

Jaguar Conservation Team (JAGCT)
Final Summary Notes
Douglas, Arizona
Meeting of June 29, 2006

Introduction

Chair Terry B. Johnson, Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD), called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. All in attendance introduced themselves and their affiliations.

A. Opening comments and ground rules

Ground rules were the same as previous meetings. Participants were asked to raise their hand to ask a question or state an opinion. Only one person was allowed to speak and side conversations were kept to a minimum. This allowed each person to be heard and kept the meeting moving through the agenda. Any participant in a Jaguar Working Group (JAGWG) (i.e. everyone present at JAGCT meetings) may comment on any issue being discussed, and all were encouraged to do so. Participants were asked to turn cellular telephones and beepers off or set to vibrate. Attendees opting to take calls were asked to leave the room before conversing with the caller.

B. Agenda review/additional discussion points

Copies of the agenda were provided during the meeting. One additional item was added to the Agenda regarding additional signatories to the existing Agreement.

The Agenda was modified to conduct the MOA discussion prior to the Conservation Assessment and Framework discussion. Also, clarification was provided regarding these two discussion points: The focus of today's effort is to gather concerns/comments on the draft MOA and Conservation Assessment & Framework, not to resolve issues/tasks within these documents. The Jaguar Conservation Team (and sequentially the MOA and Conservation Assessment and Framework) is a state-led agency approach to jaguar conservation. Although the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) does not drive this effort, both states (NM and AZ) have obligations through Section 6 of the Endangered Species Act to provide adequate jaguar conservation efforts as an element of their overall statewide Conservation Programs. As such, the draft MOA and Conservation Assessment and Framework are thoroughly coordinated with USFWS. This approach might not preclude federal listing of a species or by itself lead to rangewide recovery, but both state wildlife Departments believe it provides for appropriate state-driven conservation programs.

C. Discussion of Summary Notes from the April 2006 JAGCT meeting

Copies of the draft April 2006 summary notes were available at the meeting. Because these were not available for review, attendees of the April meeting will have 2 weeks to send comment to Bill Van Pelt before a final draft is posted on the AGFD website.

Action Item: Participants in the April meeting must send comment to Bill Van Pelt regarding the April 2006 draft meeting notes by **July 14** for consideration. Send comment to <bvanpelt@azgfd.gov>, <jaguar@azgfd.gov>, or postal mail to 2222 W. Greenway Road, Phoenix, Arizona 85023-4399.

D. Discussion of possible additional signatories to the current and/or future Conservation Agreement under which the JAGCT operates

Two additional parties, Hildalgo County and Whitewater Draw Natural Resource Conservation District, requested inclusion as signatories to the existing MOA. Both meet all requirements for becoming signatories. No objections were stated by existing signatories, so by acclamation both parties are now considered signatories to the MOA.

E. Task Reports:

1. Update on AZ-NM sightings – Tim Snow (AGFD) and Jim Stuart (NMDGF)

New Mexico – No sightings have been reported in New Mexico since the April 2006 JAGCT meeting.

Arizona – Three sightings have been reported since the April 2006 JAGCT meeting.

Class ¹	Date	Location	Comments
III-4	Apr	Vail	Black, size b/w bobcat and mountain lion; no tracks observed
III-2	May	Sierra Vista	Spotted, described as <u>not</u> rosette-like; no tracks observed
III-2	June	Tucson	Black, smaller than a mt lion; no tracks observed

¹Class I = Evidence such as a carcass, skin, hair, photo, or confirmed tracks. Class II = Report reliable and detailed; reporting party experienced in outdoor activities; multiple parties. Class III = Report vague; description not a jaguar. See Jaguar Conservation Strategy for full definition of Classes.

2. Kill Verification Activities (Section 5.H.2.) – Jack Childs

No jaguar depredation of livestock has been reported since the last JAGCT meeting, but a jaguar was reported scavenging on a dead cow near the AZ/Mexico border. The jaguar reportedly took a fetus from the cow carcass, dragged the fetus away, and consumed most of the fetus. The cow was determined to be a trespass cow from Mexico, and attempts have been made to contact the rancher in Mexico.

Jack Childs and Emil McCain discussed progress regarding their camera investigations. From 2004 to present, approximately 40 occurrences of a jaguar(s) have been documented either by tracks or photos. At least 2, possibly 3, different jaguars have been documented since 1996, based on spot patterns. The individual video-taped in the Baboquivari Mountains in 1996 has been documented as recently as 2006, although this animal disappears for extended periods.

3. Coordination with Mexico – Bill Van Pelt

Bill attended the Trilateral Committee (Trilateral) meeting in San Diego in June 2006. The Trilateral Committee was formed in 1996 via a Memorandum of Understanding between the federal wildlife conservation agencies of the United States, Mexico, and Canada, thus establishing the Canada/Mexico/US Trilateral Committee for Wildlife and Ecosystem Conservation and Management. This agreement formally brought together for the first time the three nations of North America, consolidating a continental effort for wildlife and ecosystem conservation and management. The Trilateral Committee facilitates and enhances cooperation and coordination among the wildlife agencies of the three nations in projects and programs for conservation and management of wildlife, plants, biological diversity, and ecosystems of mutual interest. More information regarding the Trilateral Committee is at the following website: <www.trilat.org>.

At the Trilateral meeting, Mexico announced it is continuing to develop a national Jaguar Conservation Program, and will host more meetings to discuss developing a management plan for Mexico. The next meeting is likely to be in August 2006. The goal is to have a draft plan that is equivalent to the USFWS strategy by the end of the year.

4. Update on the JAGCT progress report – Bill Van Pelt

The JAGCT progress report was finalized and will be posted on the AGFD website. The progress report follows the Nongame Technical Report format, as in the past. Also, USFWS is completing its 5-yr status review regarding jaguar listing and appropriate sections of the JAGCT progress report were provided to USFWS through AGFD.

F. Memorandum of Agreement

The MOA is an agreement between the 2 state wildlife Departments and any agencies that choose to become signatories under the criteria set forth in the agreement. Drafting of the MOA is done by the state wildlife Departments, considering comments from potential signatories.

The MOA development process is generally to: gather comments from interested parties; re-write the current draft MOA to ensure that it meets the needs of the two state wildlife agencies (i.e. including relative to their Section 6 responsibilities) and as many of the needs of other potential signatories as possible; continue discussion/coordination between the state wildlife Departments as necessary to resolve any issues; execute (approve) the final version; and solicit additional signatories. In New Mexico, final approval of a revised MOA might require NMDGF Commission action. In Arizona, that decision has been delegated to the AGFD Director.

Comments were gathered regarding the current draft. Most of the comments gathered at the meeting focused on: Conforming the *area of concentration* to the agreed area from the last JAGCT meeting; adding Natural Resource Conservation District references for Arizona; ensuring consistencies in use of terms (Titles); ensuring consistencies between the MOA and Framework; and ensuring that information regarding *jaguars that have been unlawfully killed* is up-to-date and accurate.

Additional comment was gathered regarding USFWS participation (signatory status), treating individual Soil and Water Conservation Districts and Natural Resource Conservation Districts as separate voting entities; potential disconnect or loss of private landowner partnerships in the process without including these folks as signatories; potential funding mechanisms and distribution of funds; and allowance of proxies for voting purposes.

G. Conservation Assessment and Framework

Comments were gathered from the group in an effort to prevent redundancies gathered from individuals. Comments were captured at the meeting so all members could see or write down the comments as needed.

Some of the more general comments included: ensuring consistency between the MOA and Assessment and Framework; including more of the positive statements/accomplishments regarding JAGCT, jaguars, and jaguar conservation in the borderlands area; consideration of re-establishment as a conservation tool; clarification of terms (additions to the glossary); use of acronyms or abbreviations; promote/emphasize open-space and movement corridors; and consider including footnotes regarding *Advantages/disadvantages of Conservation Team versus Recovery Plan approach* and *list of JAGCT accomplishments to date*.

Action Item: Comment regarding the MOA and the Conservation Assessment and Framework must be sent to Bill Van Pelt by **July 14** for consideration. Send comment to <bvanpelt@azgfd.gov>, <jaguar@azgfd.gov>, or postal mail to 2222 W. Greenway Road, Phoenix, Arizona 85023-4399.

H. Other Business

1. Contrary to media coverage and word-of-mouth, neither AGFD nor NMDGF has decided whether to move forward with jaguar capture or collaring in Arizona or New Mexico. Both agencies are considering the JAGCT's recommendation to capture and collar. AGFD has briefed Arizona's Governor on this issue, and will have additional discussion with the Scientific Advisory Group (JAGSAG) prior to submitting a final decision package to its Director. New Mexico is a little behind Arizona, especially regarding potential locations to perform a capture. NMDGF would also need to coordinate efforts through USFWS, for permitting purposes.

It was also reiterated that AGFD, NMDGF, or USFWS employees were not involved in any way with capture attempts performed in Mexico that led to two jaguar deaths.

In a related discussion, Craig Miller, Defenders of Wildlife, expressed concern regarding the potential for individuals to *hack* or illegally obtain the frequencies of any radio-collar to be used in a capture/monitoring attempt in the United States. Although the JAGCT committee recommending capture and collaring did not directly consider this concern during its risk assessment, it is noted for future consideration and any new information will be passed on to AGFD and NMDGF.

2. Bud Starnes, NMDA, volunteered to gather information regarding habitat enhancement projects that have been performed, which may have resulted in positive effects for jaguars and jaguar conservation. These projects might or might not have been directly related to jaguars. Bud indicated it might take “many months to collect the needed data. We need to decide if an existing committee will handle the project or do we need to form a new committee.”

Action Item: Bud Starnes will provide an outline of what needs to be done and how to do it at the next JAGCT meeting for discussion, and a JAGCT decision on whether and how to proceed.

3. Melanie Culver, University of Arizona, reported that none of the scats analyzed to date have been identified as jaguar.

I. Close Meeting

The next JAGCT meeting will be Thursday, October 26, 2006, at 10:00 am MST (NM Time) in Lordsburg, NM.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 3:00 PM.