

Peer Review Plan: Proposed Revision to the Nonessential Experimental Population of the Mexican Wolf

About the Document

Title: Proposed Revision to the Nonessential Experimental Population of the Mexican Wolf

Estimated Peer Review Timeline: June 2013-September 2013

Draft Document Disseminated to Public: June 2013

Peer review process:

- We will choose three or more independent peer reviewers and invite individual comment letters from the peer reviewers.
- This scientific peer review will be held concurrently with the public review process of the proposed rule.
- We will provide instructions for peer reviewers explaining their role. Peer reviewers will be asked to comment specifically on the quality of any information and analyses used or relied on in the document; identify oversights, omissions, and inconsistencies; provide advice on reasonableness of judgments made from the scientific evidence; ensure that scientific uncertainties are clearly identified and characterized, and that potential implications of uncertainties for the technical conclusions drawn are clear; and provide advice on the overall strengths and limitations of the scientific data used in the document.
- Peer reviewers will be selected based on the following criteria:
 - Expertise in gray wolf ecology.
 - Independence: Reviewers will not be employed by the Service. Academic and consulting scientists should have sufficient independence from the Service, if the government supports their work.
 - Objectivity: Reviewers will be recognized by their peers as being objective, open-minded, and thoughtful. The reviewers should be comfortable sharing their knowledge and identifying their knowledge gaps.
 - Advocacy: Reviewers will not be known or recognized for an affiliation with an advocacy position regarding the protection of this species under the Endangered Species Act.
 - Conflict of Interest: Reviewers will not have any financial or other interest that conflicts with or that could impair their objectivity.
- We will ask peer reviewers to comment on:
 - Specific information on the amount and distribution of Mexican wolf habitat within the proposed nonessential population area
 - Overall suitability of the proposed 10(j) rule for the conservation, recovery, and management of the Mexican wolf, including our objective to establish a viable, self-sustaining population. Specifically:
 - Suitability of expanding the area for direct initial release of captive-raised Mexican wolves to include the entire Blue Range Wolf Recovery Area (BRWRA)

- Suitability of allowing Mexican wolves to disperse naturally from the Mexican Wolf Experimental Population Area (MWEPA) from the BRWRA
 - Suitability of moving the southern boundary of the MWEPA from Interstate Highway 10 to the United States – Mexico international border.
 - Suitability of expanding the BRWRA to include all or portions of the Sitgreaves and Tonto National Forests in Arizona, and Cibola National Forest in New Mexico
 - Suitability of revising the conditions that determine when we would issue a permit to allow livestock owners or their agents to take Mexican wolves in the act of killing, wounding, or biting livestock on public lands allotted for grazing from “6 breeding pairs” to “100 Mexican wolves” to be consistent with our population objective to establish a population of at least 100 wolves.
 - Suitability of our definition of due care related to trapping a Mexican wolf
 - Information on the effects of reintroducing Mexican wolves on public and private land management, economic activities such as agriculture, forestry, recreation, mining, oil and gas development, and residential development.
- Peer reviewers will be asked to submit their comments by the end of the comment period (September 11, 2013).
- Peer reviewers will be advised that their reviews, including their names and affiliations, will be included in the administrative record of our final determination regarding this proposal.
- We expect to make a final determination on this rule by December 2014, in coordination with our final determination to list the Mexican wolf as an endangered subspecies.

For more information, contact Sherry Barrett, Mexican Wolf Recovery Coordinator, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, New Mexico Ecological Services Field Office, at (505) 761-4748. Also see the Mexican Gray Wolf Recovery Program website, at <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/mexicanwolf>.