



## United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
P.O. Box 1306  
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87103



In Reply Refer To:  
FWS/R2/ES-ARD/045668

July 23, 2010

Larry Voyles, Director  
Arizona Game and Fish Department  
5000 West Carefree Highway  
Phoenix, Arizona 85086-5000

Dear Mr. Voyles:

Of the many challenges confronting the Mexican wolf program, one of the most pressing is the current reduction in the wild population. As you know, we laid the groundwork earlier this year for a possible 2010 release of eight wolves including a mated pair, a yearling male, and the young-of-the-year in Arizona at Engineer Springs.

Over the past several weeks, members of my staff have met with representatives of the Arizona Game and Fish Department, New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, affected tribes, representatives of local governments, ranchers and concerned citizens to discuss this potential release. Several of these meetings were facilitated by employees of the Arizona Department of Game and Fish, and I sincerely appreciate your assistance in organizing and presenting those meetings. One of the predominant concerns raised during these meetings was in regard to how the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) will respond if the newly released pack becomes problematic.

I want to assure you that the Service is committed to appropriate Mexican wolf management actions and responses commensurate with the 1998 Final Rule and the 1998 Interagency Management Plan. We also recognize that flexibility in management of the reintroduced population of Mexican wolves is needed to make reintroduction compatible with current and planned human activities, such as livestock grazing and hunting.

Specifically, with respect to the pack proposed for release at Engineer Springs, the Service is committed to the following management actions:

- (1) If one depredation or nuisance incident occurs within 365 days from the date of release, the Service recommends implementation of approved non-lethal harassment methods including projectile devices such as cracker shells and rubber bullets and the use of turbo fladry. Simultaneously, the Service will coordinate with our

partners to evaluate the probability of additional depredation or nuisance behavior. That evaluation will include discussions with ranchers and residents regarding changes in livestock husbandry and management practices that could potentially prevent recurring depredation or nuisance incidents. If non-lethal harassment to reduce the probability of additional depredations or nuisance behavior does not sufficiently reduce or mitigate the problem, the Service will consider translocation options. We recognize that nuisance behaviors may invoke a range of possible responses based on the severity and consistency of the nuisance behavior. Therefore, the Service will promote translocation of the pack or offending animal(s) after 30 days if nuisance behavior persists in an area where non-lethal harassment methods are being implemented.

- (2) The Service will implement these actions in cooperation with our partners, and will look to the Interagency Field Team Leader for the primary state fish and wildlife agency to be the lead point of contact for any management response.
- (3) If a second depredation incident occurs within 365 days from the date of release, the Service will relocate the pack or offending animal(s) to an area where the likelihood of depredation and nuisance behaviors are reduced. A prime candidate area is the Gila Wilderness in New Mexico, which is currently absent wolves. We anticipate this action will reduce depredations by removing the wolves from an area prior to reaching permanent removal thresholds, as described in foundational documents for the reintroduction program. In addition, this action keeps animals on the ground, which is essential to meeting our goal of increasing the wild population.
- (4) To ensure that all management options are in place prior to releasing wolves we propose delaying the scheduled release of Mexican wolves at the Engineer Springs site from mid-August to mid-to-late September. This delay will allow released pups to reach a weight at which they can be radio-collared. Radio collars will provide us with the ability to monitor and more appropriately manage these wolves after release. Delaying the release may also prove beneficial to the survival of the pups as it allows completion of the entire recommended vaccination series. Radio-collaring the pups prior to release could yield valuable information on survival of young and their movements. The Service also proposes placing a GPS radio collar on the adult male and an ARGOS radio collar on the yearling male, which we believe will provide consistent data on the pack's movements and, if necessary, detailed information relative to potential depredation incidents.

I believe these commitments address many of the concerns expressed by participants in the meetings we attended in Arizona and New Mexico. I hope the Service has provided you with sufficient assurance as to how we will respond if problems arise. If you have questions or concerns, please feel free to contact Brian Millsap, Assistant Regional Director, Ecological

Larry Voyles, Director

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Services, Albuquerque, New Mexico at 505-248-6671 or me at 505-248-6282. We look forward to working in partnership with you to proceed with this important release.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "George A. J. J. J.", written in a cursive style.

Regional Director