Proposed Revisions to the Nonessential Experimental Population of the Mexican Wolf

Public Hearing on the Proposed Rule and the Draft Environmental Impact Statement

August 2014
Background on the Mexican Wolf Reintroduction

- **1970’s** – Considered extirpated in the wild in the U.S. Bi-national captive breeding program initiated between Mexico and U.S. facilities with 7 Mexican wolves.

- **1976** – Protected as an endangered species by the Endangered Species Act.

- **1982** – Mexican Wolf Recovery Plan finalized.

2011 – First releases in Mexico as a part of Mexico’s recovery program.
1998 Final Rule

Geographic Boundaries for the Mexican Wolf as Established under the 1998 Final 10(j) Rule

Legend:
- Primary Recovery Zones
- Recovery Areas
- Fort Apache Indian Reservation
- Mexican Wolf Experimental Population Area
Status of the Reintroduction Project Today

- Population in Arizona and New Mexico has a minimum of 83 wolves, 14 packs
- Partnership effort
- Many lessons learned
Scoping and Process

- 2007 scoping initiated, 12 public meetings
- 2013 - Proposed rule in the Federal Register
  - Notice of Intent to prepare an EIS.
  - Held two public hearings on the proposed rule (Albuquerque, NM; Pinetop, AZ).
- Draft EIS: 27 Cooperating agencies, tribal participation
- Received over 7,000 comments; informed revised proposed rule and Draft EIS.
- 2014 - Revised Proposed Rule, Draft EIS
The purpose of our proposed action is to further the conservation of the Mexican wolf by improving the effectiveness of the Reintroduction Project in managing the experimental population.
Purpose and Need

We intend to do this by:

– modifying the geographic boundaries in which Mexican wolves are managed south of Interstate-40 in Arizona and New Mexico;

– modifying the management regulations that govern the initial release, translocation, removal and take of Mexican wolves, and;

– issuing a section 10(a)(1)(A) permit
Issues Outside the Scope of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement

- Recovery/Recovery planning
- Essential/Non-essential status
Alternative One (Proposed Action)
Modified provisions for take of Mexican wolves

• On Federal land:
  – May issue permit for the take (including kill or injure) of a Mexican wolf that is in the act of biting, wounding or killing livestock.

• On Non-Federal land (state, tribal, private):
  – In the act of biting or killing domestic animals (livestock and non-feral dogs);
  – May issue a permit pursuant to a removal action.

• Unacceptable impacts of Mexican wolf predation on wild native ungulate herds.
Clarification of Other Take Provisions

- Take in defense of human life
- Opportunistic harassment
- Intentional harassment (permit)
Alternative Two
Alternative Three
No Action Alternative
Draft EIS Assessment of Impacts

We have assessed the effects of our proposed action and alternatives, including “No Action”, on:

- Land Use
- Biological Resources (elk and deer, other species)
- Economic Activity (livestock production, hunting, tourism)
- Health and Human Safety
- Environmental Justice
- Cumulative Impacts
Draft EIS Assessment of Impacts

- Less than significant direct adverse effects in proposed management Zones 1 and 2 on:
  - Native wild prey species, specifically elk
  - Ranching/Livestock Production
- No disproportionately high and adverse impacts to any population groups of concern.
- No significant direct or indirect effects on:
  - Vegetation
  - Other predator and non-ungulate wild prey species
  - Tourism
  - Land Use
  - Human Health/Public Safety
Public Review and Comment on Proposed Rule and Draft Environmental Impact Statement

• Draft Environmental Impact Statement and the proposed 10(j) rule public review and comment period closes September 23, 2014.

• Written and oral comments submitted today will be part of the record.

• We will use comments received on the Draft EIS in our development of a Final EIS.
Written comments can be submitted by one of the following methods:


(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.
Project Timeline

10(j) proposed rule
June 2013

NOI to prepare an EIS
August 2013

NOA Draft EIS and Revised proposed 10(j) rule
July 2014

NOA Final EIS
December 2014

Record of Decision
January 2015

Final 10(j) Rule
January 2015
Summary