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SWCCA, Jan. 30, 2013, part 2, agenda items

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During the second part of the Southwest County Commission Alliance meeting Wednesday, commissioners focused on agenda items, including a resolution to form a partnership with federal land management agencies.

Under old business, a resolution to offer support with the National Sheriff's Association opposing the expansion of U.S. Forest Service Law Enforcement. No one had a copy of the resolution, so the issue was not discussed.

Alex Thal, who works with the Catron County Commission, said he is working on a resolution to petition federal agencies to comply with federal requirements to address possible health, safety and welfare impacts from federal proposed actions. The Catron County Commission approved the resolution on Nov. 28, 2012, but Thal talked about extending the reach to the Legislature and governor.

"We need to figure out how to get federal agencies to comply with their own federal rules," Thal said. "Other governors, such as the Wyoming governor worked out the process to address the impacts from federal proposed actions."

He suggested joining with the Council of Border Conservation Districts. Darr Shannon, Hidalgo County commissioner and alliance secretary, said she would be willing to work with the CBCD. Thal said it might be a vehicle to approach the governor. "We have models out of Wyoming and Arizona.

Under new business, the first item was a presentation by Catron County Wildlife Investigator, Jess Carey.

"The new plan (for the Mexican wolf recovery program) has detrimental aspects," Carey said. "It will affect all of the state of New Mexico, all of Arizona and parts of Texas."

He cited statistics on wolf interactions with livestock and humans.

Since April 2006, there have been 104 confirmed wolf-caused livestock deaths, and 13 probable and 21 possible wolf-caused livestock deaths. There have been eight wolf-pet interactions resulting in five pet deaths.

Carey reported that 81 of the cattle deaths caused by wolves had been on private property. He showed graphic photos taken by trail cameras.

"Wolves will run yearlings until they fall from exhaustion, then feed on them while they are still living," Carey said. He showed photos of a mule that had been killed by wolves on private property, as well as photos of animals that had their rear ends eaten out. "If the animal lives, it usually has to be put down." He showed more photos of a kitten with its head bitten off and a dog that died from its bloody head bites by a wolf.

He went on to say that of 154 wolf-human interactions, 110 had been on private property. "These are habituated wolves," Carey said. "All these interactions have been confirmed by myself and

Wildlife Services," he told the Beat.

Of a total of 347 wolf-animal and wolf-human interactions, 189 occurred on private property.

"The wolves also cause psychological trauma," Carey said. "It has been documented by psychologists. Wolves shouldn't be in people's yards, but they are habituated. Children see their pets attacked by wolves. It's unacceptable that wolves come into yards. Small family ranches are falling by the wayside as collateral damage."

He talked about a school bus incident, where the student saw the wolf in the yard. His mother put the child in the truck and went down to the next bus stop to protect those children and waited with them in the truck until the bus came.

"The Alpine office (of the recovery program) had been trying to catch this wolf," Carey said. "They brought in a helicopter, because the wolf had been to all the nearby houses. The wolf was darted with a tranquilizer from the helicopter." He showed photos of the tranquilized wolf being cradled in the arms of a staff person. Wildlife Services personnel drove it to the Alpine office Tuesday about 11:30 a.m. "Wolf 1133 was transported to Alpine and then was to go to Seville," Carey reported. "Liz, the team leader, told me the wolf would be a candidate to be translocated. I asked if this wolf was not a problem going to all these homes, and she said: 'No.'"

He reported that any wolf that goes south of I-10 or north of I-40 or into Texas will be a *Canis lupus*, and not designated as a Mexican gray wolf subspecies, according to the revamped plan. "So the same wolf becomes something different, even though DNA testing will show it as a Mexican wolf?"

Once Canadian wolves move into northern Arizona, if they become a problem, they can be translocated to New Mexico, Arizona, Texas or Mexico, as a *Canis lupus*, Carey said the plan shows. "That would eliminate the separate designation of Mexican gray wolf." He advocated that something should be in the plan to protect children. "Some wolves do not become habituated. It's the supplemental feeding which leads to habituation. Chronic stress on cattle is also not addressed in the plan, so it leads to ranchers going out of business."

The next agenda item was to be Craig Roepke, Interstate Stream Commission deputy director, reporting on Gila River water issues, but Roepke was unable to attend because of being called to hearings at the Legislature.

The last agenda item under new business was discussion and possible action regarding a partnership with federal land management agencies.

The commissioners approved creating an association with the Council of Border Conservation Districts to form a partnership with the federal land management agencies.

Javier Diaz of Luna County asked that water issues, the Interstate Stream Commission and the Arizona Water Settlements Act be addressed at a future meeting.

During county requests and comments, Shannon asked that the meetings be rotated among the counties. The next meeting was set for 1 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 27, at a place to be announced in Catron County.

Ramos addressed an earlier request for evening meetings, but said the reason why the meetings were set for 1 p.m. was so that commissioners could return home by dark.

He also showed a flyer that was pasted to his office door. "It says: 'Wreck the Gila' Tour," Ramos said. "A gentleman left it taped to the door of my business."

"We are all good people, and we do the best for what we believe," Ramos said. "We agree to disagree. There are a lot of pros and cons on wolves. I personally can't see spending millions on wolves, when we have homeless people, starving people and people without jobs."

He addressed an earlier public comment remark about Arizona's governor turning down a bill to transfer public lands. "In Arizona, the lands were to be offered to private buyers. In New Mexico, the bill would keep all public lands, public. Mrs. Anderson (another one who offered public comment) left before I could say that this is a regular monthly meeting, not a public hearing."

An unidentified woman asked where the minutes and resolutions were published online, "so I can

read them."

Ramos said she could get copies at the Grant County office for 5 cents a sheet.

"We're here to focus on the health, safety and welfare of our residents," Shannon said of the alliance. "We are each selected to serve on this alliance by our fellow commissioners."

Another questioner asked the purpose of the organization.

"We formed a group so we can be heard by our state and our governor as a larger group," Ramos said. "Now we're being heard."

Glyn Griffin, Catron County commissioner, reiterated that the commissioners are elected by their counties, not by the Sierra Club or the Center for Biological Diversity. We feel we are representing our counties."

Ramos reconfirmed that he had been put on the alliance by the other Grant County commissioners. "What you heard today are not our only issues. We have talked about solid waste problems and jail and juvenile issues. It's a shame the room is filled for a wolf and not filled for solid waste problems and juvenile incarceration issues."

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