

From: [Lefton, Charna](#)
To: [Sherry Barrett](#); [Maggie Dwire](#); [Jeff Humphrey](#)
Subject: Mexican gray wolves slowly gaining ground in forests
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FYI...

<http://www.dchieftrain.com/2014/04/24/mexican-gray-wolves-slowly-gaining-ground-in-forests>

El Defensor Chieftain (Socorro, NM)

Mexican gray wolves slowly gaining ground in forests

by John Larson | April 24, 2014 | Filed under: News

The Mexican gray wolf population is continuing to stabilize with the recent releases of two pairs in the Blue Range Wolf Recovery Area in the Gila and Apache National Forests.

The first male-female pair was released on April 2; the second pair, on April 9.

An Interagency Field Team will be monitoring the wolves and, if necessary, provide supplemental food while they acclimate to the area and transition to catching native prey in the Mexican Wolf Blue Range Reintroduction Area.

The Interagency Field Team is responsible for the day-to-day management of the Mexican wolf population. Team members said they believe the females are pregnant; the timed releases should allow the wolves to transition to their new territory prior to giving birth to pups.

The two female wolves were selected from the captive breeding population to increase genetic diversity of the wild wolf population. Both males were captured during the annual wolf population survey in January.

As of the end of last year, the count was 83 Mexican wolves, up from a count of 75 the year before.

The Mexican Wolf/Livestock Coexistence Council — an 11-member volunteer group of livestock producers, tribes, environmental groups, and county coalitions — has developed an innovative Strategic Coexistence Plan, to reduce wolf/livestock conflicts and the need for management removals of depredating wolves.

The plan has three components: payments to livestock producers for wolf presence, funding for conflict-avoidance measures and funding for depredation compensation.

Sherry Barrett, the Mexican Wolf Recovery coordinator for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, said her organization does weekly "telemetry flights on these animals we have in the wild."

"There's about 50, of those 83, that have telemetry collars on them. Some of the wolves have GPS collars as well."

Still, many ranchers and cattle growers in Socorro and Catron counties are dubious.

Jess Carey, the Catron County Commission's wolf investigator, said the wolves are a dangerous presence to cattle growers as well as ranch families in the area.

Carey said that since 2006, when he first took over the job, he has tallied 211 livestock depredations, as well as 10 pets killed or injured by wolves.

"There have been 21 since the first of this year," Carey said.

Carey said the official count of cows killed by wolves is grossly inaccurate.

"If you have 10 cows and calves killed in one 24-hour period the Interagency Field Team counts that as one incident," Carey said. "And if you had a cow due to give birth within a week or two, they count that as one depredation."

Fish and Wildlife's payments to livestock producers for wolf presence will be based on a formula that considers a variety of factors to determine allocation of the annual funding for each applicant, including whether the applicant's land or grazing lease overlaps a wolf territory or core area, and the number of wolf pups annually surviving to December 31 in the territory.

The formula also considers the number of livestock exposed to wolves and the applicant's participation in proactive conflict-avoidance measures.

In addition, direct compensation will continue for confirmed-livestock deaths or injuries caused by Mexican wolves to livestock producers who are not otherwise receiving payments for wolf-presence funding under the Coexistence Plan, unless they require immediate reimbursement.

In such cases, the reimbursement amount will be subtracted from the payment for wolf-presence allocation to that livestock producer.

"Recovering the Mexican wolf must be accomplished on a working landscape," said Benjamin Tuggle, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's southwest regional director. "Working collaboratively with stakeholders, we can achieve a balance of activities that sustain economically viable ranching operations and a self-sustaining population of wild wolves. This plan is a significant step in that direction."

To report wolf sightings or suspected livestock depredation, call 888-459-9653 or 928-339-4329.

-Charna

Charna Lefton
Assistant Regional Director for External Affairs
US Fish & Wildlife Service Region 2
505-248-6285
505-248-6915 Fax