

Governor Susana Martinez
State Capital
490 Old Santa Fe Trail, Room 400
Santa Fe, NM 87501

May 15, 2015

Copies via email to staff director James Ross and the members of the New Mexico Game Commission: james.ross@state.nm.us, paul@kienzlelaw.com, billmontoya@hotmail.com, robert_nmgf@live.com, ralphramos@comcast.net, bob.ricklefs@gmail.com, bethryanlawyer@gmail.com, dicksalopek@hotmail.com.

Re: Permit to allow continued, voluntary use of private land for Mexican gray wolf management

Dear Governor Martinez,

We write to respectfully request that you reverse the New Mexico Game Commission's May 7, 2015 decision not to renew a permit for the Ladder Ranch in Sierra County to assist with recovery of state- and federally-protected Mexican gray wolves through providing secure holding pens for wolves en route to or from the wild.

We further request that you ensure the Game Commission rescind its rule promulgated on November 13, 2014 which requires, for the first time, Commission approval for permits allowing private facilities to assist in recovery and reintroduction programs for mammalian carnivores. In addition to undermining the important role played by the Ladder Ranch in the Mexican wolf recovery effort, this provision puts at risk the ability of other facilities to help in conservation of endangered carnivores. We find it odd and inappropriate for state government to interfere with philanthropic activities conducted responsibly by a private landowner on private lands to offset expenses that otherwise would be borne by taxpayers.

Since reintroduction of Mexican wolves began in 1998, the 157,000-acre Ladder Ranch which abuts the eastern border of the Gila National Forest has provided a remote location to temporarily hold wolves that have been removed from the wild or those that emanate from other captive facilities and are due to be released into the wild. The facility also allows for experiments in aversive-conditioning to determine whether wolves can be induced to be less likely to interact with livestock following release to the wild. While we believe that wolf removals have been far too frequent, and releases too infrequent, we recognize the importance of these pens, remote enough to keep captive wolves from human proximity, to accommodate the safe and humane holding of wolves pending their movements elsewhere. Moreover, policy decisions should not be dictated through depriving managers of infrastructure.

Another issue for your consideration is that the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish receives substantial funding from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to cooperate in recovery of an array of endangered species. This decision to deny the permit represents the antithesis of cooperation. The *Albuquerque Journal* quoted the Service as stating that "partnerships between private land owners and federal agencies are essential to wildlife management and endangered species recovery," and the commission's decision "may hamstring

species recovery.” The Commission’s decision puts at risk continued funding under Section 6 of the Endangered Species Act.

The Game Commission’s decision serves to undermine a reintroduction and recovery program with broad public support, into which the state had invested substantial resources until the Game Commission withdrew the state’s participation in 2011. We consider this not only adverse for the struggling Mexican wolf, but also just plain bad governance. Please instruct your Game Commission to vote expeditiously to approve the permit and rescind its ill-used authority to serve as a gatekeeper for cooperative conservation on private lands.

Thank you.

Sincerely endorsed by:

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