



United States Department of the Interior



FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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Memorandum

To: Mexican Wolf Recovery Coordinator, Southwest Region

Through: Assistant Regional Director, Ecological Services, Southwest Region

From: Regional Director, Southwest Region

Subject: Depredation Decision; Uncollared Wolves in the Fox Mountain Territory

Under the final 10(j) rule (50 CFR Part 17) of January 12, 1998, (Final Rule), the Interagency Management Plan of March 1998 (IMP), and the Final Environmental Impact Statement of November 1996, five confirmed depredation incidents by uncollared wolves in the Fox Mountain pack territory within the last 365 days triggers the need for management action, including whether individual wolves should be removed from the Blue Range Wolf Recovery Area (BRWRA). My decision is to remove by live-capture (trapping or helicopter) an uncollared wolf from the Fox Mountain pack territory in an effort to disrupt habitual livestock depredation behavior in the area.

Depredation History and Assignments:

The following depredation incidents involving an uncollared animal in the Fox Mountain territory have occurred within the last 365 days:

1. The U.S. Department of Agriculture Wildlife Services (Wildlife Services) investigated a depredation incident on April 24, 2013, of a dead calf within the Fox Mountain pack's territory. Wildlife Services confirmed the injuries to be wolf caused. An uncollared wolf was observed leaving the calf carcass indicating that an uncollared wolf was in the area. Following the depredation, the Interagency Field Team (IFT) attempted to determine if the depredation was caused by an uncollared wolf, or collared wolves associated with the Fox Mountain pack. The IFT determined that an uncollared wolf associated with the Fox Mountain pack was responsible for this depredation, based upon trail camera photos and telemetry evidence. The depredation incident was located 1.7 miles from the Fox Mountain den;

2. Wildlife Services investigated a depredation incident on January 23, 2014, of one dead cow within the Fox Mountain pack's territory. Wildlife Services confirmed the injuries to be wolf caused, and to have occurred within 24 to 36 hours prior to the investigation. Telemetry signals were not heard in the area and radio collar locations (inclusive of GPS locations) from the time period of the depredation placed the M1158, and F1212 greater than 5.5 miles away and moving further away from the depredation site. M1276 has dispersed from the Fox Mountain territory and has not been located in the area of any of these depredations. Subsequently, photos at the carcass identified one uncollared wolf utilizing the carcass. Utilizing the radio collar locations and photographic evidence, the IFT determined that an uncollared wolf or wolves were involved in the livestock depredation;
3. Wildlife Services investigated a depredation incident on February 1, 2014, of a dead cow within the Fox Mountain pack's territory. Wildlife Services confirmed the injuries to be wolf caused, and to have occurred approximately 7 days prior to the investigation. Telemetry signals were not heard in the area and radio collar locations from the time period of the depredation placed M1158 and F1212, 20-35 miles away from the depredation site during the likely timeframe of the depredation. Utilizing the data collected through radio collar locations, the IFT determined that an uncollared wolf or wolves were involved in the livestock depredation;
4. Wildlife Services investigated a depredation incident on February 1, 2014, of a dead cow within the Fox Mountain pack's territory. Wildlife Services confirmed the injuries to be wolf caused, and to have occurred approximately 3 days prior to the investigation. Telemetry signals were not heard in the area and radio collared locations from the time period of the depredation placed the M1158 and F1212, 7.5-10 miles away from the depredation site during the timeframe of the depredation on January 29, 2014. Utilizing the data collected through radio collar locations, the IFT determined that an uncollared wolf or wolves were involved in the livestock depredation;
5. Wildlife Services investigated a depredation incident on February 1, 2014, of a dead cow within the Fox Mountain pack's territory. Wildlife Services confirmed the injuries to be wolf caused, and to have occurred approximately 3-5 hours prior to the investigation. Telemetry signals were not heard in the area and radio collar locations from the time period of the depredation placed the M1158 and F1212, 5 miles away from the carcass during the timeframe of the depredation on February 1, 2014. In addition IFT personnel were in the area during the timeframe of the depredation and did not pick up a signal from M1158 or F1212. Utilizing the data collected through radio collar locations, the IFT determined that an uncollared wolf or wolves were involved in the livestock depredation.

Previous Management Measures:

Because these wolves are an uncollared animal(s), we are unsure of the effectiveness of previous efforts. The animal(s) that are associated with these depredations are loosely associated with the Fox Mountain pack, but not traveling with the adults at the present time. M1274 was removed from the Fox Mountain pack in November, 2013. A range rider has been contracted for the area of the depredations and will remain in the area until August 2014. For further information on previous

livestock depredations and management actions that have occurred regarding the Fox Mountain pack, please visit the Current Events Archive page of the Mexican Wolf Recovery Program website at http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/mexicanwolf/CEBRWRA_Ar.cfm.

Decision:

I extend my sincere thanks to all those involved in this analysis and in implementing field efforts to protect livestock and conserve wolves. I make my decision in full consideration of the following:

1. The latest series of depredations from January 23 to February 1, 2014, were not associated with collared animals of the Fox Mountain pack, but did occur within the territory of the Fox Mountain pack. Because the animal(s) involved in these depredations are in the Fox Mountain territory, these animal(s) are likely yearling wolves that were previously associated more closely with the alpha animals (M1158 and F1212), but are not currently traveling with the adults;
2. The 1998 IMP states “attempts should be made to keep alpha females, females with young, or females showing signs of lactation in the population, when feasible, in order to maintain the integrity of the breeding segment of the population. Also, during the later stages of recovery (five or more packs), when other adults are removed from the population, females with young (< September 1) may be released or not controlled. Decisions to relocate or remove a wolf or wolves from the wild population will be based on criteria such as the number of established packs in the recovery area; the sex, age, and reproductive status of the animal(s); and other circumstances relevant to the specific situation.”;
3. The 1998 IMP considers the severity of the depredations and the number of times the wolf (or wolves) have committed depredations. During the past 365 days, uncollared wolves in the Fox Mountain territory have been involved in a minimum of five livestock depredation incidents. These five depredation incidents show a pattern of livestock depredation by uncollared wolves within the Fox Mountain territory. In addition, the latest depredations have occurred on adult cows, at a time when wolf movements are not localized around a den and thus more difficult to manage using non-removal techniques. The IFT has obtained photographic evidence of an individual uncollared wolf at one of the recent depredation incidents. The three additional depredations incidents that were investigated on February 1, 2014, were consistent uncollared wolves being involved in the depredations. Our intent is to disrupt the habitual livestock depredation behavior of the uncollared wolves in the area, which are not breeding animal(s), and to reduce the likelihood of additional depredations by the Fox Mountain pack, which is a breeding component of the BRWRA wolf population, should this uncollared component rejoin the Fox Mountain pack.

Therefore, in consideration of these circumstances relevant to the situation and the efforts by the IFT in response to the depredations, and utilizing the flexibilities authorized in the 1998 IMP and Final Rule, my decision is to remove by live-capture (trapping or helicopter) one uncollared animal within the Fox Mountain territory. Radio-collared wolves in the Fox Mountain pack (M1158, F1212, and M1276 if he returns to the territory) will not be targeted for removal as they have not been involved in the latest series of depredation incidents.

Removal activities may occur on public and private lands within and adjacent to the BRWRA, provided that permission is granted by the landowner. This control order covers a 60-day period, effective on February 2, 2014. I will reconsider the measures in this control order if additional depredations occur.

The Mexican Wolf Recovery Coordinator permit (TE091551-8), issued April 4, 2013, under the provisions of 50 CFR 17.32, provides that authorized Permittees may take any Mexican wolf (*Canis lupus baileyi*) in the nonessential experimental population in a manner consistent with a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) approved management plan or species management measure adopted by the FWS pursuant to the provisions of 50 CFR 17.84(k)(3)(ix), as well as to conduct activities related directly to the conservation, protection, and recovery of reintroduced nonessential experimental populations of Mexican gray wolves within Arizona and New Mexico. Provision S.1. of the permit provides that "Specifically, authorization includes all actions related to: capture including, but not limited to, leg-hold traps, helicopter or ground darting and net-gunning, and captive capture methods..." In accordance with Provision K, should any mortality or physical injury occur to a Mexican wolf during permitted activities, all operations must immediately cease and you are required to contact the Mexican Wolf Recovery Program within 24 hours.

The Final Rule for the establishment of a nonessential experimental population of the Mexican Gray Wolf in Arizona and New Mexico (63 FR 1752) states in section 17.84(ix) that "Personnel authorized by the Service may take any Mexican wolf in the nonessential experimental population in a manner consistent with a Service-approved management plan, special management measure, or a valid permit issued by the Service under 17.32." Thus, employees of the Wildlife Services are authorized to trap Mexican wolves in accordance with this Decision Memorandum, and any incidental death or injury of wolves during this operation will be covered under the Mexican Wolf Recovery Coordinator permit (TE091551-8). Wildlife Services employees working under this permit will not be considered negligent when exercising due care. Due care is defined as Wildlife Services employees following all established policies and Standard Operating Procedures associated with Mexican wolf recovery.

Following the removal, I directed the IFT once again to increase their proactive management efforts: (1) initiate a diversionary food cache(s) to reduce the future potential of wolves depredating on livestock while localized during the denning and rendezvous seasons; (2) continue to employ a range rider to monitor livestock in the Fox Mountain pack territory; (3) continue to conduct intensive monitoring and hazing of the members of the Fox Mountain pack in order to reduce wolf-livestock conflict; and, (4) continue to coordinate with livestock owners and the Forest Service in the Fox Mountain territory to reduce wolf-livestock conflict.

I wish to thank the Mexican Wolf Livestock Coexistence Council for their commitment of financial compensation to the livestock producers for past, current, and any future depredation losses. I encourage the IFT to focus on addressing field efforts and needs associated with the continued monitoring of wolves in the Fox Mountain pack territory, with frequent reports conveyed to me through FWS contacts and normal agency channels.

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