

Colorado Gray Wolf Reintroduction 10j and EIS US Fish and Wildlife Service

Cooperating Agency Meeting Notes

August 23, 2022
11:00am – 12:00 am MST
Microsoft Teams Meeting

Attendees:

Name	Organization
Nicole Alt	FWS
John Hughes	FWS
Joel Humphries	BLM
Les Owen	CO Dept. of Agriculture
Callie Hendrickson	White River Conservation District
Eric Odell	CPW
David Klute	CPW
Reid DeWalt	CPW
Richard Truex	Forest Service
Jenna Sloan	Forest Service
Fred Jarman	Garfield County
Amber Swasey	Mesa County
Jeff Comstock	Moffat County
Steward Liley	NMDGF
Kim Hersey	UDWR
Lori Fox	WSP
Margaret Stover	WSP

Impact Topics and Questions for Cooperating Agencies

The Service asked participants if they had any feedback on the impact topics proposed for inclusion in the DEIS. The impact topics include:

- Species of special concern
- Other wildlife species
- Ecosystems and ecosystem dynamics
- Tribal cultural resources and sacred sites
- Socioeconomic resources
- Minority and low-income populations
- Recreation – visitor use and experience

The cooperators did not have any input, but the Service asked them to reach out if they had feedback in the coming weeks.

The Service asked the cooperating agencies the following questions:

1. *Do the counties have any adjustments to make to the 2020 census data related to population counts or minority or low-income demographic data?*

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the Forest Service answered that they will follow up with their environmental justice and socioeconomic leads. Moffat County stated that they did not have updates beyond census data.

2. *What are the most important industry sectors in your county based on employment and revenue?*

WSP clarified that county-based information on industry sectors can be challenging to obtain, so more granular information from the counties may be helpful for analysis. The cooperating agencies did not have input at this time and were asked to send any items by 9/2/22 if information was available.

3. *What industry sectors may be affected by the provisions of the 10(j) rule – i.e. the types of Take that would be allowed and the circumstances under which Take would be allowed?*

The Service noted the importance of differentiating between the impacts of the Service's action and the impacts of the State's action.

4. *Does the county have data related to the number, employment, and revenue generated by outfitters?*

The Service requested data that would not be available on a statewide scale. BLM and the Forest Service will connect the Service to their socioeconomic leads for further discussion on the analysis of these topics.

Participant Questions and Discussion

Garfield County asked about the status of comment analysis now that the scoping deadline passed. They asked whether the comment summary would be considered in the DEIS development.

The Service answered that WSP is working on preparing the scoping report in parallel with the DEIS. WSP reported that there were 719 total correspondences, and that comment summary was ongoing.

Moffat County asked about the status of the 10(j) rule development.

The Service reported that the 10(j) rule development is moving along in parallel with other related tasks and that they hope to have an internal draft at the same time as the DEIS.

The Service asked if the states had any concerns.

Utah Division of Wildlife Resources noted that their key concerns were the boundaries of the 10(j) and the impact of the animals that move outside of the boundaries. NMDGF said they were curious about impacts to other species of concern, namely the Mexican gray wolf.

Colorado Department of Agriculture asked about the details of the 10(j) rule and impacts to any livestock operators as well as where and how many wolves would be released. They also asked about analysis of impacts to livestock operators at county and regional levels.

The Service responded that in Alternative 1, the rule would apply statewide, so take would be authorized within the boundary of the 10(j). The Service is still determining the appropriate level of detail for analysis. The Service also spoke about using the Ditmer et al paper to analyze areas where conflict is predicted to be higher and where habitat is more ideal for wolves. The Service will provide this research paper to cooperators.

Colorado Department of Agriculture asked whether the Service is conducting an analysis of more restrictive take compared to less restrictive take.

The Service answered no that they have not considered an alternative that is a middle level of take authorization. They stated that they expect to land somewhere similar to previous 10(j) rules from the Northern Rocky Mountains and that they plan to analyze what they expect to end up in the rule, probably not with differing levels of take given the project timeline.

BLM asked when the Service needs to hear answers to the cooperating agency questions discussed earlier in the ball.

The Service asked for the answers by next Friday (9/2) or in the first week of September.

New Mexico Department of Game and Fish asked what endangered wolf population the experimental population in Colorado is intended to recover.

The Service responded that in the rulemaking and EIS they will be thinking about how the experimental population will contribute to the recovery of the species and that the experimental population will add resiliency to the existing population but may not be necessary for downlisting or delisting the species from the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

New Mexico Department of Game and Fish asked whether the experimental population would be delisted if gray wolves were delisted from the ESA.

The Service said that if gray wolves as a species are delisted, the experimental population would also be delisted under the ESA, and the section 10(j) rule would no longer apply. But if the species is relisted, the section 10(j) rule would come into effect again.

Next Steps

The cooperating agencies will respond to the questions the Service posed. BLM and the Forest Service will connect with the Service on the environmental justice and socioeconomic topics. The Service will send out the Ditmer et al paper to the group. A follow up cooperating agency meeting will be scheduled, likely in September.