

Jaguar Conservation Team (JAGCT)
Summary Notes for Meeting of October 25, 2007

Meeting Location: Douglas, Arizona

Final: November 19, 2007

Acting JAGCT Chair Bill Van Pelt, Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD), called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

A. Opening comments and ground rules

Ground rules were the same as at past meetings. Participants were asked to raise their hand to ask a question or state an opinion. Only one person speaks at a time, and side conversations should be kept to a minimum. This allows each person to be heard and keeps the meeting moving through the agenda. Also, attendees should turn cellular telephones and beepers off or set them to vibrate. In the event of a call, please leave the room before conversing with the caller. Questions will be rotated among participants to facilitate equal participation. Participants should direct questions to the Chair or specifically to the current speaker.

Anyone attending today's meeting may comment on any agenda item and all are encouraged to do so.

B. Agenda Review/Additional Discussion Points

Copies of the agenda were provided during the meeting. Additional items for consideration included: American Society of Mammalogists report from the Center for Biological Diversity, update on legislation regarding Border Fence/Secure Border Act, and status of litigation.

C. MOU, Framework, and Conservation Assessment

AGFD and NMDGF executed the MOU as Lead Agencies, and USFWS signed on as a Cooperator. AGFD and NMDGF also agreed on the Framework. Comments regarding the Assessment were received from 6-7 entities and they are still being reviewed. Any new requests/comments should be sent directly to Terry Johnson.

D. Task Reports:

1. Update on AZ-NM sightings – Tim Snow (AGFD) and Jim Stuart (NMDGF)

New Mexico – A reported observation from Villanueva, NM was a third party account of more than one cat seen over the last couple of years. The reporting party said she would contact the person(s) who actually observed the animals and have them contact NMDGF. The reporting party did not have the names of or contact information for the observers at the time of the report. Jim is continuing to investigate.

Arizona – Other than by the Borderlands Jaguar Detection Project, no Class I or Class II sightings were reported from Arizona. Five Class III observations were reported since May 2007: Dewey, Benson, White Tank Mountains near Phoenix/Buckeye, Naco, and Tucson.

Ranking Criteria for reported observations were provided at the May meeting and finalized in June 2007. The three Class rankings were reviewed: Class I – some sort of physical evidence is provided for verification; Class II – detailed information of the observation is provided but does not include any physical evidence of a jaguar; and Class III – observer reports a jaguar, other large cat, or cat-like animal, but without physical evidence or sufficient details or the report is otherwise of questionable reliability.

2. Borderlands Jaguar Detection Project – Emil McCain

The most recent photo of a jaguar in AZ occurred in July and included video of a jaguar scent marking. This latest video also showed evidence of the jaguar clawing the tree and rubbing up against the claw marks, which provides stronger evidence of scent marking behavior than previously observed. There has been an increase in human activity in the camera project area. Over the past 6 months, 8 cameras have been damaged or stolen. Jack Childs and Emil continue to provide presentations and media outreach regarding the JAGCT and the project. Jack acknowledged agency support in obtaining additional funds for continuing the camera monitoring effort. Also, North Star Science and Technology has graciously donated a new GPS-equipped radio collar, should the JAGCT pursue a telemetry project.

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

As announced at the May meeting, the Malpai Borderlands Group has made its first compensation payment for a confirmed jaguar depredation in the United States. The depredation of a young calf was found near the Jaguar Borderlands Detection Project area. The grazing permittee/landowner was amenable to compensation, and has become more interested in the camera detection project and the Jaguar Conservation Team. No new depredations have been reported.

Jack and Emil are investigating options for obtaining additional depredation funds to be used outside the Malpai Borderlands area, including in Mexico. This effort is not being sought at the request of the Malpai group, but rather as a good faith gesture based on the current occurrence information and likelihood of depredation events.

4. Coordination with Mexico – Bill Van Pelt (AGFD)

Mexico continues to move forward with establishing jaguar working group/conservation groups. Workshops are being held and the approach is to address threats and conservation efforts on a Regional basis by establishing Regional Management Groups. The Sonoita/Sinoloa Group is the closest to Arizona. Bill

attended its second meeting, which included representatives of all Mexican agencies with jaguar jurisdiction. The group discussed establishing a charter, identifying authorities, identifying areas with past occurrences, maintaining a “county”-level approach, and establishing a communication network for field personnel. The group is lead by Oscar Ramirez and intends to meet monthly. JAGCT will be asked to participate in some of their meetings as relevant materials/actions are discussed.

From today’s discussion, a recommendation was made suggesting that Mexican participants be asked to attend some of our meetings. These should include participants other than members from the Mexican federal agencies (e.g. livestock operators or more local participants). As stated in the May meeting, members of the JAGCT must remember that we have no authority over nor will we try to impose ourselves on our Mexican partners. We will continue to pursue cooperative efforts through the Trilateral Committee, which means fewer attempts through local or statewide (Mexico) contact. These contacts have an open invitation to attend our meetings, but formal invitations probably will not be extended at the local level.

In May, Bill updated JAGCT regarding a jaguar confiscated from a traveling circus near Hermosillo. Unfortunately, the jaguar had all four canine teeth broken, meaning the animal was not releasable. The jaguar is currently in a zoo in Hermosillo. The capture location has not been shared with us at this time. All we know is that a rancher used a leg-hold trap to capture the jaguar.

4. Web-site updates – Bill Van Pelt (AGFD)

AGFD is moving its Phoenix headquarters from Greenway Road to the Ben Avery Shooting Range, at 5000 West Carefree Highway in Phoenix. As a result, new actions/postings to the Website have been placed on hold. As soon as the move is completed, the Department will begin updating the jaguar page of the Website to emulate the Mexican wolf project pages.

5. Jaguar capture, marking, and monitoring in AZ – Bill Van Pelt (AGFD)

Briefings regarding the capture and marking (GPS collaring) of a jaguar in Arizona have not been completed at this time. Dr. Benjamin Tuttle (USFWS) has requested information regarding the handling protocol, individual personnel that would be involved (including experience), time frame(s) for the attempt, and the capture methods to be used. This information has been gathered and forwarded to Dr. Tuttle to be used in discussions among AGFD, NMDGF, and USFWS.

Suggestions from the discussion included a request for a new Risk Assessment because of increased border issues and additional concern that a detailed study proposal has not been provided or does not provide enough detail to alleviate concern for captured individuals.

Action Item: Distribute a copy of the Handling Protocol with the meeting notes.

F. Other Business

1. American Society of Mammalogists resolution – Michael Robinson (Center for Biological Diversity). Michael provided copies of the recent resolution from the American Society of Mammalogists calling for USFWS to develop a jaguar recovery plan, designate critical habitat for jaguars, and address issues related to dispersal of jaguars across the international border.

Action Item: Invite a representative from the American Society of Mammalogists (possibly from AZ or NM) to attend a future JAGCT to discuss the resolution.

2. Lawsuit regarding critical habitat designation. Because USFWS cannot comment on pending litigation, little discussion ensued on this topic. **Action Item:** Copies of the formal complaint will be provided with the meeting notes.
3. Border Fence/Secure Border Act. Sherry Barrett (USFWS) provided a summary regarding border fence issues, including a description of various security measures (PF225 pedestrian fence, VF385 vehicle fence, and use of towers or virtual fence). Plans are to use the various methods in areas from Yuma to Douglas with completion scheduled for December 2008.

Question: why does JAGCT not formally comment on actions regarding jaguar conservation (habitat designation, land management proposals, etc.) or border issues? This issue has been raised many times. The MOU and the Framework are the JAGCT advocacy documents, in terms of defining the group's purpose and its strategies and objectives. On specific issues, JAGCT may opt to provide information for an action agency to consider, including identifying known or potential positive or negative effects on jaguars, but without advocating for or against the issue. However, JAGCT member agencies and participating organizations or individuals are at liberty to comment and advocate as individual entities.

G. Close Meeting

The next JAGCT meeting will convene on Thursday, January 24, 2008, in Lordsburg, NM (specific meeting location to be announced).

The meeting adjourned at approximately 12:30 pm.