



Mexican Wolf Recovery Program Quarterly Update

Fourth Quarter, 2020 (October, November and December)

The following is a summary of Mexican Wolf Recovery Program activities in the Mexican Wolf Experimental Population Area (MWEPA) in Arizona, including the Fort Apache Indian Reservation (FAIR), San Carlos Apache Reservation (SCAR), and New Mexico. Additional Program information can be obtained by calling (928) 339-4329 or toll free at (888) 459-9653, or by visiting the Arizona Game and Fish Department website at azgfd.gov/wolf or by visiting the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service website at fws.gov/southwest/es/mexicanwolf. For information on the FAIR, call (928) 338-4385 ext. 226 or visit wmatoutdoor.org. Past updates may be viewed at these websites. Interested parties may [sign up](#) to receive this update electronically by visiting azgfd.com and clicking on the E-news Signup tab on the top left corner of the webpage. This update is a public document and information in it can be used for any purpose. The Mexican Wolf Recovery Program is a multi-agency cooperative effort among the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AZGFD), New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (NMDGF), USDA Forest Service (USFS), USDA-Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Wildlife Services (USDA-APHIS WS), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), White Mountain Apache Tribe (WMAT), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and the U.S. National Park Service (NPS).

To view semi-monthly wolf location information please visit <http://arcg.is/0iGSGH>.

Please report any wolf sightings or suspected livestock depredations to: the Alpine wolf office (928) 339-4329, Pinetop wolf office (928) 532-2391 or toll free at (888) 459-9653. For sightings or suspected depredations on the FAIR, please call the WMAT wolf office in Whiteriver at (928) 338-4385 ext. 226. To report incidents of take or harassment of wolves, please call the AZGFD 24-hour dispatch (Operation Game Thief) at (800) 352-0700.

Overall Mexican Wolf Recovery Program Quarterly Updates

In an effort to provide more concise information and to make this report more useful, beginning in October 2020, the report format was changed to provide information on a quarterly basis. This is the fourth quarter report for 2020.

Between October and December 2020, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service held several Cooperating Agency meetings and one Tribal Working Group meeting via video and teleconference to discuss working draft portions of the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for the court-ordered 10j Rule revision.

Numbering System: Mexican wolves are given an identification number recorded in an official studbook that tracks their history. Capital letters (M = Male, F = Female) preceding the number indicate adult animals 24 months or older. Lower case letters (m = male, f = female) are used to indicate wolves younger than 24 months. A lowercase letter “p” preceding the number is used to indicate a wolf pup born in the most recent spring. The capital letter “A” preceding the letter and number indicates breeding wolves.

Definitions: A “wolf pack” is defined as two or more wolves that maintain an established territory. In the event that one of the two alpha (dominant) wolves dies, the remaining alpha wolf, regardless of pack size, retains the pack status. The packs referenced in this update contain at least one wolf with a radio telemetry collar attached to it. The Interagency Field Team (IFT) recognizes that wolves without radio telemetry collars may also form packs. If the IFT confirms that wolves are associating with each other and are resident within the same home range, they will be referenced as a pack.

CURRENT POPULATION STATUS

The end of year census for 2019 was a minimum of 163 Mexican wolves in the wild (76 in AZ and 87 in NM). This was a 24% increase in the population from a minimum of 131 wolves counted at the end of 2018. The end of year census for 2020 is currently underway. Results of the 2020 census are anticipated to be available in March 2021. Annual surveys are conducted in the winter as this is when the population experiences the least amount of natural fluctuation (i.e. in the spring the population increases dramatically with the birth of new pups and declines throughout the summer and fall as pup mortality generally occurs in this period). Thus, the IFT summarizes the total number of wolves in the winter at a fairly static or consistent time of year. Counting the population at the end of each year allows for comparable year-to-year trends at a time of year when the Mexican wolf population is most stable.

WOLF PACK UPDATES:

For each documented wolf pack in the table below, wolves fitted with functioning collars at the end of the quarter are listed by studbook number. Studbook numbers of wolves without collars or with non-functioning collars are not listed in the pack updates. Not all wolves in the population are collared or have assigned studbook numbers. Captures, mortalities, removals, and food caching are listed in the corresponding column for the given time period. The primary reason for food caching will be noted with “S” for supplemental and “D” for diversionary; the reason for a food cache may change over time. If a wolf dies, becomes fate unknown or is removed in the current time period, its studbook number will be removed from the pack column in the following time period. After three months of consistent dispersal behavior away from pack territory, a dispersing wolf is no longer considered a member of its originating pack and will be added to a new row as a single wolf or member of a different pack. Packs raising pups will be

listed as “Yes” in the “Raising pups” column. Any fields that require further comment will be annotated with “*” and further comments are listed in the “Comments” column.

ARIZONA:

Wolf Pack Collared Wolves	Captures	Mortalities	Removals	Food cache	Raising pups (April – Sept)	Cross foster (April/May)	*Comments
Bear Canyon F1823	0	0	0	0	No	No	
Castle Rock F1686	0	0	0	0	Yes	Yes	
Cerro Trigo M2555, mp2560	0	0	0	D	Yes	No	mp2560 showed dispersal movements in AZ during the quarter.
Eagle Creek M1477	0	0	0	0	No	No	
Elk Horn AF1294, fp1869	0	1*	0	0	Yes	Yes	fp1867 was found dead in AZ, the incident is under investigation. (*See additional information below on mortalities documented in 2020)
Hoodoo AM1290, AF1333, F1830, m1789, f1938, f1936, fp1890, fp1887, mp1888	0	0	0	0	Yes	Yes	The Hoodoo pack was hazed away from Nutrioso in December. f1936 dispersed from the pack during the quarter, was caught in a private trap in NM, provided care by a veterinarian and released in the area of capture.
Noble Mountain AM1571	0	1*	0	0	No	No	AF1697 was found dead in AZ, the incident is under investigation.
Panther Creek AM1382, AF1683, f1939	1*	0	0	0	Yes	No	f1939 was captured and recollared during this quarter. f1939 has been documented making dispersal movements in AZ.
Prime Canyon f1791, f1916, f1918, f1919, f1920, m1921	0	0	0	S	Yes	Yes	AM1471’s and AF1488’s collars have both failed. f1918 and f1919 showed dispersal behavior.
Rocky Prairie AM1383, AF1489, fp2534, fp2564	3*	2*	0	S	Yes	Yes	fp2534, mp2533 and fp2564 were captured, collared and released. An uncollared pup and mp2533 were found dead in AZ. The incidents are under investigation, but were not related to the capture.
Rose M1704, F1828	0	0	0	0	No	No	
Saffel f1844, m1852, m1854	0	1*	1*	D	No	No	AF1567 was found dead in AZ, the incident is under investigation. f1851 was removed during the quarter

							due to continued depredations by the Saffel Pack. f1851 died while receiving veterinary treatment. f1844 has been documented making wide dispersal movements in AZ and in NM. m1852 and m1854 showed dispersal behavior in AZ.
Sierra Blanca AF1550	0	0	0	0	No	No	

FAIR:

Wolf Pack Collared Wolves	Captures	Mortalities	Removals	Food Cache	Raising pups (April – Sept)	Cross foster (April/May)	*Comments
Baldy AM1347	0	0	0	0	No	No	F1560's collar has failed.
Maverick	0	1*	0	0	No	No	AF1291 was found dead in AZ, the incident is under investigation.
Poker AM1582	0	0	0	0	No	No	
Tsay-O-Ah M1559, AF1283	0	0	0	0	No	No	
Tu dil hil AM1338, AF1679, f1841, m2563	1*	1*	0	0	Yes	No	m2563 was captured, collared and released. m2563 has been documented making wide dispersal movements in AZ. An uncollared pup was found dead in the Tu dil hil territory during the quarter. The incident is under investigation.

NEW MEXICO:

Wolf Pack Collared Wolves	Captures	Mortalities	Removals	Food Cache	Raising pups (April – Sept)	Cross foster (April/May)	*Comments
Cimmaron Mesa AF1705	1*	0	0	0	No	No	F1705 was captured by a private trapper, provided veterinary care, recollared and released in the area of capture
Colibri AM1555, M1856	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	
Dark Canyon AM1354, AF1456, m1855, m2561, mp2505, mp2520	4*	0	0	0	Yes	Yes	m1855, m2561, mp2505, and mp2520 were captured and collared or recollared during this quarter. mp2505 is a cross-foster pup from 2020.
Frieborn AF1443	0	2*	0	0	Yes	No	f1924 and previously fate unknown wolf M1474 (went missing last year) of the Frieborn pack were

							found dead in NM during this quarter. Both incidents are under investigation.
Gatlin Canyon M1838	0	0	0	0	No	No	
Iron Creek AM1240, AF1278, F1721, M1710, F1712, mp2545, mp2549	2*	0	0	D	Yes	Yes	mp2545 and mp2549 were captured and collared during this quarter. mp2545 is a cross-foster pup from 2020.
Lava AM1285, AF1405	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	
Leon AM1824, AF1578	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	
Leopold AF1346	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	AM1293 has not been documented this quarter and is now categorized as fate unknown.
Luna AM1158	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	
Mangas AM1296, AF1439, M1832, M1842, M1859	0	0	0	D	Yes	No	
Owl Canyon m1790, f1701	0	0	0	0	No	No	
Pitchfork Canyon F1853, mp2559	1*	0	0	D	Yes	No	F1853 was captured and released, but not recollared during this quarter.
Point of Rocks M1717	0	0	0	0	No	No	
San Mateo AF1399, m1950, m1953, fp2503	0	0	0	0	Yes	Yes	
Shepherders Baseball Park (SBP) AF1553, m2557, fp2558	0	0	0	D	Yes	No	
Squirrel Springs AF1788, m1857	0	1*	0	0	Yes	No	AM1349 was found dead in NM, the incident is currently under investigation.
Whiskey Creek M1681, mp2556	0	0	0	0	Yes	No	
Whitewater Canyon F1684	0	0	0	0	No	No	
Single M1693	0	0	0	0	No	No	
Single F1847	0	0	0	0	No	No	
Single M1831	0	0	0	0	No	No	

Single m1946	0	0	0	0	No	No	
Single F1837	0	0	0	0	No	No	
Single M1875	0	0	0	0	No	No	

MORTALITIES

Ten Mexican wolf mortalities were documented in the current quarter, which brings the total number of documented mortalities in 2020 to 29. This is an estimated (based on preliminary data of the proportion of the population that died) mortality rate of 17.7 % of the population and is comparable to the estimated mortality rate for 2019, which was 16%. With this mortality rate in 2019, the population grew at the highest rate in the last 10 years; a growth rate of about 24%.

In 2020 there were a variety of causes of mortality including natural mortalities, road kills, and illegal shootings. Of the 29 mortalities, 8 were pups, a segment of the population that normally experiences high mortality during the year. Six of the mortalities were juveniles and 15 were adults. The impact of these mortalities is uncertain but based on the 2017 Population Viability Assessment (PVA) completed for recovery planning purposes, continued population growth is expected.

For the PVA, actual mortality rates (based on radio collar data) for Mexican wolves estimated from wild population data was 28.2% for pups (0-1 years), 32.7% for juveniles (1-2 years) and 18.9% for adults (2+ years). The PVA simulated scenarios using adult mortality rate of 18.9%, plus 21.9%, 24.9%, 27.9%, and 30.9%. As long as adult mortality rate (human caused + natural) stayed below 24.9%, which appears to be the case in 2020, the probability of extinction stayed below 10% and there is minimal influence on the population expansion. Adult mortality rates are most important demographic parameter affecting population expansion and the 2020 estimated 9% adult mortality rate should be low enough to avoid population declines, as demonstrated by the PVA.

INCIDENTS

The following are investigations of livestock depredations conducted by Wildlife Services during the fourth quarter that were determined to be caused by wolves. Investigations of dead and injured livestock conducted by Wildlife Services during the time period that were determined to be from causes other than wolves (i.e. vehicle strike, illness, coyote predation, bear predation, or unknown cause) are not listed in this quarterly update.

DEPREDATIONS

	Confirmed Wolf (Current Quarter)		Probable Wolf (Current Quarter)	
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	Killed or died from injuries	Injured	Total Confirmed Wolf killed or died from injuries (2020)	Killed or died from injuries	Injured	Total Probable Wolf by State (2020)
Arizona	8	0	53	1	0	3
New Mexico	3 (8 additional investigations are pending determination from this quarter)	0	98	0	0	1
2020 Total						3

White cells contain totals for the given time period, grey cells contain totals for the year.

PUBLIC INCIDENTS

On November 19, the IFT took a delayed report of an incident that occurred in mid-October south of Hannagan Meadow. The reporting party stated they obtained video of a collared wolf in their camp on national forest and stated they had heard howling from their camp the night before. The video showed a collared wolf came into the camp on the night of October 16 for about 10 seconds, then it left and did not return. The wolf did not get into food or other items in camp and was not captured on video on following nights. GPS collar locations showed the Panther Creek pack was in the area of the camp when the incident occurred. Due to delayed reporting, the IFT did not conduct a site visit. There have been no other incidents reported in this area following this incident.

On December 15, the IFT took a report of a resident in Lakeside, AZ, who reported seeing wolves on multiple occasions near their residence. The IFT investigated and determined the animals were not wolves.

PROACTIVE MANAGEMENT

State	Hazing efforts (separate attempts to haze wolves)	Hazing events (successful hazing of a wolf)	Diversionsary food caches*	Carcasses removed	Proactive Equipment Issued (RAG boxes, fox lights, fladry)
Arizona	117	21	4	2	0
New Mexico	50	12	5	13	2

All cells contain totals for the given time period.

*Includes supplemental food caches, as these also served as diversionary food caches this year.

PROGRAM PERSONNEL

There are no personnel updates for the fourth quarter.

REWARDS OFFERED

The USFWS is offering a reward of up to \$10,000; the AZGFD Operation Game Thief is offering a reward of up to \$1,000; and the NMDGF is offering a reward of up to \$1,000 for information leading to the conviction of the individual(s) responsible for the shooting deaths of Mexican wolves. A variety of non-governmental organizations and private individuals have pledged additional funding for a total reward amount of up to \$37,000, depending on the information provided.

Individuals with information they believe may be helpful are urged to call one of the following agencies: USFWS special agents in Mesa, Arizona, at (480) 967-7900, in Alpine, Arizona, at (928) 339-4232, or in Albuquerque, New Mexico, at (505) 346-7828; the WMAT at (928) 338-1023 or (928) 338-4385; AZGFD Operation Game Thief at (800) 352-0700; or NMDGF Operation Game Thief at (800) 432-4263. Killing a Mexican wolf is a violation of state law and the Federal Endangered Species Act and can result in criminal penalties of up to \$50,000, and/or not more than one year in jail, and/or a civil penalty of up to \$25,000.