

On March 28, 2020, AM1398 was lethally removed in New Mexico. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has determined its removal efforts are completed; please see attached Decision Memorandum.



United States Department of the Interior



FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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March 24, 2020

Memorandum

To: Field Projects Coordinator, Mexican Wolf Recovery Program, Southwest Region

From: Mexican Wolf Recovery Coordinator, Southwest Region **BRADY**

Subject: Mexican Wolf Decision Memorandum, Prieto Pack **MCGEE**

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BRADY MCGEE
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Under the Revision to the Regulations for the Nonessential Experimental Population of the Mexican wolf (*Canis lupus baileyi*) (10(j) Rule), published on January 16, 2015 (80 FR 2512), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) or designated agency may intentionally harass, implement non-lethal control measures, translocate, place in captivity, or lethally control, problem wolves.

Twelve confirmed wolf-caused depredations of livestock occurred in a localized area in southwest New Mexico from September 22, 2019, to March 24, 2020 (see chronology section). These livestock were lawfully present on federal or private land. These depredations have been associated with the Prieto Pack. However, many depredations do not directly relate to locations of radio-collared wolves. Therefore, I direct the Interagency Field Team (IFT) to conduct the following management actions:

- Lethally control or capture via live trapping and remove AM1398 (failed collar) from the depredation area. Removal is authorized for one wolf at this time.
- Regardless of the results of the removal efforts, the IFT should continue to: (a) conduct intensive wolf monitoring, (b) continue hazing wolves following the completion of removal activities, and (c) continuing to coordinate with livestock producers in the depredation area.

The removal order is in effect from March 24, 2020, to April 15, 2020.

Current Conditions

The Prieto Pack and associated uncollared/failed collared wolves have engaged in a chronic series of depredation in late 2019 and early 2020. The Prieto Pack currently consists of a minimum of four animals (AM1398, AF1251, m1846, and an uncollared), and potentially other uncollared yearlings. AM1398 has a failed collar.

Chronology of Recent Events Prompting this Management Decision

09/22/2019: Depredation of a cow – confirmed wolf. Assigned to uncollared/failed collared wolves within the Prieto Pack territory.

11/26/2019: Depredation of a cow – confirmed wolf. Assigned to Prieto Pack excluding m1845 or m1846.

11/30/2019: Depredation of a calf – confirmed wolf. Assigned to uncollared/failed collared wolves within the Prieto Pack territory.

12/02/2019: Depredation of a calf – confirmed wolf. Assigned to uncollared/failed collared wolves within the Prieto Pack territory.

01/08/2020: Depredation of a cow – confirmed wolf. Assigned to the Prieto Pack.

02/29/2020: Depredation of a calf – confirmed wolf. Assigned to m1845 and uncollared/failed collared members of the Prieto Pack.

03/02/2020: Depredation of a cow – confirmed wolf. Assigned to m1845 and uncollared/failed collared members of the Prieto Pack.

3/04/2020: Depredation of a cow – confirmed wolf. Assigned to AF1251 and uncollared/failed collared members of the Prieto Pack.

03/13/2020: Depredation of cow – confirmed wolf. Assigned to the Prieto Pack.

03/20/2020: Depredation of cow – confirmed wolf. Assigned to the Prieto Pack.

03/21/2020: Depredation of a calf – confirmed wolf. Assigned to the Prieto Pack.

03/21/2020: Depredation of a calf – confirmed wolf. Assigned to the Prieto Pack.

Management Actions Conducted to Deter/Reduce Conflicts

The rancher/permittee and the IFT have taken a wide variety of preventative measures to avoid additional depredations, including:

The permittee provided has been actively hazing wolves and looking for depredations.

The IFT provided diversionary food caches and hazed consistently during November and December 2019 and continued actively monitoring and hazing the wolves in February 2020.

The permittee maintained a range rider in the area.

During the annual count and capture operations in February, the IFT unsuccessfully attempted to remove AM1398 from the Prieto Pack.

Although unrelated to the depredation management, m1845 was found dead on 03/21/2020. The cause of this mortality is under investigation.

Consistent with a previous removal order, an uncollared male associated with the Prieto Pack was lethally controlled on 03/23/2020.

Decision:

I extend my sincere thanks to all those involved in implementing field efforts to protect livestock and conserve wolves. I make my decision fully considering the following:

1. Evidence in the Service's files shows that Mexican wolves have injured or caused the death of the aforementioned domestic animals.
2. Given the rate and proximity of the depredations, the Service believes it is likely that Mexican wolves will continue to depredate on domestic animals in the near future without additional control measures.
3. We have considered evidence of the use of attractants or intentional feeding of Mexican wolves in the area. There is no evidence to suggest the intentional use of attractants or feeding to draw wolves into the area.
4. The basis of this removal order is livestock depredations, and thus, we have not considered evidence related to wolf/human interactions.
5. I am concerned with the numerous depredations in this area over a short period of time and the toll these depredations have caused the livestock producer. In addition, I am concerned with the additional depredations that have occurred in the area despite IFT efforts to mitigate the scenario.
6. It is the Service's intent to recover the Mexican wolf in a manner that reduces economic effects on the local livestock industry.

Therefore, my decision is to authorize U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) - Animal and Plant Health Service (APHIS) - Wildlife Services personnel to either lethally remove or capture AM1398 (failed collar). Removal is only authorized for one wolf at this time. AM1398 does not have a unique genetic profile relative to other extant animals in the wild population because AM1398 has siblings or closely related individuals that are breeding in the population.

Removal activities should cease when AM1398 is removed. I will evaluate the continuation of the authorization period based on the relevant information at the time (e.g., whether additional depredations have occurred, where cattle are located, and any additional information on the Prieto Pack).

In the meantime, I direct the IFT to continue or increase their proactive management efforts to reduce conflict with livestock by: (a) continuing to conduct intensive wolf monitoring, (b) continue hazing wolves following the completion of removal activities, and (c) continuing to coordinate with livestock producers in the depredation area.

The Mexican Wolf Recovery Coordinator permit (TE091551), issued May 6, 2015, under the provisions of 50 CFR 17.32, provides that Authorized Permittees may take any Mexican wolf in the non-essential experimental population in a manner consistent with a Service-approved management plan or species management measure the Service adopted pursuant to the provisions of 50 CFR 17.84, as well as to conduct activities related directly to Mexican wolf reintroduced, non-essential experimental population conservation, protection, and recovery in Arizona and New Mexico. The permit's provision S(1) 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: handling; possessing; administering health care; propagating; radio collaring, or other marking techniques; releasing, translocating, and cross-fostering; obtaining and preserving blood, tissue, fur, semen, ova, and other samples that are considered parts of Mexican wolves (scat is not considered a part of a Mexican wolf and can be collected without a permit); transporting between approved Mexican wolf captive management facilities in the United States and Mexico, to and from Veterinarian care facilities, and to approved release sites; purposeful lethal take (purposeful lethal take is limited to Mexican wolves within the MWEPA in Arizona and New Mexico); hazing via less-than-lethal projectiles; injurious harassment; research; and carrying out any other USFWS-approved husbandry practice, law enforcement, or management action for Mexican wolves."

The 2015 10(j) Rule states in section 17.84(7)(vii) that "The Service or a designated agency may take any Mexican wolf in the experimental population in a manner consistent with a Service-approved management plan, special management measure, biological opinion pursuant to section 7(a)(2) of the Act, section 6 of the Act as described in §17.31 for State game and fish agencies with authority to manage Mexican wolves, or a valid permit issued by the Service through §17.32." Thus, USDA-APHIS Wildlife Services employees are authorized to lethally control or trap Mexican wolves in accordance with this Decision Memorandum, and any incidental wolf death or injury during this operation will be covered under the Mexican Wolf Recovery Coordinator permit (TE091551). The USDA-APHIS Wildlife Services employees working under this permit will not be considered negligent when exercising appropriate methodology. Appropriate methodology is defined as USDA-APHIS Wildlife Services employees following all established policies and Standard Operating Procedures associated with Mexican wolf recovery.

I wish to thank the livestock producers in this area for their efforts to reduce Mexican wolf-livestock conflicts, and the Mexican Wolf/Livestock Council, the Arizona Livestock Loss Board, and the Farm Services Agency for their financial compensation to the livestock producers for past, current, and any future depredation losses. I encourage the IFT to focus on field efforts and needs associated with continued wolf monitoring in the area.

Cc: Assistant Regional Director, Ecological Services, Southwest Region