



NEWS RELEASE

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Six Mexican wolves released into New Mexico's Gila Wilderness

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) translocated a pair of adult Mexican wolves and four pups into the Blue Range Wolf Recovery Area in New Mexico Tuesday. The translocation will help increase the genetic diversity of the wild Mexican wolf population.

The six wolves were being held at the Service's Sevilleta Wolf Management Facility until they were transported Monday evening by vehicle to the Gila Cliff Dwellings adjacent to New Mexico's Gila Wilderness. From there, the wolves were packed into the wilderness release site by mule.

"As part of our strategy to increase the genetic robustness of this population, we are committed to strategic releases that improve the diversity in the gene pool while increasing the number of breeding wolves in the Blue Range Wolf Recovery Area," said Benjamin Tuggle, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Southwest Regional Director. "This release into the Gila Wilderness is another step that helps us reach our goal of a self-sustaining wild wolf population."

The adult female wolf released today, F1126, was among two pairs of wolves originally released this past April in Arizona by the Mexican Wolf Interagency Field Team (IFT). She and her mate were identified as the Coronado pack.

Shortly after her April 9 release into the wild, pregnant F1126 and her mate separated, possibly as a result of an encounter with an already existing pack. F1126 settled in an area south of the release site, where she established a den and delivered a litter of pups around May 5.

With no previous experience in the wild and no mate to assist her with hunting and rearing the pups, the IFT determined that F1126's pups would not likely survive in the wild. The IFT captured F1126 and her pups on May 15.

While two of F1126's pups were cross-fostered to the Dark Canyon pack, the remaining four pups were transported with her to the Sevilleta Wolf Management Facility. On May 17, the Service introduced F1126 and her pups to her former mate, M1051, to enable these pups to be reared by both an adult male and female and provide a cohesive pack for translocation to the wild.

"F1126 and M1051 behaved as a pair almost immediately," said Sherry Barrett, the Service's Mexican Wolf Recovery Coordinator. "M1051 easily took to the role of father, and adopted the four pups as his own."

The Dark Canyon pack has accepted the two cross-fostered Coronado pack pups, and they and are being reared side-by-side with three other Dark Canyon pack pups.

The six wolves released today will continue to be identified as the Coronado Pack. They were translocated to an enclosure in the Gila Wilderness that is intentionally designed to allow them to chew through and self-release any time after being placed there. Thus, the wolves may remain in the enclosure for less than 24 hours, or may self-release up to several weeks from now. Both F1126 and M1051, as well as the four pups, have previous wild experience, and so are able to be translocated into the secondary recovery zone in compliance with the existing federal 10(j) rule covering the reintroduction project.

The Mexican wolf reintroduction project is a collaborative effort of the Service, Arizona Game and Fish Department, White Mountain Apache Tribe, USDA Forest Service, USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service – Wildlife Services, and several participating counties.

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