



United States Department of the Interior

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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Memorandum

To: Mexican Wolf Recovery Coordinator, Region 2

Through: Assistant Regional Director, Ecological Services, Region 2

From: Regional Director, Region 2

Subject: 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, three confirmed livestock depredation incidents by Mexican wolf male AM871, female AF861 and associated pack triggers 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 (BRWRA). The U.S. Department of Agriculture Wildlife Services (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 3 days prior to the investigation (July 6, 2011). The third depredation was investigated on February 26, 2012. An individual of the Middle Fork Pack injured a cow on February 23, 2012. These incidents occurred in the secondary recovery zone of the BRWRA.

I extend my sincere thanks to all those involved in doing the analysis and in implementing field efforts to protect livestock and conserve wolves. I make my decision in full consideration of the following:

1. I remain concerned about the overall status of the wolf population in the 10(j) area. Largely due to natural and unlawful mortalities in combination with legal removal actions in recent years, the Mexican gray wolf 10(j) population has not shown significant increases toward overall population goals. The population has remained relatively "flat," oscillating between 40 and 60 wolves.

2. The 2011 End of Year population survey documented 7 breeding pairs in the wild population, one of which was the Middle Fork Pack. AM871 and AF861 have been confirmed as denning and/or as having pups each year since 2006, and are expected to breed again in 2012.
3. The Interagency Management Plan provides certain flexibilities to determine problem wolves. Wolves may not necessarily be problem wolves if depredations occur on public lands, or if they occur in areas or at times, that are critically important to wolves. The two confirmed depredations investigated on July 9, 2011, occurred between June 1 and September 30, and were within a mile of the pack's highly suspected rendezvous site. The Interagency Management Plan specifies that under such conditions, control of wolves will only occur if all other options for resolution of the conflict have been exhausted.
4. The third depredation was assigned to a member of the Middle Fork Pack and resulted in an injury to the cow.
5. A range rider will be available April 1st or earlier. In the interim, a receiver will be given to the landowner. There will be increased monitoring of the pack by the Interagency Field Team (IFT). Options may also include low maintenance fladry, hazing, diversionary food caches and wolf behavior modification methods that may significantly assist in resolving future depredation conflicts.
6. The Middle Fork Pack has demonstrated significant periods of time with no livestock depredations. For instance the latest injury is 7.5 months removed from the previous depredations.
7. The adults and yearlings in this wolf pack are determined to be of high genetic value to the 10(j) wolf population in the wild. Removal of this pack at this time could significantly adversely affect the overall genetic diversity and long-term survival of the 10(j) wolf population.
8. It is important to retain wild-born wolves in the 10(j) wolf population. The Middle Fork Pack is expected to breed again this year which would allow for the natural rearing of wild born pups into adulthood. This is beneficial to overall population survival.

Therefore, in consideration of these eight points and utilizing the flexibilities authorized in the Interagency Management Plan, my decision is that the Middle Fork Pack, including adults and any yearlings, shall remain in the wild through April 30, 2012. We will reevaluate their status at that time, taking into consideration any additional depredations that may occur.

During this time period, a range rider will be in place until such time when deemed no longer necessary (e.g., cattle are moved from the area, wolves move from the area). In addition, Agency personnel are authorized to implement a full spectrum of integrated and innovative

methods to deter depredation behavior, including ground hazing on foot or by horseback and aerial hazing, if deemed appropriate by IFT personnel.

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 Stakeholder Council for their commitments toward financial compensation to the livestock grower 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 and control efforts, with frequent reports conveyed to me through U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service contacts and normal agency channels.