

Mexican Wolf Reintroduction Project Five-Year Review

According to the nonessential experimental population rule (rule) that authorized the Mexican Wolf Reintroduction Project, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) is required to conduct a Five-Year Review of the project. The Five-Year Review will be a formal evaluation of the biological/technical, administrative, and socio-economic aspects of the project. Although the fifth year of the project ended on March 28, 2003, the Five-Year Review will address the period through December 31, 2003. Data from 2004 will not be included because the review analyses have already begun and the year is not complete. As per the rule, included in the review will be the determination whether the program should continue, continue with modifications, or be terminated.

A. Biological/Technical Component

The biological/technical component is performed by the Interagency Field Team (IFT) under the direction of the Field Team Leaders and the Field Projects Coordinator with oversight/guidance from the Service's Region 2 Science Advisor. The IFT analyzes all available Mexican wolf project data using December 31, 2003 as the cut off date. There are three components to the technical review as follows:

1. Evaluation of issues identified in the Mexican Wolf Interagency Management Plan with comparison to the EIS projections at 5 years of reintroduction:
 1. Have wolves successfully established home ranges within the designated wolf recovery area?
 2. Have reintroduced wolves reproduced successfully in the wild?
 3. Is wolf mortality substantially higher than projected in the EIS?
 4. Is population growth substantially lower than projected in the EIS?
 5. Are numbers and vulnerability of prey adequate to support wolves?
 6. Is the livestock depredation control program adequate? (*include evaluation of the number of depredations vs. number projected vs. other wolf programs vs. the first 3 years of reintroduction*).
 7. Have documented cases of threats to human safety occurred?
 8. Have any sinks been identified?
 9. Have any sources of mortality been significantly higher than expected?

(* Note: Questions 8 and 9 are additional questions identified to be evaluated).

2. Evaluation of the biological and technical recommendations from the 3-year review Paquet Report, indicating the status of the recommendations as either: a) completed/being implemented; b) not completed/being implemented but necessary (provide justification for why it has not been completed and estimated time-frame for completion); and c) not considered necessary to complete/implement (include justification):
 1. Continue to develop appropriate opportunities to release (and re-release) wolves for at least 2 years to ensure the restoration of a self-sustaining population.

2. Begin developing population estimation techniques that are not based exclusively on telemetric monitoring.
 3. Develop data collection forms and data collection and management procedures similar to those used by the red wolf restoration program in North Carolina.
 4. Require biologists to promptly and carefully enter field data into a computer program for storage and analysis.
 5. Make all data available for research and peer review.
 6. Carefully consider using a modified #3 soft-catch trap for capturing Mexican wolves rather than the McBride #7.
 7. Encourage research that will help to inform future Program evaluations and adjustments.
 8. Develop a contemporary definition of a biologically successful wolf reintroduction and the criteria needed to measure success.
3. Evaluation of the recommendations, actions, and priority goals identified in the six working groups of the Three-Year Review Stakeholder Workshop, indicating the status as either: a) completed/being implemented; b) not completed/being implemented but necessary (provide justification for why it has not been completed and estimated time-frame for completion); and c) not considered necessary to complete/implement (include justification) [See Three-Year Review Workshop Report for specific recommendations].

B. Administrative Component

The administrative component is performed by the Adaptive Management Oversight Committee (AMOC) with specific questions/issues assigned to specific AMOC representatives (designated in parenthesis) for completion. There are three components to the administrative component as follows:

1. Evaluation of the administrative questions identified in the Mexican Wolf Interagency Management Plan:
 1. Is effective cooperation occurring with other agencies and the public? (The survey that was done for the Three-Year Review will be repeated for the Five-Year Review and will be conducted by Arizona Game and Fish personnel)
 2. Are combined agency funds and staff adequate to carry out needed management, monitoring, and research? (Johnson)
2. Evaluation of the organizational recommendations from the Three-year review Paquet Report, indicating the status of the recommendations as either: a) completed/being implemented; b) not completed/being implemented but necessary (provide justification for why it has not been completed and estimated time-frame for completion); and c) not considered necessary to complete/implement (include justification):
 1. Modify the recovery team by inviting an appropriate individual other than the recovery coordinator to serve as the team leader. (Buchanan)
 2. Instruct the modified recovery team to revise by June 2002 the 1982 recovery plan.

- (Buchanan)
3. Immediately engage the services of the modified recovery team. (Buchanan)
 4. Immediately modify the final rule and develop authority to conduct releases into the Gila National Forest. (Buchanan)
 5. Immediately modify the final rule to allow wolves that are not management problems to establish territories outside the Blue Range Wolf Recovery Area. (Buchanan)
 6. Resist any opportunity to reintroduce Mexican wolves in the White Sands Wolf Recovery Area. (Buchanan)
 7. Provide biologists with opportunities to visit other wolf projects to gain training with capturing and handling free-ranging and captive wolves. (Bergman)
 8. Station the Field Coordinator in the Blue Range Wolf Recovery Area (e.g. in Glenwood or Silver City, New Mexico or Alpine, Arizona) and insist that this person be intimately involved with all aspects of fieldwork (wolf management, public relations, data collection, management, analysis, report preparation, etc.) (Buchanan)
 9. Put forth a concerted effort to develop realistic expectations for the project. (Johnson)
 10. Initiate programs to educate people about wolf behavior. (Dale)
 11. Require livestock operators on public land to take some responsibility for carcass management/disposal to reduce the likelihood that wolves become habituated to feeding on livestock. (Murphy)
 12. When writing or lecturing about the project, the Service should emphasize a community approach to understanding the wolf reintroduction project and its effect on other species and ecological processes. (Hayes)
3. Evaluation of the recommendations from the Arizona-New Mexico independent review of the Three-Year Review indicating the status of the recommendations as either: a) completed/being implemented; b) not completed/being implemented but necessary (provide justification for why it has not been completed and estimated time-frame for completion); and c) not considered necessary to complete/implement (include justification). [See the State's review document for specific recommendations]. (Johnson and Hayes)

C. Socio-Economic Component

Industrial Economics, Inc. will furnish the necessary personnel, material, equipment, services, and facilities to estimate the socio-economic aspects of the Mexican wolf reintroduction project using all existing information. This shall include, but not be limited to, information from the Reintroduction of the Mexican Wolf within its Historic Range Final Environmental Impact Statement, and information and recommendations provided by the working groups in the Three-Year Review Stakeholder Workshop (i.e., Human Dimensions Working Group, Economic Issues Working Group, etc.). Additional data collection may be required to fully assess all categories of cultural and economic effects. Impacts will be addressed at both the primary and secondary recovery areas (i.e., the entire Blue Range Wolf Recovery Area).

Industries to be considered in the analysis include ranching, hunting guides and outfitters, forest

products, recreation, and tourism (travel, lodging, restaurants, etc.). Due to the regional importance of this issue, the contractor will employ local experts as appropriate to augment in-house staff and add credibility to the analysis. Impacts to surrounding tribes and cumulative impacts accruing to the local and regional economies will also be considered. The types of impacts to address include business output, employment, value added, and taxes. To the extent that they are readily identifiable and measurable, non-market effects will also be considered as part of the analysis.

Five-Year Review Schedule for Completion and Review Process

A. Technical Component:

1. IFT submits first technical draft report to Adaptive Management Oversight Committee (AMOC) and Technical Subgroup of Southwestern Distinct Population Segment Gray Wolf Recovery Team (Recovery Team) as independent reviewers by October 8, 2004.
2. AMOC and Technical Subgroup review and comment, make recommendations, and provide input if additional evaluation criteria are needed by November 5, 2004.
3. IFT revises technical draft report according to input received from AMOC and Technical Subgroup by November 30, 2004.
4. Revised technical draft report provided to entire Recovery Team (including Stakeholder Subgroup) and Adaptive Management Working Group (AMWG) by December 6, 2004. The Recovery Team will have opportunity to discuss comments/questions at January 21-22, 2005 Recovery Team meeting in Albuquerque; AMWG will have opportunity to discuss comments/questions at January 26-29, 2005 AMWG meetings in Truth or Consequences NM, Glenwood NM, Alpine AZ, and Phoenix AZ. Final comments by Recovery Team and AMWG due by March 15, 2005.
5. IFT revises technical draft report according to input received from AMWG and Recovery Team and submits to AMOC by April 30, 2005.
6. AMOC discusses draft technical report at June 17, 2005 AMWG meeting and provides final comments to IFT by June 30, 2005.
7. IFT makes final edits and produces final technical report by July 15, 2005.
8. Final Five-Year Review technical report approved by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service by July 31, 2005.
9. Final Five-Year Review report made available to public through AMWG and Recovery Team by August 31, 2005.
10. Final Five-Year Review technical report prepared for publication in a scientific journal. Completion date yet to be determined.

B. Administrative Component

The administrative component will follow the same schedule and review process identified above.

C. Socio-Economic Component

This component of the review has been contracted to Industrial Economics, Inc. A stakeholder kickoff meeting was held on October 16 in Springerville, Arizona to initiate the review and to seek input regarding socioeconomic impacts of wolves in the BRWRA. A review schedule will be identified following this meeting.

Notes:

1. All review documents provided internally or to the public shall be in electronic format, as files downloadable from cooperator websites or pdfs or word-processed documents on cds available at public libraries and cooperating state, federal, and tribal agencies in Arizona and New Mexico.
2. The reintroduction project is a matter of law, as has been discussed on numerous occasions at a variety of venues. The courts have clearly and repeatedly affirmed the legality of the reintroduction, and the mandate to pursue it under the Endangered Species Act as a component of wolf recovery. Hence, the focus of the Five-Year Review will be on objectively identifying specifics about what has worked well and what has not worked well thus far in the reintroduction project, and what should be done in terms of law, policy, and/or procedure to improve the project to better address the relevant recovery and social issues. Comments regarding position statements (like/dislike, agree/disagree with the Mexican reintroduction project) will not be considered relevant to this review.
3. Any changes from the Five-Year Review process identified above will notified/distributed via the SWDPS Recovery Team Listserve or the Reintroduction Project News, which is available by self-subscription at <http://azgfd.com/eservices/subscribe.shtml>. You MUST sign up for the newsletter yourself.
4. Only written comments submitted through the U.S. Postal Service to the USFWS will be accepted. Comments must be postmarked no later than March 15, 2005 and mailed to:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
New Mexico Ecological Services Field Office
2105 Osuna Road, NE
Albuquerque, NM 87113
ATTENTION: Mexican Wolf Project: Five-Year Review

