



# United States Department of the Interior



FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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In Reply Refer To:  
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**JUL 27 2012**

Michael A. Mares, Ph.D.  
President, American Society of Mammalogists  
University of Oklahoma, Oklahoma Museum of Natural History  
2401 Chautauqua Street  
Norman, Oklahoma 73072

Dear Dr. Mares:

Thank you for your letter dated June 20, 2012, to the Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service, Dan Ashe, regarding the development of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (Service) Mexican Wolf Recovery Plan. As Regional Director for the Southwest Region, I have full responsibility for the recovery planning effort for the Mexican wolf and all listed species in our Region. The Director has asked me to respond to your letter on his behalf.

First and foremost, in your letter, you refer to an "impasse" in the development of the Mexican Wolf Recovery Plan. I assure you that this is not the case. We are continuing to move forward with the development of the Mexican Wolf Recovery Plan.

I appointed the Mexican Wolf Recovery Team (Recovery Team) in February 2011, to assist the Service in revising the 1982 Mexican Wolf Recovery Plan, which will provide guidance in planning and implementing actions to recover and delist the Mexican wolf. The Recovery Team consists of four Subgroups: Science and Planning, Tribal Liaisons, Agency Liaisons, and Stakeholder Liaisons. The Science and Planning Subgroup (SPS) is comprised of highly qualified scientists with a variety of expertise in wolf management, genetics, conservation biology, biogeography, ungulate biology, predator-prey dynamics, trophic cascades, Southwestern landscapes, and social sciences. The SPS is tasked with developing goals, objectives, criteria and implementation actions that promote successful Mexican wolf recovery and delisting. The SPS has been working diligently to develop recovery criteria and determine the best locations for recovery to occur.

The Recovery Team also incorporates a diverse array of recovery partners from the United States and Mexico, including representatives from Tribes; Federal, State, and County governments; sportsmen organizations; environmental groups; and the livestock industry. To be successful, the Recovery Team's plan will have to be biologically defensible and provide innovative ways of restoring the wolf to a working landscape occupied by people with diverse expectations of the land

and its resources. The Tribal and Agency liaisons will provide applied management perspectives, while the Stakeholder liaisons are expected to provide a diverse source of expertise regarding their particular interests in Mexican wolf recovery. These perspectives may include discussions of human, social and economic considerations.

In June 2012, I reviewed the preliminary recovery criteria developed by the SPS, and I am impressed by and supportive of the development of these criteria to date. However, I concluded that, because Mexico comprises a significant portion of the historical range of the Mexican wolf, further review of the available information on habitat availability and prey density in Mexico was needed.

I requested that members of my staff and several members of the SPS meet with Mexican researchers and officials this summer to further explore habitat conditions in Mexico, especially in regard to prey density. While we have a substantial amount of information about availability of Mexican wolf habitat and prey in the United States, we are lacking that level of information in Mexico. Therefore, we have reached out to biologists in Mexico to ensure we have collected and analyzed all available information so that the plan can be based on the best available science.

During the next few months, we will also further coordinate with the Mexican government regarding the binational aspects of the two nations' recovery efforts. In addition, we recently established a contract with Bennett Brooks of Consensus Building Institute to assist the SPS and the full Recovery Team in discussions of recovery criteria and to clarify and resolve, as possible, remaining issues. We believe that all of these steps will substantially improve the recovery planning process and the final recovery plan. After our coordination meeting with Mexico this summer, we will schedule a full Recovery Team meeting, at which time the SPS will present the draft recovery criteria.

We appreciate your offer of assistance and scientific expertise to conduct an expedited peer review of the draft recovery plan. However, such a review is premature at this time, as the recovery criteria are still in development. After the full Recovery Team meets, we will discuss the best course of action for an early peer review of appropriate sections. We will provide the recovery plan for full public and peer review, per our Recovery Planning Guidelines, upon the completion of the draft document in 2013, and we will provide you with a copy at that time. We expect to have the final recovery plan completed in 2014.

Thank you for your continuing interest in the recovery of the Mexican wolf. Should you have further questions or comments, please contact Michelle Shaughnessy, Assistant Regional Director, Ecological Services, Region 2 at 505-248-6671..

Sincerely,

  
Acting Regional Director

Dr. Michael A. Mares

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cc: Mexican Wolf Recovery Coordinator, Albuquerque, New Mexico  
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