



# News Release

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## **Pair of Mexican wolves released into the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests**

PHOENIX -- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) and the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AZGFD) released a pair of Mexican wolves into the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests yesterday.

The Mexican Wolf Interagency Field Team (IFT) conducted a “soft release” of wolves M1130 and F1305 (F indicates female and M indicates male), meaning the wolves will be held in an enclosure until the animals chew through the fencing and self-release.



The female is the Rim Pack breeding female that was taken into captivity in January to be paired with M1130, a more genetically-diverse male. M1130 was whelped at the California Wolf Center in 2008 and eventually moved to the Service’s Sevilleta Wolf Management Facility in New Mexico.

The wolf pair was observed breeding and biologists believe the female is pregnant. The pair was released near the Rim Pack’s old territory in Arizona on the Alpine Ranger District.

“The release of this genetically-diverse pair of Mexican wolves will help us build on our recent success of reaching a population milestone of more than 100 wolves in the American Southwest,” said Mike Rabe, nongame wildlife branch chief for Arizona Game and Fish Department. “The methods used for their release help ensure that these wolves acclimate and behave as wild wolves”

Both wolves underwent an acclimation process at Sevilleta to determine that they are suitable release candidates.

“Improving the genetics of the wild Mexican wolf population continues to be our priority,” said Benjamin Tuggle, Fish and Wildlife Service Southwest regional director. “Together this pair will improve the genetic profile of the current Mexican wolf population, ensuring long-term viability. The female, F1505, has experience living in the wild increasing the success rate for the pair’s survival.”



The “soft release” allows the pair to acclimate to their surroundings, and the IFT anticipates the wolves will begin utilizing the area around the release site. The IFT will provide supplemental food while the wolves learn to catch and kill native prey, such as deer and elk, on their own. The supplemental feeding will assist in anchoring the wolves to the area.

The 2014 Mexican wolf population survey results announced in February showed a minimum of 109 in the wild, up from 83 the previous year.

The Reintroduction Project partners are the Service, AZGFD, White Mountain Apache Tribe, USDA Forest Service and USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service – Wildlife Services, several participating counties in Arizona and the Eastern Arizona Counties Organization. For more information on Mexican wolves, visit [www.azgfd.gov/wolf](http://www.azgfd.gov/wolf).

***Note to Media: Photos and video of the wolf pair are available by contacting AZGFD Public Information Officer Lynda Lambert at (623) 236-7203 or [llambert@azgfd.gov](mailto:llambert@azgfd.gov).***

The mission of the Arizona Game and Fish Department Mission is to conserve Arizona’s diverse wildlife resources and manage for safe, compatible outdoor recreation opportunities for current and future generations. Learn more at [www.azgfd.gov](http://www.azgfd.gov)

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service works cooperatively with the American public to continue the conservation legacy of America’s great outdoors. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit [www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov)