

JAGUAR CONSERVATION TEAM (JAGCT) SUMMARY NOTES

August 5, 2004

Location: Animas High School, Animas, New Mexico
Time: NM Time: 0900 – 1200
Participants: Warner Glenn, Sue Krentz, Richard Moore, Kelly Glenn-Kimbro, David Moore, and Ron Thompson (Rancher or ranch affiliated); Richard Mahler, Billie Hughes, Steve Pavlik, Gary Groban, Chris Hass, and Kevin Hansen (private citizens); George Ortega (former NMDGF commissioner); Jesus F. Moreno and Jorge Barcelo (Jaguar, Sonora); Bud Starnes (New Mexico Department of Agriculture); Judy Keeler (BHA); Bobbi Barrera and Gary Helbing (U.S. Forest Service); Janice Przybyl, Jo Ann Caruthers, and David Hodges (Sky Island Alliance); Heidi Kuska and Bill Grossi (Bureau of Land Management); Paul Barrett and Delivan Ropir (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service); Tim Veeneudaal and Jim Schmidt (USDA APHIS Wildlife Services); Stephen Williams (Arizona State Land Department); Jack Childs, Anna Mary Childs, and Emil McCain (Jaguar Project); Keel Price (U.S. Department of Agriculture); Chuck Hayes (New Mexico Department of Game and Fish); Michael Robinson (Center for Biological Diversity); Octavio C. Rosas (New Mexico State University); Scotty Johnson and Craig Miller (Defenders of Wildlife); Sharon Wilcox (University of Texas); Deb O'Neill, Tim Snow, and Terry Johnson (Arizona Game and Fish Department)

Introduction

Terry Johnson, JAGCT Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:08 a.m.

A. Opening comments and ground rules

Ground rules were the same as previous meetings. Participants were asked to raise their hand to ask a question or state an opinion. Only one person was allowed to speak and side conversations were kept to a minimum. This allowed each person to be heard and kept the meeting moving through the agenda. Participants in the Jaguar Working Group (JAGWG) (i.e. everyone present at JAGCT meetings) may comment and are encouraged to do so on any issue being discussed at the JAGCT meeting. Everyone was reminded to pick up documents at the entrance and sign in.

All in attendance introduced themselves and the organizations they represented.

B. Agenda Review/Additional Discussion Points

The agenda for the day was reviewed and there were no additions or deletions.

C. Discussion of summary notes from the January 2004 JAGCT meeting

There were no comments or questions about the January 2004 JAGCT summary notes. Everyone was reminded that they could be found on the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD) website at http://www.azgfd.com/w_c/jaguar_management.shtml.

D. Task Reports:

1. Update on AZ-NM sightings – Tim Snow and Chuck Hayes

Arizona – There were 3 sightings (not including Jack Childs’) reported to AGFD since the January meeting. There was one Class II-5 sighting in the Tortolita Foothills near Marana. The interview was too late to conduct an investigation. A Class III-2 was reported from the Catalina Foothills outside of Tucson. The reporter described an animal other than a jaguar. The report from Canelo (south of Sonoita) was a Class III-3/4. The report appeared to be exaggerated.

New Mexico – No sightings reported since the January meeting.

Discussion ensued regarding the timing of the sightings being reported and the timing of the actual investigation. There was concern that too much time elapses between the initial report and the investigation. AGFD explained that if a sighting report is left on someone’s voicemail, it might be 1 week before someone from the agency follows up with a phone call. There are only 2 people in the agency that typically handle the follow-up interview and investigation.

The time it takes to schedule an interview is a legitimate concern. The reason a sighting brochure was developed was to help people direct their calls to the appropriate persons and enable prompt responses. There is still a gap in response time.

AGFD made a commitment that we would get the info to someone who can follow up immediately. This is not being done. We can reprioritize responsibilities of those who respond to make this a higher priority so we can live up to our commitment.

Action Item: AGFD needs to reanalyze how we handle this to make for timely responses. We will update everyone on our progress at the next JAGCT meeting.

Some of the sightings that are in NM are reported to AZ.

Question: Some people have reported sightings to the Sky Island Alliance and claim they do not wish to report it to AGFD. The Alliance does the interview, but promises not to pass on the information to AGFD. What can be done with this information?

Response: When people do not provide this information to a state agency because they

are uncomfortable, it works counter to the agency being able to manage the species. The state agency needs all the available information, because decisions will still be made in the absence of information.

This is an opportunity to educate these people; use the brochure, the minutes, the MOA.

Question: Are sightings being mapped? **Response:** No. If we map them, we may be able to identify focus areas where we can concentrate our efforts. If we do map, we should map everything by class. It would not be a “public” map; it would be an internal data assessment to identify concentrations of sightings. We already know that most of the sightings are in the Tucson metro area.

In the areas with high numbers of reports, cameras could be put out and there could be an increase in public education.

Question: There was no representation from Border Patrol at this meeting. It is necessary for them to participate if we are to focus on long-term conservation. They also need to be proactive. What can we do to engage them? **Response:** Jack has met with a representative from Border Patrol. They seem to be backing off for some reason.

Action Item: AGFD will follow up with Border Patrol and report back to the JAGCT. AGFD will extend an offer to have them be a signatory to the MOA after the new strategy is finished.

2. Mexico Update – Raul Valdez

PHVA in Hermosillo, Mexico is tentatively scheduled for September by Amy Camacho with African Safari. She also is interested in coordinating a large cat chemical immobilization and handling training course. African Safari is interested and supportive of the creation of a JAGCT in Mexico.

There is a new association for the conservation of jaguars in the Sierra Madres. This association is formed by 12 ranches, encompassing 93,000 acres, and is a recognized non-profit organization in Mexico. The president of the association and other members were present at the meeting.

Ranchers have committed to not killing jaguars even when they kill livestock. They are looking for alternative sources of income. One source is guided deer hunts. There were two scheduled last year, and there are 15-20 scheduled for this year. Most of the hunters are Americans. There is one graduate student collecting data for their Master’s work on ungulates in this area.

The ranchers realized they have to diversify economically. Workshops are being organized for local ranchers in Mexico to explain alternative income sources. This will ultimately lead to better management of wildlife and other resources.

There have been 7 jaguars killed in Sonora, but they were not killed on the 12 ranches participating.

Question: Are you aware of a formal request to establish a UMA for take? **Response:** No. Because it is an endangered species in Mexico, a UMA cannot be established.

AGFD pointed out that it may be impossible, but it is being discussed. It may require changes in existing laws.

The association's president, spoke while Dr. Valdez translated. He said the ranchers are committed to the program and want to live with these predators. They wish to form a long relationship with the JAGCT. They are interested in learning the best methods to manage the entire ecosystem on their ranches.

One of the most important things that the JAGCT could do would be to stimulate interest in Mexico. Better management in Mexico means better management in the U.S. The Mexican representatives were thanked for their participation and commitment to jaguar conservation.

The association of ranchers also said they would be happy to take volunteers during February – April to help on the ranches' research project. There is no funding available to help people get there. The ranchers have welcomed the researchers with open arms.

3. Kill Verification Activities (Section 5.H.2.) – Jack Childs

There were no jaguar kills since the last meeting, but 2 mountain lion kills were investigated.

Jack introduced Emil McCain, who is a graduate student of Luke George at Humboldt University. He is studying the activity patterns of large predators and their prey. Emil has increased the number of cameras from 12 to 32. He is also conducting scent experiments to identify what scent lure would work best. The big hold up is money needed to continue funding him. He needs \$63,000 for the next 2 years and is looking for funders. The Phoenix Zoo and the Arizona Community Fund is donating. They are looking for ideas on where to look for money. Jack's project is jaguar detection; this is different. AGFD needs to see a proposal before we can commit to funding. Some money is needed immediately so Emil can hire an assistant to continue fieldwork while he attends classes.

On 24 June Emil found tracks that they believe are jaguar. Emil is very familiar with large cat spoor. They also have photographs of tracks that may be jaguar. When connected on a map, the points where the tracks, and the two photos taken last year were found enclose a 35 square mile area.

Now that they have a fulltime biologist, they want to step up efforts to capture and collar a jaguar. The 2 caught in Sonora both died from overheating and stress. Because of this, they do not want to use snares, but would like to try box traps. They would like to initiate an effort beginning in January. They may be able to use culvert traps; they are constructed in such a way so they will not be able to break their teeth. Alan Rabinowitz said that leopards and jaguars are the easiest felid to get into an enclosed trap. Cougars have been successfully captured in box traps, so it may work with jaguars. Jack will lead a committee to develop a trapping protocol. AGFD has the necessary permits to trap a jaguar.

Not a lot is known about jaguars in this part of their range, but we do know that they are sensitive to handling. The preference would to continue camera “trapping” to remain non-invasive. However, the only way to learn about the jaguars is to get collars out. We have a capture team, including a veterinarian, that is qualified to immobilize jaguars. We need to decide if we are going to pursue trapping a jaguar. Bill, Tim, Jack, Craig, Ron, Terry, Paul, Michael, a Wildlife Services member, and Warner or Kelly will complete the subcommittee to develop trapping protocol.

Question: Can the protocol be tested in Mexico for box traps? **Response:** We don’t want to “test” in Mexico before trying here, but we will follow up and investigate the use of box traps. We will follow up with Dave Bergman.

Two cameras have been vandalized in the last 60 days. It was clear that the intent was to vandalize the cameras; bolt cutters were used. The site is now inactive. There has been a marked increase in drug smuggling. Photos taken of smugglers increased from a couple per year to a couple per month. One man photographed was dressed in camouflage and was carrying an M-16. In one case, he turned the camera off. This has become a human safety issue. The Wildlife Conservation Society paid for the cameras that were vandalized. The cameras will be replaced in January, but the location is lost.

4. Habitat Report Updates – Chuck Hayes and Terry Johnson

New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (NMDGF) completed a report that is roughly parallel to Arizona Game and Fish Department’s habitat report. NMDGF provided copies to the JAGCT at the July 2003 meeting. However, the Habitat subcommittee (JAGHAB) has not formally accepted it and it has not been moved forward for JAGCT acceptance.

After some deliberation on dates and locations, all JAGHAB primary members agreed to meet in Albuquerque, NM on 31 August to decide if they will move the report forward.

Question: Is this the original committee? **Response:** Yes.

The report was reviewed by JAGHAB in July 2002. JAGHAB did provide comments on it twice. The report has been revised since last July. The report shouldn't be new to anyone. NMDGF has not asked for formal approval of the report yet.

A manuscript developed from AGFD's habitat plan has been accepted by the professional journal, *Journal of Wildlife Management*. It is currently being revised.

JAGSAG has reviewed the reports from both states.

E. *Review of Jaguar Conservation Agreement Activities March 1997 through December 2003*
Technical Report

Two drafts have been made available for comment. There were not many comments on the first draft, but there were several constructive comments made on the second draft. We need to have a morning session for review of this latest draft so we can come to closure on this document. We will meet in Albuquerque the morning of 31 August.

The meeting will begin at 0900 and will close by 1600 (both NM time). NMDGF hopes to find a room at Wyndam Gardens at the airport. Chuck will get Terry the information by COB on 23 August.

F. Other

1. We think that a settlement has been reached, but has not been signed. We can be cautiously optimistic that we have an agreement.

AGFD wrote a letter to Governor Napolitano asking if AGFD could participate as an intervener for interrogatories; the governor approved intervener status. AGFD tried to carry the JAGCT commitment to affect conservation of the jaguar through the JAGCT.

Question: What was sued for? Critical habitat? **Response:** To request designation of critical habitat and the formation of a jaguar recovery team.

2. Self-subscription for email updates

Instead of having single species subscription lists, AGFD may group all species together and have on subscription list. This is not for us to decide; our information and

education personnel will decide how to move forward. AGFD will pursue this in September.

Action Item: AGFD will have an email self-subscription service available in September.

3. Either the JAGCT timelines were too ambitious or we did not have the resources to meet the deadlines. A suggestion was made to meet quarterly instead of biannually. Action items and tasks easily slip through the cracks the fewer times we meet. This schedule is not suggested to be indefinite, but at least until the new conservation strategy is completed.

One task that slipped through was that USFWS never signed the MOA. The JAGCT needs closure on this. The final assessment will reframe the new conservation strategy. Working on this will take more than biannual meetings.

There was much discussion on when and where to begin the quarterly meetings. It was finally decided that we would begin the quarterly cycle in January 2005.

The next two JAGCT meetings will be on January 13, 2005 in Willcox, Arizona and on April 28, 2005 in Lordsburg, New Mexico.

Action items and our position on habitat criteria and the NMDGF habitat report will be finalized.

4. **Question:** Can the JAGCT actively solicit funds for Jack? **Response:** Yes. According to the MOA we are required to, but the funding has to be sanctified by the JAGCT. We need to look internally and externally. The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation may be an option. Someone should look into funding from the Doris Duke Foundation.

Action Item: JAGCT members should pursue funding for Jack and Emil.

5. The threat assessment is not complete in the draft review. TEP is proposing a line through the area where Jack has photographed jaguars. JAGCT has not acted on this.

Question: Can the team send AGFD's habitat report and a letter to TEP saying we feel this is crucial jaguar habitat? **Response:** The JAGCT has sent a letter like this before. The JAGCT can only provide information and cannot state support or opposition.

This sparked discussion over sharing JAGCT concerns in a letter, not just information. A suggestion was made that the team can point out concerns already identified in the habitat report, but not advocate one way or another. It was clarified that the signatory

agencies cannot take a stand. We have a letter that was sent to border patrol that we can edit and use.

Action Item: Craig Miller, Tim Snow, and Sue Krentz will draft a letter.

There was discussion of forming a threats subcommittee, and reassessing subcommittees altogether to identify what needs to be changed. The JAGCT will discuss this in January.

Action Item: The JAGCT will reassess subcommittees at the January meeting.

6. NMDGF suggested that they might be able to fund some camera traps if there is an interest of conducting it in New Mexico. They have some money for it, but are limited on staff.

The meeting was adjourned at 1122.