

Mexican Wolf Recovery Program



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Mexican wolves

- Most unique subspecies of gray wolf in North America
- Smallest (50-80 lbs)
- Southern-most occurring
- Ecological generalist – Generally in forested areas with adequate prey



Anti-Predator Campaign (1890-1930)



Extirpated in SW United States by 1970
Extirpated in Mexico by mid 1980s

Listing Status of Mexican wolf

- 1976 – listed as endangered subspecies
- 1978 – subsumed into gray wolf listing
- 2015 – listed as endangered subspecies



- due to:
 - illegal killing
 - inbreeding
 - loss of heterozygosity
 - loss of adaptive potential
 - small population size

Recovery of Mexican Wolves

- 1977 – captured some of last remaining wolves in Mexico
- Initiated Bi-National captive breeding program with 7 wolves
- 1982 – Finalized recovery plan
 - *Maintain captive breeding program*And
 - *Re-establish self-sustaining population of at least 100 Mexican wolves in the wild*



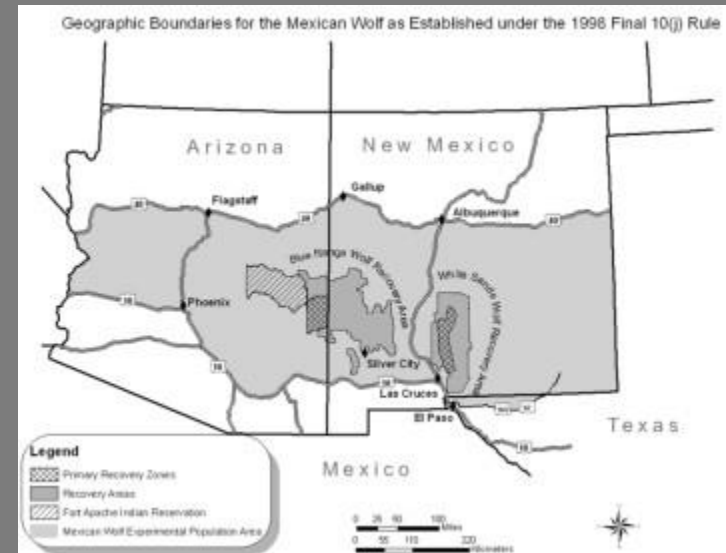
Captive Breeding Facilities



- 240-300 wolves in 50+ captive breeding facilities in US and Mexico
- All managed under Mexican Wolf Species Survival Plan
- Breeding controlled to maintain genetic diversity

Mexican Wolf Wild Population

- 1998: designated experimental population in Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas
- 1998: U.S. first released Mexican wolves into wild
- 2011: México first released Mexican wolves into wild



2015 Wild Population in U.S.

- Minimum of 97 Wolves
- Declined from 110 in 2014 due to lower survival of pups and higher mortality
- 21 packs; 10 with at least 1 pup
- 23 pups



*Current as of December 31, 2015

Depredation and Predation in U.S.



- 2015: 52 livestock confirmed killed



- 80% of diet is elk. States have not detected impact on elk populations



Current objectives

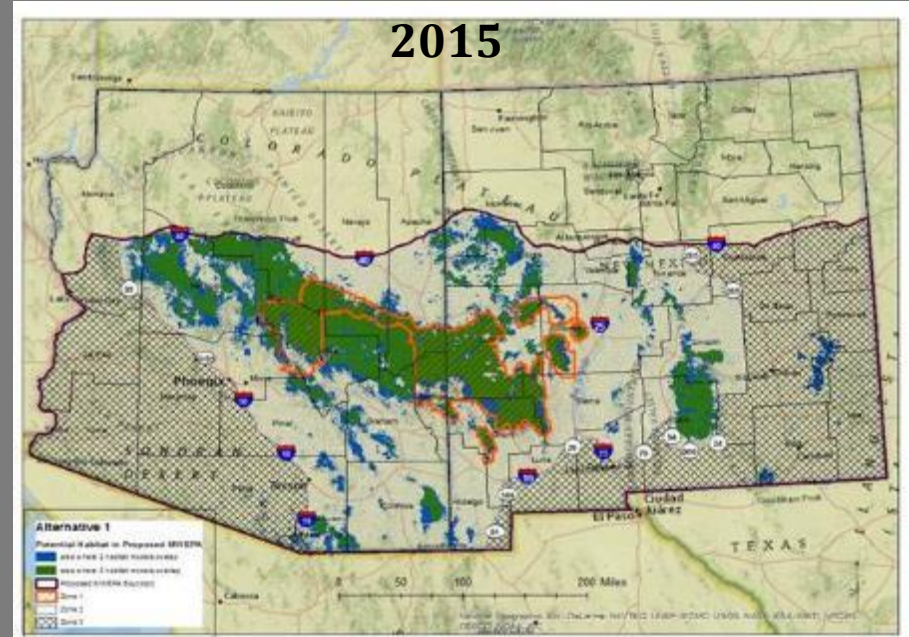
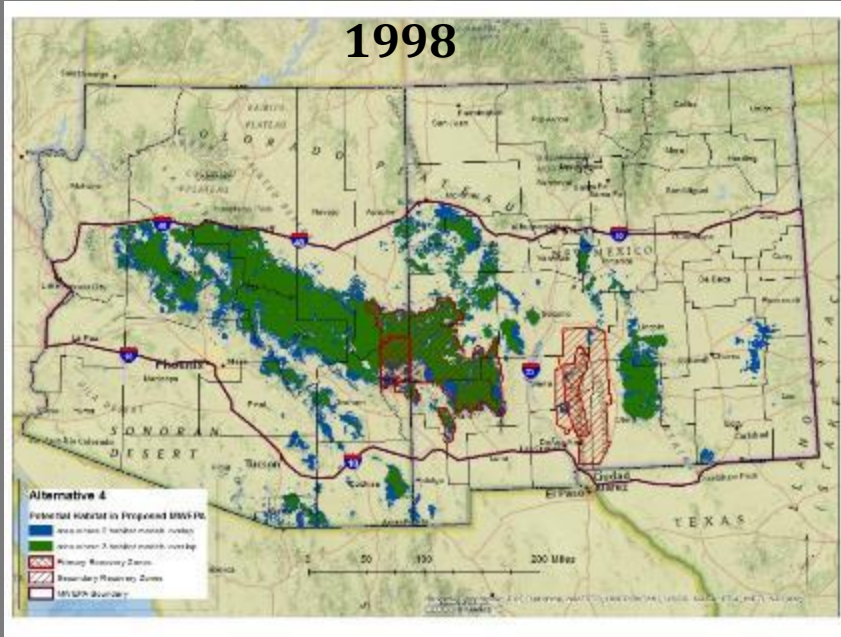
- ◉ Grow current population to 300-325
- ◉ Reduce conflicts with livestock
- ◉ Release wolves from captive population to increase genetic diversity of wild population
- ◉ Revise recovery plan (how many and where)



2015 Changes to Management

- Listed Mexican wolf as endangered subspecies
- Revised Mexican Wolf Experimental Population Rule:
 - Increased area where wolves can be released from captivity to improve genetics
 - Provided for population growth: 300-325
 - Clarified take provisions

Mexican Wolf Experimental Population Area



Expands the area from 7,212 mi² to over 153,853 mi² (including 31,363 mi² of suitable habitat).

Expands release area from 1,153 mi² to 12,507 mi².

Experimental Population

Experimental Populations have more management flexibility, including:

- Relaxes prohibitions on take (harassment, injury, killing)
- Allows release and translocation of wolves
- Allows removal of problem wolves



Project Efforts to Reduce Livestock Conflicts in U.S.

- Supplemental hay
- Development of water sources
- Alter grazing rotations away from wolf dens
- Range riders
- Telemetry equipment loan
- Diversionary feeding



Releases of wolves from captivity



- Release adult pair with pups
- Issues – naïve wolves may cause nuisance



Cross-Fostering Wolf Pups



Recovery Planning

- Meeting with 4 Corner states, Mexico Government, and scientists
- Facilitated by IUCN Conservation Breeding Specialist Group
- Recovery Team established in 2010 is on hold
- Draft and Final Recovery plans due in 2017



Let's hear from you...

- What are your thoughts about this partnership story so far?
- Is this a “typical” recovery story? Why or why not?
- What do you think happened next?



Partnerships

MOU

USFS, USDA
Wildlife
Service,
USFWS, AZ
G&F, Tribes
and
Counties
(manage
wild
population)

Species Survival Plan & MOU

51 Zoos in
US & Mexico
(breeding)
Turner
Endangered
Species
Fund (pre-
release
facility)

Cooperative Agreements

AGFD, White
Mountain
Apache
Tribe
(manage
popn);

Universities
(curation,
DNA)

MOU

NFWF (Wolf
/ Livestock
Council)

Tribal Working Group

12 Tribes
and Pueblos
(wolf
recovery)

Trilateral Agreement for cross-border species (US, Mexico, Canada)



Litigation

- 4 lawsuits on the 2015 revisions to the 10j Rule, EIS,
 - WildEarth Guardians
 - Defenders of Wildlife et al.
 - New Mexico Counties and cattlegrowers et al.
 - Safari Club International New Mexico
- Settlement agreement to complete draft and final recovery plan by November 2017
 - Defenders of Wildlife et al.
 - Arizona Game and Fish Department



Legislation

- Proposed legislation in House to delist the Mexico wolf and give management to states
- Proposed legislation in Senate requiring recovery plan in 6 months
 - acceptable to states, livestock producers, ranchers, managers or owners of natural resources or private lands, recreation interests, counties, and other interested state parties
 - If we don't comply management goes to states
 - Wolf will be automatically delisted when pop goal met

State Perspectives

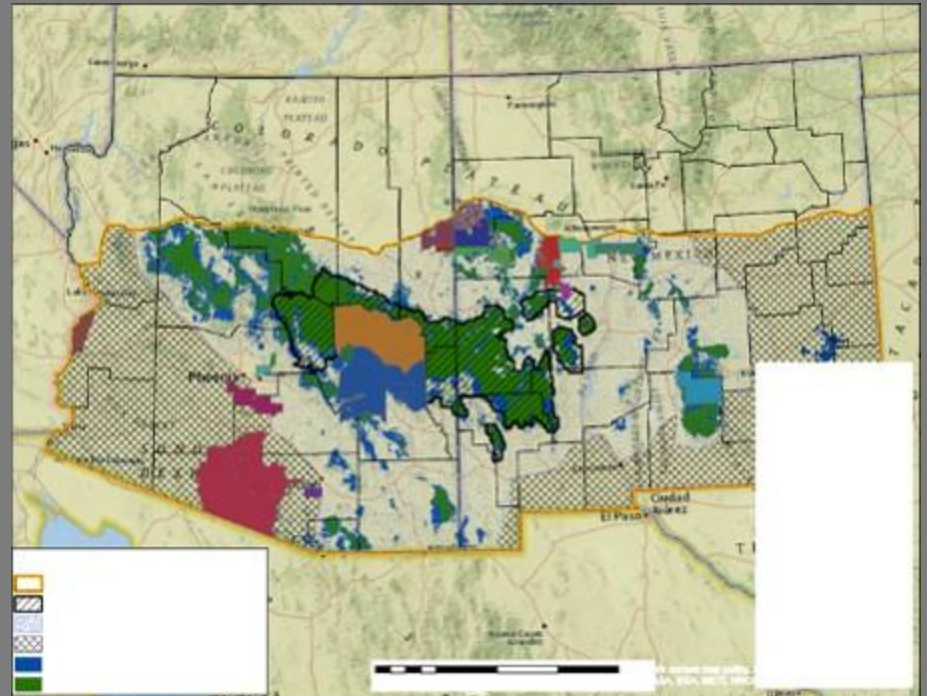
- Concerned about
 - reduction of elk and hunting license revenue
 - relationship with livestock producers
- oppose Federal management of state wildlife
- Concerned about releases of wolves from captivity – often results in nuisance behavior



Tribe and Pueblo Perspectives

Varies based on:

- Historic culture with wolves (stories and songs)
- Current economy (livestock and trophy hunts)
- Lack of trust of Federal government (treaties, sovereignty)



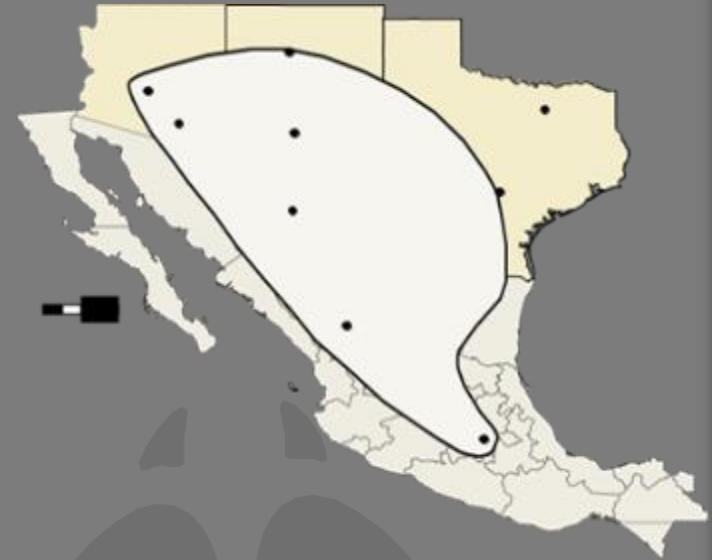
Environmental Community Perspectives



- Wolves are important to a healthy ecosystem
- It is taking too long to achieve recovery
- Oppose grazing on Federal lands; FWS gives too much deference to livestock producers
- Depredating wolves should not be removed
- FWS should release many more wolves from captivity as soon as possible
- Want wolf recovery in Utah and Colorado; these states strongly oppose wolves

Perspectives in Mexico

- Wolves extirpated in the 1980s; listed as endangered species in Mexico
- Mexico began releases in 2011; high levels of mortality
- No Federal land in Mexico; have some conservation overlays on private lands
- Livestock grazing and trophy hunting important to local communities
- Lack of data on deer populations; no wildlife management
- Illegal drug activity precludes access to many areas
- US States want most of recovery to be in Mexico



Livestock Producer Perspectives



- Helping to feed America
- Got rid of wolves, and don't want them back
- Concern for safety
- Enough other predators already
- On financial edge due to drought and Federal regulations
- The ESA is ruining their communities (Mex spotted owl destroyed timber; wolf is destroying grazing and hunting)
- Want significantly more compensation for depredations and maximum management of wolves

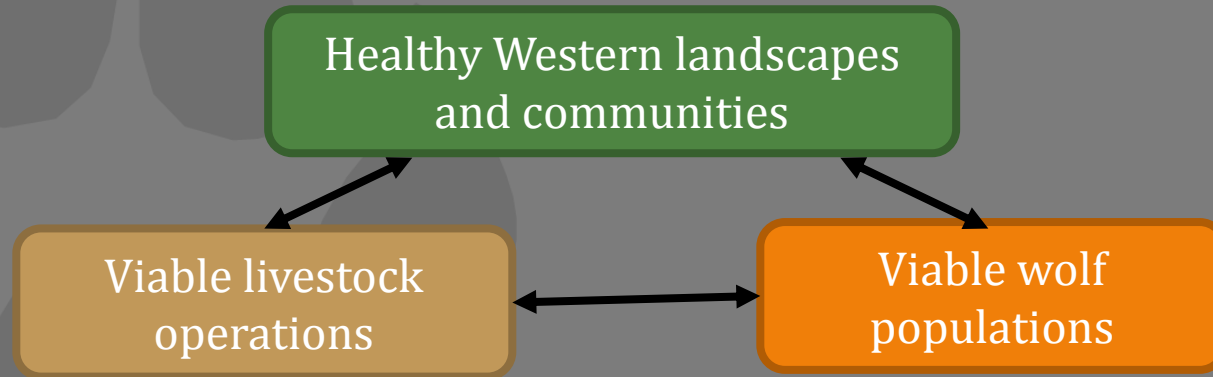
Mexican Wolf/Livestock Council

11 Ranchers, environmental groups, tribes, and county coalitions. In 2015:

- \$68,199 in depredation compensation
- \$85,000 in payments for presence
- 1:1 match from Defenders of Wildlife and Mexican Wolf Fund –proactive conflict avoidance measures



Council Goals



Maintain healthy western landscapes and communities while supporting viable ranching operations and viable wolf populations

- Payments for Presence are formula based
 - wolf territories, core areas, pups
 - no. of livestock exposed to wolves
- Requires additional funding





Lessons Learned

- Difficult to find consensus with issues that evoke strong emotion
- Important to understand agency missions and stakeholder perspectives and look for overlap
- Wolves are political lightning rods; Congressional issues take a lot of time esp. in election years
- Stories and local knowledge outweigh scientific facts and travel faster
- Important to stay with the science, but make it accessible to lay people
- Important to keep leadership informed (no surprises)
- We need to do more stakeholder engagement
- Hard to gain trust;
- Easy to lose trust



Questions?

