

Pro-Wolf Tips and Talking points for December 4th AZ Game & Fish Commission Meeting

What to expect: You will have the opportunity to address the Commissioners about wolves during agenda item 5, which is the *Wolf Briefing*. Agenda item 3, *State and Federal Legislation*, may also be of concern since federal bills and riders have been introduced to remove protections for wolves in some places around the country, including HR2910 “Mexican wolf Transparency and Accountability Act” introduced by Congressmen Paul Gosar (R-AZ) and Steve Pearce (R-NM), which would strip Mexican wolves of federal protections.

When you arrive at the meeting, you will be offered the opportunity to fill out a blue speaker card. Please fill one of these out whether you intend to speak or not and indicate on the card that you are there for item 5 and that you support wolf recovery. If you think you might want to speak, keep that option open on the card-you can always change your mind if called. If you know you don't want to speak, you can indicate that on the card, and just having shown up and filled the card out will make a difference.

You can speak during more than one agenda item. You will likely be asked to keep your remarks to 3 minutes or less, depending on how many people are wanting to speak.

Talking Points: You'll likely do best if you keep your remarks simple and focus on a few key points rather than trying to incorporate everything below.

- An informed Commission acting on sound science would recognize the critical role played by large carnivores in maintaining the health of game herds and ecosystems. [Arizona Game and Fish's attempts](#)¹ to obstruct new releases, keep wolves out of key habitats north of I-40, and arbitrarily limit their numbers demonstrate a bias against wolf recovery and against top carnivores that is not appropriate or responsible.
- There are still only around 110 endangered Mexican gray wolves in all of New Mexico and Arizona. They remain severely endangered and people all over the world are rooting for their success, as shown by the over 1 million supporters on the Mexican gray wolves [Facebook page](#)². AZ Game and Fish Commission should not be working to make these unique, native wolves' recovery more difficult.
- [Polling in 2008](#)³ showed that 77% of AZ voters support the Mexican wolf reintroduction, and 76% agreed that “the wolf is a benefit to the west and helps the balance of nature.” [Polling in 2013](#)⁴ showed that 81% of AZ voters agree that “Wolves play an important role in maintaining healthy deer and elk populations” and that “Restoring wolves to forests and wilderness in Arizona will bring a healthier balance to our ecosystem.” The 2013 poll also showed that 81% of AZ voters support restoring wolves to suitable habitat in the Grand Canyon region. The AZ Game Commission has a responsibility to do what's best for all of Arizona's wildlife, and for Arizona's citizens, who want wolves.
- While a valid recovery plan for Mexican wolves is urgently needed, the [lawsuit](#)⁵ filed by AZ Game and Fish recently is nothing more than a thinly veiled effort to interfere with settlement agreements with conservationists who have long pushed for expediting recovery planning. The intent of AZ Game and

¹ AZGFD Alternative <http://tinyurl.com/USFWS-DEIS>

² Mexican Gray Wolves Facebook page <http://tinyurl.com/fbMGW>

³ Wolf Recovery Survey- Arizona <http://tinyurl.com/2008wolfpoll>

⁴ Tulchin Research, New Poll Finds Strong Support For Wolf Protection in Southwestern Border States <http://tinyurl.com/2013wolfpoll>

⁵ Press Release announcing AZGFD filing suit against federal officials over Mexican Wolf Recovery plan development <http://tinyurl.com/AZGFDsuit>

Fish is clearly to slow down recovery planning and ensure that the plan is not based on the [best available science](#)⁶ already developed by experts on the Science and Planning subgroup.

- The commission's actions are a disturbing example of state politics impeding scientific integrity. Even as AZ Game and Fish biologists on the Mexican wolf Interagency Field Team have been working hard to make the reintroduction program a success, the politically appointed members of the AZ Game and Fish Commission have repeatedly worked against the recovery of endangered Mexican gray wolves and dismissed the recommendations of nationally recognized scientific experts.
- [Peer reviewed science by top wolf experts](#)⁷ says that Mexican wolves need four things to recover: they need two new populations north of Interstate 40 and the ability to travel between the three populations; they need genetic rescue, which requires expedited releases from the captive population; human caused mortality must decrease; and there must be an absolute minimum of 750 wolves in the wild. With no basis in science, the [AZ Game and Fish Commission wants to keep wolves south of I-40, to block new releases, to loosen restrictions on killing and trapping wolves, and to allow no more than 325 wolves to live in the wild.](#)⁸
- It is important to distinguish between the best available science, which is the peer reviewed research done by scientists on the Science and Planning Subgroup, [and AZGF's internally generated challenge](#)⁹ of that science, which has not been peer reviewed and in no way meets the standards required to be considered best available.
- Less than 1% of cattle and calf losses in Arizona are due to wolves. Assistance is available to help livestock owners share the land with native wildlife and livestock owners are compensated for livestock killed by wolves.
- Wolves and their prey – elk, deer, and other ungulates – coexisted for tens of thousands of years without humans “managing” wolves. In fact, wolves and other top carnivores are vital to good herd health. They kill the very young and old elk, leaving the healthiest part of the herd and preventing overpopulation. They also keep coyote populations in check, which could help increase pronghorn numbers.
- In 2010, when there were an estimated 1723 wolves, including 111 breeding pairs,¹⁰ in the Northern Rocky Mountain states, Wyoming estimated there were 120,000 elk statewide, 50 percent above objective; Montana estimated 150,000 elk statewide, 14 percent over objective; and Idaho had an estimated population of 101,100. While this was slightly below objective, 23 of the state's 29 management zones had elk numbers within targets or above at this time.¹¹

Additional Tips for Testifying:

- Print out your main points ahead of time and print them large so they can be read easily.
- Introduce yourself and where you are from or where you work.
- Speak from the heart- why do you personally care about healthy populations and sound policies for wolves and other carnivores?
- Be polite when testifying.

⁶ Developing Metapopulation Connectivity Criteria from Genetic and Habitat Data to Recover the Endangered Mexican Wolf <http://tinyurl.com/BestAvScience>

⁷ *Id.* (See above)

⁸ AZGFD Alternative <http://tinyurl.com/USFWS-DEIS>

⁹ Letter to Director of SWGFD emphasizing AZGFD's concerns <http://tinyurl.com/AZGFDtechRev>

¹⁰ U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Table 6b: Northern Rocky Mountain minimum year-end wolf population and breeding pairs by State, 1982-2014. <http://tinyurl.com/NR-Wolves-1982-2014FWS>

¹¹ Wolves and Hunting. <http://tinyurl.com/NR-elk-numbers2010>