

MEXICAN WOLF ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE  
Final Summary Notes for Meeting of April 20-21, 2006

Location: Arizona Game and Fish Department Pinetop Regional Office, 2878 East White Mountain Boulevard, Pinetop, AZ 85935  
Date/Time: April 20, 2006: 1330 – 1700 (AZ Time)  
April 21, 2006: 0800 – 1130 (AZ Time)  
Host: Arizona Game and Fish Department  
Participants: AMOC Lead Agencies: AGFD – Terry B. Johnson (Chair), Bill Van Pelt, Dan Groebner, Shawn Farry, Janess Vartanian, Mike Godwin; NMDGF – Chuck Hayes, Lisa Kirkpatrick; Saleen Richter; USDA APHIS WS – Dave Bergman; USDA FS – Bobbi Barrera; USFWS – John Oakleaf, Jim Ashburner. WMAT – Cynthia Dale

AMWG Signatory Cooperators: Greenlee County AZ – Hector Ruedas; NMDA – Bud Starnes

Note: some participants were not present for the entire meeting.

**Action items are listed in bold type.**

April 20: 1330 – 1700

1. Opening comments and ground rules

Terry Johnson called the meeting to order at 1330 local time. After a brief welcome and introductions, the agenda was followed.

2. Agenda review/additional discussion points

The agenda was reviewed but no significant changes were needed.

3. Discussion of Summary Notes from AMOC/AMWG meetings of January 26-27, 2006

Summary Notes from January 17, 2006 conference call were distributed. Absence of comment on these notes earlier brought question if notes were final. Terry noted under Item 1 Bullet 2 – 1008 should substitute for “old Ring Pack.”

Notes from January AMWG meeting - need to be supplemented by notes of attendees. Chuck has some notes that need to be deciphered; John Morgart may also have additional notes.

**Action item: Chuck Hayes will provide his notes for the January public AMWG meetings to Terry Johnson by next week. Completed by Hayes in April 2006.**

**Action item: John Oakleaf will check with John Morgart to see if he has any notes to add to those from Chuck Hayes, and forward them to Terry. Completed by Morgart and Johnson in April 2006.**

**Action item: By May 2, Terry will finalize and post the Summary Notes for the January 2006 AMOC and AMWG meetings. Completed by Johnson in May 2006.**

4. Task reports:

a. 5-Year Review: USFWS response and Federal Register comments

John Oakleaf acted as alternate for John Morgart, and gave a report on the 5-Year Review. Received 107 responses as follows: 80 in favor, 26 opposed, and 1 neutral. Expect to have analysis of comments completed by April 28. Will then send recommendations to Ben Tuggle for review. Letter to follow soon after. The guess at this point is that the reintroduction project will be recommended to continue with modifications. Terry's conversations with USFWS indicate that AMOC may move forward with recommendations 15 through 37, but a decision of items 1 – 14 is forthcoming.

Initial review indicates that most all substantive issues in the extended review were covered in the initial review.

AMOC should not share comments or speculation on responses until USFWS decision has been made.

b. USFWS/USFS Special Use Permit update

Bobbi Barrera reported the NM new translocation pen sites had been approved and consultation completed. Appears the permit is complete for NM side. There will be 2 translocations on NM side—1 in April (new site), one in June (wilderness site). USFS will do consultation on AZ side; due to go to USFWS ES office in Phoenix next week. Final decision on number of releases has not been made for Arizona. Concern that public perceives pre-determined outcome regarding Arizona releases for 2006.

**Previous action item: The IFT will develop a timeline for “NEPA cleanup” – get rid of release and/or translocation sites no longer under consideration for use. Initiated; final draft due to AMOC by September 30, 2006 for discussion and closure at October AMOC meeting.**

c. August 2006 Mexican Wolf Management Workshop

David Bergman handed out final draft of the workshop agenda. Each speaker will have 30 minutes to speak, resulting in need to drop some speakers. WMAT requested

a moderator from WMAT, so Wally Murphy will not be the moderator for the session he had been scheduled. David needs help to talk to and confirm speakers.

**Action item: Terry Johnson and John Oakleaf will help David Bergman confirm speakers for the August Mexican wolf workshop. In progress as of July 2006.**

John Oakleaf suggested changing Dan Stark's topic to "Predation on Native Ungulates."

**Action item: Terry Johnson will talk to John Morgart again re: whether the proposed David Parsons invited presentation at the workshop is appropriate. Completed by Johnson, Morgart, and Bergman June 2006.**

A block of 60 rooms reserved at the Hon-Dah resort.

Need information for the third day "Invitation only" workshop. This portion of the workshop is intended for local people affected by the wolf program. Will need to work up an invitation list. Would be most effective if some of the speakers are able to stay over for the third day to have this specific discussion with this small group.

Cynthia Dale suggested inviting Tribal Council and Wolf Task Force (about 20 people total) from WMAT.

**Action item: Terry Johnson will work with AMOC/AMWG representatives (Chuck Hayes, David Bergman, Hector Ruedas, Cynthia Dale) to identify key local stakeholders for invitation to third day forum. The other representatives need to get lists of stakeholders to Terry and David by May 15 (names, addresses, and phone numbers). In progress as of July 2006.**

Are there funds available to support speakers?

**Action item: By the May 1 conference call, NMDGF will look into availability and ability to fund speakers at workshop, and report by the upcoming conference call. AGFD and USFWS will also check. USFS does not have funding to help with this, but some of the \$45,000 previously conveyed might be used. In progress as of July 2006.**

**Action item: Cynthia Dale will check on room charges at the Hon-Dah resort for the August workshop; and the possibility of comp. rooms based on number of rooms booked. Comp rooms could be used to defray expenses of invited nongovernmental speakers. Status unknown as of July 2006.**

d. IFT updates

- IFT/USFS concurrence letter. Pertinent information on this topic was covered under the discussion of special use permits for releases.
- IFT Annual Operating Plan for 2006. Shawn reported that all 2006 operating plans except WMAT are completed.  
**Action item: IFT will work on template for integrating all Annual Work Plans into one report for 2007, and will bring a proposed format to AMOC for approval at the July AMOC meeting. Completed July 2006.**

WMAT is asking for money from USFWS to support telemetry flights

**Action item: If there is a desire to expand flights for wolf/prey base monitoring, it is critical to schedule as soon as possible to plan for planes and pilots. If they desire to use AGFD planes (and pilots), WMAT and SCAT need to ensure that AGFD (IFT Leader Shawn Farry) is apprised of their desires, as soon as they know them, so AGFD can determine whether planes and pilots are available. Costs are not the only issue. AGFD has limited air support, and its planes can only fly on projects in which the Department is a cooperator. Completed July 2006.**

**Action item: By the May 1 conference call, AMOC will address the question about money for helicopter flights for depredation response and for end-of-year counts. Need to finalize information about this item—specific amount needed in FY07, availability of Section 6 funds. AGFD is looking at internal budget and availability of new Section 6 funds related to this, will report back on status of Section 6 funds. In progress by AGFD and NMDGF as of July 2006.**

- IFT Annual Report for 2005. This report was completed. The Recovery Program is in the process of incorporating IFT sections into the annual Recovery Program report. This should be completed before Colleen Buchanan leaves USFWS service.
- IFT Translocation and Initial Release Update. A June translocation is planned for NM, with the final site to be based on denning locations this spring, and to determine which of four available sites will be used in NM while maximizing distance from existing groups.

Initial release(s) in AZ – Public meetings were held in last two days to gather public comment. Bear Valley and Rousensock were presented as recommended sites at these meetings. At the Morenci meeting, about 17 people were in attendance. At Alpine there were about 18 people. Morenci attendees opposed to all releases. The Alpine meeting provided a mixed response, with some support. A

common belief was that decisions had already been made. Shawn handed out synopsis of comments from both meetings.

**TRIBAL INFORMATION REDACTION.**

Status of breeding pairs at end of 2005 – 5 pairs (**TRIBAL INFORMATION REDACTION**).

Rabies issue – Rabies outbreak still going on, workers at Eagle Creek had reported being attacked. It is estimated that there have been about 40 dead foxes observed. Wolves are susceptible as any other mammal, but will not act as a vector. Rabies is not perpetuated by wolves (but can pass to another mammal through bites). Should rabies be a consideration for initial releases? No, rabies is endemic in AZ. Wolves should probably be vaccinated 4-6 weeks prior to release to allow enough time to build up titers. Probably need to consider rabies pre-vaccination series for personnel handling wolves.

Drought issue – This is likely just the beginning of the drought cycle expected to last at least another 10 years. Any option other than continued releases is difficult to justify due to rule constraints.

**Action item: Dan Groebner and Bill Van Pelt will review the existing 10-j and FEIS to determine if there is any other option to continued releases, based on other conditions such as drought. Initiated; completion report (to Johnson) deadline August 2, 2006**

Meeting adjourned at 1630, until 0800 on 4/21/06.

April 21, 2006: 0800 – 1130

1. Continue discussion from previous day

e. Budget update

USFS budget looks grim.

NMDGF has authority to spend ~\$220K, has shortfall but will be looking at other sources to make up. Budget beginning July 2007 is currently unknown, but at this point expect no major changes.

AGFD has budget of ~\$800K, reports say AGFD might have as much as \$500K additional—need to check on this, because that makes no sense.

USDA-WS has \$150K for both states. Represents no change.

USFWS—John Oakleaf said that John Morgart will have to update each agency on budget available from USFWS.

Review of Hector Ruedas' visit to D.C. to meet with AZ Congressman Renzi. Renzi seemed generally receptive. Expect to have continuing dialog with county representatives regarding funding for the wolf program. Talked about lack of effective compensation program. Terry Johnson noted Renzi was first Republican congressman to sign on to supporting Teaming with Wildlife. Also met with senators Kyl and McCain. Kyl seemed receptive to county concerns.

Section 6 funds: \$170K were offered by USFWS in addition to the traditional funds offered each state. Will be allocated with 10% state match. Direction to John Morgart was that funds should be for new activities and not just replace existing funding. Will submit revised proposed that will keep \$45K for NM aerial costs, remaining \$125K to cover existing costs in AZ, not to new landowner support position unless can come out of existing AZ budget. Will update on upcoming conference call in 7-10 days.

**Action item: By the May 1 conference call, all Lead Agencies need to update their FY06 budget information. Initiated; complete information including projections or requests for 2007 due to Johnson by August 2, 2006**

f. **TRIBAL INFORMATION REDACTION** predator study

**TRIBAL INFORMATION REDACTION.**

Stewart Breck also submitted a new research proposal from Janess regarding wolf-cougar competition that she would perform as a personal proposal, not an IFT proposal. AGFD will not fund any additional research until Stewart can put together a compilation of all research, and then will only consider research on tribal lands if it has gone through all the appropriate steps for work on tribal lands.

Funding for Stewart Breck's study to replicate cattle predation study in AZ on NM side is ongoing. Two graduate students for this project recently meet with the field team. 2006 is the last year for funding the study in AZ. Will be beginning study in NM this year. The permittee has already been provided with collars. Will be on ranch primarily on lands inside the boundary, will small portions of private lands outside. Texas Tech will be beginning a study looking at wolf-coyote interactions.

APHIS-WS is also working to finalize protocols for rabies challenge study. Would like to challenge 9-10 wolves in 3 groups: naïve (vaccinated only immediately before challenge), 2 groups with different vaccination history. Want to have meeting in May to get this study started.

A question was raised about how to deal with research proposals that don't request cooperating agency funding. It was agreed that this is a different situation than when researchers approach AMOC participants for funding. Cynthia reiterated that WMAT looks very carefully at research proposals to assess whether there is a benefit to the tribe as well.

**Action item: Cynthia Dale will send WMAT guidelines for research studies to Terry Johnson for redistribution to all agency cooperators, FYI. Completed April 2006.**

Economic model for loss of cattle should be done with this summer, and presented at the August workshop. Goal is to have better Defenders or new compensation program.

Jornada research facility in NM got funding for research on virtual fencing experiment in Australia. Should be completed in 1.5-2 years.

John Morgart wants to talk to AMOC about publishing the 5-year review.

**Action item: On the May 1 conference call, John Morgart will solicit AMOC opinion about publishing the technical component of the 5-year review. Initiated; complete information to be provided to AMOC prior to October 2006**

g. Other Pending AMOC/IFT Action Items

Terry read from the AZ Cattlemen's Association Publication, regarding litigation to remove wolves. **NON-PUBLIC INFORMATION REDACTION** has had depredations and is concerned with roadkill attracting wolves. **NON-PUBLIC INFORMATION REDACTION** is continuing to pursue legal action to remove wolves.

5. Other business

John Oakleaf talked about Dan Stark's research. Wally received comments from district rangers to determine how to proceed with management based on Dan's research and depredations found.

IFT members John Oakleaf, Shawn Farry, and Saleen Richter attended the Catron County commission meeting, and Saleen attended the Grant County commission meeting this month. The IFT was asked to attend monthly meetings of Catron County or send an update to the meeting. Catron County would like to develop their own response team for wolf sightings and depredation investigations due to the increase in wolf population in Catron County. This team would have a hotline for reporting wolf sightings. Depredations would still be reported to WS. Investigations will be done side by side. It is unclear if Catron County investigation reports will be provided to IFT. The money is available for the short term but the process is not complete as to how the County will work with other agencies. The county would like to hire Jess Cary to complete

investigations for Catron County independent of Wildlife Services. Ron Shortes had stated to John Oakleaf that he had thought that Terry was attending the meeting and providing the update, but nobody had invited Terry! A statement was made at the meeting that the county has determined loss due to wolves at \$500,000/year with multiplier to \$1,000,000. Catron County would also like to fund the placement of signs and anti-wolf advertisement for magazines and educational materials.

The IFT will continue to attend meetings and there has been positive feedback from IFT attending the commission meeting to provide updates and to be available for other opportunities for open lines of communication. Catron County Commission meetings are held 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Wed of each month. Shawna has provided updates for several of the ranger districts and will do so for all USFS districts in the recovery area.

Grant County was receptive to Saleen attending the commission meeting. Commissioners requested information about upcoming meetings and project updates.

**Action item: Saleen Richter will provide Terry Johnson with current contact information for Grant county commissioners to disseminate to AMOC. Completed.**

**Action item: IFT will keep AMOC informed of IFT contact with county commissioners, etc. if AMOC-related topics are to be addressed. Ongoing.**

Dan Groebner talked about analysis of impacts of wolves on prey populations. A request has been made to update wolf impacts on prey model used for EIS. AZGFD would like to provide the public with plausible range of impact of wolves on prey. The current state of knowledge regarding prey populations would be an appropriate agenda topic for the July or October AMOC meetings.

WMAT has funding for elk collars to look at movements of elk due to wolf presence.

NMDGF experimenting with FLIR (forward-looking infra-red) for game population surveys.

AGFD has tasked Sharon Hansen to gather all relevant background information for 14 of the 5-Year Review recommendations and construct a road-map for each of the assigned recommendations to enable AMOC to rapidly locate the relevant material. Documentation will come from state and federal agencies working in northern wolf and red wolf states. Sharon is working on recommendations 1, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 16, 24, 26, 29, 32, and 34. Completion of this project should be in June. Any citations or reprints AMOC members can provide will be helpful.

**Action item: By the May 1 conference call, AMOC will identify any additional 5-Year Review recommendations they would like to add to the list that Sharon Hansen will be researching. Completed May 1, 2006.**

Shawn Farry discussed AZ release site selection for 2006. Based on yesterday's discussion Shawn provided IFT's preferred sites as Engineer Springs and Bear Valley. Rousensock and Middle Mountain are also sites in consideration.

IFT comments on potential release sites – In AZ prey base increases with elevation (specifically about the rim). **TRIBAL INFORMATION REDACTION**.

Action item: On the May 1 conference call, an AMOC recommendation to AGFD regarding the number (0, 1, or 2) and location of potential releases and release sites (0 to 5 are under priority consideration) will be made, pending additional potential den site information of other packs and any changes in local conditions (e.g. prey base, fire). Completed May 1, 2006.

If only one site were to be used, IFT would prefer Middle Mountain. Hector talked about fire potential and impact of fire on wolf movements. Hector raised question of possible release after fire season.

Potential release in August increases difficulty of moving and holding animals at the release site. June and July release time offers small deer fawns and elk calves available to newly released animals. Rousensock is not considered number one choice by anyone at meeting or from public comment.

**TRIBAL INFORMATION REDACTION**.

Action item: AMOC conference call will be on May 1 at 1:00 AZ time, 2:00 NM time. **AMOC conference call will be on May 1 at 1:00 AZ time, 2:00 NM time. Completed May 1, 2006.**

Meeting adjourned at 11:30 am.