



# News Release

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**Southwest Region (Arizona • New Mexico • Oklahoma • Texas)** [www.fws.gov/southwest/](http://www.fws.gov/southwest/)

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## **Fish and Wildlife Convenes Mexican Wolf Recovery Plan Team**

-First Meeting Held-

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), Southwest Region, convened the new Mexican Wolf Recovery Team (Team) for its first meeting on February 22. The Team is made up of four groups that are charged with writing the revised Mexican wolf recovery plan. The Team will be led by Peter Siminski, Ph.D., from the Department of Mammology, The Living Desert, Palm Desert, California. The Team's coordinator and liaison to the Service is Tracy Melbihess, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Both Peter and Tracy are very familiar with this topic, having worked on past efforts to revise the recovery plan.

The Southwest Region has also put in place two new managers for the Mexican Wolf Recovery Program. Sherry Barrett was selected to be the Mexican Wolf Recovery Coordinator. This position oversees all aspects of Mexican wolf recovery. Sherry is an experienced manager who comes to Albuquerque from the Ecological Services field office in Tucson, Arizona, where she served as the Assistant Field Supervisor. Elizabeth Jozwiak has accepted the Service's Field Project Coordinator position. This position manages all of the Service's Interagency Field Team (IFT) staff. Liz came from Alaska where she was a wildlife biologist specializing in carnivore and large predator management at Kenai National Wildlife Refuge in Soldotna.

The 1982 recovery plan for the Mexican wolf recommended a two-pronged approach to recovery that included establishment of a captive breeding program and reintroduction of wolves into the wild. Although substantial progress in implementing this plan has been achieved, the plan does not contain criteria for recovering and delisting the wolf in the southwestern United States. Developing these criteria will be an important focus of the new recovery planning effort.

The four groups are: science and planning, agency liaisons, tribal liaisons, and stakeholder liaisons. These groups are made up of scientists, wildlife managers, and informed and experienced stakeholders from the livestock community, conservation community, and other local interests. They will work collaboratively to develop the recovery plan.

"We have assembled some of the best scientists, wildlife managers, and forward thinking stakeholders to accomplish our goal of completing a recovery plan for the Mexican wolf," said

Benjamin Tuggle, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Southwest Regional Director. "As they work with our scientists and wolf specialists over the next two years I am confident that the recovery plan that is produced will guide us toward recovery of one of the Southwest's most iconic species."

The Team, working with Service staff, will write the revised recovery plan. The plan will contain broad recovery strategies to guide conservation efforts, and specific goals, objectives, and criteria that will specify when the Mexican wolf can be considered for down listing and delisting. The Team will develop a prioritized list of implementation actions, with time and cost estimates, to achieve Mexican wolf recovery.

The Science and Planning Group brings together eminent scientists with expertise in wolf management and biology, landscape ecology, population dynamics, conservation biology, and genetics. This group will develop the scientific basis for recovery goals and criteria that will lead to the delisting of the Mexican wolf.

The tribal and agency liaison groups will provide applied management perspectives, including their on- the- ground experience with Mexican wolves, during the development of recovery strategies and implementation actions. They will also provide the perspectives of their organizations, communities and constituents. Additionally, tribal liaisons will provide natural resource expertise and tribal perspectives on issues related to wolf reintroduction and recovery.

The stakeholders group will provide a very diverse range of experience and expertise that will inform the development of strategies and implementation actions in the plan. That, together with the perspectives of the tribal and agency groups, the stakeholders' perspectives on the human, social, and economic components of recovery, and their working knowledge of local communities and the landscape of the Southwest, will ensure that site-specific considerations are included in the recovery plan.

The Service and the science and planning group will meet with the liaison groups during key points of plan development to solicit their input, management perspectives, and review of draft documents. Public review and independent peer review will occur when the draft revised plan is complete.

The names and affiliations of these team members will be found on the Southwest Region's web site at <http://www.fws.gov/southwest> in the near future.

A recovery plan is a guidance document describing options on how to restore and maintain a federally threatened or endangered species to the point when it no longer requires protection under the Endangered Species Act. Decisions regarding whether or not to implement major actions recommended in a final recovery plan must first undergo separate public and agency notice, review, coordination, and process.

A priority of the Service is to make implementation of the ESA less complex, less contentious and more effective. America's fish, wildlife resources belong to all of us, and ensuring the health of imperiled species is a shared responsibility. We're working to actively engage conservation partners

and the public in the search for improved and innovative ways to conserve and recover imperiled species.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service works cooperatively with the American public to continue the conservation legacy of America's great outdoors. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit [www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov).

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