

**Mexican Wolf Adaptive Management Oversight Committee
Final Summary Notes for January 29-30, 2004**

Location: Socorro, New Mexico, at the New Mexico Tech Library

Time: 1-5 pm on January 29, and 8am until noon on January 30

Participants: Arizona Game and Fish Department (Terry Johnson [Committee Chair], Dan Groebner, and Deb O'Neill), White Mountain Apache Tribe (Cynthia Dale), New Mexico Game and Fish Department (Chuck Hayes and Nick Smith), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Susan MacMullin, Colleen Buchanan, and John Oakleaf), USDA APHIS Wildlife Services (Dave Bergman, Stewart Breck, and Mike Kelly), U.S. Forest Service (Lou Woltering), New Mexico Department of Agriculture (Bud Starnes), San Carlos Apache Tribe (Steve Titla and Harold Nofchissey), Catron County (Alex Thal, Lena Shellhorn, and Ron Shortes), Sierra County (Adam Polley), Greenlee County (Hector Ruedas and Kay Gale), and Navajo County (J.R. DeSpain).

Introductions and Agenda Review

Terry Johnson, Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD), called the meeting to order at 1:09 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.

All in attendance introduced themselves and the organizations they represented.

Two items were added to the agenda: 1) discussion on the letter that San Carlos Apache Tribe brought to the meeting regarding their position on Mexican wolves on tribal lands and 2) discussion on the three wolf protocols available at the meeting for the morning session.

Status of the Interagency MOU

Signatories to date:

Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD)	White Mountain Apache Tribe (WMAT)
U.S.D.A. APHIS Wildlife Services (APHIS 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 has scheduled the MOU to be on the agenda for their April 2004 Commission meeting. They are hopeful that the meeting will be before the April 22-23 AMOC meeting.

Graham, Sierra, and Cochise Counties have not signed but are still considering it.

Catron County declined to sign the MOU.

San Carlos Apache Tribe has not signed but would like to participate in the AMOC meetings. They are opposed to wolf reintroduction and are concerned about depredations on

their cattle. They thought by signing the MOU, they would be supporting wolf reintroduction. It was explained that they did not have to support reintroduction to be a signatory of the MOU and achieve goals under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

Issue: Sierra and Catron Counties would like to make modifications to the MOU in two areas. **Reply:** They need to propose the changes and they will be discussed at the next AMOC meeting on April 22-23. The changes requested would not have to be ratified by all parties if it pertains exclusively to the counties.

Issue: Should non-signatories to the MOU and/or the general public be allowed to participate in AMOC meetings? **Reply:** AMOC would only allow government agencies to participate, whether they are signatories to the MOU or not. Members of the public will not be allowed to attend the AMOC meetings. Only signatories to the MOU will be allowed to vote if it is deemed necessary at the AMOC meetings.

Only allowing government agencies to participate led to discussion on open meeting laws and concerns about not allowing the general public to attend. The general feeling was that AMOC meetings are not policy-developing meetings, they are working meetings used for information gathering before presenting it to the public. The initial purpose of the group was to develop an MOU, now the group's job is to implement the MOU.

Sierra County views AMOC as a federal project, so they do not have concerns about compliance with the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA). FACA allows government agencies to meet and have discussions without the public present.

Action Item: Investigate open meeting laws and report to Terry by 03/15/04 (Chuck, Cynthia, Terry, and TIR Steve).

News Releases and Flow of Project Information

New Mexico Game and Fish Department handed out an information flow matrix before starting the discussion.

The purpose of the matrix is to provide information to parties (e.g., cooperators, media) under the same protocol in a timely manner. The most important information that this matrix needs to provide is how fast information needs to get out and to whom. The matrix kicks in after the Interagency Field Team (IFT) confirms the report(s), but IFT's responsibilities need to be clarified in the matrix. The philosophy is to release information as specific as possible without jeopardizing the landowners or the wolves.

Issue: Information is being released to the media prior to cooperators hearing of it. **Reply:** If information is new and has not been shared with the cooperators, it needs to be done before the press release. Local people and cooperators need to know first. "Locals" or stakeholders need to be

defined more clearly in the matrix. Counties should be in the loop regarding livestock depredations. If IFT is releasing the information, it should flow up through John to PIOs to be covered under the matrix. If parties outside of the cooperators receive new information, it needs to be sent to all cooperators **immediately**.

Some general comments on the matrix were:

The “released to whom” column is not necessarily a press release.

We cannot operate differently than what document says; case-by-case basis will not work. It will not make us accountable. Guidelines need to be clear enough so they are followed consistently.

If the matrix is followed, and the email list in the matrix is notified when necessary, there should be no problems.

A suggestion was made to have a fulltime PIO at the IFT office. This person’s sole responsibility would be releasing information and contacting appropriate parties.

If someone asks a question, answer everything you can comfortably. If you do not know, refer them to the appropriate individual.

Chuck was given input on what situations or behaviors belong in which category. A suggestion was made to reduce the number of categories to three.

Action Item: Incorporate comments from meeting and send final matrix to parties by March 1, 2004 (Chuck).

Annual Reports

The 2001 and 2002 IFT annual reports were “catch-up” reports written without collecting comments. The 2003 IFT annual report will be distributed by March 15, 2004 for review. At the April 22-23 meeting, AMOC will provide the field team project coordinator with comments.

IFT reports need to be developed by the three lead individuals from NMGFD, AGFD, and White Mountain Apache Tribe (WMAT) and the field team project coordinator. These four individuals must ensure that the biology in the report is correct before it is sent out to reviewers. All information needs to be certain before AMOC gets the report. Once the IFT is comfortable with the report, it goes through the field team project coordinator and up the chain for comments. It goes back through the coordinator for revisions.

Wolf Mortalities

USFWS distributed an information sheet that summarized wolf mortalities.

More wolves have died this past year than the previous years, but there are more wolves out there. This is a factual element, but the human dimensions element needs to be considered also. Doing nothing about the high mortality is not acceptable; something needs to be done. The public is expected to show alarm at the number of wolves that died. At the public meeting on January 30, we need to be able to address what has been done to reduce/prevent wolf mortalities. Each lead agency will give a short summary of their activities in this regard.

AGFD has increased patrols overtly and covertly. The Southwest Environmental Center has offered to recruit volunteers to patrol areas. AGFD cannot use volunteers for patrols, but has a reserve officer program they may be able to use. AGFD will explore this program with a request from AMOC. Using volunteers to hand out brochures may be acceptable but there was a concern over letting “anyone” volunteer. There may be those with agendas different from the group and there could be civil lawsuits as a result.

WMAT has published wolf information in their hunting regulations, as well as photos demonstrating the differences between coyotes and wolves. They have increased signage in wolf areas. WMAT only has two receivers and would like more to monitor wolves. AGFD may have a few that they can loan them.

NMGFD has investigated purchasing more signs and will be meeting with the USFS to identify areas where signs are needed. They are limited on personnel on the ground – they do not have many Conservation Officers.

LAW ENFORCEMENT INFORMATION REDACTION.

Some concerns were identified that need to be addressed:

There may need to be a paragraph describing law enforcement activities added to the MOU.

The focus of more people “on the ground” has been during hunting seasons, but there have been many mortalities outside of hunting season.

Collars may not be visible enough and people are mistaking wolves for coyotes when they shoot them. Conversely, if you have very visible collars and someone wants to shoot a wolf, you make them an easy target.

The lead agencies should commit to developing law enforcement strategies. They need to focus on what are the most effective things that can be done to reduce mortalities.

Action Items

1. **LAW ENFORCEMENT INFORMATION REDACTION.**
2. IFT will put together a summary of law enforcement strategies and send to email list by February 17 (John Oakleaf).
3. Individual agencies will discuss issues and strategies with their law enforcement personnel and get comments back to John by March 31 (AGFD, NMGFD, and WMAT).
4. John will present summary at the April 22-23 meeting.

2004 Annual Work Plan, IFT FTE Availability, and Budget Issues

Issue: USFWS has not received allocations for this fiscal year as of yet and will be experiencing budget cuts the next fiscal year. **Reply:** USFWS suggested it may be important for individuals from the lead agencies to go to Washington D.C. to state their funding case. The MOU states that the signatories will collaborate and get funds and Congress is more likely to support a cohesive group.

Issue: San Carlos Apache tribe explained that they have no money to bring to the group and then gave a brief history of the tribe's financial situation. **Reply:** Cooperators are involved financially to the extent they can be. If that means zero, that is understood.

APHIS WS is prohibited from compensating for livestock loss; they respond to depredations only. Congress may be amenable to increased funding for depredation response. Defenders of Wildlife (DOW) has approximately \$200,000 in their account earmarked for livestock reimbursement.

Issue: Currently AGFD employees cannot respond to San Carlos Apache Tribe unless they are invited in through the 1991 MOU or through a letter to the AGFD Director. **Reply:** San Carlos Apache Tribe will revisit the MOU now that they understand it and AMOC better.

USFWS wanted to identify the needs of the agencies and the group as a whole. San Carlos Apache tribe has to determine if they want to join as a cooperator so their financial needs can be included. The group needs to identify priorities.

Action Items

1. Flight cost information from IFT to Terry by COB on February 3, 2004 (Dan).
2. This information will be sent to Susan by COB on February 4, 2004 (Terry).
3. Response regarding money available for flights for February and March to Terry by COB February 5, 2004 (Susan).
4. Send list of priorities and associated dollar figures to Susan by March 1, 2004 (Terry, Chuck, Cynthia, and maybe Steve).
5. Summarize priorities and budget and send out to leads by March 15, 2004. Organize conference call to discuss this (Susan).

The Five-Year Review

USFWS distributed comments received on the five-year review.

There was a slow response on the review, so comments have not been compiled yet, but there were common elements in the comments received. The review is currently one year late.

Action Items

1. IFT begins working on the review (John).
2. Draft outline will be sent to the group by February 18, 2004 (Colleen).
3. Comments due back to Colleen by March 3, 2004 (All).
4. Final draft back to group by March 31, 2004 for decision at April meeting (Colleen).

Timelines and Responsibilities for Developing Role and Function Statements

This was loosely structured in the MOU and now we have to identify them; we have six months to finish this.

A decision was made to wait until the workplan is finished in April and define roles and responsibilities from that.

Schedule and Location of 2004 AMOC/AMWG Meetings

April 22, Clifton	AMOC	8:00 - 5:00
April 23, Clifton	AMOC	8:00 - 12:00
April 23, Morenci	AMWG	1:30 - 5:00

Action Item: Greenlee County will set up meeting logistics

July 8, Silver City	AMOC	8:00 - 5:00
July 9, Silver City	AMOC	8:00 - 12:00
July 9, Silver City	AMWG	1:30 - 5:00

Action Item: NMGFD will set up meeting logistics

October 14, Springerville	AMOC	8:00 - 5:00
October 15, Springerville	AMOC	8:00 - 12:00
October 15, Springerville	AMWG	1:30 - 5:00

Action Item: AGFD will set up meeting logistics

Action Items

1. Send out draft agenda to AMOC 30 days in advance for comment (Terry).
2. Return comments to Terry within 2 weeks (all).

Other Business

San Carlos Apache Tribe gave a brief history about their relationship with the Federal government. They have concerns that if they sign the MOU, the government will walk away from their responsibilities. Representatives at AMOC will explain to their Council and Commission what AMOC and the MOU is about.

APHIS/WS Depredation Study Update

Dr. Stewart Breck, USDA APHIS Wildlife Services National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC), outlined the depredation study for the group. Funding for this study has been provided by APHIS WS, USFS, USFWS, and AGFD. The proposal was reviewed by independent scientists.

There are two main objectives to this 5-year study:

- 1) Reduce depredation problems by altering grazing practices
- 2) Determine predation detection rate

Prior to the study, a wolf pack in the area was removed because they were outside the Recovery Area boundary on the **TRIBAL INFORMATION REDACTION**. The study is not just focusing on wolf depredation, but the entire suite of carnivores (coyotes, wolves, black bears, and mountain lions). The crew is blind from the rancher (i.e. the rancher goes about their normal business).

Researchers began tagging 150 head of cattle (98% were calves; age 1 week to 2 months) in May 2003. Between May and November, eight tagged calves were documented as mortalities (1 wolf, 5 mountain lion, and 2 non-predator). Five non-tagged calves were also found (1 unknown, 2 mountain lion, and 2 non-predator).

Researchers are also checking where collared wolves are in relation to the herd. Researchers are using flight locations also and will be plotting spatial locations of cattle herd and wolves into GIS.

Data that have been collected so far is not enough to address Objective 1, but will meet Objective 2.

Cost and resources can be projected from what they have done so far. They will try to give a better estimate by early March. As of now, the budget is short funded. APHIS WS has overspent based on conversations and emails with other agencies. The project will be \$125,000-\$150,000 short by June 2004. The bottom line is APHIS WS needs money. Any funds coming from USFWS must go through another agency; APHIS WS cannot contract with USFWS directly.

Action Items

1. Craft budget with deficit and what your needs are and send to Terry by February 13, 2004 (Dave).
2. Send budget out to cooperators by February 17, 2004 (Terry).

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3. Send out meeting summary notes by February 9, 2004 (Deb).
4. Identify errors in notes, provide “cure, ” and send comments to Deb by February 17, 2004 (all).
5. Send out final summary notes by February 23, 2004 (Deb).

Meeting adjourned at 12:03 on January 30.

MW AMOC Summary Notes for Meeting of 20040129-30.Public Record.doc