



Mexican Wolf Reintroduction Project Monthly Update

November 1-30, 2015

The following is a summary of Mexican Wolf Reintroduction Project (Project) activities in the Mexican Wolf Experimental Population Area (MWEPA) in Arizona, including the Fort Apache Indian Reservation (FAIR), and New Mexico. Additional Project information can be obtained by calling (928) 339-4329 or toll free at (888) 459-9653, or by visiting the Arizona Game and Fish Department website at <http://www.azgfd.gov/wolf> or by visiting the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service website at <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/mexicanwolf>. Past updates may be viewed on either website, or interested parties may sign up to receive this update electronically by visiting <http://www.azgfd.gov/signup>. This update is a public document and information in it can be used for any purpose. The Project is a multi-agency cooperative effort among the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD), USDA Forest Service (USFS), USDA-Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Wildlife Services (USDA-APHIS WS), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the White Mountain Apache Tribe (WMAT).

To view semi-monthly wolf telemetry flight location information please visit <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/mexicanwolf/RWL.cfm>

Please report any wolf sightings or suspected livestock depredations to: (928) 339-4329 or toll free at (888) 459-9653. To report incidents of take or harassment of wolves, please call the AGFD 24-hour dispatch (Operation Game Thief) at (800) 352-0700.

Overall Mexican Wolf Recovery Program Monthly Update

1. Process to select release/translocation sites in Zone 1 of the Mexican Wolf Experimental Population Area

In January 2015, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) revised the regulations for the experimental population of the Mexican wolf. These revisions included expansion of the area within which Mexican wolves can disperse into and occupy, and expansion of areas on National Forest lands where Mexican wolves can be released from captivity (initial releases). Under the 1998 regulations, we could only release Mexican wolves from captivity into the primary recovery zone, which comprised only 16% of the Blue Range (the southern portion

of the Apache National Forest). Restricting releases to this small area significantly constrained our ability to release additional wolves from captivity to address genetic concerns in the wild population. Releases of Mexican wolves from the more genetically diverse captive population are needed to improve the genetic health of the wild population.

Releases from captivity are now authorized by the 10(j) rule in the Apache, Gila and Sitgreaves National Forests; the Payson, Pleasant Valley and Tonto Basin Ranger Districts of the Tonto National Forest; and the Magdalena Ranger District of the Cibola National Forest. The Arizona Game and Fish Commission has directed that only translocations and cross-foster are permitted by the Commission.

Use of these new areas for the release/translocation of pairs of wolves with pups requires the identification of release sites where temporary pens would be constructed to hold the wolves while they acclimate to the new area. The Mexican Wolf Interagency Field Team is working with the Forest Service to determine the best areas for these release sites. They have developed maps showing buffers around towns, occupied dwellings, Tribal Trust lands, and Forest Service boundaries. They have also held meetings with local Forest Service permittees to gather ground-based information on each site. Based on this information, the IFT will propose a set of sites for the Forest Service to assess under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The Forest Service NEPA assessment will only address the effects of constructing the temporary pens, not the release of Mexican wolves, which was already analyzed in the Service's November 2014 [*Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Proposed Revision to the Regulations for the Nonessential Experimental Population of the Mexican Wolf \(Canis lupus baileyi\)*](#).

Release/translocation sites on the Gila and Apache National Forests are not included in this NEPA assessment, as the release sites on those Forests have already been evaluated and approved by the Forest Service.

There are no imminent releases/translocations of Mexican wolves planned at this time. The Service and partner agencies are in the processes of developing a release/translocation plan for 2016.

2. In July 2015, the Mexican Wolf Species Survival Plan group met in Mexico City, Mexico, and conducted genetic and demographic analyses of the captive Mexican wolf population. Recommendations for the breeding and transfer of Mexican wolves were later finalized, and include the transfer of 39 wolves among the captive institutions to facilitate housing and breeding needs for 2016. Thirty-one breeding pairs were recommended, plus an additional two pairs as potential release candidates in Mexico and two pairs as potential release candidates in the US.

3. The Forest Service held a meeting with grazing permittees on the Tonto National Forest regarding potential release/translocation sites on August 20, 2015.
4. The Forest Service held a meeting with grazing permittees on the Magdalena Ranger District of the Cibola National Forest regarding potential release/translocation sites on October 1, 2015.
5. The Service participated in a Small Business Administration Hearing on the Mexican Wolf Program on October 14, 2015. The hearing was conducted by phone.
6. The Service and Arizona Game and Fish Department gave presentations on the Mexican wolf at a meeting of the 4 Forest Restoration Initiative on October 28, 2015.
7. The Service awarded Livestock Demonstration Grants for fy2015: Arizona Game and Fish Department received \$40,000 for depredation compensation and \$80,000 for preventative measures; New Mexico Department of Agriculture received \$60,000 for depredation compensation and \$34,000 for preventative measures, and the White Mountain Apache Tribe received \$70,000 for preventative measures.
8. The Mexican Wolf/Livestock Council disbursed the 2014 Payments for Presence of Mexican Wolves in October 2015 to qualified applicants. In Arizona, \$38,000 was disbursed to 15 applicants, and in New Mexico, \$47,500 was disbursed to 20 applicants. The applications for 2015 are due June 1, 2016.
9. Due to livestock depredation, on September 23, 2015 the Service issued a management decision to remove up to two members of the Bluestem Pack if additional depredations occurred. No subsequent depredations were confirmed and the livestock have been removed from the summer range allotment. No wolves were removed. The removal order expired on November 1, 2015.
10. The Service and Arizona Game and Fish Department met with the Arizona Cattle Growers Association on November 10, 2015 to discuss public involvement and depredation compensation programs.
11. The Mexican Wolf Middle Management Team met November 19, 2015 to discuss updating the Memorandum of Understanding and Standard Operating Procedures.

Numbering System: Mexican wolves are given an identification number recorded in an official studbook that tracks their history. Capital letters (M = Male, F = Female) preceding the number indicate adult animals 24 months or older. Lower case letters (m = male, f = female) indicate wolves younger than 24 months or pups. The capital letter “A” preceding the letter and number indicate breeding wolves.

Definitions: A “wolf pack” is defined as two or more wolves that maintain an established territory. In the event that one of the two alpha (dominant) wolves dies, the remaining alpha wolf, regardless of pack size, retains the pack status. The packs referenced in this update contain at least one wolf with a radio telemetry collar attached to it. The Interagency Field Team (IFT) recognizes that wolves without radio telemetry collars may also form packs. If the IFT confirms that wolves are associating with each other and are resident within the same home range, they will be referenced as a pack.

CURRENT POPULATION STATUS

At the end of November 2015 the wild Mexican wolf population consisted of 50 wolves with functional radio collars dispersed among 19 packs and two single wolves. Members of the IFT continue pup counts this month and have so far counted 43 pups produced by 11 packs in the MWEPA.

IN ARIZONA:

Bear Wallow Pack (m1338 and f1335)

This pack continues to utilize the east-central portion of the ASNF.

Bluestem Pack (collared AF1042, m1331, f1333, m1382, m1404, f1405, and f1443)

In November, the Bluestem Pack continued to use their traditional territory in the central portion of the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest (ASNF). Bluestem wolves' f1333, m1382, m1404, and f1443 have been located in their traditional territory during the month with at least two other wolves, while m1331 has been located separate from the pack in New Mexico. Wolf f1405 has been located separate from the pack in eastern Arizona and located with M1161.

Elk Horn Pack (collared AF1294 and M1342)

In November, the Elk Horn Pack continued to make broad movements within their traditional territory in the northeast portion of the ASNF.

Hawks Nest Pack (collared AM1038, AF1280, m1383, and f1439)

In November, the Hawks Nest Pack was located within their traditional territory in the north central portion of the ASNF. AM1038, AF1280, and m1383 were seen traveling together this month. Wolf f1439 dispersed from the Hawks Nest Pack and has been consistently located with Mangas Pack M1296 in the northwestern portion of the GNF in New Mexico.

Hoodoo Pack (collared AM1290 and mp1441)

In November, the Hoodoo Pack remained localized in the north-central portion of the ASNF. The IFT has documented AM1290 and mp1441 traveling with a wolf believed to be AF1395, whose radio collar is non-functional.

Marble Pack (collared AF1340, mp1440, and fp1442)

In November, the Marble Pack was located in their traditional territory in the northwest-central portion of the ASNF. The IFT continued to document the Marble Pack utilizing a rendezvous site in November. AF1340 was documented traveling with four other wolves.

Maverick Pack (collared AM1183, AF1291, and f1335)

During November, the Maverick Pack traveled within their traditional territory both on the FAIR and ASNF. The IFT has documented a minimum of four animals traveling together.

Panther Creek Pack (F1339 and M1394)

During November the Panther Creek Pack has been located in the east-central portion of the ASNF.

Rim Pack (AF1305)

Throughout November, AF1305 has been traveling a wide area throughout the central portion of the ASNF.

M1161 (Collared)

M1161 was been documented traveling with f1405 from the Bluestem Pack in eastern Arizona.

ON THE FAIR:**Diamond Pack (collared 1437)**

During October and November, the Diamond Pack was located in the eastern portion of the FAIR.

Tsay o Ah Pack (collared M1343, AF1283, fp 1445)

During October, the WMAT captured and collared a female pup (fp 1445). She was fitted with a GPS collar. During October and November, Tsay o Ah Pack was located in the eastern portion of the FAIR.

Single (mp1447)

During October, the WMAT captured and collared a male wolf in the eastern portion of the FAIR. During November, m1447 was located in the eastern portion of the FAIR.

Other

During October, WMAT recaptured Marble Pack AF1340 on the FAIR. No processing or collar refitting occurred.

IN NEW MEXICO:**Coronado Pack (collared AM1051)**

During November, AM1051 of the Coronado Pack was not located.

Dark Canyon Pack (collared AM992, AF923, M1293, m1354, m1347, and fp1444)

During November, the IFT located this pack within its traditional territory in the west-central portion of the Gila National Forest (GNF).

Fox Mountain Pack (collared m1396)

In November, the IFT documented the Fox Mountain Pack outside of their traditional territory and traveling with f1397 of the Willow Springs Pack. Trail camera photos from November confirmed both AM1158 and m1396 were located with f1397.

Iron Creek Pack (collared AM1240 and AF1278)

During November, the Iron Creek Pack continued to utilize their territory in the northern portion

of the Gila Wilderness and the southern portion of the GNF.

Lava Pack (collared M1285 and F1295)

In November, the Lava Pack was located in its traditional territory between the Gila Wilderness and the Elk Mountains. A diversionary food cache has been maintained to reduce potential conflicts with livestock.

Luna Pack (collared AM1155, AF1115, and m1398)

During November, the Luna Pack remained in their traditional territory in the north-central portion of the GNF.

Prieto Pack (collared AM1387, AF1251, m1386 and f1392)

During November, the Prieto Pack was located within their traditional territory in the north-central portion of the GNF.

San Mateo Pack (collared AF903 and M1345)

During November, the San Mateo Pack was located within their traditional territory in the north eastern portions of the GNF. The IFT conducted efforts to add additional collars to the San Mateo Pack in November but were not successful.

Willow Springs Pack (collared AM1185, and f1397)

In November, the IFT located Willow Springs Pack f1397 in its traditional territory in the north central portion of the GNF. Documentation via remote camera confirmed both AM1158 and m1396 from the Fox Mountain Pack are traveling with f1397. AM1185 has been documented traveling outside its traditional territory.

M1284 (collared)

During November, M1284 was located by the IFT within the GNF in New Mexico.

Mangas Pack (collared M1296)

During November, M1296 was located traveling with dispersing wolf f1439 from the Hawks Nest Pack in north western portions of the GNF in New Mexico.

MORTALITIES

No wolf mortalities were documented during the month of November.

INCIDENTS

During November, 3 livestock depredation reports involving wolves and no nuisance reports.

On November 8, Wildlife Services investigated a dead cow near O bar O canyon in New Mexico. The investigation determined the cow was killed by wolves.

On November 24, Wildlife Services investigated a dead calf west of Springerville Arizona. The investigation determined the calf was killed by Coyotes.

On November 30, WMAT investigated a dead cow in the eastern portion of the FAIR. The investigation determined the cow was a probable wolf kill.

COMMUNICATION AND COORDINATION

On November 19, the Management Team met at the SO office in Springerville Arizona.

PROJECT PERSONNEL

Sara Eno, a former USFWS volunteer, was hired as the new biologist for the FAIR. Welcome back Sara!

REWARDS OFFERED

The USFWS is offering a reward of up to \$10,000; the AGFD Operation Game Thief is offering a reward of up to \$1,000; and the NMDGF is offering a reward of up to \$1,000 for information leading to the conviction of the individual(s) responsible for the shooting deaths of Mexican wolves. A variety of non-governmental organizations and private individuals have pledged an additional \$46,000 for a total reward amount of up to \$58,000, depending on the information provided.

Individuals with information they believe may be helpful are urged to call one of the following agencies: USFWS special agents in Mesa, Arizona, at (480) 967-7900, in Alpine, Arizona, at (928) 339-4232, or in Albuquerque, New Mexico, at (505) 346-7828; the WMAT at (928) 338-1023 or (928) 338-4385; AGFD Operation Game Thief at (800) 352-0700; or NMDGF Operation Game Thief at (800) 432-4263. Killing a Mexican wolf is a violation of the Federal Endangered Species Act and can result in criminal penalties of up to \$50,000, and/or not more than one year in jail, and/or a civil penalty of up to \$25,000.