



United States Department of the Interior

Fish and Wildlife Service Arizona Ecological Services Office

9828 North 31st Avenue, Suite C3

Phoenix, Arizona 85051

Telephone: (602) 242-0210 Fax: (602) 242-2513



August 12, 2022

Honorable Kasey Velasquez
Chairman, White Mountain Apache Tribe
201 East Walnut Street
P.O. Box 700
Whiteriver, Arizona 85941

Dear Chairman Velasquez,

Based on your Tribe's status as a sovereign nation and in keeping with our trust responsibility, please accept this letter as notice of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's proposal to establish an experimental population of gray wolves in Colorado, under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), and solicit your participation in this process on a government-to-government basis. At your request, I am available to meet with you to learn how our action may affect your Tribe; share information we have about the process to designate an experimental population; and discuss possible options to incorporate Tribal information, comments, and expertise into our decision.

The State of Colorado is working to reintroduce gray wolves (*Canis lupus*) in Colorado in response to a statewide voter-led initiative. Because reintroduced wolves may migrate outside Colorado, we are contacting potentially affected or interested tribes, including the White Mountain Apache Tribe in keeping with our Statement of Relationship with the Tribe. In addition, as a cooperator in the Mexican Wolf Recovery Program, we respect and value your Tribe's expertise and long-standing commitment to conserving the ecosystems upon which wolves depend.

Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) is responsible for the reintroduction no later than December 31, 2023. CPW has requested the Service designate an experimental population of gray wolves under section 10(j) of the ESA to provide increased management flexibility. The Service is in the process of developing an ESA 10(j) rule. We currently list the gray wolf as endangered in Colorado under the ESA. For more information, please see the enclosed newsletter, as well as visiting this website: <https://www.fws.gov/office/colorado-ecological-services-field-office/colorado-gray-wolf-updates>.

If you would like us to consult with you, please respond to me by August 26, 2022, at heather_whitlaw@fws.gov or at the return address in the letterhead.

If you have any questions, please contact me directly at 806-773-5932 or via email (heather_whitlaw@fws.gov), or your staff may contact John Nystedt, Tribal Coordinator, at 602-478-3797 or john_nystedt@fws.gov.

I look forward to continuing to work with you on a government-to-government basis to promote species and ecosystem conservation while ensuring the protection of Tribal lands, trust resources, rights and cultural values.

Sincerely,

Heather Whitlaw
Field Supervisor

ENCLOSURE

cc w/enclosure:

Stuart Leon, Director, Game and Fish Department, White Mountain Apache Tribe, Whiteriver, AZ

Mark Altaha, Director, Heritage/Archeology Program, White Mountain Apache Tribe, Whiteriver, AZ

KeAloha Douma, Attorney General, White Mountain Apache Tribe, White River, AZ

cc (electronic) w/o enclosure:

Regional Director, Fish and Wildlife Service, Albuquerque, NM

Assistant Regional Director, Ecological Services, Fish and Wildlife Service, Albuquerque, NM

Deputy Assistant Regional Director, Ecological Services, Fish and Wildlife Service, Lakewood, CO

Field Supervisor, Ecological Services, Fish and Wildlife Service, Lakewood, CO

Native American Liaison, Fish and Wildlife Service, Lakewood, CO

Native American Liaison, Fish and Wildlife Service, Albuquerque, NM

Tribal Coordinator, Fish and Wildlife Service, Flagstaff, AZ

Regional Director, Western Region, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Phoenix, AZ

Executive Director, Inter-Tribal Council of Arizona, Phoenix, AZ