

**Mexican Wolf Adaptive Management Work Group Meeting**  
**January 30, 2004**  
**Final Summary Notes**

Location

New Mexico Institute of Technology and Mining Technical Library, Socorro, New Mexico.

Attendees

Elizabeth Slown, Colleen Buchanan, John Oakleaf, and Susan MacMullin, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; Nancy Kaminski, Barbara Marks, Sue Sefscik, Halina Szyposzynski, Ruela Metz, Sharon Morgan, Darry Dolan, and Mark Hansy, private citizen; Bud Starnes, New Mexico Department of Agriculture; Laura Schneberger, NMPLC, New Mexico Cattle Growers Association, and Gila Cattlemen; Dan Groebner, Terry Johnson, and Deb O'Neill, Arizona Game and Fish Department; Nick Smith and Chuck Hayes, New Mexico Game and Fish Department; Tianna Rae Thompson, San Carlos Apache Tribe; Lou Woltering, U.S. Forest Service; Michael Robinson and Laresa Kerstetter, Center for Biological Diversity; Jean Ossorio, Southwest Environmental Center; Dan Adikes, The Phoenix Zoo; Dave Bergman and Stewart Breck, USDA APHIS Wildlife Services.

Welcome, Introductions, Ground Rules, and Agenda Review

Terry B. Johnson, Chair (Arizona Game and Fish Department - AGFD), called the meeting to order at 1:31 p.m.

Ground rules were the same as previous meetings. Participants were informed they did not need to address the Chair to offer comment, but could address the party directly. If that proves unworkable, a more structured process will be implemented.

The agenda was modified to allow Dr. Stewart Breck, USDA APHIS Wildlife Services National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC), to discuss his study first.

Update on Animal Husbandry/Depredation Study

USDA APHIS Wildlife Services (WS) has a great deal of experience conducting research. This study is looking at the impact of Mexican wolves on animal (livestock) husbandry techniques. AGFD did not want to conduct this study itself because objectivity of their researchers would be questioned. Dr. Breck's background is researching non-lethal control methods, and he specializes in human-wildlife conflicts. The data are being gathered in an objective manner, using the best but an evolving study design. The study proposal is being reviewed by scientific experts, including some individual scholars as well as agency-affiliated scientists. To maintain the integrity of the process, their identities will not be released. This study will help develop strategies to reduce predator-livestock conflict.

Beginning May 2003, WS researchers started monitoring cattle (mostly calves, but some adult cows were included) with radio transmitters and documenting the cause of death when a calf carcass was found. Researchers want to estimate a detection rate, the number of animals killed by predators that are actually found. Radio signals let researchers know the location of the calf, as well as if it has stopped moving for over 2 hours. This indicates the transmitter has fallen off the animal, or the animal is a potential mortality. To date, researchers have documented various predators killing cattle as well as other mortality factors. This is done at a species level, not individual animals.

The study will cost just over \$200,000 for the first year. Costs are exceptionally high the first year because of initial equipment costs. Money has come from WS, U.S. Forest Service (USFS), and AGFD. The USFS has contributed \$5,000 thus far and AGFD has contributed \$25,000. AGFD also has committed to \$100,000 per year for three years, beginning in 2004. The AGFD money comes from Heritage funding; no federal funds or money from game and fish licenses.

This study has not been planned as a long-term study with complete budgets; it is a pilot study and researchers are still trying to work things out. If a decision is made to continue the study, the detailed proposal and budget will be sent to cooperators in April.

**Issue:** A concern was raised about geographic limitations imposed on the study. The Center for Biological Diversity (CBD) would like the study to be broad based to represent where the wolves actually are. **Reply:** Breck responded that scale and integrity are 2 different things. The scale of the study is based on resources available and integrity is maintained through scientific design.

**Issue:** Attendees asked for the location of the study. **Reply:** Due to existing litigation, WS is prohibited from giving any information on cooperators to a third party (Doe et al. vs. Veneman. Civ. No. W99CA335, US District Court, Waco District, Texas.).

### Introductions

All agency personnel introduced themselves, followed by the public.

### Status of the Interagency MOU

Signatories to date:

Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD)	White Mountain Apache Tribe (WMAT)
USDA APHIS Wildlife Services (WS)	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
U.S. Forest Service (USFS)	Greenlee County
New Mexico Department of Agriculture (NMDA)	Navajo County

AMOC participants that have not signed:

- New Mexico Game and Fish Department (NMGFD) has scheduled the MOU to be on the agenda for their April 2004 Commission meeting. They are hopeful that the Commission meeting will be before the April 23 AMWG meeting.
- Graham, Sierra, and Cochise counties have not signed but are still considering it.
- Catron County declined to sign the MOU. This does not mean they will never sign it. They have issues to work through to see if they can participate.
- San Carlos Apache Tribe has not signed but would like to participate in meetings, and defer a decision on signing the MOU.

The counties that have been invited to participate are in the Blue Range Recovery Area, but eligibility for participation is any government agency at county level or above. Other cooperators can be added as described on pages 12-13 in the MOU.

We are beginning to operate under the MOU. Although some parties have not signed, the MOU deadlines and accountability are starting now. The MOU is a means of articulating the process that the cooperators will follow. It is a framework of cooperation, and is not meant to be detailed or to identify specific products.

**Issue:** Concern was expressed about the fact that the USFWS has not filled the Mexican Wolf Recovery Coordinator position since Brian Kelly vacated it last June. **Reply:** An Acting Recovery Coordinator has been functioning while USFWS pursues filling the vacancy. Since Brian Kelly left, many individuals contributed to decisions over take/control of wolves.

Due to the tone and nature of some of the discussion to this point, Terry Johnson instructed that henceforth all questions were to go through him and he will redirect them to the appropriate party.

**Issue:** Concern was expressed regarding the MOU lacking anything specifically related to reducing mortality. **Reply:** Numbers 1-6 on pages 4-5 of the MOU were developed in September 2002, so the recent high number of mortalities (15 since March 2003) was not addressed as an “urgent operational issue,” such as in Number 3.

**Issue:** An attendee suggested that an “adaptive writing” strategy should be adopted because the MOU seems to focus on depredation (e.g. Number 3, referenced above), not on wolf conservation. **Reply:** There is more to the MOU than that one sentence. The MOU does not need to be recrafted; it needs to be implemented immediately.

**Issue:** A suggestion was made to use the money AGFD is giving to WS for research to pay for telemetry flights instead. **Reply:** A problem AGFD is facing is that some federal agencies are still waiting on their current year budget, so that is holding up everyone from spending money. Moreover, the states cannot pick up all the shortfalls created by Congress failing to appropriate sufficient funds for federal agencies to cover appropriate actions.

**Issue:** What will be done if the MOU is not working? **Reply:** If the MOU is not working, we may amend it. For example, a law enforcement paragraph may need to be added. There are not yet any objective performance measures to identify if the MOU is or is not working; the recovery team will provide some of those measures, in terms of population objectives. There is no demographic target yet, other than what is outlined in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). We should be able to estimate better demographic targets because we have data from 5 years of Mexican wolves on the ground.

The MOU is now on the AGFD website at: [http://www.azgfd.com/w\\_c/wolf\\_reintroduction.html](http://www.azgfd.com/w_c/wolf_reintroduction.html) and has a link to the USFWS Mexican wolf recovery page.

**Action Item:** Include the MOU as an agenda item at future meetings.

#### Annual Reports for 2001, 2002, and 2003

The 2001 and 2002 Interagency Field Team (IFT) annual reports are available, and copies were provided today. The 2003 IFT annual report will be finished by March 15, 2004 and available at the April 23 meeting, if not before through the email subscription service. Future annual reports will be on time.

**Action Item:** Complete and disseminate the 2003 IFT report before the April 2004 AMWG meeting.

#### 2004 Annual Work Plan and Budget

The workplan will be available at the April 23 meeting. Currently, we are trying to measure needs and identify other funding sources. The 3-page document available at this meeting is an estimate expenditures of approximately \$9.5 million to date. AGFD's escalating costs are a reflection of their efforts to respond to Mexican wolf population increases.

**Action Item:** Complete and disseminate the 2004 IFT annual work plan and budget before the April 2004 AMWG meeting.

#### Recovery Protocols and IFT Standard Operating Procedures

➤ Development of Role and Function Statements

These are necessary to implement the MOU, but we will wait until April so we can use the workplan as framework on which to begin developing them.

➤ News Releases and Flow of Project Information

NMGFD has taken the lead in creating a matrix of responsibilities for information flow to the agencies and the public. The final version will be available at the April 23 meeting. Meanwhile, our public information officers are maintaining information flow. Be aware that not all information published is accurate and there is a constant struggle between timeliness and accuracy. We have to be more proactive in getting information out and the matrix will help.

**Action Item:** Complete and disseminate the matrix before the April 2004 AMWG meeting.

➤ Existing Protocols

This is on the agenda and the protocols are being made available because there were many questions in previous AMWG meetings on direct interactions (e.g. handling) with wolves.

These protocols supercede the 1998 management plan, though some language is directly from the plan. These protocols still allow USFWS to make the final decision about control, but cooperators now have a voice in the recommendations.

**Issue:** CBD wanted to know (a) whether John Oakleaf will make the final decisions on control until the USFWS recovery leader position is filled, and (b) whether the decisions will be made in writing and signed by the decision-maker(s). **Reply:** USFWS explained that no single person makes control decisions. USFWS personnel present at the meeting will bring the public's suggestions to their Regional Director; the decision to put control decisions and signatures in writing would be up to him.

**Action Item:** Bring the Regional Director's response to CBD's request for putting all control decisions in writing, with signatures of the decision makers, to the April 2004 AMWG meeting.

Five-Year Review

USFWS is taking the lead on this review. All cooperators have been asked to provide recommendations on process and content. USFWS will bring a detailed outline to the April meeting identifying how we will proceed.

**Action Item:** Complete and disseminate the draft outline for the review before the April 2004 AMWG meeting.

Report from the Interagency Field Team

John Oakleaf, USFWS and IFT member, gave a PowerPoint presentation on IFT activities and some of the results of their fieldwork. In discussing survival and causes of mortality, John explained that captive breeding naiveté expresses itself after wolves are released. This did not occur in the

Yellowstone and Idaho populations because those were translocations of wild wolves, not releases of captive-reared wolves. After several generations of Mexican wolves are born in the wild, they will be increasingly more shy of humans.

**Issue:** The Francisco Pack on San Carlos was not expressing naiveté; they were being wolves, but they were documented killing three head of cattle on USFS land. Ranchers claim the Francisco Pack killed about 56 head, and that after the wolves were removed, the calf crop increased. CBD claims the pack was removed because of the boundary rule. **Reply:** the Francisco Pack was removed from the San Carlos Indian Reservation because the Tribe asked that it be removed, and the Reservation is not within the boundaries of the recovery zone.

USFWS is working on a database that will identify criteria that will promote “good” releases. We know that releasing a pack with pups increases site fidelity, but we still cannot predict success for any given animal or pack.

Wolf survival is based on “radio” days (i.e. the number of days a wolf is collared). There were six confirmed causes of mortality in 2003 (3 gunshot, 2 hit by car, and 1 unknown), and none in 2004. For statistical purposes, only collared wolves are used in analyses, but uncollared wolf mortalities are reported and tracked.

There may be one release in 2004, but the location has not been identified yet. It may be Mingus Mountain.

#### Other Business

➤ Wolf mortalities

**Issue:** Some thoughts/concerns raised were: Can shooting of all canids be stopped in the wolf recovery area? The deaths of alphas cannot be a coincidence. **Reply:** There is some evidence of single parents raising pups here, and a lot of evidence from the northern Rockies.

**Issue:** Who is responsible for investigating mortalities. **Reply:** Investigation of wolf deaths is a federal activity, with assistance as requested from other agencies, but other agencies are doing a lot to try to prevent shootings:

WMAT – They include photos of wolves and coyotes in their hunting regulations. They use radio broadcasts to let people know there are wolves in the area. They place additional personnel in the field during major hunts, handing out flyers, and they continue to monitor the wolves with radio telemetry.

NMGFD – They have a field person tracking wolves, talking with people they encounter, and they assist in investigations at USFWS request.

AGFD – They sent letters to hunters informing them that wolves are in the areas they will be hunting and there is information on wolves in the hunting regulations. They use radio announcements and have erected additional signs. They increase field patrols during the hunting season and educate hunters opportunistically. They increase their presence at campgrounds during the hunt. They have developed a traveling display that is used for wolf education at hunter and outdoor expos. They have started developing a wolf page on their website.

USFWS – They conduct overt and covert operations and conduct investigations. Law enforcement personnel work every hunt in Arizona and New Mexico. They have developed posters and done many media releases.

USFWS is the lead on wolf investigations, but there is no specific lead person; each mortality has a case agent. They maintain 5 full time investigators, but none are assigned just to wolves. AGFD and NMGFD help at USFWS request. USFWS does not know if wolves are being shot because of confusion with coyotes. If there is a pattern, they hope law enforcement personnel will let them know.

No one is monitoring wolves other than WMAT, NMGFD, AGFD, and USFWS. However, ranchers are given receivers occasionally if wolves are in their area. They are not normally given directional antennas; they can just identify wolf presence. Frequencies are changed on wolves only when their collars are changed and frequencies cannot be changed remotely. There has never been any evidence of these ranchers being involved in any wolf death in Arizona-New Mexico.

No one knows if these 2003-2004 mortalities are intentional killings. All we can do is keep “good” people being “good.” License plate numbers are often recorded on vehicles encountered in wolf-occupied areas.

It is unknown if there will be any arrests soon.

Following a recommendation at the last AMWG meeting of more signs being erected, NMGFD has mapped areas in Gila National Forest and is trying to get on their agenda to discuss erecting more signs. They hope to meet in late February to have signs erected in March. NMGFD cannot afford more than 10 signs. AGFD will provide signs to NMGFD if necessary.

**Issue:** Nancy Kaminski volunteered to organize a group to erect signs and Halina Szyposzynski suggested pursuing a National Wildlife Federation grant for purchasing signs. **Reply:** NMGFD cannot pursue grants because they do not have

matching funds. AGFD will cooperate in trying to secure funds and will put the funds and signs to the best possible use, whether in Arizona or New Mexico.

**Issue:** Does WS remove M44s from wolf-occupied areas? **Reply:** WS is informed daily on wolf locations and removes its M-44s from these areas. NMDA has their own label for M-44s, and WS has no jurisdiction over them. WS cannot speak for any other M-44 users.

**Action Item:** Follow up at April 2004 meeting regarding M-44 use.

**Issue:** Socorro was a long way to come for this meeting. A suggestion was made that these meetings should be located closer to population centers. **Reply:** The focus has been holding meetings in areas where wolf reintroduction is occurring. Meeting dates and locations have already been set for the three meetings remaining in 2004. Perhaps holding a fifth meeting in a calendar year at a population center would solve the problem.

**Action Item:** Follow up at April 2004 meeting regarding meeting locations.

#### Review of Action Items and Assignments

**Action Item:** Include the MOU as an agenda item at all future AMWG meetings – Terry Johnson.

**Action Item:** Complete and disseminate the 2003 IFT annual report before the April 2004 AMWG meeting – John Oakleaf

**Action Item:** Complete and disseminate the 2004 IFT annual work plan and budget before the April 2004 AMWG meeting – Susan MacMullin.

**Action Item:** Bring the USFWS Region 2 Director's response to CBD's request for putting all control decisions in writing with signatures of the decision-maker(s), to the April 2004 AMWG meeting – Colleen Buchanan.

**Action Item:** Complete and disseminate the draft outline for the 5-year review before the April 2004 AMWG meeting.

**Action Item:** Update at next meeting regarding M-44 use – Dave Bergman.

**Action Item:** Follow up at April 2004 AMWG meeting regarding meeting locations, to determine whether meeting should be expanded to include urban centers.

#### Schedule and Locations of 2004 AMWG Meetings

Mexican Wolf Adaptive Management Work Group  
January 30, 2004 Final Summary Notes  
Page 9 of 9

- April 23, Morenci 1:30 - 5:00
- July 9, Silver City 1:30 - 5:00
- October 15, Springerville 1:30 - 5:00

Meeting adjourned approximately 5:00 p.m.

MW AMWG Summary Notes for Meeting of 20040130.doc