

Mexican Wolf Recovery Program Standard Operating Procedure

Title: Writing and Approving SOPs

Number: 2.1

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Purpose:

This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) establishes the process for developing and approving Mexican Wolf Recovery Program (Program) SOPs. This SOP represents, in part, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife “Service-approved management plan” referenced in the 2022 Revised Experimental Population Rule (2022 10(j) Rule, 50 CFR 17.84(k)).

Exceptions:

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife’s Regional Director must approve any exceptions to Program SOPs, including this SOP.

Background:

Under Objective 3 in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for Mexican Wolf Recovery and Management (<https://www.fws.gov/media/memorandum-understanding-mexican-wolf-recovery-and-management>), Signatories commit to “Foster cooperation that improves the science-based foundation for Mexican wolf recovery by conducting or facilitating research necessary to achieve recovery criteria and developing Standard Operating Procedures to guide the management of the experimental population consistent with the 10(j) Rule and Recovery Plan.”

Procedures:

1. Drafting or revising an SOP:
 - a. The Lead Agencies shall jointly designate a Lead Author at a Management Team (MT) meeting to gather relevant information and develop a new or revise an existing SOP.
2. Interagency Field Team (IFT) review:
 - a. The Lead Author requests comments from the IFT members and revises the SOP as appropriate. Discussion within the IFT should ensure that differences of opinion are resolved amicably, to the maximum extent possible.
 - b. The Lead Author provides final IFT review and conveys the draft SOP to the MT. The comment field will highlight areas of unresolved disagreement within the IFT for MT consideration and resolution.
3. Management Team (MT) review:
 - a. Initial review – each member of the MT acting independently of others:
 - i. Reviews the draft SOP;
 - ii. Vets the draft SOP within their agency to ensure appropriate concurrence; and
 - iii. Sends comments and requests for clarifications to the IFT (via the Field Coordinator or Lead Author; with a cc: to the other MT representatives) to revise the document as appropriate.
 - iv. The Lead Author will incorporate revisions and highlight area for discussion at the next MT meeting.

- b. Second review – MT acting in unison at an MT meeting:
 - i. MT reviews and discusses the draft SOP;
 - ii. MT, if necessary, revises the document based on relevant input and finalizes the draft SOP for approval.

- 4. Approval:
 - a. MT recommends if the SOP is of sufficient controversy to need Executive Committee review and USFWS Regional Director approval or if the SOP can be approved and signed by the USFWS Mexican Wolf Recovery Coordinator:
 - i. If Executive Committee review is required, the USFWS Recovery Coordinator will send the SOP to the Executive Committee for review and discussion at an Executive Committee meeting. Following review and discussion, Lead Author will revise the document as necessary to incorporate feedback and share the updated draft SOP with the Executive Committee for final review and USFWS Regional Director approval.

- 5. Dissemination:
 - a. After the USFWS Regional Director or Mexican Wolf Recovery Coordinator has signed an SOP, the USFWS Mexican Wolf Recovery Coordinator distributes the SOP to the MOU Signatories and IFT.
 - b. Signed SOPs will be available to the public online at:
(<https://www.fws.gov/library/collections/mexican-wolf-recovery-program-sops>)

Approvals: The Interagency Field Team developed, the Management Team reviewed, the Executive Committee was informed, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Mexican Wolf Recovery Coordinator approved this SOP on April 17, 2025.

References: None