



# United States Department of the Interior



FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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Memorandum

To: Mexican Wolf Recovery Coordinator, Southwest Region

Through: Assistant Regional Director, Ecological Services, Southwest Region

From: *ACTING* Regional Director, Southwest Region

Subject: Depredation Decision; Fox Mountain Pack

Under the final 10(j) rule (50 CFR Part 17) of January 12, 1998 (Final Rule), the Interagency Management Plan of March 1998 (IMP), and the Final Environmental Impact Statement of November 1996, six confirmed livestock depredation incidents 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 members of the pack should be removed from the Blue Range Wolf Recovery Area (BRWRA). My decision is to remove by live-trapping either M1276, m1274, or one of the 2 uncollared yearlings, if it is a male, from the Fox Mountain pack in an effort to disrupt habitual livestock depredation behavior of the pack.

### Depredation History and Assignments:

The following depredation incidents involving members of the Fox Mountain pack have occurred within the last 365 days:

- (1) The USDA APHIS Wildlife Services investigated a depredation incident on December 30, 2012, of a dead cow within the Fox Mountain pack's territory. The USDA APHIS Wildlife Services confirmed the injuries to be wolf caused and to have occurred on December 25 or 26, 2012. On December 26, 2012, telemetry signals from members of the Fox Mountain pack indicated that M1276, AM1158 and AF1212, were 3.7 miles from the livestock depredation. An IFT intern saw 3 wolves running from the carcass on

December 29, 2012. The Interagency Field Team (IFT) determined that at least one of three wolves (M1276, AM1158, or AF1212) was involved in this livestock depredation.

- (2) The USDA APHIS Wildlife Services investigated a depredation incident on April 6, 2013, of a dead cow and an unborn calf within the Fox Mountain pack's territory. Wildlife Services confirmed the injuries to be wolf caused, and to have occurred March 30 or April 1, 2013. On April 1, 2013, telemetry signals placed M1276, M1158, and F1212 within 1.5 miles of the livestock depredation. The IFT determined that M1158 (based on satellite collar data) and at least one other wolf, either M1276 or F1212, of the Fox Mountain pack were involved in the livestock depredation.
- (3) The USDA APHIS Wildlife Services investigated a depredation incident on April 24, 2013, of a dead calf within the Fox Mountain pack's territory. The USDA APHIS Wildlife Services confirmed the injuries to be wolf caused. An uncollared wolf was observed leaving the calf carcass indicating that an uncollared wolf was in the area. Following the depredation, the IFT attempted to determine if the depredation was caused by an uncollared wolf, or collared wolves associated with the Fox Mountain pack. The IFT determined that an uncollared wolf associated with the Fox Mountain pack was responsible for this depredation, based upon trail camera photos and telemetry evidence. The depredation incident was located 1.7 miles from the Fox Mountain den.
- (4) The USDA APHIS Wildlife Services investigated a depredation incident on May 2, 2013, of two dead calves within the Fox Mountain pack's territory. The USDA APHIS Wildlife Services confirmed the injuries to be wolf caused, and to have occurred within 24 hours of the investigation. On May 2, 2013, telemetry signals placed M1276 approximately 0.5 mile from the carcass. The depredation incident was located approximately 6 miles from the Fox Mountain den. The IFT determined that M1276 of the Fox Mountain pack was involved in the livestock depredation due to radio telemetry locations that only placed this animal in the area during the depredation investigation.
- (5) The USDA APHIS Wildlife Services investigated a depredation incident on July 14, 2013 of two dead calves within the Fox Mountain pack's territory. The USDA APHIS Wildlife Services confirmed the injuries to be wolf caused, and to have occurred within 24 hours of the investigation. On July 13, 2013 and July 14, 2013, telemetry signals placed M1158, M1276, F1212, and m1274 near livestock the night before, and near the 2 carcasses the morning of the 14<sup>th</sup>. The IFT determined that at least 2 of these 4 wolves (M1158, M1276, F1212, m1274) of the Fox Mountain pack were involved in the livestock depredation due to radio telemetry locations placing these animals in the area on the day of the depredation investigation. The depredation incident was located approximately 0.5 mile from the Fox Mountain rendezvous site.
- (6) The USDA APHIS Wildlife Services investigated a depredation incident on August 6, 2013, of an injured calf within the Fox Mountain pack's territory; the calf was euthanized due to the severity of injuries. The USDA APHIS Wildlife Services confirmed the

injuries to be wolf caused, and the IFT determined that one or more members of the Fox Mountain pack are responsible for the depredation. The IFT may further evaluate the information available and assign this depredation to one or more specific members of the Fox Mountain pack. However, the urgency to finalize this memo and begin removal actions precedes a more specific depredation assignment and would not alter the decision to remove m1274, M1276, or an uncollared yearling male associated with the Fox Mountain pack.

#### Previous Management Measures:

In response to the depredation incidents involving wolves in the Fox Mountain pack that occurred in 2012, the IFT, livestock owners, and private entities funded and implemented a series of proactive measures, including: diversionary food caches, range riders, moving cattle out of the area, and hazing (please see Fox Mountain Decision Memo on July 2, 2012). Despite these efforts, depredations continued and the Service issued a removal order for AF1188 (please see August 8, 2012, and August 10, 2012, Decision Memos for more information). F1188 was removed to captivity in October 2012. For further information on previous livestock depredations and management actions that have occurred regarding the Fox Mountain pack, please visit the Current Events Archive page of the Mexican Wolf Recovery Program website at [http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/mexicanwolf/CEBRWRA\\_Ar.cfm](http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/mexicanwolf/CEBRWRA_Ar.cfm).

Following the confirmed depredation on April 6, 2013,

- The IFT set up two diversionary food caches for the Fox Mountain pack in areas free of active cattle grazing to reduce the potential for future depredations. Members of the Fox Mountain pack did not utilize these food caches. These food caches were maintained for three weeks. They were discontinued due to non-use by the Fox Mountain pack, after the IFT established a food cache near the den area following the April 24, 2013 depredation.
- A range rider was brought on to monitor the livestock in the Fox Mountain territory within the BRWRA and outside the BRWRA boundary. The range rider began monitoring wolves and livestock in the Fox Mountain territory on April 20, 2013.

Following the confirmed depredation on April 24, 2013:

- The IFT worked with the three affected livestock owners and the Forest Service to develop alternative proactive strategies to reduce wolf-livestock conflicts within the Fox Mountain pack territory.
- The IFT set up one diversionary food cache near the Fox Mountain den area. This diversionary food cache was established to reduce the future potential for livestock depredations during the denning season. Photographic evidence documented the members of the Fox Mountain pack initially utilizing the food cache on May 3, 2013. Members of the Fox Mountain pack continue to utilize this food cache.

Following the confirmed depredation on May 2, 2013:

- In cooperation with the permittees and land owners, the IFT set up an additional diversionary food cache in the Centerfire Creek area to reduce the potential of future depredations by members of the Fox Mountain pack. This food cache was maintained for approximately three weeks, but was discontinued due to non-use by the Fox Mountain pack.
- A second range rider was brought on to monitor the livestock in the Fox Mountain territory within the BRWRA and outside the BRWRA boundary. The range rider began working in the northern portion of the pack's territory on June 17, 2013.

Following the confirmed depredation on July 14, 2013:

- In cooperation with the permittees and land owners, the IFT set up an additional diversionary food cache between the rendezvous site and the livestock during the critical period when livestock were being moved between 2 pastures in close proximity to the rendezvous site. This food cache was maintained for approximately two weeks, but was discontinued due to non-use by the Fox Mountain pack.
- Additional IFT staff were deployed to assist the range rider and permittee in monitoring and hazing wolves while the cattle were rotated from one pasture to another adjacent to the rendezvous site.

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) The current Fox Mountain pack consists of at least 13 wolves; adults AF1212 and AM1158, subadult M1276, five yearlings (m1274, f1281, f1295, and two uncollared wolves), and at least 5 pups documented on a trail camera. Females 1281 and 1295 have largely been traveling separately from the pack, and on August 5, 2013, f1281 was located approximately 50 miles away. In October 2012, AF1188 was removed from the wild for involvement in livestock depredations, and in December 2012, AM1158 accepted F1212 as the new alpha female of the pack. This pack is important for achieving population goals.

(2) The 1998 IMP states “attempts should be made to keep alpha females, females with young, or females showing signs of lactation in the population, when feasible, in order to maintain the integrity of the breeding segment of the population...Also, during the later stages of recovery (five or more packs), when other adults are removed from the population, females with young (< September 1) may be released or not controlled. 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.”

(3) The 1998 IMP considers the severity of the depredations and the number of times the wolf (or wolves) have committed depredations. During the past 365 days, one or more radio-collared members of the Fox Mountain pack (AF1212, AM1158, M1276, m1274) have been involved in up to five livestock depredation incidents. An uncollared member of the Fox Mountain pack has been involved in one additional depredation incident. These six depredation incidents show a pattern of livestock depredation by the Fox Mountain pack. Although individual members of the pack have been implicated in depredating livestock six times in the past year, the known level of involvement for each wolf listed above is uncertain.

Regardless, it is our intent to disrupt the habitual livestock depredation behavior of the Fox Mountain Pack.

(4) It is important to retain wild-born wolves in the 10(j) wolf population. Since the Fox Mountain pack denned and produced pups, allowing for the natural rearing of wild born pups from the Fox Mountain pack into adulthood is beneficial to overall population survival. Of the wolves involved in the livestock depredations listed above, the alpha pair of the Fox Mountain pack performs a critical role in the natural rearing of wild-born pups and ensuring the eventual recruitment of those pups into the Blue Range Wolf Population. If the alpha pair of a pack is intact, sub-adult and yearling wolves perform a more peripheral role in pup raising and survival.

Therefore, in consideration of these circumstances relevant to the situation and the efforts by the IFT in response to the depredations, and utilizing the flexibilities authorized in the 1998 IMP and Final Rule, my decision is to remove by live-trapping either M1276, m1274, or one of the 2 uncollared yearlings associated with the pack if it is a male. The alpha pair (M1158 and F1212) and their associated pups will not be targeted for removal. Two additional yearling wolves associated with the Fox Mountain pack (f1295 and f1281) will not be targeted for removal. Females 1281 and 1295 are largely traveling separately from the pack, and are not implicated in most or all of the pack's depredations. Any uncollared females associated with the pack will not be targeted for removal in an effort to retain females which are under-represented in the wild population.

Removal activities may occur on public and private lands within and adjacent to the BRWRA, provided that permission is granted by the landowner. This control order covers a 60-day period, effective immediately.

The Mexican Wolf Recovery Coordinator permit (TE091551-8), issued April 4, 2013, under the provisions of 50 CFR 17.32, provides that Authorized Permittees may take any Mexican wolf (*Canis lupus baileyi*) in the nonessential experimental population in a manner consistent with a USFWS-approved management plan or species management measure adopted by the USFWS pursuant to the provisions of 50 CFR 17.84(k)(3)(ix), as well as to conduct activities related directly to the conservation, protection, and recovery of reintroduced nonessential experimental populations of Mexican gray wolves within Arizona and New Mexico. Provision S.1 of the permit provides that "Specifically, authorization includes all actions related to: capture

including, but not limited to, leg-hold traps, helicopter or ground darting and net-gunning, and captive capture methods...” In accordance with Provision K, should any mortality or physical injury occur to a Mexican wolf during permitted activities, all operations must immediately cease and you are required to contact the Mexican Wolf Recovery Program within 24 hours.

The Final Rule for the Establishment of a Nonessential Experimental Population of the Mexican Gray Wolf in Arizona and New Mexico (63 FR 1752) states in section 17.84(ix) that “Personnel authorized by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) may take any Mexican wolf in the nonessential experimental population in a manner consistent with a FWS approved management plan, special management measure, or a valid permit issued by the FWS under 17.32.” Thus, employees of the USDA APHIS Wildlife Services are authorized to trap Mexican wolves in accordance with this Decision Memorandum, and any incidental death or injury of wolves during this operation will be covered under the Mexican Wolf Recovery Coordinator permit (TE091551-8). USDA APHIS Wildlife Services employees working under this permit will not be considered negligent when exercising due care. Due care is defined as USDA APHIS Wildlife Services employees following all established policies and Standard Operating Procedures associated with Mexican wolf recovery.

Following the removal, I direct the IFT to once again to increase their proactive management efforts: (1) continue to maintain a diversionary food cache(s) in order to reduce the future potential of wolves depredating on livestock while localized during the denning and rendezvous seasons, (2) continue to employ 2 range riders to monitor livestock near the Fox Mountain pack, (3) continue to conduct intensive monitoring and hazing of the members of the Fox Mountain pack in order to reduce wolf-livestock conflict, (4) continue to coordinate with livestock owners and the Forest Service in the Fox Mountain territory to reduce wolf-livestock conflict.

I wish to thank the Mexican Wolf/Livestock Coexistence Council for their commitments toward financial compensation to the livestock producers 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 FWS contacts and normal agency channels.