

From: [Melbiness, Tracy](#)
To: [Barrett, Sherry](#)
Subject: Re: article on Wolf Reintroduction Meeting held in Reserve (Grant County Beat)
Date: Wednesday, April 24, 2013 3:51:06 PM

That's quite an article.

On Wed, Apr 24, 2013 at 3:04 PM, Barrett, Sherry <sherry_barrett@fws.gov> wrote:



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[Wolf Reintroduction Meeting held in Reserve](#)

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By Jo Anne Blount

On Tuesday, April 16, 2013, ranchers, elected officials and other members of the public assembled at the community center in Reserve, NM, to hear a USFWS presentation concerning the re-release of a pregnant Mexican Gray wolf and her mate into the McKenna Park area of the Gila Wilderness within Catron County. The USFWS handout stated that the purpose of the re-release, scheduled for the end of April, is to augment genetic diversity, offset mortalities, replace the loss of breeding wolves and assist in addressing the cumulative impact of threats to the Blue Range Wolf Recovery Area (BRWRA).

The meeting in Reserve was held in response to pressure by Commissioner Van "Bucky" Allred and New Mexico Cattle Growers Representative Zack Riley after it was revealed at a similar meeting in Beaverhead that no further notice of the release of wolves would occur in Catron County. It was pointed out that notice of this meeting was scanty; it was found by the County Manager on a countertop downstairs in the courthouse, rather than delivered directly to the Commission Office. The crowd was incredulous when it became apparent that there was to be no formal presentation of the proposal. The extent of the meeting was merely the viewing of maps and literature set out on tables manned by agency personnel who could take comments. One man announced that the wolf program is fiction, farce, fraud and failure designed to destroy rural communities following through with Agenda 21. Others felt that the open house technique was designed to confuse and cheat the people. Ron Morsbach from Congressman Steve Pearce's office expressed dismay at the way the meeting was conducted and said if "Mr. Pearce conducted meetings this way he never would have been elected."

There are many provisions for keeping the public informed of agency actions such as executive orders, memoranda of understanding and congressional law. Agency personnel relented, sat down for a "chat" and the meeting commenced.

There were many concerns about the wolf reintroduction program. Allred was adamant that no further releases occur, because the female, F1108, was involved in at least nine cattle depredations before she was 7 months old. She has been in captivity for five years. The male M1133 is extremely habituated to humans.

He was in captivity for 5 years and only lasted 3 weeks in the wild before being removed, as a nuisance, from private residences in the Reserve area. Catron County Commissioner Glyn Griffin stressed that the health, safety and welfare of humans are more important than wolves and does not want more collateral damage from releasing these wolves again. Children waiting for school buses in the morning need to be secure. The former superintendent of Reserve Public Schools testified that he has witnessed children traumatized by seeing their pets killed by wolves, by being followed by wolves and hearing them at night and having their peace of mind destroyed to the point of suffering from nightmares and performing poorly at school. Agency personnel could not guarantee the safety of citizens, especially children. Dennis Swapp, a fourth-generation rancher in Catron County, wanted to know who would be responsible if his child was hurt or killed by a wolf. Sherry Barrett, lead agency representative of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service said she would not consent to be sued. Swapp stated he would not be suing; he would be charging her with murder. Barrett said that Benjamin Tuggle of USFWS makes

the final decision, regarding the release of wolves.

The general consensus voiced by citizens, as well as elected officials, is that the release of this pair of wolves is to shore up a failing re-introduction program at taxpayer expense. Barrett said that the debt incurred is justified because it is an important program. A woman from the USFWS stated that wolves control elk populations, but failed to make her case when it was pointed out that elk are also an introduced species. Riley cited data from Yellowstone National Park, where 35 wolves were introduced and the elk population declined from 16,000 to 4,000. If the current estimates are correct and there are at least 78 wolves roaming the Gila National Forest, the ramifications for the elk population are obvious, he said. A hunter-guide stated that the wolf program will eliminate hunters and guides and adversely impact local economies. Jack Diamond, an area rancher, stated that hunters are going to wake up and realize what is being taken from them.

Although there are an estimated 75 wolves, the recovery team hasn't determined a target yet. The Center for Biological Diversity wants 3,500. Someone suggested that the wolves be taken to Santa Catalina, but Barrett said the zone is between 140 and 110.

Riley asked what it would take to reevaluate the methodology.

Morsbach said that he recalled that if the program were halted then all of the wolves would have to be removed, according to the 1998 plan. The officials couldn't corroborate this.

An audience member asked: "Who recommended that these specific wolves be released?" According to the 1998 plan, the only ones that can be released in NM had to have wild experience. This is a pregnant pair, and May is the due date. She will be released about eight days before her due date.

Several members of the audience expressed dismay at this revelation—that it would throw the female into shock and is cruel. Despite the admissions that they don't know if the pregnant female can survive, and it is hard on her to be turned loose in that condition, milk will sustain the pups for several weeks, and the parents will be fed by packing in road-kill and horse meat (possibly originating from Ohio). Riley observed that this teaches the wolves and the pups that people on mules have food rather than that humans should be avoided. These wolves already lack the avoidance response, and this makes it worse because the pups will form affiliation with folks and packs.

A Glenwood resident, said the whole wolf program is cruel to wolves, pets, livestock, children and adults. One rancher's wife reflected that her husband has had to kill his cattle, which had been eaten alive; their hind ends and udders chewed out, sometimes with a dead calf left hanging out of her. These animals suffer horribly before they die or are euthanized.

Carolyn Nelson, a rancher from Alma, said they have had wolves on their allotment and observed that they passed over elk to eat cattle, which constitutes scientific evidence regarding whether wolves prefer cattle or elk. Her children were surrounded by wolves but did not run. City kids may have run, in the same situation, and would have been eaten alive.

The response by USFWS was to pull out some compensation forms and place them on the back table so people could get them before leaving. They said that they don't know how to prevent livestock depredations and will continue to try various techniques such as hazing and feeding vomit-inducing beef to wolves, telemetry helps but admit that they don't know where wolves are despite weekly fly-overs. Ranchers should implement management methods like range riding, at night when wolves hunt and feed, using horses or ATVs on their grazing allotments (despite the threat of closure of 1000s of miles of roads on the GNF through the upcoming TMP being implemented by the US Forest Service).

USFWS representatives claimed that range riders were successful in Luna in preventing depredation. Jess Carey, Catron County Wildlife Investigator, disputed that, saying the wolves simply went around the patrol and killed livestock, which the riders subsequently found.

Allred asked to receive the telemetry equipment that was promised the county. The response was that only certain landowners could have that equipment. The county would need to acquire an MOU for that.

State Representative Don Tripp asked what weight the comments and other input would carry, and what tangible effects would there be on land owners in the area. It was stated that comments could be sent in.

Morsbach suggested that copies be sent to all of the elected officials. He said he has attended these meetings for over 10 years and both sides always say the same things. The USFWS always have intentions to remedy depredation issues and habituation issues, which still have not been successful.

The ranchers and public always point out the negative impacts, such as livestock and pet mortality and threats to themselves and more seriously their children that have occurred since the inception of the Mexican Wolf Reintroduction Program.

Although there were wolf-reintroduction proponents from Las Cruces and Silver City present, no one spoke in defense of the program, except agency personnel who said they believed it to be important.

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