



United States Department of the Interior



FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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In Reply Refer To:
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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: Management Decision; Luna Pack

Under the Revision to the Regulations for the Nonessential Experimental Population of Mexican wolves (*Canis lupus baileyi*) (10(j) Rule), which was published on January 16, 2015, the Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) or designated agency may carry out intentional harassment, nonlethal control measures, translocation, placement in captivity, or lethal control of problem wolves.

The current Luna Pack is responsible for three depredation incidents from February 16 to March 11. I direct the Interagency Field Team (IFT) to remove wolf M1396 of the Luna Pack by live trapping and place him in captivity. Currently the Luna Pack is traveling widely throughout their territory, and therefore trapping success is expected to be low. Further, there is the possibility that AF1115 could be a non-target capture, and I am concerned that trapping efforts during certain stages of pregnancy may preclude AF1115 from successfully producing pups. To achieve the highest chance of success and emphasize the targeted capture of M1396 (and not AF1115), I direct the IFT to conduct trapping efforts to remove M1396 through April 1 if an opportunity presents itself (e.g. the Luna Pack localizes on a kill or other food source). After April 1 trapping efforts will cease until May 15 or AF1115 localizes at a den, whichever comes first. At that time, trapping to remove M1396 will be conducted for a 60-day period. If M1396 is removed from the population and AF1115 dens, the IFT will support her and her pups with supplemental food caches. Additionally, AM1155 (the former Luna male) continues to travel through the Luna territory, and may have opportunity to rejoin the pack if M1396 is removed. The IFT will also continue to implement proactive management efforts, including opportunistically hazing wolves away from cattle, managing diversionary food caches, working

with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and permittee to evaluate and implement alternatives, and monitoring wolf and cattle interactions closely. Any non-target wolves captured will be processed, collared, and released on site.

Current Conditions

M1396, previously of the Fox Mountain Pack, replaced AM1155 of the Luna Pack around February 11, 2016. Immediately after that pairing, depredations by the Luna Pack increased significantly from past patterns, beginning February 17 and continuing on February 19 and March 11. M1396 has a history of relatively regular depredations (see below). AF1115 has a history of infrequent depredations (see below). The recent increase in depredations suggests that the addition of M1396 into the Luna Pack has influenced a change in pack behavior towards increased cattle depredation. AF1115 is currently the most genetically unique known breeding female in the wild population, and maintaining AF1115 has significant genetic value to the population at this time. We are concerned that this pattern, left unmanaged, has the potential to negatively influence AF1115's behavior towards cattle depredations in the future and therefore her future genetic contribution to the population.

History

Previous to this year, Luna wolf AF1115 has been implicated in 2 depredations over the previous 6 years (2010-2015). Fox Mountain wolf M1396 has been implicated in 6 depredations in the previous 2 years (or during his lifespan 2014-2015).

AF1115 (Luna Pack) Depredation History

2015 - none
 2014 - calf
 2013 - none
 2012 - calf
 2011 - none
 2010 - none

AM1396 (previously Fox Mountain Pack) Depredation History

2/14/15 - adult cow
 3/3/15 - adult cow
 3/8/15 - adult cow
 3/30/15 - adult cow
 4/6/15 - adult cow
 10/13/15 - adult cow

Chronology of Recent Events Prompting this Management Decision

2/11 - Fox Mountain Pack male wolf M1396 replaces Luna male wolf AM1155 and begins traveling with AF1115 creating a new Luna pair (M1396 and AF1115).
 2/16 - cow killed by wolves; AF1115 present via GPS satellite locations (M1396 only has a VHF collar; therefore remote data are unavailable).
 2/19 - 1 cow confirmed killed by wolves (carcass discovered by IFT on 2/22 and reported to Wildlife Services). AF1115 present via GPS satellite locations (M1396 only has a VHF collar; therefore remote data are unavailable).

- 2/26 - Established 3 trail camera stations to monitor wolf activity around ranch and allotment.
- 2/28 - Established 2 food cache sites to divert wolf activity away from calving areas.
- 2/28 - Discussed options for managing cow carcasses to minimize attractant to area, and ranch manager looks into heavy equipment availability.
- 2/28 - Hazing attempted to move wolves away from clusters of higher density calving, but AF1115 and M1396 not in general vicinity.
- 3/3 - Restocked food caches, and documented that wolves have not yet been visiting food caches
- 3/3 - Hazing attempted to move wolves away from clusters of higher density calving, but AF1115 and M1396 have already left the area.
- 3/4 - Hazing attempted to move wolves away from clusters of higher density calving, but AF1115 and M1396 are not in the area.
- 3/5 - Hazing attempted to move AF1115 and M1396 further from clusters of higher density calving, but while Luna reacted negatively to hazing, they continued to stay near a dead cow and an elk kill.
- 3/6 - Hazing attempted to move wolves away from clusters of higher density calving, but decided against it since situation could favor pushing wolves closer to calving clusters.
- 3/10-3/11 - 1 cow confirmed killed by wolves along road.
- 3/14 - Discussed options for managing cow carcasses to minimize attractant to area.
- 3/14 - prepared to haze but wolves not in the area.
- 3/15 - into the future – hazing operations and diversionary feeding will continue into the future as practical.

Decision

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

1. I am concerned about the recent increase in the depredation rate by the Luna Pack that significantly departs from the previous six years.
2. M1396 (disperser from the Fox Mountain Pack), who has a known depredation history, has recently joined the Luna Pack displacing the breeding male. The Luna Pack began a depredation series killing three cattle within a 25-day period only five days after M1396 joined the pack.
3. During the last six years, and prior to M1396 joining the pack, the Luna Pack has had low levels of depredations, averaging < 1 depredation incident per year and ranging from 0 to 1 depredation per year.
4. We are concerned that this pattern, left unmanaged, has the potential to negatively influence AF1115's behavior towards cattle depredation in the future and therefore affect her future genetic contribution to the population.

Therefore, my decision is to remove M1396 from the wild and place him in captivity. The IFT is authorized to trap through April 1, and again for a 60-day period beginning May 15 or when it is determined that AF1115 whelps, whichever comes first.

Removal activities may occur on Federal and private lands within and adjacent to the Gila National Forest, provided that permission is granted by the private landowner or Tribe. In the

meantime, I direct the IFT to once again continue or increase their proactive management efforts in order to reduce conflict with livestock by: (1) Continuing to provide and maintain diversionary and supplemental food cache(s) while wolves are localized during the denning seasons (i.e. if M1396 is removed), (2) continuing to conduct intensive monitoring and hazing of the members of the Luna Pack, as necessary, (3) continuing to coordinate with livestock permittees and the U.S. Forest Service in the Luna Pack territory, and (4) continuing to collar additional wolves within the Luna Pack. If successful, M1396 will be removed and placed into captivity where the Service will evaluate his potential to contribute to recovery in the future.

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 (*Canis lupus baileyi*) in the nonessential experimental population in a manner consistent with a Service-approved management plan or species management measure adopted by the Service pursuant to the provisions of 50 CFR 17.84, 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: 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 10j 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, employees of the USDA-APHIS 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). 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 Mexican Wolf/Livestock Council and the Farm Services Administration 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 the continued monitoring of wolves in the area, with frequent reports conveyed to me through Service contacts and normal agency channels.