

Colorado Gray Wolf 10(j) Rulemaking EIS US Fish and Wildlife Service

State Coordination Meeting

April 17, 2023
3:00 – 4:00 pm MST
Microsoft Teams Meeting

Attendees:

Name	Organization
Nicole Alt	FWS
Scott Becker	FWS
Kurt Broderdorp	FWS
Brady McGee	FWS
Jacob Mesler	FWS
Lauren Toivonen	FWS
Jessica Forbes	WSP
Margaret Stover	WSP
Jim deVos	Arizona Game & Fish Department (AZGFD)
Reid DeWalt	Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW)
Brian Dreher	Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW)
Eric Odell	Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW)
Stewart Liley	New Mexico Department of Game & Fish (NMDGF)
Kimberly Hersey	Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR)

Public Comment Period

The Service reminded the group that the public comment period closes on 4/18. The Service is working with WSP on the comment sorting process and will download all the comments on 4/19. The Service asked the meeting participants to email their submitted comments directly to the Service. AZGFD, CPW, UDWR, and NMDGF confirmed that they would send their comments to the Service. CPW noted that their comments would likely be combined with the Colorado Department of Agriculture and UDWR noted that their comments would be submitted from their Public Lands Policy Coordinating Office.

EIS Suggested Language Discussion

NMDGF shared that they had been working with AZGFD on suggested language for the Service to consider including in the EIS and draft agreement. Their suggested language was focused on the importance of maintaining Mexican wolf genetic integrity and including further assessment of potential impacts to Mexican wolves if reintroduced gray wolves were allowed to migrate south without a mechanism for relocating them.

AZGFD shared their screen and the group read and discussed the draft suggested language that AZGFD and NMDGF put together.

One suggestion in the draft language was to move the analysis of impacts to Mexican gray wolves from cumulative impacts to species of special concern in Chapter 4 of the EIS. The Service asked the group why they suggested moving the analysis and NMDGF noted that they want to highlight the potential impacts to Mexican gray wolves and ensure that the analysis shows why gray wolf and Mexican gray wolf populations should be kept separate. AZGFD added that they would like the EIS to underscore the importance of maintaining Mexican gray wolf genetic integrity. NMDGF noted that the Service has indicated that integrating Mexican gray wolves and gray wolves is not necessary and that if there is ever a need to integrate the two populations then there are enough wolves in captivity to breed them in a controlled environment, rather than relying on natural dispersal. The Service confirmed that this is their stance on integrating Mexican gray wolves and gray wolves and noted that the Service's EIS team may reach out for a citation or discussion on the topic. The Service explained that moving impacts to Mexican gray wolves from cumulative impacts to the species of special concern section of the EIS could imply that the impacts are due to the Service's action, rather than Colorado's action.

The Service agreed that discussing geographic separation of Mexican gray wolves and gray wolves made sense. The group also agreed that discussing the Florida panther and Texas puma hybrid as a separate example case would not be necessary.

The group spoke about how to submit and review the suggested language. The Service noted that they want to be cognizant of including any phrases that could contradict their action. NMDGF explained that they want to provide information to help the Service with the EIS and they understand that all of their suggestions will not be included in the EIS verbatim. The Service asked NMDGF and AZGFD to ensure that any conclusions drawn in the suggested language have direct studies to support them.

UDWR asked if additional information would be needed on returning wolves to further Colorado's recovery goals. They also asked about including the habitat corridor for wolves through Utah to New Mexico and Arizona as justification for returning wolves to Colorado. The Service said they planned to justify returning wolves to Colorado from Utah based on meeting Colorado's wolf recovery goals. They will confirm this approach with Service leadership soon. CPW also plans to send a letter of commitment to the Service noting that the State will accept relocated wolves back to Colorado if they migrate out of the 10(j) area.

Draft Agreement

AZGFD and NMDGF began work on the draft agreement. In their current draft, the agreement is based on returning wolves to Colorado to protect the Mexican gray wolf population. They noted that framing the agreement this way could impact whether Utah is included in the agreement. The Service noted that the agreement could cite multiple reasons for returning gray wolves to Colorado. They suggested the agreement could include supporting the recovery effort in Colorado and protecting Mexican gray wolves. The Service will also discuss justification for the draft agreement internally.

Next Steps

NMDGF and AZGFD plan to continue work on the suggested language for the EIS and the draft agreement. The group will continue discussions during the next call on 4/24, which the Service extended to 90 minutes to allow sufficient time to review draft language.

Action Items

Task	Responsible Party	Due by:
AZGFD, CPW, UDWR, and NMDGF to email the comments they submitted through Regulations.gov to the Service	AZGFD, CPW, UDWR, NMDGF	4/18/2023
The Service to discuss justification for the draft agreement internally.	FWS	
NMDGF and AZGFD to continue work on the suggested language for the EIS and the draft agreement for further discussion on 4/24.	NMDGF, AZGFD	4/24/2023