



# Mexican Wolf Recovery Program Quarterly Update

*Fourth Quarter 2024 (October, November, December)*

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 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://arcgis.com/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) 352-0700.

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

On December 20, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service published the 5-Year Evaluation of the Mexican Wolf Recovery Strategy which assesses progress on recovery objectives for the Mexican wolf for both the U.S. and Mexico populations of wild Mexican wolves. This evaluation also measures progress towards interim abundance and release targets identified in the Mexican Wolf Recovery Plan, and compares between observed metrics and predicted metrics, which were derived from 2017 modeling and used to craft the current recovery strategy and criteria for the endangered subspecies. The evaluation notes the United States population of Mexican wolves has surpassed interim abundance and release targets, as well as predictions for gene diversity and population growth. The evaluation can be found at: <https://www.fws.gov/media/5-year-evaluation-mexican-wolf-recovery-strategy>

**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 listed 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 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*	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	In November, M2889 started displaying dispersal behavior.
<b>Castle Rock</b> M1921, F2632	0	0	0	0	No	No	
<b>Eagle Creek</b> M1477, F1548	0	0	0	0	No	No	
<b>Elderberry</b> AF2977, M2766	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	
<b>Elk Horn</b>	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	

AM1838, AF1866, f2865							
<b>Fantasia</b> AM2873, AF2759	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	
<b>Firebox</b> M1881	0	0	0	0	No	No	
<b>Hoodoo</b> M1893, AF2752	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	
<b>Juniper Bench</b> AF1920, m2859, fp2989*, mp2995*	1*	1*	0	0	Yes	No	In October, fp2989 was found dead in New Mexico. The mortality is under investigation.  In October, the IFT captured, collared and released mp2995.
<b>Lost Spring*</b> M2766*	0	0	0	0	No	No	In December, M2766 became a member of the Elderberry pack after traveling with the pack for two months. M2766 was the last remaining member of the Lost Spring pack and the pack is now defunct.
<b>Manada del Arroyo</b> F1828, M2774	0	0	0	0	No	No	
<b>Pancho Spring</b> AM2770, m2988*	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	In December, m2988 dispersed from the Pancho Spring pack and became a Single after traveling alone for three months.
<b>Prime Canyon</b> AM1471, F2849	0	0	0	S	Yes	Yes	
<b>Rocky Prairie</b> AM1383, F2769, f2864*	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	In December, f2864 became Fate Unknown after not being document for three months.
<b>Rose</b> AM1704	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	
<b>Saffel</b> AM1854, AF1939,	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	In October, mp2990 slipped its collar.

M1852, mp2990*, mp2991							
<b>Sierra Blanca</b> AF1550, m2796*	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	In November, m2796 dispersed from the Sierra Blanca pack and became a member of the Warm Springs pack after traveling with the pack for two months.
<b>Snake Creek</b> AM2709	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	
<b>Warm Springs</b> AF1938, m2796, fp2993*	1*	0	0	0	Yes	No	In October, the IFT captured, collared and released fp2993.
<b>New Pack</b> M2848	0	0	0	0	No	No	
<b>New Pack</b> F2979*	0	1*	0	0	No	No	In November, F2979 was found dead in Arizona. The mortality is under investigation.
<b>Single f2868</b>	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	
<b>Single m2988</b>	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	
<b>Single AF1686</b>	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	
<b>Single F2534</b>	0	0	1*	0	N/A	N/A	In October, the IFT released F2534 in Arizona. In December, the IFT lethally removed F2534 from the wild.

## FAIR:

<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>Baldy</b> AM1347	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	

<b>Tsay-O-Ah</b> AM2698, AF1283	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	
<b>Tu dil hil</b> AM1382, F2758	1*	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	In December, the IFT captured, collared and released AM1382. AM1382, previously from the Panther Creek pack and Fate Unknown, was documented traveling with Tu dil hil and is now a member of the pack.
<b>Single M1857</b>	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	
<b>Single F2767</b>	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	

**Total number of wolf packs in Arizona at end of the quarter: 23**

#### **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> (April – Sept)	<b>Foster</b> (April/May)	<b>*Comments</b>
<b>Agua Frio</b> AM1875	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	
<b>Aldo</b> AM2561	0	0	0	0	No	No	
<b>Beaver Point</b> f2884, M2557	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	
<b>Buzzard Peak</b> AM2567	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	
<b>Canovas Creek</b> AM1584	0	0	0	0	No	No	

<b>Centerfire</b> AM2697	0	0	0	D	Yes	No	.
<b>Chimney Canyon</b> AM2636, mp2945*, mp2950*, fp2952* and fp2953*	4*	0	0	S	Yes	Yes	In October the IFT captured, collared and released mp2945, mp2952, fp2950 and fp2953. mp2945 is a captive born pup that was fostered into the Chimney Canyon pack in May.
<b>Cimmaron Mesa</b> AF1705*, AM2702	0	1*	0	0	Yes	No	In November, AF1705 was found dead in New Mexico. The mortality is under investigation.
<b>Colibri*</b> AM1856*	0	1*	0	0	Yes	No	In October, AM1856 was found dead in New Mexico. The mortality is under investigation. AM1856 was the only radio collared wolf in this pack and the pack is now defunct.
<b>Cottonwood Canyon</b> AM1859	0	0	0	S	Yes	Yes	
<b>Dark Canyon</b> AM1354, AF1456	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	
<b>Dillon Mountain</b> AF1865	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	
<b>El Torro</b> AF2861	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	
<b>Frieborn</b> AF1443, AM2765	0	0	0	0	Yes	Yes	
<b>Gallinas Canyon</b> AF2588, AM2700	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	
<b>Hail Canyon</b> AF2690, AM2764, m2821, m2834, mp2922*, fp2929*, mp2933*	3*	0	0	0	Yes	Yes	In December, a private trapper captured mp2922 (a captive born pup that was fostered into the Hale Canyon pack in May), mp2933 and fp2929 on private land. The IFT responded to the incident and removed all three wolves for medical treatment, after which

							mp2922 and fp2929 were released back with the Hail Canyon pack. mp2933 was translocated to the Gila Wilderness.
<b>Holdup Mountain</b> F2743, M2847	0	0	0	0	No	No	
<b>Iron Creek</b> M2549, AF2756	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	In October, AF2756 was found dead in New Mexico. The mortality is under investigation.
<b>Leon</b> AM1824, AF1578, f2806, m2809	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	
<b>Leopold</b> AM1855, m2883	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	
<b>Lonesome</b> AF2694, AM2755	0	0	0	S	Yes	Yes	
<b>Luna</b> AF1487	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	
<b>Mangas</b> F2775	0	0	0	0	No	No	
<b>Milligan Gulch</b> AF2688, AM2687	0	0	0	S	Yes	Yes	
<b>Neko Canyon</b> AF2742	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	
<b>Noble Mountain</b> AM2886	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	



<b>Pitchfork Canyon</b> AF1853, AM2566	0	0	0	0	Yes	Yes	
<b>Point of Rocks</b> AM1717, AF2515, mp2939	0	0	0	S	Yes	Yes	
<b>Saddle Mountain</b> F2540	0	0	0	0	No	No	
<b>Sawtooth</b> AM2704, mp2994*	1*	0	0	S	Yes	No	In October, the IFT captured, collared and released mp2994.
<b>Sheepherders Baseball Park (SBP)</b> AF1553, M2719	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	
<b>Six-Shooter Saddle</b> AM2867	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	
<b>Snow Lake</b> AF2746, M2772	0	0	0	0	No	No	
<b>Tres Lagunas</b> AF2763	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	
<b>Wagontongue</b> AM1946, M2773	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	
<b>Whiskey Creek</b> AM1842, M2760	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	
<b>Willow Creek</b> AF1890, M2772	0	0	0	0	No	No	

Single M1888	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	
Single F2713	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	
Single m2978	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	
Uncollared	0	1*	0	0	N/A	N/A	An uncollared wolf was found dead in New Mexico. Studbook assignment is pending. The mortality is under investigation.

**Total number of wolf packs in New Mexico at end of the quarter: 37**

## **MORTALITIES**

Six Mexican wolf mortalities were documented in the fourth quarter (1 in AZ and 5 in NM) bringing the total number of documented mortalities in 2024 to 30 (13 in AZ and 17 in NM). Due to consistent Mexican wolf population expansion, to ensure accurate inter-annual comparisons in mortality rates, these data are presented as the total+ number of documented mortalities per 100 Mexican wolves. Using these data for the last five years, the values calculated are: 2024 awaiting final winter count data, 2023 12 mortalities/100 wolves, 2022 5 mortalities/100 wolves, 2021 13 mortalities/100 wolves, and 2020 16 mortalities/100 wolves. Cause of death for each mortality will be reported in the 2024 annual report when all the necropsies are finalized. The impact of these mortalities is uncertain but based on the 2017 Population Viability Assessment (PVA) completed for recovery planning purposes, continued population growth is again expected in 2024.

## **GENETIC MANAGEMENT**

Captive pups fostered (since 2016)	Captive pups fostered in 2024	<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
126	27	12	16	20	13	30

<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.

## DEPREDACTIONS

	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*	3	0	22	0	0	4
New Mexico	8	0	77	0	0	27

<b>2024 Total</b>		<b>99</b>		<b>31</b>
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*Unshaded cells contain totals for the current quarter, gray cells contain totals for the year.*

*\*There are seven investigations in NM from the current quarter that are still pending Wildlife Service's Regional Review. The yearly total shown above includes the finalized investigation reports shown as pending during last quarter.*

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/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. Confirmed wolf depredations per 100 wolves for 2024 will be calculated after the population count is finalized.

## **PUBLIC INCIDENTS**

On October 30, 2024, the IFT received a report of a possible wolf near a private residence in a rural neighborhood near Timber Knoll in Arizona. The reporting party stated that an individual came to the residence to report that, while driving by the residence, they had seen a dog attacking the RP's goat. The RP was able to locate the goat in some bushes nearby, which later died due to its injuries. The RP stated that they saw what they believe to be the same animal that attacked their goat and believed it to be a wolf. They described the animal as being larger than a husky with gray speckled fur and pointed ears. The RP was able to locate tracks from the animal in the area and obtain photos, although they were never sent to the IFT. Following the report, the IFT responded by doing a site visit where various tracks from domestic dogs were located and several local domestic dogs were seen traveling the area. The IFT informed the RP that the goat could be investigated to determine if there was wolf involvement but the RP had already buried the goat and declined. Based on the information provided, the tracks located within the vicinity of the residence and the various sightings of domesticated dogs in the surrounding area, the IFT does not believe that there was any wolf involvement and that the damage to the goat was likely caused by a domesticated dog.

On December 4, 2024, the IFT received a report of uncollared wolves on Mariano Mesa approximately 8 miles north of Quemado, NM involving interactions with people (i.e., Category 2). The RP stated "We saw a wolf this morning on our property, very near to the house and cattle water lot. Literally out the kitchen window." An initial investigation by the IFT on December 6<sup>th</sup> confirmed the presence of at least two wolves via tracks in the

area. Additional follow-up by USFWS Sevilleta Field Office confirmed wolf presence of 6 uncollared wolves through use of video cameras. The IFT initiated a trapping operation on January 10, 2025 to place a GPS collar(s) in this uncollared pack.

**PROACTIVE MANAGEMENT**

State	Monitoring efforts (monitoring with intent to haze a wolf)	Hazing events (successful hazing of a wolf)	*Diversionary food caches maintained	Carcasses removed	Proactive equipment projects (RAG boxes, fox lights, fladry)
Arizona	74	13	0	4	0
New Mexico	66	23	1	1	0

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

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

**PROGRAM PERSONNEL**

There are no program personnel updates for this quarter.

**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 \$51,500, depending on the information provided. The total amount is up to \$103,500.

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.