

MEXICAN WOLF BLUE RANGE REINTRODUCTION PROJECT¹

Initial Release and Translocation Recommendations to Stimulate Mexican Wolf Population Growth

Adaptive Management Oversight Committee and Interagency Field Team
Mexican Wolf Blue Range Reintroduction Project

Final: October 15, 2008

DECISION OF LEAD AGENCY DIRECTORS

Effective today, the jurisdictional Lead Agency Directors (AGFD, NMDGF, USFWS) approved the recommendations set forth in this document. Project staff will now proceed with notifications and outreach per Standard Operating Procedures 5.0 (Initial Releases) and 6.0 (Translocations). A timeline for implementation is included below (see page 6).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Lead Agencies are concerned that since 2003 the Mexican wolf population in the Blue Range Wolf Recovery Area (BRWRA) of Arizona and New Mexico and the Fort Apache Indian Reservation (FAIR) of Arizona has oscillated between 40 and 60 known (documented) radio-collared and uncollared wolves (AMOC 2008). Unlawful killings and management removals in response to livestock depredation and boundary violations have played primary roles in affecting wolf population growth. USFWS has already initiated NEPA² process to address issues pertaining to BRWRA boundaries and other management directives in the Federal nonessential experimental population “10(j)” rule under which the Project operates. However, that regulatory process is not likely to be completed for several years. Consequently, the Lead Agency Directors have asked AMOC and the IFT to develop an aggressive plan for initial releases and translocations in 2008 and 2009, by which to offset losses and facilitate progress toward the Project’s population goal of at least 100 wolves in the BRWRA.

AMOC reviewed the IFT’s draft recommendations for initial releases and translocations several times between December 2007 and July 2008. All cooperating agencies were afforded multiple opportunities to participate in the discussions and to comment on drafts. By consensus, AMOC endorsed the revised-draft IFT recommendations on July 29-30, 2008.

AMOC, the IFT, and all cooperating agencies met with the Lead Agency Directors on July 31, 2008 to discuss the AMOC-IFT recommendations. After agreeing on a number of modifications (mainly for purposes of clarification), the Directors authorized AMOC and the IFT to take the

¹The Reintroduction Project is a state- and tribally-led collaborative effort among six Lead Agencies and five Signatory Cooperators. Lead Agencies are: Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD); New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (NMDGF), USDA-APHIS Wildlife Services (WS), U.S. Forest Service (USFS), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and White Mountain Apache Tribe (WMAT). Signatory Cooperators are: Graham, Greenlee, and Navajo counties, Arizona; New Mexico Department of Agriculture; and Sierra County, New Mexico.

²National Environmental Policy Act.

final draft recommendations forward for public discussion, in accordance with Project Standard Operating Procedures 5.0 (Initial Releases) and 6.0 (Translocations). This document presents the final (approved) AMOC-IFT recommendations for initial releases and translocations in Arizona and New Mexico between October 2008 and December 2009 (see Table 1).

Table 1. Initial releases and translocations of Mexican wolves recommended for the Blue Range Mexican Wolf Recovery Area from October 2008 through December 2009.

<u>Management Action</u>	<u>Wolves Proposed for Release to the Wild</u>	<u>Proposed Release Site(s)</u>	<u>Approximate Dates of Release</u>
Initial Releases	1. AM1039 and AF836	Middle Mtn AZ or Campbell Blue AZ	November 2008
	2. AM660, AF749, m1130, m1133, and any dependent pups born in 2009 to AM660 and AF749	Engineer Springs AZ or Bear Valley AZ or Rousensock AZ	July 2009
Translocations	3a. F1105 (depending on genetic analysis) or a female yet to be captured for management-related removal)	Immediate vicinity of Paradise Pack AM795 (currently vicinity of Greens Peak AZ)	December 2008 or January 2009
	3b. AF1028 (if captured for management-related removal) or offspring from Saddle (F1053, F1054, F1055)	Immediate vicinity of Fox Mountain Pack AM1038 (currently vicinity of Escudilla Mtn AZ and Jim Smith Peak NM)	December 2008 or January 2009
	3c. Female yet to be captured for management-related removal	Immediate vicinity of lone wolf M619 (currently vicinity of Mexican Hay Lake AZ, Escudilla Mtn AZ, and Tenney Mtn AZ)	December 2008 or January 2009
	4. Up to two unspecified pairs, based on individuals yet to be captured for management-related removal	McKenna Park NM, West Fork of the Gila NM, Miller Springs NM, and/or North Seco NM	March to May 2009

Table 1 (continued). Initial releases and translocations of Mexican wolves recommended for the Blue Range Mexican Wolf Recovery Area from October 2008 through December 2009.

<u>Management Action</u>	<u>Wolves Proposed for Release to the Wild</u>	<u>Proposed Release Site(s)</u>	<u>Approximate Dates of Release</u>
Translocations (Cont.)	5a. Unspecified Male	Immediate vicinity of Laredo Pack AF1028 (currently in Gila Wilderness NM)	December 2008 or January 2009
	5b. Unspecified Female	Immediate vicinity of San Mateo Pack M1114 (currently vicinity of Sand Flat NM to Centerfire Creek NM)	December 2008 or January 2009
	5c. Unspecified Male	Immediate vicinity of San Mateo Pack F903 (currently vicinity of Sand Flat NM to Centerfire Creek NM)	December 2008 or January 2009
	5d. Unspecified Male	Immediate vicinity of Lofer Pack AF1056 (consistently on FAIR AZ; translocations on FAIR are subject to WMAT approval)	December 2008 or January 2009
	6a. M921 or M922	Near Tom Moore Mesa NM (where F1040 radio-collar signal disappeared in 2007)	October 2008 or November 2008
	6b. F1106 or F1108	Near Collins Park NM (where AM1045 radio-collar signal disappeared in 2008)	October 2008 or November 2008

SUMMARY OF AMOC RECOMMENDATIONS

By consensus, AMOC endorses the IFT recommendations below for initial releases and translocations in Arizona and New Mexico from October 2008 through December 2009.

SUMMARY OF IFT RECOMMENDATIONS

By consensus, the IFT recommends: (1) November 2008 initial release of AM1039 and AF836 at the Middle Mountain or Campbell Blue site; (2) July 2009 initial release of AM660, AF749, m1130, and m1133 (and any dependent pups that AM660 and AF749 produce prior to release) at the Engineer Springs, Bear Valley, or Rousensock site; (3a-c) December 2008 or January 2009 translocation of up to three adult female wolves (to be selected from captive wolves with previous wild experience; includes F1105, pending results of genetic analyses, and AF1028, if captured for management removal) to areas immediately adjacent to the following unmated male wolves that are already in the wild: AM795 (Paradise Pack, in the area of Greens Peak AZ), AM1038 (Fox Mountain Pack, on the AZ-NM border in the area of Escudilla Mountain AZ and Jim Smith Peak NM), and M619 (a lone wolf, in the area of Mexican Hay Lake AZ, Escudilla Mountain AZ, and Tenney Mountain AZ); (4) March-May 2009 translocation of up to two unspecified pairs (dependent on management removals in fall/winter 2008/2009) at McKenna Park NM, West Fork of the Gila NM, Miller Springs NM, and/or North Seco NM; (5a-d) December 2008 or January 2009 translocation of up four wolves (male and/or female) to areas immediately adjacent to the following wolves: AF1028 (Laredo Pack in Gila Wilderness NM), M1114 and F903 (San Mateo Pack dispersers that have been traveling separately in the Sand Flat to Centerfire Creek areas of NM), and AF1056 (Lofer Pack, believed to be unmated on FAIR); and (6a-b) translocation in October or November 2008 of two wolves (M921 or M922 to the Tom Moore Mesa NM area and F1106 or F1108 to the Collins Park NM area) to areas where wolves might be present but their radio-collar signals have disappeared (i.e. F1040 in the Tom Moore Mesa area of NM and AM1045 in the Collins Park area of NM). These recommended initial releases and translocations are intended to increase the number of breeding pairs, successful production of pups, and the total wild population of Mexican wolves.

This recommendation is based on: (a) end-of-year (EOY) count information suggesting the Mexican wolf population is oscillating between 40 and 60 known (documented) radio-collared and uncollared wolves; (b) documented mortality of ten wolves (5 alphas, 3 yearlings, and 2 pups born in 2008) and fate-unknown status of another alpha wolf in 2008; (c) evaluation of availability and suitability of all approved initial release and translocation sites in Arizona and New Mexico; (d) availability of captive wolves that, if released, would facilitate pack formation and/or improve the genetic diversity of the wild population and perhaps reduce inbreeding coefficients; (e) direction from the Lead Agency Directors to develop more aggressive recommendations for initial release and translocation in 2008 and 2009 than in previous years; (f) logistics, IFT staff resources, and budget necessary to support multiple initial releases and/or translocations; (g) availability of space in the Ladder Ranch NM and Sevilleta NM Wolf Management Facilities (WMFs); and (h) inability to conduct initial releases in New Mexico.

BACKGROUND

The Lead Agencies identified the need for an aggressive approach to Mexican wolf releases and translocations in a white paper entitled “*The Need for Management Response to Mexican Wolf Population Losses*” (AMOC 2008). In summary, the need stems from unlawful mortalities, management removals, and other losses that from 2003 through 2008 appear to have held the wild population at 40 to 60 known (documented) radio-collared and uncollared individuals.

To identify which wolves and which approved initial release and translocation sites are most suitable for use in 2008 and 2009, the IFT consulted two other Project documents: “*Evaluation of Captive Mexican Wolves to Determine Availability and Suitability for Initial Release or Translocation*” (Dwire 2008); and “*Evaluation of Initial Release and Translocation Site Availability and Suitability*” (IFT 2008).

The IFT’s primary considerations in determining which wolves and sites to recommend for initial releases and translocations in 2008 and 2009 included:

1. End-of-year-count information suggests the wild population is oscillating between 40 and 60 known (documented) collared and uncollared Mexican wolves, thus impeding progress toward the Project’s population goal of at least 100 wolves.
2. Documented mortality of ten wolves and fate-unknown status of two other wolves during spring and summer 2008.
3. Availability and suitability of initial release and translocation sites (i.e. physical and biological conditions of the sites, including consideration of occurrence of wild wolves, especially packs, in the area or likely to use the area in the near future).
4. Availability of captive wolves that, if released, would (a) improve the genetics of the wild population by increasing genetic diversity through increased representation of the Ghost Ranch and Aragon lineages (thus reducing inbreeding coefficients), (b) be likely to continue a pair bond established in captivity, and/or (c) establish pair bonds with wild, unpaired wolves.
5. Direction from the Lead Agency Directors to develop more aggressive recommendations for initial releases and translocations in 2008 and 2009 than in previous years, to offset recent losses and to increase the number of breeding pairs and production of pups in the wild in 2009.
6. Logistics, IFT staff resources, and budget necessary to support (including post-release monitoring and management) multiple initial releases and/or translocations in Arizona and New Mexico in 2008 and 2009.
7. Availability of space in the Ladder Ranch and Sevilleta WMFs.
8. Inability to conduct initial releases in New Mexico.

Process and Timeline

On July 31, 2008, AMOC and the IFT presented a near-final draft of this document to the Lead Agency Directors and other cooperator agencies. During that discussion, the Directors reached consensus on clarifications and changes that would enable them to authorize AMOC and the IFT to discuss the document with the public in September 2008, in accordance with Project SOPs 5.0

(Initial Releases) and 6.0 (Translocations). A summary of comment from a meeting with local grazing permittees in Springerville AZ on September 9, 2008 is included in Appendix 3. A summary of comment from the public meeting in Alpine AZ on September 15, 2008 is included in Appendix 4. AMOC and the IFT were directed to address the public comment and then bring the draft recommendations back for final consideration by the Directors in October 2008.

The changes requested by the Directors on July 31, 2008 have been made in this document. Public concerns voiced in September 2008 have also been considered (see Appendixes 3 and 4). The approximate timeline for implementing these initial releases and translocations is as follows:

1. IFT final draft proposal: August 25, 2008.
2. AMOC comments to IFT on final draft proposal: September 8, 2008.
3. IFT incorporates AMOC comments prior to September 15, 2008.
4. Public meeting in Alpine AZ (Community Center) on initial releases and translocations recommended for Arizona in 2008 and 2009: September 15, 2008. Note: Project SOP 6.0 (Translocations) does not require public meetings for translocations proposed for approved translocation sites in New Mexico. The NM translocation sites proposed herein for use in 2008 and 2009 have been approved through NEPA process, thus NMDGF has determined that it will not hold public meetings on this proposal.
5. Revised document with public comment incorporated sent to AMOC to assess Lead Agency Director support for recommendations: September 22 to October 6, 2008.
6. Lead Agency Directors convey their individual decisions to AMOC: October 6, 2008.
7. Jurisdictional Lead Agency Director decisions on recommended actions within their jurisdiction (USFWS Regional Director concurrence is required) conveyed to AMOC and from AMOC to the IFT: October 14, 2008.
8. IFT contact permittees within 10 miles of Middle Mountain and Campbell Blue initial release sites: by October 14, 2008.
9. First press release for first initial release: by ca. November 7, 2008.
10. Wolves initially released from pen: ca. November 15, 2008.
11. Follow-up press release: ca. November 21, 2008.
12. Initial contact with permittees for possible December 2008 or January 2009 translocations: ca. November 21, 2008.
13. Individual female wolf translocations: up to seven in Arizona and/or New Mexico: ca. December 2008 and January 2009.
14. Follow-up press release for translocations conducted: within 7 calendars of each event.
15. IFT contact permittees within 10 miles of initial release site (i.e. site selected from Engineer Springs, Bear Valley, and Rousensock): on or before May 15, 2009.
16. Press release for second initial release: ca. June 1, 2009.
17. Wolves initially released: July 2009.
18. Follow up press release: within 7 days after the initial release in July 2009.

Note: in addition to the local contacts (e.g. permittees, Ranger Districts, county governments) and press releases noted above, the IFT will make contacts and issue press releases in accordance with SOP 6.0 (Translocations) for all other translocations conducted in 2008 and 2009. Specific dates for these outreach efforts cannot be provided at this time, due to the uncertainty of when any such translocations might occur.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INITIAL RELEASES AND TRANSLOCATIONS IN 2008 AND 2009

After carefully considering all applicable factors, the IFT recommends (by consensus) the initial releases and translocations listed below for 2008 and 2009. It should also be noted that, in accordance with SOP 6.0 (Translocations): (a) the Directors may approve additional initial releases and translocations at any time, and (b) the IFT has the latitude, in certain circumstances, to conduct management-related translocations at any time.

The following releases are recommended:

1. Initial release of AM1039 and AF836 in November 2008 at Middle Mountain or Campbell Blue. If this release proves infeasible for logistical or other reasons, AM1039 and AF836 would be held in captivity, allowed to whelp pups in 2009, and released in July 2009 at Middle Mountain or Campbell Blue. Note: post-release movement of these wolves following a November release will be less certain than if they were tied to pups-of-the-year in a summer release.

AM1039 has extensive wild experience; AF836 is genetically valuable but naïve (lacks wild experience). This combination holds significant potential to establish a wild pair that would be more likely to immediately focus on wild prey, less likely to cause nuisance or depredation problems, and which would increase genetic diversity in the wild population.

AM1039 and AF836 are paired at the Ladder Ranch NM Wolf WMF. AM1039 was born in the wild in 2006 to the Aspen Pack. AM1039 lineage is 62.5% McBride, 25% Ghost Ranch, and 12.5% Aragon. It dispersed to south of Grants NM (outside the BRWRA boundary) in 2007. It was captured in January 2008 and translocated to Gila Flat NM. In February 2008, it dispersed to the San Mateo Mountains NM, where a private trapper accidentally captured it in a coyote trap. AM1039 broke the chain on the trap and remained in the area with the trap on its foot. It was captured via helicopter and taken to a veterinarian to evaluate and treat its injuries. Despite treatment, the trapped foot never fully recovered, so eventually that leg was removed. Following a recovery period, AM1039 was placed in captivity with AF836 on March 28, 2008. AM1039 has bonded with AF836 and shows no lingering problems from loss of a leg. AF836 was born at the Minnesota Zoo in 2003 and is derived from all seven founder wolves in the Mexican wolf captive breeding program. AF836 lineage is 50% McBride, 25% Ghost Ranch, and 25% Aragon. AF836 was transferred to the New York Wolf Center's pre-release conditioning pen in 2004 and to Sevilleta WMF in November 2006, before being placed with AM1039 in the Ladder Ranch WMF.

The recommended release would occur at the Middle Mountain or Campbell Blue initial release site. It would require temporarily erecting a mesh pen for soft release. Placement in the pen would occur in early November, after seasonally-present cattle have been moved elsewhere and while gut piles from harvested elk are available. All cattle on allotments within five miles of the Middle Mountain and Campbell Blue initial release sites are scheduled to be moved elsewhere by October 31, 2008. Because weather, access,

and other factors sometimes delay livestock removal, flexibility in date of wolf placement in the pen and date of release could be necessary to ensure accommodating the permittee.

Preferred Site: Middle Mountain AZ. This site is preferred for initial release of AM1039 and AF836 rather than the higher-ranked Bear Wallow site for several reasons (see Table 1). Bear Wallow is currently used by two wolf packs and is closer to the BRWRA outer boundary. However, Middle Mountain has several benefits relative to other sites, as noted in Table 1 and the site-specific comments that follow it. It is at the head of Hawk's Nest Canyon, between the Beaver Creek and Campbell Blue watersheds. Campbell Blue and Beaver creeks are perennial, so water is readily available in the area. The initial release pen would be erected at approximately 8800 ft elevation, where the dominant vegetation is mixed-conifer forest. Extensive ponderosa pine forest occurs at lower elevations immediately adjacent to the release site. The Middle Mountain pen was used in July 2006 for initial release of the Meridian Pack (then consisting of AM806, AF838, fp1028, and mp1029), which subsequently caused more than three nuisance incidents. A November release of AM1039 and AF836 would reduce: (a) risk of conflict with livestock, which would be removed before the release, and (b) potential for nuisance incidents, because the closest houses are only used by seasonal (summer) residents.

Alternative Release Site: Campbell Blue AZ. This site ranks higher than Middle Mountain (see Table 1) but is recommended as an alternative site for release of AM1039 and AF836 because an uncollared group of wolves has been documented in the Coleman Creek area in 2006, 2007, and 2008. The IFT will survey and trap the area in September 2008 to gain a better understanding of whether the site is unoccupied and thus available for initial release of AM1039 and AF836.

2. Initial release of AM660, AF749, m1130, and m1133 (and any pups that AM660 and AF749 produce in 2009) in July 2009 at Engineer Springs (preferred site), Bear Valley (first alternative), or Rousensock (second alternative). The Engineer Springs area had several controlled and natural fires in 2007 and 2008. However, the area is already recovering from the burns and legally-permitted cattle may not be present within five miles of the site until fall 2010 (see discussion below; trespass cattle may be present at any time). Post-burn "green-up" might even increase local ungulate densities in 2009, providing a better prey base for an initial release. Full evaluation of site condition (vegetation and prey abundance) will occur in spring 2009 and would help determine whether the proposed initial release would occur at Engineer Springs, Bear Valley, or Rousensock.

This initial release would include AM660, AF749, m1130, m1133, and any dependent pups produced by the alpha pair in 2009. Release of a successful mated pair with yearlings (and possibly with dependent pups) increases the likelihood of establishing a territory in the release area.

AM660 and AF749 are paired and reside at the California Wolf Center in a pre-release conditioning pen. If a release is approved, the pair and their two male pups would be transferred to Sevilleta WMF in late spring 2009. AM660 was born in 2000 and is

genetically valuable (50% McBride and 50% Aragon). AF749 was born in 2002 and is also genetically valuable (50% McBride and 50% Ghost Ranch). Their releasable offspring, m1130 and m1133 (born in 2008) are especially valuable genetically (50% McBride, 25% Ghost Ranch, and 25% Aragon).

The recommended release would occur in July 2009, regardless of which site is selected. The wolves would be brought to the release site approximately 12 weeks post-whelping, after completion of pup vaccinations. At the release site, the wolves would be placed in a pen and retained there for approximately two weeks. A pen is available at Engineer Springs; it was repaired³ in August 2008; fire-killed trees will be removed before June 1, 2009 to eliminate threat of tree-fall. A temporary soft-release mesh pen would be erected at either of the alternative sites. Release would occur about mid-July. Flexibility in date of wolf placement in the pen and date of release would be necessary to accommodate moving the wolves from Sevilleta WMF to the release site.

Preferred Site: Engineer Springs AZ. The IFT recommends this initial release for Engineer Springs for several reasons (see Table 1), particularly because several previous releases at this site have been successful: 1998 initial release of AM166 and AF482; 2000 translocation of AM166, initial release and translocation of F594 (released twice), initial release of F518, initial release and translocation of F522 (released twice), and initial release of F592; 2001 initial release of Saddle Pack (AM574, AF510, and fp645, fp646, mp647, and mp648); and 2002 translocation of M632. However, use of Engineer Springs would be contingent on IFT site-assessment in late spring 2009 to ensure that habitat conditions and prey base are suitable.

The Engineer Springs site is in the Strayhorse Creek watershed, about ten miles upstream from the confluence of Strayhorse Creek and Blue River. It is adjacent to the “North Fork” of Strayhorse Creek, which is intermittent for about two miles downstream of the release site, then becoming perennial for two more miles. The release pen is at 7200 ft elevation. The dominant vegetation in the area is ponderosa pine and Gambel oak. Mixed-conifer forest (Douglas-fir, southwestern white pine, ponderosa pine, Gambel oak, etc.) occurs in drainages within 0.25 miles of the site.

In 2008, the Eagle and Hot Air wildfires burned much of the area around the Engineer Springs release pen. The USFS Clifton Ranger District and livestock permittees for the East Eagle, Mud Springs, AD Bar, and Strayhorse allotments are developing a grazing strategy for the next three years that would also allow the vegetation to recover in the areas affected by fire. Specific grazing strategies, in the form of revised Annual Operating Instructions (AOI), have not been completed as this recommendation is being written. However, the Clifton Ranger District and the Eagle Creek cattle-grazing association will present the proposed grazing strategies to the IFT in September 2008. The IFT anticipates the grazing strategies and revised AOIs will allow for rest of burned areas adjacent to the Engineer Springs release pen in the immediate future, and be compatible with use of the site for an initial release in July 2009. The burn area is already

³The Engineer Springs water development also needs repairs, to restore structural integrity of the apron and collection pipe, but this damage would not affect site suitability for an initial release.

experiencing a flush of herbaceous and woody vegetation production throughout the fire-impacted areas, due to summer rainfall in 2008.

First Alternative Site: Bear Valley AZ. Within the Blue Range Primitive Area, Bear Valley ranks highest among the three approved initial release sites near Bear Mountain (i.e. Bear Valley, WS Lake, and Campbell Flat; see Table 1). The most significant drawback to all three Bear Mountain sites is proximity of livestock; 924 head of cattle graze year-round within five miles. In deciding between the three sites for an alternative to Engineer Springs, the IFT chose Bear Valley because of its greater distance from occupied residences along the Blue River. Bear Valley has not been used for an initial release, so it has no history for comparison with success at other sites. Site evaluations ranked Bear Wallow, Long Cienega, Moonshine Park, Elk Lake/Hoodoo, and Fish Bench higher than Bear Valley (see Table 1), but they were all excluded because of existing wolf use or past nuisance behavior related to an initial release. Campbell Blue also ranked higher than Bear Valley but was excluded because it is recommended as the alternative site for the November 2008 initial release of AM1039 and AF836. Rousensock also ranked higher overall but has a lower prey base than Bear Valley, thus it is recommended as a second alternative site for this initial release.

Second Alternative Site: Rousensock/Burns Place AZ. In comparison to Engineer Springs and Bear Valley, this site ranks high relative to (reduced) potential for livestock depredation; only 20 cattle occur within five miles. However, it ranks lower in regard to biological potential (i.e. below Engineer Springs, Bear Valley, and Campbell Blue but above Middle Mountain; see Table 1). Wolves initially released at this location might move up-slope toward Engineer Springs, where prey would be more readily available. However, that would not be a problem if Engineer Springs were not used for initial release or otherwise occupied by wolves.

3. Translocations 3a-c. Up to three translocations in December 2008 or January 2009 of as-yet unspecified female wolves into the Secondary Recovery Zone in Arizona to augment two existing packs that lost alpha females in 2008 and an unpaired male wolf.

These translocations would place up to three female wolves into the Secondary Recovery Zone. Two of the females would augment wild packs that lost alpha females in 2008 (Paradise Pack, AM795; and Fox Mountain Pack, AM1038). The third female would be translocated to pair with M619 (a wild lone male) to promote formation of a new pack; M619 has extensive wild experience but is nearing the end of its reproductive years. These translocations will depend on ground conditions in December 2008 and January 2009 (snow could preclude access) and on fall 2008 pup trapping/collaring efforts confirming that the wild males have not already paired with wild females

3a. Paradise Pack, Greens Peak Area AZ. Since 2006, the Paradise Pack, which includes AM795, has used a territory in the Secondary Recovery Zone that includes the Greens Peak area of the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest (ASNF) and the northeastern portion of FAIR. AM795 lineage is 100% McBride. If trapping and radio-collaring in fall 2008 indicate AM795 has not paired with a wild female, and a genetically appropriate mate is

available (e.g. F1105, pending genetic analysis), the IFT would translocate the captive female into the immediate vicinity of AM795 in December 2008 or January 2009 to promote a pairing.

3b. Fox Mountain Pack, Jim Smith Peak NM and the area of Escudilla Mountain AZ. Since January 2008, the Fox Mountain Pack, including AM1038, has used a territory in the Secondary Recovery Zone that includes the Jim Smith Peak area of the Gila National Forest (GNF) in New Mexico and the area northeast of Escudilla Mountain in Arizona on the ASNF. AM1038 lineage is 62.5% McBride, 25% Ghost Ranch, and 12.5% Aragon. If trapping and radio-collaring in fall 2008 indicate AM1038 has not paired with a wild female, and a genetically appropriate mate is available, the IFT would translocate the captive female into the immediate vicinity of AM1038 in December 2008 or January 2009 to promote a pairing.

3c. ASNF AZ. M619, a lone wild male, has consistently occurred in the Secondary Recovery Zone in an area on the ASNF between Mexican Hay Lake, Escudilla Mountain, and Tenney Mountain. M619 lineage is 100% McBride. If trapping and radio-collaring in fall 2008 indicate that M619 has not paired with a wild female, and a genetically appropriate mate is available, the IFT would translocate the captive female into the immediate vicinity of M619 in December 2008 or January 2009 to promote a pairing.

4. Up to two translocations of as-yet unspecified pairs of wolves in March-May 2009 (prior to whelping) in New Mexico at McKenna Park, West Fork of the Gila, Miller Springs, and/or North Seco. These translocations would include offspring from the Aspen Pack (F1106, F1108; both are 75% McBride and 25% Aragon lineage), Saddle Pack (M1049, M1050, M1051, M1052; F1053, F1054, F1055; these animals are all 81.25% McBride, 6.25% Ghost Ranch, and 12.5% Aragon lineage), or Francisco Pack (M921, M922; both are 100% McBride lineage) that are not used in proposed translocation #3 (above). These offspring cannot be paired among themselves because they all share a very recent common ancestor (F511, 100% McBride lineage). The best pairing among them would result in an in-breeding coefficient of 0.23, which is above the SSPP-accepted standard of less than 0.200. Thus, these offspring would need to be paired with wolves that are removed from the wild for management purposes in 2008 or 2009. If both translocations occurred, they could add two breeding pairs to the wild population.
5. Translocations 5a-d. Translocation of Aspen, Saddle, or Francisco pack offspring into wild packs that have lost or which lose alpha wolves (male or female) in September-December 2008 or in 2009. Known possibilities for translocations include: Laredo Pack - AM1008 died, AF1028 (50% McBride, 25% Ghost Ranch, and 25% Aragon lineage) surviving; Lofer Pack - AF1056 (75% McBride and 25% Ghost Ranch lineage) unmated; San Mateo Pack - F903 (100% McBride lineage) unmated; and San Mateo Pack - M1114 (lineage unknown) unmated and apparently not associating with F903. The Aspen offspring (F1106 and F1108), captured in 2007, have significant wild experience and good genetics (75% McBride and 25% Aragon lineage). They are the most viable candidates for translocations near unpaired males of appropriate genetic lineage. Offspring from the Saddle Pack (F1053, F1054, and F1055; all with 81.25% McBride,

6.25% Ghost Ranch, and 12.5% Aragon lineage) are of less genetic value and have much less wild experience (6 weeks as pups) than the Aspen offspring but they could also be translocated near unpaired males. If the Saddle Pack offspring (M1049-M1052) and the Francisco Pack offspring (M921 and M922) have not been used in translocations proposed above (i.e. #3 or #4), they could be translocated near unpaired females per this recommendation. If these translocations occurred, they could add several breeding pairs to the wild population. The exact number of pairs cannot be determined, because of the speculative nature of these proposed translocations.

Note: Lofer Pack occurs on FAIR. WMAT is monitoring to assess its status, including possible loss of the alpha female. If translocation to offset loss of the alpha male must occur, prior approval from WMAT (not AMOC) will be required. The possibility is included here simply to apprise all Lead Agencies Directors of the situation.

6. Translocations 6a-b. Two locations in New Mexico have been identified where wolf radio-collars failed in 2007 or 2008. Dispersing F1040's signal disappeared near Tom Moore Mesa in fall 2007. Elk Mountain AM1045's signal disappeared in spring 2008. Subsequent observations indicate that these animals, or at least associated wolves, might still be present in those areas. Thus, the IFT proposes translocating Aspen Pack offspring F1106 or F1108 near Collins Park and Francisco Pack offspring M921 or M922 near Tom Moore Mesa to augment the groups in October or November 2008. Both translocations would be in accordance with Exceptions 1b or 1c of SOP 6.0 (Translocations): sites that are currently or were previously occupied by wolves.

PROPOSALS DISCUSSED BUT NOT RECOMMENDED

At AMOC request, the IFT also discussed possible translocation of captive Saddle or Aspen offspring before they become sexually mature. For several reasons, the IFT does not recommend translocating offspring from captivity before they reach sexual maturity: (a) they do not provide an immediate opportunity for population growth, (b) they would need to survive in the wild for a year or more before they could become mature enough to establish a pack, and (c) they have more value to the Project as future mates for unpaired wolves that are removed from the wild but which remain eligible for translocation. Immediate translocation of juveniles captured in the wild to other locations is a viable alternative because these animals can continue to gain wild experience within the overall Project area. Leaving juveniles (> six months old) within their original pack's territory when removal of alpha members is required is also a viable alternative, to allow the animals to continue to gain wild experience. Project data analyses (see 5-Year Review, TC-11 to TC-13) indicate that animals with a greater portion of their life spent in the wild have a greater probability of successful translocation and a reduced chance of management removal or near-term mortality. Thus, the IFT recommends maintaining wolves in the wild for the greatest amount of time possible. However, if juvenile animals are brought into captivity, they should be maintained in captivity until they reach sexual maturity.

APPENDIX 1.

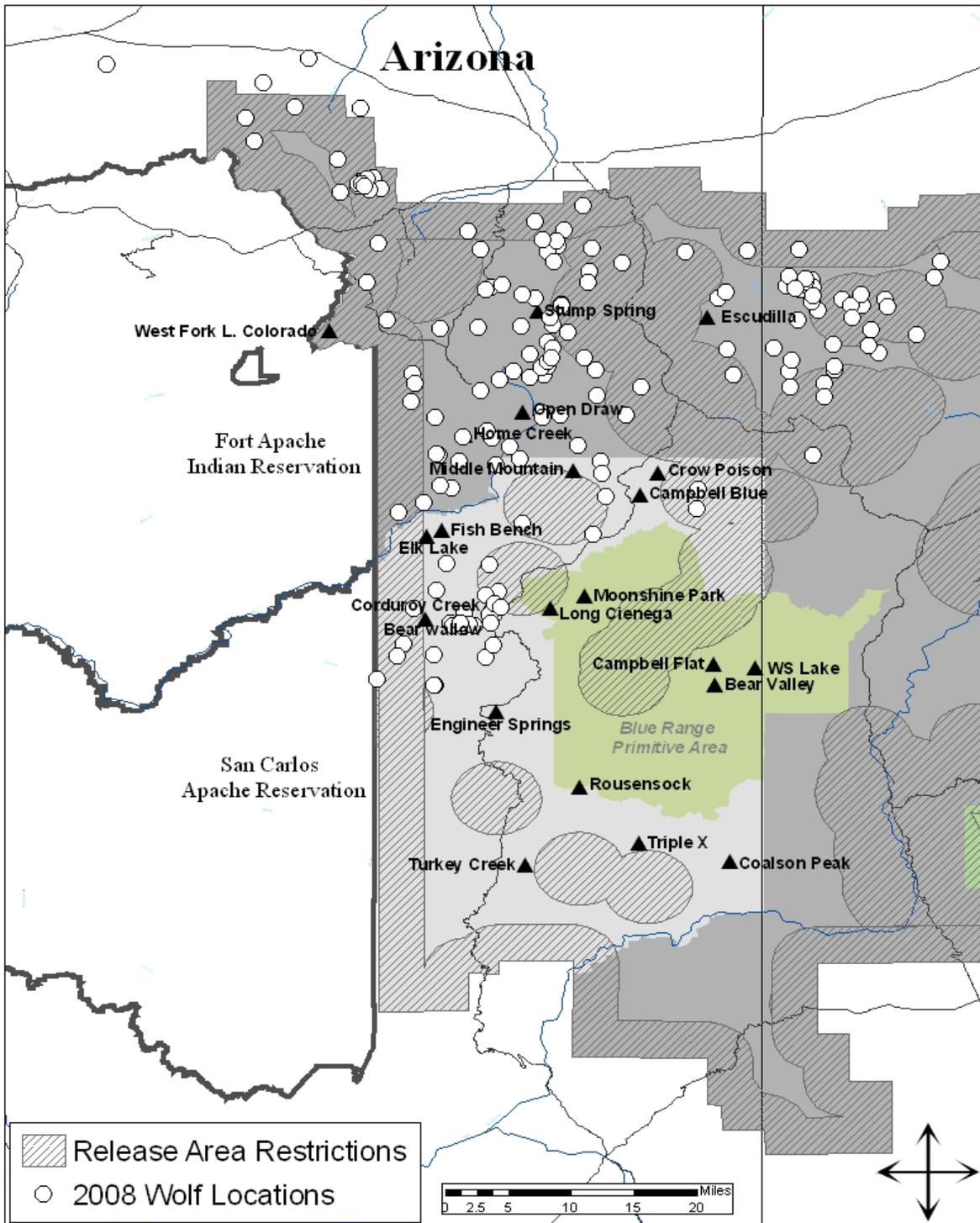


Figure 1. Arizona initial release and translocation sites in comparison to Mexican wolf locations in 2008. All sites have been approved through NEPA process. Light gray area is Primary Recovery Zone. Dark gray area is Secondary Recovery Zone.

APPENDIX 2.

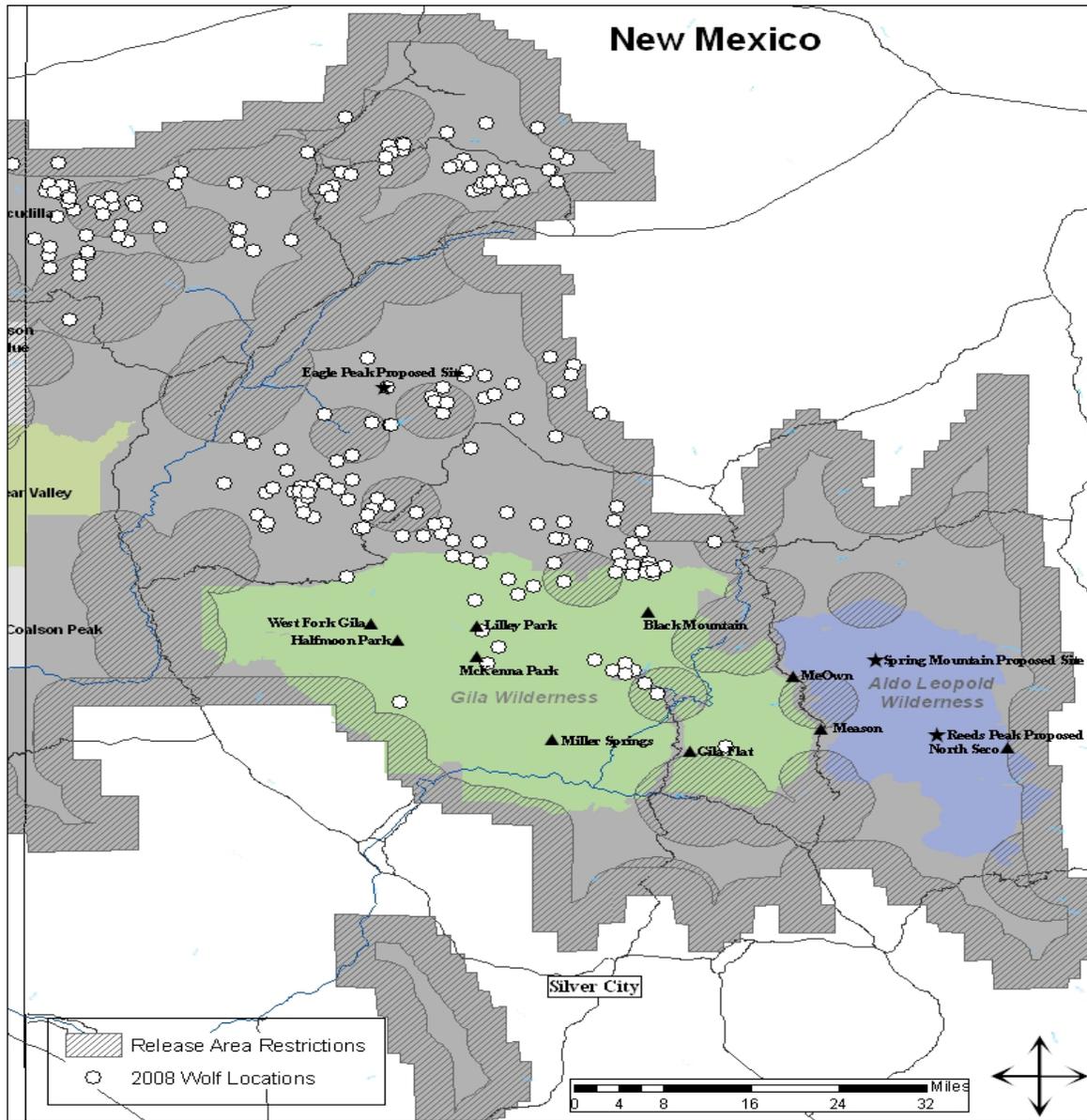


Figure 2. New Mexico translocation sites in comparison to Mexican wolf locations in 2008. Triangles indicate sites approved through NEPA process. Stars indicate newly proposed sites. Dark gray area is Secondary Recovery Zone in New Mexico.

APPENDIX 3.

Summary of Interagency Field Team Meeting with Local National Forests Grazing Permittees Regarding Proposed Mexican Wolf Initial Release at Engineer Springs, Arizona in 2009.

Meeting Date and Location: September 9, 2008; Springerville, Arizona.

Two grazing permittees on the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests (A/S NF) Clifton Ranger District were present: Chase Caldwell, Hogtrail and AD Bar allotments; and Twig Winkler, Tule Allotment.

Three Mexican Wolf Reintroduction Project Interagency Field Team members were present: Chris Bagnoli, Acting Field Team Leader, Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD); John Oakleaf, Field Projects Coordinator, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; and Cathy Taylor, Project Liaison, USFS.

Four other individuals from AGFD and USFS were present: Mike Godwin, Field Supervisor, AGFD; Donna Reed, Clifton Ranger District Range Staff, USFS; Aaron Baldrige, Clifton Ranger District Range Staff, USFS; and Deb Bumpus, A/S NF Range, Watershed and Wildlife Staff, USFS.

This meeting was jointly coordinated by the IFT and Chase Caldwell to discuss potential release of wolves at Engineer Springs in 2009, on the Clifton Ranger District. The purpose was to discuss the potential to develop a cooperative management plan for livestock in the vicinity of the release site to minimize potential wolf-related impacts on affected grazing permittees. Caldwell presented a draft adaptive management plan for livestock grazing for several grazing allotments adjacent to the Engineer Springs site.

A central issue in this process is recent USFS requirement to provide rest for portions of the East Eagle, Hogtrail, Mud Springs, AD Bar, and Strayhorse grazing allotments to allow for vegetation recovery in areas impacted by the Eagle and Hot Air wildfires in 2008. Caldwell and the grazing permit holders for the East Eagle Creek Allotment, Gary and Darcy Ely, are working with the Clifton Ranger District to develop rest/rotation schedules to allow for the desired vegetation recovery and to sustain grazing operations during the recovery. The proposed pasture rotations have the potential to temporarily limit cattle grazing within five miles of the Engineer Springs release site until late 2010. Other issues discussed included removal of "maverick" (wild unbranded cattle) cattle on the Strayhorse Allotment and fence maintenance on all the affected allotments.

Caldwell and the Elys have developed a preliminary budget for range improvements and practices they believe will benefit both the proposed release of wolves in 2009 and their collective grazing operations. Potential practices and materials for which the Mexican Wolf Reintroduction Project might be able to provide financial support include fencing materials, water pipelines and troughs, range riders to monitor potential cattle and wolf interactions, and portable corrals to provide flexibility in conducting calf branding operations. The individuals attending the meeting planned to continue discussions via email to coordinate revisions to the

proposed budget to better define practices that can be considered as cost match and those practices requiring funding match from the Project.

Caldwell is opposed to release of Mexican wolves at the Engineer Springs release site in 2009. He is unsure that there is enough suitable prey in the area to keep wolves in the vicinity of Engineer Springs. However, if this site is selected for release of wolves in 2009, Caldwell expressed his sincere desire to work cooperatively with the Reintroduction Project to implement mutually agreed-upon grazing and wolf management practices to mitigate any potential impacts to his and the Ely's grazing operations.

APPENDIX 4

Summary of Public Meeting Regarding Proposed Initial Releases and Translocations of Mexican Wolves in 2008 and 2009.

Meeting Date and Location: September 15, 2008; Alpine, Arizona.

Nineteen members of the public were present: Barbara Marks, Blue AZ; Tom McNab, Blue AZ; Jennie Cronkhite, Blue AZ; Karin Ireys, Blue AZ; Sam and Julie Luce, Blue AZ; Bill Bunnell, Blue AZ; Eleanor Kerger, Blue AZ; Beth Musselman, Blue AZ; Jeanne Graham, F.S. Road 26, Beaver Creek, AZ; David and Bea Noble, Alpine AZ; Jeanne Randall, Alpine AZ; Chris Corker, Alpine AZ; Stephanie Coleman, Alpine AZ; Bill and Antonia McClain, Hannagan Meadow AZ; Patty Packant, Alpine AZ; and Joel Fowler, Alpine AZ.

Four Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD) Interagency Field Team (IFT) members were present: Chris Bagnoli, Acting Field Team Leader; Colby Gardner, Wildlife Specialist I; Jeff Dolphin, Wildlife Technician and Beth Orning-Tschampl, Wildlife Technician. Two AGFD employees supporting the wolf project were also present: Dave Cagle, Region 1 Wildlife Program Manager; Mike Godwin, Region 1 Field Supervisor and Advisor to the wolf project.

Three other IFT members were present; John Oakleaf, Field Projects Coordinator, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS); AnnMarie Howser, Project Biologist, USFWS; and Cathy Taylor, Project Liaison, U.S. Forest Service (USFS).

Two other USFS employees were present: Rick Davalos (Alpine District Ranger) and Allison Stewart (Acting Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest Supervisor).

One Signatory Cooperator representative to the project's Adaptive Management Oversight Committee was present: Hector Ruedas, County Supervisor, Greenlee County, Arizona.

Comments regarding the proposed releases and translocations were collected by summarizing group discussions and displaying them on a flip chart for group review and individual written comments that were collected at the end of the meeting.

A summary of flip chart comments and questions, including IFT responses to specific questions (Mike Godwin also responded to elk questions) is listed below:

1. An individual expressed his opinion that the wolves released by the reintroduction project are traumatizing local children. The project activities are causing individuals to lose their ability to maintain their livelihoods in the area. Do not release more wolves.
2. It is time to leave the wolf population alone and see what happens to the existing wolves in the project area. Do not release more wolves.
3. Residents are concerned about wolves attacking or fighting with pet dogs around their residences. People want to be able to defend their dogs in such circumstances. (Attendees were advised of existing Federal law governing take of Mexican wolves.)

4. An individual who provides trail rides to the public in the Blue Range Wolf Recovery Area expressed concern about wolves attacking while he and/or his clients are riding. (Response: he was advised of existing Federal law governing take of Mexican wolves.)
5. An individual inquired about the genetic status of wolves used for release by the project. (Response: he was advised that the wolves released by the project are genetically pure and not the result of wolf /dog hybridization.)
6. What are the effects of wolves on local wildlife populations? (Response: AGFD has not detected any significant reductions in deer or elk population levels since wolves have been reintroduced. Recent elk surveys indicate current calf recruitment levels are good, i.e. 39 calves for every 100 cows surveyed in Game Management Units (GMU) 1 and 27. Reductions in elk hunt permit levels for GMUs 1 and 27 starting in 2005 resulted from (a) concerns from sportsman organizations regarding the number of antlerless elk being harvested from these units; (b) lower monitored elk forage utilization levels; and (c) Arizona Game and Fish Commission direction to increase elk numbers across Arizona.)
7. The project goal of 100 wolves in the Blue Range Wolf Recovery Area is too high. There are too many roads and too many people in the area for the project to succeed.
8. Middle Mountain and Campbell Blue release sites are too close to residences in the area. If we have a significant amount of snow fall this winter the wolves will drop off the Rim and move closer to areas where people live. There may be uncollared wolves in the Coleman Creek area already. (The response was that the IFT was attempting to trap any uncollared wolves in the vicinity of Coleman Creek. To date no wolves have been trapped. Track sign indicates at least one wolf may be in the area.)
9. The Blue Range Primitive Area is not good wolf habitat. Most wolves merely pass through the area.
10. The project does not know how many uncollared wolves are in the recovery area at this time. The proposed releases may create problems with the wolves that are already present in the area. The released wolves might leave the recovery area and cause problems.
11. After 10 years, the project is a failure. There is not enough funding and manpower to manage additional wolves in the recovery area at this time.
12. The proposed trapping and translocation of wolf M1114 from the Sand Flats area of New Mexico into the Gila Wilderness is against the SOPs that govern the removal of wolves that have three confirmed depredation incidents within 365 days. This wolf should not be returned to the wild because it will undermine people's belief in the current wolf management process.
13. The Endangered Species Act is not actually a law.

A summary of eight written comment letters received is listed below:

1. A resident of Alpine wrote: "We enthusiastically applaud the efforts to save the Mexican wolf from extinction. Hang in there with the project. Some day future generations will look back and thank you."
2. An unsigned commenter wrote: "You did a good job trying to explain to people who do not want to hear. Please do the very best you can, both for the wolves and the local communities."
3. A resident of Alpine wrote: "Please, please quit wasting our hard earned tax dollars! The wolves are here, fine, quit babysitting them." Other comments from this person included:

- Take them off the endangered species list.
 - Start managing deer and elk herds and quit managing your checking account.
 - Deer herds are decimated in Unit 27.
 - Start compensating ranchers and the public if a wolf is even questionable of causing a depredation or (consider) eliminating that wolf or wolves. No three strikes and you're out sort of thing.
4. An unsigned commenter wrote: "I think you don't need to release more wolves! Why not let the ones you have released breed and grow into wild wolves? Nature will take its proper course." Other comments from this letter include:
- If habitat conditions are good you will release wolves anyway.
 - Why do you have these meetings, you don't care what we think.
 - There is a lot of opposition to this program in this area.
 - Stop this program now and let nature take its course.
5. A resident of the Blue River area wrote: "How many people have to live in this area before this program will not release a wolf? There may not be many people living on the Blue Range but it's our home." Other comments from this letter include:
- The number of proposed wolves should be lowered to the existing level to save tax dollars.
 - Instead of releasing more wolves, put collars on the uncollared wolves.
 - What will happen when the Government cuts funding for the program?
 - Please, no more!
6. A resident of the Blue River area wrote: "Programs such as the Spotted owl, Wolf, Jaguar, Grizzly, etc. have been costing the states of Arizona and New Mexico money for years and have done nothing for the people who live here. These programs are designed to destroy our property rights and move us off the landscape."
7. A resident of the Blue River area wrote:
- A few years ago, the area encompassing Middle Mountain, Campbell Blue & Engineer Springs was considered filled to capacity w/wolves by some in the wolf project. Both Middle Mt and Campbell Blue are very close to human habitation and residences near both locations had incidents occur following releases. Engineer Springs allows wolves to drop off in pretty much direct routes to Blue residences and Eagle Creek – a little distance involved, but not anything to a wolf as we all personally know.
 - The Primitive Area does not appear to be desirable to wolves other than the Aspen Pack, although they spent a large part of their time going from residence to residence. They were near Bear Valley part of the time, but most of that time was with our cattle near "A" spring, where we lost several calves. No remains were found although team members observed the wolves with the cattle during their flight surveys. We were unable to go out horseback due to weather conditions until too late. Other wolves have primarily passed through and not remained. There have been some hanging around the Campbell Blue, Centerfire, etc. area and wolves have traveled down the Red Hill road going off one side or the other, but this is primarily in the winter, and wolves moving out of the snow we hope we have to locations under the Rim could put them in areas with livestock. The [name redacted] ranch is supposed to put cattle in the Upper Bobcat pasture which is under the area under the Rim and north of Red Hill road. This could be problematic, especially if cows due to calve are put in there.

- They have made a proposal to the Alpine District to allow them to combine their bulls with our bulls in that pasture to hopefully avoid big problems, not that wolves wouldn't attack a grown bull, but it's obviously not like a calf.
- With the translocations, we will have our cattle at Escudilla this next spring (2009) and we know several of the other permittees near there will, too on the Springerville District and in New Mexico. Luna Lake is a highly used recreational area and there are numerous residences nearby. That has been an issue of ours from the start and has been demonstrated with maps – there were not, are not and will not be any place in the BRWRA wolves could be released without it being close to humans.
 - We are also concerned about the ability of TWO people, Bill Richardson & Bruce Thompson, to change the 10J Rule for everyone else, not only overriding the decisions of MANY members of the IFT & AMOC, but also the total disregard for if not in violation of the NEPA process. Decisions are not arrived at easily by the teams after much investigating and discussion; we understand this, but apparently Richardson & Thompson don't. It worries us that if problems arise with a new release or translocation that a management decision will be broadsided, much like what happened with San Mateo M1114 days ago.
 - In the presentation it was stated that numbers seem to hover between 40 & 60. Many of us felt that 100 wolves were too many for the recovery area and this seems to bear it out. Perhaps releases should be stopped to see if the wolves present on the landscape are able to eke out a living or continue to be in conflict with humans.
 - We do want to thank you for considering when livestock would be in the areas so you could try to avoid conflicts. Waiting until July when the rains should have started is good, too. Greater water availability is best for the prey, spreading them out but also locating them near the release sites, particularly Bear Valley. Again, however, other than Aspen, wolves don't seem to like the Primitive Area other than around Red Hill Road and under the Rim.
8. A resident of Alpine AZ wrote:
- The loss of so many potential breeding or currently breeding female wolves this spring warrants releasing additional wolves in the recovery area.
 - The facilities at Sevilleta are full of wolves and this necessitates releasing more wolves, especially wild-born wolves, into the recovery area.
 - More wolves are needed in the recovery area to facilitate development of new packs and social interactions that are important for a stable wolf population.
 - I am familiar with the Engineer Springs release area. It provides good prey habitat because of the existing vegetation (forbs and shrubs), which was enhanced this year by the recent wildfires.
 - Until the rigid requirements of SOP 13 are changed so wolves are not removed for 3 depredations (that's 3 head of livestock @ \$1.35/mo grazing fee, or in the case of sheep \$0.27/mo), wolves must be replaced through translocation or releases, or there will be no movement toward recovery population goals.
 - The efforts of the IFT have been extraordinary and professional. Given the program's many and biologically unfounded constraints, the program has been successful.