

MEXICAN WOLF ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT WORK GROUP  
Summary Notes for Meeting of July 21, 2006

Location: Community Center, Reserve NM  
Date/Time: 1:30 – 5:00 pm  
Participants: AMOC Lead Agencies: AGFD – Terry B. Johnson (Chair); NMDGF – Chuck Hayes; USDA-APHIS WS – Dave Bergman; USDA-FS Cathy Taylor; USFWS – John Morgart.

IFT members: AGFD - Shawn Farry and Shawna Nelson; NMDGF – Saleen Richter; USFWS – John Oakleaf.

A. Welcome, Introductions, Ground Rules, and Agenda Review

Terry Johnson called the meeting to order at 1:30 pm. After a brief welcome and introductions, the ground rules and agenda for the meeting were reviewed. Terry also pointed out that copies of self-subscription newsletter for the project and documents pertaining to today's meeting were available on the back table.

B. Defenders of Wildlife Depredation Compensation and Mitigation Program

Eva Sargent, Southwest Director for Defenders of Wildlife (Defenders), provided an overview of the three components of Defenders' compensation program: mitigation, prevention, and incentives.

Mitigation is intended to compensate livestock owners – to build tolerance, spread the cost of reintroduction, and have the public share in the cost. Defenders has spent \$50,000 for approximately 100 incidents in Arizona/New Mexico. Changes have been made in the program – initially, market value of the animal at time of depredation was paid, now Defenders pays full market value. The funds are now held as a dedicated trust. Defenders pays 50% on probable wolf kills and on some on possible kills in Arizona and New Mexico when they are associated with a confirmed kill.

The proactive fund is about prevention -- deterrents – to keep wolves away from cows – such as cost share programs like riders and herding guard dogs and fladry. Defenders has spent \$25,000 in AZ/NM on proactive measures. There have been problems with the program, but Defenders is committed to it.

Incentives: Defenders advocates wolf-related ecotourism as a means of providing local benefits. Eva suggested that local residents put up a guesthouse in an area occupied by wolves, and see how many people come to see the wolves. It's a big draw elsewhere to see wolves. If anyone is interested in how to get started in tourism/ecotourism, they can contact Eva for assistance.

Eva stated that Wildlife Services (WS) used to send wolf depredations reports to Defenders but now it does not. WS sends them only to the affected rancher, which "screws up payments from

Defenders.” Ranchers are provided instructions for compensation and they get their check in approximately 6 weeks.

Terry Johnson commented at that point that this agenda item was not intended to be an ecotourism discussion, but to focus on compensation and prevention. Also, he said that Defenders is very well aware that the change in process for WS sending depredation reports is a result of litigation elsewhere (Texas), and is not a matter of WS choice. If Defenders wishes to work with ranchers on compensation claims, they must work with the ranchers directly. The ranchers have the option to contact Defenders or not.

In the ensuing open discussion, a variety of topics were covered, including: the criteria for confirming a wolf kill; the extent to which depredation mortality is accurately reflected by carcass discovery; Defenders cannot figure out a way to compensate without a carcass; failure of the NM Governor’s Task Force to identify solutions to the compensation issue; the conflicts inherent to a compensation program that leads one rancher to accept wolf presence while his neighbors oppose it; the reality that wolves are not only predators or problems that ranching faces in this area; a small ranching operation can be much more severely affected by loss of 1 or 10 cows than a much larger operation would be; the specific methods by which WS investigates an alleged depredation incident and confirms or refutes wolf involvement; the benefits of Defenders or someone else hiring a local person to live in the Blue Range and assist ranchers with taking proactive measures; and a prevailing belief among those present today that wolf reintroduction will not work in AZ-NM because there is not enough space, not enough prey, and not enough scientific fact on which to base the effort.

#### B. Translocations and New Releases of Mexican Wolves in 2006

Shawn Farry summarized the current situation: one new release (Meridian Pack in AZ) and three translocations (Granite Pack in Gila Wilderness NM; F923 south of Glenwood NM; and M859 near Pelona Mountain NM).

In response to a question about the fate of a second pack considered for release, Farry stated that the Redstem pack is still available for release, but a release has not yet been planned.

In the ensuing open discussion, the following topics were covered: allegations that the IFT did not follow-up on reports of an uncollared wolf making an attack on a calf in NM for two-and-a-half weeks, but Jess Carey came out immediately; whether the IFT follows the incident reporting procedures that AMOC has established; whether WMAT still does releases (yes) or they have asked for removal of all wolves (no); whether there are any more areas on the A-S and/or GNF in which wolves can be or should be released (there are no conflict-free areas of significant size); why there have been no initial releases in the Pinos Altos range – where local residents want them (current rules prohibit initial releases there; only translocations are allowed there); whether the IFT keeps a log of phone calls received for response time (time/date stamped) (yes); how often monitoring flight information is sent out (within 24 hours of each flight); whether there is a dedicated phone line for wolf reports (there is a 24-hr hotline); why Arizona and New Mexico

Game and Fish would want to reintroduce wolves that eat the game; the percentage of land within the outer boundaries of the Primary Recovery Zone that is public land (approximately 95%); whether the United States is a democracy or a republic; how much distance a wolf can cover in one day, one hour (varies considerably, with individual packs, animals, behavior, weather, and season - up to 30 miles for a lone animal but not typical; average home range is less than 200 square miles; pack usually travels back and forth within a 10-mile area).

#### D. Depredation and Wolf Management Activities

Shawn Farry reported that M859 had been trapped for one depredation and persisting outside boundary, and that the Nantac Pack had been permanently removed. In the ensuing open discussion of wolf depredation issues and IFT control actions, the following topics were covered: the number of depredation incidents that triggers control actions within and outside the MWEPA boundary; whether it is biologically sound to leave livestock carcasses in the wild in an area in which wolves are being reintroduced; whether the IFT complies with SOP 13.0 in controlling wolves (yes); whether the radio collars on wolves makes them susceptible to unlawful killing; Catron County concerns regarding possible psychological trauma to families resulting from wolf reintroduction; whether a person who believes their life is in danger from a wolf can shoot it (yes, but the incident will be investigated and if necessary a court will decide whether the action was appropriate); why some people are so concerned about wolves, when there are so many other predators in the wild that have so much more impact on elk, deer, domestic dogs, etc.; why people and wolves appear to co-exist so much better in other areas than in AZ-NM; whether there is a biological need for more releases; implications of the 5-Year Review recommendations regarding the need and agency commitment to change the current nonessential experimental population rule and the MWEPA boundaries; whether AMOC will be making changes in Project SOPs, through adaptive management, while addressing the rule change issue (yes); and the number of Mexican wolves in the wild.

#### E. 5-Year Review Outcomes and Implementation Actions

John Morgart stated that under the existing nonessential experimental population rule, both 3 and 5-year reviews were required to determine whether to continue, discontinue, or modify the rule and the reintroduction effort. USFWS was responsible for completing these reviews, and USFWS asked AMOC to take on the challenge of the most recent one, the 5-Year Review. AMOC spent considerable time preparing the document, including many public meetings and comment gathering. The resulting 5-Year Review document was sent to USFWS for consideration. However, AMOC's 37 recommendations had not undergone public review, so USFWS opted to send out whole package for additional public review. USFWS then evaluated all the comments and forwarded recommendations up the chain. The material is now in the hands of Acting Regional Director Ben Tuggle. In terms of where the program going, that answer will be provided after Dr. Tuggle has completed the internal process, including consulting with USFWS in Washington DC and with the Secretary of the Interior's office. Thus, at this time, USFWS is not prepared to make a final announcement on its reaction to the 37 5-Yr Review recommendations.

The ensuing open discussion included the following topics: why USFWS sent out the entire 5YR when it acknowledged that only the first 14 recommendations are within its purview and the other 23 recommendations are within the purview of AMOC (USFWS wanted to provide all the relevant context and respond on the basis of the comment received); whether this level of Interior Department involvement is usual and customary (yes); what the issues might be (no speculation here); whether the 5YR response from USFWS will address possible psychological trauma of children (no speculation); whether some children's fear of wolves might reflect parental fears (fear is largely learned); what is meant by "full protection of wolves" (it means they are Protected under the ESA; they are an endangered species, protected by law; non-essential experimental designation provides management flexibility that "full protection" does not; whether NEPA process will be involved when the rule is changed (yes; the cooperators will invoke NEPA and it seems likely that a full EIS will be done); whether the AZ-NM wolf population is dropping, without management response, when if that were happening in Yellowstone National Park there would have been immediate management change; whether SOP are dynamic (yes) or set in stone (no); possible opportunities to minimize wolf/human interface; the need to find creative short-term solutions to human-wolf conflicts and also come to ideal longer-term solutions; what it might take to create more acceptance/tolerance; the number of known wolves (30-49) and the unknown number of uncollared wolves in the recovery area (35-49 wolves as of December 31, 2005; the next firm count will not be until the end of this year); the average litter size in AZ-NM (2.1 pups per litter); when USFWS might have a response from Washington on the 5YR (Morgart said possibly within the next couple of weeks, based on his personal feelings; whether the 1998 EIS population projections are firm goals that must be met (no) or targets to work toward (yes); the need for boundary changes; whether USFWS will reconvene the Recovery Team (no answer); and whether the current approach to the end-of-year count is the best approach (this issue is being evaluated now, and if any constructive changes can be made they will be made).

#### F. Other Business

With regard to the ecotourism issue deferred from earlier, it was noted by various attendees from the public that: historically tourism not basic to the local economy (audience disagreement on this); some ecotourism is already occurring (audience disagreement on whether it is significant and whether it has potential for growth; ecotourism is not a sustainable economy (audience disagreement on this); whether, if information on sustainable development were sent to AMOC, anyone would read it (yes); and whether improvements can be made in notification of AMWG meetings (yes; please sign up for the ES Updates from AGFD, as noted earlier and on the printed agenda for this meeting).

Meeting adjourned at 5:00 pm.