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NEWS RELEASE

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Mexican wolf female re-released to wild

PINETOP, Ariz. – A recently captured Mexican gray wolf female has been re-released into an area occupied by a lone male in hopes the two will bond and become a breeding pair.

Arizona Game and Fish Department biologists report that Aspen Pack female #872 was re-released to the wild on Saturday, Jan. 15, after a trip by snowmobile into a location east of the Mount Baldy Wilderness Area on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests. The animal was captured Dec. 22 in the Blue River corridor, which has a scattering of private property and residences. It had been held at a secure wolf facility as project biologists searched for a more suitable site for translocation.

Bruce Sitko, information officer in the department's Pinetop office, explains, "Moving this wolf to the area inhabited by the lone male will provide it a more viable, long-term potential of survival and reproduction capability. It was not in the animal's best interests to leave it where it was."

The male wolf, known as #795, was born in the wild to the Cienega Pack in the spring of 2002. It was captured and fitted with a telemetry collar in September of that same year.

"The Mexican gray wolf project is part of an interagency program begun in 1998 to reintroduce wolves to a portion of their historic habitat in southwestern New Mexico and east-central Arizona," says Sitko.

The department has been actively involved in Mexican wolf recovery efforts since the mid-1980s. In 1998, in cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 11 wolves were released into the Blue Range Wolf Recovery Area in eastern Arizona. In subsequent years, additional releases have occurred. Management activities have included public opinion surveys, public outreach and education, site feasibility studies, intensive coordination with other cooperating agencies, and adaptive management with the public.

The reintroduction of the Mexican gray wolf is a cooperative, multi-agency effort of the Arizona Game and Fish Department, New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, White Mountain Apache Tribe, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service, and USDA Wildlife Services.

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