

Jaguar Conservation Team (JAGCT)- Habitat Subcommittee Summary Notes
Gray Ranch, New Mexico
April 15, 1999

Meeting Opened - 9am

Ground Rules for the meeting were presented.

Handouts - Agenda for this meeting, Draft Summary Notes from January 1999 Jaguar Habitat Subcommittee Meeting, Draft Jaguar Habitat Criteria as modified on 1/21/99, E-mail communications with SAG members (Dave Brown, Alan Rabinowitz, Brian Miller), two abstracts from The Wildlife Society meeting in Farmington NM on jaguar habitat in northern Mexico by Mendoza et.al. and Lopez and Brown, and Conservation Recommendations for jaguar from the Biological Opinion for Safford/Tucson Field Offices' Grazing Program.

Review of last meeting's minutes

Page 2, question D.5., there is no answer to this question. The minutes are correct, there was no answer in the meeting.

Page 3, X.B., are seasonal waters part of jaguar habitat? Yes, jaguars are mobile and follow their prey, so they will move to seasonal waters and move away when they are dry.

SAG responses:

Research Priority:

Collar a jaguar to determine habitat use. Need more information before some management decisions can be made with certainty or the jaguar could be de/down-listed.

Definitions of Habitat - occupied or potential are different, depending on the individual SAG member.

Dave Brown's input:

His work with Carlos Lopez on Mexico jaguar kill locations and habitat is provided in the abstract that was distributed. Work on the range of jaguar in U.S. and northern Mexico and the habitat where they were killed has been combined by Dave into a paper. Work is in press, and will be available to the group soon. They have identified 3 core areas with jaguars in northern Mexico.

Raul Valdez's work:

He plans on going back to the 1 core population that he has identified in northern Mexico to gather additional information on sites of jaguar kills. He has been looking for tracks and

sign, focusing on riparian areas, and doing habitat evaluations in those areas. Additionally, he has been interviewing ranchers, ranch hands, locals, etc. about jaguar kills and locations.

Alan Rabinowitz's response:

Not much to do, sit and watch and see what happens with additional jaguars. His definition of habitat is a very pure one. Many would consider this definition one of occupied habitat.

Brian Miller's comments:

He suggested dropping elevation from the criteria, which we have already done. He mentioned that jaguars would migrate to follow prey, which would add strength to the argument of the importance of seasonal water. He stated that radio-collaring would be an important tool, and that it would provide a much higher return on collecting habitat data than any other technique. For habitat he suggests considering what is potentially there, not just what presently exists.

Mexico Meeting on Jaguars

AZ/NM ranked as a lower priority as a focus area for conservation, however, it was ranked as a higher priority for research on the species.

Abstract Handouts:

The two handouts are abstracts from a conference in February and show the results of recent habitat and jaguar kill location data collected in Mexico. Although it seems alarming to see the number of recent kills, the surveyors indicated that they felt that there are still fairly stable populations in these areas. What is unclear is whether the increased number of kills is actual, or an artifact of poor record keeping over time. Reported kills were verified by physical evidence and people who knew the person that killed the animal were interviewed when possible.

Jaguar Recovery Team

Discussion of the criteria for listing and what would need to occur for the species to be de/down-listed occurred. It was presented that there are only two ways for the jaguar to be de/down-listed. They can either become extinct or they can be recovered.

Discussion of a Recovery Team occurred. Pressure may need to be applied to the USFWS to establish a Recovery Team, so that we can begin to work toward recovery of the jaguar. The team would set specific recovery criteria. Ranchers will probably not support a jaguar re-introduction. Re-introduction is not a preferred option while there is still a chance that animals are naturally re-colonizing. Using the activities outlined in the Conservation Agreement would probably be the best avenue for recovery. Those activities do not necessarily need to impinge upon private land owners. Addressing issues in Mexico would probably be a focus of recovery efforts. Jaguars will probably not be de/down-listed without jaguars recovered in the United States.

We could recommend to the Conservation Team to write a letter to USFWS to encourage them to establish a Recovery Team.

Sarah agreed to send or bring examples of Recovery Plans for other species for the subcommittee to review. Recovery Teams have usually been composed of scientists. Recently, Recovery Teams have been including stakeholders. Several methods of stakeholder involvement have been used recently for recovery of Mexican spotted owl and other species. Sarah agreed to take word back to her agency that there is interest in developing a recovery plan.

Habitat Criteria

We discussed the Use of Census Bureau "Tiger" files to estimate human population density for the purpose of our mapping. The road density files have a few inherent problems, but they may be all we have to go with, so we may not have many choices. As a layer, we can adjust to the accuracy of the data by not giving it as much strength in terms of stippling levels beyond a certain road density level. The highest road density levels that are not considered habitat will be blocked out.

All comments on the criteria from the January meeting were incorporated into the current draft, including the treatment of corridors.

Prey densities were discussed. It may take more prey to recover jaguar than to sustain the occasional jaguar. Are there places out there that don't have adequate prey densities? Probably not in AZ. More information on prey in Mexico will be gathered by further research there. If there is enough prey for them to survive, then there is adequate prey. If there is adequate prey, why aren't they here? A discussion of felids vs. canids in habitat use, prey competition and species reductions away from core populations took place.

We agreed to continue to work on the maps, although they are not for the purpose of determining jaguar habitat, only prioritization of areas for cooperative efforts.

Waters are not digitized for NM. Seven major ranches in SW NM encompass most of the area. There are no areas that are more than 10 miles from a water in this area, at least seasonally. The only permanent waters are windmills, and they may be turned off. There are areas in the White Sands area that might be 10 miles from water. Very few areas in NM would not meet the water criteria.

Additional Agenda Items:

Mike Pruss described and demonstrated the jaguar track field notebook that has been distributed to AGFD Wildlife Managers.

We reviewed who the members of the Scientific Advisory Group (SAG) are: Raul Valdez, Mike Tewes, Brian Miller, Dave Brown?, Carlos Lopez, Alan Rabinowitz.

The NM Senate Bill that would assess penalties for take of jaguar if it is de- or down-listed was discussed briefly. It could be modified in the future, if need be, to meet recovery requirements. Jaguar kills - Michael Robinson located 2 more citations with jaguar kills reported. Michael will

send the citations to Mike Pruss. Mike will check to see if those are already recorded in the jaguar kills we are currently aware of.

Efforts to document whether jaguars are currently here or not could be intensified.

The comments were made that NM Game and Fish Department is not participating in the Habitat Subcommittee, and that the summary notes should be sent out earlier. With everyone's limited resources, participation and time commitments are often limited for many agency people.

Funding Issues

No money has been expended by USFWS on the Mexico projects as far as Sarah is aware. Michael suggested that the Conservation Team recommend to Congressman Joe Scheen that funds be appropriated for this purpose. If the goal was to bring management back to the local level, he may look at it. USFWS gets some NAFTA money, and that may also be available.

Consider writing a letter to Congressman Joe Scheen for allocation funds for jaguar work. It may be hard to get support from agriculture interests because there are so many other things that are being fought over right now. But it is worth a try, because of the agreement in this group about the need to gather Mexican jaguar data. Should be added to the agenda for discussion at the Conservation Team meeting. A proposal would need to be drafted first by a university. Would querying Scheen be worthwhile in advance of a proposal? We need to speak with Raul at the next JAGCT meeting about writing a proposal.

USFWS Jaguar Permit

A discussion of the USFWS Endangered Species permit status for pursuit of jaguars took place. The process for AZ's permit is still in the works. There was no knowledge of the status of NM's permit.

Section 7 Consultations:

BLM Hidalgo County involving oil and gas - USFWS just wrote conservation recommendations for the jaguar.

BLM Grazing Allotments in NM, Las Cruces District - they will have grazing criteria, similar to the manner in which the USFS consulted.

ADC Region-wide Consultation ongoing since 1995, still not complete for the jaguar, since it wasn't listed when consultation began.

Action Items:

Sarah will bring example recovery plans for the subcommittee members at the next meeting.

Sarah will check to see what the schedule is for the Recovery Team creation.

Mike Pruss will get AZ and NM kill locations for Michael Robinson.

Michael Robinson will get jaguar kill citations to Mike Pruss.

Mike Pruss will get Alan Rabinowitz's trip notes on his Baboquivari and Peloncillo mountain trips for the group.

Gary Helbing will continue to see what Cochise County can come up with for population data.

Check with Craig Miller to see if he has found anything out about money.

Check with Ben Brown to see if he has found anything out about money.

Sarah will check to see if the USFWS has any money for international work and for helping the Phoenix Zoo fund the translation of the Mexico City meeting notes into English.

Only one restaurant is open in Animas now. Need to make some arrangements for the next meeting.

Schedule Next Meeting - it will follow the Jaguar Conservation Team meeting in Animas. We will break for lunch after the JAGCT meeting, and then return for the habitat meeting.

Attendance List

Meira Gault	Rancher
Mike Pruss	AGFD
Bill Moore	NMDA
Sarah Rinkevich	USFWS
Judy Keeler	BHA
Bill Cowan	BHA
Jimmy Stewart	Ranch Manager
Gary Helbing	USFS (CNF-Douglas)
Don Cullum	Rancher
Michael Robinson	SWCBD