



United States Department of the Interior



FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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August 8, 2012

Memorandum

To: Mexican Wolf Recovery Coordinator, Ecological Services

Through: Assistant Regional Director, Ecological Services *Michelle Shroyes*

From: Regional Director, Region 2 *Joy E. Nicholas*

Subject: Lethal Removal Order for Mexican Wolf Female 1188

Under the final 10(j) rule (50 CFR Part 17) of January 12, 1998 (Final Rule), the Interagency Management Plan (IMP) of March 1998, and the Final Environmental Impact Statement of November 1996, a fourth depredation incident within one year by members of the Fox Mountain pack trigger a decision on the appropriate continued management of the Fox Mountain pack, including whether these wolves should remain in the wild or be removed from the Blue Range Wolf Recovery Area (BRWRA). It is my decision to lethally control the alpha female of the pack, AF1188, based on four key considerations: (1) chronic depredations, (2) occurrence of the depredations outside of the BRWRA boundary, (3) the low genetic value of AF1188, and (4) the provisions in the Final Rule and the 1998 IMP.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture Wildlife Services (Wildlife Services) investigated a depredation incident of a dead calf on August 1, 2012, on private land outside of the BRWRA boundary. The Wildlife Services personnel estimated that the calf death occurred on July 30, 2012, and confirmed the mortality to be wolf caused. The calf carcass was located approximately 3.25 miles from the Fox Mountain pack's den. On July 30, 2012, AF1188, was located approximately 1.9 miles from the depredation site, and 2.4 miles from the site the following day. The Interagency Field Team (IFT) determined the Fox Mountain pack was responsible for this depredation.

Additional confirmed depredation incidents in the past year involving the Fox Mountain pack were investigated on March 27, April 26, and May 1, (please see the Depredation Decision

memo dated July 2, 2012 for additional details). Three of the past four depredation incidents have occurred on private land outside of the BRWRA (the fourth on Bureau of Land Management property also outside of the BRWRA). The IFT has steadily increased proactive management efforts throughout this time in an attempt to deter future depredations, including two diversionary food caches and the assistance of two range riders.

Final Rule section 17.84(k)(15) provides a specific definition of “problem wolves” to mean wolves that “(1) Have depredated lawfully present domestic livestock, (2) Are members of a group or pack...that were directly involved in livestock depredations, (3) Were fed by or are dependent upon adults involved with livestock depredations..., (4) Have depredated domestic animals other than livestock on private or tribal lands, two times in an area within one year; or (5) Are habituated to humans, human residences, or other facilities.”

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. While the minimum population increased from 42 to 58 between 2009 and 2011, the longer term population trend has remained relatively “flat,” oscillating between 40 and 60 wolves between 2002 and 2011, largely due to natural and unlawful mortalities in combination with legal removal actions. While the more recent population trend is encouraging, I remain concerned about the overall population goal over the longer term.
2. The current Fox Mountain pack was formed in 2011 by wild born AF1188 and wild born male wolf 1158 (AM1158), and currently consists of AM1158 and AF1188, at least one uncollared yearling and a minimum of four young-of-the year. The pack remains important to achieving population goals.
3. The July 2, 2012 decision memo concerning this pack indicated if future depredations occurred, that either AM1158 or AF1188 may be removed after the pups are no longer dependent on the alpha female for milk.
4. In addition to the definition set forth in the Final Rule, the 1998 IMP lists conditions and criteria that also apply in determining the “problem” status of wolves. Also, the 1998 IMP includes guidelines for conducting wolf control actions. Decisions to relocate or remove a wolf or wolves from the wild population will be based on criteria such as the number of established packs in the recovery area, the sex, age, and reproductive status of the animal(s), and other circumstances relevant to the specific situation.
5. In order to maintain the integrity of the breeding segment of the wild population, we consider the genetic value of both AM1158 and AF1188. AM1158 has a greater genetic value than AF1188 (she is more related to the rest of the wild population), when considering the long-

term breeding integrity of the population in the BRWRA. In addition, AF1188 and AM1158 form a poor genetic pair (they are first cousins), which does not benefit the overall genetic health of the wild population.

6. The background of these two wolves is also considered. While neither AM1158 or AF1188 were implicated in any livestock depredations prior to pair bonding, AM1158 was born and raised in the Fox Mountain territory and did not depredate in the area until AF1188 joined the pack.
7. It is noteworthy that two additional depredation incidents – one from June 2011 and one from July 2011 – were also assigned to the Fox Mountain pack but are not considered “current” as they are narrowly beyond 365 days. In addition, the Fox Mountain pack was located near a probable wolf depredation that occurred in August of 2011.
8. AM1158 and AF1188 are considered surplus to the captive population. If removed, AF1188 would be unlikely to be selected for breeding, as she would not benefit the genetic composition of the captive population.

Therefore, in consideration of these circumstances relevant to the situation and the efforts by the IFT in response to the depredations, utilizing the flexibilities authorized in the 1998 IMP and Final Rule, my decision is to lethally control Fox Mountain pack alpha female, AF1188. Live removal of AF1188 was not considered a viable option, due to the low genetic value of this individual in the captive breeding program, and because of the need to quickly alter the ongoing depredation behavior. Therefore, I have authorized the immediate lethal control of AF1188. Two adults remain in the pack to raise young-of-the-year. Following the lethal control, I direct the IFT to once again increase their proactive management efforts, including intensive hazing of the pack off of private land.

Removal activities may occur on public and private lands within and adjacent to the BRWRA, provided that permission is granted by the landowner. This lethal control order covers a 30-day period, effective immediately.

I wish to thank the Mexican Wolf Interdiction Fund and the associated 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 Fox Mountain pack’s continued monitoring, with frequent reports conveyed to me through U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service contacts and normal agency channels.