



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Post Office Box 1306
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87103



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Memorandum

To: Mexican Wolf Recovery Coordinator, Region 2

Through: Assistant Regional Director, Ecological Services, Region 2

From: **ACTING** Regional Director, Region 2 *Faye E. Nicholopoulos*

Subject: Depredation Decision; Mexican Wolves AM1158/AF1188
(Fox Mountain Pack)

Under the final 10(j) rule (50 CFR Part 17) of January 12, 1998, the Interagency Management Plan of March 1998, and the Final Environmental Impact Statement of November 1996, two confirmed livestock depredation incidents within one year occurring in the secondary recovery zone by Mexican wolf male AM1158 and female AF1188 trigger a decision on the appropriate continued management of the Fox Mountain Pack, including whether these wolves should remain in the wild or be removed from the Blue Range Wolf Recovery Area (BRWRA).

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Wildlife Services investigated a depredation incident on June 16, 2011, of an injured calf within the Fox Mountain pack's territory, approximately 0.05 mile from the pack's den site. The USDA Wildlife Services confirmed the injuries to be wolf caused, and to have occurred on June 15, 2011. On June 13, 2011, telemetry signals from M1158 and F1188 were located 4.2 miles from the site of the incident.

The USDA Wildlife Services investigated a depredation incident on July 6, 2011, of a dead calf found approximately 1.75 miles from the pack's rendezvous area and confirmed the injuries to be wolf caused. On July 5, 2011, F1188 and M1158 were located 3.0 miles from the site of the incident.

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 remain concerned about the overall status of the wolf population in the 10(j) area. Largely due to natural and unlawful mortalities in combination with legal removal actions, the Mexican gray wolf 10(j) population has not shown significant increases toward overall population goals. The population has remained relatively “flat,” oscillating between 40 and 60 wolves.
2. The current Fox Mountain Pack was formed in 2011 by wild born female wolf 1188 and wild born male wolf 1158. In 2011, the Fox Mountain pack exhibited denning behavior, and the Interagency Field Team (IFT) is currently working on documenting pup survival. This pack is important to achieving population goals. Disruption of pack dynamics, particularly as pups are reared, could jeopardize pup survival.
3. The Interagency Management Plan considers that wolves may not necessarily be determined to be problem wolves if depredations occur on public lands and in areas, or at times, that are critically important to wolves. One confirmed depredation investigated on June 17, 2011, occurred within 1 mile of an active den site and between March 1 and June 30, a time and location considered to be of critical importance to denning wolves. One confirmed depredation on July 6, 2011, occurred between June 1 and September 30, a time considered to be of critical importance to wolves during rendezvous season. The Interagency Management Plan specifies that under such conditions, control of wolves will only occur if all other options for resolution of the conflict have been exhausted.
4. The Interagency Management Plan considers the severity of the depredations and the number of times the wolf (or wolves) have committed depredations. M1158 was born in the wild in 2008, and F1188 was born in the wild in 2009. Prior to their natural formation in 2011 as the Fox Mountain Pack, neither wolf was documented in any depredation incidents. The two confirmed depredation incidents in this memorandum are the first and only confirmed depredation incidents involving either wolf. Therefore, this pack has demonstrated significant periods of time with no livestock depredations.
5. Other relevant circumstances exist in this situation. On May 29, 2011, the Wallow Fire started in the Blue Range Wolf Recovery Area and burned over a portion of the Fox Mountain home range. During the time frame of the depredations (mid June through early July) the Wallow Fire had moved within two miles of the Fox Mountain den area. Earlier in the season, IFT personnel and U.S. Forest Service range staff alerted the permittee to the presence and denning

behavior of the Fox Mountain Pack within their allotment and worked proactively towards modifying pasture rotations to reduce possible future wolf/livestock conflicts. However, because of the Wallow fire, the permittee had fewer options available and cattle were moved to within 0.5 mile of the pack's den site in early June. After the July 6, 2011 depredation incident, the IFT established a diversionary food cache to reduce the probability of future depredations.

6. It is important to retain wild-born wolves in the 10(j) wolf population. Allowing for the natural rearing of wild born pups from the Fox Mountain Pack into adulthood is beneficial to overall population survival.

Therefore, in consideration of these six points and utilizing the flexibilities authorized in the Interagency Management Plan, my decision is the Fox Mountain Pack, including adults and pups, shall remain in the wild at this time. As we go forward we will reevaluate their status, taking into consideration any additional depredations that may occur. In addition, Agency personnel are authorized to implement a full spectrum of integrated and innovative methods to deter depredation behavior, including ground hazing on foot or by horseback and aerial hazing, if deemed appropriate by IFT personnel. We remain committed to assisting ranchers and permittees with depredation problems caused by wolves.

I wish to thank the Mexican Wolf Interdiction Fund and the associated Stakeholder Council for their commitments toward financial compensation to the livestock grower for past, current, and any future depredation losses. I encourage the IFT to focus on addressing field efforts and needs associated with the Fox Mountain Pack's continued monitoring, with frequent reports conveyed to me through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service contacts and normal agency channels.