

From: [Oakleaf, John](#)
To: [Dwire, Maggie](#)
Cc: [Jeff Humphrey](#); [Sherry Barrett](#); [Tracy Melbihess](#)
Subject: Re: Another Chieftain Article on Wolf Releases
Date: Tuesday, November 10, 2015 6:55:30 PM

Jeff,

There was a report of two uncollared wolves charging two horn hunters last year (April) near the Arizona, New Mexico line just to the NE of alpine near Turner Peak. Jess Carey heard rumor of the incident and eventually talked to the Reporting Party. We set up cameras in the area and looked for tracks and scat but were unable to confirm the incident. Collared wolves were not in the area at the time of the incident. So, I guess the point is that the reporting of the incident is consistent, but we were unable to confirm the incident. Anita is taking the information from Jess Carey's county reports.

John

On Tue, Nov 10, 2015 at 11:25 AM, Oakleaf, John <john_oakleaf@fws.gov> wrote:

So the horse incident and the incident with the 2 1/2 year old were the same day with M1130, which we lethally removed the following day. I am unsure of the details on the charging of 2 men. I will check into it.

John

On Tue, Nov 10, 2015 at 10:19 AM, Dwire, Maggie <maggie_dwire@fws.gov> wrote:

While Jeff does that I'll be sitting here picturing a cat with no head. (!)

On Tue, Nov 10, 2015 at 9:53 AM, Britt, Beth <beth_britt@fws.gov> wrote:

Sorry - Jeff can do the draft with input from the Wolf team to ensure we correct the facts.

Thanks!

- Beth

On Tue, Nov 10, 2015 at 9:09 AM, Dwire, Maggie <maggie_dwire@fws.gov> wrote:

Hi Beth,

It's not quite clear who your email is directed at, I assume Jeff?

Maggie

On Tue, Nov 10, 2015 at 8:32 AM, Britt, Beth <beth_britt@fws.gov> wrote:

Please draft a request for retraction based on lack of factual support and ask them to retract.

On Tue, Nov 10, 2015 at 8:28 AM, Sherry Barrett <sherry_barrett@fws.gov> wrote:

We need to address the allegation of 2 wolves charging a human

Sent from my iPhone

On Nov 9, 2015, at 4:56 PM, Humphrey, Jeff <jeff_humphrey@fws.gov> wrote:

http://www.dchieftain.com/news/wolves-at-the-back-door/article_47ba92b2-831c-11e5-97c5-cb90fd5b44b5.html

Wolves at the 'back door'

Hearing set about county effort to halt release

Scott Turner El Defensor Chieftain managing editor editorial@dchieftain.com
[Comments](#)

Updated Nov 5, 2015

Mexican Wolf



Courtesy photo

A Mexican Wolf at the Seville National Wildlife Refuge Wolf Management facility.

Protecting livestock and human lives are among the reasons some are opposed to the release of Mexican Wolves in Socorro County.

Helping the wolves fight off extinction is the reason others support the federal government's intention to release the wolves despite opposition from local and state officials.

There seems to be no middle ground heading into a public hearing and possible vote by the Socorro County Board of Commissioners to bar the release of the wolves as part of the Mexican Wolf Recovery Program.

"It seems to be an inflammatory effort to get the federal government to back off its decision to release the wolves into Socorro County," said Michael Robinson, of the Center of Biological Diversity, about the proposed ordinance the commissioners could vote on at their meeting Tuesday.

A commissioner from a neighboring county doesn't quite see the issue the same way.

"It's easy to be for the release when it's not happening at your back door," said Catron County Commissioner Anita Hand.

Socorro County Commissioner Martha Salas will be among officials making a decision after residents are given the opportunity to make their opinions known at the 10 a.m. meeting.

County Manager Delilah Walsh said the ordinance is on the agenda to be voted on.

"But it's possible they could table it," Walsh said.

Should the commissioners approve the ordinance, it would go in effect 60 days after the vote, Walsh said.

The feedback Salas has received so far has been overwhelmingly against the release.

She recently attended a chapter meeting at the Alamo Navajo reservation where reservation leaders voted against allowing the release in the county.

"They say the presence of the wolves has already pushed bears and cougars more toward the reservation," Salas said. "Now, they fear the wolves are going to be coming to the reservation."

Robinson said the proposed release point in the San Mateos is far from the reservation, but acknowledged wolves could roam a good distance if their food source was scarce. He said the wolves generally stayed confined if food sources were plentiful.

Catron County attacks

Hand cites attacks on livestock as a primary reason she is opposed to the release. So far in 2015, she said there have been 36 confirmed wolf kills on livestock, with four other possible kills.

The county also records two cows being injured in wolf attacks, as well as five pets.

Hand also cited 10 sightings of wolves by county residents, including five up close in which a wolf charged two adults, a wolf followed a 12-year-old on horseback and one that came within 30 feet of a 2 ½-year-old.

"Imagine seeing a cat with no head, a dog torn apart or calves chewed up," Hand said.

New Mexico Congressman Steve Pearce, who represents Socorro County, cites the attacks in Catron County as a reason for his opposition to the wolf recovery program. He said he would continue to back efforts to defund the program in Congress.

"Most of Catron County is federal land," Pearce said. "They have a small tax base. They depend heavily on the cattle industry."

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Public Affairs Specialist Jeff Humphrey said the organization understands concerns about the potential for attacks on livestock or people.

"Human safety remains of utmost concern to the Service," Humphrey said. "We advise the public to always take the necessary steps and precautions to remain safe when in nature. We have not documented any cases of Mexican wolf attacks on a person."

Robinson and Mary Katherine Ray, wildlife chairwoman of the Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club, agreed with Humphrey that attacks on humans were rare and even said attacks on livestock were not as common as portrayed.

Ray, who lives in the San Mateos, saw wolves near her home.

"And they ran away as soon as they saw me," Ray said.

She said the pack has since been relocated to Arizona.

Robinson cited federal statistics kept each year on the wolf recovery program in the Blue Range recovery area. The statistics showed the most livestock kills in a year by the wolves was 36 in 2007. A total of 30 kills was recorded in 2014.

The statistics can be found at http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/mexicanwolf/pdf/Wolf_livestock_domestic_pet_conflict.pdf and also reveals action by the Fish and Wildlife Services in response to attacks.

"Cattle is not really on their menu," Ray said.

Elk is among the main sources of food for the wolves, Robinson and Ray said.

Ray and Humphrey both emphasize that rules are now set up to allow residents to "take" or kill wolves in case of such attacks, or if they feel they are in danger. Ray said residents can obtain permits from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to do so.

"The Endangered Species Act, as well as our regulations for the MWEPA, allow for the take (including injuring or killing) of a Mexican wolf in self-defense or the defense of others," Humphrey said. "Our regulations also provide for opportunistic harassment and intentional harassment of Mexican wolves. The regulations also allow for the take of a Mexican wolf under various circumstances to protect pet dogs and livestock."

The ordinance, however, makes the Socorro Sheriff's Office the agency the public should use in dealing with wolf interactions if U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services officials are not available. County Attorney Adren Nance said the ordinance does not give the Sheriff's Office new authority, but recognizes the authority the Sheriff's Office already has.

The Socorro County Sheriff's Office serves as animal control in the county.

Needed for survival

Ray feels the wolf relief program is necessary because “we destroyed the species.”

Both Robinson and Humphrey said the release was necessary to introduce diversity into genes of the Mexican wolves already in the wild. Robinson said inbreeding has made the wolves more vulnerable to disease and lowered their reproduction rate, cutting their chances of survival.

“The wild population does not have adequate gene diversity, which compromises the health of individual wolves (inbreeding) and the overall health of the population,” Humphrey said. “We can improve the gene diversity of the wild population by releasing wolves from captivity with genes not already represented in the wild population. In other words, our releases from captivity at this time will be aimed at improving the genetic situation rather than increasing the size of the population, which is growing naturally without the aid of initial releases.”

Supporters of the wolf release program question whether Socorro County has the authority to enforce the ordinance on federal land.

Nance acknowledges that case law conflicts on whether the ordinance would be enforceable.

“But it would address the release on private land and would prevent a ranch owner such as a Ted Turner from doing so,” Nance said.

Turner owns the Armendaris Ranch in southern New Mexico that is home to several wildlife research projects. Endangered species have been released on the ranch.

The U.S. Department of the Interior granted permission for the release of the wolves into the state a couple of weeks ago despite a decision by the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish in September to refuse the request by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services to do so.

“I don’t like the federal government going against the wishes of the state of New Mexico,” Pearce said. “Why don’t they release the wolves in Central Park? Wolves used to roam there, too.”

Release not determined

Even with permission from the DOI, the release of the wolves by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service may not come for quite some time, Humphrey said.

“For 2016, our process is a bit more complicated, and potentially delayed, because we are still working with the Forest Service and the public to identify new initial release sites in the recently expanded Mexican Wolf Experimental Population Area (MWEPA),” Humphrey said.

The number of wolves the U.S. Fish and Wildlife service plans to release into areas of Arizona and New Mexico has not been determined. The delay in the release has caused the service to shelve its previous plan.

“Last spring, we’d requested permits for up to 10 pups (for cross-fostering) and a pair of adults and their progeny,” Humphrey said. “The window/season for such releases has passed; so those releases aren’t imminent.”

The Mexican wolf population has grown for several years in a row, reaching its highest population size to date as of the 2014 end of year count, at a minimum of 110 wolves.

“We will conduct our 2015 annual count in January, 2016,” Humphrey said.

At the 2014 end of year count, the wolves were approximately equally spread between the two states, with Arizona having several more than New Mexico.

Currently, the location of the population can best be tracked using the “Occupied Range” map, available on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife website at: <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/mexicanwolf/TADC.cfm>. People can click on the map for a larger version of it. This map also indicates the most recent aerial locations of the radio-collared wolves.

Jeff Humphrey
Public Affairs Specialist
Fish and Wildlife Service
2321 West Royal Palm Road, Suite 103
Phoenix, Arizona 85021
602-242-0210 ext. 222
<http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/arizona/>

m 505.252.3046
beth_britt@fws.gov
www.fws.gov/southwest

Arizona | New Mexico | Oklahoma | Texas

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Maggie Dwire
Assistant Mexican Wolf Recovery Coordinator
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
2105 Osuna Road NE
Albuquerque, NM 87113
Ph (505) 761-4783

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Beth Britt
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Southwest Region
External Affairs
d 505.248.6285
m 505.252.3046
beth_britt@fws.gov
www.fws.gov/southwest

Arizona | New Mexico | Oklahoma | Texas

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Maggie Dwire
Assistant Mexican Wolf Recovery Coordinator
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
2105 Osuna Road NE
Albuquerque, NM 87113
Ph (505) 761-4783

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John Oakleaf
Field Projects Coordinator
USFWS, Mexican Wolf Program
(505) 761-4782 (work)
(928) 245-1910 (cell)

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Field Projects Coordinator
USFWS, Mexican Wolf Program
(505) 761-4782 (work)
(928) 245-1910 (cell)