

**Mexican Wolf Adaptive Management Work Group
Final (Revised) Summary Notes for Meeting of October 15, 2004**

Location

Rode Inn, 242 E. Main Street, Springerville, Arizona

Attendees (not all Attendees signed in)

Darry Dolan, David L. Goerndt, Halina Szyposzynski, Charlie Goulds, Sharon Goulds, Darcy Ely, Maryann Johnson, Pam Ewing, Nick Ewing, George Lemen, Nancy L. Kaminski, Bill Bunnell, Daniel Parraz, and Hoyt Pinaire (private citizens); Jean Ossorio (Southwest Environmental Center – SWEC); Craig Miller (Defenders of Wildlife – Defenders); Michael Robinson (Center for Biological Diversity – CBD); Kevin Wright (The Phoenix Zoo); Deion Hinton (White Mountain Apache Tribe – WMAT); Hector Ruedas and Kay Gale (Greenlee County); Shawna Nelson, Deb O’Neill, Dan Groebner, Bill Van Pelt, Jon Cooley, Shawn Farry, and Terry Johnson (Arizona Game and Fish Department – AGFD); Chuck Hayes and Lisa Kirkpatrick (New Mexico Department of Game and Fish – NMDGF); John Oakleaf, James Ashburner, Colleen Buchanan, John Morgart, Victoria Fox, and Susan MacMullin (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – USFWS); Bud Starnes (New Mexico Department of Agriculture – NMDA); Wally Murphy (U.S. Forest Service – USFS); David Bergman, Keel Price, J. Brad Miller, Richard Grabbe, and Chris Carrillo (USDA APHIS Wildlife Services – WS).

Welcome, Introductions, Ground Rules, and Agenda Review

Terry B. Johnson, Chair (AGFD), called the meeting to order at 1:34 p.m. He thanked all present for attending.

The Adaptive Management Oversight Committee (AMOC) and Cooperating Agency representatives seated at the front of the room introduced themselves and described their roles with wolf reintroduction. All attendees then briefly introduced themselves.

The ground rules were affirmed as the same as for previous meetings: minimize side-bar conversations; show respect for disparate opinions; raise hands for recognition; one person speaks at a time; question-and-answer format; participants should direct questions to the panel; and participants should state their names prior to making a statement or asking a question.

Please recognize that these summary notes are not minutes, and comments and questions will not be summarized word for word.

The agenda was reviewed. There were no comments.

Summary Notes from Previous Meeting

Terry asked if there were any questions or comments on the summary notes from the July 2004 meeting. There were none.

Interagency Field Team (IFT) Report

Several releases have occurred: 1) the Aspen pack near Blue, AZ: two adults and three pups; 2) in the Gila Wilderness of NM: three adults and five pups; and 3) in the Gila Wilderness of NM: two adults.

The IFT's focus since July has been as follows: 1) getting wolves back inside the Recovery Area boundary; 2) writing the scientific portion of the Five-Year Review; 3) gathering data to estimate counts of wolves; and 4) tracking collared wolves.

As of September, the minimum count of wild wolves is 49. This count includes releases and uncollared wolves that have been seen.

The Aspen pack stayed in the release area for about three weeks before splitting up. Part of the pack spent time around houses and chased a calf in the Blue River corridor. The wolves have been hazed with rubber bullets and cracker shells.

Darry Dolan – How many wolves are collared?

John Oakleaf – 23-24.

The IFT has been trying to trap and collar additional animals in three packs: Bluestem, Hon-Dah, and San Francisco. They have not been successful.

The two San Mateo wolves were brought back inside the Recovery Area boundary. The male stayed, but the female has returned to the San Mateos.

John Oakleaf introduced the IFT members present. AGFD has advertised three additional IFT positions for hiring over the next several weeks. These positions are being filled to bring the IFT closer to the staffing level needed to be more responsive to wolf management issues.

Michael Robinson – When was the San Mateo female determined to have left the recovery area?

John Oakleaf – Yesterday. She traveled from inside the boundary to outside the boundary, a total of 50 miles, in eight days.

Darry Dolan – A pup was sighted with the San Mateo pack. Did you release the pair without the pup?

John Oakleaf – There were no signs of nursing, so we thought the pups died. We continued to conduct howling surveys in the area, but never received a response.

Craig Miller – Have there been any reports of young wolves in that area?

John Oakleaf – No

Maryann Johnson submitted copies of a petition signed by every resident on the Blue (excluding the Dry Blue), stating their objection to the Aspen pack being released. The petition was sent to Arizona Congressman Rick Renzi's office.

Terry Johnson read the introduction paragraph on the petition, and noted there are approximately 30 signatures.

Charlie Goulds expressed his feelings on the release in the Blue. He lives in the Blue, and ranches and guides there. He has one cow and calf. USFWS has put several packs there against residents' wishes. He read a statement describing his objection to the releases (written copies available).

John Oakleaf – Four release sites were identified in the Aspen pack release proposal. They were selected based on certain characteristics necessary for wolves. These sites were presented to the public. The IFT took the public comments, incorporated them with agency input, and the AMOC approved the IFT-preferred site.

Terry Johnson elaborated on John's explanation. The release site is recommended, but land ownership determines who makes the final decision. In this case, the AGFD Director made the decision because the recommended site was on non-tribal lands in Arizona. There were pros and cons to every site. AMOC and AGFD weighed the alternatives carefully. We are trying to move toward recovery, and there is pressure to release wolves to meet recovery goals. We understood there would be opposition, but we still thought it was the best site, considering all relevant factors. This site was a consensus recommendation from the IFT and all AMOC agencies. We did modify the location based on public input.

Michael Robinson – Following the release of the Paquet report in the Three-Year Review of this program, the USFWS held 11 public meetings to collect comments. The largest category of recommendations was that the rule should be changed to allow direct release of wolves into the Gila Wilderness. During this entire process, Brian Kelly (who was the USFWS Mexican Wolf Recovery Coordinator then) repeatedly stated the results would change the final non-essential, experimental population rule, but the rule has not been changed yet. Wolves still only can be initially released in the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests.

Terry Johnson explained that we are operating under a series of legal constraints. If the release is a new release, in accordance with the non-essential, experimental population rule, it can only occur in the Apache National Forest.

Susan MacMullin. – “Experimental” is a designation that allows for greater latitude. Non-essential means they are not essential to the population.

Terry Johnson – This rule allows us to kill a wolf if necessary. The rule provides management flexibility. There would be more constraints if the wolves had full protection. We did not want them to have full protection from a management standpoint. We needed the tools provided through a non-essential experimental population designation.

Darcy Ely – Is the IFT trying to find a way to remove the wolves from the Blue?

John Oakleaf – We have been somewhat successful. The wolves are naïve; they do not understand the dangers. We evaluate wolves after each release and compare behaviors.

Darcy Ely – Is there food for them, and if so, is it still there?

John Oakleaf – It is still there. There was food before the release, and certainly there is food now. Even more so.

Jon Cooley – The IFT looks at criteria when considering a site for a release. The primary reason this site was selected was because there were a lot of elk browsing on regenerating aspen. Surveys since the release show a large elk presence.

John Oakleaf – This site also was a successful release site before.

Terry Johnson – We contrasted the criteria against four sites before deciding on one.

Craig Miller – Defenders of Wildlife has a program available to help with fencing, dog kennels, etc. In areas where we anticipate problems, we will provide 50% funding and the landowner has to provide the other 50%. Or, we can work with a three-way split with cooperators. Defenders is willing to come down, evaluate and meet with people on the Blue.

Terry Johnson – Two federal programs are also available. The Landowner Incentive Program (LIP) provides up to \$1.5 million each year to state agencies, and must be matched by non-federal dollars. There also is a private lands stewardship program that USFWS administers. Congress has spoken strongly in favor of these programs.

Darry Dolan – Does the (non-essential, experimental) classification constrain release in New Mexico?

Terry Johnson – Initial releases can only occur in Arizona, but translocations can occur in New Mexico.

Jean Ossorio – Geneticists have indicated that it is highly desirable to increase diversity in the gene pool. If only releases can be done in AZ, absent of a modification of 10j, we will see repetition of this in the future. We cannot have more infusion if you will not release in NM.

Sharon Goulds – The decision on the Blue release was because of prey base. You have fed the wolves a couple times after their release. Then you had to quit so they can kill on their own. They have been staying in one area and meat has been brought in to try to get them back up to higher elevations. The elk are up high, not down low, but the wolves keep going back down to river. How many times are you hauling meat up? How long will we have to put up with this?

John Oakleaf – We put out the last meat a few weeks ago. We want to haze them out of the area. It has been working more or less.

Charlie Goulds – You do not let condors get habituated to humans, but people were dragging elk in. I know about scent, and the wolves can associate meat with human scent. You are habituating wolves to humans. The 10j (non-essential, experimental population rule) is supposed to be non-invasive and non-threatening to people? I am going broke.

Terry Johnson – Economic impacts were taken into consideration, but not because of 10j. We would have considered the impacts no matter what.

Michael Robinson – On translocation to the Gila, the 10j has reduced flexibility. These wolves are the only endangered species in which the animals are required to stay in arbitrary political boundaries. These animals were removed just because they were in the wrong forest. There was a recommendation to change this in the Three-Year Review. The Review said it should be normalized to be like other endangered species programs in the U.S. Scientists and the majority of people providing comments have condemned this constraint. The program is in disarray because of dereliction of responsibility.

Terry Johnson – Some areas of the program are really flexible and some areas not. You like some parts, and you do not like others.

Darry Dolan – The Blue residents probably would have been happy to see wolves move into the Gila. What will it take to revisit the final rule?

Terry Johnson – The USFWS Regional Director (RD) made it perfectly clear that if the recommendations coming out of the Five-Year Review say to change the rule, he will. The

Five-Year Review did not have full public participation, nor was it completed, and that is why the recommendations were not moved forward.

Susan MacMullin – The RD wants to ensure the 10j works. When there is a draft Recovery Plan, he will look at it.

Colleen Buchanan – The Five-Year Review will clearly spell out the history of the rule.

Terry Johnson – Gila residents may have a different opinion than Blue residents about the “benefits” of translocating AZ’s Blue wolves to NM’s Gila Wilderness. Whatever adjustments are made, someone will be unhappy. Let’s not fool ourselves thinking that more release sites in New Mexico are the solution for everything. Regardless, any changes in the rule or other aspects of wolf management must be science driven, while considering social and cultural aspects.

Craig Miller – We could all benefit from removing boundaries, less livestock, lower road densities, and less conflict. Is the IFT developing a contingency plan after finishing the review, if there is a new RD and the previous recommendations do not go anywhere?

John Oakleaf – Our focus is recovery.

Craig Miller – The RD has the ultimate say if recommendations are implemented. What if he leaves? I would like to help develop a solution.

Charlie Goulds – I want to compliment Shawna Nelson and John Oakleaf. I appreciate your work. I know there is no easy answer.

John Oakleaf – The people in the Blue have really accepted us.

Terry Johnson – We need to remember that the issue is not whether wolves should be there or not. The courts have decided that. The challenge is how to make things work. Every effort is being made to address every issue that pops up. There is effort being made on every person’s part, not just by agency personnel.

Hector Ruedas – If there is a request to remove the pack, who will respond and how long will it take?

John Oakleaf – First, we identified the problem. Now we are hazing. We are seeing a quicker response by the wolves to humans. If it does not work, and they continue to cause problems, we will move to the next step, which is to trap.

Terry Johnson – What is the time frame? What triggers trapping and control?

John Oakleaf – Wolves have to have had a conflict with two dogs in a calendar year, or one livestock conflict. To date, the wolves have not done this.

Terry Johnson – A nuisance animal can be moved. How do you know when a wolf is a nuisance? What are the criteria?

John Oakleaf – It is on a case-by-case basis.

Charlie Goulds – There were wolves in the Blue before the Aspen pack was released. Now, if I see wolf tracks, I call my dogs and get out of there. Defenders would maybe give me \$1,000 for a calf, but my dogs are worth that. One guy who lost a dog was only offered \$150.

Craig Miller – We (Defenders) asked how much the dog was worth, and he told us \$150. We also offered to train a new dog.

Charlie Goulds – You need to try to be proactive and not reactive.

John Oakleaf – We have been giving you receivers and trying to help as much as possible.

Charlie Goulds – That helps when I am at home, but it does not help when I am hunting. I do not know what to do, other than move.

Terry Johnson – This is not our first nuisance incident. How were the others handled?

John Oakleaf – We hazed them. This pack is a great example where hazing has worked. Alternatively, another wolf was hazed and it did not work, so we trapped it.

Unknown – If the Aspen pack becomes a nuisance and you trap them, do you release in original site again, or are they pulled out entirely? What is the effect on the program? The elk are there, but the wolves are coming down anyway. What will happen to the wolves?

John Oakleaf – When we trap, we will evaluate alternatives. Some may go to another area. Our focus is still on hazing right now, and we are not considering trapping. I do not have a clean answer. Sometimes they are brought into captivity. If we translocate them, they can go anywhere in the secondary zone.

Michael Robinson – The 1996 Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) included demographic projections. Every year, the population has not reached the projection. This year it should be 68. You said there were 49. How will we get up to 68 at the end of the year?

John Oakleaf – 49 is the bare minimum. The projection was based on what they thought in 1996. We probably will be below that this year.

Terry Johnson – I was intimately involved in developing the FEIS. The projections/speculations were based on work on other wolves across the country, not on any data from Mexican wolves on the ground. The projections were targets. They were theories. There have been impediments to progress. Some are social intolerance, lack of funding, etc. There were no guarantees in the FEIS as to where we would be in five years or ten years.

Maryann Johnson – I have seen little science in this project. The Five-Year Review needs a lot more work done to outline objective guidelines for people to follow.

Terry Johnson – It's clear that the IFT does not have sufficient guidelines for addressing issues such a nuisance wolf. We will go away from this meeting and develop them. We definitely will change things to ensure more consistency and more accountability.

Jenna Yates – There are problems and they need to stop. Are wolves going to stay there?

Terry Johnson – That is what I meant earlier. Wolves are being reintroduced, they will continue to be reintroduced, and we have to deal with them.

Jenna Yates – Deal with the facts. When you're talking about social implications in an area, you go and live there. The people are more valuable, but in decision-making, the wolves are more important. You need to know people's needs and values.

Craig Miller – I didn't hear much about being proactive with nuisance wolves. I heard about hazing them, but that's it. Wolves bear the burden with livestock conflict. We need to evaluate more proactive things. The program Defenders has is a good one. I know some may be reluctant to work with Defenders, but the preventative fund is good. There is money for hiring riders, community grazing, fladry, and others. These partnerships are great. The spirit of these partnerships is that landowners don't have to shoulder the financial burden alone. We will work with landowners to complement their lifestyle in the Blue. I am disappointed that more of these opportunities haven't been taken advantage of.

Bill Vail – We have been to a lot of these meetings, and we are getting tired of this. People have a bad taste in their mouth.

Craig Miller – These ideas were created with input from people in this community. It took a long time to raise money, but we're ready. We spent \$400,000-500,000 on these programs the past two years in the Northern Rockies.

Sharon Goulds – If the wolves kill our dogs, will the government reimburse us?

Craig Miller – Defenders' compensation program will reimburse for livestock and livestock dogs. It is private compensation, not governmental.

John Oakleaf – There have been 20 shooting mortalities.

Jenna Yates – What is recovery? What is the goal?

Susan MacMullin – That is what the Recovery Team is for. They will develop recommendations. However, we won't have them for another year.

Terry Johnson – The plan with 100 wolves as the goal was written in 1982. Those ideas were much different than they are now. We have to revisit the plan.

Jenna Yates – A lot of people come here to see the wolves. Are you considering when people want to stay away from them?

Susan MacMullin – The key is to get them recovered so the states can take over management. The states will have more flexibility, as with managing lions.

Terry Johnson – We (the state wildlife agencies of AZ and NM) were asked to review the Three-Year Review in 2002, and we identified a lack of recovery goals as a significant problem. The total bill so far for recovery efforts has been \$10 million since 1978. That figure is less than 20% of what was spent to eradicate the wolves.

Halina Szyposzynski – I want to thank Terry Johnson for contrasting the small amount of money spent on Mexican wolf reintroduction with that spent on its eradication. I also want to respond to his description of the reintroduction planning process from its early days as being deficient in its scientific knowledge basis and as being very informal. No one has been happy with the process so far, but are you not exaggerating the flaws in the planning and decision-making process? Is it an exaggeration to say that we had no goal? Despite the shortcomings in available data, the best expert knowledge available at the time was used carefully by well-informed people. Perhaps you (Mr. Johnson) should not be quite so self-critical, as a representative and participant of that process, in describing it in this public forum.

Terry Johnson – From 1987 to 1998, we have been evaluating the goal through countless public meetings and more than 19,000 comments on the FEIS. We constructed the best reintroduction goal we could. It is flawed, but it was not casual. We have never been casual. Because we wanted public participation, the money we spent increased. We have a recovery goal, but it is antiquated. We are doing adaptive management, and are including social aspects. We still do not know what the new recovery goal will be. We don't know what the Blue Range Wolf Recovery Area (BRWRA) is contributing to recovery, because we don't

know what recovery is (in terms of numbers). Once we do, then we know what the BRWRA contribution to the DPS is and we can manage toward it. We have to identify a sufficiently high number so they will never be in peril, or else we'll end back where we started.

Status of Mexican Wolf Recovery Coordinator

John Morgart introduced himself as Recovery Coordinator, and provided some background information on his career thus far.

Update on Wolf Mortalities

There have been no new mortalities since early 2004.

Colleen Buchanan reported on the last three investigations: two wolves were shot, and another predator killed one.

Interagency MOU

Sierra County has signed. Catron County has declined to sign, but will continue to participate. The Grant County Commission staff is inquiring about the MOU. Terry Johnson will meet with the county, Chuck Hayes, and Alex Thal to see if they will sign, or at least participate. No one has withdrawn from the MOU.

Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)

The IFT and AMOC have been working on a series of protocols to provide guidelines for IFT operation. We will have another internal review, and then will meet with our Directors on December 17 for closure.

Action Item: We will put the SOPs on the AGFD website no less than 30 days prior to the January AMWG meeting. We will have full discussion at the January meeting, and revise the SOPs based on public input. All comment received will be considered.

George Lemen – Will one include where you can put new releases?

Terry Johnson – We can't change the rule, but one of the SOPs will address how release sites are chosen.

Jean Ossorio. – The NMDGF Commission is now willing to discuss wolves. NM is more constrained by the 10j than their Commission. It is opposite in AZ.

Michael Robinson – The NMDGF Commission specifically requested that the 10j be changed. There are tons of processes. This is a parody of wildlife management.

Terry Johnson – Again, there was no clear process in the Three-Year Review, nor was there closure. It was very confusing, and the state agencies are tremendously frustrated. Now, through this adaptive management program and the Five-Year Review, we are trying to change things for the better.

Chuck Hayes – The NMDGF Commission did not say that. They advised the Department to make recommendations to make changes in the rule. They never said they wanted releases or to destroy the boundary. On December 15, I will be going to the Commission with a report on the progress of the recommendations.

Darry Dolan – How are recommendations going to be submitted to the Commission?

Chuck Hayes – At a formal Commission meeting. The minutes will be made public. The meeting will be in Albuquerque.

USEWS Regional Director's Response Regarding Request for Written Documentation of Wolf Control Decisions

Susan MacMullin explained that the RD wants the SOPs finished to provide explanations of why things are done the way they are. But, he will not require documenting every decision.

Roles and Functions

Role and function statements outline what parties are responsible for what duties.

Action Item: The updated draft Roles and Functions summary will be provided to the public at least 30 days prior to the January meeting.

Five-Year Review

Maryann Johnson read a letter from Peter Johnson, MD, demanding that better science be applied in the Five-Year Review.

Colleen Buchanan introduced two people working on the socioeconomic portion of the Five-Year Review. There will be a stakeholder meeting tomorrow to structure this part of the review. It is not an open meeting; people were invited.

Terry Johnson – In selecting consultants to handle the socioeconomic component of the Review, we looked for individuals with objectivity and experience.

Michael Robinson – Why is there an additional level of review that is not required by the FEIS? Why is more money being spent? Why do the subcontractors have extensive backgrounds in the livestock industry?

Colleen Buchanan – There are more impacts to look at than the biology of wolves on the ground. USFWS has committed to this, and is putting in \$50,000 to conduct the Review.

Terry Johnson – We are also trying to respond to specific criticisms expressed in previous AMWG meetings. The subcontractors were not selected because they were affiliated with any specific background. All cooperators own this decision, not just USFWS.

Colleen Buchanan – We will decide tomorrow if this portion of the Review will be on a different timeframe, but, hopefully, it will be finished the same time as the rest of the Review.

Susan MacMullin – The contract is \$130,000. We put in \$50,000 in 2004.

Edward (last name unavailable) works for a small economic department within USFWS, not Industrial Economics, Inc. They are working on lots of different things, so they contract out the work. Industrial Economics, Inc. is the only consultant they can contract with.

Industrial Economics, Inc. is a consulting firm of 65 staff working out of one office. They competed to renew their contract with USFWS two years ago. They do a fair amount of critical habitat work. They are recognized as being objective.

IFT 2004 and 2005 Annual Work Plans and Budgets

The big challenge to work through this is that the Federal and State Fiscal Years don't match up. The 2004 budget was short due to USFWS cutbacks, so AGFD came up with \$400,000 to fill in holes for flights, IFT operations, etc. That will get us thru 2004. USFWS requested \$200,000 more for FY05. USFS is trying to get \$50,000. In 2004, Wildlife Services will spend \$150,000, NMDGF \$80,000, and WMAT \$130,000. We are still working out 2005. We expect to have less money next year.

Wildlife Services has been working from Congressional appropriations since 2003. By the time the funding reaches Arizona, it is approximately \$127,000. It is split evenly between the Arizona and New Mexico programs.

Animal Husbandry/Depredation Study Update

The objectives for the study are:

1. Test the effectiveness of community grazing for reducing cattle depredation.
2. Quantify the number of cattle killed by disease, accidents, and four sympatric carnivores (coyotes, black bears, mountain lions, and Mexican wolves).
3. Estimate the number of cattle killed by wolves, and discovered by producers (i.e., detection rate).
4. Determine factors influencing carnivore predation on livestock including age and condition of cattle, spatial location of cattle, season, and habitat type.

Based on all reviews and the pilot year, we have determined that the first objective could not be met. Statistically, we were not getting enough data to identify a change if we moved to commensal herding. Currently, there are no packs in the study area. AMOC has agreed to continue the study without the first objective. The study is being funded by AGFD and WS. AGFD has committed to funding for three more years.

Other Business

AMWG will meet four times in January to discuss the Five-Year Review. Six agencies will be represented at each of the night meetings. All of these meetings will be open to the public.

January 26	6-9:00 p.m.	Truth or Consequences, NM (site to be selected and logistics to be handled by Adam Polley)
January 27	6-9:00 p.m.	Glenwood, NM (site to be selected and logistics to be handled by Alex Thal)
January 28	6-9:00 p.m.	Alpine, AZ (site to be selected and logistics to be handled by Terry Johnson)
January 29	6-9:00 p.m.	Phoenix, AZ (site to be selected and logistics to be handled by Terry Johnson)
April 22	1:30-5:00 p.m.	San Carlos, AZ (Apache Gold Casino, http://www.apachegoldcasinosort.com/), Hwy 70, five miles east of Globe; logistics to be handled by Steve Titla)
June 17	1:30-5:00 p.m.	Reserve, NM (site to be selected and logistics to be handled by Chuck Hayes)
October 14	1:30-5:00 p.m.	Morenci, AZ (site to be selected and logistics to be handled by Hector Ruedas)

Terry Johnson reiterated that these are not minutes of the AMWG meeting, but summary notes to capture the thrust of the discussion and any action items.

The meeting adjourned at 5 p.m.