



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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In Reply Refer To:
FWS/R2/ES-TE/050080

DEC 08 2011

Memorandum

To: Mexican Wolf Recovery Coordinator, Region 2

Through: Assistant Regional Director, Ecological Services, Region 2

From: **ACTING** Regional Director, Region 2

Fay E. Nicholopoulos

Subject: Reevaluation of the September 26, 2011, Depredation Decision; Mexican Wolves AM871/AF861 (Middle Fork Pack)

Under the final 10 (j) rule (50 CFR Part 17) of January 12, 1998, the Interagency Management Plan of March 1998, and the Final Environmental Impact Statement of November 1996, two confirmed livestock depredation incidents within one year occurring in the secondary recovery zone by Mexican wolf male AM871 and female AF861 trigger a decision on the appropriate continued management of the Middle Fork Pack. This decision includes whether these wolves should remain in the wild or be removed from the Blue Range Wolf Recovery Area.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Wildlife Services investigated the depredation incidents on July 9, 2011, and, according to their reports, one yearling was determined to have died the evening of July 5, 2011, and the second yearling died on July 6, 2011. Both depredations were determined to be wolf caused. I signed a Decision Memorandum on September 26, 2011, regarding the July 2011 depredations and committed to reevaluate my decision after November 1, 2011, taking into account their status at that time and any additional depredations that may occur. This Decision Memorandum constitutes that reevaluation.

On September 1, 2011, USDA Wildlife Services' personnel investigated a depredation incident occurring in the Middle Fork territory. On August 30, 2011, an injured yearling was found within the Middle Fork Pack's territory and transported to the ranch for medical attention. The USDA Wildlife Services was contacted on August 31, 2011, and the investigation occurred the

following day. The USDA Wildlife Services' personnel confirmed the injuries to be wolf caused, and the yearling was later euthanized. Based on radio telemetry data collected by Interagency Field Team (IFT) personnel during the days preceding and post-investigation, the depredation was assigned to F1105.

Following the confirmed depredation incidents involving Middle Fork AM871 and AF861 in July 2011, we implemented a diversionary food cache for the Middle Fork Pack. In addition to the diversionary food cache, a range rider was employed to monitor the livestock in the area during mid to late summer. The IFT has continued intensive monitoring of the Middle Fork Pack and has remained in communication with local permittees in order to reduce potential wolf/livestock conflicts. During October and November 2011, livestock occurring in close proximity to the Middle Fork rendezvous area were removed from the Gila National Forest, in accordance with the Annual Operating Instructions for the allotment. Furthermore, now that it is late fall, the Middle Fork pups of the year are considered mobile and may travel from the rendezvous area with the adults. This mobility allows the Middle Fork wolves to travel widely within their territory, reducing the potential interaction with livestock occurring in close proximity to the rendezvous area.

Through careful consideration of the behavior of the Middle Fork Pack since the July 2011 depredation investigations, in combination with removal of livestock from the vicinity of the Middle Fork Pack, my decision is the Middle Fork Pack, including adults, yearlings and pups, shall remain in the wild at this time. As we go forward we will reevaluate their status, taking into consideration any additional depredations that may occur.

In addition, IFT personnel continue to be authorized to implement a full spectrum of integrated and innovative methods to deter depredation behavior. We remain committed to assisting ranchers and permittees with depredation problems caused by wolves. I wish to thank the Mexican Wolf Interdiction Fund and the associated Interdiction Stakeholder Council for their commitments toward financial compensation to the livestock producer for past, current, and any future depredation losses. I encourage the IFT to focus on addressing field efforts and needs associated with the Middle Fork Pack's continued monitoring, with frequent reports conveyed to me through U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service contacts and normal agency channels.