



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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In Reply Refer To:
FWS/R2/ARD-ES/

December 14, 2011

Memorandum

To: Mexican Wolf Recovery Coordinator

From: Regional Director, Region 2 *Benji N. Jurgala*

Subject: Mexican Wolves – F1105 Permanent Removal Order (includes potential removal of additional canid animal)

Purpose: The decision represented in this memorandum is a permanent removal order for a single wolf, F1105. F1105 is presenting a threat to human life or safety, in addition to exhibiting continued nuisance behavior. This removal is authorized by the Final Rule for the Non-Essential, Experimental Population (63 FR 1752), pursuant to Section 10(j) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, (10(j) Rule) and is consistent with the 1998 Mexican Wolf Interagency Management Plan.

In addition, this memorandum authorizes permanent removal for any canid found traveling with F1105 that is equal to or smaller in size than F1105. F1105 produced a wolf-dog hybrid litter in the spring of 2011; four of the five pups in the litter were humanely euthanized. Recent observations of F1105 indicate she is traveling alone; however, any smaller canid documented traveling with her shall be removed as well, in accordance with the 10(j) Rule and 1998 Interagency Management Plan.

Background: Mexican wolves have been reintroduced into Arizona and New Mexico under the 10(j) Rule since 1998. In the 10(j) Rule, removal (including lethal take) is one of the tools available to resolve wolf related human life or safety and nuisance situations.

F1105 Recent History: Single wolf F1105 was translocated into the Gila National Forest on January 26, 2011, to increase genetic diversity of the wild wolf population and facilitate pair bonding with a wild male wolf. On February 6, 2011, USDA Wildlife Services' personnel investigated a depredation incident involving a cow and a calf, and confirmed the cause of death to be wolf related. Based on radio telemetry data collected near the depredation site, F1105 was determined to be the wolf involved in this depredation. This incident occurred in the Secondary Recovery Zone of the Blue Range Wolf Recovery Area (BRWRA). Following the February depredation incident, F1105 began traveling widely in the northern half of the Gila National

Forest. In late spring 2011, F1105 denned, and genetics confirmed the pups produced were wolf/dog hybrids. In late May 2011, four of the five pups were removed from the wild and humanely euthanized. Throughout the summer, the Interagency Field Team (IFT) worked to determine the status of the fifth pup. After June, the IFT was unable to document the survival of the fifth pup, and F1105 was observed several times traveling alone. During late summer 2011, F1105 traveled to the Beaverhead area of the Gila National Forest and has remained in that general area throughout fall 2011. On September 1, 2011, USDA Wildlife Services' personnel investigated a depredation of an injured calf, which was later euthanized due to injuries. Wildlife Services' personnel confirmed the injuries to be wolf caused. Based on radio telemetry data collected by IFT personnel during the days preceding and post-investigation, the depredation was assigned to F1105. This incident occurred in the secondary recovery zone of the BRWRA.

The IFT obtained information confirming F1105 was observed interacting with a domestic dog near a campsite on November 15, 2011. On November 18, 2011, IFT personnel began trapping efforts to remove F1105. This trapping effort continued through November 27, 2011. While conducting trapping efforts, the IFT documented F1105 exhibiting nuisance behavior in several campsites. Trapping efforts were temporarily suspended and F1105 moved several miles to the south; the IFT has continued intensive monitoring efforts of F1105.

On December 13, 2011, F1105 was observed within 25 yards of a rural residence and its occupants and interacting with domestic dogs. F1105 was subsequently located on the porch of the residence in the evening. Based on tracks, there was evidence that F1105 returned and was close to the residence during the night. The behavior of F1105 demonstrates a habituation to humans and human residences, which may present a human safety hazard.

Decision: The above described behavior demonstrates that F1105 is exhibiting a lack of fear of humans and human dwellings and constitutes a threat to human life or safety. Therefore, I have determined that in accordance with the 10(j) Rule and 1998 Interagency Management Plan, permanent removal of F1105 is warranted, and I direct the IFT to immediately initiate permanent removal actions. Removal includes trapping, darting, and aerial and ground lethal control actions. This permanent removal order is specific to F1105. Removal activities may occur on public lands within the BRWRA and on private lands therein, provided that permission is granted by the landowner. This permanent removal order covers a 45-day period, effective immediately.

In addition, I authorize the IFT to permanently remove any canid that may be traveling with F1105 that is equal to or smaller in size than F1105. This includes trapping, darting, and aerial and ground lethal control actions. Removal activities may occur on public lands within the BRWRA and on private lands therein, provided that permission is granted by the landowner. This permanent removal order covers a 45 day period, effective immediately.

Justification: The 10(j) Rule issued by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) on January 12, 1998 states (section 17.84(k)(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 section 17.32. This may include, but is not limited to, capture and translocation of wolves that... (6) are a nuisance...". Lethal methods of take may be used when reasonable attempts to capture wolves alive fail and when the Service determines that immediate removal of a particular wolf or wolves from the wild is necessary."

In addition, section 17.84(k)(xii) of the 10(j) Rule states:

"If the Service ... determines that a wolf presents a threat to human life or safety, the Service or authorized agency may kill it, capture and euthanize it, or place it in captivity."

Lastly, section 17.84(k)(x) of the 10(j) Rule states:

"As determined by the Service to be appropriate, the Service or any agent so authorized by the Service may capture, kill, subject to genetic testing, place in captivity, euthanize, or return to the wild (if found to be pure Mexican wolf) any feral wolf-like animal, feral wolf hybrid, or feral dog found within the Mexican Wolf Experimental Population Area that shows physical or behavioral evidence of hybridization with other canids, such as domestic dogs or coyotes..."

Therefore, in accordance with the 10(j) Rule and the 1998 Interagency Management Plan, I hereby authorize immediate permanent removal (including lethal take) of F1105 from the BRWRA. In addition, any canid traveling with F1105 that is equal to or smaller in size than F1105 may also be so removed.

Situations may arise where no attempt can be made to live capture the wolves in question. Examples include, but are not limited to, weather that prohibits trapping or aerial capture, a wide ranging wolf, human safety concerns, or chronic livestock loss. This is consistent with the Service's other gray wolf reintroduction program and provides flexibility when there are no reasonable recapture means available and when the situation requires immediate action.

Cc:
Assistant Regional Director, Ecological Services, Region 2