

**MEXICAN WOLF ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE**  
Final Summary Notes for April 22-23, 2004

Location: Courthouse Annex, 5<sup>th</sup> Street and Leonard Avenue, Clifton, Arizona  
Time: AZ Time: 0800 – 1700 on April 22, and 0800 – 1200 on April 23  
Host: Greenlee County and Arizona Game and Fish Department  
Participants: AMOC Lead Agencies: AGFD – Terry B. Johnson (Chair), Deb O’Neill, Jon Cooley, Dan Groebner, and Paul Overy; NMDGF – Chuck Hayes; USDA APHIS WS – Dave Bergman, Alan May, and Stewart Breck; USDA FS – not present, USFWS – Colleen Buchanan, Stuart Leon, Susan MacMullin, and John Oakleaf; and WMAT – Deion xxx (need correct spelling of first and last name).

AMWG Signatory Cooperators: Graham County AZ – not present; Greenlee County AZ – Hector Ruedas and Kay Gale; Navajo County AZ – not present; and NM Department of Agriculture – Bud Starnes.

AMWG Non-signatory Participants: Catron County NM – Lena Shellhorn and Alex Thal; Cochise County AZ – not present; Sierra County NM– not present; and SCAT – Steve Titla, Harold Nofchissey, and Stefanie White.

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

April 22

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

Terry Johnson called the meeting to order at 0800 local time. After a brief welcome and introductions, and thanks to Greenlee County for hosting this meeting, the previous Ground Rules were reaffirmed. For the benefit of newcomers, differences between AMOC and AMWG meetings were noted. Primary Contacts were asked to ensure that surrogates are familiar with the purposes and structures of the two meetings. Only the AMWG session on the afternoon of the second day is open to the public.

Because some of today’s attendees will be absent on Friday, “Other Business” (including “New Business”) will be covered on both days. Also, the “depredation pilot study” will be covered today, after the MOU discussion, to accommodate Stewart Breck’s need to leave after today’s session.

Attendees agreed by consensus that the current Summary Notes format is OK, and (with SCAT abstaining) that the draft notes from January’s AMOC meeting are final and can be distributed to AMOC meeting governmental cooperators and participants. Again, AMOC notes are for AMOC use, and are not intended for public distribution.

B. Review of Action Items from January 2004 AMOC and AMWG Meetings.

The agenda for this meeting was largely drawn from the Action Items from the January 2004 AMOC and AMWG meetings. If an Action Item is not covered in the agenda, attendees were asked to bring it to the group's attention.

C. Status of the Interagency MOU and Possible Additional Signatories.

With NMDGF signing the MOU this month, all Lead Agencies have signed it. Graham, Greenlee, and Navajo counties and the NMDA have also signed it. In January, Catron County indicated it would not sign the MOU, but would like to participate in AMOC/AMWG meetings. SCAT has not decided whether to sign, but has indicated an interest in participating along the same lines as Catron County.

Sierra County indicated in January that it would bring forth issues that, if addressed, might enable it to become a signatory. Subsequently, Sierra County forwarded to the Chair a signed copy of the next-to-the-last draft of the MOU, which was not the final version signed by all other signatories. Today, Alex Thal indicated that more recent correspondence from Catron and Sierra counties existed. He then obtained it via fax during the meeting, and provided it for AMOC review through the day and for re-discussion later, if necessary.

AMOC/AMWG is intended to be inclusive, not exclusive, so the MOU provides a mechanism for agencies, subject to approval by signatories, to structure "rules of engagement" that apply specifically and uniquely to them, so long as they do not conflict with the MOU.

Now that all Lead Agencies have signed the MOU, the clock is ticking on description of roles and functions. Per the MOU, AMOC has six months to complete these descriptions. This will be discussed further later, per today's agenda.

**Action Item:** Johnson, Ruedas, and Starnes will meet with Sierra and Catron counties before the July AMOC meeting, to discuss their comments about the MOU. They will report back to AMOC at the July meeting, and, if appropriate, schedule an acceptance vote at that meeting, as per the MOU.

D. Compliance with Open Meeting Laws

AGFD and NMDGF affirmed that, per discussion with their respective counsels, AMOC meetings are not public meetings from a legal standpoint. Technically, they are "work sessions," serving a coordination and communication function, with the actions being guided by policies and decisions made by the individual agencies. WMAT indicated

previously that public meeting laws do not apply to Tribal settings. Thus, as discussed in previous meetings, we will proceed with these being “invitation only” sessions for government agencies. SCAT suggested that someone could challenge this position, but it was agreed that any governmental action can be challenged and the best we can do is act on advice of our own counsel.

E. APHIS/WS Depredation/Herd Husbandry Pilot Study Update.

The first year of this pilot study is nearly complete. Decisions as to whether to continue the study, and whether and how to modify it, will be made after analysis of the first year’s data and comments from a variety of independent experts selected by Breck. Until such time as the host ranch indicates otherwise, the location of the study will not be divulged.

One of the main goals of this project is to assess whether this particular grazing regime will work in an area with a complex predator load (e.g. wolves, mountain lions, bears, and coyotes). The objectives are to look at impacts of wolves (and other predators) on cattle and at the grazing patterns and herd management practices. It would be nice to look at these questions across the recovery area, but that would require far more funding. One way to work toward that might be to put GPS collars on wolves and other predators, and look at this from the top down instead of the bottom up. This might also help assess the interactions among all carnivores, as well as their impacts on prey. However, GPS collars are expensive, and GPS technology might not be feasible yet in this kind of topography.

Project staff turnover is huge, due in part to uncertainties about funding, so WS is exploring use of a Master’s student to see whether they would be more likely to stay with the effort because of their vested interest.

In June 2003, about 160 calves were ear-tagged. The tags are radio transmitters. No depredations were found from November through today. The rugged terrain and snow made monitoring very difficult. Researchers have been able to monitor the radio-tagged livestock, but some couldn’t be tagged. The rancher did a round up in November and pulled off a bunch of calves – 25 went to new allotment. Also, some calves were born over winter and couldn’t be tagged. We can’t confidently say whether untagged livestock were depredated. The spring round up will occur next week, and then we will have a better idea of how many were lost. Next winter, the herd won’t be in that country. They’ll be in a place that will be more easily accessible.

Although the interim results of this project will be discussed with AMOC as appropriate, please remember that conclusions cannot be drawn until the end of the project, which might last 3 or 4 more years, depending on funding and other factors.

**TRIBAL INFORMATION REDACTION.**

The pilot study is already constrained by funds, and cannot be expanded **TRIBAL INFORMATION REDACTION** or elsewhere without infusion of new funds. AGFD has already given \$125k, and will give another \$100K next year and the next. However, AGFD funds and staff cannot be used for work on SCAR because SCAT hasn't signed the MOU or in some other way invited AGFD to assist with wolf management on its lands. USFS has contributed \$5K to the study. Catron County is very supportive of the study, but has not contributed funds. USFWS and WS continue to disagree over whether FWS has conveyed any funds to WS that can or should be used to help support this study.

**Action Item:** Breck will report back to AMOC and AMWG at the July meeting on the peer review, findings from the 2003-2004 field work, and future plans or recommendations for the study (e.g. budget, methods, timeframes).

F. The Matrix Re-visited: News Releases and Flow of Project Information.

The final version of the matrix went out to AMOC/AMWG cooperators about March 1. We are using it now, to provide guidelines for how to direct questions. The good news is it is working great overall. Still, as expected, it does not and cannot provide exact guidance for every possible situation. It intentionally leaves room for discretion, so cooperators will need to make judgments as to how to handle situations as they arise. For example, depredation incidents could fit in a couple different categories. Perhaps we will need to add specific examples (mini case studies) to the matrix as we implement it. As for distribution, agencies should decide for themselves who needs to have a copy and what their participation/decision trees are. Overall, though, the guidelines have worked well and interagency communication seems to have improved appreciably over the past several months.

**Action Item:** By May 7, Hayes will redistribute to AMOC/AMWG participants a final version of the information flow matrix.

**Action Item:** Johnson will bring copies of the final matrix to the July AMOC/AMWG meetings.

G. Law Enforcement Action Items from January 2004

**LAW ENFORCEMENT INFORMATION REDACTION**

H. Annual Report for 2003

The 2003 report was distributed today, bringing the IFT up-to-date in this area. It is similar to previous years. It summarizes 2003 activities. The IFT Leaders co-crafted it,

with assistance from John Oakleaf, per the MOU. WMAT information was included in accordance with their wishes. Now that we are up to date, we need to ensure that with the 2004 report we provide an opportunity for review and public comment in AMWG. Meanwhile, if there are any concerns with the 2003 report they should be discussed on Friday morning so we can be prepared for the public meeting that afternoon.

USFWS is committed to doing annual reports for the recovery program, and will integrate the 2003 IFT report into its next recovery report.

**Action Item:** By May 7, Johnson will distribute the 2003 Annual Report electronically to AMOC/AMWG participants.

**Action Item:** Within 14 days, Johnson will get the 2001-2003 Annual Reports converted to password-protected pdf files and loaded on the [www.azgfd.com](http://www.azgfd.com) Mexican wolf website for downloads.

I. Working Lunch on-site: Discussion of Annual Work Plan and IFT Budget for 2004

This discussion revolved around various draft documents, including a summary of IFT needs and draft work plans from each of the three IFT leaders. It was noted that several changes have occurred since the drafts were produced just a few weeks ago. For example, releases weren't going to happen in NM this year, and now they probably are. The same applies to AZ. We need to solidify what activities will be carried out so we can identify how many FTEs and what logistical and other support is needed. If we want to have a Work Plan ready when the year begins (January), we need to be acting on it at the October AMOC/AMWG meetings.

Total FTE needs and availability are noted toward the end of the summary document. They need to be revised based on today's discussion. All IFT FTEs need to be identified and allocated. AGFD, NMDGF, USFWS, WMAT, WS and Catron County (through WS) are contributing FTEs.

The IFT Work Plan is a calendar year plan that doesn't coincide with anyone's budget year. However, consensus today indicated that is not a significant issue, and a calendar-year work plan does make sense from a fieldwork perspective.

Discussion of the draft Work Plan summary proceeded as follows (number below refer to the topic sequence in the draft summary):

1. Monitoring is the most important activity – the highest priority. We can't always get to where wolves are by ground travel, so flights are extremely important. We especially need to know where they are in depredation situations. Monitoring is an

example of how we're doing, and it goes toward recovery. Get rid of the "when possible" phrase; everything is constrained by reality. Are we able to keep up right now with what we need to be doing? Yes, as long as we have the flights we need. Flights cover AZ, NM, SCAT, and WMAT lands. Compared to other wolf projects, this is above and beyond, but that kind of comparison is irrelevant. The relevant question is whether our effort is appropriate to our situation. Would another FTE significantly increase our ability to identify what wolves are doing? Are we resource limited? What's the IFT confidence, in terms of percentage of monitoring? All collared wolves are monitored at least once each week, but our goal is not to collar all wolves. Also, five wolves have gone MIA. These wolves could still be alive; we don't know. We have 17 collared wolves now, among 50-55 total animals. We need to be sure about our numbers before we tell the public. In our weekly telemetry, we get virtually all of the collared animals. When we don't get a signal from one, we follow up as appropriate. Our database has all locations. Will there be more collars this year? Yes, we trap un-collared wolves and will probably be releasing more. We are doing AZ and NM flights on separate days now, typically on sequential days. If more wolves are collared, and we continue to monitor 100% of them, we may need more funding for flights. However, we have a small buffer in the flight budget so we could absorb some new effort. Conversely, if additional flights are not required, some of the flight money might be available for other uses.

We are using the collared wolves to monitor all wolves. How adequate is our monitoring for the un-collared animals? It's as good as it gets. We're satisfied, but there may be one pack that we need to get collars on. Another FTE would not significantly increase data collection under current circumstances. However, SCAT has lots of sightings and IFT presence on SCAR were to increase, and as the total wolf population grows, we would need additional monitoring resources.

We do not follow up on all sightings. IFT looks for a series of sightings before it begins to trap. Wolves move a lot, and it's really hard to catch up with one wolf. **TRIBAL INFORMATION REDACTION.**

Can we increase the technology and not increase the cost in terms of FTEs? Would GPS collars decrease the number of people needed in the field? Not until technology improves. The problem is that GPS data are not real time data.

Johnson expressed concern that the IFT is not projecting staff and budget needs sufficiently to meet demands as the wolf population expands. Perhaps our effort for the current population of collared wolves is sufficient, but AGFD continues to hear complaints from the public that uncollared wolves are not monitoring well enough.

2. Intensifying the number of people out during certain times, for outreach and education, not law enforcement. AZ has more FTEs in the field on a consistent basis year-round, so that's why we don't increase that much during the fall hunts. Perhaps volunteers could be used to increase outreach, rather than tie up IFT staff. However, if someone needs to "sit" on a pack during a hunt, that should be an IFT member not a volunteer.
3. This is important information that hunters and other interest groups have requested. The IFT flies daily for parts of the winter to get an understanding of how many kills the wolves are making at this time of year, as well as prey age structure, type, health, and depredation. Aerial observations are followed up on the ground. This occurs for one month in early winter and one month in late winter. This effort is comparable to similar studies in other wolf recovery/management areas. The big question is what are the wolves doing to the elk and deer populations? AZ doesn't have as good a handle on deer/elk age structure as NM, so we don't know what proportions the wolves are killing.

We need to ensure that this work is value-added in terms of contribution to understanding impacts on big game populations and livestock, contribution to wolf management in the reintroduction area, and contribution to recovery planning. All the cooperating agencies get questions on how many deer and elk are being killed. It is crucial that we get a handle on this. We need reliable predation rates and composition of prey. **TRIBAL INFORMATION REDACTION**. But, how would this information be used to manage wolves differently? How would this information be useful for overall recovery planning? How would it be useful to assessing and mitigating impacts on ungulates?

The IFT has talked about rotating this study between AZ and NM from year to year. Access issues are very important. We need a good written study design, one that has been peer reviewed, and we need to use methods that are consistent year to year. The study design also needs to be blessed by AMOC, or at least by AGFD, NMDGF, WMAT, and USFWS since it is relevant to wildlife management, including both prey species and the wolf. This project is great concept, but we need to ensure that it's useful.

Should we merge this topic into another category?

**Action Item:** By May 7, Oakleaf will provide MacMullin with a project description including a "1-page" summary of the importance of this study relative to impacts on prey base, importance to wolf management in the reintroduction project, and relevance to recovery rangewide.

**Action Item:** By May 14, MacMullin will disseminate the project description and justification statement to AMOC/AMWG participants for comment.

**Action Item:** By May 28, AMOC/AMWG participants will provide MacMullin with comment on the project description and justification statements.

**Action Item:** At the July AMOC meeting, MacMullin will led discussion of the project, as it has been integrated into the redrafted 2004 Annual Work Plan.

4. Discussion began with a statement that the IFT is planning three releases this year. The first is a release of two adults and 3 pups with no wild experience (male high genetic value, female same) into AZ, south of Hannagan Meadow in a burn with high regeneration of aspen and lots of elk browsing (high density). It is very isolated and not occupied by wolves. The ranching community is pretty much absent. The site (Moonshine Park) is approximately 15 miles from SCAR. The Other 2 releases (translocations) are 2 animals (calf kill and elk kill) into wilderness; and 2 back also.

AGFD noted that its FTE projection in the draft 2004 Annual Work Plan is incorrect, because we thought we were not going to do releases this year.

AGFD also questioned whether these releases have been approved yet? NMDGF asked whether releases need to be approved? The IFT should make recommendations, but someone else needs to make the decision.

In previous AMWG meetings, we have said publicly that we are considering releases for genetic augmentation. Wolves have been bred with intention to release. USFWS wouldn't have bred them if they weren't going to be released.

We need an accountability trail on releases. We need to know who made the final decision, and why, and we must be able to explain both to the public. Per the MOU, all releases need to come through AMOC and AMWG for discussion and feedback, with the public as well as among ourselves, but ultimately the three lead agencies (AGFD, NMDGF, and WMAT) decide what happens on their land. The annual work planning process should ensure that this happens.

The problem here is that these three releases have not been adequately discussed with the public, and that is a potentially fatal flaw. How do we fix this? How we handle this issue will have significant impact on our credibility as an adaptive management effort.

**Action Item:** By May 7, MacMullin will disseminate to AMOC/AMWG participants the draft protocol for proposing and approving wolf releases.

**Action Item:** By May 28, AMOC/AMWG participants will comment back to MacMullin on the draft protocol.

**Action Item:** At the July AMOC meeting, we will discuss and hopefully finalize a protocol or operating procedure for proposing and approving wolf releases.

**Action Item:** At the July AMWG meeting, we will discuss the final protocol or procedure with the public.

5. This is the first place where a FWS FTE appears, and they should be reflected in all others. This is very important and the activities must be clear. Effort doesn't necessarily translate into more hours. If the IFT had one more FTE, would that help? It would free up biologists for other things.

An IFT priority is to get more collars on right now. We could use qualified trappers. This could be a 6-month position (0.5 FTE). Perhaps this position could be split with Number 7, with each using a 0.5 FTE.

6. AGFD – this is what we are doing. NMDGF - this is what we want to do. USFWS effort is Stark's and Oakleaf's presentations. We need another FTE for extension service to provide technical assistance/guidance to ranchers. The priority is fine.
7. We don't know how many depredations will occur in a given year, so the IFT approach has been to dedicate time to other things and do this on an as-needed basis. AMOC believes we need to address this differently, because the public perceives that our response time is too slow as it is. That perception will only grow as the wolf population increases. More IFT time needs to be budgeted here.

We also need to define who responds to depredations. Is IFT the most appropriate investigator? Does the public assume the IFT is biased and WS unbiased? The response protocol says that if WS can't respond within 24 hours, IFT will. We need to live with our protocols, or change them.

The real time sink here isn't depredation investigation; it's the subsequent trapping and removal. Although only 1.5 WS employees are dedicated to wolf issues, others respond as needed, even though they are fully committed to other responsibilities. In fact, WS has responded within 24 hours on 100% of the depredation reports. So, the investigation side of this is in good shape. Again, it's the follow-up management that needs improvement. Do we need to add an FTE to account for trapping and removal that follows? We should add at least a 0.5 FTE.

The IFT asked how likely we are to get additional funding to support more FTEs? The likelihood of getting funding for additional FTEs is zero if we don't demonstrate the need. So, we have to build a case. AGFD allocates budgets based on needs and priorities, and will commit more funds to this project if it ranks high in both areas. The wolf is an extremely high priority for AGFD.

8. WS and FWS will add to this. AGFD thinks this is as close to a zero priority as anything in the draft work plan. If a sighting does not represent a management issue, from a wolf, depredation, or real or perceived human safety perspective, then it's not important to follow it up. We get too many bogus sighting reports to follow up on every report. The IFT and the agencies must make judgments about follow up that reflect the specifics of each situation: take the call, evaluate it, and, if the circumstances warrant, investigate it. The nature of the information dictates whether to follow through. We should get rid of the 0.2 FTE here and embed these activities under monitoring. They do not warrant stand-alone status.
9. Extremely high priority (with 1 and 7). There's not enough FTE time allocated. AGFD cannot help on SCAR until they invite us in. SCAT could accomplish this by signing the MOU, inviting AGFD in under the existing AGFD-SCAT MOU, or sending us a letter with terms of engagement. By cutting out AGFD, it cuts the number of IFT people that can respond in half.

AGFD's need to respond other than on SCAR has been almost zero. The FTE load has probably been about 0.3 total for NM and AZ, and 1.5 for FWS (on SCAT). But, again, FWS needs more help on SCAT: either more FWS FTEs, or assistance from AGFD, NMDGF, or WMAT. **TRIBAL INFORMATION REDACTION**. Removing wolves is a band aid, not a solution.

10. This topic could include 11, 12, 13, 14, and 16. IFT response to public inquiries has increased appreciably under AMOC/AMWG. Phone calls now get returned the same day, almost always. Greenlee County says public comment indicates much greater satisfaction in this area now.

Administrative assistance is needed in the office, to free biologists for field responsibilities, including data analysis and report writing. Could an admin assistant answer technical questions from the public? Not all of them, but at least it would be a live person handling the phone during working hours and the rest of the IFT could be in field more.

11. This may not be a high priority to the public, but it is mandatory to the agencies and important to the employees for career development and to the project for flow of information. Still, we must not send more IFT members to a meeting than is

necessary (especially for meetings out-of-state). We should also rotate IFT coverage of meetings so all IFT members have opportunities to learn.

12. This topic should be merged into 10.
13. This provides IFT staff an opportunity to gain knowledge and experience. Realistically, though, this topic should be merged into 10.
14. Merge this into admin – but it is a high priority.
15. Why is this a medium priority? It should be merged into wolf releases – 4.
16. Merge this into admin (10).
17. All IFT Leaders and Oakleaf need to cooperate in handling this responsibility. Their work is crucial to starting and completing the review. AGFD questioned the 0.02 FTE allocation for AGFD as insufficient – that’s only about 40 hours! Although Oakleaf may do most of the data analyses, all IFT Leaders must be involved in the writing, review, and quality control. The 0.5 FTE for USFWS is an overestimate, but 0.02 for AGFD, NMDGF, and perhaps WMAT is too low.
18. This is Dan Stark’s MS project. USFWS questioned whether this even fits into the work plan. Does it belong in his personal development plan? If all of his fieldwork on this were part of the IFT work anyway, then he could be considered as 0.7 FTE here.

AGFD noted that if this study is not an IFT priority, then allocating Stark’s time to it takes resources away from IFT priorities. If that were true, then USFWS should compensate by providing a replacement FTE, or by providing funding for someone else to hire a replacement for sufficient time to compensate for Dan’s absence. The AMOC issue is not whether Stark can or should pursue graduate studies, but whether doing so takes essential resources away from the IFT.

USFWS noted that it made a unilateral decision in supporting this proposal. The issue should have been discussed with AMOC, since the FTE allocation affects IFT resources. However, USFWS cannot renege on its commitment to Stark. So, this will be taken out of the work plan, and USFWS will find a way to mitigate the impacts.

19. Could we take 3, 18, and this one and collectively label them studies, and deal with them as an entity? Regardless, we need more resources (funding) if we need more of this work. If there are no resources, then we need to decide where to make the cutoff.

Overall, AGFD should be planned as contributing 5 FTEs, assuming that FWS will not decrease its 2.0 FTE commitment or the funding it provides to AGFD, and assuming that NMDGF increases its efforts as projected in these discussions. AGFD's willingness to increase its contributions is tied to assurance that other cooperators contribute at levels commensurate to their responsibilities and capabilities. However, AGFD's fear is that before very long we will have more wolves than we can manage. We need to staff up ahead of the curve in this situation. The AGFC still thinks that we are not fully meeting public expectations. This is not a negative reflection on the IFT; it's just an indication that we need more IFT staff.

Another important issue is office space. The IFT may lose its field office because the Forest Service needs that area for its own purposes. The IFT office is a 3-bedroom trailer, which provides each of the USFWS employees with an individual office, a storage room, and a small space for communal work and meetings. AGFD IFT members are thus forced to use their homes as offices. USFWS noted today that the current facilities would probably not pass an OSHA inspection. Perhaps USFS could provide space elsewhere for the entire IFT, since they're not contributing any FTEs or other funding. Or perhaps we could get FEMA surplus trailers.

Should WS station its IFT member in Alpine, to increase communication and cooperation? The same thought applies to the new USFWS Special Agent. If office space were also needed for the WS IFT member and for the Special Agent, then the justification would be greater. We haven't talked about who would pay for this office space yet. Currently, only USFWS occupies the space, so it is not a true field office.

Discussion of location indicated consensus that Alpine is still the most appropriate place for the IFT office. However, this affects recruitment because housing is so limited (and expensive) in Alpine. Perhaps, if it does not affect their presence and availability, IFT members should be allowed to live in Springerville.

Co-location is a plus in terms of USFWS priority. Communal office space would enhance within-IFT communication and should be a priority for all. We need to continue this discussion of office space and location, and examine all the costs and benefits with more data on hand.

**Action Item:** USFWS will look into different options for IFT office space, and report back at the July AMOC meeting in conjunction with discussion of the 2004 Annual Work Plan.

**Action Item:** By May 7, MacMullin will revise and re-distribute the Draft 2004 Annual Work Plan to AMOC/AMWG participants.

**Action Item:** By May 7, Johnson will distribute a paired-rankings exercise to AMOC/AMWG participants, and the IFT.

**Action Item:** By May 21, AMOC and AMWG participants, and the IFT through Oakleaf, will submit to Johnson their paired-rankings results for compilation.

**Action Item:** By May 28, Johnson will disseminate the paired-rankings results to AMOC/AMWG participants.

**Action Item:** The Annual Work Plan (and budget) will be discussed and approved at the July 8 AMOC meeting, and shared with the public in the AMWG session on July 9.

#### J. The Five-Year Review

The draft document represents all comment received during previous reviews. Note that the items listed are not recommendations from this review, but findings of the previous review that need to be reconsidered this time. We need to evaluate each of them, in terms of what has been done with that recommendation, why that happened, and what our recommendation is now, based on our analysis.

In compiling this draft description, USFWS identified, for the sake of discussion today, the individuals that seemed most appropriate for taking the lead in handling each component. Anyone else from AMOC or AMWG with an interest in a given issue would cooperate with the designated lead. The timeline attached to the review description covers Section A, but presumably would be the same for Sections B and C.

The draft schedule is ambitious but not unrealistic, and it is certainly necessary. We are a year behind on this review right now. It should have begun in April 2003. The up-side of this is that we have another 1.5 years of field data to consider.

The 10j rule is certainly a major issue in this review. If the rule were changed such that the recovery area were expanded, an EIS would likely be needed.

NMDGF needs to provide information to its Commission by December 8 on boundary issues, recovery, etc., with social considerations and a report on overall progress. The Commission's direction does not require that this work be completed by December 8, but a progress report must be made. This work needs to be closely integrated into or at least coordinated with the 5-year review. So, we need to set a tight schedule and stick to it.

The IFT is concerned about the review schedule. Would "coming close" be sufficient? No, but this is a draft, so let's discuss it before becoming too concerned. However, once we settle on a schedule, we must live with it and meet our deadlines.

IFT concerns about the review schedule reflect the other obligations being considered, such as releases. Will NMDGF need AGFD or FWS assistance with its translocations? SCAR depends on Oakleaf and Stark to handle its depredation and translocation/removal issues, so if Oakleaf is spending the next two months doing the review, who will handle the SCAR issues? The same applies to the IFT leaders, with respect to other field and administrative responsibilities. Again, it is crucial that the work be parsed out among the IFT, and not centralized in any single IFT member.

After considerable discussion, the draft time schedule was revised. Time was added to the IFT writing segment, and AMOC/AMWG review cycles were shortened. The deadline for #1 will be July 31. For #2 it will be August 20. For #3 it will be September 10. Then it will be on track for completion by January 31, 2005.

B and C will be on the same schedule as A. It wouldn't be good for one part of the review to come out without the others. For the public to evaluate this, everything needs to be looked at side by side.

Breck will handle A1.6.

The public will be the ultimate reviewer, so the public review period will be lengthened to 60 days total -- 30 days before the October meeting and 30 days after.

The Recovery Team Technical Group could serve as the independent review body.

USFWS with assistance from Catron County and NMDA will develop a recommendation for a local (Southwest) contractor or contractors to handle the socioeconomic issues, including: recreation, agriculture/livestock, local government, and businesses that are disproportionately affected. We do not want someone with a pro or con bias, or without expertise and experience in the Southwest. Not many people know how to do this, and those who do tend to be heavily scheduled, so we have to get someone on board soon. Among the possible sources of this expertise are: ASU, NAU, NMSU, and the UofA.

Should the Recovery Team also review B, since it's their recommendations in the first place? Who would be the reviewers from the Recovery Team? We can ask the RD to ask the Team to do it in a certain timeframe.

Should the two people who did the 3-year review also review this one? What about objectivity? Maybe someone else on the Recovery Team should do this review instead. Can the reviewers do "B" at the same time as the public?

USFWS wants a peer review before the public review for technical part A. It will be a better document for the public. AGFD agrees.

Should we send the draft to the entire Recovery Team? Or send it to the Tech Subgroup and have the Regional Director tell them to do it?

Regardless of our final approach, we need to keep meticulous records on comments. Each step must be done this way, so we have all comments stacked up behind all these layers. It will back up how we reached the conclusions that we did. USFWS noted that it can't say pers. comm. any more in decision documents. They have to say who said what, and document phone calls, etc.

AGFD sees Recovery Team review as value-added for B 4,5,6 and 11, but not for the other components of B.

The 5-Year Review will actually be a 6-year review, since it will address 5.75 years of data (i.e. 1998 through December 31, 2003)

**Action Item:** By May 7, Buchanan and MacMullin will discuss Recovery Team participation in the 5-year Review with Recovery Team Leader Siminski and Recovery Team Coordinator Scheffler, and integrate their guidance into the schedule.

**Action Item:** By May 14, MacMullin, with assistance from Thal and Starnes, will draft a recommendation for AMOC/AMWG review on Section C of the 5-Year Review. Cooperators will have three workdays to respond.

#### K. Other Business

1. Alex Thal asked whether AMOC/AMWG might look into depredation management in terms of problems with verification and compensation, and possible solutions. Would the group be interested in tackling this? Yes, per the MOU. Perhaps the AZ-NM Congressional delegations could provide assistance, if we find mutually agreeable recommendations.

The ranching community needs a compensation program that is fair, and easily accessible in terms of process. Areas to look into include better compensation formulas and Congressional funding for compensation and better monitoring and management. The livestock industry is seeing a disproportionate effect on their interests and livelihood. The Northwest has a compensation program; we need to see how it could be adapted to the Southwest. Idaho provides funds to USFWS, which allocates the money to counties to divide among affected livestock producers. It's an annual allocation; one year they did \$100K, and another \$30K.

Loss verification not required. AGFD noted that an AUM fee reduction in the recovery zone, such as was suggested years before the first release (1998), might have achieved the desired end and did not require verification. Regardless, we need to look into this, and see if we can reduce the burden on ranchers.

**Action Item:** Bergman will lead the work group established today on this issue, and bring recommendations back to AMOC/AMWG by July 31, 2004. Breck, MacMullin, Oakleaf, O'Neill, Starnes, and Thal will work with him. Bergman will also ask Adam Polley and Harold Nofchissey to participate. A cautionary note: if recommendations are forthcoming, federal cooperators cannot carry them forward due to federal laws covering such issues.

2. Bud Starnes reported that ranchers believe agency law enforcement personnel are treating them improperly in personal contacts. They feel like they are presumed to be poachers/wolf killers. The questioning seems unnecessarily intimidating and confrontational. The ranching community is very unhappy; they are honest people and do not believe they are being treated properly. Enforcement agents need to be more sensitive to this. Ranchers can be helpful if approached properly, but right now, because they are offended, they are probably not providing as much information as they could. Is this a pattern from one agency, or all? It's all three agencies. Bergman pointed out that WS has also been accused of poaching. The IFT noted that some ranchers have also cast aspersions about them, including accusations that they do not find or report depredated livestock.

AGFD follows up on leads no matter where they come from. In the past, our officers were required to leave a blue contact card with folks they interview. Although about 99% of the cards come back with praise for the officer and the work they are doing, occasionally they have registered a complaint. If an officer is reported as having been abusive, AGFD has a formal process to deal with such allegations.

The agencies need more specifics from ranchers on what they think is appropriate and what the sensitivities are so we can train our guys to interact better with the ranchers. However, officers must follow the leads as they present themselves, and in any enforcement situation even a casual question is likely to be perceived as an interrogation.

**Action Item:** By May 7, Cooley will determine whether blue cards are being used appropriately by AGFD officers to record and report field contacts, and report back to AMOC/AMWG.

**Action Item:** By May 14, Buchanan, Hayes, and Johnson will talk with their law enforcement staff about treatment of ranchers, and follow-up with an email to AMOC/AMWG indicating that it has been completed.

**Action Item:** By June 25, the IFT will develop a brochure or other information to provide to ranchers for guidance on what to do when they see a wolf kill or a dead wolf. MT has a brochure on this. We should adapt it. The draft brochure or other information is due to AMOC/AMWG by June 25 for review, and discussion and final approval at the July 8 AMOC meeting.

1700 Adjourn for the Day

April 23. Meeting convened at 0808.

L. Closure on Agenda Items from Yesterday (All)

1. WS Pilot Study. Bergman affirmed that thus far AGFD has contributed \$125K, and USFS \$5K cash and in-kind. WS absorbed all other costs for 2003, and is making up the rest of the anticipated total cost of \$150K for 2004. The 2005 budget is uncertain, pending results of the peer review and analysis of the first year's data.

**TRIBAL INFORMATION REDACTION.**

**Action Item:** Before or at the July 8 AMOC Meeting, Breck will provide results of the peer review, an update on the first year's findings, and a recommended approach and budget for the next few years. He will evaluate whether the study should be expanded (i.e. to the **TRIBAL INFORMATION REDACTION** and elsewhere), and if so how much more money would be required to do so. should we add to the work plan that our desire would be to expand to **TRIBAL INFORMATION REDACTION**? good idea, but we don't have an idea how much this will cost.

2. Role and Function Statements. Group discussion. How do we start drafting role and function statements? Suggestion: A potential starting point is fleshing out the duties that we each have under the MOU and the draft 2004 Annual Work Plan. Also, use the 1998 Mexican Wolf Management Plan, and be sure to address the IFT as it is structured now and as it might be expanded if funds are available (e.g. address new FTEs, such as the "admin assistant" and the "extension agent").

**Action Item:** By May 28, the IFT will submit draft role and function statements to AMOC/AMWG, which will discuss the drafts and provide direction on revision at the July 9 AMOC meeting.

3. The MOU. Johnson indicated that last night he reviewed the material from Catron and Sierra counties. He found nothing inconsistent with the MOU that everyone else has signed, although comment #7 may be problematic.

**Action Item:** Johnson will proceed as determined yesterday. He, Starnes, and Ruedas will meet with Catron and Sierra counties to discuss their comments, and determine where to go next. Prior to that meeting, Johnson will craft a paragraph outlining that this accommodation is for these two counties only, and would not change anything to which the current signatories have already committed. The results of these efforts will be reported and discussed at the July 8 AMOC Meeting.

M. Update on Wolf Mortalities and Investigations

No new mortalities have occurred since the January AMOWC/AMWG meetings, and there is no news on any of the ongoing investigations.

Next, discussion focused on possible actions to address LE (law enforcement) and outreach issues, beginning with a Reward Poster forwarded to AMOC by **NON-PUBLIC INFORMATION REDACTION** of Defenders of Wildlife. Defenders was not listed in the poster because **NON-PUBLIC INFORMATION REDACTION** thinks such knowledge might stop people from coming forward. The current reward from USFWS is \$10K, and the NGOs are offering another \$35K, with the actual amount paid depending on information provided. **LAW ENFORCEMENT INFORMATION REDACTION**.

Who decides on the wording on reward posters? LE does, and we have to change our monthly update to reflect what LE from all three agencies wants. AGFD LE accepts money from NGOs and blends in to our rewards. However, it appears that under this scenario the NGOs are keeping the money and giving it out as they see fit. LE may not be willing to cooperate under those circumstances, because it might result in breaches of confidentiality.

**Action Item:** AGFD, NMDGF, and USFWS AMOC members will provide the NGO info to their LE programs, but we won't disseminate it. Greenlee County doesn't want to participate in this at all.

**Action Item:** Buchanan will talk with **NON-PUBLIC INFORMATION REDACTION** about the wording on the poster. If they use the OGT numbers, they need to use the correct language and phone numbers, which they can get it from AGFD LE (Rob Young) and NMDGF (Chuck Hayes).

Discussion then turned to Oakleaf's February 2004 handout, to see what AMOC would like to move forward to LE.

1. The IFT needs \$800 each for 13 receivers and \$200 each for 13 antennas, for a total of \$13,000. AGFD will buy this equipment if everyone agrees this is a priority. The equipment will remain AGFD property on loan.

**Action Item:** Overy and Groebner will provide specifications and purchase information to Johnson (via Bill Van Pelt) so purchase can be completed within 60 days. The equipment will be placed on Overy's inventory, and he will develop a distribution list for Johnson to approve. **TRIBAL INFORMATION REDACTION** as well as other cooperating entities.

2. An interagency LE meeting is needed, and discussions toward that end are underway.

**Action Item:** USFWS will convene an interagency LE meeting to discuss issues of mutual concern to the wolf program. USFWS will provide a report at the July 8 AMOC Meeting on the outcomes. LE should be involved in AMOC meetings, but probably not in AMWG meetings.

3. AGFD has strict requirements when it comes to volunteers and LE. Volunteers cannot say they're representing the agencies unless they have written approval. AGFD can pay for mileage, but the budget is limited. Any volunteers for AGFD would work out of the Pinetop Regional Office and come out of their budget. FLSA will prevent some agency folks from volunteering for such work. NMDGF and AGFD can let official volunteers use vehicles. But, do we really need or want more LE volunteers? Is the area enforcement saturated during the hunt already? If we do need help, use of volunteers could free-up IFT staff for other things. Cooley foresees a lot of supervision required to make good use of volunteers.

Consensus indicated that the collective liability and risks are too great to move toward enforcement-oriented volunteers, other than those who come in through established reserve officer programs.

4. Vehicle logos. IFT vehicles should have the appropriate agency emblems, to enhance public awareness of IFT presence.

**Action Item:** Oakleaf will follow-up immediately to obtain and emplace magnetic USFWS logos on all USFWS IFT vehicles. These logos will remain in place unless a specific situation requires temporary removal.

5. Loan of receivers to ranchers. Why is this an issue? Some people are upset that we are loaning this equipment to ranchers. Consensus: the IFT will loan receivers and antennas as necessary to benefit the project.

**Action Item:** By May 24, the IFT will draft guidelines for agency employee use of receivers and a form to be signed by any non-employee who is being loaned a receiver and/or antenna. AMOC will review the guidelines and form, and provide appropriate direction so this can be resolved before the July 8-9 AMOC Meeting.

6. Brochures. Discussion clarified that we need three outreach elements: (a) the USFWS-generated brochure on wolf recovery/reintroduction; (b) a brochure providing wolf-friendly advice to general recreationists; and (c) information for hunters on differences between coyotes and wolves

**Action Item:** Within 30 days, Buchanan will work with Johnson and Van Pelt from AGFD to fund printing of the USFWS brochure. Johnson will allocate \$3K toward printing costs.

**Action Item:** Within 30 days, Groebner will work with Johnson and Van Pelt from AGFD to fund printing of the USFWS brochure. Johnson will allocate \$3K toward printing costs. Hayes may also be able to provide funds for more copies.

**Action Item:** By June 30, Cooley and Groebner will work up the hunter information on coyotes and wolves, for integration into AGFD mail-outs to successful applicants in the wolf project area.

N. Other Business

1. The Center for Biological Diversity's request under the Administrative Procedures Act for relief on federal rulemaking with regard to the Mexican wolf. AGFD brought copies of the document for AMOC/AMWG members, and the public. USFWS advised that its Solicitor is looking at this issue right now. Legally, there's no 90 day response requirement, although the Center sees this differently. This is not an ESA petition, so there is no 90-day finding requirement.
2. SWDPS Recovery Team Participation. Johnson advised that it might be in everyone's best interest if local government participation in the Recovery Team were stepped up. AMOC/AMWG must have guidance in several areas that the Recovery Team is supposed to provide. Adam Polley (Sierra County) is representing the counties on the Recovery Team, but he has many other responsibilities and may not be able to cover this alone. In particular, more expertise on socioeconomic and human dimensions issues is needed. What can be done to encourage more local government participation in the Recovery Team? Maybe USFWS could send out letters or something to get more counties involved. These meetings are 2-3 days long and occur 4 times each year. That's a lot of time to ask of anyone. Maybe the counties could use alternates, as other entities are doing, to complement Polley's participation.

**Action Item:** MacMullin will discuss local government participation in the Recovery Team with USFWS-Albuquerque, and report back to AMOC in July on outcomes.

3. Wolf Releases. New releases must be planned far in advance, so we should talk about 2005 releases in October in conjunction with the 2005 Annual Work Plan discussion. We must give the public meaningful opportunities to comment on these issues, and any changes we make in our plans. Process is the primary issue, not biology, genetics, or even location. We must improve the process, and live up to our commitment for public participation. The agencies make the final decisions, but we must be able to

explain why we do what we do, and we do not do something else. Our objective is to involve, not just inform.

What are we really asking for? What are the expectations of running releases through this group? Does a release plan need to be done and forwarded to the group? Yes, we need a procedure in place for public involvement and for decision-making. We need to develop one, and then stick to the plan

If we plan releases too far in advance, to include public, could it reduce our ability to adaptively manage? Release site and release animal conditions change all the time, and sometimes very quickly. Response: we can develop and use flexible processes. All public discussion does not have to take place in an AMWG session. We can present a suite of areas that is being considered for the release. We can hold special meetings to supplement AMOC/AMWG meetings. At least some sectors of the public believe we can't adequately control the wolves that are out there, so they question why are we putting more out. If we are considering new releases, people must be informed about it and have a chance to engage us along the way toward decisions. We simply must engage the public. Releases must be on our agendas so people can come to the meeting to discuss them. In this case, we mentioned the possibility of a 2004 release at an AMWG meeting but it wasn't an agenda item so people couldn't know to come discuss it. We don't have anything down on paper either, in the way of a proposal.

AMOC must provide guidance to the IFT about releases. We can still address comments and modify our plans for 2004 releases, but we must be open to comment and we must have alternatives in mind.

**Action Item:** Within 30 days, the IFT, with Greenlee County assistance, will have a local meeting with the public to discuss the proposed Moonshine Park release site and at least two alternatives. The IFT will accept comment for 30 days, and then forward decision package to MOC for review and to AGFD for a decision. The IFT must make clear to all interested parties that in part a 2004 release in Arizona is necessary because of the 2003 mortalities. Regardless, the decision-package must make clear what criteria were applied to select a site, and reject others, and what public concerns emerged and how they were considered.

**Action Item:** By May 7, Oakleaf will email a list of all draft and final protocols on wolf releases to MacMullin, who will forward it to AMOC for review and comment to MacMullin within 7 days of receipt.

#### 4. First 2005 AMOC and AMWG Meetings

**Action Item:** The first 2005 meetings will be deferred to February 24-25, to accommodate the 5-Year Review schedule. NMGFD will coordinate logistical arrangements for the meetings in Reserve, New Mexico.

**Action Item:** By May 14, Hayes will provide AMOC/AMWG participants with initial arrangements information (location and dates) for the February 24-25 meetings.

At 12:15 pm, the meeting adjourned for the AMWG Meeting (which began at 1330 at a different location).