

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Southwest Region
July 2013

Fact Sheet

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the *Proposed Revision to the Nonessential Experimental Population of the Mexican Wolf (Canis lupus baileyi) and the Implementation of a Management Plan*



NEPA Planning

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 requires Federal agencies to assess the environmental effects of their proposed actions prior to making decisions. The environmental impact assessment process conducted under NEPA is intended to ensure agencies make better informed decisions and that the public has a meaningful opportunity to participate in the process. More information regarding NEPA can be found in “*A Citizen’s Guide to NEPA: Having Your Voice Heard*” (http://ceq.hss.doe.gov/nepa/Citizens_Guide_Dec07.pdf). The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service’s NEPA goal is to make better environmental decisions in a cost and time-efficient manner to further our mission to conserve, protect, and enhance fish and wildlife and their habitats for the continued benefit of the American people. In accordance with this goal we are preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the *Proposed Revision to the Nonessential Experimental Population of the Mexican Wolf (Canis lupus baileyi) and the Implementation of a Management Plan*.

Public Involvement

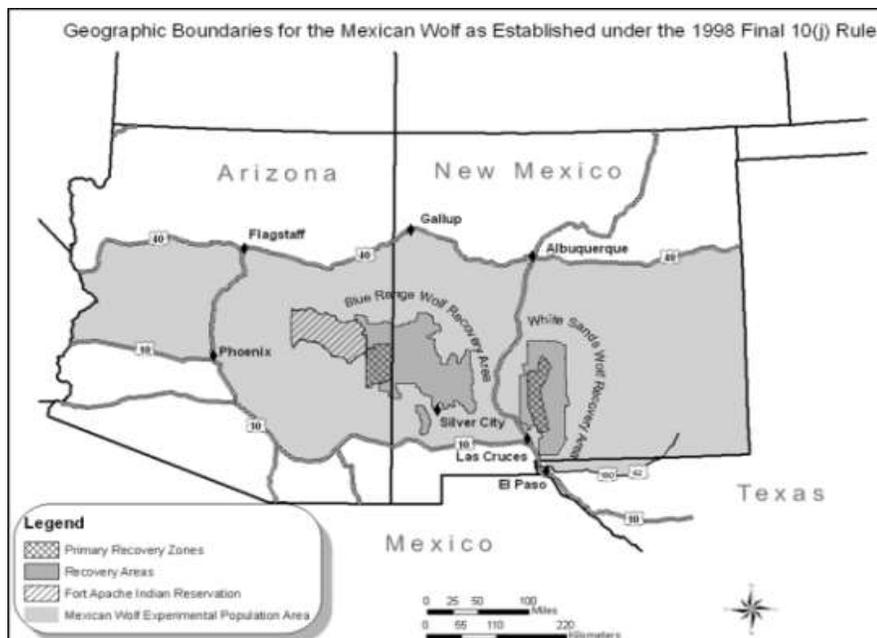
Public participation and input is an essential element of the NEPA process. The Service initiated the scoping process for this EIS by publishing a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an EIS for the *Proposed Amendment of the Rule Establishing a Nonessential Experimental Population of the Arizona and New Mexico Population of the Gray Wolf (“Mexican Gray Wolf”)* in the Federal Register on August 7, 2007. We held 12 public informational sessions in the communities and on the dates listed in our scoping report, which is available at: <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/mexicanwolf/documents.cfm>. We are continuing the scoping process by providing additional opportunities for the public to provide input to the development of a draft EIS. We will use the comments received during the 2007 public scoping, as well as comments received during this scoping period, in the preparation of our EIS. We will make a Draft EIS available for public review during which we will hold two public hearings and information sessions. We will use comments received on the Draft EIS in our development of a Final EIS. We will make the Final EIS available for public review before we make a decision.

Background



The Mexican wolf (a.k.a. Mexican gray wolf) (*Canis lupus baileyi*), a subspecies of gray wolf, historically occurred mostly in, or near, forested, mountainous terrain in northern Mexico, New Mexico, Arizona, and western Texas. The subspecies may have also ranged north into southern Utah and southern Colorado. Mexican wolf populations declined rapidly in the 20th century due to intensive eradication efforts. By the early 1970s, the Mexican wolf no longer existed in the wild in the southwestern United States.

Recovery efforts for the Mexican wolf began when it was listed as endangered in 1976. A bi-national captive-breeding program between the United States and Mexico was initiated in 1977 to save the Mexican wolf from extinction. Reintroduction efforts to reestablish the Mexican wolf in the wild are underway in both the United States and Mexico. We began reintroducing Mexican wolves into the Blue Range Wolf Recovery Area (BRWRA) within the Mexican Wolf Experimental Population Area (MWEPA) in 1998, under the authority of the Endangered Species Act and our final rule for the *Establishment of a Nonessential Experimental Population of the Mexican Gray Wolf in Arizona and New Mexico* (1998 Final Rule). The BRWRA is located wholly within the Apache and Gila National Forests in Arizona and New Mexico. The primary goal of the reintroduction effort is to restore a viable, self-sustaining population of at least 100 wild Mexican wolves within the BRWRA. This minimum population target was projected to be met by 2006. As of the December 31, 2012 annual population count there was a minimum of 75 wild Mexican wolves in the BRWRA.



Our Proposed Rule and our Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)

On June 13, 2013 we published a proposed rule [*Proposed Revision to the Nonessential Experimental Population of the Mexican Wolf* (78 FR 35719)] for the Mexican wolf nonessential experimental population in Arizona and New Mexico. The proposed rule, together with the proposed implementation of a management plan for Mexican wolves in areas of Arizona and New Mexico that are outside of the Mexican Wolf Experimental Population Area (MWEPA), forms the basis of the proposed action of our EIS.

Our Proposed Action and Alternatives

We have developed a range of alternatives, including the Proposed Action and No Action alternative, for our proposal to: (1) modify the geographic boundaries established for the Mexican wolf reintroduction in the 1998 Final Rule; (2) modify the management regulations established in the 1998 Final Rule which govern the release, translocation, natural dispersal, and take of Mexican wolves, and; (3) implement a management plan for Mexican wolves for those areas of Arizona and New Mexico that are outside of the Mexican Wolf Experimental Population Area (MWEPA). We do not yet know what the preferred alternative or the environmentally preferred alternative may be, and we recognize that there may be other reasonable alternatives that we should consider.

Our Purpose and Need for Action

The mission of the Service is to conserve and protect listed species and one of the two primary goals of our Endangered Species program is to achieve their recovery. The reintroduction of the Mexican wolf into the BRWRA was envisaged “as the first step toward recovery.” In accordance with this vision, we expect that the successful establishment of a viable, self-sustaining experimental population will be an important contribution to the recovery of the Mexican wolf in the wild.

The purpose of our action is to establish a viable, self-sustaining experimental population of Mexican wolves within the MWEPA and to effectively manage Mexican wolves throughout Arizona and New Mexico. Modification of the regulations established in our 1998 Final Rule is needed because under the current regulations we have not been able to achieve the necessary population growth that would ensure the resiliency and genetic health of the experimental population. Implementation of the Mexican Wolf Management Plan is needed because there is potential for Mexican wolves to inhabit areas in Arizona and New Mexico external to the MWEPA.

For More Information and to Provide Comments

We are currently seeking comments or suggestions from the public, governmental agencies, Tribes, scientific community, industry, or any other interested parties concerning the scope of the EIS, pertinent issues we should address, and alternatives that should be analyzed. Specifically, we are interested in comments on the preliminary draft EIS statement of our purpose and need, our proposed action and alternatives, and the alternatives that we have considered but do not intend to bring forward for further analysis in a draft EIS. We have developed a webpage for NEPA planning on the FWS Southwest Region Ecological Services Mexican Wolf Recovery Program website. In cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Southwest Region, we have also established information repositories at the Supervisor Offices for the National Forests throughout the project study area. For additional information or to access documents that we have made available for review with instructions on how to submit comments please visit our website:

http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/mexicanwolf/NEPA_713.cfm

Or visit the following locations:

New Mexico

Carson National Forest
208 Cruz Alta Road
Taos, NM 87571

Cibola National Forest
2113 Osuna Rd. NE
Albuquerque, NM 87113

Gila National Forest
3005 E. Camino del Bosque
Silver City, NM 88061-7863

Lincoln National Forest
3463 Los Palomas Blvd.
Alamogordo, NM 88310

Santa Fe National Forest
11 Forest Lane
Santa Fe, NM 87508

Arizona

Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests
30 South Chiricahua St.
P.O. Box 640
Springerville, AZ 85938

Coconino National Forest
1824 S. Thompson Street
Flagstaff, AZ 86001

Coronado National Forest
Federal Building
300 West Congress
Tucson, AZ 85701

Kaibab National Forest
800 S.6th Street
Williams, AZ 86046

Prescott National Forest
344 South Cortez Street
Prescott, AZ 86303-4398

Tonto National Forest
2324 East McDowell Road
Phoenix, AZ 85006

Photographs courtesy of: the Endangered Wolf Center, the Mexican Wolf Interagency Field Team, and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

