

MEXICAN WOLF ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE¹
FINAL (REVISED) SUMMARY NOTES FOR MEETING WITH
INTERAGENCY FIELD TEAM ON MAY 29, 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 29, 2009: 0800 – 1500 (AZ Time)
Host: Arizona Game and Fish Department
Participants: Lead Agencies: AGFD, NMDGF, USDA WS, USFS, USFWS, and WMAT
Signatory Cooperators: GRAHCO, GRECO, NACO, and OTCO
IFT: AGFD, NMDGF, USDA WS, USFS, USFWS, and WMAT
OTHERS: SCAT

AGENDA (Note: the agencies present in the meeting may modify the agenda without notice)

1. 0800. Welcome and ground rules

AMOC Chair Terry B. Johnson (AGFD) called the meeting to order.

2. Agenda review, additional discussion points, and special announcements

No additional agenda items were suggested.

On behalf of NACO, Jerry Brownlow presented a Charles M. Russell print to AGFD Wildlife Area Manager Brian Crawford, in recognition of his public service.

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

Johnson noted that the summary Notes for this week's meetings should be posted within 30 days. The final Summary Notes for all previous AMOC and AMWG meetings are already posted on the Project's Web site (<http://azgfd.gov/wolf>).

4. Follow-up discussion from yesterday's meeting with the Directors and identification of additional agenda items for today and/or future action or meetings

Johnson asked whether anyone had any comment regarding yesterday's meeting with the Directors. Nobody had any comment, except for a reaffirmation of yesterday's discussion about supplemental feeding. The discussion is summarized as follows:

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.

The IFT is authorized to use supplemental feeding this year as a management tool on an as-needed basis to reduce the risk of livestock depredation, particularly near active den sites. Each situation must be justified in advance, including description of how other management options have been exhausted (e.g. cows moved to a different pasture, fladry and/or fencing used). USFWS and the wildlife agency of jurisdiction will make the decision whether to proceed and what type of food to offer (elk carcasses, carnivore logs, etc.). Upper level leadership is to be informed of each use of supplemental feeding through the appropriate supervisory chain(s) as the action is initiated, carried out, and reviewed after completion. The final documentation for each use of this tool will include a determination of whether it worked and to what degree. The initial release failure this year supports the critical nature of keeping more wild-born pups on the ground. However, the Directors cautioned that this practice must not become routine and the Project must practice due diligence in informing leadership, tracking the effort, and reporting outcomes up the chain.

5. Break
6. Update on proactive interdiction projects

Johnson noted that the interdiction updates provided at Wednesday's AMWG meeting by Chris Bagnoli (AGFD), Paula Capece (NMDGF), and Krista Beazley (WMAT) had been excellent. He asked them to briefly summarize their presentations for the benefit of those present today who had not been at the AMWG meeting.

- Capece – update on NM interdiction activities. San Mateo Pack - Fox Mountain permittee has receiver. Middle Fork Pack – several receivers out and range rider that will cover all allotments. Dark Canyon pack – no range rider request; funding to move to different allotment and maintain fences with \$5000 additional funding. Other projects – fence project near Gila Wilderness for enclosure for goat pasture near a preapproved release site that is not currently associated with any packs (potential good community relations project); fence project - GAC has materials and Defenders of Wildlife has pledged \$6000 for labor – there is some confusion on labor costs for this project and we are still looking for additional funding to complete it. Fladry is being used on both of the preceding projects.

Additional items – NMDGF looking into program to provide funding for youths to work for ranchers; NMDGF personnel would do the groundwork to link up ranches with access to the youths. Working with USFS range conservationists toward seasonal calving – 60-90 day window vs. year-round. The challenge is how to get the idea on the ground without it coming from the Project.

- Bagnoli - fences are being built to reduce Hawks Nest and Paradise pack impacts on private livestock owners in January; will fence off 20 acres for calving pasture. Fladry being used on Dobson/Pederson sheep holding areas near Highway 260 and Summit – night pens. Providing range rider for the Dobson cattle operations with funding from

the Mexican Wolf Conservation Fund. Through the January 2009 end-of-year count/helicopter capture operation we developed a relationship with operators within the Hawks Nest Pack territory on state trust and private lands. Marks family will receive funds for hay to facilitate calving in protected areas. Working with Ely family on calving-season changes to facilitate a narrower window during which calves are available to predators.

- Beazley – Paradise Pack den site is near a calving area, so we are using supplemental feeding with carnivore logs. This seems to be working very well – no depredations found to date. No other proactive activities occurring right now but we are asking for ear tags -- 300/year/livestock association for four of the 9 or 10 associations on the Fort Apache Indian reservation. We are also developing an ecotourism plan that we will test in mid-June. The ecotourism activities are intended to raise funds that can be allocated to the livestock associations. The dry run this year will be free, so we can assess viability of the tour program for next year.

Johnson – what use, if any, are you making of the less-than-lethal projectiles program that we developed in 2007-08? Capece – there is not a whole lot of interest in NM because of the belief that the wolves would become acclimated quickly and the projectiles not work in the long term. We have not really made LTLP widely available in the project area. Bagnoli – AGFD offered a LTLP permit to Sug Peters but she declined the offer. Beazley – WMAT does not have an authorized program yet. The Tribe is waiting on a letter from USFWS (Wally Murphy) providing authorization.

Johnson – at least some of the areas in which wolf losses have occurred have livestock permittees. Have those permittees requested any proactive measures? Oakleaf – yes, radio receivers are attached to those areas.

Oakleaf – the Mexican Wolf Conservation Fund is providing funding for certain law enforcement activities, including training.

Dave Bergman (USDA WS) – in the AMWG meeting on Wednesday, Paula mentioned that two receivers are missing. Which agency do they belong to and what effort has been made to locate them? Oakleaf – the IFT knows which permittees had the missing receivers and I have tried to get them back. They are both USFWS property. I will follow up again. Johnson – you might check to see whether the receivers have depreciated to the point at which they can be written off.

Johnson (recap from May 27 AMOC discussion) – Jerry Brownlow asked if we could discuss Defenders of Wildlife's new (March/April 2009) guidelines for claims under its compensation policy. At a field level, is anyone encountering resistance from livestock permittees to filing claims because of the 2009 changes? Oakleaf -- Gene Whetten believes it changes the requirements and he is declining to go through the process. Bagnoli – Cary Dobson expressed concern about the funding source, promptness of payment, and stipulations involved with the process. Chris Beazley (SCAT) – is there coordination with SCAT on wolf loss activities? Johnson – per SCAT request, all

coordination on wolf issues is handled by USFWS (John Oakleaf). Johnson – the Reintroduction Project has frequently advocated for the Defenders compensation program. If livestock operator concerns about the new claim requirements make this program less useful, should we advocate for the program with the changed stipulations or advise Defenders of the issue? Dale – WMAT has not noticed any changes in the claims process but perhaps that is because Defenders treats us differently or because none of our permittees are aware of the changes. All – open discussion ensued regarding the changes in the compensation process and the group considered whether it should communicate back to Defenders that the additional stipulations have caused concern and we are asking them to consider it in their process. The group acknowledged that this is a sensitive issue, because the Defenders program is still the only compensation program out there – if the agencies don't offer their own program should they criticize Defenders' program. Also, resistance to the new stipulations seems to be less of a problem than resistance to the entire program simply because it is run by Defenders. Brownlow added that there are concerns about the stipulations and public perceptions among the Navajo County livestock operators. Oakleaf – the changes make the guidelines more similar to Defenders' national guidelines. Matt Wunder (NMDGF) – Defenders will only pay where the wolf is listed. If the gray wolf is delisted in the northern Rockies and the western Great Lakes, would the Defenders compensation program only apply to the Mexican wolf? Decision: given that our intent is only to identify an issue that seems to be an impediment to an otherwise good program, the Lead Agencies and cooperators agreed to draft such a letter for future consideration (i.e. July 14 conference call).

Action Item: Johnson will draft a letter to Defenders regarding the new stipulations for claims under its depredation compensation program. Among the questions to pose: what is meant by “long term;” what is meant by “reasonable;” and what is meant by “immediate.” The letter will be reviewed during the July 14 AMOC conference call.

7. Outreach

Capece – in NM several outreach presentations have been made, some of them in conjunction with Gila National Forest events.

Bagnoli – in AZ there have also been several presentations, including at state parks, on the National Forests, and in the wildlife outreach series at the Pinetop Regional Office. More are scheduled throughout the summer, including the Desert Bighorn Sheep Society. We are also drafting articles for various outlets, including AGFD's *Wildlife Views* magazine and our television show.

Bruce Sitko (AGFD) – we are ramping up getting factual information out about wolf-related activities that are occurring on the ground. We will use AGFD media outlets for insertion of project activities with each outlet. We intend to produce weekly or bi-weekly updates on AGFD related websites. We are developing natural history workshops for AZ educators, as an avenue for developing a curriculum on wolf-related information. It is

more efficient to influence teachers to influence school-aged kids across the state than to make individual classroom presentations ourselves.

Johnson – how do these kinds of activities relate to yesterday’s discussion with the Directors about a comprehensive communication strategy? Can these ideas be incorporated in time to meet the July deadline for drafting that strategy? We also need to consider the request in the AMWG meeting to keep our wolf Web site current and complete.

Wally Murphy (USFWS) – we need to get the key messages and the delivery mechanism identified in that strategy.

Johnson – it would also be good if, as one agency develops an outreach product, such as an article for its own magazine or tv show, it would coordinate with the other cooperators to see if they can adapt it for their own media outlets.

Bergman – we also need to target the livestock operators’ publications as well – especially for distributing information on proactive measures.

Bud Fazio (USFWS) – several teacher/workshop models are available, such as from the International Wolf Center and the red wolf project (the “far traveler” model).

Mike Godwin (AGFD) – recently I interacted with a field group from Crowder College. Also, Barbara Marks is now the Arizona Cattle Growers Wildlife Committee Chair – should this project have a formal affiliation with that Committee or should it be an informal relationship?

Capece – the IFT’s recent outreach activities are listed in the update that was given at the AMWG meeting on Wednesday.

Oakleaf – we need to make a few changes in that update before it is distributed as final and posted to the Web site.

Capece – when film crews are associated with Project activities could the agencies retain the right to final edit? General response – will never happen.

Johnson – whether we are talking about printed articles or videotape, we need to keep in mind that each agency has its own policies on publications. Wildlife Services is particularly specific in this area.

Bergman – our general policy is NOT to show animals in a trap. Could agencies use the “B” footage that another agency produces?

Capece – it would be helpful to have Web site postings of very recent issues – to provide factual information that counters the rumors that sometimes are the only information available to interested parties.

Capece – we need proactive contact with media outlets for information dissemination within local papers.

Bud Starnes (NMDA) – local folks need a direct line to determine an event is true or not.

Johnson – the Project’s direct lines work – but people need to use them! Dial (888) 459-9653; (928) 339-4329; or (800) 352-0700.

Johnson – outreach is clearly crucial to success, but the workload involved – and the equitable distribution of that workload within the IFT – is also a concern.

Capece – NMDGF continues to issue press releases in association with translocation issues but general information is provided to cover several releases.

General discussion -- calls to the IFT line might increase if the numbers were more conspicuous on the Web sites and in publications. Are we using Project vehicles to display the Project logo and advertise the IFT contact numbers? Years ago AMOC agreed that all Project vehicles would be marked with identifiers but that was focused on individual agency logos, not on the Project logo or Project phone numbers.

Capece – we need to increase use of agency media outlets for information release and develop standardized Project presentations for school programs.

Johnson – again, several years ago we agreed to a standardized Project presentation for outreach presentations. Is it used? Where is it archived? If IFT members give individualized presentations, where are they archived and how are they shared for use by other Project-affiliated personnel?

General discussion – although a standardized presentation is needed for use as appropriate, we also must recognize that many presentations must be adapted to a particular group or audience. We need consistency on core messages but can have individually-adapted presentations.

8. Breck report on alternate approaches to wolf monitoring

Dr. Stewart Breck (USDA-APHIS Research Scientist), via conference call, summarized his recent assessment of telemetry options in terms of cost vs. needs for: ARGOS system integration into the current monitoring program; North Star system vs. ARGOS (different system with GPS collars) -- when collars work GPS is a good system, but half of the collars failed during the current study; ARGOS is strictly a satellite system – uses algorithms to calculate locations vs. GPS system. Would not recommend conversion be to a strict satellite/GPS system without VHF capability because you would need VHF for ground tracking options for several things. There is no “real time” component in GPS-only collars, so without VHF real time tracking would be significantly more difficult (especially on the ground, with regard to management options, recapture, removal,

permittee tracking). Collar life now vs. post-conversion cost associated with replacing collars more often. Battery life of VHF side of collars vs. what we are using now. Battery life is significantly reduced with real time tracking work.

Action Item: AMOC and the IFT will continue to assess whether and how to integrate Breck's recommendations into the Project's approach to wolf monitoring, with a focus on identifying what changes to make (if any) in 2010 and beyond.

9. Estimated costs and projected availability of funding for wolf monitoring and management flights (fixed wing and helicopter) from July 2009 through June 2010 (All)

The estimated flight costs for July 2009 through June 2010 are \$150,000. AGFD has budgeted \$100,000 (for the AGFD and WMAT shares) toward these costs and NMDGF has budgeted \$47,000. Unless fuel costs escalate appreciably during the year, this should be sufficient to cover weekly monitoring flights and the end-of-year count/helicopter capture for the period in question.

All six Lead Agencies affirmed that their budgets for the Project for the coming Fiscal Year are in place or expected to be approved at the levels necessary to maintain the Project as planned.

10. Break for lunch
11. Reconvene – AGFD and USFS filming, videotaping, etc. and any current or anticipated external proposals that fall under SOP 25 (media access to Project)

Cathy Taylor (USFS) – the USFS would like to get Project footage, but not in the near term. An AGFD crew has been videotaping and will continue to do so for a segment on the department's cable television show. Activities by cooperating agency film crews do not fall under SOP 25.0 and at present there are no requests from outside entities for media access pursuant to SOP 25.0.

12. Proposed "annual report booklet" in addition to current annual report

Johnson: a few weeks ago, Capece tried to forward a draft supplement to the Annual Report for AMOC consideration, but the file size exceeded NMDGF server limits. Capece is now reconsidering the format to see how the file size can be reduced so it is more user (and server) friendly. The consensus desire within the Project seems to be for a simple, reader-friendly document that summarizes the Annual Report, including the end-of-year count. It could replace the current 2-page EOYC summary. Printing costs and electronic access are important considerations.

Bergman – IFT workload is another concern with regard to producing a new report and outreach in general. These activities should not be allowed to impact effectiveness in the

field: wolf management is the first priority. Documentation of field actions must be up to expected standards.

Bagnoli – my entire job is administrative. Note: several people offered Chris some cheese with that wine.

Capece – NMDGF has an IFT of two employees and her job is primarily outreach.

Johnson – outreach responsibilities within the IFT should be equitably shared among the agencies. AGFD is increasingly handling things that should be shared, for example the monthly reports and AMWG updates. IFT workload must be considered in developing delivery mechanisms for the anticipated comprehensive communications strategy.

13. USDA-WS assessment of publications pertaining to saliva-based DNA testing as a means of establishing predator identity

Dr. Tony Piaggio (USDA-APHIS Research Molecular Biologist), via conference call, led a discussion of the utility of saliva-based DNA testing in determining the species and individual involved in a given depredation incident. The discussion was in response to a suggestion posed in January by an interested member of the public. Dr. Piaggio reviewed the applicable scientific literature and stated that mass media have grossly misrepresented the research into and the management utility of this technique. The procedures necessary to collect and process samples and the amount of effort required to get a result that has real-time management value are time/cost prohibitive. The turn-around time from the lab could be within a business week (not overnight) and shipping each lot of samples would cost approximately \$100. The technique is worthy of additional research and testing but it does not have management application value at this time. If funding for such research were available within this Project, there are much higher priorities.

14. Temporary Holding Pens update

Bagnoli – AGFD is moving forward with an Environmental Analysis Checklist for the potential Sipe Wildlife Area site but no completion date has been given. An update should be available for the next (July) conference call.

Bergman -- WS has 3' wide fencing that could be used to construct pens. The fencing is available on request, at no charge.

Bobbi Barrera (USFS) – the Regional office has provided funding to the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest for pens on USFS property. If the Apache-Sitgreaves is not chosen as the final site for pen construction, these funds will still be available to apply to other wolf project needs.

Taylor – some of the funds in my budget for this year could be used for other IFT needs at the Alpine office, which would free up some AGFD funds to be used for pen construction. I also have funds for proactive conservation measures.

Matt Wunder (NMDGF) -- NMDGF is not planning for any financial contribution to pen construction.

Johnson – NMDGF is really putting AGFD in a bad spot. Our Commission direction in October 2008 was for us to secure more equitable sharing of Project costs among the cooperating agencies. When we looked at alternative pen sites, you said that if the NM site was not selected NMDGF might be able to help with costs for a site in AZ. We opted to move forward with an AZ site and now you say NMDGF does not plan to help with the costs. We are only talking about NMDGF contributing about \$1000! That is very small in comparison to the total costs. Also, it's not just the costs of pen construction that is at issue – it's also how the care-taker costs (time and money) associated with holding wolves are covered by the Project as a whole.

Cynthia Dale (WMAT) – we are still deliberating on a site on FAIR but if one is selected we would need financial assistance to construct the pen.

15. USFS topics

- a. Proposal for operations in Wilderness
- b. Gila National Forest Range Conservationist Recommendations

Taylor – USFS is looking into developing a streamlined process for approval of non-conforming activities in designated Wilderness Areas. Currently, each action must be handled (approved) on a case-by-case basis. This can be problematic with some wolf management activities that need to occur quickly; however, to date we have been able to secure approvals when these requests have been made. The IFT and Forest Service District staffs are to be commended on handling of these situations thus far (e.g. injured animals removed by helicopter; capture and collaring actions; translocations; and depredation or nuisance incidents). At this time, each request will continue to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis and the circumstances involved. Requests will continue to be handled through the appropriate Ranger District wilderness specialists and District rangers and then be forwarded to the Regional Office for final approval.

Taylor – wolf presentations at the last Society for Range Management conference (in Albuquerque NM) precipitated some discussion among Forest and Ranger District staff and stakeholders. Forest Service staff (at the District and Forest level) would like to have more input and communication with the Project. A draft proposal prepared by the Gila national Forest has been reviewed by USFS and other IFT personnel for applicability. The IFT will work to keep the Forest Service range conservationists and other staffs informed and to communicate more regularly (“keep them in the loop”). Some items identified thus far will require funding – e.g. portable corral loading chutes to help in moving livestock during calving operations. Increased interest in the wolf project by Forest Supervisors and their staff, particularly range conservationists, should prove positive for the wolf project.

16. Project contact information

All participants in the meetings this week were asked to update their contact information on the three contact summaries that Johnson maintains for the Project. The update summaries will be re-distributed in early June. Project cooperators were again asked to be proactive in notifying Johnson of changes in personnel and contact information so he can keep the summaries updated. Ultimately, this is an AMOC representative and surrogate responsibility for each cooperating agency.

Action Item: in the first week of June, Johnson will redistribute update contact summaries for the Project. All Project cooperators will then magically become proactive henceforth in notifying Johnson about changes in personnel and contact information so he can keep the summaries updated.

17. Need for June 9 AMOC conference call

By consensus the June conference call was canceled. The next AMOC conference call will be on July 14, the standard second Tuesday of the month.

18. Other Business

None.

19. 1500. Adjournment