



## **Arizona Game and Fish Department**

### **NEWS RELEASE**

For immediate release Nov. 13, 2009

### **Arizona Game and Fish response to court settlement agreement on Mexican wolf management**

PHOENIX – In a news release distributed today (Nov. 13), the Center for Biological Diversity announced a settlement agreement between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and several environmental advocacy groups concerning Mexican wolf management.

The Arizona Game and Fish Department offers the following response:

In its role as the state's wildlife management authority, the Arizona Game and Fish Department has a vested interest in continuing its participation and leadership in Mexican wolf conservation.

The department has actively participated in wolf recovery going back more than 30 years. Since 1977, the department has spent an estimated \$5.3 million for wolf recovery efforts.

The department advocates that Mexican wolf management decisions will continue to be based on sound science and to provide opportunities for participation by local and tribal governments, nongovernmental organizations and individuals from all segments of the public. The department looks forward to redefining how it can best participate in wolf management, to represent the state's interests based on state statutory authority as well as its authority granted under the federal Endangered Species Act.

Consistent with previous Arizona Game and Fish Commission guidance, the department supports the development of an updated Mexican wolf recovery plan with measurable recovery goals based on science. The current plan was completed in 1982 and the department has asserted for more than 10 years that failure to revise the plan has been a considerable impediment to wolf conservation.

The department believes that the development of a mechanism for addressing financial impacts of wolf depredation on private interests is an important step in addressing long-standing social challenges associated with wolf recovery and may in fact be a crucial component in ensuring that the program moves forward in full compliance with the impacts and management commitments identified in the original (1996) environmental impact statement and final 1998 rule on Mexican wolf reintroduction.

The department's endangered species coordinator, Terry Johnson, currently chairs the Mexican Wolf Adaptive Management Oversight Committee (AMOC). The press release sent by the plaintiff organizations is misleading in that AMOC is not and never has been the deciding authority on whether or not a wolf stays in the wild. AMOC reviews situations in which management response is needed and when removal is one of the options considered makes recommendations based on an approved procedure and forwards those recommendations to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Prior to 2008 the USFWS Mexican Wolf Recovery

Coordinator, per the 1998 final rule, made the final decision on removal. Since then, the Region 2 director of the USFWS has consulted on such recommendations with the directors of the other five lead agencies participating in AMOC, but ultimately is the sole deciding authority on wolf removal.

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