

MEXICAN WOLF ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE¹
SUMMARY NOTES FOR MEETING WITH AGENCY DIRECTORS ON MAY 28, 2009
Note: This is a Public Record (available at <http://azgfd.gov/wolf>)

Location: Pinetop AZ, at the AGFD Region I Office
Date/Time: May 28, 2009: 0800 – 1800 (AZ Time)
Host: Arizona Game and Fish Department
Participants: Lead Agencies: AGFD, NMDGF, USDA WS, USFS, USFWS, and WMAT
Signatory Cooperators: NMDA; GRAHCO, GRECO, NACO, and OTCO
IFT: AGFD, NMDGF, USDA WS, USFS, USFWS, and WMAT
OTHERS: SCAT

AGENDA

1. 0800. Welcome and ground rules (Johnson)

AMOC Chair Terry B. Johnson welcomed everyone. He noted that, in last night's AMWG Meeting, Otero County NM became a Signatory Cooperator in the Project and that today the only Signatory Cooperator not represented is Sierra County NM.

A packet of logistical information for the December 8-10 2009 AMOC and AMWG meetings in Truth or Consequences NM was passed around the room. AMOC will meet with the IFT on the 8th (1 pm to 5 pm) and 9th (8 am to 3 pm). AMWG will meet on the 9th (4 pm to 8 pm) and the Directors session will be on the 10th (8 am to 3 pm).

Each participant in the meeting introduced himself or herself.

2. Agenda review, additional discussion points, and special announcements (All)

Johnson reviewed today's agenda. In keeping with the effort to increase capacity for eventual leadership transition within AMOC, he asked Matt Wunder (NMDGF) to lead today's afternoon session.

NMDGF Director Tod Stevenson asked that Mexico's plans for wolf releases be added to Item 6.

AGFD Director Larry Voyles asked that the format of future AMOC-Director meetings be discussed under Item 15, if time permits, so he can suggest a concept for a Directors "executive session" that precedes meetings with AMOC.

¹The Reintroduction Project is a state- and tribally-led collaborative effort among six Lead Agencies and five Signatory Cooperators. Lead Agencies are: Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD); New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (NMDGF), USDA-APHIS Wildlife Services (WS), U.S. Forest Service (USFS), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and White Mountain Apache Tribe (WMAT). Signatory Cooperators are: Graham, Greenlee, and Navajo counties, Arizona; New Mexico Department of Agriculture; and Otero and Sierra counties, New Mexico.

USFWS Region 2 Director Benjamin Tuggle introduced Bud Fazio as Mexican Wolf Recovery Coordinator. Fazio was previously the Service's Red Wolf Recovery Coordinator.

3. Summary Notes for AMOC and AMWG Meeting(s) (Johnson)

Johnson explained that Summary Notes for AMOC and AMWG meetings are now posted to the Project Web site (<http://azgfd.gov/wolf>) after AMOC has reviewed them. AMWG Summary Notes have always been posted there. Posting of AMOC notes began in July 2008, in response to Public Records requests in AZ and NM. The postings are current (all previous notes have been posted) and the notes for this week's meetings should be posted within 30 days of today's meeting. Johnson said he receives very few review comments on the drafts from cooperators; the notes would benefit from more robust review.

Johnson also asked whether the group would agree that beginning with this week's meetings the AMOC Summary Notes should be more thorough, as they were in the first few years of the Project, before by cooperator consensus they became much more abbreviated. He noted that with the current approach, cooperators who miss a meeting have difficulty assessing the context for decisions and outcomes. He also noted that overall continuity within the cooperators has suffered since the notes became abbreviated.

Stevenson asked whether there is a mechanism to summarize the outcomes somewhere else besides the meeting notes so one is not as likely to get bogged down in all the details.

Voyles said this underscores the need for the Directors to have an "executive session" sometime before meeting with AMOC so the key issues are kept in front of them.

Action Item: by consensus, henceforth the Summary Notes for AMOC meetings will be more complete records of what was discussed and what decisions or outcomes resulted.

4. Opening comments by each Lead Agency Director and then by the lead representative for each cooperating agency present regarding their perspective(s) on the Project, especially relative to meeting: biological expectations, social expectations, and expectations for inter-agency cooperation and adaptive management.

Johnson noted that some Directors recently said the Project is in need of a "restart." The past two years have been somewhat quarrelsome. Tensions increased within the Project as a schism developed among the cooperators. Decisions on several crucial issues have been delayed while awaiting action by the Lead Agency Directors. Today is an opportunity to hit the restart button and focus on what needs to be done instead of what has happened.

- Larry Voyles, AGFD – in October 2008 the AGF Commission reaffirmed its support for Mexican wolf conservation and the collaborative approach the cooperators are taking. It is vitally important that the 2003 MOU for this Project be renewed. The cooperators also need to focus on developing an incentive and interdiction program to encourage broader support and participation. Part of the

key to incentives and interdiction is working with the Native American interests in the Project.

- John Caid, WMAT – recently the WMAT Tribal Council passed a resolution continuing support for Tribal participation in the Project. However, frictions still exist with Tribal cattle associations. Collaboration between wildlife and livestock interests will be the key to continued success. The Tribe wants to continue within the Project. The Tribe’s perspective is that the Project is doing better than public reports may be indicating.
- Corbin Newman, USFS – expressed appreciation for all the participants in the room. Success will be achieved through collaboration. Mexican wolf conservation is an important issue to USFS. Newman expressed particular appreciation for Dr. Tuggle; “USFWS probably has a more difficult role than most of us do.”
- Jeff Green, USDA Wildlife Services – his agency’s mandated role is to reduce damage caused by wildlife, especially as it relates to agricultural interests. Wildlife Services is pleased to be a part of this collaboration and hopes they will be given the latitude in the future to use the most efficient methods in wolf management.
- Ben Tuggle, USFWS – “restart” – what does it mean? Perhaps most importantly it means that we take advantage of what we have learned and use that knowledge to plot the path forward and integrate into the process a new “surge” of cooperation. What do we need? We need: a new EIS to operate with what we know to be right; a new recovery plan to have the opportunity to identify how the Project relates to recovery of the Mexican gray wolf; and more progress on building the interdiction program – we need funds for the interdiction program. The 2009 “omnibus” appropriation bill was passed by Congress and includes language to address predator issues that allows for expenditures for an interdiction program.

Wolf-related lawsuits are ongoing and will continue to challenge the collaborative effort, but USFWS recognizes the contributions of everyone involved in this Project and is dedicated to obtaining the resources needed to the program

- Tod Stevenson, NMDGF – collaborative effort is extremely important to the success of this and other programs. NMDGF recognizes the efforts of all involved in the program. He recognizes that NM has been perceived to have been problematic in the past but under his leadership NMDGF is making the commitment to be true to its role as an active participant in the program. The Mexican wolf program is extremely important and a clear priority to the NMDGF, NM Game Commission, and the Governor of NM. NMDGF is committed to law enforcement to end the loss of wolves and is working with the IFT on field activities. He recognizes the challenges of credibility and trust. NMDGF will initiate change from within but must also focus on improving its interactions with the public and others. Stevenson is looking at the Project as a fresh start. He agrees with Tuggle that this means keeping the knowledge and experience that we

have and using it to determine the best path forward through the EIS and other pathways. NM is very supportive of the Project MOU, contrary to what may have been communicated by NMDGF in the past – there are some challenges with the language but we will work through them.

- Kay Gale, GRECO – conveyed Hector Ruedas’ regrets that various commitments at home and office prevented from attending this week’s wolf meetings. Greenlee County continues to be a committed partner in this Project, even given the differences in opinion. Economic issues have increased the need to recognize the importance of our collaborative efforts.
- Larry Stephenson, on behalf of GRAHCO – the coming together of a cohesive program is important. The interdiction program is a very important component and is supported by the Arizona counties.
- Jerry Brownlow, NACO – Navajo County is committed to working with the Project and is pleased that the WMAT Tribal Council has reaffirmed its commitment to the program.
- Bud Starnes, NMDA – Bud’s agency has been involved in this effort for seven years. He is now receiving positive feedback from ranchers for Project field staff helping them find answers and solutions to help them improve their bottom line. The Project needs to expand on that progress. Private livestock operators control a lot of land in NM and AZ.
- Harold Nofchissey, SCAT – Harold introduced Tribal biologist Chris Beazley as the new SCAT representative to this effort. SCAT hopes to build better partnerships in the future.
- Tim Smith, OTCO – it is no secret that OTCO is formally opposed to Mexican wolf recovery and reintroduction. However, 80 percent of OTCO is under federal control, so it seems obvious that cooperating with AMOC is the best way to gather information and pass it back to county residents. OTCO appreciates being accepted as a Signatory Cooperator, effective today.
- Kay Gale added a note regarding last night’s AMWG meeting, reference public comment about livestock grazing being “a free lunch.” It is NOT a free lunch. The point is that in our education efforts we should expand on how we pass along information on livestock practices in other wolf recovery areas in the USA (e.g. compare Minnesota and AZ/NM re: the difference between livestock operations on public vs. private land).

5. Break

6. USFWS updates on:
 - a. Anticipated effects of March 31, 2009 Federal court decision denying USFWS motion to dismiss litigation on NEPA, ESA, and APA compliance regarding the AMOC MOU, SOP 13.0, and any other relevant issues

Tuggle briefly recapped the lawsuit as it relates to SOP 13.0 and AMOC. USFWS has provided the court with a history of what we did to address the SOP issues described within. The attorneys have asked to go back with a Settlement Agreement for consideration – final decisions are yet to come but the Service’s course will be to support the actions of this group on a fundamental level. The AMOC philosophy will continue to be supported as a fundamental, critical component in our foundation for success – recognition of the importance of articulating clearly the use of the biology that we have and which we have used in our decision-making process. We must find the way to articulate our decisions to the interested parties – why we make decisions, how they impact the wolf population, and what were the circumstances surrounding the selection of the various components of the decision process.

USFWS is committed to the MOU process and it is actually a good time for consideration of renewal. USFWS has input that will allow us to move forward in a positive fashion benefiting the program as a whole

Questions and Comments: Voyles asked whether we have a concept of how we inform the publics and use outreach? He is thinking about a dedicated interagency team of communication specialists who understand the nuances of what we do, the publics that regularly communicate with the Directors, and strategic messages. How do we organize our outreach methods? Tuggle responded by committing USFWS to coordinate development of a new comprehensive communication strategy for the program. Johnson noted the cooperators had convened a group of their PIOs in 2007 to do this very thing but the effort languished due to uneven support among the Lead Agencies. The materials from that group should be a starting point for this new effort. USFWS led the 2007 group and Johnson still has the minutes from that meeting. Voyles said the new strategy should include a body and leadership system, a reporting mechanism that provides a single avenue to communicate to ALL Directors. Tuggle suggested that the Directors each select a representative to this new group, which would include the AMOC chair. Johnson said we already have a list of Lead Agency PIOs for wolf issues (he will redistribute copies after this meeting). He added that tomorrow AMOC and the IFT will be discussing outreach strategies and they can incorporate today’s ideas. Tuggle said the bottom line is that we need a comprehensive communication strategy. Stephenson asked whether a subcommittee process should put in place now; it has worked in other venues. Tuggle replied that each agency Director should tell their lead PIO about the level of priority for this effort. That will be critical to the successful start of this program. Johnson noted that SOP 3.0 already identifies outreach strategies, as does the Project’s annual work plan. These documents should also provide background for the work group. Voyles again asked whether we know (do we agree) what the message(s) is (are) that we want

to send at a macro level? The leads must be able to identify strategies to communicate the message(s). Tuggle repeated that he needs somebody responsible for this process – to use what we have done, build, and move forward. Caid said the macro message must demonstrate the positives. Voyles said we need to think about framing messages from a policy leadership level. Tuggle said the deadline should be sooner rather than later in the context of getting with the other responsible parties and a draft to the Directors prior to December meeting.

Action Item: USFWS (Charna Lefton) will lead a work group of PIOs from the Lead Agencies, with coordination with the AMOC Chair, to draft a comprehensive communication strategy by August 1, 2009.

- b. Anticipated effects of recent USDI decisions on gray wolf delisting(s) and subsequent NGO NOIs regarding re-listing(s)

Tuggle – USFWS has been involved in internal discussions and litigation as to what “species” of gray wolf is to be recovered and where. Another internal meeting on the rangewide aspects of this issue is scheduled for July.

Starnes – I urge that the decision-making process take a full look at elements of science, including the legal influence of science.

Tuggle – we hope to make an informal decision by July on what wolf entities will be recovered in North America. The internal deliberative process will include peer review outside the agency. This process will address the three or four subspecies of wolves in North America and will allow decisions to be made about how we will proceed with recovery planning for the Mexican gray wolf (i.e. for wolves in the Southwest).

Dale – what does the litigation regarding recent delistings (ID and MT, and Western Great Lakes) do to the process?

Tuggle – the delisting of the other wolves does not adversely impact inclusion of the Mexican gray wolf within the recovery discussions – it levels the playing field. This population is not listed as a “lesser species.” With this work we have been able to consider this subspecies within consideration of management of the gray wolf as a whole.

- c. Status of Mexican wolf conservation assessment

Tuggle - the Conservation Assessment discusses where we are with Mexican wolf recovery and the problems and challenges we face. The final document should be out fairly soon. It is needed ASAP; it will make it easier to move forward with recovery planning. Dwire – the contractor has completed her work on the CA and we hope to have final USFWS edits made and the document through the surname (approval) process) in July – to be finalized in August.

- d. Status of Environmental Assessment for short-term changes in the 1998 10(j) and assessment of NEPA compliance relative to Project Cooperator review of the draft

Tuggle - as announced last September, USFWS is developing an Environmental Assessment to address the 1) 10j definition of a breeding pair, and 2) initial releases in NM. John Slown wrapped up the EA before he left USFWS earlier this month. Tuggle's staff will brief him further before a decision is made on releasing the EA to the public.

- e. Status of Environmental Impact Statement for long-term changes in the 1998 10(j)

Tuggle – although NEPA scoping for an EIS on possible broader changes in the current 10j has been conducted, further action awaits availability of funds. When funding is in hand, the EIS process will take about four years to complete. The EIS process will ensure that all available information, including the 3 and 5-year reviews, will be considered. The EIS will include a socioeconomic assessment.

Bergman – just a reminder that Wildlife Services has committed an employee (David Hayes) to helping USFWS develop the EIS and he continues to be available for work on it while full funding is being pursued.

- f. Federal funding for Mexican wolf interdiction, incentives, and compensation projects on private, federal, state, and tribal lands: availability of funds, project priorities, process for project consideration and approval

Tuggle - the 2009 Omnibus bill addresses interdiction and compensation. We need to communicate to all stakeholders that implementation of the Mexican wolf reintroduction program is different than the other wolf recovery programs. This is important for those that do not know or understand the process. To date, no decisions made how the Omnibus bill funding will be used or distributed for use.

Dale – WMAT has given full access to tribal lands for reintroduction. WMAT would like to have full and equal access to the funding distribution decisions.

Tuggle - USFWS successfully argued a change in language to include the Tribes. He added that NM has sent letters to its congressional delegation advocating the interdiction funding.

Johnson – if USFWS will give me copies of the NM documents I will distribute them to all AMOC-involved agencies.

Tuggle – we will do that.

Chris Beazley (SCAT) – does the Omnibus language allow for depredation assistance in response to ongoing events and for proactive measures?

Johnson - prior to today's meeting I distributed (via email) the "wolf loss" program excerpt from the Omnibus bill to all AMOC cooperators. Copies are also available on the table at the back of the room.

Tuggle – we should be developing ideas on how to apply these funds on Tribal lands.

Action Item: USFWS will send copies of the NM interdiction program funding support letters to Johnson to forward to all AMOC cooperators.

g. Wolf releases in Mexico.

Johnson – in the May 2009 Trilateral Committee meeting, in Florida, Mexico said that it intends to release wolves by the end of this calendar year, at the northern end of the historical range in Chihuahua, very close to the NM-Mexico border.

Tuggle - to succeed with recovery, we must have a wolf population within Mexico. USFWS is pursuing this with Mexico in a cooperative nature and is optimistic about potential success of these efforts. USFWS realizes that wolves will move, so both recovery programs (MX and USA) must co-evolve to a certain extent. Wolves that cross the border and exist in AZ outside of 10J area -- we will have to deal with this issue. The habitats targeted for release are excellent but the numbers of animals released and the quality of habitats will likely limit dispersal.

Johnson - the issue is not so much about actual dispersal but about all the work that comes with the perceived dispersal. If the public is caught by surprise the reaction will be even more negative than would otherwise be expected.

Tuggle – this is why our communication strategy is so important - to inform the public and to educate them on all aspects of occurrences.

Discussion ensued on the legal status of wolves existing outside the 10j area in AZ or NM. If they could not be proven to have originated in the 10j (BRWRA), they would be considered endangered, not experimental nonessential. If they can be proven to have originated through releases in Mexico, would they be returned to Mexico?

Dave Holderman (NMDGF) - what geographic scope (range) is being considered for the releases in Mexico?

Maggie Dwire (USFWS) – the northern-most section of Chihuahua, with one pack out as early as October 2009.

Johnson – at the Trilateral meeting Mexico said the preferred release site is about 50-60 miles (or less) south of the border.

Dave Bergman (WS) – a plan to handle these animals is necessary, from a Wildlife Services’ perspective; our management activities will be affected by the presence of these animals.

7. Break for lunch
8. Reconvene – Renewal of 2003 Memorandum of Understanding
 - a. Signatories, basic structure, and statements of purpose, goal, objectives
 - b. Roles, functions, and desired knowledge and skill sets of Lead Agency Directors, AMOC, Representatives from other Cooperating Agencies, and the IFT
 - c. Desired timelines for revision of MOU and completion of renewal

Johnson – the need for today is not necessarily to make decisions but to at least create a timeline and process for moving the MOU toward renewal. In the last round of review (last October-November), all cooperators were in agreement with the MOU as revised (copies provided today) with the exception of NMDGF and USFWS. USFWS provided specific comment regarding changes (see revised draft) but NMDGF did not.

Dale - exception by WMAT: comments on acceptance by USFWS and the WMAT wolf management plan. WMAT is in agreement with the basic functions. Any substantive changes will require council review, a lengthy process.

Wunder – the purpose of the MOU is to set parameters for the six Lead Agencies and Signatory Cooperators to work within the rules under which we operate. NMDGF’s comments last year were made under a different administration. I would like to hear from Tod – our new Director - on this process.

Stephenson – keep it simple and as general as possible.

Stevenson – in front of us is a document with some changes attached. Where are we with the current suggestions – are the counties ok with the current changes? Are we ready to walk through the MOU today and move on to the next step?

Tuggle – I like the idea of general agreement but we need to identify the mechanism for handling several things – there are a couple of things that we need to include on the responsibilities of USFWS. We need to complete discussion within the USFWS and get that wording back to the cooperators as quickly as possible – strengthen the document in terms of clarifying the position of the USFWS.

Don DeLorenzo, USFS - I encourage us to move forward and fix the meaningful items and get it signed.

Wunder – are we looking for language from the Directors that clearly identifies the statement “this is how I want you to function?”

Tuggle – use the current proposed revised MOU as a start for USFWS to insert changes as recommended by USFWS. We will not be changing any of the operating principles of the MOU. If we do we will bring that back for the consideration of the group. We should be able to do this in about a month. Use addendums or amendments to clarify how we will operate within this MOU. Let those that know this MOU the best work through it. Comments and suggestions considered acceptable on issues that need to be sent to the Directors for consideration.

Newman - yes, but let's address anything that sticks out as unacceptable to a signatory party.

Dale - 1st item – chair position descriptor is still unacceptable. Where do we go? Verbiage needed on rotation of chair.

Stevenson – NM has made the commitment to dedicate the resources necessary to accept and conduct the chairmanship to the level required to keep the program successful.

Dale – we are still supportive of keeping Terry as chair. We have questions based on past experience with the level of commitment of NMDGF to the project since in the past resources have not come in terms of resources and personnel.

Johnson – reminder that NMDGF under its new leadership has made the commitment that it will dedicate the resources necessary to make it work.

Voyles – agencies differ in capabilities with resources. What makes or breaks us is the absolute commitment to this collaborative process. Without that commitment we will not get it done.

Johnson – sharing the chair responsibility will strengthen the group's ability to function through time and changing conditions and maintain continuity and breathe fresh perspective into the project. This change will keep the project from being identified with a single person or personality!

Voyles – how the Directors lead can have substantial impact on the effectiveness of the chair no matter who that person might be.

Wunder – a point that needs to be considered is what constitutes collaboration among a group. At times there are strong feelings about a dissenting minority opinion on a decision. How do we define how we make decisions? Who says what one state will do reference what a decision prescribes that a state does.

Voyles – each state has its own authorities and will from time to time need to act and decide based on those authorities. The collaborative process and decision making need not take away from the statutory authorities driving an agency's program.

Tuggle – initial default is what is in the best interest of the program, then where it is occurring. I will have discussion with that authority to support those that have the most at stake in the action.

Voyles – if we have a sincere commitment to the collaboration we will be sensitive to how we are doing business and how it affects the other partners and results in a deeper understanding of how those actions affect the whole.

Johnson – our approach since the beginning (2003) has been to strive for consensus and understanding such that a vote may not be necessary even if there is a minority opinion. Votes have become more necessary over the past 18 months simply because we increasingly found ourselves with the same agency dissenting on seemingly everything and unwilling or unable to accept a majority opinion. The question is whether an agency's disagreement or dissent really is at a level at which the majority opinion is still acceptable. If it is not acceptable, then move the issue up to the next level. The key question should be: is this a decision or recommendation that I (my agency) may not agree with but one that I (my agency) can live with vs. my agency really cannot live with this majority decision or recommendation. It is possible to dissent without obstructing the majority opinion. Not every minority opinion is a deal-breaker. But, if a cooperator says that his or her agency truly cannot live with a majority decision or recommendation, then the issue must be escalated to a higher level of authority for resolution. Keep the decision at the lowest possible level.

Stevenson – if we are going to make a collaborative process work we cannot vote. We have to figure out how to achieve consensus.

Murphy – a little less process and a little more leadership.

Newman – there resides in each Director's chair some level of authority that cannot be relinquished. Collaboration does not mean consensus – consensus is the goal but will not always be reached. Does AMOC understand and are they comfortable with this position?

Voyles – it is up to the leadership of the Directors to demonstrate it is ok to operate with these principles. We should always strive to never have our partners taken by surprise by our actions or decisions – this should be a goal!

Stevenson – every single person in the room has a responsibility to help make this program move forward and improve process and relationships.

Action Item: USFWS will get back to the group within one month with changes and additions to the MOU and request that the other parties review and edit within a couple of weeks and send their changes back to the group. AMOC will schedule its review for the July 14 conference call.

9. Guidance on completing draft management “white paper” on:
 - a. Rationale or justification for stepping up initial releases and translocations
 - b. Annual population objectives for 2010 through 2016 and emphasis on retention of breeding pairs and wild-born pups or young-of-the-year (YOY) wolves
 - c. Linking “a” and “b” above to appropriately-funded, effective (performance based) interdiction, incentives, and compensation measures

Tuggle – when it comes to these kinds of things, they should be decided at the AMOC level and informed up the chain. Where are we at on this? AMOC needs to make the decision in the best interest of the wolves and advise the Directors and then go do what we do – via the Directors charging AMOC with that task.

Johnson – AMOC did draft this white paper, in response to initial questions from USFWS. It was posed as an AMOC position paper to be approved by the Directors. Then USFWS staff required that it be changed to a Directors authored position paper. It was revised several times within AMOC for discussion with the Directors. AMOC representatives presented or were supposed to present drafts to their Director several times over the past year. I received no Director feedback except from AGFD and USFS. AMOC can revise it again but AMOC members must ensure that as the document is prepared for presentation to their Directors the necessary briefings take place. We need to update the paper to reflect recent events (e.g. Omnibus funding).

Voyles – we need to include discussions of interdiction incentives compensation and outreach components.

Starnes – we need to have PIO tools available to inform and educate publics on what AMOC is doing, changing, etc.

Dale – population objectives must be achievable – based on biology – increases must be balanced with incentives and interdictions. We need the comprehensive communication strategy.

Cathy Taylor (USFS) – population objectives – from discussion last night we have the cart before the horse. I suggest we finish the work plan and leave out the population objectives until we have the final population figures obtained OR could have simply a percentage of the correct population as the objective.

Tuggle – question – are we making decisions about the program goals before the population counts?

Johnson – yes, the annual population objective has been articulated in the annual work plan but the work plan is completed before the annual population count numbers are available. Previous discussion in AMOC suggested the population objective could be separated from the work plan and made a stand-alone document – but no action was taken.

John Oakleaf (USFWS) – is the current funding level for interdiction sufficient? Or do we wait for more money to move forward?

Tuggle – we go forward and still try to develop additional financial resources to support the program. They are mutually exclusive – independent of one another. The field team needs to be telling AMOC and the Directors what they need to be doing.

Johnson – in last year’s October AGF Commission meeting direction was given to the Department to link incentives funding and population objectives/initial release plans, so we may need to recalibrate what this states.

Voyles – because of past comments we need to be pushing both sides with A and B equally aggressively and maintain the focus of both goals as AMOC responsibility.

Starnes – change the decision-making process. Hit the restart button. Example: assigning depredation – stop assigning it to the individual wolf. Assign it to the ranch/rancher and assign depredation relief interdiction incentive efforts based on the need of the folks suffering significant depredation.

Voyles – model based on financial package awarded for achieving a conservation target: how many wolves a rancher might be able to accommodate or that real number the properties are supporting.

Dale – tolerance -- achieving that with relationships with the livestock folks by providing incentives and interdiction funding.

Unknown - Program administration by National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. What are we looking for? The cooperators at past meetings have bought into increased release efforts if we get incentives funding.

Murphy – we are likely in a modification mode of the population increase. Push to the degree possible with full intent to pursue funding aggressively.

Johnson – the purpose of the white paper was to establish population objectives which include all events that occurred recently, including incentives funding. It states that we will do what is necessary to maintain wild populations if we do not meet population objectives.

Tuggle – remand this paper back to AMOC to revisit and then re-circulate it for Directors’ consideration. Is this the appropriate pathway to articulate the population objective vs. the annual work plan?

Newman - IFT – biology based objectives. AMOC – with social considerations. An amended objective to Directors.

Johnson – the IFT does not have control of all things influencing the biological objectives.

DeLorenzo - but they can convey those as sideboards limiting population objectives.

Tuggle – what is the timeline for the population objective paper? When is it SOP to have population objectives?

Dwire – it is needed for the SSP meeting at the end of July.

Tuggle - this document talks about in generality what will guide us forward, fundamentally where we should be. Then we can make decisions on requesting animals from SSP.

Dwire - what the SSP needs is the number of pairs for release into initial area info from IFT to AMOC to directors. Not necessarily germane to the document discussion.

Action Item: AMOC will rewrite the population objective white paper; due in 30 days.

10. Clarification Memos for SOPs 11.0 and 13.0: finality and consistency with the document referenced in #9 above

Johnson – the process for developing Clarification Memos for SOP 11.0 and 13.0 started in 2007. We thought it would take less time to develop Clarification Memos than the two years estimated for full revision. It is now two years later and the final draft Clarification Memos for 11 and 13 have been hanging since August 2008. What will we do?

Murphy – I move approval of the SOP 11.0 and 13.0 Clarification Memos.

Johnson – seconded.

Tuggle – I am comfortable where we are with this process – action has not been taken likely because we have not had the meetings, but I am comfortable with the language as it is drafted.

Johnson – I am concerned about the adequacy of our records for decisions.

Tuggle – the administrative record must be complete. We must have good justification and thorough documentation for everything we do.

Lead Agency directors – all six Directors approved the Clarification Memos as presented today.

Johnson – it should be noted that all counties and NMDA were and remain opposed to any changes in SOP 13.0. Nevertheless, they were all constructive parts of the discussion and revision process and provided valuable insights and comment.

Johnson – it should also be noted that some of the Project's SOPs are dated in that they reference people and phone numbers that have changed. Unless someone has in mind making substantive changes in an SOP, I can make these clerical changes over the course of this year.

Oakleaf: two SOPs that might need substantive change are 18.0, radiotelemetry and 19.0, winter mortality study.

Action Item: Johnson will finalize the SOP 11.0 and 13.0 Clarification Memos and distribute them within the Project and post them on the Project Web site (<http://azgfd.gov/wolf>). He will also make the appropriate clerical changes (updates) in the other Project SOPs over the course of this year.

11. Break

12. Possible wolf translocations and initial releases June 2009 through December 2010

Oakleaf – changes have occurred since the document was drafted. A male and six pups intended for initial release at Engineer Springs, died in captivity recently.

Dwire -- discussed the circumstances of the deaths: the Alpha male died from complications associated with a nasal tumor (cancer); the pups' cause of death is unknown – the necropsy is pending. The animals remaining are the Alpha female and two male yearlings. Availability of other animals from the SSP for a July release does not look good. Options for the initial release are wait a year, or get a pair from captivity without pups for this release site.

Johnson – the Engineer Springs release was approved last October – a lot of work went into site coordination with all agencies and livestock operators.

Oakleaf – the IFT consensus is to wait until next year and release a pair with pups; that would increase chances of release-site fidelity. However, there are other considerations. We have had additional mortality in the wild and the 2009 population count was below the 2008 count. Last year the Directors approved Project a more aggressive approach to release.

Starnes – we need to take advantage of this opportunity and put whatever we have available out there and get wolves on the ground for augmentation. Hypothetically, we could do an initial release in Arizona and then immediately translocate the animals to New Mexico.

Discussion ensued regarding the variables involved with this approach. One possible option – because of snow conditions, get a pair ready for an October/November release at Engineer Springs rather than holding to July.

Tuggle – reference the movement of animals: all we have is our integrity. When that is given up, we will have a difficult time getting it back, if at all! In the future, we need to develop additional scenarios (contingency plans) where we can get more animals on the ground – pairs, pups and singles – so we are not limited as we were this year with only a single pack being readied for release.

All – doing an initial release in AZ with an intention to immediately translocate the pack to NM is not an option.

Oakleaf - discussion of other translocatable animals. Need for SOP 6.0 compliance. Dates on translocations in 2010 were not part of the previous approval package.

Tuggle – landowners and permittees at the release sites – we need to ensure that we redouble our efforts to notify these landowners and permittees of impending releases.

Stevenson – description of time period for translocation: should it be changed to “as they become available” rather than an approximate date? Future plans on aggressive release and translocation need to be conveyed to the Directors in a general sense and save the detailed plan for when a specific incident is being planned for a specific location and date.

Taylor – the two National Forests want to have a good idea of what is coming in the year for planned releases/ translocation. She would like to have Director approval on plans. A change to the Directors requesting a plan with less detail does not relieve the IFT and AMOC from producing that level of detail.

Action Item: the IFT will revise and implement the initial release and translocation document (covering the period July 2009 through December 2010) per today’s discussion, ensuring more contingency options for initial releases. AMOC will continue to keep the Directors informed of upcoming initial releases and translocations.

13. Possible use of supplemental feeding in 2010 and 2011 to increase pup recruitment and decrease livestock depredation (concept discussion/brainstorming)

Tuggle – where we are as a group on supplemental feeding? Do we need to take the time to have this discussion?

Oakleaf – presented the IFT perspective on supplemental feeding. Discussion of pros and cons. Previous AMOC discussions led to bringing the concept statement to the Directors for further guidance on moving forward. Agreement to produce a guidance document for limited use of supplemental feeding as a management tool to use when necessary to reduce risk of depredation. IFT to produce the background information, including history

of use and justification for supplemental feeding. AMOC to add pros and cons as appropriate and forward it to the Directors for consideration.

Describe the action for a restricted period of time in order to produce more wild-born pups and carry the adults until wild prey bases are available for a ready conversion – include communicate upward when the option will be used and why and for how long.

Action Item: for current year, the IFT is authorized to use supplemental feeding on as as-needed basis to reduce risk of livestock depredation and inform up the chain upon initiation. Each proposal/justification needs more detail: type of feed used (elk carcasses, carnivore logs), monitoring protocol for pack post-feeding, follow-up completion (evaluation) report; etc. [We need to be sure that we thoroughly document our recommendations and decisions, the justifications for them, and the processes by which they are considered and made.]

CAUTION: do not let this practice becoming common; practice due diligence of tracking and informing up the chain on use. The initial release failure this year supports the critical nature of keeping more wild-born pups on the ground. Describe how other options were exhausted prior to feeding option, e.g. moving cows to a different area.

14. 1600. Cooperator budgets and priorities for the Reintroduction Project for July 2009 through December 2010

This topic was tabled, due to lack of time.

Action Item: AMOC will engage the Directors in discussion of the Project budget. Identify priorities and how funding shortfalls (if any) will be resolved.

15. 1630. Logistics and agenda for December 8-9-10 AMOC, IFT, Directors, and AMWG meetings in Truth or Consequences NM

Voyles – some type of pre-meeting briefing is needed for the Directors so knowledge is gained on topics that will require decision during the Directors meeting.

Action Item: the Directors will discuss how they will collaborate between AMOC-Director meetings to address key issues (scheduled conference calls? briefings by AMOC Chair) and whether they will make changes in the format of their twice-annual meetings with AMOC and the IFT.

16. Closing comments from Lead Agency Directors and lead representatives from other cooperating agencies

Tuggle – appreciation for everyone hanging in there and getting through several important items. We had a really productive meeting. Thanks to all.

Stevenson – I second Ben's comments, and recognize the personnel input into this process and the staff work requirement.

Newman – ditto what Benjamin and Tod said – the challenges of personnel change are significant. We need to recognize the changes that come with that type of shift; think about how we can better we prepare ourselves coming into these meetings and recognize there is a great deal of trust from Directors back to AMOC and IFT.

Green – thanks, Wildlife Services appreciates everyone’s work.

Voyles – I appreciate Dr. Tuggle’s commitment to the collaborative process and the improvements that have been made. Thanks to the counties and Wildlife Services and the folks on the ground who are building credibility with the public.

Caid – I appreciate everyone’s involvement.

17. 1800. Adjournment for a buffet dinner provided by Navajo County. All present thanked Navajo County for providing the excellent BBQ dinner.