

Hello,

Thank you for joining us on today's Cooperating Agency meeting. I am Liisa Niva and I am the Acting Field Supervisor for the Colorado Ecological Services Field Office. I will be leading today's meeting and look forward to receiving your input and comments.

As you're aware, at the request of Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) proposed a rule to designate an experimental population (10(j) rule) under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) for gray wolves in Colorado to support CPW's wolf reintroduction program. The FWS published a notice of availability of the draft environmental impact statement (EIS), pursuant to the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), regarding the proposed issuance of the 10(j) rule.

I will be providing a summary of the more substantive comments we received and the changes that have been made to the draft FEIS. You will be receiving the draft FEIS for review tomorrow, Tuesday July 18 and will have until Monday July 24 to review the FEIS and provide us with comments. If needed, we plan to hold a follow up meeting to summarize the comments we received from this review on Thursday July 27. A Teams invitation has been sent to you for that possible follow up meeting.

Summary of Changes:

- The "optional" state-wide ungulate provision was changed in the FEIS to reflect the change in the rule to adopt a similar provision that would only be applicable on tribal reservation lands of the Ute Mountain Ute and Southern Ute tribes in Colorado. This change was made in the alternatives and in the impact analysis, as applicable.
- Edits to the alternative elements for allowable take were made to be consistent with the revised rule.
 - Removed reference to pets and change "dogs" to "working dogs"
 - Changed "shoot on site permit" to "repeated depredation permit"
 - Added language to taking of wolves to allow for more than 24 hours to report in areas with limited site access.
- Alternatives considered but dismissed was updated to include suggestions from comments on the DEIS that were not carried forward for detailed analysis in the FEIS.
- The FEIS was updated to reflect consistency with the final state plan vs. the draft state plan.
- The affected environment was updated to reflect the current status of wolf population numbers in Colorado.
- Issues considered but dismissed were updated to address public comments including detailing the dismissal of climate change and disease transmission.
- Based on the response to public comments on the DEIS, the following changes were made to the socioeconomic analysis:
 - The discussion of existing environment conditions was expanded to discuss livestock losses from predators and other causes and associated economic costs.
 - The impacts analysis was revised based on information provided by commenters to use the Wyoming Wolf Trophy Game Management Area and portions of eastern Washington and eastern Oregon in the Northern Rocky Mountains Distinct Population Segment as geographies of comparison.

- Wolf counts and depredation data from the most recent five years for which data is available was averaged and used in the equation to estimate depredation in the 21 focal counties and state of Colorado.
 - Based on the three geographies of comparison, we provided a range of depredation estimates under the no-action alternative.
 - Additionally, text was added to the impacts analysis to clarify the methodology, data sources, and data limitations.
- Cumulative impacts were updated to add additional information regarding the Mexican wolf.
- Coordination and Consultation (Updated in Section 1.6 and Chapter 5)
 - Information has been added about consultation that has occurred with the states and tribes since the DEIS.
 - An appendix has been added with the summary of public comments on the DEIS and the Service's response to those comments.