



# Mexican Wolf Recovery Program Quarterly Update

*First Quarter 2024 (January, February, March)*

The following is a summary of Mexican Wolf Recovery Program activities in the Mexican Wolf Experimental Population Area (MWEPA) in Arizona, including the Fort Apache Indian Reservation (FAIR), San Carlos Apache Reservation (SCAR), and New Mexico. Additional Program information can be obtained by calling (928) 339-4329 or toll free at (888) 459-9653, or by visiting the Arizona Game and Fish Department website at [azgfd.gov/wolf](http://azgfd.gov/wolf) or by visiting the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service website at [fws.gov/southwest/es/mexicanwolf](http://fws.gov/southwest/es/mexicanwolf). For information on the FAIR, call (928) 338-4385 ext. 226 or visit [wmatoutdoor.org](http://wmatoutdoor.org). Past updates may be viewed at these websites. Interested parties may [sign up](#) to receive this update electronically by visiting [azgfd.com](http://azgfd.com) and clicking on the E-news Signup tab on the top left corner of the webpage. This update is a public document and information in it can be used for any purpose. The Mexican Wolf Recovery Program is a multi-agency cooperative effort among the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AZGFD), New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (NMDGF), USDA Forest Service (USFS), USDA-Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Wildlife Services (WS), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), White Mountain Apache Tribe (WMAT), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and the U.S. National Park Service (NPS).

To view semi-monthly wolf location information please visit <https://arcg.is/bLyPO>

**Please report any wolf sightings or suspected livestock depredations to:** the Alpine wolf office (928) 339-4329, Pinetop wolf office (928) 532-2391 or toll free at (888) 459-9653. For sightings or suspected depredations on the FAIR, please call the WMAT wolf office in Whiteriver at (928) 338-4385 ext. 226. To report incidents of take or harassment of wolves, please call the AZGFD 24-hour dispatch (Operation Game Thief) at (800) 3520700.

## **Overall Mexican Wolf Recovery Program Quarterly Updates**

In the February 2024 Arizona Cattlelog Magazine, Jim deVos wrote an article on the Arizona Livestock Loss Board and how livestock producers can most efficiently interact with the Board when depredations occur and the producer is seeking compensation.

On February 21, 2024, AZGFD spoke at the annual midwinter meeting of the Arizona Cattle Growers Association on several wolf related items. Key messages were related to the translocation of AF1828 and her mate in the Peloncillos in late spring, the role of the ESA in mandating recovery of the Mexican wolf, and pup fostering in lieu of adult releases. A lively question and answer discussion took place for about 30 minutes. There were approximately 75 producers and ACGA leadership in attendance at the meeting.

On March 14, 2024, AZGFD Mexican Wolf Coordinator Jim deVos and Arizona Game and Fish Commissioner James Goughnour participated in a call-in radio show on the KMOG, which broadcasts from Payson, Arizona with a focus on providing current information on population status and genetic management elements of Mexican wolf recovery. The majority of the calls expressed concern over the impact of a growing wild wolf population on ungulate populations and the need to conduct recovery of a top predator. KMOGs reach is about 16,000 listeners in the Rim area and extends south to the north valley of the greater Phoenix metropolitan area.

**Numbering System:** Mexican wolves are given an identification number recorded in an official studbook that tracks their history. Capital letters (M = Male, F = Female) preceding the number indicate adult animals 24 months or older. Lower case letters (m = male, f = female) are used to indicate wolves younger than 24 months. A lowercase letter “p” preceding the number is used to indicate a wolf pup born in the most recent spring. The capital letter “A” preceding the letter and number indicates breeding wolves.

**Definitions:** A “wolf pack” is defined as two or more wolves that maintain an established territory. In the event that one of the two breeding (dominant) wolves dies, the remaining breeding wolf, regardless of pack size, retains the pack status. The packs referenced in this update contain at least one wolf wearing a radio telemetry collar. The Interagency Field Team (IFT) recognizes that wolves without radio telemetry collars may also form packs. If the IFT confirms that wolves are associating with each other and are resident within the same home range, they will be referenced as a pack.

## **CURRENT POPULATION STATUS**

**The end of year count for 2023 generated a minimum abundance of 257 Mexican wolves in the wild (113 in AZ and 144 in NM).** This was a 6% increase in the population from the minimum of 242 wolves counted at the end of 2022. The increase documented from 2022 to 2023 marks the eighth

consecutive year of population growth, the longest continuous streak since recovery efforts began. At the end of 2023, there were a minimum of 60 packs documented (23 in AZ and 37 in NM). Annual counts are conducted in the winter as this is when the population experiences the least amount of natural fluctuation (i.e., the population increases dramatically in the spring with the birth of new pups and declines throughout the summer and fall as pup mortality generally occurs in this period). Thus, the IFT summarizes the total number of counted wolves in winter. Counting the population at the end of each year allows for comparable year-to-year trends at a time of year when the Mexican wolf population is most stable.

### **WOLF PACK UPDATES:**

For each documented wolf pack in the table below, wolves fitted with functioning collars at the end of the quarter are listed by studbook number. Studbook numbers of wolves without collars or with non-functioning collars are not listed in the pack updates. Not all wolves in the population are collared or have assigned studbook numbers. Captures, mortalities, removals, and food caching are listed in the corresponding column for the given time period. If a pack was food cached at any time within the quarter, the food cache column will indicate the type of food cache. The primary reason for food caching will be noted with “S” for supplemental and “D” for diversionary; the reason for a food cache may change over time. If a wolf dies, becomes fate unknown, or is removed in the current time period, its studbook number will be removed from the pack column in the following quarterly report. After three months of consistent dispersal behavior away from pack territory, a dispersing wolf is no longer considered a member of its originating pack and will be added to a new row as a single wolf or member of a different pack. Packs that have raised pups in the quarter will be listed as “Yes” in the “Raising pups” column. This will remain for the calendar year if the pack was documented rearing pups in the period of April through September. Any fields that require further comment will be annotated with “\*” and further comments are listed in the “Comments” column.

### **ARIZONA:**

<b>Wolf Pack</b> Collared Wolves	<b>Captures</b>	<b>Mortalities</b>	<b>Removals</b>	<b>Food cache</b>	<b>Raising pups</b> (April – Sept)	<b>Foster</b> (April/May)	<b>*Comments</b>
<b>Bear Canyon</b> AM2563, AF1823, m2889*	1*	0	0	D	N/A	N/A	In January, the IFT captured, collared, and released m2889.

<b>Castle Rock</b> M1921, f2632	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	
<b>Eagle Creek</b> M1477*, F1548	1*	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	In January, the IFT captured, recollared, and released M1477.
<b>Elk Horn</b> AM1838, AF1866, fp2865	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	
<b>Fantasia</b> AF2759, AM2873	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	
<b>Firebox</b> AM1881	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	
<b>Hoodoo</b> M1789*, M1893, AF2752, fp2868*	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	In January, fp2868 dispersed out of the Hoodoo Pack and became a single in March. In March, M1789's collar battery died, but continued to be documented traveling with the pack.
<b>Juniper Bench</b> AF1920, mp2859	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	
<b>Lost Spring*</b> m2766, F2885*	1*	0	0	D	N/A	N/A	In January, the IFT captured, collared and released F2885, which had been documented traveling with m2766 for 3 months. This new pair has been named the Lost Spring Pack.
<b>Pancho Spring</b> AF1889, AM2770, mp2870	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	
<b>Panther Creek</b>	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	There are no longer any collared animals in the Panther Creek Pack, however, the pack was documented and counted in their normal territory during annual counts.
<b>Prime Canyon</b> AM1471*, m2848, f2849	1*	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	In January, the IFT captured, recollared, and released AM1471.

<b>Rocky Prairie</b> AM1383, f2769, mp2863, fp2864	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	
<b>Rose</b> AM1704, mp2888*	1*	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	In January, the IFT captured, collared, and released mp2888.
<b>Saffel</b> AM1854, AF1939*, M1852	1*	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	In January, the IFT captured, recollared, and released AF1939.
<b>Sierra Blanca</b> AF1550, AM1571, mp2796*	1*	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	In January, the IFT captured, collared, and released mp2796.
<b>Warm Springs</b> F1938, M2545	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	
<b>Single fp2868</b>	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	
<b>Single AF1686</b>	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	
<b>Single m2722</b>	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	
<b>Single m2709</b>	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	

## FAIR:

<b>Wolf Pack</b> Collared Wolves	<b>Captures</b>	<b>Mortalities</b>	<b>Removals</b>	<b>Food Cache</b>	<b>Raising pups (April – Sept)</b>	<b>Foster (April/May)</b>	<b>*Comments</b>
<b>Baldy</b> AM1347, f2767, f2887*	1*	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	In January, the IFT captured, collared, and released f2887.
<b>Tsay-O-Ah</b> AM2698, AF1283	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	
<b>Tu dil hil</b> AM1338, f2758	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	

<b>Single M1857</b>	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	
<b>Single f2890*</b>	0	1*	0	0	N/A	N/A	In March, an uncollared wolf was found dead in Arizona. The mortality is under investigation.

**Total number of wolf packs in Arizona at end of the quarter: 20**

#### **NEW MEXICO:**

<b>Wolf Pack</b> Collared Wolves	<b>Captures</b>	<b>Mortalities</b>	<b>Removals</b>	<b>Food Cache</b>	<b>Raising pups</b> <b>(April – Sept)</b>	<b>Foster</b> <b>(April/May)</b>	<b>*Comments</b>
<b>Agua Frio</b> AF1936, AM1875	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	
<b>Aldo</b> AM2561	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	
<b>Beaver Point</b> AM1949, AF2753, fp2884*	1*	0	0	D	N/A	N/A	In January, the IFT captured, collared and released fp2884.
<b>Burnt Peaks</b> M2557	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	
<b>Buzzard Peak</b> AF1726, f2713	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	
<b>Canovas Creek</b> AM1584*	1*	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	In January, the IFT captured, recollared and released AM1584.

<b>Centerfire</b> AM2697	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	.
<b>Chimney Canyon</b> M2636, F2523*	1*	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	In January, the IFT captured, recollared and released F2523.
<b>Cimmaron Mesa</b> AF1705, AM2702	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	
<b>Colibri</b> M1856	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	
<b>Cottonwood Canyon</b> AF2503*, AM1859	1*	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	In January, the IFT captured, recollared, and released AF2503
<b>Dark Canyon</b> AM1354, AF1456, f2741	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	
<b>Dillon Mountain</b> AF1865, M2880*	0	1*	0	0	N/A	N/A	In March, the IFT captured M2880, which died during handling. The mortality is under investigation.
<b>El Torro</b> F2861	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	
<b>Frieborn</b> AF1443, AM2765	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	
<b>Gallinas Canyon</b> AF2588, AM2700	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	
<b>Hail Canyon</b> AF2690, AM2764, mp2821, mp2834*	1*	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	In January, the IFT captured, collared and released mp2834.
<b>Iron Creek</b> AF1278, M2549, F2756, f2746	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	

<b>Leon</b> AM1824, AF1578, fp2806*, mp2785*	1*	1*	0	0	N/A	N/A	In January, the IFT captured, collared, and released fp2806. In January, mp2785 was found dead in New Mexico. The mortality is under investigation.
<b>Leopold</b> AF1346, AM1855, mp2883*	1*	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	In January, the IFT captured, collared, and released mp2883.
<b>Lonesome</b> AF2694, AM2755	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	
<b>Luna</b> AF1487, M2567	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	
<b>Mangas</b> f2775	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	
<b>Milligan Gulch</b> AF2688, AM2687*	1*	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	In January, the IFT captured, recollared, and released AM2687.
<b>New Pair*</b> <b>f2763</b>	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	In February, f2763 (dispersed from the Leon Pack) formed a new pair in NM.
<b>Noble Mountain</b> AF1918, M2886*	1*	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	In January, the IFT captured, collared and released M2886.
<b>Pitchfork Canyon</b> AF1853, AM2566	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	
<b>Point of Rocks</b> AM1717, AF2515	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	
<b>Saddle Mountain</b> F2540	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	
<b>San Mateo</b> AF1399	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	



<b>Sawtooth</b> M2704, F2593	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	
<b>Shakespeare Canyon</b> m2762*	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	In January the IFT documented m2762 (dispersed from the Rocky Prairie Pack) traveling with an uncollared female and was named the Shakespeare Canyon Pack.
<b>Shepherders Baseball Park (SBP)</b> AF1553, AM2703	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	
<b>Wagontongue</b> AM1946, m2773	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	
<b>Whiskey Creek</b> AM1842*, m2760	1*	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	In January, the IFT captured, recollared and released AM1842.
<b>Whitewater Canyon</b>	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	In January, the IFT documented AM1455 (failed radio collar) traveling with two uncollared wolves in the historical Whitewater Canyon territory.
<b>Willow Creek</b> AF1890, M2867, m2772*	1*	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	In January, the IFT captured, recollared and released m2772.
<b>Single M1888</b>	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	
<b>Single M2847</b>	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	
<b>Single f2742</b>	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	
<b>Single f2743*</b>	1*	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	In January, the IFT captured, refit collar, and released f2743.

Single m2719*	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	In March, m2719 dispersed from the Whitewater Canyon Pack and became a single.
---------------	---	---	---	---	-----	-----	--

**Total number of wolf packs in New Mexico at end of the quarter: 36**

## **MORTALITIES**

Three Mexican wolf mortalities were documented in the first quarter (1 in AZ and 2 in NM). Cause of death for each mortality is currently under investigation by USFWS Law Enforcement. The number of documented mortalities per 100 Mexican wolves, using the annual total of documented mortalities compared with the final minimum population count for 2023 was 12 mortalities/ 100 wolves. Mortalities per 100 wolves the previous three years is as follows: 16 mortalities / 100 wolves in 2020, 13 mortalities / 100 wolves in 2021 and 5 mortalities / 100 wolves in 2022.

## **GENETIC MANAGEMENT**

Captive pups fostered (since 2016)	Captive pups fostered in 2023	<sup>a</sup> Fosters documented alive at the end of the quarter	<sup>a</sup> Documented mortalities of fosters	<sup>a,b</sup> Fosters surviving to breeding age	<sup>a</sup> Fosters documented producing pups	<sup>a</sup> Documented litters produced by fosters
99	16	14	12	18	10	21

<sup>a</sup>These are only **MINIMUM** values that have been documented by the IFT. The IFT does not affix radio collars on pups at the time of the foster, as the pups are too small. Pups are collared opportunistically when fostered wolves are captured later in the year or in subsequent years. Not all fosters that survive are captured and collared.

<sup>b</sup>At the end of the quarter, three more fostered wolves that had been collared by the IFT reached breeding age (considered two years of age or greater).

## INCIDENTS

The following are investigations of livestock depredations conducted by Wildlife Services during the quarter that were determined to be caused by wolves. Investigations of dead and injured livestock conducted by Wildlife Services during this time period that were determined to be from causes other than wolves (i.e., vehicle strike, illness, coyote predation, bear predation, or unknown cause) are not listed in this quarterly update.

## DEPREDATIONS

	Confirmed Wolf (Current Quarter)		Yearly Total Confirmed Wolf Killed or Died from Injuries	Probable Wolf (Current Quarter)		Yearly Total Probable Wolf by State
	Killed or Died from Injuries	Injured		Killed or Died from Injuries	Injured	
Arizona	6	0	6	3	0	3
New Mexico	25	5	25	9	2	11
2024 Total			31			14

*Unshaded cells contain totals for the current quarter, gray cells contain totals for the year.*

The yearly total number of confirmed wolf depredation incidents in 2023 (111) was down from the yearly total of confirmed wolf depredation incidents in 2022 (137). The number of depredations per 100 Mexican wolves, using the yearly total confirmed wolf depredations (killed or died from injuries) compared with the final minimum population count for 2023 was 43 depredations / 100 wolves. Depredations per 100 wolves for the prior three years is as follows: 86 depredations / 100 wolves in 2020, 63 depredations / 100 wolves in 2021 and 56 depredations / 100 wolves in 2022.

## **PUBLIC INCIDENTS**

On the evening of February 17, 2024, the IFT received a report from a homeowner in Clay Springs, AZ that they believed their dog had been attacked and injured by a wolf near their residence that day. The homeowner discovered the dog severely injured at the residence but did not see any wolves. The IFT responded and conducted a site visit on the morning of February 18. Wildlife Services also investigated the dog's injuries and determined the injuries were a probable wolf depredation. The dog later died from its injuries following the incident. There were no GPS collar locations in the area from any collared wolves. The IFT conducted extensive sign search and camera deployment for over a month following the incident in the location where the attack was believed to have occurred, as well as the surrounding area and was unable to document wolf presence.

## **PROACTIVE MANAGEMENT**

State	Monitoring efforts (monitoring with intent to haze a wolf)	Hazing events (successful hazing of a wolf)	Diversionsary food caches maintained	Carcasses removed	Proactive equipment projects (RAG boxes, fox lights, fladry)
Arizona	114	141	2	9	2
New Mexico	37	31	1	0	1
2024 Totals	150	172	1	9	3

*Unshaded cells contain totals for the current quarter, gray cells contain totals for the year.*

*\*Includes supplemental food caches, as these also served as diversionsary food caches this year.*

## **PROGRAM PERSONNEL**

In January, Cameron (Mac) Purvin joined the IFT as the new USFWS Wolf Biologist for the Alpine Field Office. Mac comes to the IFT with prior experience working in a number of endangered species recovery projects, as well as experience working for the USFWS in the National Wildlife Refuge System. Welcome Mac to the IFT!

## **REWARDS OFFERED**

The USFWS is offering a reward of up to \$50,000, the AZGFD Operation Game Thief is offering a reward of up to \$1,000, and the NMDGF is offering a reward of up to \$1,000 for information leading to the conviction of the individual(s) responsible for the shooting deaths of Mexican wolves. A variety of non-governmental organizations and private individuals have pledged additional funding for a total reward amount of up to \$37,000, depending on the information provided.

Individuals with information they believe may be helpful are urged to call one of the following agencies: USFWS Special Agents in Pinetop, Arizona, at (346) 254-0515; the WMAT at (928) 338-1023 or (928) 338-4385; AZGFD Operation Game Thief at (800) 352-0700; or NMDGF Operation Game Thief at (800) 432-4263. Killing a Mexican wolf is a violation of state law and the Federal Endangered Species Act and can result in criminal penalties of up to \$50,000, and/or not more than one year in jail, and/or a civil penalty of up to \$25,000.