

MEXICAN WOLF BLUE RANGE REINTRODUCTION PROJECT
ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT WORK GROUP

Note: This was a Public Meeting on July 30, 2008

Location: Morenci AZ, at the Morenci Club in Morenci Plaza (next to Basha's Grocery)
Time: AZ Time: 1800 – 2100 AZ Time
Host: Arizona Game and Fish Department
Participants: Public meeting, open to all. Participants included: representatives from all AMOC Lead Agencies (including Directors from AGFD, NMDGF, USDA-WS, and USFS; and Director surrogates for USFWS and WMAT) and all AMOC Signatory Cooperator Agencies; and approximately 27 individuals from the public.

1. Welcome, introductions, ground rules, and agenda review. AMOC Chair Terry B. Johnson (AGFD) opened the meeting at 1800 AST. Attendees were welcomed; introductions were made; the ground rules were explained; and the agenda was reviewed. Terry thanked Greenlee County for providing such gracious and exemplary support for the three days of agency wolf meetings underway on July 29-31, and the AMWG public meeting tonight.
2. Interagency Field Team items. The IFT provided a written report addressing the issues below for the period between the April and July 2008 AMWG meetings. That report is posted on the Project Web site, at <http://azgfd.gov/wolf>, and will not be repeated in this summary.
 - a. Staffing changes
 - b. 2008 breeding season (results to date)
 - c. Depredation and nuisance responses in 2nd quarter 2008
 - d. Outreach activities in 2nd quarter 2008
 - e. Other IFT items
3. AMOC items
 - a. Update on NEPA scoping process for possible changes in the 10(j) rule. John Slown (USFWS) provided an update. A private contractor to USFWS has boiled the ca. 13,000 Scoping comments down to more than 30 core issues. Agency cooperators in the NEPA process will meet in Albuquerque on September 10-11 for a briefing and discussion of the next steps in the process. Meanwhile, USFWS is trying to gather the financial and other resources necessary to complete an EIS as early as 2012 (estimated date, dependent on many factors). Slown reaffirmed that USFWS is the action agency in this NEPA effort, and that the cooperating agencies will basically provide a staffing function: they will digest information, including all public comment received and all other information the agencies bring into the analysis, and make recommendations on alternatives, strategies, approaches, and other information presented in the draft and final EIS. However, the USFWS Regional Director (or perhaps the Secretary of Interior) will make the final decision(s) in the process.
 - b. Project guidelines and practices for loaning radio telemetry receivers. Terry Johnson said AMOC and the IFT are re-evaluating existing Project procedures for loaning telemetry

receivers, and considering new suggestions from NMDGF. The IFT will provide draft recommendations to AMOC within a few weeks, after which AMOC will consider whether to modify or reaffirm existing guidelines. The primary Project uses for receivers to date have been for wolf monitoring by IFT staff and cooperating agency law enforcement staff and for loan to private individuals who have or are likely to have wolves in the immediate area of their domicile or livestock operations. The loaned receivers are pre-programmed to certain channels, so individual wolf frequencies need not be given out. Johnson noted that all people to whom equipment has been loaned have been very cooperative in terms of using, maintaining, and returning the equipment.

- c. Discussion of population objectives for the Reintroduction Project. Terry Johnson affirmed that AMOC, including all cooperating agencies and the IFT, is discussing the need to change how annual population objectives are established for the Project, and the need to increase the objectives to stimulate more aggressive efforts to grow the wolf population. This issue has been swept up in AMOC discussion of possible modifications in the draft Clarification Memos for SOPs 11.0 and 13.0 (see Item 3.d), and possible management and law enforcement responses to recent wolf mortalities in AZ and NM (see Item 3.e). The discussions are very comprehensive, but still in the early stages. A timeline for making decisions has not been set, but it seems likely that some actions will be approved and underway by October 2008, if not sooner. Until decisions are made, no further information will be made public.
- d. Update on Lead Agency consideration of Clarification Memos for SOPs 11.0 (Depredation Incident Investigation) and 13.0 (Control of Mexican Wolves). AMOC has digested the 1600+ public comments and has discussed the Clarification Memos over the past two days. Further discussion will occur tomorrow, in an agencies-only AMOC and IFT meeting with the Lead Agency Directors or their surrogates. Consideration of changes in the draft Clarification Memos will continue to be concurrent with deliberations on Item 3.c and Item 3.e, as noted above. The core issue is how to better grow and maintain the wild wolf population, while appropriately addressing impacts on stakeholders (e.g. depredation losses, significant nuisance problems).
- e. Update on 2008 mortalities and possible management responses. See previous two agenda items. The results of various necropsies have not yet been received, and several investigations are still underway, but it appears that unlawful and other mortalities earlier this year will again impede achieving any growth in the wild wolf population (e.g. breeding pairs have been lost and the extent to which those losses will be offset by success in other pairs/packs it is as yet unknown). Suffice to say the agencies have recognized the importance of this situation, and are re-assessing all possible management and law enforcement response that would help put and keep more wolves on the ground. The issues continue to revolve around social carrying capacity (human tolerance) rather than habitat-or native prey-based carrying capacity.

- f. Other AMOC items. In response to a question from the audience regarding Project costs, Terry Johnson referred interested parties to the cost summary information provided on the Project Web site (<http://azgfd.gov/wolf>). The information is updated twice each year. The next update will occur in August-September 2008.
4. Other business.
 - a. AMWG meetings: Terry Johnson advised attendees that, in view of the energy crises (i.e. personal and vehicular), and the onset of meetings and other work on the USFWS NEPA process for 10j rule revision (see Item 3.a), AMOC has decided to cut back AMWG meetings to three times per year in 2009 et seq. (several attendees applauded this decision) and has convened a small work group to examine alternative approaches to more effectively engage meeting attendees in discussion of key issues. Greenlee County Manager Kay Gale will head the work group, which will include four agency representatives and three individuals from the public. Kay will contact the proposed work group members and affirm their participation, or work with AMOC to identify replacements. AMOC has asked Kay to provide an assessment of progress on this task at the end of August, and if possible a draft report, recommendations, etc. in time for AMOC to consider implementing the changes in October 2008. Terry reminded all attendees that if changes are made in October that do not achieve the desired end, AMOC will make further changes and implement them (try them out) quickly. So, it is possible that the July and October 2008 AMWG meetings will differ in format, as will each of the 2009 AMWG meetings. The one constant will be a concise opening segment in which AMOC and the IFT present “status” and “decision” information on action items, the wild population, and other Project activities and issues. Interested individuals were encouraged to submit suggestions for more effective engagement of the public in AMWG meetings to: mexwolf@azgfd.gov.
 - b. Inaccurate Project Information: A member of the public expressed concern that certain agency employees provide inaccurate project information, including to elected officials and policy makers. Terry Johnson stated that anyone who has specifics on such allegations should convey those details to AMOC or to the appropriate agency. The complainant said they would look into the issue further and take the appropriate action. Note: complaints such as this are frequent occurrences in the wolf arena, and when sufficient information is available for follow-up they are investigated appropriately. However, time and time again the final take home lesson is that people engaged in the same wolf discussion tend to take quite different recollections away from the discussion, opinion is often construed as fact, context sensitivity is among the first casualties of repeated conversations, and once information has been relayed a second, third, or 20th time it is subject to the routine decay of repetitive human re-statement. Moreover, allegations of providing misinformation, intentionally or otherwise, have been made repeatedly about virtually all cooperating agencies, stakeholders, and other entities engaged in wolf issues. AMOC does and will certainly strive to address the issue when

important to do so, but to try to address every misstatement or even just the blatant errors in media and other depictions of almost any element of Mexican wolf reintroduction is, realistically, impossible, given the available resources. The more important battles must be chosen for resolution, and that's as true for individuals outside the Project as for those within it.

5. Dates and locations of future AMWG meeting. The AMOC Chair completely forgot to cover this item, and nobody pointed out that oversight until the meeting was too far into adjournment to re-herd the cats. Suffice to say that the October 2008 AMWG meeting will be in Glenwood NM the late afternoon and evening (1600-2000) of October 29, and the next AMWG meeting will be on April 29 (1600-2000) near Globe AZ at the Apache Gold Conference Center. Details on these meetings and the other two 2009 AMWG meetings will be released soon in an Endangered Species Updates newsletter (see below for subscription information).
6. Adjournment. Business having concluded, Terry Johnson adjourned the meeting at ca. 2030 and wished everyone a safe journey home.

Notes: (1) Information on the Mexican Wolf Blue Range Reintroduction Project is available on the Internet at <http://azgfd.gov/wolf> and <http://mexicanwolf.fws.gov>. (2) Notices for AMWG meetings and other news about issues pertaining to the Reintroduction Project are disseminated electronically through a self-subscription newsletter, the *Endangered Species Updates*. A self-subscription form is available at: <http://azgfd.gov/signup>. (3) Send email messages to the Reintroduction Project to: mexwolf@azgfd.gov; this is a passive account, so messages received will be read but individual responses will not be sent. (4) Send postal mail to: Mexican Wolf Reintroduction Project, 5000 West Carefree Highway, Phoenix, Arizona 85086.