



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office
2493 Portola Road, Suite B
Ventura, California 93003

October 17, 2001

Dear Interested Party:

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is now completing the fifth year of releases of California condors (*Gymnogyps californianus*) in northern Arizona under a special provision of the Endangered Species Act which allows for the designation on an "experimental nonessential" population. Under this designation, there is greater flexibility for management of a reintroduction program for an endangered species. As part of the federal rule-making process which established the experimental nonessential designation, the Service agreed to review the progress and public acceptance of this reintroduction within the first 5 years of the program. The Service is inviting you to participate in this review of the condor reintroduction project in northern Arizona.

Background:

The release of California condors in northern Arizona has been undertaken in partnership with The Peregrine Fund. The Peregrine Fund manages the day-to-day operations of the field program, including monitoring the birds' movements, working with local land owners and land managers, and providing any additional care for the birds. To date, there have been 47 condors released to the wild in northern Arizona, with seven releases occurring since December, 1996. Reintroduction efforts have been frustrated by lead poisonings, bird-human interactions, and a shooting; 18 birds have died and 4 have been returned to captivity. Today, there are 25 free-flying condors. Last March the first condor egg laid in the wild since 1986 was laid by a reintroduced bird in a shallow cave in Marble Canyon, a short flight from the release site. The condors have been known to fly widely, but generally within the Grand Canyon corridor. In the summer of 1998, one bird flew to Flaming Gorge, Wyoming, 310 miles from the release site; three other condors flew to Grand Junction, Colorado, 250 miles to the north. For detailed information about these releases, please refer to the enclosed "Arizona California Condor Release Summary," "Time Line for the Arizona California Condor Releases," "Arizona California Condor Release Table," and to The Peregrine Fund's web site at: www.peregrinefund.org.

This review is being conducted by a team of condor biologists, representatives of local management agencies, and the Service, with input from local governments and the public. A report will be completed by this team and submitted to the California Condor Recovery Team for review and recommendations to the Service for continuation, modification, or cancellation of releases of condors in northern Arizona. The Service is responsible for making a final decision

regarding the continuation of this reintroduction. The guidelines under which the review is to be conducted comes from the Federal Rule establishing the experimental nonessential designation:

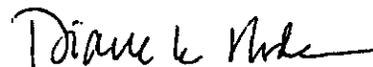
Federal Rule. Endangered Species Act, Section 10(j) (61 FR 54044-54059). Special Rule 10, p. 54058. (10) The status of the reintroduction project is to receive an informal review on an annual basis and a formal evaluation within the first 5 years after the initial release, and every 5 years thereafter. This evaluation will include, but not be limited to: a review of management issues; compliance with agreements; assessment of available carrion; dependence of older condors on supplemental food sources; post release behavior; causes and rates of mortality; alternative release sites; project costs; public acceptance; and accomplishment of recovery tasks prescribed in California Condor Recovery Plan. The number of variables that could affect this reintroduction project makes it difficult to develop criteria for success or failure after 5 years. However, if after 5 years the project is experiencing a 40 percent or greater mortality rate or released condors are not finding food on their own, serious consideration will be given to terminating the project.

Public Participation Process:

The evaluation team will host two public open houses: in Kanab, Utah, on Thursday, November 1, 2001, 7 - 9 P.M. at the Shilo Inn, 296 West 100 North; and in Flagstaff, Arizona, on Monday, November 5, 2001, 7 - 9 P.M. at the Arizona Game and Fish Department Office, 3500 South Lake Mary Road. The open houses will include presentations reviewing the reintroduction experiment in northern Arizona, and group discussions on various aspects of the program. Comments from the public, local governments, and agencies are requested. Comments will be accepted through November 23, 2001. To submit your comments, you may use the enclosed form, send an email to: "FW1AZCONDORS@RI.FWS.GOV", or write to: California Condor Recovery Program Coordinator, Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office, 2493 Portola Road, Suite B, Ventura, California 93003.

If you have any questions regarding this review or the California Condor Recovery Program, please contact Bruce Palmer of my staff at (805) 644-1766.

Sincerely,



Diane K. Noda
Field Supervisor

Enclosures:

Public Comment Form
Arizona California Condor Release Summary
Time Line for the Arizona California Condor Releases
Arizona California Condor Release Table

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Public Comment Form**

**Evaluation of the First Five Years of California Condor
Reintroductions in Northern Arizona**

Please return this form, send an email to "AZCONDORS@R1.FWS.GOV", or write, by
November 23, 2001:

California Condor Recovery Program Coordinator
Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office
2493 Portola Road, Suite B
Ventura, California 93003

Name: _____

Address: _____

Comments: _____

Five Year Review For The 10(j) Rule Arizona California Condor Release Summary

Bill Heinrich, The Peregrine Fund, October 2001

In October of 1996 the Section 10(j) Rule of the Endangered Species Act was published in The Federal Register, and a lawsuit filed by San Juan County in southern Utah was dismissed, allowing the first releases of California Condors to take place in northern Arizona. Prior to this The Peregrine Fund, a private non-government conservation organization, had been selected by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, and the California Condor Recovery Team, to conduct the releases in northern Arizona. Close partnerships were developed between the four main cooperators including the USFWS, the Bureau of Land Management, the Arizona Game and Fish Department and The Peregrine Fund. Additional partners soon included the National Park Service, the U.S. Forest Service, State of Utah Department of Natural Resources Division of Wildlife, the Hualapi Tribe, the Navajo Nation, the Los Angeles Zoo, the Zoological Society of San Diego, and the Phoenix Zoo. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed by all of these groups. There was an additional Agreement between the USFWS and Coalition of County and Local Governments for the California Condor Experimental Population Area, Northern Arizona and Southern Utah. With all of the agreements in place it was then possible to begin releases.

To date 47 condors (24 males and 23 females) have been released in northern Arizona: 32 at the Vermilion Cliffs site and 15 at the second Hurricane Cliffs site which was established in 1998, located approximately 65 miles to the west of the Vermilion Cliffs. Both sites are located on lands administered by the BLM. All but four condors were released as juvenile (32) or sub-adults (11). Of the 43 young birds, 16 have perished, two have been removed from the wild population for long term behavioral conditioning, three temporarily remain in holding at the Vermilion Cliffs awaiting re-release in the near future, and 22 are currently flying free. The four older birds which were released, two breeding pairs (all four were between eight and nine years old), represented a short-lived experiment to include breeders with other released birds. Two were killed shortly after release, probably as a result of inappropriate roosting behavior following many years spent in captivity, and the other two were quickly recaptured and permanently removed from the free-flying population.

For the most part the condors have remained within the boundaries outlined in the current 10(j) rule. On several occasions however they have flown outside. Most notably between 31 July and 13 August 1998 condor #119 disappeared and flew 310 miles north, being spotted at the Flaming Gorge Reservoir on the Wyoming/Utah border before returning to the release site on 13 August. In the same year between 23 August and 17 August, condors #116, #122, and #123 left the release area on 23 August, and were spotted on 25 August near Grand Junction, Colorado, over 250 miles to the north. They returned to the Vermilion Cliffs in just one day, on 27 August.

On 25 March 2001 the first California Condor egg to be laid in the wild by captive produced condors was located by Peregrine Fund biologists monitoring a cave in Grand Canyon National Park. The egg was broken by other condors shortly after it was laid, but remains a positive sign for the future and reflects the overall success of the first five years of California Condor releases in northern Arizona under the 10(j) rule.

TIME LINE FOR THE ARIZONA CALIFORNIA CONDOR RELEASES

October 1996: The section 10(j) rule of the Endangered Species Act was published in The Federal Register, and a lawsuit filed by San Juan County in southern Utah was dismissed, giving the green light for the release to take place.

October 29, 1996: Six parent-reared California Condors were flown from Burbank, California to Page, Arizona on a C26A smoke jumper plane supplied by the Bureau of Land Management. The six condors were then flown to the release site above the Vermilion Cliffs by The Salt River Project helicopter.

December 12, 1996: Hundreds of California Condor enthusiasts gathered below the Vermilion Cliffs to witness the release of six condors.

January 10, 1997: The body of Condor 42 was found dead below the Vermilion Cliffs, apparently killed by a Golden Eagle.

May 18, 1997: The body of Condor 51 was found below a span of high power lines southeast of Page, Arizona. The condor died shortly afterwards from injuries sustained from the collision with the line.

April 29, 1997: Nine California Condors, hatched between March 15, 1995 and May 20, 1995, were flown from the Los Angeles Zoo to Page, Arizona by the Bureau of Land Management and transported to the release site above the Vermilion Cliffs.

May 14, 1997: The first four of the nine condors were released.

May 26, 1997: The second group of five condors were released, bringing the total of free-flying California Condors in Arizona to 13.

July 13, 1997: Condor 26 had to be captured and sent back to the World Center for Birds of Prey in Boise, Idaho. It was determined that her tameness towards humans might jeopardize the behavior of the other condors.

July 14, 1997: Condor 28 left the area with Condors 22 and 27, and was never seen again. Numerous flights were taken in order to try to pick up a radio signal but were abandoned by the end of August. We are now counting the bird as a mortality.

July 20, 1997: Condor 24 was captured at the visitors' center on the South Rim of the Grand Canyon National Park. She had last been seen feeding 26 days before. She was given emergency medical assistance and sent to the San Diego Wild Animal Park where she recovered. She has since been re-released at the Vermilion Cliffs and is doing well.

October 8, 1997: Four additional puppet-reared condors were flown from the Los Angeles Zoo to Page, Arizona by the BLM smoke jumper plane from Boise, Idaho. They were picked up by The Salt River Helicopter and flown to the release site.

November 20, 1997: The four young Condors were released from the Vermilion Cliffs release site.

November 25, 1997: The Boise Air National Guard flew a C-130 transport plane to Miramar Air Force Base near San Diego and picked up seven condors from the San Diego Wild Animal Park. It then flew to Burbank where 13 additional condors were picked up from the Los Angeles Zoo. All 20 birds were flown to the Peregrine Fund's new condor facility in Boise, bringing the Boise captive population to 41 individuals. The 20 new birds ranged from three to seven years of age.

July 31-August 13, 1998: Condor 19 disappeared and flew 310 miles north before being spotted at Flaming Gorge Reservoir on the Wyoming/Utah border before returning to the site on August 13.

August 23-27, 1998: Condors 16, 22, and 23 left the release area on August 23, and were spotted on August 25 near Grand Junction, Colorado over 250 miles to the north. They returned to the Vermilion Cliffs in just one day on August 27.

September 25, 1998: The final approval had been given to establish a second California Condor release site on the Hurricane Cliffs approximately 65 miles to the west of the Vermilion Cliffs release site and construction began on the enclosed 8 foot by 24 foot enclosed hack box and 24 foot by 30 foot attached fly pen.

October 3, 1998: The carcass of California Condor #69 was found.

October 7, 1998: The BLM smoke jumper plane in Boise flew six young California Condors from Boise, Idaho to St. George, Utah and then proceeded to Burbank, California. The six young condors were driven to the new Hurricane Cliffs site.

October 8, 1998: Three additional California Condors were flown from the Los Angeles Zoo to St. George, Utah and transported to the new Hurricane Cliffs site, bringing the total to nine new birds, giving Arizona a total of 23 condors.

November 18, 1998: The eight young condors were released from the Hurricane Cliffs site.

November 23, 1998: The single condor, #34, produced in 1996 was released from the Vermilion Cliffs release site.

December 24, 1998: Condor 77, released on November 18, was found dead near the release site, presumably killed by a coyote.

March 11, 1999: Condor 24 was found shot and killed in the Grand Canyon. A young man turned himself in and was subsequently fined \$3,200 by the USFWS.

May 6, 1999: Condor 86 was captured and returned to Boise after repeatedly approaching people and showing signs of being too tame.

November 8, 1999: Nine condors were flown from Boise, Idaho to St. George, Utah. The birds were then driven to the Hurricane Cliffs release site.

December 7-29, 1999: Seven of the nine condors at the Hurricane Cliffs site were released. One was returned to Boise for future release and four year old condor 129 was released at the Vermilion Cliffs.

January 5, 2000: Condor 207 found dead near Hurricane release site from aspirating food.

February 4, 2000: Condor 197 found dead near Hurricane release site from eagle predation.

March 3, 2000: Condor 116 found dead above Colorado River from lead poisoning. All of the condors were trapped and tested for lead. Only 119 had high levels and was treated and released.

April 11-14, 2000: Condors 195,196, 198 and 203 were captured for behavioral reasons and returned to Boise.

May 1, 2000: Condor 111 missing and presumed dead.

June 12, 2000: Condor 165 found dead below south rim of Grand Canyon from lead poisoning.

June 16, 2000: Condor 191 died at the Phoenix Zoo from lead poisoning.

June 20, 2000: Condor 182 found dead near the Vermilion Cliffs, cause unknown. Condor 150's telemetry signal found stationary for over several weeks in an inaccessible area of canyon. Cause of death unknown. All but one of the birds were captured and tested for lead. Nine had unacceptable levels over 50 ug/dl and were treated and released gradually over a period of two months.

September 7, 2000: Condor 184 found dead below the Vermilion Cliffs, presumably from eagle predation.

November 8, 2000: Thirteen condors were flown from Boise, Idaho to Marble Canyon, Arizona by the United States Forest service with funding from the Bureau of Land Management.

December 12, 2000: The first pair of adult nine year old condors, 82 and 74 were released in the experiment to accelerate having birds breeding in the wild at an earlier date.

December 19, 2000: The second pair of adult 10 year old condors, 70 and 60 were released.

December 25, 2000: Adult condor 82 found killed by coyotes.

December 28, 2000: Adult condor 74 was found killed by coyotes and the remaining adult pair 70 and 60 were immediately caught and brought back into captivity ending the experiment.

December 29, 2000: The remaining seven young and two older birds were released from the Vermilion Cliffs release site.

January 21, 2001: Condor 232 was temporarily brought back in to captivity for behavioral reasons.

February 2, 2001: Young Condor 228 was found dead and emaciated on top of hack box.

May 14, 2001: Young condors 232 and 224 were temporarily brought back into captivity for behavioral reasons.

May 23, 2001: Condor 186 was temporarily brought back into captivity for behavioral reasons.

March 25, 2001: First California Condor egg laid in the wild by captive released condors was found in Grand Canyon National Park. It was broken by the condors on the same day.

August 24, 2001: The first satellite transmitter placed on a condor in Arizona was placed on condor 176.

ARIZONA CALIFORNIA CONDOR RELEASE TABLE, 10-16-2001

CONDOR	SEX	FACILITY	HATCH DATE	STATUS*
PLACE OCT. 28 RELEASE #1 DECEMBER 12, 1996 (6)				
149**	M	LAZ	5-07-96	
151	F	LAZ	6-02-96	DEAD 5-18-97 EAGLE
136**	F	LAZ	5-12-96	
133**	F	LAZ	5-22-96	
142**	M	LAZ	5-29-96	DEAD 1-10-97 POWER LINE
150**	F	WCBP	5-26-96	DEAD 6-?-00 UNKNOWN
PLACE APRIL 29 RELEASE #2 MAY 14, 1997 (4)				
119	F	SDWAP	3-15-95	
127	F	SDWAP	3-31-95	
116	M	SDWAP	4-13-95	DEAD 3-02-00 LEAD
128	F	LAZ	4-19-95	DEAD 7-14-97 LOST
PLACE APRIL 29 RELEASE #3 MAY 26, 1997 (5)				
122	M	LAZ	5-17-95	
124	F	LAZ	4-04-95	DEAD SHOT 3-10-99
123**	M	LAZ	5-20-95	
114	M	SDWAP	4-09-95	
126	F	SDWAP	5-02-95	CAPTURED 07-13-97 RETURNED TO WCBP. RETURNED TO VER. CLIFFS 11-08-99 RELEASED 12-29-99
PLACE OCT. 8 RELEASE #4 NOVEMBER 20, 1997 (4)				
165	M	WCBP	4-20-97	DEAD 6-12-00 17lead pellets crop
162	M	LAZ	4-14-97	
169	M	SDWAP	5-20-97	DEAD 10-3-98 COYOTE
158	M	SDWAP	4-07-97	
PLACE OCT. 7&8 HURRICANE CLIFFS, RELEASE #5 NOV. 18, 1998 (8)				
134	M	SDWAP	4-02-96	
176	F	WCBP	3-19-98	
177	M	WCBP	3-28-98	DEAD 12-24-98 COYOTE
182	M	WCBP	4-02-98	DEAD 6-20-00 UNKNOWN
184	F	LAZ	4-11-98	DEAD 9-07-00 EAGLE
186	M	LAZ	4-15-98	CAPTURED, 4/7/99, RELEASE IN 2000
187**	M	WCBP	4-22-98	
191**	F	WCBP	5-10-98	DEAD 6-16-00 ANEMIC
193	M	WCBP	5-30-98	

CONDOR SEX FACILITY HATCH DATE STATUS*

PLACE Nov. 8, HURRICANE CLIFFS, RELEASE #6 Dec.7, 1999 (7)

195	F	SDWAP	2-19-99	WCBP TEMP.HOLDING 4-11-00
196	F	SDWAP	3-20-99	WCBP TEMP.HOLDING 4-14-00 TO VERMILION CLIFFS 01-31-01 RELEASED (VC) 03-12-01
197	F	SDWAP	3-24-99	FOUND DEAD 2-4-00 EAGLE
198	M	SDWAP	3-31-99	WCBP TEMP. HOLDING 4-13-00 TO VERMILION CLIFFS 01-31-01 RELEASED (VC) 03-12-01
203	M	WCBP	4-23-99	WCBP TEMP. HOLDING 4-14-00 TO VERMILION CLIFFS 01-31-01 RELEASED (VC) 03-12-01 CAPTURED 5-14-01 HOLDING VC
207**	M	WCBP	5-4-99	DEAD 1-15-00 ASPIRATION
211**	F	WCBP	5-23-99	DEAD MISSING 5-00

PLACE NOV.8,2000 VERMILION CLIFFS (13) RELEASE

#82	F	SDWAP	4-04-92	12-07-00, DEAD 12-25-00 COYOTE
#74	M	LAZ	5-20-92	12-07-00 DEAD 12-28-00 COYOTE
#70	F	LAZ	5-25-91	12-19-00 CAPTURED 12-29-00 RETURNED TO BOISE 1-31-01
#60	M	LAZ	3-30-91	12-19-00 CAPTURED 12-30-00 RETURNED TO BOISE 1-31-01
#223	M	WCBP	4-18-00	12-29-00 RECAPTURED 2-16-01 RELEASED 2-21-01
#224	F	WCBP	4-18-00	12-29-00 CAPTURED 1-16-01 RELEASED 1-31-01 RECAPTURED 2-16-01 RELEASED 3-12-01 CAPTURED 5-14-01 HOLDING VC
VC#227	M	WCBP	4-28-00	12-29-00 CAPTURED 1-30-01 RELEASED 3-12-01
#228**	F	WCBP	4-28-00	12-29-00 DEAD 02-09-01 FOUND STARVED ON RELEASE BOX
#232	M	WCBP	4-30-00	12-29-00 CAPTURED 01-04-01 RELEASED 01-31-01 CAPTURED 01-31-01 RETURN BOISE 3-9-01
#234	F	WCBP	5-11-00	12-29-00
#235**	F	WCBP	5-18-00	12-29-00 CAPTURED 2-16-01 RELEASED 2-21-01
#186	M	LAZ	4-15-98	12-29-00 RE-RELEASED CAPTURED 5-23-01
#210	F	WCBP	5-23-99	12-29-00

SUMMARY

AZ 47 RELEASED, 18 MORTALITIES, 6 RETURNED TO CAPTIVITY FOR BEHAVIORAL REASONS INCLUDING ADULTS #60 & 70, 5 TO BE RELEASED AT A LATER DATE (#195,#232 IN BOISE), (#203,#224,#186,VC AZ). CURRENTLY 22 CONDORS IN WILD IN AZ INCLUDING #126,#196,#198, THAT HAVE BEEN RE-RELEASED.

MORTALITIES:

- 1 SHOT
- 1 POWER LINE COLLISION
- 1 ASPIRATION
- 2 LOST
- 3 EAGLE PREDATION
- 4 COYOTE PREDATION
- 3 LEAD POISONING
- 2 UNKNOWN
- 1 FOUND STARVED ON HACK BOX

- STATUS, DOING WELL IN WILD UNLESS OTHER STATUS NOTED
 - ** INDICATES YOUNG WERE PARENT REARED, ALL OTHERS PUPPET REARED
- DEAD