



# News Release

Public Affairs Office  
PO Box 1306  
Albuquerque, NM 87103  
505/248-6911  
505/248-6915 (Fax)

**Southwest Region (Arizona • New Mexico • Oklahoma • Texas)** <http://southwest.fws.gov>

**For Release:** February 6, 2009

**Contacts:** Jeff Humphrey, 505-248-6909 or 602-680-0853

## 2008 MEXICAN WOLF POPULATION SURVEY COMPLETE

A total of 52 Mexican wolves were counted in the wild in Arizona and New Mexico at the end of 2008, according to the annual survey conducted by the Interagency Field Team for wolf reintroduction. There were also 52 Mexican wolves recorded in the 2007 survey. Surveys are conducted in January of each year. Pups born in the summer must survive to December 31 to be counted as part of the Mexican wolf population. Fixed-wing aircraft and functional radio-telemetry were used to confirm five wolf packs on New Mexico's Gila National Forest, five packs on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest and Fort Apache Indian Reservation in Arizona, and six lone wolves – two in Arizona and four in New Mexico. The survey indicated that there were only two pairs that met the federal definition of breeding pairs at year's end.

Of the 52 wolves, 45 were born in the wild. One captive born female wolf (F836) was released to the wild in 2008. In 2008, one wolf was temporarily captured twice after dispersing outside of the Blue Range Wolf Recovery Area, but the animal was translocated back into the recovery area on both occasions. In previous years, wolves were removed because of livestock depredation, for dispersing outside of the Blue Range Wolf Recovery Area or repeated nuisance behavior. No such wolves were removed in 2008. Illegal shooting was the leading cause of documented loss of wolves in 2008.

“Our interagency partnership has made strides toward obtaining the biological information needed to manage wolves in a working landscape that also supports traditional livestock operations and public recreation,” said Benjamin N. Tuggle, PhD, Regional Director for the Service's Southwest Region. “Except for the illegal shooting or suspicious demise of seven wolves, 2008 would have seen Mexican wolf populations on the upswing again. These mortalities are an intolerable impediment to wolf recovery. We will continue to aggressively investigate each illegal wolf killing to help ensure that anyone responsible is [prosecuted](#) to the fullest extent of the law.”

Seven of the 10 packs produced at least 18 pups, with 11 surviving until the end of the year. However, based on the definition in the final rule establishing the reintroduction project, the count only recognizes two breeding pairs because by year's end, one or more of the mates in two packs had died. In addition, three packs had only a single offspring survive until December 31 (survival of two or more pups until December 31 in the year of their birth is required to qualify as a

breeding pair). In two of these packs, one pup died under suspicious circumstances late in 2008, resulting in both packs not qualifying as a breeding pair.

“We were fortunate this year – we did not remove any wolves from the population for management purposes under the AMOC Standard Operating Procedures,” said Tuggle. “In 2008, we received substantial public input on the wolf reintroduction effort as part of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process. Completing the Draft EIS, and implementing a wolf-livestock interdiction program, are priorities for us.”

The Mexican Wolf Reintroduction Project is a cooperative effort administered by six co-lead agencies: Arizona Game and Fish Department, New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, White Mountain Apache Tribe, USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Wildlife Services, USDA Forest Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. These agencies function as an Adaptive Management Oversight Committee. This management approach provides opportunities for participation by local governments, nongovernmental organizations, and individuals from all segments of the public.

---

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. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit [www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov).

- <http://www.southwest.fws.gov> -