

The Rewilding Institute

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February 1, 2006

Attn: Art Telles
Gila National Forest
3005 E. Camino del Bosque
Silver City, NM 88061

Dear Mr. Telles:

The Rewilding Institute, a conservation think tank, appreciates the opportunity to provide scoping comments on the six proposed Mexican gray wolf release sites in New Mexico.

I am familiar with the specific locations of the North Seco, Me Own, Meason, Black Mountain, and West Fork Gila sites, having backpacked in these locations. I am not familiar with the Gila Flat site. In addition, I am familiar with the activities and structures associated with both hard and soft (mesh pen) releases of Mexican wolves in remote locations, including wilderness. Following my retirement as the USFWS Mexican Wolf Recovery Coordinator, I was a volunteer pen sitter for the first two such releases in the Gila Wilderness at the Chicken Coop Canyon and Half Moon Park release sites.

I have extensive experience with the NEPA process and was responsible for the preparation of the EIS for the Mexican wolf reintroduction project in the Blue Range Wolf Recovery Area, the project under which these release sites are being proposed.

It is my informed professional opinion that activities associated with the release of wolves at the six proposed sites will not individually or cumulatively have significant effects on the human environment, including

any natural, cultural, recreational, historic or other resource, nor will these activities significantly affect air, noise, or water quality.

Extensive analyses of similar activities have been conducted previously in an Environmental Assessment of proposed translocations of wolves into the Gila Wilderness completed by the USFWS on March 17, 2000. That EA resulted in a Finding of No Significant Impact. Clearly, a repetition of that process is unnecessary and would cause needless delays in the Mexican wolf reintroduction project, not to mention a waste of public funds.

Clearly, the negligible impacts of the proposed activities do not rise to the level of triggering a detailed analysis under NEPA or would qualify for a categorical exclusion, if such a category has been defined.

The Rewilding Institute urges the U.S. Forest Service to approve all six sites for future releases of Mexican wolves with no further analysis under NEPA.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

David R. Parsons
Wildlife Biologist
Carnivore Conservation Coordinator