



Mexican Wolf Reintroduction Project Monthly Update

February 1-29, 2016

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), San Carlos Apache Reservation (SCAR), 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 www.azgfd.gov/wolf or by visiting the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service website at 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 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 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

The Fish and Wildlife Service gave a presentation on the Mexican Wolf Recovery Program to the US Forest Service's Region 3 Leadership Team in Tubac, AZ on February 4, 2016.

The Fish and Wildlife Service and the Arizona Game and Fish Department met on February 8, 2016 with the Black Mesa and Lakeside Ranger Districts on the A/S National Forest and grazing permittees to discuss proposed release/translocation sites on the Sitgreaves National Forest, in Zone 1 of the Mexican Wolf Experimental Population Area. No initial releases of Mexican wolves are proposed on the Sitgreaves National Forest in 2016.

The Mexican Wolf Interagency Field Team completed the 2015 Annual Count and Capture operation on February 6, 2016. The count resulted in a minimum of 97 Mexican wolves in Arizona and New Mexico.

The IFT ceased the population count and capture operations on January 28, to review capture protocols and procedures after the deaths of two Mexican wolves (F1295 and F1340) which both died during the annual population count and capture operation this year. Both have been sent to the Fish and Wildlife Service's Forensics Laboratory in Ashland, Oregon, which will conduct necropsies to determine causes of death for each wolf. The techniques, protocol, and drugs used were the same as those used throughout this year's count and last year's count. F1295 was darted and processed on January 23, released back into the wild and died four days later. F1340 was captured on January 28, and died within minutes of being darted. This year, 15 additional male and female wolves were successfully darted, processed, collared and released back into the wild. After completing the review, the Service determined that it was appropriate for the helicopter operations to continue on January 30. Due to this temporary suspension, some mechanical issues, and a few days of inclement weather, the helicopter operations were extended through the following week to ensure a complete population count for 2015. The 2015 population survey concluded on February 6.

The Fish and Wildlife Service and the Arizona Game and Fish Department gave presentations at the USDA- Wildlife Service's Non-Lethal Predator Damage Management Workshop on February 18, 2016 at Hon Dah.

The Fish and Wildlife Service met with the Navajo Nation Fish and Wildlife program in Window Rock, New Mexico on February 25, 2016 to discuss management of Mexican wolves.

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

Project personnel concluded the end-of-year population count on February 6. As a result of survey and capture efforts associated with the count, the collared population at the end of February 2016 consisted of 50 wolves with functional radio collars dispersed among 18 packs and 2 single wolves. The overall minimum population estimate for the wolf population in 2015

was 97.

Note: In accordance with Standard Operating Procedure 27.0, the end-of-the-year population count is a minimum count with no range of numbers or associated statistical confidence intervals. The count includes three components:

1. All current radio-collared wolves and their pack associates being monitored as of December 31 of each year;
2. Radio-collared wolves whose collars are not functioning, but for which evidence exists indicating they were likely to have been alive on December 31, as determined by the IFT;
3. Uncollared wolves confirmed by IFT personnel anytime during November, December and January.

IN ARIZONA:

Bear Wallow Pack (collared m1338 and f1335)

In February the Bear Wallow Pack was located within their traditional territory in the east-central portion of the ASNF and the northeast portion of SCAR.

Bluestem Pack (collared AF1042, AM1341, m1331, f1333, m1382, m1404, and f1443)

In February, the Bluestem Pack continued to use their traditional territory in the central portion of the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest (ASNF). Bluestem wolves' AM1341, m1382 and f1443 have been located in their traditional territory during the month, while m1331, f1333, and f1405 have been located separate from the pack. Wolf m1331 has been located in the north-east portion of the GNF in New Mexico in January. Wolf f1333 has been traveling with the Hoodoo Pack. Wolf m1404 has been documented traveling with f1405 of the Buckalou pack. The IFT has been conducting a predation study on the Bluestem Pack during the month of February, visiting and analyzing potential kill sites and associated prey items.

Buckalou Pack (collared M1161 and f1405)

Wolf m1404 from the Bluestem pack was documented traveling with f1405 during this month. M1161 has a non-functional radio collar. The IFT has been unable to document M1161 traveling with the Buckalou Pack since m1404 began traveling with f1405.

Elk Horn Pack (collared AF1294 and M1342)

In February, 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, M1383, and mp1453)

In February, the Hawks Nest Pack was located within their traditional territory in the north central portion of the ASNF. Wolf f1439 has remained with M1296 of the Mangas Pack in the northwestern portion of the GNF in New Mexico and is now officially part of the Mangas pack. AF1280 died this month.

Hoodoo Pack (collared AM1290 and mp1441)

In February, the Hoodoo Pack remained localized in the north-central portion of the ASNF.

AM1290 has been located traveling with Bluestem F1333. AM1290, F1333, and mp1441 have continued traveling together this month.

Marble Pack (collared AM1243, mp1440, and fp1442)

In February, the Marble Pack was located in their traditional territory in the northwest-central portion of the ASNF. The IFT has been conducting a predation study on the Marble Pack during the month of February.

Maverick Pack (collared AM1183 and AF1291)

During February, the Maverick Pack was located within their traditional territory both on the FAIR and ASNF. The IFT has observed 2 uncollared wolves traveling with the pack this month.

Panther Creek Pack (F1339 and M1394)

During February, the Panther Creek Pack has been located in the east-central portion of the ASNF. The IFT observed 2 collared wolves with this pack in January.

ON THE FAIR:

Diamond Pack (collared M1249, f1437, mp1447, and mp1454)

During February, the Diamond Pack was located in the eastern portion of the FAIR and the north portion of the ASNF. M1249 and f1437 spent the majority of the month on the FAIR and mp1447 and mp1454 spent the majority of the month on the ASNF.

Tsay o Ah Pack (collared M1343, AF1283, fp1445)

During February, the Tsay o Ah Pack was located in the eastern portion of the FAIR.

IN NEW MEXICO:

Coronado Pack (collared AM1051)

AM1051 of the Coronado Pack was not located in February.

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

During February, the IFT located this pack within its traditional territory in the west-central portion of the Gila National Forest (GNF). M1293 was not located in February and mp1444 displayed movements suggesting possible dispersal. M1347 was located outside the Dark Canyon Pack territory for most of February.

Fox Mountain Pack (collared m1396)

In February, the IFT documented the Fox Mountain Pack within their new territory in the north central portion of the GNF. Wolf m1396 was documented traveling with AF1115 of the Luna Pack in mid-February.

Iron Creek Pack (collared AM1240 and AF1278)

During February, 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 mp1446)

In February, the Lava Pack was located in its traditional territory between the Gila Wilderness and the Elk Mountains

Luna Pack (collared AM1155, AF1115, and m1398)

During February, the Luna Pack remained in their traditional territory in the north-central portion of the GNF. The IFT continues to document dispersal behavior of m1398 traveling mainly in portions of the GNF in New Mexico. In mid-February, AM1155 was documented separate from the Luna Pack and AF1115 was located traveling with m1396 of the Fox Mountain Pack. During February AF1115 and m1396 of the Fox Mountain were involved in the death of two cows; the IFT has initiated hazing efforts and established a diversionary food cache.

Prieto Pack (collared m1386, mp1445 and f1392)

During February, the Prieto Pack was located within their traditional territory in the north-central portion of the GNF. On February 4, during the annual population survey, an uncollared wolf was captured, collared, released and assigned studbook number mp1455. Wolf f1392 has continued to be located with single wolf M1284 in the north-central portion of the GNF during February.

San Mateo Pack (collared M1345)

During February, the San Mateo Pack was located within their traditional territory in the north eastern portions of the GNF.

Mangas Pack (collared M1296, F1439)

During February, M1296 was located traveling with dispersing wolf f1439 from the Hawks Nest Pack in north western portions of the GNF in New Mexico. In February, f1439 became a member of the Mangas Pack, having been located traveling with M1296 for three months.

M1284 (collared)

During February, the IFT located M1284 traveling with dispersing wolf f1392 from the Prieto Pack within the GNF in New Mexico. On February 4, during the annual population survey, M1284 was captured and recollared.

MORTALITIES

In February, AF1280 from the Hawks Nest Pack was located dead in Arizona. The incident is under investigation.

INCIDENTS

During February, there were 8 livestock depredation reports involving wolves and no nuisance reports.

On February 8, Wildlife Services investigated a dead cow near Cerro Montosa in Arizona. The investigation confirmed the cow was killed by wolves and assigned to uncollared wolves, or uncollared wolves associated with the Diamond Pack.

On February 9, Wildlife Services investigated a dead cow near Cerro Montosa in Arizona. The investigation confirmed the cow was killed by wolves. The depredation was assigned to the Diamond Pack.

On February 20, Wildlife Services investigated a dead cow near Y canyon in New Mexico. The investigation determined the cow was killed by wolves. The depredation was assigned to Luna Pack AF1115 and m1396 of the Fox Mountain Pack.

On February 23, Wildlife Services investigated a dead cow near Y canyon in New Mexico. The investigation determined the cow died from calving complications.

On February 24, Wildlife Services investigated a dead cow near Y canyon in New Mexico. The investigation determined the cow was killed by wolves. The depredation was assigned to Luna Pack AF1115 and m1396 of the Fox Mountain Pack.

On February 24, Wildlife Services investigated a dead cow near Hard Castle Gap in New Mexico. The investigation determined that the calf died of natural causes.

On February 24, Wildlife Services investigated a dead cow near Hard Castle Gap in New Mexico. The investigation determined that the cow died of unknown causes.

On February 29, Wildlife Services investigated a dead cow near Y canyon in New Mexico. The investigation determined the cow died of unknown causes, but likely calving complications.

COMMUNICATION AND COORDINATION

On February 11 project personnel gave a presentation as part of the University of California, Riverside, Deep Canyon Lecture Series in Palm Springs, CA. Approximately 250 people were in attendance.

On February 12, the IFT presented a Mexican Wolf Project update to 55 people at the McDowell Mountain Regional Park

On February 18, the IFT participated and presented at the Less than Lethal workshop set up by USDA Wildlife Services.

PROJECT PERSONNEL

In February, Becca Thomas-Kuzilik, a USFWS volunteer left the program. Thanks for all your help Becca!

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.