Reintroduction and Conservation of the Mexican Gray Wolf

WHEREAS, since its inception, the American Society of Mammalogists has opposed those predator-control programs that are not based on sound scientific research; and,

WHEREAS, the U.S. Endangered Species Act mandates formal recovery plans for all listed taxa using the best available science; and,

WHEREAS, the Mexican gray wolf (*Canis lupus baileyi*) has been listed as federally endangered since 1976 with a formal recovery plan initiated in 1982 that mandates its reintroduction to the wild (Parsons 1998); and,

WHEREAS, the Mexican gray wolf is one of the most imperiled mammals in North America because of the concerted predator-control program formerly conducted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and its predecessor agency, the Bureau of Biological Survey (Robinson 2005); and,

WHEREAS, the Mexican gray wolf is native to Mexico and the adjoining borderlands in the United States (Nelson and Goldman 1929; Young and Goldman 1944; Nowak 1995); and,

WHEREAS, the last Mexican gray wolves in the wild—5 individual animals—were captured between 1977 and 1980 for a captive-breeding program, leaving none left in the wild for almost 2 decades (Parsons 1996); and,

WHEREAS, the Mexican Wolf Recovery Plan adopted in 1982 (USFWS 1982) called for reintroduction to achieve 2 viable populations in the wild, as a first step toward eventual recovery, but did not specify demographic criteria that would constitute recovery; and,

WHEREAS, Mexican gray wolves were reintroduced to the wild beginning in 1998, and the environmental impact statement (USFWS 1996) projected growth of the population to 102 wolves, including 18 breeding pairs, by the end of the 9th year; and,

WHEREAS, at the end of the 9th year (2006) U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reported only 59 wolves, including 7 breeding pairs, in the wild (Mexican Wolf Interagency Field Team 2007); and,

WHEREAS, grazing policies of the U.S. Forest Service result in continued conflicts between a federally subsidized livestock industry and a federally endangered taxon; and,

WHEREAS, the rationale for predator control of Mexican gray wolves differs from that of other endangered taxa, including wolves elsewhere, because it confines wolves to an arbitrary area and creates conflicts with livestock; and,

WHEREAS, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Standard Operating Procedure 13 mandates the killing or permanent removal of any wolf involved in 3 livestock depredations in 1 year even though 95% of the Blue Range Wolf Recovery Area is public land, most of which is grazed by livestock (USFWS 1996); and,

WHEREAS, to ensure success of Mexican gray wolf reintroduction and achievement of population goals, the 2001 independent scientific panel (Paquet et al. 2001) recommended a rule

change allowing wolves to roam freely and requiring removal of livestock carcasses so as not to attract wolves; and,

WHEREAS, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service did not implement the primary recommendations of the Paquet Report and instead has announced a rule-change process that likely will continue to limit movements of Mexican gray wolves and exacerbate conflicts with livestock owners using public lands (Mexican Wolf Blue Range Adaptive Management Oversight Committee and Interagency Field Team 2005); and,

WHEREAS, the impending rule-change process is premised on limiting the number of wolves at 125 animals, and preventing wolves from becoming established in new areas where wolves may be allowed to roam (Mexican Wolf Blue Range Adaptive Management Oversight Committee and Interagency Field Team 2005; and Povilitis et al. 2006);

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the American Society of Mammalogists, meeting at the 87th Annual Meeting at the University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, New Mexico, 6–10 June 2007, calls upon the U.S. Forest Service to revise its land management policies to allow recovery of this federally endangered taxon, and for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to: 1) expedite a revision of the 25-year-old Mexican Wolf Recovery Plan, prior to finalizing a rule change, to develop a recovery goal and identify new recovery areas; 2) suspend all predator control directed at Mexican gray wolves at least until the interim 100-wolf goal of the current reintroduction program has been achieved; 3) protect wolves from the consequences of scavenging on livestock carcasses; 4) ensure the recovery and sustainability of populations of Mexican gray wolves; and 5) allow wolves to roam freely throughout the Southwest.

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