

Multi-NRCD Meeting Minutes
July 15, 2014
Natural Resource Conservation Service Complex
Tucson, Arizona

Attendee list at end of Minutes

This joint meeting of seven Natural Resource Conservation Districts, agencies of Arizona State Government, was held at the NRCS Conference Room, Tucson to discuss initiating coordination with USFWS pertaining to the NEPA document for the Proposed Revision to the Nonessential Experimental Population of the Mexican Wolf under and the ESA 10(j) rule.

The meeting was called to order at 10:55 by Bill Dunn.

Bill Dunn nominated Cindy Coping to chair the meeting.

It was moved and seconded for Bill Dunn to chair the meeting.

Dunn: There's going to be some costs involved and I don't know how to do it except just split it up. Hereford has offered to be the Treasurer, keep the monies and disburse them, and report.

Monzingo: What kind of costs are involved?

Dunn: Margaret Byfield, refreshments, recording secretary.

Meyer: I make a motion that Hereford NRCD act as our Treasurer. Motion seconded and voted on.

Margaret Byfield called in and connected via teleconference.

Dunn: We've already called our individual districts' meetings to order and we're OK with the open meeting requirements for THIS meeting, but can you explain them for future reference.

Byfield: In a joint coordination meeting – each of the local agencies call their meetings to order and name a chair. They go through their agendas, and then each of the local agencies adjourns their meetings. Then you will all publish your Minutes and distribute them.

Dunn: So each district will try to have a quorum at each agency.

Byfield: If they don't have a quorum, they don't have to officially open their meeting as they won't be able to conduct official business.

Floor: So, each local agency votes separately?

Byfield: You go through topics you want to discuss, but as far as official business to vote on you can only vote on when the next meeting will be. This is NOT a coordination meeting. A coordination meeting is when the other agency is sitting at the table with you.

This right now is an organizational meeting. A coordination meeting is when you meet with another government entity. You will need to go back to your boards if you want to set up a meeting with FWS on an action item.

Jim Chilton: Do they HAVE to coordinate?

Byfield: The Endangered Species Act says they do NOT have to coordinate. They have to take into account local conservation regulations.

Dunn: The 10J rule is a NEPA document. What about FLPMA?

Byfield: No, that's BLM. If US Fish & Wildlife are the major lead on determining NEPA regarding the wolf, they are required to coordinate, in order to prepare a NEPA document. The BLM is involved in FLPMA. The lands involved could be lands managed by Forest Service, but at the end of the day the document you're dealing with involves Fish & Wildlife.

Rachel Thomas: Margaret, you're breaking up so much that it's hard to understand you. Mary Darling is here so why don't we just take it from here.

Dunn: What happened was that Margaret was supposed to be her but she was held up at the airport.

Chilton: Mary, are you familiar with the NEPA requirements?

Darling: I have it in front of me. Yes, Fish & Wildlife has the responsibility to work with local governments and get input as to impacts.

Dunn: I asked Jim DeVos and Jon Cooley [of Arizona Game & Fish Department] to come today as they will end up managing the wolf instead of Fish & Wildlife. We want to align our strategies with what they think needs to happen. Jim, do you want to address this?

Jim Devos: Thanks for inviting us. The Mexican wolf seems to stir up a lot of interest everywhere we go. The F&WS is preparing a rewrite of the 10J rule and it will be released on July 24. There is also a listing/delisting proposal. The wolf nationally is listed as an endangered species. There are about 4,000 in the Great Lakes region and 1,700 in the Rockies. If wolves wander into those areas they are considered endangered. The EIS will be out, we anticipate, this month. The delisting package is being reviewed in Washington right now. I have a sense there are only a handful of people in the U.S. who understand this.

The draft EIS and the draft 10J rule will be released in July.

Part of the timing of all of this is that a group of environmental litigants – Center of Biological Diversity and other like-minded agencies – are suing the F&WS over their handling of the wolves. They have until January 2015. I expect we'll see a 60-day comment period. There will be open comment meetings on August 11 in Truth or Consequences, New Mexico and August 13 at Honda Resort in Pine Top, Arizona.

Our belief is that if you're not at the table you have no ability to know what's going on and no way to represent land-based people like yourselves. I suspect the agency is doing things different now but the F&WS is the action agency and will make the ultimate decision on all of the documents for listing/delisting.

AGFD facilitates input from cattle growers and other groups. They drafted comments about 10J. They coordinating cooperating agencies to get input from the livestock community (position is 'no more wolves').

AGFD in May voted to support the cooperating agencies' alternative, basically recognizing there is a federal statute that will guide the recovery of the Mexican wolf. The decision of yes wolves/no wolves was made 30 years ago. We are providing a balanced approach to ensure there are very effective mechanisms to control wolf behavior. We believe there should be 150 wolves in Arizona. The USF&WS believes there is a NEED hundreds one hundred to thousands of wolves in Arizona and New Mexico.

Some of the people they've used as advisors focus on developing genetic diversity so in order to do that there must be 250 wolves of each subspecies so that there is a connectivity among the populations.

AGFD believe we only need 150 wolves with manageability, with manageability defined as being able to remove wolves exhibiting unacceptable behavior.

Jon Cooley: The basic management areas are:

- Blue Range – essentially the same as what exists now as per the 1998 rule. Initial releases would be done.

- Mexican Wolf Management Area – Mexico holds 90% of habitat for the wolf and anything done in Mexico would be a contribution to recovery, not recovery itself. We need to provide connectivity with Arizona and New Mexico wolf populations.

Devos: There are a number of environmental litigants who will take the agencies to task about wolf management. What they want is to have wolves from Canada to the Sierra Madre. What WE believe is that what the cooperative agencies propose is valid in a court of law to contribute to recovery. Mexico has to play a key role in this.

There certainly are issues in the F&WS and their approach, but if the cooperative agencies could not demonstrate there is a meaningful contribution to recovery, there's a guarantee that everything would be litigated, and a court would decide how to manage the wolf, and the stakeholders would not have a say.

At least one of the enviro-litigants has 50 attorneys. It seems as if the DOJ attorneys are more likely to settle than litigate actions. The point being that I don't think the stakeholders' alternative has legal holes and I think it's a scientifically sound, very safe argument.

The 10J language is an amendment to the Endangered Species Act that the area for recovery is experimental, not essential. (Here he cited an example of the California Condor successful recovery using this approach.)

Dunn: I'm trying to figure out what the stakeholders' position is on that area south of I-10 – do they want to breed the wolves there and bring them up?

Devos: One of the problems with the 10J and the definition of the 10(j) is that if a wolf comes into that area, it is protected. The stakeholders proposed there are to be no protected zones north of I-40.

South of I-10 would be an area where wolves would be allowed to distribute THROUGH. If they cannot have connectivity to Mexico, that would be a fatal flaw in the cooperative agencies' alternative.

Floor: Didn't they know that 30 years ago?

Devos: Sure, if we go back to the existing recovery plan established in 1982 there was a target to get to 100 wolves. That was not a recovery number. Again, we're trying to CONTRIBUTE to recovery. I can predict wolves south of I-10 will be controlled by court order.

There are 52 captive breeding programs scattered across the U.S. and Mexico. Mexico has an endangered species act. Recovery of the Mexican Wolf in Mexico is a high priority throughout the country. They have 3 Mexican Wolves now. They have the support of the F&WS and non-governmental organizations in Mexico. There are no equivalents of state wildlife agencies; only a national one.

Floor: Did their wolves come from the Blue Range?

Devos: Yes they're all of the same parentage - not necessarily out of the Blue Range itself, but they all come from the same lineages.

Floor: They are all part dog, correct?

Devos: No, I hear that all the time. There is no validity to that. Every time they're tested they come back pure grey wolves. At first, the wolves didn't act wild and some mated with dogs and those pups were all destroyed.

Dunn: Do you want to talk on the department's stand on re-listing?

Devos: They want to de-list the populations of gray wolves. But if a wolf goes from the area in Montana to, say Oregon, it becomes a fully protected wolf. The fact that they meet their recovery goals is a critical juncture to de-list the northern wolf. We believe the wolf should be delisted in the northern part of the area.

Again, every decision we make in the wolf world is based on staying out of court and each state can manage the Mexican wolf. There are only 83 or 85 we acknowledge in the wild now. Clearly there aren't enough issues to de-list them.

The listing is *Canis lupus*. If we strip the protection from the northern wolf and don't apply it to the southern wolf, we're headed to the district court, and the court is favorable to the environmental litigants over biologically-based state wildlife agency actions.

Cooley: In the case of the northern wolf, they have connectivity with Canada. We don't have that same biological argument here in the Southwest.

Thomas: How many do we have in captivity?

Devos: Last I heard we had 260. So we have roughly 350.

Dunn: What is the number for delisting?

Devos: I don't know. We'll find out on July 24.

Darling: They won't tell us.

Devos: What I anticipate there will be no number. We feel there is a need to have an absolute number on that document but under ESA even though Arizona is a full authority on Section 6 agreement, the authority of management of the grey wolf is solely with the F&WS. We believe they're taking liberty with the congressional language of the 10J section of the Endangered Species Act.

Until you see it in writing on the Federal Register, it's all speculation, but they've all talked about 10% increase over 10 years, and that would be about 250 wolves in Arizona and New Mexico. What that means is murky. Delisting? Turning over management to us? We don't know.

Cooley: The absence of a recovery plan confounds the process as well. They started the team before October 2012 and there was an effort made but it never went through.

Devos: They know lawsuits are inevitable. There have been 3 attempts to have a recovery plan. I think part of why they never came to fruition, regardless of how it happened, the draft chapter that dealt with the recovery number was widely leaked and it caused a problem. The litigation says you've got to have an EIS by January.

It's unparalleled to have an EIS, 10J and recovery plan all at the same time. We want what is biologically appropriate rather than what is socially acceptable to other groups.

Dunn: What their first deal was in the 10(j) was a goal of 100 and that's what they did in the Northern Rockies and Minnesota, and now it seems like a bait-and-switch deal.

Devos: The final EIS came out in 1996 and there were zero wolves on the ground and had no real sense of where they were headed. They set a trajectory that there would be 100 by 2006.

Cooley: It is not referred to as a recovery goal, but as a re-introductory plan.

Devos: They did periodic reviews - at the 5-year review they were stalled at 50 wolves, due to size of the area, shooting, car accidents not increasing at the projected rate. With re-evaluation at 2007 they did some scoping and our comments challenged that as being too old to be effective. Basically the population was stagnant at 50, they couldn't get a recovery plan done, they identified the Blue Range as too restrictive. Personally I think a lot of the wolves were still captive releases and those wolves did stupid things and I think all but 1 or 2 now are wild born. At the end of 2013 the population was not less than 83, about a 13% increase over the year before, the year before that a 30% increase, the year before that a 20% increase. Wild wolves know how to make a living better than captive wolves. Wild wolves are not immune to livestock depredation than the captive-released wolves.

Floor: What are the barriers, both physical and social or international legal?

Devos: In the early 1900's, as they eradicated wolves in AZ and NM and every year they would re-colonize from Mexico. There was no barrier at that point. My belief is that the fences there today are not an impediment.

Floor: So legally that's not shown as an impediment,

Devos: I would say no. Federal science takes precedence in court over State science.

Chilton: My ancestors showed up here in 1887 and the government systemically got rid of wolves and I thought that was a good idea and I'm just outraged, outraged over the idea that the F&WS is demanding wildlife connectivity in the area between Nogales and Sasabe and other areas, meaning no wall. I personally am of the opinion that national security is far more important than wolves, for humanitarian reasons. In Pima County, over 2,000 people have died coming across the country. We need to secure the border for national security and humanitarian reasons. 20,000 tons of trash is dropped by the 2-legged wolves. And the economic impact of wolves on ranchers trying to make a living is just outrageous. I attended the last Board meeting of the AZ Cattle Growers Association and heard, for example, it costs about \$300 a cow to keep them safe from wolves. They passed a policy that no more than 100 wolves, period, in both AZ and NM, should be allowed. We're going to discuss it next week at our convention. The 1982 recovery plan should be just that: 100 wolves. We appreciate the work the stakeholders' group has done and I believe the alternative is very good but we just can't take the 250 – 300 wolves in it. I want you and Jon and Director Voyles to know we can't accept the 250-300.

Devos: I've been in rooms like this many times in the last 10 months and the number people want ranges from zero to thousands. I appreciate everything you've said and I appreciate that every person in here who has livestock in wolf country has paid a price.

This discussion is going to end up in the Tucson District Court because it's a friendly court. The science to me indicates that you have to have 250-300 beasts to have a self-sustaining population.

The commission is going to listen to the cattle growers but I can only repeat that 100 wolves is not a biologically feasible number for recovery.

The environmental litigants have very deep-pocket clients that are ready to sue.

Floor: What about prey base?

Devos: If there's not prey, they will wander THROUGH, which is what we want. There IS prey, however, - white-tail deer.

If I was in your shoes I'd rather have the ability to manage wolves rather than have the F&WS do it.

If the area is covered by the 10J, if a wolf comes in there in any manner, the wolf will be protected by the Endangered Species Act, unless we do something based on a well-founded scientific data.

Floor: You want them to de-list the northern wolf and re-list the southern wolf?

Devos: As a sub-species, yes. Under Section 6 the state of AZ has a Full Authority Agreement and we maintain equal footing with USF&WS. We think that those folks on the local terrain are better managers than folks managing from Washington DC.

There are organizations that are not concerned about the sport of hunting or productivity of the land and they don't want us out there. These conservation organizations range from extremist to centrist, and I'm talking about folks who are very litigious.

Floor: What can the court hold against us as saying we're not coordinating with Mexico, whether it be county to county, city to city etc. What do we need to do so that doesn't happen?

Devos: Interesting. I spoke with a wildlife agency rep from Mexico and I think if we had more money we could do more. We had an on-the-ground capacity with a biologist in Mexico but he's gone on to get a post-doc and we need to start again.

I think we can demonstrate a strong capacity of working with Mexico. We want wolves in Mexico because it takes a lot of pressure off of us. Some people want to see wolves in places like the Grand Canyon and Southern Colorado. Some would like to see Mexico fail but their successes in Mexico are not dissimilar to ours in the US for a program in its infancy.

Carl Hawley: The Mexican government receives funding from us?

Devos: They get logistical help and technical advice.

Cindy Coping: Does Mexico's effort only involve captive-bred wolves, or also wild-caught wolves, considering the population here will continue to grow?

Devos: We've recognized that wolves that are captive-bred and released are less successful and cause more problems. One option is to have a facility where wolves are collared, become wild and then be released. Our push to have an actual number in the 10J is that once that number is reached we can relocate wild-born well-behaved wolves from the Arizona landscape.

The other thing we're doing is called cross-fostering: you take a wolf with desirable genetics and she has pups the same time as a wild-born and combine them.

Dunn: Where are the tribes on this?

Cooley: White Mountain Apache in 1998-99-2000 passed a resolution to adopt a Mexican wolf management plan (instead of relying on F&WS). San Carlos has been fairly consistent about not wanting to have wolves on their reservation; this doesn't relieve them of having to manage wolves on their reservation and they work with F&WS to handle it.

Apache are concerned about their game and livestock operations.

Floor: Do they have to follow our rules regarding Endangered Species Act?

Cooley: Yes. Tribal lands are part of the federal mix the rest of us deal with. There is some legal debate about the Act being applicable to reservation lands but most tribes follow it.

Dunn: Let's attempt to talk with Margaret again.

Byfield: Well, Bill, what questions do you have for me?

Dunn: What would you suggest be our first order of business?

Byfield: With AGFD and F&WS we're not talking cooperative agencies, we're talking coordination. Bring them the information you have on science and economics. That's

the target is to get this info in front of them where they have to respond and get into that open discussion with you.

You've got the actual listing.

You've got the experimental area.

You've got the economic impact issue.

If there's a conflict with their proposal and your issues they need to offer a plan to resolve them. You have to go in with a unified position.

Dunn: I invited Ashley Kerna with U of A Coop Extension to join us today.

Ashley Kerna: I will be making a presentation on the contribution of the beef industry to the entire state of AZ, including cattle productions as well as slaughter for food and tanning and leather processing, at the cattle growers' conference on Saturday.

Dunn: If we hired or used you somehow, you could mirror what they put into their economic analysis.

Kerna: Knowing all the assumptions they made, I could replicate that study.

Darling: In DC, they have two people doing an economic impact study and their numbers are so far off and general.

Kerna: Everything is taken as a national average. In agriculture, that doesn't work.

Byfield: You're saying the input they use is a national number, not a county or city number?

Kerna: They use shares, so it trues up to whatever your sales are.

Dunn: F&WS guidelines require that their data can be reproduced. You can challenge them on their numbers.

Byfield: Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument – one of the things the county did there is hire an economist who looks at things by county and city and how the loss of cattle have local impact and his numbers are much more dramatic than the national model. We have to show the national agencies they are wrong and that's something you need to bring to a coordination meeting. We can't just say their numbers are bad, we have to show them they are and why.

Darling: Catron County, New Mexico has done this so we do have some hard facts.

Dunn: The next thing we're going to do is to agree on shooting for zero or 100 or a thousand, if AGFD gets to manage it.

Darling: But what is your intent going into NEPA - are you looking to say no to everything, or work with existing alternatives F&WS came up with and comment on the DEIS?

Dunn: How many alternatives do they have?

Darling: Four. They're not available until later in July.

Chilton: We need to link in with the cooperating agencies but I just can't stand the number of 250-300.

Darling: We need to use science. Biologically based, 100 is not good. But you may not want a biological alternative.

Chilton: I don't think biology is what the US Fish and Wildlife Service should focus on. People are far more important than wolves, and as a consequence 100 are too many but if it gives people their jollies to know there are 100 wolves out there. I appreciate Jim DeVos' idea that we need 250, but if we do, we'll put ranchers out of business, we'll lose elk, and endanger children walking to school.

Byfield: You've hit the nail on the head. You're the producers impacted by the wolf, You suffer the losses, no one else is. We need to communicate the impact on the human environment. That's your strength and that's what you know but it's not being communicated to the agencies. We need to get them to start worrying about the producers who are losing business because of their decisions. It's an element they underestimate every time.

Devos: You guys are down to the point of talking about YOUR position. Do you need anything else from Jon and me about the state's position and input? The only thing I would say is that we weren't afraid of being sued, but to limit the number of wolves that would be acceptable.

Coping: When you came up with your 250 wolves number, did you consider the impact on elk?

Devos: We came up with 3 wolves per 1,000 elk. An educated guess is that there are about 145,000 elk from Highway 87 east. If we go over 250 wolves, we lose more elk.

Darling: Is there a strategy to come up with different economic analyses based on different numbers of wolves?

Devos: One thing I lament is that every one of you in this room share common goals with those of us in the wildlife agencies. This group has to come together and be in a position to make a decision based on health and human safety and biology.

Richard Searle: If, say, zero, the whole wolf re-introduction is a failure.

Devos: It's a non-starter. You'll be dismissed as lunatic fringe as not interested in complying with federal law.

Searle: IS there even a place in federal law for failure of a program?

Devos: Yes, but this is not a failure. We've gone from zero to 83. Getting to zero wolves in Arizona and NM is absolutely not going to happen. The 250-300 number is for both states, with no more than 150 in each state.

Nun: Jim, thank you. Hopefully we can help each other out.

Darling: (to Ashley Kerna) Can you send us the numbers?

Kerna: I usually use the national numbers.

Darling: Why don't you send us those numbers and we can verify.

Kerna: State or County?

Dunn: Both. What would you charge?

Kerna: I don't know, it depends on how much data I have to collect. It depends on the level of complexity.

Darling: We could do some of that for you.

Dunn: We have to decide on how we're going to proceed and what we're going to fight for. Jim Chilton makes a good case but Jim DeVos says it won't hold up in court, but maybe we don't care about that.

Mary: NEPA accounts for socio-economic impacts so we need to show it outweighs the biological impact. We can supplement the Mexican population with 100 animals.

Dunn: Ted Turner wants 'em.

Darling: 90% of the population is in Mexico, and everyone agrees with that, and then Jim Chilton's argument fits.

Searle: They want the corridor to Mexico. Is there any justification to have ANY wolves in the US?

Darling: Well, 90 % of the habitat is in Mexico so can we make ALL the recovery to occur on habitat in Mexico? They'd have to incentivize ranchers in Mexico to make it worth their while to have the wolves there,

Floor: Do all the rules in the Blue Range have an affect? They have not lived up to any of their promises.

Darling: There is a nuisance report out by F&WS that covers most years since the recovery plan started but they minimize the incidents.

Dunn: Mary has probably been on more coordination deals than anyone in Arizona.

Darling: Yes, we can present it at the coordination meeting – nuisance incidents – and ask F&WS why it isn't in their data.

Floor: In the 1940's there were 4 or 5 wolves that circled around the Santa Ritas but there was not enough feed for them.

Dunn: Well, is everyone on board with Jim Chilton?

Searle: What does coordination do?

Dunn: On the desert tortoise, we got them to declare livestock grazing is not a threat to the desert tortoise. Each district has to come up with its own long-range plans and strategies. But before that, we have to agree on what needs to be agreed on.

Byfield: The focus should be more on the human impact, pushing them to provide a proper analysis, rather than focusing on the number of animals. You need to be unified in your approach. You can in general agree you support the majority of the stakeholders' positions but ultimately you need to decide how you're going to convey the human

impact to the F&WS so that they include it in their analysis. If we put all this information forward and they ignore it and don't include it in their table, then you have the basis to sue under NEPA.

Dunn: I was told the AGFD has no qualms about suing them over this deal.

Darling: That's why Norman James is involved – he is an Endangered Species Act attorney.

Dunn: He sent us a list of questions he'd like us to ask in a Fish & Wildlife Service public meeting,

Darling: You just need to put as much pressure as you can on including the impact on the human environment. I like the idea of an economic analysis that shows the impact with 100 wolves, 250, 1000, and present it to the F&WS and expect it to be included in their analysis. F&WS is releasing the draft EIS for the experimental population on July 24, You'll have August and most of September to comment. They're going to release their final EIS in December, with the implementation in January.

Byfield: You have to have your coordination meeting before they release their final.

Dunn: I read their stipulated agreement and either party can request an extension.

Darling: The key is getting to the table.

Dunn: They're going to have to be reminded it was just an agreement between two parties and the judge.

Byfield: I think there's a lot of ways to delay it if that's what we need to do.

Darling: I think we need to set a date with the F&WS now.

Byfield: You need to request a meeting ASAP to be scheduled after July 24.

Thomas: Does each district need to request a meeting?

Byfield: You can draft a joint letter on one district's letterhead and include the names of the other districts. Give them a few date options.

FM: I agree we need to schedule a date right away with them because otherwise they'll keep putting us off. I'm very behind on this issue and it seems many others are as well so we need enough time before the very first meeting to show we know what we're talking about.

Byfield: One thing that may help is when that draft comes out and that will solidify your focus.

Dunn: And even talking with Ashley and Russ and getting their info ... and discussing how we're going to pay for all that.

[General discussion about dates followed here.]

Dunn: We'll offer them the 3rd, 4th, or 5th of September.

Meyer: Have we really agreed that we're going to go forward with Margaret Byfield's idea to focus on the human environment impact?

Fred Davis: The F&WS have so miserably failed in all their promises so far and I say to hell with the wolves. Or do we go with the cattle growers idea of 150?

Chilton: No, 100. We decided unanimously on 100 total in both states.

Dunn: It seems to me our effort could complement the stakeholders and get as much out of it as we can and count that as a success.

Floor: What about the number in Mexico?

Dunn: I haven't heard one.

Dunn: Because this is a NEPA project and not a listing project, is this a viable strategy to pursue?

Byfield: Ask them in the coordination meeting if they've provided information on economic impact.

Darling: They'll say 'yes, we looked into it and declare there would be minimal impact.'

Byfield: We're going to provide them with hard data on economic impact on ranchers to make the case compelling so that they can't get away with not using it.

Coping: What the service and all the pro-wolf activists will do is take this past number of predation rates worldwide and we need to find out how many AUMs have been affected in the Blue Range area and get the numbers from the ranchers themselves.

Searle: Has New Mexico State come into this?

Darling: No I haven't seen that but I can find out.

Searle: I hate to say it, but zero may not even be an option.

Dunn: Do you think we can use AGFD as an effective ally?

Searle: The whole purpose of this is to be part of the process so that you can challenge the decision. Then you decide if you're going to sue, and how to pay for it.

Dunn: Well, we could be satisfied with getting AGFD to sue them because they have the money. Cattle growers don't have the money.

Darling: AGFD is afraid of losing their Section 6 (Endangered Species) funding.

Byfield: They could be an ally but you have two completely different perspectives. I would suggest NOT asking them to join you at the coordination meeting.

Dunn: I didn't mean that, but I don't know who is going to sue F&WS besides them.

Searle: There will be a lawsuit. The county has the financial capacity to sue on this issue.

Hawley: I think they're setting their population of wolves as biological subsistence on the fact of lack of connectivity.

Mary: There's a lot of debate in the scientific community about minimal populations for genetic diversity.

Byfield: Are you saying that we could not argue today that the wolf is recovered?

Darling: There are no papers that show 100 is a viable population.

Byfield: With 83 wolves now, they're actually recovering. Is there any basis to show they need more than 100?

Darling: I couldn't argue that an epidemic wouldn't wipe out the population.

Byfield: I feel like we're letting them move the bar. They went from 100 animals to 250-300 animals. Instead of agreeing with something to prevent something larger down the road, they just keep moving the bar and if give them 300 now they might raise it again.

Dunn: That's what they did in Minnesota and that's what they did with the grey wolf.

Fred Davis: If we invite them to our meeting, are they going to acquiesce to anything we suggest?

Byfield: Because the way we prepare a good case is to get as much analysis as we can and load the record with as much data as we can. That way if they don't use it we have a solid record to sue on. If we don't get anything to them and make a compelling case and they don't consider it then we can go to court.

The goal of coordination is to get them to do what you would like them to do.

Darling: Normally we find information that's not public by asking the right questions at these meetings, correct?

Byfield: Yes, it's like peeling an onion. You find that most of the time their science is very weak and you can point out their mistakes and get a lot of good stuff in the record.

Jim Lindsey: If we're all in agreement that we don't want this area expanded and we don't want any wolves at all and it looks like it's going to a court case anyway, we don't have to give them a number.

Searle: We have to show what impact this has on our areas.

Darling: F&WS really minimizes impacts.

Floor: It sounds like this is leaning more and toward suing. In Yellowstone they were sued and sued and won nothing. The government finds a judge sympathetic to their view.

Byfield: [Gave an example of the prairie chicken issue.] We got to choose the venue. You have to be very strategic but I tell you the politics involved was very interesting,

Dunn: There is a lot of public opinion on this and we could invite reporters to these meetings and point out how much F&WS has spent on this program (\$1 million per wolf) and just tell them horror story after horror story and make sure it gets in the papers.

Darling: Congress may have to de-list the Mexican wolf. It may go there.

Byfield: I am not litigation-happy, that's your avenue of last resort.

Coping: Has anybody filed petitions to list these decimated herds and moose as designated population segments?

Dunn: Minnesota has put them on their species of concern list.

Darling: F&WS has stated wolves eat elk but they don't know what they'll eat in other areas.

Daric Knight: Do we have to create a new association for this?

Byfield: You're not going to create a new association. The agency is coordinating with you directly with all the districts together.

Knight: So that entails a bunch of conference calls then?

Byfield: Well, you should have at least one face-to-face meeting with your district having a quorum.

Knight: Would that meeting be in Phoenix?

Darling: It would be Albuquerque.

Knight: Would New Mexico be involved as well?

Thomas: They are just beginning to get involved with the coordination process and getting info. They're not sure where they are yet.

Knight: So Bill, you in Arizona are a step ahead on this, right?

Dunn: The draft EIS comes out July 24 so we have to get on this.

Darling: The F&WS wolf hearing is August 11 in Honda, August 13 in Truth or Consequences.

Knight: We're going to discuss this at our summer conference. Margaret, you'll be there as well. I came to this meeting late but I notice there's something about Hereford and the money?

Dunn: Hereford is going to act as Treasurer.

Knight: What's the money for?

Dunn: Well, we hired a secretary and we ordered pizza for this meeting. And, Ashley Kerna of Coop Extension is putting together some info for us regarding economic analysis, so that's another cost.

Knight: Is each district asked to contribute a certain amount or how else is it determined?

Dunn: We have to share it all.

Knight: So if we have six districts, we split it six ways. What if one district doesn't agree with what's going on? You don't have any idea of what the expenses are going to be, do you?

Dunn: I wouldn't be surprised if it costs us \$10,000. The more districts, the less cost per district. We have five so far, you'd be six and San Pedro would be seven.

Darling: Has Apache County done an economic analysis on the impact of the wolf?

Knight: Not the district, but the county has. We're going to be very interested in pursuing this and I suppose we can opt out at any time, like when the bills are due (laughter). We have a vested interest in this as we're right in the middle of this right now and we wanted to know how this group coordination thing would work.

Thomas: Hereford has had coordination meetings with BLM on the SPNRCA and our first meeting was \$6,000 including the experts we brought in.

Knight: I think that's all the questions we have Bill but I'm pretty sure you can count us in.

Searle: The cost of spreading this over six or seven districts – a lot of entities will want this same data and there's a way for a lead organization to include the counties and have them help pay for it.

Thomas: And I would not go into a coordination meeting without Margaret Byfield at the table with us.

Darling: We want the 10th Circuit if we file (in New Mexico).

Dunn: If everyone will put together a resolution and look at that demand letter, and if it suits you we can tailor it per your suggestions. We'll shoot for the first week in September for the coordination meeting. If San Pedro will have a meeting and get on board, and everybody needs to have their long-range plan that you want F&WS to be compatible with, send me your changes and I'll put it on Winkelman's letterhead and include all the districts.

Thomas: If you have questions use that email group set up on the wolves.

Dunn: We need to take AGFD off that while talking amongst ourselves.

Coping: The wolves are going to eat a combination of elk and cattle, so we're natural allies [with AGFD].

Dunn: Except we don't get Section 6 funds and they do.

Chilton: Ultimately there's going to be a lawsuit so it's a case of loading the record.

Floor: Will the cattle growers have numbers on what this will cost on a per-head basis?

Chilton: We heard that if you have a pasture with wolves harassing cattle, you got 40-60% cash crop versus 80-90%.

Dunn: Do we need to assign anyone to do anything between now and August 11?

Davis: This letter to F&WS needs to be sent by all of us for the meeting, right?

Dunn: Margaret said we could use just one district letterhead and put all the districts on it.

Davis: Do we have to vote on this resolution?

Dunn: We could so we can get that letter out pronto. Winkelman already has adopted the resolution, and has Pima.

Frank Krentz: (Whitewater Draw) I make a motion to approve Winkelman's resolution on the Mexico wolf,

Seconded by Hawley. Motion carried.

Krentz: (Whitewater Draw) I make a motion to approve sending a letter to the F&WS on the rights of coordination. Seconded by Rob Ruegg. Motion carried.

Thomas: (Hereford) I make a resolution that Hereford adopt the resolution prepared by Winkelman, Seconded by Lindsey. Motion carried.

Thomas: I make a resolution that Hereford submit a letter on the resolution to Winkelman. Seconded by Lindsey. Motion carried.

Krentz: (Whitewater Draw) I make a motion to add our names to the letter to F&WS regarding coordination, Seconded by Ruegg. Motion carried.

Dunn: Any other business?

Winkelman adjourned at 2:50 pm, as do the others districts.

Attendees

Guests and Visitors:

Ashley Kerna, *University of Arizona Co-op Extension*

Richard Searle, *Cochise County Supervisor*

Jim DeVos, *Arizona Game and Fish Department*

Jon Cooley, *Arizona Game and Fish Department*

Mary Darling, *Darling Geomatics* representing *Cochise County*

Margaret Byfield, *American Stewards of Liberty**

Patrick Bray, *Arizona Cattle Growers*

New Mexico*

Apache NRCD*

Daric Knight

Hereford NRCD

Jim Lindsey

Rachel Thomas

Tom Richter

Pima NRCD

Cindy Coping

Jim Chilton

San Pedro NRCD

George Monzingo

Jim Wisbey

Whitewater Draw NRCD

Carl Hawley

Frank Krentz

Fred Davis

Rob Ruegg

Willcox San Simon NRCD

Larry Parker

Tim Klump

Winkelman NRCD

Bill Dunn

Frances Meyer

Gary Vinson

Steve Turcotte

*By telecon

