



United States Department of the Interior



FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Mexican Wolf Recovery Program
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March 29, 2023

Memorandum

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

From: Mexican Wolf Recovery Coordinator, Southwest Region

Subject: Mexican Wolf Decision Memorandum, Mangas Pack Alpha Male 1296

Under the Revision to the Nonessential Experimental Population of the Mexican wolf (10(j) Rule), published on July 1, 2022 (87 FR 39348), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) or designated agency may intentionally harass, implement non-lethal control measures, translocate, place in captivity, or lethally control problem wolves.

Thirteen confirmed livestock depredations caused by the Mangas Pack occurred in a localized area in western New Mexico from May 21, 2022, to March 7, 2023 (see chronology section). These livestock were lawfully present on federal or private land. These depredations have been associated with the Mangas pack, which consists of six wolves (three pups, one sub-adult, and two adults) with three functioning radio collars (AM1296, mp2774, fp2775). Therefore, I direct the Interagency Field Team (IFT) to conduct the following management actions:

- Lethally control AM1296 from the depredation area. Removal is authorized for one wolf at this time. AM1296 genes are still represented in the wild through offspring or potentially a sibling or other closely related individuals in the population. Further, we do not anticipate that the removal of AM1296 will impact the ability of the pack to raise pups because there are numerous yearlings and adult members of 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 the diversionary food cache, (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 March 29, 2023, through May 10, 2023.

Current Conditions

The Mangas Pack has engaged in a chronic series of depredations (13 confirmed) over a period of 10 months in which 8 have occurred in the last 2 months. The Mangas Pack currently consists of six wolves (three pups (which are about to be yearlings), one sub-adult, and two adults) with three functioning radio-collars.

Chronology of Recent Events Prompting this Management Decision

5/21/2022: Depredation of a cow – confirmed wolf. Assigned to m2687 of the Mangas Pack. The depredation was on public land.

5/24/2022: Depredation of a calf – confirmed wolf. Assigned to m2687 of the Mangas Pack. The depredation was on public land.

7/6/2022: Depredation of a cow – confirmed wolf. Assigned to AM1296 and m2687 of the Mangas Pack. The depredation was on public land.

7/25/2022: Depredation of a cow – confirmed wolf. Assigned to AM1296 and m2687 of the Mangas Pack. The depredation was on public land.

10/20/2022: Depredation of a cow – confirmed wolf. Assigned to AM1296 and m2687 of the Mangas Pack. The depredation was on private land.

1/21/2023: Depredation of a cow – confirmed wolf. Assigned to AM1296 of the Mangas Pack. The depredation was on public land.

1/21/2023: Depredation of a calf – confirmed wolf. Assigned to AM1296 of the Mangas Pack. The depredation was on public land.

1/24/2023: Depredation of a cow – confirmed wolf. Assigned to AM1296 of the Mangas Pack. The depredation was on public land.

1/26/2023: Depredation of a cow – confirmed wolf. Assigned to AM1296 of the Mangas Pack. The depredation was on public land.

1/26/2023: Depredation of a calf – confirmed wolf. Assigned to AM1296 of the Mangas Pack. The depredation was on public land.

2/1/2023: Depredation of a cow – confirmed wolf. Assigned to AM1296 of the Mangas Pack. The depredation was on private land.

2/24/2023: Depredation of a bull – confirmed wolf. Assigned to uncollared Mangas Pack members. The depredation was on private land.

3/7/2023: Depredation of a cow. Assigned to uncollared Mangas Pack members. The depredation was on public land.

3/15/2023: mp2774 and fp2775 captured.

Management Actions Conducted to Deter/Reduce Conflicts

The rancher/permittee and IFT have taken a wide variety of preventative measures to avoid additional depredations, including:

The permittee moved livestock to a different pasture in February of 2023 and employed a range rider periodically for many years, including during the recent depredations.

The IFT provided continuous diversionary food caches from March 2021 until July 2022 (1.5 years) and intense hazing from mid-January 2021 thru the end of March 2021 (~2 months) and again mid-January 2022 thru April 2022. During this time the IFT moved up to eight cattle carcasses (not all assigned as wolf kills) out of active cattle pastures to decrease further depredations.

In January 2023, chronic depredations resumed. The IFT responded by moving cattle carcasses from the pasture where depredations occurred in January. Then in February, the IFT initiated a diversionary food cache along with daily hazing attempts until March 6, at which time the IFT began a trap line to radio-collar additional animals in the Mangas Pack because there was only one collar in the pack. While the IFT was trapping, a private trapper on private land within an adjacent allotment within the Mangas Pack territory captured two uncollared Mangas pups. The IFT responded to the incident and radio-collared both wolves and released them on site to ensure the animals were traveling with the Mangas Pack for management purposes.

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 Service's files shows that Mexican wolves have injured or caused the death of the aforementioned domestic animals.
2. Given the rate and proximity of the depredations, the Service 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 Service's intent to recover the Mexican wolf in a manner that reduces economic effects on the local livestock industry.

Therefore, my decision is to authorize U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) - Animal and Plant Health Service (APHIS) - Wildlife Services personnel to lethally remove AM1296 of the Mangas Pack. To effectively manage a conflict situation, a radio collared animal is essential to track, monitor, and haze wolves in the area. Therefore, a removal is only authorized for one radio collared wolf at this time which will ensure other collared wolves (mp2774, fp2775) remain in the pack. AM1296 has genes represented in the wild through offspring and likely siblings or closely related individuals in the population.

Removal activities should cease when AM1296 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 Mangas 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 December 27, 2022, 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 or trap 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 (TE091551). 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 the Mexican Wolf/Livestock Council, Arizona Livestock Loss Board, Farm Services Agency, and New Mexico Department of Agriculture 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: Assistant Regional Director, Ecological Services, Southwest Region