



News Release

Public Affairs Office
PO Box 1306
Albuquerque, NM 87103
505/248-6911
505/248-6915 (Fax)

Southwest Region (Arizona • New Mexico • Oklahoma • Texas) www.fws.gov/southwest/

For Release: July 24, 2014

Contacts: Jeff Humphrey, (602) 242-0210, Jeff_Humphrey@fws.gov

Service Updates Proposed Rule Changes for Mexican Wolf Reintroduction, Releases Draft Evaluation of Impacts *-Seeks public comment and announces hearings-*

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), has updated its June 2013 [proposed revisions](#) to the existing nonessential experimental population designation of the Mexican wolf (*Canis lupus baileyi*) under the Endangered Species Act to provide additional clarity and flexibility to effectively manage the experimental population in a working landscape. The Service also announces the availability of a draft environmental impact statement (dEIS) on the proposed revisions. A 60-day public comment period is reopening (through Sept. 23) to provide all interested parties an opportunity to comment on the proposed rule and dEIS. Public information meetings and hearings have also been scheduled.

Since 1998, the Service and cooperating state, federal and tribal agencies have reintroduced and managed Mexican wolves under a rule designating the U.S. population as “Nonessential, Experimental.” This designation provides for increased management flexibility for populations that are reintroduced into a designated experimental area within their historical range.

“The Fish and Wildlife Service is seeking substantive comments on this proposed rule which will allow for greater management flexibility for this 10J population,” said the Service’s Southwest Regional Director Benjamin Tuggle. “Over the last 16 years, we have learned a great deal about managing this wild population of Mexican Wolves. These proposed revisions to the original 10J rule reflect some of the necessary management changes as we move forward with wolf reintroductions, while being responsive to the diverse needs of local communities.”

Specifically, the 1998 regulations limit managers’ ability to achieve the necessary population growth, distribution and recruitment that would improve genetic variation within the experimental population and contribute to a self-sustaining population of Mexican wolves on the landscape.

The proposed revisions therefore include:

- expanding the areas within which Mexican wolves can be released and disperse,
- extending the Mexican Wolf Experimental Population Area's (MWEPA) southern boundary from I-40 to the U.S.-Mexico border in Arizona and New Mexico, and
- clarifying definitions in the rule, including when wolves can be taken while attacking livestock and non-feral dogs, or as needed to manage wild ungulate populations (elk, deer, etc.).

The regulatory flexibility provided by these proposed revisions to the 1998 rule would allow for management actions within the MWEPA that further the conservation of the Mexican wolf while being responsive to the needs of local communities in cases of problem wolf behavior.

The proposed rule revisions have been informed by and are being evaluated through the development of a comprehensive [dEIS](#). The dEIS evaluates impacts of four alternative revisions to the rule (including the 1998 rule) on land use, biological resources (including wild ungulate prey species), economic activities (including ranching, hunting and tourism), human health and safety, and environmental justice.

Written comments on this proposed rule and the draft environmental impact statement can be submitted by one of the following methods:

(1) *Electronically*: Go to the Federal eRulemaking Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov>. Search for FWS-R2-ES-2013-0056, which is the docket number for this rulemaking. You may submit a comment by clicking on "Comment Now!" Please ensure that you have found the correct rulemaking before submitting your comment.

(2) *By hard copy*: Public Comments Processing, Attn: FWS-R2-ES-2013-0056; Division of Policy and Directives Management; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Headquarters, MS: BPHC, 5275 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church, VA 22041-3803.

Previously submitted comments on the proposed rule revision and dEIS need not be resubmitted, as they will be fully considered in preparation of the final rule and EIS.

Two public informational sessions and two public hearings on this proposed rule and dEIS are scheduled. An informational session will be held from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., followed by a public hearing for the recording of oral comments from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. as follows:

- Aug. 11, 2014 at Hon-Dah Conference Center, 777 Highway 260, Pinetop, Ariz. (3 miles outside of Pinetop at the Junction of Hwy 260 and Hwy 73)
- Aug. 13, 2014 at the Civic Center, 400 W. Fourth Street, Truth or Consequences, N.M.

Registration to present oral comments on the proposed rule and dEIS at the public hearings will begin at the start of each informational session. With the exception of federal elected officials, all oral comment registration cards will be pooled and drawn at random.

The comment period will remain open through September 23, 2014.

To learn more about the proposed rule revision, dEIS, and details of the public hearings, and for links to submit comments to the record, visit <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/mexicanwolf/>.

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>.

-FWS-

<http://www.fws.gov/southwest>

Note: Dr. Tuggle's name and quote were corrected/revised (9/11/14) from the originally released version.