



Mexican Wolf Interagency Field Team



# The Mexican Wolf/Livestock Coexistence Plan: an Innovative

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# Solution

Some of the most effective recovery efforts for endangered species have come from innovative ideas developed by local people. For the Mexican wolf, we recognize the importance of involvement from those in Arizona and New Mexico who live and are involved with the Mexican wolf every day. Recently, a group of local people most affected by wolves came together to work with others who are concerned with the wolves' recovery to develop a new paradigm for addressing wolf-livestock conflicts, one of the most significant impediments to Mexican wolf recovery. The result is an innovative program that has the potential to resolve a long-standing conflict between ranchers and conservationists.

The new plan avoids the problems of traditional compensation programs, which too often involve both dead livestock and dead wolves. Instead, payments are based on the presence of wolves, successful pup recruitment and the use of conflict-avoidance measures, as well as affected livestock. The payment is both a recognition that wolves can have a negative financial impact on livestock producers, and that wolf recovery represents public values related to the recovery of endangered species and ecological processes.

Unlike most species protected under the Endangered Species Act, the Mexican

wolf is not endangered by loss of habitat or competition with nonnative species. Instead, the Mexican wolf was extirpated in the wild as part of federal, state and local anti-predator campaigns resulting from conflicts with livestock as settlers moved west across the United States in the early to mid-1900s.

Since 1998 when Mexican wolves were reintroduced to the wild, approximately 80 percent of their diet has consisted of elk, but Mexican wolves also depredate livestock. Compensation programs for wolf depredations have been contentious due to the problems of determining the causes of livestock





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deaths and missing livestock. In the rough and remote areas of Arizona and New Mexico, the cause of death can be difficult to identify by the time livestock carcasses are found, if they are found at all. Dr. Benjamin Tuggle, Southwest regional director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), envisioned that the development of a solution to Mexican wolf-livestock conflicts and the economic consequences to livestock producers that accompany Mexican wolf reintroduction could be crafted by a local group representing divergent views and expertise.

In 2011 Tuggle appointed the 11-member Mexican Wolf/Livestock Coexistence Council—volunteers rep-