

**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
BETWEEN
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
COLORADO ECOLOGICAL SERVICES FIELD OFFICE
AND
COLORADO PARKS AND WILDLIFE
FOR
DEVELOPMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS ASSOCIATED WITH
THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN EXPERIMENTAL POPULATION OF NORTHERN
GRAY WOLVES IN COLORADO**

I. Introduction

This Memorandum of Understanding ("MOU") is between the United States Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service, Colorado Ecological Services Field Office ("FWS"), and Colorado Parks and Wildlife ("CPW"), jointly referred to as the "Parties." The FWS is the lead federal agency for development of a proposed rule establishing an experimental population of northern gray wolves (*Canis lupus*) in Colorado pursuant to Section 10 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA), and an attendant Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) analyzing the effects of this proposed rule. The FWS acknowledges that CPW has jurisdiction by law and special expertise that is applicable to the proposed rule and EIS development effort, as defined at 40 C.F.R. §§1508.15 and 1508.26. This MOU describes responsibilities and procedures agreed to by the Parties.

The cooperating agency relationship established through this MOU shall be governed by all applicable statutes, regulations, and policies, including the Council on Environmental Quality's National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) regulations (in particular, 40 C.F.R. §§ 1501.6 and 1508.5), the FWS's planning regulations, and the Department of the Interior Manual (516 DM 2.5).

II. Purpose(s)

The purposes of this MOU are:

- A. To designate CPW as a Cooperating Agency in the proposed rule development and EIS processes.
- B. To provide a framework for cooperation and coordination between the FWS and CPW that will ensure successful completion of the proposed rule and EIS in a timely, efficient, and thorough manner.
- C. To recognize that the FWS is the lead agency with responsibility for the completion of the proposed rule, EIS, and the Record of Decision (ROD).
- D. To describe the respective responsibilities, jurisdictional authority, and expertise of each of the Parties in the planning process.

alternative, and determining appropriate mitigation measures. In meeting these responsibilities, the FWS will follow all applicable statutory and regulatory requirements.

2. The FWS will provide CPW with a copy of the Administrative Draft of all planning and NEPA documents referenced in paragraph 1 of this section with adequate time for CPW to review and comment on the draft. Materials will include a proposed timeline for the overall NEPA process.
3. To the fullest extent consistent with its responsibilities as lead agency, the FWS will consider the comments, recommendations, data, and/or analyses provided by CPW in the rulemaking and EIS planning processes, considering those topics on which the CPW is acknowledged to possess jurisdiction by law or special expertise.
4. To the fullest extent practicable, after consideration of the effect such releases may have on the FWS's ability to withhold this information from other parties under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and other federal statutes, the FWS will provide CPW with copies of documents underlying the proposed rule and EIS relevant to CPW's responsibilities, including technical reports, data, analyses, comments received, working drafts related to environmental reviews, and draft and final EIS.
5. The FWS will keep CPW apprised of current events in relation to development of the proposed rule and EIS and will appropriately involve CPW in meetings where it would be necessary or of benefit to the process.

B. The CPW roles and responsibilities include:

1. CPW is a Cooperating Agency in this planning process and is recognized to have jurisdiction by law and special expertise.
2. CPW will provide information, comments, and technical expertise to the FWS regarding those elements of the proposed rule and EIS, and the data and analyses supporting them, in which it has jurisdiction or special expertise or for which the FWS requests its assistance.
3. Within the areas of their jurisdiction or special expertise, CPW may participate in providing guidance on public involvement strategies, identifying data needs, suggesting management actions to resolve planning issues, identifying effects of alternatives, suggesting mitigation measures, and providing written comments on working drafts of the proposed rule and EIS and supporting documents.
4. CPW will submit information at their discretion or upon request by the FWS within the specified timeframes.
5. CPW will treat Administrative Drafts and any other documents so designated by the FWS, where consistent with federal and state law, as confidential documents not to be released publicly or shared outside CPW.

C. The joint roles and responsibilities of the Parties include:

1. The Parties agree to participate in this planning process in good faith and

FWS will also describe substantial inconsistencies between its proposed action(s) and the objectives of state, local, or tribal land use plans and policies.

- E. Management of information. Any records or documents generated as a result of this MOU shall become part of the official FWS record maintained in accordance with FWS record management policies. CPW acknowledges that all supporting materials and draft documents may become part of the administrative record and may be subject to the requirements of the FOIA and other federal statutes. To the extent consistent with state and federal law, the cooperating agencies will keep confidential and protect from public disclosure any and all documents specifically related to, or generated by this agreement. FWS will determine their suitability for public review or release under the provisions of the FOIA, Privacy Act, and in accordance with Department of the Interior or FWS regulations. The FWS acknowledges that CPW's handling of these materials may be impacted by the Colorado Open Records Act (CORA). The Parties agree that the FWS at its discretion may withhold from CPW those documents that would otherwise be available for public release under FOIA or applicable state statute including CORA.
- F. Conflict Resolution. The Parties agree to make reasonable efforts to resolve procedural or substantive conflicts, and may agree to initiate an Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) process. The Parties acknowledge that FWS retains final responsibility for the decisions identified in the Colorado Northern Gray Wolf Experimental Population proposed rule, EIS and ROD.

VIII. Compliance with Applicable Laws and Regulations; Severability Clause

This MOU is subject to all applicable Federal laws, regulations and rules, whether now in force or hereafter enacted or promulgated. Nothing in this MOU shall be construed as in any way impairing the general powers of the FWS under such applicable laws, regulations, and rules. If any term or provision of this MOU is held to be invalid or illegal, such term or provision shall not affect the validity or enforceability of the remaining terms and provisions. Meeting the terms of this MOU shall not excuse any failure to comply with all applicable laws and regulations, whether or not these laws and regulations are specifically listed herein.

IX. Term, Amendment, and Termination

- A. Term of MOU: This MOU becomes effective upon the date last signed and executed by the duly authorized representative of the Parties to this MOU. This MOU will end when the ROD for the Colorado Northern Gray Wolf Experimental Population EIS is approved and signed.
- B. Amendments:
 - i. The Parties may request changes to this MOU, which shall be effective only upon the written agreement of all Parties.
 - ii. Any changes, modification, revisions, or amendments to this MOU shall be incorporated by written instrument, executed and signed by all Parties, and will be effective in accordance with the terms and conditions contained herein.
- C. Termination: Any Party may end its participation in this MOU by providing written notice to the other Party.

Signatures

- A. All signatories have the appropriate delegation of authority to sign this MOU.
- B. The Parties have executed this MOU on the dates shown below.



Reid DeWalt, Assistant Director
Aquatics, Terrestrial, and Natural Resources
Colorado Parks and Wildlife

Dated: June 22, 2022



Nicole Alt, Colorado Ecological Services Supervisor
Colorado Ecological Services Field Office
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Dated: 6/22/2022