



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 *Susan Jacobsen*

From: Regional Director, Southwest Region *Benjamin M. Hagg*

Subject: Depredation Decision; Paradise pack-AM795 and AF1056

Under the final 10(j) rule (50 CFR Part 17) of January 12, 1998, (Final Rule), the Interagency Management Plan (IMP) of March 1998, and the Final Environmental Impact Statement of November 1996, two confirmed livestock depredation incidents in the secondary recovery zone within 1 year by a Mexican wolf triggers a decision on the appropriate continued management, including whether the wolf should remain in the wild or be removed from the Blue Range Wolf Recovery Area (BRWRA). In this case, members of the Paradise pack (AM795 and AF1056) have been directly involved in four depredation incidents within 1 year. My decision is to remove by live-trapping both AM795 and AF1056 from the Paradise pack in an effort to disrupt habitual livestock depredation by the pack.

Depredation History and Assignments

The following depredation incidents involving members of the Paradise pack have occurred within the last 365 days:

- 1) The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA-APHIS) Wildlife Services investigated a depredation incident on June 9, 2013, of a dead calf within the Paradise pack's territory. Wildlife Services confirmed the injuries to be wolf caused, and to have occurred around June 4, 2013. On June 4, 2013, Global Positioning System (GPS) location points confirmed that AF1056 was at the site of the depredation for 3 hours from 0500 to 0800. In addition, ground telemetry signals from June 4, 2013, also indicate AM795 was traveling with AF1056 in the area of the depredation. The Interagency Field Team (IFT) determined that AM795 and AF1056 were involved in this livestock depredation incident;

- 2) Wildlife Services investigated a depredation incident on July 31, 2013, of a dead calf within the Paradise pack's territory. Wildlife Services confirmed the injuries to be wolf caused, and to have occurred on July 30, 2013. Telemetry signals placed AM795 and AF1056 at the depredation site on July 30, 2013. The IFT determined that AM795 and AF1056 were involved in this livestock depredation incident;
- 3) Wildlife Services investigated a depredation incident on August 19, 2013, of a dead calf within the Paradise pack's territory. Wildlife Services confirmed the injuries to be wolf caused, and to have occurred on August 18, 2013. The calf was discovered by an IFT member on August 18, 2013. The GPS location points on August 18, 2013, place AF1056 within 0.62 miles of the depredation site. Flight locations and ground telemetry locations from August 19, 2013, located AM795 and AF1056 approximately 2.37 miles from the depredation site. The IFT determined that AM795 and AF1056 were involved in this livestock depredation incident;
- 4) Wildlife Services investigated a depredation involving a dead calf on August 27, 2013. Wildlife Services confirmed the injuries to be wolf caused and estimated the death to have occurred around August 22 or August 23. The GPS location points on AF1056 indicate this wolf was within 2.6 miles of the depredation site on August 21, 2013, and 3.39 miles to the northwest of the depredation site on August 22, 2013. On August 24, 2013, the Paradise pack was 10 miles to the east of the depredation site, suggesting the pack crossed through the area of the depredations on August 23, 2013, although points were not collected on August 23, 2013. The IFT determined that AM795 and AF1056 were involved in this depredation.

Three additional depredation incidents within the Paradise pack's territory have occurred within the last 365 days and are assigned to uncollared wolves. In each case, location data obtained by the IFT confirms AM795 and AF1056 were not present at the depredation site (e.g. located elsewhere). The IFT has initiated trapping to capture and collar any uncollared wolves in the area. The IFT was also instructed to hold AM795 and AF1056, if captured.

Previous Management Activities

In response to the depredation incidents involving wolves in the Paradise pack that occurred in 2013, the IFT, livestock owners, and private entities funded and implemented a series of proactive measures, including: diversionary food caches, range riders, hazing as well as the rotation of cattle to different pastures.

Following the confirmed depredation on June 9, 2013:

- 1) The IFT began intensive monitoring of the Paradise pack, and set out a road-killed elk in an area free of active cattle grazing to reduce the potential for future depredations;
- 2) Three range riders had been employed to monitor the livestock in three different allotments in Paradise territory. All three range riders were working by June 15, 2013; and

- 3) Members of the IFT along with one of the range riders monitored the Paradise pack extensively from July 19 to August 1, 2013.

Following the confirmed depredation on July 31, 2013:

The IFT continued hazing efforts on the Paradise pack until they moved onto the Fort Apache Indian Reservation (FAIR) on August 6, 2013. The wolves remained on FAIR until August 18, 2013, when they returned to the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest.

Following the confirmed depredation on August 19, 2013:

- 1) The IFT continued to intensively monitor and haze the Paradise pack;
- 2) The IFT continued to work with the affected permittee to minimize future potential wolf livestock conflicts; and
- 3) The IFT initiated a diversionary food cache to limit potential depredations and assist in the removal of an individual, if necessary.

Following the confirmed depredation on August 27, 2013:

The IFT initiated trapping to capture, collar, and release on site any uncollared wolves in the area of the August 27 depredations. The IFT was instructed to hold AM795 and AF1056, if captured.

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 The current Paradise pack consists of at least two wolves; adults AF1056 and AM795. This pair produced pups in 2009, 2010, and 2011, but did not produce pups in 2012 or 2013 and has, therefore, not recently contributed to achieving population goals associated with reproduction. It is unknown why these animals are not producing pups, but the advanced age of AM795 (11 years old) could be a factor;
- 2 The 1998 Interagency Management Plan considers the severity of the depredations and the number of times the wolf or wolves have committed depredations. Since forming as a pair in 2009, AM795 and AF1056 have been involved in six depredation incidents, four of which occurred during the past 70 days and are the subject of this memo. Prior to these recent incidents, AM795 was involved in one depredation incident in 2011 that AF1056 was not involved in, and one depredation incident in 2007 with the Paradise pack prior to AF1056 joining the pack. AF1056 was previously involved in two depredation incidents with the Lofler pack in 2007 and 2008, prior to pairing with AM795;

- 3 The Mexican wolf captive breeding program prioritizes breeding pairs to maintain or increase gene diversity while avoiding inbreeding. To help achieve long term goals, a frozen semen bank was established in 1990 and in 2005 to preserve female genes (ova and ovarian tissue). The preservation of these reproductive materials has already proven beneficial and may become even more so as assisted reproductive technologies continue to advance. AM795 is a pure McBride wolf and semen collected from this wolf could be used to maintain the McBride lineage in captivity, which may be beneficial in producing Mexican wolves with little or no inbreeding. While AM795 appears to no longer be producing pups in the wild, he is within the age range of successful collection in captivity.

Therefore, in consideration of these circumstances relevant to the situation, 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-trapping both AM795 and AF1056.

Removal activities may occur on public land 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 from the date stamped atop this memo. 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 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 (TE091551-8). The USDA-APHIS Wildlife Services employees working under this permit will not be considered negligent when exercising due care.

Due care, solely for the purposes of this memorandum, is defined as USDA-APHIS Wildlife Services employees following all established policies and Standard Operating Procedures associated with Mexican wolf recovery.

Following the removal of AM795 and AF1056, I direct the IFT to once again increase their proactive management efforts: 1) continue to search for sign of and trap for uncollared wolves adjacent to or within the Paradise pack's territory; 2) continue to employ a range rider to monitor livestock within the Paradise pack territory while livestock are present on the forest; 3) continue to conduct intensive monitoring and hazing of remaining members of the Paradise pack in order to reduce wolf-livestock conflict; 4) continue to coordinate with livestock owners and the Forest Service in the Paradise pack territory to reduce wolf-livestock conflict.

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