



United States Department of the Interior



FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Mexican Wolf Recovery Program
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April 18, 2025

Memorandum

To: Field Coordinator, Mexican Wolf Recovery Program, Southwest Region

From: Mexican Wolf Recovery Coordinator, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Southwest Region

Subject: Mexican Wolf Decision Memorandum, Hail Canyon Pack

Under the Revision to the Regulations for the Nonessential Experimental Population of the Mexican wolf (*Canis lupus baileyi*) (10(j) Rule), published on January 16, 2015 (80 FR 2512) and revised on July 1, 2022 (87 FR 39348), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) or designated agency may intentionally harass, implement non-lethal control measures, translocate, place in captivity, or lethally control problem wolves.

Seven confirmed wolf-caused depredations and two probable wolf-caused depredations of livestock occurred in the Hail Canyon pack territory in central New Mexico from April 2024 to April 2025 (see chronology section). The livestock were lawfully present on federal or private land. These depredations have been associated with the Hail Canyon pack consists of five wolves (three sub-adults, and two adults) with four functioning radio collars (AM2764, AF2690, m2922, and f2929). One wolf does not have a radio collar. It is expected the breeding female will soon den and whelp a new litter of pups, further increasing the size of this pack. Therefore, I direct the Interagency Field Team (IFT) to conduct the following management actions:

- Lethally control AM2764 of the Hail Canyon pack from the depredation area. Removal is authorized only for AM2764 at this time. AM2764 genes are still represented in the wild through offspring (m2933, f2929, AM2834), siblings (AF2763, F2806, M2809, AF2861). Further, we do not anticipate that the removal of AM2764 will impact the ability of the Hail Canyon pack to raise pups because there are other yearlings in the pack to assist in raising pups.
- Regardless of the results of the removal efforts, the IFT should continue to: (a) conduct intensive wolf monitoring, (b) maintain diversionary food caches, (c) haze wolves following the completion of removal activities, and (d) coordinate with livestock producers in the depredation area on future management actions to reduce the likelihood of additional depredations.

The removal order is in effect from April 18 through May 16, 2025.

Current Conditions

The Rainy Mesa area has experienced a chronic series of depredations. Since April 2024, there have been seven confirmed and two probable wolf depredations. Six of these depredations have occurred in the last month.

Chronology of Recent Events Prompting this Management Decision

4/17/2024: Depredation of a calf – confirmed wolf. Assigned to uncollared animals. Hail Canyon collared animals were the closest to the depredation and it occurred in the Hail Canyon territory. The depredation was on public land.

4/29/2024: Depredation of a cow – probable wolf. The Hail Canyon pack was in the area, and it occurred in the Hail Canyon territory. The depredation was on public land.

10/18/2024: Depredation of a cow – confirmed wolf. Assigned to uncollared animals. It occurred in the Hail Canyon territory. The depredation was on public land.

11/26/2024: Depredation of a horse – confirmed wolf. Assigned to Hail Canyon pack. The depredation was on public land.

3/12/2025: Depredation of a cow – confirmed wolf. Assigned to Hail Canyon pack. The depredation was on public land.

3/21/2025: Depredation of a cow – confirmed wolf. Assigned to Hail Canyon pack. The depredation was on public land.

3/28/2025: Depredation of a cow – confirmed wolf. Assigned to uncollared animals. Hail Canyon collared animals were the closest to the depredation and it occurred in the Hail Canyon territory. The depredation was on private land.

3/28/2025: Depredation of a calf – probable wolf. The Hail Canyon pack was in the area, and it occurred in the Hail Canyon territory. The depredation investigation occurred on private land.

4/7/2025: Depredation of a cow – confirmed: Assignment N/A. It occurred in the Hail Canyon territory. The depredation was on public land.

Management Actions Conducted to Deter/Reduce Conflicts

The rancher/permittee and IFT have taken a variety of preventative measures to avoid additional depredations, including but not limited to establishing food caches, hazing, and loaning of telemetry equipment.

One supplementary food cache was established in May 2024 and maintained through August

2024. Two diversionary food caches were also established in April 2025 and continue to be maintained. While food caches have been established, there are extensive challenges to food caching the Hail Canyon pack in the northern most portion of their range as it is only accessible through private property, lacks roads, and has extremely rugged topography.

Hazing activities took place in November 2024, December 2024, and April 2025 around Rainy Mesa and to its south. Hazing in the northern most portion of the Hail Canyon pack's range has proven to be ineffective due to the rugged terrain particularly along the south slopes of Eagle Peak.

The permittee was provided with a ranch receiver in December 2024, and in March 2025, f2929's collar was changed to 24-hour VHF from the typical 12 hours per day, and m2922's collar was changed to send 12 GPS location points per day from the typical 2 points per day.

Additionally, three Mexican wolves were caught in traps on private land. All three were radio collared for continued monitoring, and one of the wolves (m2933) was translocated away from the Hail Canyon pack.

Decision:

I extend my sincere thanks to all those involved in implementing field efforts to protect livestock and conserve wolves. I make my decision fully considering the following:

1. Evidence in the FWS's files shows that Mexican wolves have caused the death of the aforementioned domestic animals.
2. Given the rate and proximity of the depredations, the FWS believes it is likely that Mexican wolves will continue to depredate on domestic animals in the near future without additional control measures.
3. We have considered evidence of the use of attractants or intentional feeding of Mexican wolves in the area. There is no evidence to suggest the intentional use of attractants or feeding to draw wolves into the area has occurred.
4. The basis of this removal order is livestock depredations, and thus, we have not considered evidence related to wolf/human interactions.
5. I am concerned with the numerous depredations in this area over a short period of time and the toll these depredations have caused the livestock producer. In addition, I am concerned with the additional depredations that have occurred in the area despite IFT efforts to mitigate the scenario.
6. It is the FWS's intent to recover the Mexican wolf in a manner that reduces economic impacts on the local livestock industry.

Therefore, my decision is to authorize U.S. Department of Agriculture - Animal and Plant Health Service - Wildlife Services (USDA – APHIS Wildlife Services) personnel to lethally remove AM2764 of the Hail Canyon pack. To effectively manage a conflict situation, a radio collared alpha-member of the pack is essential to track, monitor, and haze wolves in the area. It is our

intent not to remove the breeding alpha-female (who is wearing a functioning radio collar) who will likely whelp a new litter of pups soon. Therefore, a removal is only authorized for one wolf at this time which will ensure other collared wolves (m2922, f2929) remain in the pack. The Hail Canyon pack has genes represented in the wild through siblings and the pack's breeding female.

Removal activities will cease when AM2764 of the Hail Canyon pack is removed. I will evaluate the continuation of the authorization period based on the relevant information at the time (e.g., whether additional depredations have occurred, where cattle are located, and any additional information on the Hail Canyon pack).

In the meantime, I direct the IFT to continue or increase their proactive management efforts to reduce conflict with livestock by: (a) continuing to conduct intensive wolf monitoring, (b) continuing to haze wolves following the completion of removal activities, (c) continuing to maintain the diversionary food cache, and (d) continuing to coordinate management actions with livestock producers in the depredation area.

The Mexican Wolf Recovery Coordinator permit (ESPER0048320), issued September 4, 2024, under the provisions of 50 CFR 17.22 and 50 CFR 17.32, provides that Authorized Permittees may take any Mexican wolf in the non-essential experimental population in a manner consistent with a Service-approved management plan or species management measure the Service adopted pursuant to the provisions of 50 CFR 17.84(k), as well as to conduct activities related directly to Mexican wolf reintroduced, non-essential experimental population conservation, protection, and recovery in Arizona and New Mexico. The permit's provision R(l) 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; handling; possessing; administering health care; propagating; radio collaring, or other marking techniques; releasing, translocating, and cross-fostering; obtaining and preserving blood, tissue, fur, semen, oocytes, and other samples that are considered parts of Mexican wolves (scat is not considered a part of a Mexican wolf and can be collected without a permit); transporting between approved Mexican wolf captive management facilities in the United States and Mexico, to and from veterinarian care facilities, and to approved release sites; purposeful lethal take (purposeful lethal take is limited to Mexican wolves within the MWEPA in Arizona and New Mexico); hazing via less-than-lethal projectiles; injurious harassment; investigating known wolf GPS radio collar clusters indicative of den, rendezvous or kill sites; research; and carrying out any other USFWS-approved husbandry practice, law enforcement, or management action for Mexican wolves."

The 2022 10(j) Rule states in section 17.84(7)(vii) that "The Service or a designated agency may take any Mexican wolf in the experimental population in a manner consistent with a Service-approved management plan, special management measure, biological opinion pursuant to section 7(a)(2) of the Act, section 6 of the Act as described in §17.31 for State game and fish agencies with authority to manage Mexican wolves, or a valid permit issued by the Service through §17.32." Thus, USDA-APHIS Wildlife Services employees are authorized to lethally control Mexican wolves in accordance with this Decision Memorandum, and any incidental wolf death or injury during this operation will be covered under the Mexican Wolf Recovery Coordinator permit (ESPER0048320). The USDA-APHIS Wildlife Services employees working under this permit will not be considered negligent when exercising appropriate methodology. Appropriate methodology is defined as USDA-APHIS Wildlife Services employees following all established policies and Standard Operating Procedures associated with Mexican wolf recovery.

I wish to thank the livestock producers in this area for their efforts to reduce Mexican wolf-livestock conflicts and working with the IFT. I also wish to thank the Arizona Livestock Loss Board for their financial compensation to the livestock producers for past, current, and any future depredation losses. I encourage the IFT to focus on field efforts and needs associated with continued wolf monitoring in the area.

Cc: Regional Director, Ecological Services, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Southwest Region