



News Release

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A Pair of Mexican Wolves Will Not be Released into the Apache National Forest at This Time

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has determined that a pair of wolves will not be released into the wild at this time. The pair, M1051 and F1126, was brought to an acclimation pen at the Corduroy Creek release site in Arizona on April 26, 2013. After spending over six weeks in the acclimation pen, the Service will transfer the pair back to a Service-approved pre-release facility and will seek opportunities for another release in the future.

Release sites are selected in unoccupied wolf habitat where prey is available and the potential for conflict with humans, livestock and other packs is reduced. The 15-year history of the Mexican wolf reintroduction project has shown that naïve wolves are most successful when released as pairs with pups. The female of this pair was pregnant at the time of transfer to the acclimation pen, however the pups born to F1126 did not survive.

While the acclimation area had been used in the past by the Rim pack of Mexican wolves, at the time this pair of wolves was transferred to the pen, it was believed that the Rim pack had vacated the area based on the lack of recent production by the pack, and the removal of the alpha female in January in order to harvest valuable genetic material. However, the Mexican Wolf Interagency Field Team (IFT) has confirmed that the Rim pack alpha male, AM1107, is traveling with a new female identified by the IFT as F1305. The Rim pair has been frequenting the acclimation pen and acting aggressively toward M1051 and F1126, suggesting they will defend their territory against them if the naïve pair were to be released.

“After a difficult deliberation during which I weighed the options and evaluated the likelihood that the new pair would succeed in the wild, I have decided not to conduct the release at this time,” said Dr. Benjamin Tuggle, the Service’s Southwest Regional Director. “Initial releases of naïve wolves are always a difficult task. The significant reduction in the pair’s chances for success emphasizes the need to expand the area within which releases of wolves can occur. The Service remains committed to improving this population through initial releases to increase genetic diversity of the

population. We will continue to work with partners to identify suitable release opportunities in the future to meet our management and recovery objectives.”

“After consideration of the challenges this pair would face if they were released, the Service made a decision that will give the pair a better chance at survival and afford these wolves an opportunity to contribute to the program in the future,” said Director Larry Voyles of the Arizona Game and Fish Department.

For further information please refer to the Decision Memo on the Mexican wolf web site, under Mexican Wolf News, at <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/mexicanwolf/>.

The Mexican wolf recovery program is a collaborative effort between the Service, Arizona Game and Fish Department, White Mountain Apache Tribe, USDA Forest Service and USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service – Wildlife Services, several participating counties in Arizona and the Eastern Arizona Counties Organization.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov. Connect with our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/usfws, follow our tweets at www.twitter.com/usfwshq, watch our YouTube Channel at <http://www.youtube.com/usfws> and download photos from our Flickr page at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/usfwshq>.

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The Arizona Game and Fish Department’s mission is to conserve Arizona’s diverse wildlife resources and manage for safe, compatible outdoor recreation opportunities for current and future generations.