



News Release

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Agency to Evaluate Amending its Mexican Wolf Recovery and Reintroduction Program Welcomes Public Involvement in Scoping Possible Changes

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has announced that it will begin a scoping process to gather input on potential modifications to its rule that established a recovery and reintroduction program for the Mexican gray wolf. The Service established a nonessential, experimental population of the Mexican gray wolf in 1998 and has since introduced more than 90 wolves into Arizona and New Mexico.

A Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement and Socio-economic Assessment for the Proposed Amendment of the Rule Establishing a Nonessential Experimental Population of the Mexican Wolf in Arizona and New Mexico was published in the *Federal Register* today. Public meetings will be held in November and December, 2007 throughout Arizona and New Mexico.

All comments and input received from now until the end of the year will be used to prepare a draft proposed rule, a draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and a Socio-economic Assessment. Once drafted, those documents will also go through a public review process.

“This National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) scoping process will provide an incredible opportunity for the public to collaborate in the future of wolf recovery in Arizona and New Mexico,” said Benjamin N. Tuggle, PhD, Southwest Regional Director. “Under Section 10(j) of the Endangered Species Act we are allowed more flexibility to work with communities in managing experimental populations such as the Mexican wolf. We have learned many lessons through the adaptive management process since establishing the program and recognize it is time for adjustments to be considered.”

Through this notice and the public scoping meetings, comments or suggestions are being sought from the public, concerned government agencies, Tribes, the scientific community, industry, ranchers, landowners or any other interested parties concerning pertinent issues that should be addressed and alternatives that should be analyzed. To promulgate a proposed rule and prepare a draft Environmental Impact Statement, including an assessment of socio-economic impacts all comments and any additional information received will be taken into consideration. All comments, including names and addresses, will become part of the supporting record and will be made public.

The notice can be found on the web at <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/mexicanwolf/>. Submit written comments directly to the Service’s New Mexico Ecological Services Field Office on or

before December 31, 2007, or at any of the 12 scoping meetings to be held in November and December 2007. Send comments to Brian Millsap, State Administrator, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, New Mexico Ecological Services Field Office, 2105 Osuna NE, Albuquerque, NM 87113. Written comments may also be sent by facsimile to (505) 346-2542 or by e-mail to R2FWE_AL@fws.gov. Guidance on sending comments is in the notice.

Questions regarding the scoping process or development of a proposed rule amending the 1998 final rule should be directed to John Morgart at (505) 346-2525. Persons who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 1-800-877-8339, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Each informal public information session will be held from 5 to 6 p.m., presentation of known issues will be conducted from 6 to 6:30 p.m. and the actual scoping meeting will take place from 6:30 till 9 p.m. Locations are as follows:

November 26, 2007: Flagstaff, AZ
November 27, 2007: Hon-dah, AZ
November 28, 2007: Alpine, AZ
November 29, 2007: Grants, NM
November 30, 2007: Albuquerque, NM
December 1, 2007: Socorro, NM
December 3, 2007: Alamogordo, NM
December 4, 2007: Las Cruces, NM
December 5, 2007: Glenwood, NM
December 6, 2007: Safford, AZ
December 7, 2007: Tucson, AZ
December 8, 2007: Phoenix, AZ

The Service will provide reminder notifications that will include specific address information prior to the public information sessions, issue presentations, and scoping meetings.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 97-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 548 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resources offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign and Native American tribal governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.