Bob Brister
1102 S 800 E #A
Salt Lake City, UT 84105

Society for Conservation Biology
The North America Section of a global community of conservation professionals

December 28, 2007

Mr. Brian Millsap
State Administrator
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
New Mexico Ecological Services Field Office
2105 Osuna NE
Albuquerque. NM 87113

Dear Mr. Millsap:

On behalf of the North American Section of the Society for Conservation Biology (SCB), a global society of approximately 14,000 conservation professionals, I am pleased to submit review comments on the *Scope of the Environmental Impact Statement and Socio-Economic Assessment for the Proposed Amendment of the Rule Establishing a Nonessential Experimental Population of the Arizona and New Mexico Population of the Gray Wolf* (72 Fed. Reg. 151: 44065 (7 Aug 2007).

The attached comments were prepared by Drs. C. Carroll, M. K. Phillips, A. Switalski, and J. Vucetich for the North American Section of SCB. The full set of comments was subjected to external peer review and was approved by the Policy Committee of the North American Section (D. DellaSala, Chair), the Policy Committee of SCB Global (L. Boitani, Chair), and the Policy Director of SCB (J. Fitzgerald), as well as myself.

We sincerely hope that our comments will assist the U.S. Fish in Wildlife Service in improving its recovery strategy and meeting its ultimate goal of recovery of the Mexican Gray Wolf. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Reed F. Noss
President, North American Section, SCB

Society for Conservation Biology – North America • 4245 North Fairfax Drive, Suite 400 • Arlington, VA 22203-1651 USA
Phone +1-703-276-2384 • Fax +1-703-995-4633 • info@conbio.org • www.conservationbiology.org

Comments on the Scope

of the

Environmental Impact Statement and Socio-Economic Assessment

for the

Proposed Amendment of the Rule Establishing a

Nonessential Experimental Population of the

Arizona and New Mexico Population of the Gray Wolf

(72 Fed. Reg. 151: 44065 (7 Aug 2007))

Submitted by the Society for Conservation Biology – North America Section Prepared by C. Carroll, M. K. Phillips, A. Switalski, and J. Vucetich

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Society for Conservation Biology (SCB) is an international professional organization dedicated to promoting the scientific study of the phenomena that affect the maintenance, loss, and restoration of biological diversity. Our peer-reviewed journal, Conservation Biology, has published dozens of articles addressing both the Endangered Species Act and wolf restoration in the United States. The SCB is organized into Regional Sections, which represent the continents and ocean. The largest of these

Sections is the North American, representing the United States, Canada, and Greenland. The North American section, through the SCB policy office, provides the following comments on proposed revisions to the policies governing the Mexican Gray Wolf recovery program (50 CFR Part 17, 72 FR 44065) and on the scope of the assessment(s) of the impact of the program, and changes proposed in it. These comments draw upon fundamental principles of conservation biology and specific information on wolf biology as they apply to the scoping process and to potential revisions to the policies governing the Mexican Gray Wolf recovery program[1].

The Mexican Gray Wolf recovery program has not achieved its objective of restoring viable populations of southwestern wolves due to policy guidelines that have lacked a strong basis in wolf biology and related biological principles, imposed counterproductive restrictions on the scope of recovery actions, and failed to include recovery criteria that are consistent with the statute, case law and the spirit and intent of the Endangered Species Act[2]. Current (2006) population levels and number of breeding pairs are significantly below (57% of and 39% of, respectively) those

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[1] See, 50 CFR Part 17, 72 FR 44065

[2] Section 4(f)(1) of the Act has since 1988 required a recovery plan for each listed species (including listed subspecies) that in turn includes site-specific management actions, objective measureable criteria for recovery and delisting, and estimates of the time and cost required to carry out the intermediate steps and to achieve the goal of recovery. Section 4(f)(3) requires the Secretary to report every two years to the authorizing committees of Congress on status of efforts to develop and implement recovery plans for all listed species. Section (h)(4) requires publication of guidelines for developing and implementing recovery plans, which according to paragraph (1)(A) must give priority to species most likely to benefit from them, particularly those in conflict with economic activities. It may be that since these are mandatory duties and since the Secretary's authority to allow regulated and permitted takings is itself subject to certain, duties, findings and conditions specified in the Act, that such takings, and the designation as non-essential itself, should be included in the scoping and assessment process and addressed in a recovery plan.

anticipated in the environmental impact statement for the reintroduction (USFWS 1996). Although the current scoping process relates specifically to revision of the experimental-nonessential population (Endangered Species Act section 10(j)) rule, such revision is inextricably tied to issues regarding the broader direction of the recovery program. In fact, the current rule revision process would more appropriately occur in conjunction with, rather than before, re-initiation of the recovery planning process. In order to successfully recover wolves to the southwest, the program needs to move forward based on a reinvigorated recovery planning process. Until such time as a recovery plan is completed, revised interim implementation guidelines that reduce current risks to the reintroduced wolf population would be preferable. Our suggestions as to the future direction of the recovery process can be allocated to the following specific areas **which should be addressed in the assessment(s) as categories or subcategories of proposed actions or alternatives for achieving the legal goal of recovery by attaining the delisting targets that a recovery plan would contain, based upon the Act's requirements, including delisting decisions based on the best available commercial and scientific data.** [3]

1. Considering the Mexican wolf population outside of captivity is significantly below anticipated numbers, the recovery planning process should be immediately reinitiated. The recovery team should involve scientists with expertise in relevant fields such as conservation planning, wolf behavior and social structure, prey population dynamics, and wolf genetics. Recovery planning should consider the large historic population level (tens of thousands) and high

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[3] Ibid note, 2 and for delisting -- Section (4)(b)(1)(A).

levels of inter-population dispersal of southwestern wolves as documented by genetic analysis. These data will aid assessment of potential goals for recovery of ecologically-effective populations of southwestern wolves.

2. Recovery of a viable wolf meta-population in the southwest requires that wolves be recovered in areas outside of the Blue Range Wolf Recovery Area (BRWRA). Administrative policies and activities that interfere with the dispersal and persistence of wolves outside the BRWRA interfere with recovery. The recovery team should address wolf recovery planning at a broad spatial scale, including the role of recovered southwestern gray wolf populations in facilitating recovery and maintenance of a viable wolf meta-population in the western US. This would necessarily involve consideration of suitable recovery areas outside of the Blue Range Wolf Recovery Area and what policy revisions would facilitate natural dispersal to those areas or insure success of active reintroductions.

3. In the interim period before finalization of a proper recovery plan, rule revisions should be limited to mitigating immediate threats to the current reintroduced population. Here we provide two specific examples of revisions we deem necessary. Current public lands management practices that increase potential habituation of wolves to feeding on livestock should be revised. Policies regarding thresholds for management control (either due to repeated depredation events or to non-problem dispersal outside the recovery area) should be revised to take into account the continued vulnerability of the small reintroduced population to excessive lethal control or removal levels, and restoration of core habitat should be considered.

INTRODUCTION

The gray wolf (*Canis lupus*) was extirpated from the southwestern U.S. by the 1940s and was likely extirpated from northern Mexico sometime after 1980 (Brown 1983). In 1982, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) finalized a binational recovery plan for the Mexican wolf (*C. l. baileyi*) that proposed to maintain a captive breeding program and to reestablish a population in the wild of at least 100 wolves (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 1982). In 1997, the USFWS finalized a reintroduction plan calling for releasing about 15 wolves annually, classified as an experimental-nonessential population, to the Blue Range Wolf Recovery Area, which encompasses around 18,000 km^2 of the Gila National Forest in New Mexico and the Apache National Forest in Arizona and New Mexico. Experimental-nonessential populations are designated by the USFWS per section 10(j) of the ESA to expedite recovery while minimizing conflicts with human activities resulting from endangered species reintroduction projects (Parker and Phillips 1991). The final rule (USFWS 1998) authorized the Service to initially release wolves only in the "primary recovery zone" of the BRWRA, an area that encompasses about 2,664 km^2 of the Apache National Forest. The remainder of the BRWRA comprised the secondary recovery zone, where re-releases of wolves were authorized.

In April 2003, the USFWS published a reclassification rule that divided the lower 48 states into three distinct population segments (DPS). For the southwestern DPS, the USFWS retained the experimental-nonessential population area (Parsons 1998) and designated the populations with the remainder of the area as endangered. The decision to classify the southwestern DPS as endangered indicated a need for comprehensive and science-based recovery planning, including the development of

downlisting and delisting criteria (USFWS 2003). This process was initiated in October 2003 but was suspended in 2005.

ISSUES RELATED TO MANAGEMENT OF THE BLUE RANGE REINTRODUCED POPULATION

In 2001, a "3-year" review of the Mexican Wolf Recovery Program (Paquet et al. 2001) noted the failure to achieve population levels anticipated in USFWS (1996) due to high levels of mortality and management removal (recapture). To address this problem the authors recommended that the recovery program should 1) reduce habituation of wolves to feeding on livestock by altering livestock management practices through better disposal of carcasses and other measures; and 2) allow natural dispersal of non-depredating wolves outside the initial primary recovery area. These two measures would reduce the level of lethal control and recapture and thus facilitate more rapid growth of the reintroduced population. Neither of these recommendations has been implemented.

We endorse both of these recommendations. Allowing natural dispersal of non-problem wolves is important both for improving the prospects for establishing new populations without the need for expensive active reintroduction efforts, and for facilitating expansion of the Blue Range population to a size where it will be more resilient to factors reducing viability of small, isolated populations (e.g., environmental stochasticity, loss of genetic diversity, human-caused mortality, disease, and climate change Frederickson et al. 2007, Frankham 2007). Much suitable habitat exists adjacent to the BRWRA but outside the current recovery zone boundaries (Sneed 2000, CBSG 2000, Carroll et al. 2005, Carroll et al. 2006). The experience with wolf reintroduction in the Northern Rocky Mountains, where no artificial geographic limits were placed on

wolf dispersal, suggests that lack of such restrictions is important for rapid success of reintroduction efforts (USFWS et al. 2006).

Set higher population goals before increasing control efforts

In late 2005, the Mexican wolf recovery oversight committee completed a "5-year" review of the program (AMOC 2005) and recommended several modifications. The AMOC review suggested allowing wolves to disperse beyond the current Blue Range Wolf Recovery Area, in order to facilitate establishment of a metapopulation. However, the review suggested coupling this with an expansion of the "experimental non-essential population area" (MWEPA) where wolves are managed under rules that allow more frequent removal and lethal control (Recommendation 5; AMOC 2005). Once the wolf population in this larger experimental population area reached 125 animals, it was recommended that policy permit killing of wolves in a wide variety of situations (livestock depredation, attacks on pets, desire to increase game populations)(Recommendations 10 and 11; AMOC 2005). Additionally, AMOC (2005) explicitly states that revised livestock management guidelines such as carcass management guidelines will not be implemented (Recommendation 12b and 29; AMOC 2005).

As southwestern wolf populations grow, it is logical to reduce protections on wolves. However, especially if the experimental population area is expanded to encompass a large portion of Arizona and New Mexico, the population goal of 125 is not scientifically justifiable and is far too low to trigger an increase in lethal control. Wolf density is approximately 3 wolves per 1,000km^2 in the BRWRA (AMOC 2005). While it is unknown what historical density of Mexican wolves was (but see Leonard et al 2005),

this is a significantly lower wolf density than recovering wolf populations in the U.S. Northern Rockies (USFWS et al. 2006). This latter recommendation is thus inconsistent with principles regarding conservation management of small populations, and with the results of studies that highlight the vulnerability of southwestern wolf populations due to fragmented habitat (Carroll et al. 2005, Carroll et al. 2006). Expansion of the MWEPA might in principle be supported as encouraging additional reintroduction efforts to suitable habitat areas outside of the BRWRA. However, in practice, when coupled with recommendations that would be expected to result in unsustainable levels of mortality, this measure would so reduce protection for wolves within the expanded MWEPA as to constitute a setback for recovery efforts.

The effect that current management control has had in preventing population growth demonstrates that restrictions on recapture, killing, or harassment should be increased rather than relaxed, as the small reintroduced population is still vulnerable to excessive mortality levels. In particular, the recent increase in management control actions related to livestock depredation may be attributed to the low threshold for such actions under Standard Operating Procedure 13 (SOP13). SOP13 should be revised, taking into account the vulnerability of the small BRWRA wolf population, to set a higher threshold before recapture or lethal control actions can occur.

Lethal control decisions must also be made based upon wolf population structure: wolves are social animals and the viability of their population(s) depends not just on the number of wolves. One therefore cannot treat all wolves as equal. If those killed are alpha wolves or disproportionately of one sex or age cohort, etc. the agency must first consider what removal will do to wolf viability, behavior, and recovery.

ISSUES RELATED TO THE LARGER DIRECTION OF THE RECOVERY PROGRAM

Conduct planning at a regional spatial scale

The Endangered Species Act mandates recovery of populations that are both viable and geographically well-distributed within their historic range (Vucetich et al. 2006). Thus management of the BRWRA wolf population should be embedded within a planning process that considers recovery issues at a larger spatial scale throughout the southwestern and western US. Both historical genetic data (Leonard et al. 2005) and evaluations of current habitat condition (Carroll et al. 2006) may aid in this effort. Recently, Carroll et al. (2006) modeled current and future habitat suitability in the southwestern U.S. and identified four potential reintroduction sites (the Grand Canyon and Mogollon Rim in Arizona, Colorado's San Juans, and the Carson National Forest in northern New Mexico) in addition to the BRWRA. These studies suggest that the White Sands (New Mexico) candidate recovery area has low habitat suitability and thus does not merit substantial recovery efforts. However, because this area could function as stepping stone habitat to more suitable areas, the recovery program could encourage natural dispersal and colonization there.

Carroll et al. (2006) predicted that southwestern wolves were vulnerable to development trends associated with the region's expected rapid human population growth over the next few decades. At current levels of development, their results predicted a 40% decline regionally in carrying capacity by 2025, with two-thirds of this due to development on private lands. Habitat in New Mexico and Colorado was most vulnerable due to more fragmented wolf habitat and rapid human population growth there. Other areas of the region had threat levels similar to the northern Rockies, about

a 25% decline in carrying capacity over 25 years. These findings, rather than foretelling failure for southwestern wolf recovery, can help land managers and non-governmental organizations (e.g., land trusts) target restoration and protection towards areas with habitat that can be secured from developments detrimental to wolf recovery. Restoration (road removal/closure) and protection of core wolf habitat should be used to help mitigate other threats to Mexican wolf populations.

Although all four candidate US reintroduction sites identified in Carroll et al. (2006) had high enough potential to be included in further wolf recovery planning, the vulnerability to landscape change of the Mogollon Rim and San Juans sites and the relative isolation of the Carson site from the bulk of wolf habitat in the region suggested pairing any of these with a second site to ensure the establishment of a well-distributed, viable population. The Grand Canyon site had higher potential, similar to that of the Blue Range. This is because 1) northern Arizona and southern Utah hold large areas with low development threat, 2) the national park itself, like the Yellowstone reintroduction area in the northern Rockies, excludes livestock and firearms, and 3) sufficient prey inhabit the less arid portions of the area such as the Kaibab plateau. The Grand Canyon forms a key link in a band of suitable habitat stretching across Utah and Arizona from the Wasatch Ranges of Utah to the Blue Range of Arizona and New Mexico, and southward to the Sierra Madre of Mexico (Carroll et al. 2006). Reintroduction there would thus be a key step towards fulfilling the goal of reestablishing a connected population of wolves from Canada to Mexico. This goal is particularly important in light of climate change. In addition, Carroll et al. (2006) identified several suitable habitat areas spanning the U.S./Mexico transboundary

region, such as the San Luis range and Big Bend/Madre del Carmen areas. This emphasizes the urgent need for greater coordination with Mexican recovery efforts.

Consider historic population levels and inter-population dispersal

Historical genetic data are an important source of information for establishing recovery goals. Recent genetic analysis of museum specimens of southwestern wolves (Leonard et al. 2005) suggests two findings that provide key context for recovery efforts: 1) historic population levels of southwestern wolves were in the ten of thousands, and 2) levels of genetic interchange between regional populations were relatively high, with alleles typical of *Canis lupus baileyi* being found intermixed through a much broader area than encompassed by a subspecies boundary based on morphological data (Bogan and Mehlhop 1983, Nowak 1995). Reestablishment of such dispersal may be necessary, not only to facilitate natural recolonization of vacant but suitable habitat, but also to maintain and enhance genetic diversity within the southwest population. and ensure connectivity with adjacent regional populations in Colorado and the Northern U.S. Rocky Mountains.

The Mexican wolf recovery program has never adopted formal recovery criteria. The initial plan was published 25 years ago (USFWS 1982) and only suggested establishment of a wild population of 100 wolves. Inexplicably, a new recovery plan has never been developed. Current conservation science strongly suggests that one small and isolated population involving 100 wolves would have too low a chance of long-term survival for the species to be considered recovered (Lande 1995, Soulé et al. 2005, Vucetich et al. 2006). Recovery goals should incorporate new information regarding restored wolf population numbers in the southwest and beyond (Leonard et al. 2005).

Furthermore, setting such low population goal would not result in an "ecologically effective" population and many of the ecological services of wolves might not be realized (Soulé et al. 2005). To achieve long-term recovery of wolves in the southwest, the program should first establish strong source populations through several well-distributed reintroductions in protected core areas, and then allow natural dispersal by wolves to establish peripheral populations in poorer habitat and link the initial reintroduction sites. Reestablishing a connected metapopulation would not only increase the population's chances of persistence. It would also begin to restore the ecological role wolves once played as a keystone species in the southwest (Brown 1983).

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December 17, 2007

Brian Millsap
State Administrator
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New Mexico Ecological Services Field Office
2105 Osuna NE
Albuquerque, NM 87113

Re: Comments pursuant to Federal Register Vol. 72, No. 151, pp. 44065-44069: *Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Notice of Scoping Meetings and Intent to prepare and Environmental Impact Statement and Socio-Economic Assessment for the Proposed Amendment of the Rule Establishing a Nonessential Experimental Population of the Arizona and New Mexico Population of the Gray Wolf ("Mexican Gray Wolf").*

Dear Mr. Millsap:

Defenders of Wildlife appreciates the opportunity to comment on the proposed revision of the final rule governing the Mexican wolf reintroduction program. This is Defenders second comment letter in response to this Federal Register notice. The first addressed Mexican wolf recovery and the proposed rule change from a broad perspective. The comments contained here are provided specifically in response to the Service's request to receive input on "(h) any other potential or socioeconomic effects" (FR Vol. 72 No. 151, p. 44065).

Unfortunately, the Service's previous socio-economic analysis of the reintroduction of the Mexican gray wolf to the BRWRA[1] did not reveal a commitment on the part of the Service to conduct a balanced analysis of the costs and benefits associated with Mexican gray wolf reintroduction. Rather, that study devoted a disproportionate amount of effort to quantifying the costs of Mexican wolf reintroduction in monetary terms, at the expense of the development of corresponding estimates of the economic value of the beneficial impacts resulting from the reintroduction. As a result, the study was heavily biased toward emphasizing the negative impacts of reintroduction at the expense of the positive impacts. We hope that this shortcoming will be rectified in the proposed new socio-economic assessment. In the following comments, we briefly discuss an approach the Service could use to calculate the passive use value of Mexican wolves, the single largest economic benefit that would be generated by increases in the Mexican gray wolf population.

The Mexican gray wolf is listed as an endangered species under the Endangered Species Act. As a result of its federally protected status and because of its emblematic nature documented

[1] Unsworth et al. (2005), *Mexican Wolf Blue Range Reintroduction Project 5-Yr Review: Socioeconomic Component*, Final Report, December 31, 2005. Industrial Economics, Arlington, VA.

through a wealth of survey research, the gray wolf is a species of national interest.[2] Research shows that in the case of gray wolves, passive use (existence, stewardship, and bequest) values account for a large share of the wolves' total economic value.[3] The 2005 final socio-economic analysis of the Blue Range reintroduction project explicitly acknowledged this fact.[4]

Unfortunately, that study stated that an analysis of the passive use value of Mexican wolves was beyond its scope, when in fact the authors of the study had been provided with a passive use analysis for Mexican gray wolves that had been conducted in 2005. That analysis (Kroeger *et al.*, 2006)[5] demonstrated that common economic valuation approaches could be applied to generate conservative estimates of the passive use value of Mexican wolf reintroduction. It did so by estimating a meta-analysis-based regression function for the economic value of gray wolf reintroduction. That function was then parameterized to fit the Mexican wolf reintroduction context by setting key variables to values that reflect the Southwest (AZ and NM) conditions.

Importantly, the function estimated in Kroeger *et al.*'s analysis also provides a tool that can be used to generate estimates of the additional passive use value that would be generated by increases in the Mexican wolf population, or, conversely, of the lost passive use values that would result from a decline of the wolf population.

Based on its overly critical assessment of contingent valuation approaches, we can only presume that the Service's last socio-economic assessment (Unsworth *et al.*, 2005) ignored the analysis by Kroeger *et al.* (2006) because the latter was based on studies that employed contingent valuation approaches to estimate the passive use values associated with Mexican wolves. Contingent valuation, and similar approaches like conjoint analysis, constitute the only type of technique available for quantifying passive use values. Overwhelming evidence in the literature attests to contingent valuation's ability to generate valid and reliable value estimates.[6] In the interest of generating very conservative willingness to pay estimates, the

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[2] Duffield (1992), *An Economic Analysis of Wolf Recovery in Yellowstone: Park Visitor Attitudes and Values*, pp. 2-35 to 2-85 in J.D. Varley and W. G. Brewster (eds.), *Wolves for Yellowstone?* A Report to the United States Congress, Vol. 4, Research and Analysis, NPS, Yellowstone NP.

[3] For a literature review on the value of gray wolves, see Kroeger, T., F. Casey, and C. Haney, 2006, "Reintroduction of the Mexican gray wolf *(Canis lupus baileyi)* into the Southwestern United States: An economic perspective", Paper presented at the 18th Annual North American Wolf Conference, Chico Hot Springs, Montana, 4-6 April 2006.

[4] See Unsworth et al., p. SEC 6-14.

[5] Kroeger, T., F. Casey, and C. Haney, 2006, "Reintroduction of the Mexican gray wolf *(Canis lupus baileyi)* into the Southwestern United States: An economic perspective", Paper presented at the 18th Annual North American Wolf Conference, Chico Hot Springs, Montana, 4-6 April 2006.

[6] See for example Arrow, K., R. Solow, P.R. Portney, E.E. Leamer, R. Radner, and H. Schuman, 1993, "Report of the NOAA Panel on Contingent Valuation", Federal Register 58(10), pp. 4602-14; Carson, R.T., R.C. Mitchell, M. Hanemann, R.J. Kopp, S. Presser, and P.A. Ruud, 2003, "Contingent valuation and lost passive use: Damages from the Exxon Valdez oil spill", *Environmental and Resource Economics* 25(3), pp. 257-286; Carson, Richard T., Nicholas E. Flores, Kerry M. Martin, and Jennifer L. Wright. 1996. Contingent valuation and revealed preference methodologies: Comparing the estimates for quasi-public goods. *Land Economics* 72:80-99; Carson, Richard T., Nicholas E. Flores, and Norman F. Meade. 2001. Contingent valuation: Controversies and evidence. *Environmental and Resource Economics* 19(2):173-210; Banzhaf, S., D. Burtraw, D. Evans, and A. Krupnick, 2004, "Valuation of natural resource improvements in the Adirondacks", Resources for the Future, Report, September 2004. See also Hanemann, W.M., 1994, "Valuing the environment through contingent

Service in its analysis could have elected to use the results of cash transaction experiments to scale down estimates of stated willingness to pay.[7] Instead, it elected not to quantify passive use values at all, thus resulting in the omission from its analysis of the single largest economic value associated with Mexican wolf reintroduction.

We hope the Service will choose to include in its new socio-economic analysis the passive use values that would be associated with changes in the population of Mexican gray wolves resulting from the proposed amendments to the 1998 NEP.. Inclusion of these benefits is essential in any balanced analysis that aims to quantify the socio-economic impacts of changes in Mexican gray wolf numbers.

I would be pleased to offer you any needed assistance or answer any questions you might have about these issues. I can be reached at 202-682-9400, x. 104, or via email at tkroeger@defenders.org. As always, Defenders of Wildlife stands ready to assist the Service in the recovery of the Mexican wolf.

Sincerely,

Timm Kroeger, Ph.D.
Natural Resources Economist

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valuation", *The Journal of Economic Perspectives* 8(4), pp. 19-43, who shows that there exists ample evidence in the benefits estimation literature that CV-based WTP estimates are generally in line with estimates based on revealed preference approaches.

[7] See for example Duffield's use of scaling factors in the final economic impact statement of reintroduction of gray wolves to Yellowstone National Park and central Idaho (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1994, Final Environmental Impact Statement, "The Reintroduction of Gray Wolves to Yellowstone National Park and Central Idaho", FWS, Helena, MT).

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December 21, 2007

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Re: Comments pursuant to Federal Register Vol. 72, No. 151, pp. 44065-44069: *Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Notice of Scoping Meetings and Intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement and Socio-Economic Assessment for the Proposed Amendment of the Rule Establishing a Nonessential Experimental Population of the Arizona and New Mexico Population of the Gray Wolf ("Mexican Gray Wolf").*

Dear Mr. Millsap:

Defenders of Wildlife appreciates the opportunity to comment on the proposed revision of the final rule governing the Mexican wolf reintroduction program. Defenders is a national non-profit conservation organization with more than 900,000 members and supporters nationwide. We are a science-based advocacy organization focused on conserving and restoring native species and the habitats upon which they depend, and have been involved in such efforts since the organization's establishment in 1947. Over the last two decades, Defenders has played a leading role in the recovery of Mexican wolves in the southwest United States. Our work to ensure and speed the recovery of the Mexican wolf has included participating in the litigation that moved the reintroduction program forward in 1990, our defense of the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) in two lawsuits seeking to end the program, sitting on the now defunct Mexican Wolf Recovery Team, and swift rebuttal of Congressman Pearce's latest effort to gut the program. Of particular relevance, Defenders administers The Bailey Wildlife Foundation Wolf Compensation Trust, which reimburses ranchers in the region for verified livestock losses to wolves, and The Bailey Wildlife Foundation Carnivore Conservation Fund, which assists family ranchers with non-lethal, proactive methods that help reduce or prevent livestock losses to wolves.

In this letter, we discuss six reasons why the Mexican wolf reintroduction program is meeting neither the requirements of the Endangered Species Act nor the reintroduction goals established in the original Environmental Impact Statement. We also point to two overriding issues which contribute to the dismal state of the program – a lack of leadership by the FWS and lack of a meaningful Recovery Plan. We make recommendations for correcting these problems, including 8 specific recommendations for changing the final rule. At the same time we recognize that some of our recommendations do not depend upon changing the final rule and, in order to salvage the program, must be made immediately.

First, we must bring to your attention a serious pre-decisional bias in the scoping materials. The Federal Register Notice (FR Vol. 72 No. 151, p. 44068), quotes from a letter by Region 2 Director Benjamin Tuggle: "Furthermore, the Service will work with the cooperating agencies and the AMOC to begin the process of developing a new 10(j) proposed rule and associated NEPA analysis." This same wording – a "new 10(j) rule" – appears multiple times in the "Involving the Public" panel displayed in the scoping meetings. These statements reveal the FWS's intent to ignore the possibility of affording the Mexican wolf full protection under the ESA as an alternative to an experimental designation. Under NEPA, the purpose of scoping is to "identify the significant issues related to a proposed action." 40 C.F.R. § 1501.7.

There is no doubt that the Mexican wolf reintroduction program is in serious trouble. The federal register notice for this process states bluntly that "minimum estimates of the number of wolves and breeding pairs in the BRWRA at the end of 2006 … [fall] significantly short of the projection in the 1996 Final EIS of 102 wolves and 18 breeding pairs" and that "we believe management constraints contained in that rule are too restrictive to meet management objectives expressed in the 1982 Recovery Plan (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 1982, p. 23), the Record of Decision to the 1996 Final EIS (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 1997, pp. 11, 17), and the 2005 Mexican Wolf Blue Range Reintroduction Project 5-Year Review (Mexican Wolf Blue Range Adaptive Management Oversight Committee and Interagency Field Team 2005, p. TC–2)."

While Defenders agrees with the FWS that some provisions of the existing rule hinder recovery, we believe the reintroduction program's problems are deeper than the rule itself, and we discuss these other issues here as support for what needs to be included, and what must be avoided, in any new rule. The overarching issue is that many, if not most, of the management actions taken relevant to the reintroduction program fail to meet the legal requirement of the Endangered Species Act ESA §10(j)(2)(A) that the reintroduction further the conservation of the species, and also do not live up to the FWS's promise in the Final EIS (page 2-16) that its actions, while achieving the least impact on private activity, would be consistent with wolf recovery. In its rush to delegate authority, soothe political opposition and quiet recalcitrant opponents of the federal government, to whom the wolf is more a symbol than a real threat, the FWS finds itself presiding over, if not condoning, the second extinction of the Mexican wolf.

Defenders sees six very basic reasons that the reintroduction program is stalled or in retreat. These are: (1) the requirement that wolves stay within the boundaries of the Blue Range Wolf Recovery Area (BRWRA); (2) the prohibition on "naïve" releases in New Mexico; (3) poaching; (4) failure to consider genetic issues; (5) the US Forest Service's willful disregard of its obligations to protect endangered species; and (6) excessive removal of wolves from the wild. We will address each of these issues in turn, below.

The FWS's Failure to Lead

Ultimately, however, many of these issues are tied to failure of the FWS to assert its authority under the law, and to ensure that the reintroduction project upholds the FWS's standards and mission. There is no indication that the FWS is fulfilling its ultimate responsibility and authority to recover wolves, and indeed, some of the actions of the Adaptive Management Oversight Committee (AMOC) and its members are counter to recovery. There are many examples, but perhaps the most glaring is the inept handling of the five year review. That the review was overseen and written by AMOC, rather than outside experts, undercuts its objectivity and value. One of the extensions of the comment period appeared tied to concerns about the FWS's status as the lead agency, underscoring the authority problem. Most telling is the FWS's blanket

acceptance of the shoddy recommendations of the review, many of which not only overstepped AMOCs authority but also promoted such recovery-thwarting, anti-scientific ideas as capping the population at 125 wolves over an undisclosed area, placing more constraints on where wolves could be released, forbidding *a priori* advocacy of carcasses removal even though this may be necessary for recovery, and allowing additional take of wolves based on their eating too many elk. Accepting such recommendations was antithetical to the mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Recovery Planning

Our other overriding concern is the lack of a meaningful recovery plan. Defenders has been making the case for updating the recovery plan for years, and the idea of promulgating a new rule without a recovery plan continues to alarm us. Without scientifically sound goals, actions, timelines and criteria for delisting, there are no standards against which to measure progress. Reference to a recovery plan should put a stop to management practices that move the population in the wrong direction and as a practical matter would provide a framework within which the FWS could explain its decisions. Clearly, it makes no sense to engage in a contentious, expensive, multi-year NEPA process to change the rule, only to find it incompatible with the recommendations of a Recovery Team. This kind of outcome would slow recovery and frustrate the public. The new rule, because it is long-lived and has the force of law, must support bona fide recovery goals.

Wolf Boundaries and "Naïve" Releases

The FWS is well aware of how essential it is to the success of the Mexican wolf recovery program to allow wolf populations to expand and disperse into suitable habitats outside the boundaries of the current BRWRA, and of the necessity to allow "naïve" releases in New Mexico. Both of these actions are supported on demographic, genetic, and even social grounds. Indeed, the case could be made that the current boundaries concentrate conflict in a small area, and that livestock producers would feel some relief if wolves were allowed to disperse over a wider area and into regions with lower livestock density (for example the Grand Canyon and Sky Island ecoregions). Certainly recovery is impossible without population expansion and dispersal – a population of 100 wolves living in a confined area is no more "recovered" than the current zoo population.

Poaching

Although poaching is difficult to control, the magnitude of the problem calls for stronger measures by both the FWS and state and federal prosecutors. At least 25 wolves have been poached since the program began, not including the recent disappearance of 3 members of the Durango pack. Recent incidents of baiting wolves with livestock to cause their removal should also be investigated as serious breeches of the law.

Genetics

It is essential that the FWS begin to consider Mexican wolf genetics from two vantage points. First, because the genetics of individual wolves contribute to their reproductive fitness and the population's ability to adapt, they have a profound effect on the subspecies' ability to recover. The FWS must consider the genetic "importance" or "value" of individual wolves when making management decisions. This has not been the case in the past, with the damaging and

demoralizing result that wolves with particularly high genetic value have been lethally controlled with complete disregard to the impact on recovery of the subspecies. A recent paper by Fredrickson et al. (Genetic rescue and inbreeding depression in Mexican wolves. *Proceedings of the Royal Society B* 274:2365-2371, 2007) discusses the state of the captive and wild Mexican wolf populations and the crucial role of mixed-lineage animals in the "genetic rescue" of the wild population. This paper also touches on the necessity of growing the wild population, which has not just demographic significance, but genetic significance as well. This points to the second factor that warrants the FWS's attention. A recent paper by Frankham (Genetic adaptation to captivity in species conservation programs. *Molecular Ecology, in publication*) sounds the alarm -- species cannot be maintained in captivity for long before they become unfit for life in the wild. This research underscores both the importance and timeliness of restoring a wild Mexican wolf population, and provides a warning that the captive Mexican wolf population may not be able to provide suitable replacement animals for those removed, or candidates for new reintroductions, in the future.

The US Forest Service

The Forest Service's blatant disregard for its obligations under the ESA is undermining the reintroduction program, and ultimately Mexican wolf recovery, in the Apache and Gila National Forests, which together comprise 95% of the land in the BRWRA. In the *Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact* for the unmodified continuation of livestock grazing on the T Bar Allotment, a hotspot for wolf-livestock conflicts, the Forest Service makes the following statement: "By definition, a non-essential experimental population is not essential to the continued existence of the species. Therefore, no proposed action impacting on a 10(j) population so designated could lead to a jeopardy determination for the entire species. Therefore, proposed livestock grazing and livestock management activities in the 10(j) area with Mexican gray wolves are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the wolf." Similar statements can be found in many grazing-related NEPA and decision documents issued by the Forest Service. The position that actions under the jurisdiction of the Forest Service "are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the wolf species" ignores the obligation of the Forest Service under ESA § 7(a)(1) to utilize its resources in furtherance of the conservation of the Mexican wolf and other endangered species.

Wherever wolves and cattle are found together some level of depredation will occur. Nonetheless there are ways to lower levels of wolf depredation: moving cattle away from den sites, using extra herders, fencing and fladry, lowering stocking rates during particular times of the year or in particular areas, removal of attractants such as carcasses, community calving programs, etc. The Forest Service could take the lead on many of these – and yet it refuses to act anywhere along the spectrum from requiring, promoting, or – in some cases – even allowing measures to reduce livestock-wolf conflicts. This situation provides another example of the FWS's failure to control and lead the recovery effort. In the numerous public meetings in which the obligation of the Forest Service to act has been raised, the AMOC members have repeatedly declared that none of the agencies have any legal means to regulate grazing practices. This absurd statement, which is contradicted by both federal statutes and court decisions, should have been immediately and decisively corrected by the FWS.

Excessive Removals

Current levels of removal of Mexican wolves from the wild by the FWS and cooperating agencies are unsustainable. The FWS has permanently removed approximately 25% of the

known wild population of Mexican wolves this year alone, and according to the five year review (undertaken when removal rates were lower than today), one Mexican wolf was killed or otherwise permanently removed for every 1.1 cattle depredations (the comparable ratio in the Northern Rockies is 3.8 depredations per wolf removed). In their analysis of the situation, Parsons and Ossorio (Mexican wolf reintroduction: Put and take wolf recovery?, 19th Annual North American Wolf Conference, Flagstaff, AZ and 87th Annual Meeting of the American Society of Mammalogists, Albuquerque, NM, 2007) conclude that the population is "take limited" and artificially supported by additional releases well past those projected to be necessary in the original EIS. Although Defenders supports the removal of wolves that chronically kill livestock, the management flexibility of the current 10(j) rule does not in any way override the obligation of the reintroduction project to contribute to recovery of the Mexican wolf. Indeed, recovery can be promoted if the FWS, as well as the Forest Service and all cooperating agencies, uses and promotes all reasonable means to lower the incidence of depredation (the primary cause of removals). Defenders would be pleased to share with the FWS our experience in proactive conflict avoidance. The FWS must take immediate steps to lower removal rates, and must be sure that any new rule does not increase circumstances for regulated take.

Recommended Changes to the Rule

Rewriting the final rule is a dangerous opportunity. The current rule's flaws are few – only the boundaries and constraints on releases in New Mexico are serious impediments to recovery. The recovery of the Mexican wolf is hamstrung more by the implementation of the rule than by the rule itself. The FWS must be absolutely vigilant that changes to the rule do not move us further from recovery, and particularly that new prohibitions on wolf numbers or dispersal, or new reasons for take, do not make recovery impossible.

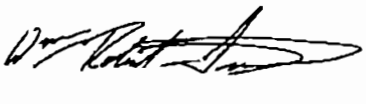
Defenders of Wildlife advocates the following changes to the rule, changes that we believe will allow the reintroduction program to not only reach the reintroduction goal of 102 wolves and 18 breeding pairs, but also to contribute meaningfully to the recovery of the Mexican wolf over a significant portion of its historic range. In short, we believe these changes are necessary to bring the program into compliance with the ESA, and we ask that the FWS fully evaluate them as required by NEPA and include them in a valid alternative in the draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS).

1) Reclassify the reintroduced population of Mexican wolves as Essential Experimental under ESA § 10(j). Requiring the Forest Service to consult with the FWS over actions that impact Mexican wolves would give this endangered species equal footing with other uses of the public lands. At the same time, an Essential Experimental designation would preserve ESA § 10(j)'s management flexibility to deal with livestock depredation and other negative impacts.
2) Include reasonable limits on regulated take. These limits must take into account population size and structure, number of breeding pairs, genetic importance of individuals and genetic health of the wild population, and progress toward the reintroduction goal and recovery. These limits should be established in formal consultation with credentialed, independent scientists, so that their scientific basis is sound and there is a reasonable degree of certainty that the level of regulated take will not impede recovery.
3) Allow more options for non-injurious harassment of wolves as a way to adversely condition them to avoid livestock and human habitations. Specifically, the rule should be amended so that the FWS's proposed paint-ball program can be initiated and tested.

4) Make no restrictions on where wolves can disperse or establish territories.
5) Make no restrictions on where wolves can be released, including the release of "naïve" wolves directly from captivity.
6) Do not broaden circumstances for regulated take. For example, the proposed allowance for the public to kill wolves attacking pets should never have been seriously considered. Pet owners can take fairly simple precautions to keep their pets safe. The program could be severely impacted by opponents shooting wolves after "baiting" them with pound animals. There is now at least one confirmed incident of baiting with livestock, reported in the recent article in *High Country News*. (December 24, 2007). It is easy to see how wolf reintroduction opponents could use dogs for baiting, and opening this possibility would greatly frustrate law enforcement efforts to distinguish between legal and illegal take.
7) Strengthen penalties for illegal take and add penalties for "baiting" as a means to cause take.
8) Make no provisions that would limit future recovery options – for example no constraints on population size, geographic distribution of wolves, or the number, location or size of future reintroduction areas.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment. In summary, we believe that the eight changes and prohibitions above are essential to bring the reintroduction program into compliance with the ESA, and we ask the FWS to include them in the DEIS. Furthermore, it is imperative that recovery planning begin now so that a scientifically-sound complete recovery plan be in place before any new rule is finalized. The recovery plan must inform the new rule, not be constrained by it. Finally, the FWS has failed to assert the necessary leadership and control over the program to fulfill its duty to recover the Mexican wolf. It must use all means to correct this immediately, without waiting for this rule change or any other process before changing course and beginning to recover the Mexican wolf.

Sincerely,



Wm. Robert Irvin
Senior Vice President,
Conservation Programs

How to Submit Comments

Written comments accompanied by name and address will become part of the formal record of the scoping process. While you may provide your ideas verbally during the meeting, we want to make sure your input is formally captured in your own words. You may submit written comments in three ways:

- Fill out the comment portion of this brochure and leave it in the drop box
- Take the brochure with you and return it by mail
- Provide comments via e-mail. For your convenience, you can do that here at the computer station, or visit www.mexicanwolfeis.org
- Faxed comments may be sent to (505) 346-2542

Please note: In order to be considered part of the formal record, your comments must include your name and address. Comments may be submitted through December 31, 2007.

Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment--including your personal information--may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

Comments:

I support The Wolf Recovery program. Wolves should be restored to their natural habitat Cows grazing in The forest is not The ours natural habitat and so The wolf should not be held accountable for these Cows who "stray". In turn, wolves who stray beyond their recovery should not be eliminated either they become have no idea of their new restricted area. Cows are The problem not wolves.

Dogs who end up as victims of wolf attacks also should not be blamed on The wolves. Wolves are only protecting their own and does not [illegible] The wolf hunting grounds Overall, I think Cows should be eliminated from our National Forest. It has become a free feeding ground for them and quite frankly I am tired of paying for their meals. Let The wolf roam within in our National forest.

Name: William Joseph

Street: 1709 Morton St

City, State, Zip: Silver City, NM 88061

Tape closed with address on outside, and add a stamp.

DO NOT STAPLE
Thank you for your input!