



Feds to set recovery plan, critical habitat for jaguar

By Tony Davis and Tim Steller

In a major policy reversal, the Obama Administration said today it will both prepare a recovery plan for the endangered jaguar and designate prime habitat, to help the big cat recover and thrive in a country where no jaguars are known to live.

The Fish and Wildlife Service made the recovery plan announcement this afternoon, a few hours after it sent its earlier decision to declare critical habitat for the jaguar to the Federal Register to publish on Wednesday.

The decisions cap a lengthy controversy over how the federal government should treat the endangered cat -- a controversy that has dragged on almost since the animal was given federal protection back in 1997.

The recovery plan announcement by Acting Service Director Rowan Gould added in a note to

the service's Southwest Regional Office, "Recognizing that most of the habitat for this species and almost all individuals of this species occur outside of the United States, the extent and details of the plan will need to be clarified and focused as you proceed with the planning process."

The Tucson-based Center for Biological Diversity celebrated the decisions. "We're delighted about the critical habitat designation," said Michael Robinson of the center, before the recovery plan decision was announced.

Rancher Judy Keeler, who has been involved with the Arizona-New Mexico Jaguar Conservation Team for years, was resigned about the news. The jaguar's real critical habitat is south of the United States, she said from her ranch in far southwestern New Mexico.

"We don't have any jaguars here. Never have been to my knowledge. My parents and grandparents have



The jaguar known as Macho B wanders away after being captured and collared Feb. 18 near Arivaca. Arizona Game and Fish

lived here since the 1880s," she said.

The only jaguar known to spend considerable amounts of time in the United States, Macho B, was euthanized March 2, 12 days after being captured by Arizona Game and Fish employees and fitted with a tracking collar. A veterinarian diagnosed the animal with kidney failure.

Check back with Starnet today for more on this story, and look at the Star's archive of jaguar stories.

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