

MORE WOLVES, LESS POLITICS

MEXICAN GRAY WOLVES 2017



IT HAS BEEN 40 YEARS since the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) first listed the Mexican gray wolf, or lobo, under the Endangered Species Act. Today the lobo remains the most endangered gray wolf in the world. The wild U.S. population of only 113 lobos and the handful of newly reintroduced lobos in Mexico are all descendants of just seven wild founders of a captive breeding program. Illegal killings, removals due to livestock predation and a lack of genetic diversity threaten the wild wolves. But the biggest threat to their survival is politics: There has been tremendous pressure from the states to limit captive wolf releases and the geographic range and number of wolves allowed in the wild.

Science Shows Path to Recovery

The Mexican gray wolf is lucky in one respect—its recovery has captured the attention of highly regarded scientists. Their published scientific research suggests that the best remaining habitats for Mexican gray wolves are in the Grand Canyon ecoregion and in northern New Mexico and southern Colorado.

According to the FWS recovery team, to be safe from extinction lobos will need at least three connected core populations and at least 750 wolves in Arizona, New Mexico, southern Colorado and southern Utah.

Extinction Is Still a Possibility

- Members of Congress have pushed to strip lobos of Endangered Species Act (ESA) protections.
- Anti-wolf state agencies are attempting to block the release of captive wolves into the wild.
- In 2015, FWS finalized new rules for wolf management that directly contradict the best available science. The rules that threaten the lobos' recovery include capping the population at 325



MEXICAN WOLF INTERAGENCY FIELD TEAM

A Mexican wolf is released at Gila National Forest in New Mexico in 2010. Since 2009, FWS has released just four captive-bred wolves despite the desperate need for an infusion of new genes in the wild population.

wolves, keeping them out of needed habitats and allowing more wolf killing.

- During the entire Obama administration, FWS has only released four new wolves from captivity. Of these, three are dead and one is back in captivity.
- Since releases from captivity began in 1998, FWS has never released enough wolves.
- With no infusion of new genes, the wild wolves have lost significant genetic diversity.

Genetic Diversity Is Key to Survival

- Over time, genetic diversity helps wolves and other wildlife fight disease and adapt to changing environments.
- Dwindling genetic diversity reduces the number of wolf pups that are born and lowers pup survival rates.
- Because the wolves in captivity have genes not represented in the wild, FWS can increase the genetic diversity and the odds of successful lobo recovery by releasing more wolves from captivity.

FWS Must Act Now to Save Mexican Gray Wolves

1. Release new breeding pairs in the wild. Numbers of wild wolves are important, but new genes in the gene pool are crucial. To overcome the challenges of a severely limited genetic heritage, FWS needs to release more of the wolves in the captive breeding program in to the wild.

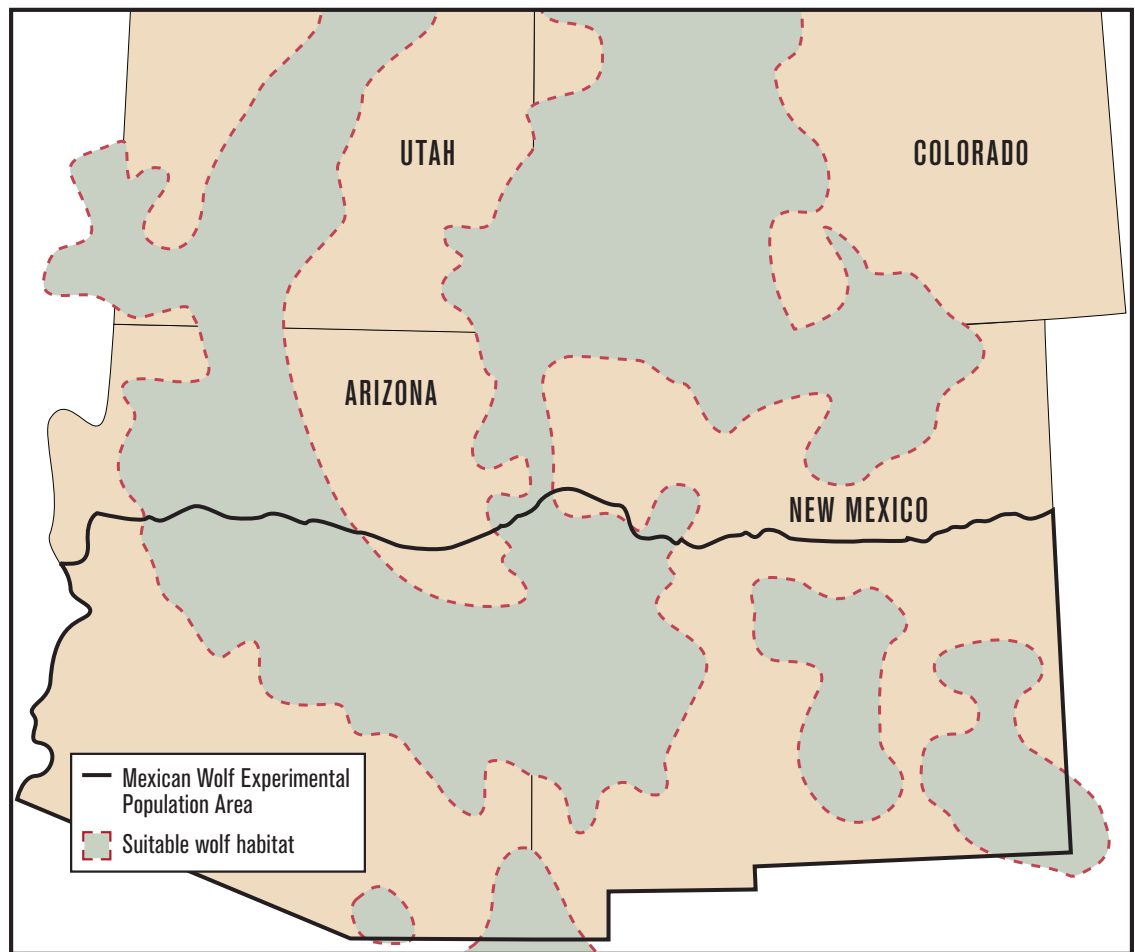
2. Complete and implement a comprehensive recovery plan. Forty years after the lobo was first listed under the ESA, the wolves are still waiting for a recovery plan. As a result of litigation brought by Defenders and our allies, FWS must complete a recovery plan by November 30, 2017.

3. Establish new core populations. FWS has barred the Mexican gray wolf from going north of Interstate 40 in Arizona and New Mexico, keeping the wolf from a significant amount of suitable habitat needed to establish new populations.

Time Is Running Out for Mexican Gray Wolves

To save lobos, FWS must stand up to political pressure from Congress and state officials and use the very best scientific information to create a workable recovery plan.

Suitable Habitat for Mexican Gray Wolves



Some of the best suitable habitat occurs outside the designated recovery area, primarily on protected federal and tribal lands.

The agency must consider all of the lobo's appropriate and suitable habitat in the United States and cannot expect Mexico to assume the burden of recovery. Additional populations of Mexican gray wolves must be established north of the Grand Canyon into southern Utah and in the southern Rockies of Colorado and New Mexico. Many more wolves from the captive population must be released so the wild population can overcome its limited genetic heritage and expand into other appropriate and suitable habitats in the Southwest, the Southern Rockies and Mexico. FWS must assert its authority. We need more wolves and less politics!

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