

Talking Points for Game and Fish Officials – December 2012

- Start by thanking the commission for the opportunity to speak and tell them your name and where you live.
- Convey how important new releases of wolves into the wild are to increase the population's numbers and genetic health.
- At last count, just 58 wolves, including six breeding pairs, survived in the wild. The wild population is extremely small and vulnerable to threats such as disease, inbreeding, or natural events. The commission should support many new releases of captive wolves into the wild.
- Obstruction by anti-wolf special interests and politics has kept this small population of unique and critically endangered wolves at the brink of extinction for too long and can no longer be allowed to do so.
- Tell the commission why you support wolves and stress that the majority of New Mexico and Arizona voters support the Mexican wolf reintroduction. Polling showed 69% support in New Mexico and 77% support in Arizona.
- Talk about your personal connection to wolves and why the issue is important to you. If you're a grandmother wanting your grandchildren to have the opportunity to hear wolves in the wild, or a hunter who recognizes that wolves make game herds healthier, or a businessperson who knows that wolves have brought millions in ecotourism dollars to Yellowstone, say so.
- Describe the ecological benefits of wolves to entire ecosystems and all wildlife. Wildlife biologists believe that Mexican wolves will improve the overall health of the Southwest and its rivers and streams – just as the return of gray wolves to Yellowstone has helped restore balance to its lands and waters.

If you wish to speak specifically about the recent release proposal from AZ Game and Fish and the Fish and Wildlife Service, the following are important points to make:

- While proposing to release a few new wolves into the wild after four years of no releases is a step in the right direction, the Mexican Wolf Blue Range Reintroduction Project Replacement Release Outline for Arizona 2013 is inadequate. The wild population of Mexican wolves is at tremendous risk due to its small size and genetics and the proposal is to put out one or two more wolves within or next to existing wolves' territories, and killing or removing them if they become a "nuisance".
- The resumption of killing and removing endangered Mexican wolves over livestock conflicts outlined in the Pack Management Plan is unacceptable. Policies like those described in the plan are one of the reasons the Mexican wolf population numbers and genetic health are still of such great concern.
- The department should Eliminate "presence of livestock" as a rationale for excluding areas from consideration for wolf releases (There are plenty of places to release wolves in the Blue Range Wolf Recovery Area, but many appear to be excluded simply because of active livestock grazing operations in the project area; proactive measures have been successfully used to avoid depredations and the recovery of Mexican gray wolves is the appropriate priority).