

MEETING MINUTES

**NEW MEXICO STATE GAME COMMISSION
SPECIAL MEETING**

**Albuquerque Marriott, Acoma Room
2101 Louisiana Blvd., NE, Albuquerque, NM 87110**

Day and Date: Friday, February 26, 2016

Time: 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.

DIRECTOR SANDOVAL: If you want to do the Pledge?

CHAIRMAN KIENZLE: I think we'll call it to order and do roll call.

MALE SPEAKER: Do that first?

CHAIRMAN KIENZLE: Yes. And then we'll do the Pledge.

DIRECTOR SANDOVAL: OK.

CHAIRMAN KIENZLE: All right, 9 o'clock. Call this meeting to order. Good morning.

CHAIRMAN KIENZLE: Roll call.

DIRECTOR SANDOVAL: Commissioner Espinoza?

COMMISSIONER ESPINOZA: Present.

DIRECTOR SANDOVAL: Commissioner Ramos?

COMMISSIONER RAMOS: Present.

DIRECTOR SANDOVAL: Commissioner Ryan?

COMMISSIONER RYAN: Here.

DIRECTOR SANDOVAL: Commissioner Ricklefs?

COMMISSIONER RICKLEFS: Here.

DIRECTOR SANDOVAL: Commissioner Salopek?

COMMISSIONER SALOPEK: Here.

VICE CHAIRMAN MONTTOYA: Here.

DIRECTOR SANDOVAL: Chairman Kienzle?

CHAIRMAN KIENZLE: Present.

DIRECTOR SANDOVAL: Mr. Chairman, I believe we have a quorum. And for the public audience, we have Mike Phillips from Turner Endangered Species. He is on the phone. He is

Final

appearing telephonically from Montana. He had some obligations up there, so he is on the phone. Mike, would you like to introduce yourself, please.

MIKE PHILLIPS: Mike Phillips with the Turner Endangered Species Fund in Bozeman, Montana.

DIRECTOR SANDOVAL: Thank you, Mike.

CHAIRMAN KIENZLE: Let's do the Pledge of Allegiance. Ralph, you want to start?

COMMISSIONER RAMOS: Sure.

(Pledge of Allegiance is recited.)

CHAIRMAN KIENZLE: Can I get a motion to approve the agenda, please.

COMMISSIONER: So moved.

COMMISSIONER: Second.

CHAIRMAN KIENZLE: All in favor?

MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIRMAN KIENZLE: The ayes have it.

CHAIRMAN KIENZLE: One agenda item today, Number 4, Turner Endangered Species Fund Application for Importation of 5 Wolves to the Ladder Ranch for temporary holding prior to export to Mexico.

MALE SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, members of the Commission, in front of you, you have from the Turner Endangered Species Fund to import 5 wolves from Wolf Haven International in

Final

Washington to the Ladder Ranch for temporary holding before export to Mexico as part of Mexican government's recovery efforts of the Mexican Wolf in their country.

CHAIRMAN KIENZLE: Mr. Phillips?

DIRECTOR SANDOVAL: Mike, are you there?

MIKE PHILLIPS: Mike Phillips here, yes.

DIRECTOR SANDOVAL: So, Mr. Phillips, you are on. You have the floor for your request.

MIKE PHILLIPS: Thank you, Director. Mike Phillips from the Turner Endangered Species Fund. I assume everyone can hear me well enough. Chairman Kienzle, Director Sandoval, thank you for convening in Special Session to consider my request for a permit to import 5 wolves from Wolf Haven in Tenino Washington to the Ladder Ranch. They would be held there until at such time they could be transported to a captive facility, specifically Rancho La Mesa in Mexico before their eventual release in that country. I am sorry that I am not present in person. I do hold you guys and the Commission's authority in high regard. I would be there if I could. As a sitting member of the Montana Senate, I have honored to have been appointed to Governor Bullock's Clean Power Plan Advisory Council and I have duties in Helena later today that I was unable to reschedule. So I do apologize and very much appreciate the opportunity to participate telephonically. The Bi-National Species Survival Plan for the Mexican Wolf has recommended that these 5 wolves be moved as soon as practical to the Rancho La Mesa facility in Mexico for their eventual release to the wild. Logistically it has proven quite undesirable because of long layovers and plan changes, potential weather delays and the sort, it is undesirable to fly the wolves to Mexico directly from Washington State. Therefore to facilitate the shipment of these animals to Mexico the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service would like to first move them to the

Final

Ladder Ranch after all subsequent permits have secured. The Service would then complete the transfer to Mexico by driving the wolves to the Laredo border crossing where they would be handed over to staff from La Mesa. Today's Special Session, as Chairman Kienzle and Director Sandoval know, was called for because of the time constraints based on the transport of the adult female from Washington State due to the breeding season and the gestation process. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is keenly desirous of not moving her during the first 30 days of gestation. And, while they haven't bred yet according to the keepers observing the animals at Wolf Haven, it is likely that breeding will take place very soon. The adult pair is reproductively experienced and everyone has every reason in the world to expect that they will breed here very soon. With that, Chairman, as a very quick set up, I could also discuss the timing of the move if that is of interest to you and your team.

CHAIRMAN KIENZLE: Yes. I'm not sure . . .

MIKE PHILLIPS: Is this Chairman Kienzle. Again, Mike Phillips from Turner Endangered Species Fund. If you guys could jot down these dates, it would make it easier to follow along with the potential plans. The first plan would be to, if indeed an importation permit is issued by the Commission, the first plan, call it Plan A, would be to be to move the 5 wolves immediately. Just for today's discussion, let's assume they would be moved by next Monday or Tuesday, the 29th of February or the 1st of March. They would then be allowed to breed at the Ladder Ranch. Let's assume that takes place sometime around the 4th or 5th of March. Then the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service would not want to transport them to the Laredo border crossing until sometime in early April to get at least the first 30 days of gestation completed and then, of course, they would be allowed to whelp in Mexico in the La Mesa facility, probably sometime in early May. That would be Plan A.

Final

Plan B calls for a delayed shipment until early April. So, here's what Plan B would look like. Let's assume that the adult pair breeds in Washington State around the 4th of March. That would be next Friday. They would then be given 30 days of quiet time or thereabouts to let gestation begin in earnest with a transport to the Ladder Ranch sometime in early April. They would then be allowed to whelp at the Ladder Ranch. That would take place in early May. And then they would be moved to La Mesa, the 5 wolves that are alive today along with any puppies that have been born, they would be moved to La Mesa sometime in early July probably when the puppies are about 8 to 10 weeks of age. At that time they have been weaned and are really much more capable of dealing with the stress of a long truck ride. And, Mr. Chairman, I wish I could say exactly which plan the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service would like to pursue. To some extent it depends on what is being observed of the wolves in Washington State. But at this point if nothing changes in the next few days, I think the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service would like to move the family immediately to the Ladder Ranch and that would, of course, call for implementation of Plan A.

CHAIRMAN KIENZLE: Anything further you want to add, Mr. Phillips?

MIKE PHILLIPS: Mr. Chairman, Mike Phillips again. If that was directed at me, I can't really hear very well, so I did not hear the question.

CHAIRMAN KIENZLE: Sorry. Is there anything further you want to add at this time? You will have the opportunity, of course, to address any questions that are asked. But anything else you want to add before I move on to the next phase of this?

MIKE PHILLIPS: Mr. Chairman, Mike Phillips again. No, sir.

CHAIRMAN KIENZLE: Commissioners, any questions or comments?

Final

MALE SPEAKER: Not right now.

CHAIRMAN KIENZLE: Stewart, I understand you have been down to the Ladder Ranch recently?

STEWART LILEY: Mr. Chairman, members of the Commission. That is correct. I went down to the Ladder Ranch with both the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and staff at the Ladder on Wednesday to discuss this transfer. And it is, like Mike stated, the desire to get the wolves here right away, have them breed at the Ladder and get them to Mexico as soon as possible. That is also the Mexican government's desire, to not whelp puppies in the United States, to whelp these puppies in Mexico so they are not moving young pups as well. So, the desire is to get them there, whelp pups in Mexico and not in the U.S.

CHAIRMAN KIENZLE: And have you had the opportunity to address some of the issues that have been raised in earlier wolf meetings about handling protocols and those kinds of things.

STEWART LILEY: Mr. Chairman, members of the Commission, we went out there and looked at potential human habituation, the minimization we could do in cooperation with the Fish and Wildlife Service, Ladder Ranch, and the Department, as to what we could do to minimize those. They have implemented some things and are going to continue to, such as removing den boxes, let the wolves den naturally if they are going to make a den in the pens, more feast or famine type of feeding regime that minimizes human contact to wolves, and also building some screens around where feeding is so they have separate pens where they could feed in versus where the wolves live so there is not a direct connection with food to humans to the wolves to minimize that connection. So yes, we are moving that way.

CHAIRMAN KIENZLE: So, you feel like progress has been made in that regard.

Final

STEWART LILEY: Mr. Chairman, members of the Commission, yes, I do feel there has been progress made there.

CHAIRMAN KIENZLE: Commissioners, any . . .

MALE SPEAKER: I have, go ahead, Bill.

COMMISSIONER MONTROYA: When you inspected the facility, were you comfortable with the security and how everything is put together for the duration of the holding of the wolves.

STEWART LILEY: Yes, they had, their holding facilities do have aprons where the wolves cannot dig out of the facilities. They have an overhang where they can't climb. So yes, I would say it is a very secure facility that will hold wolves with very, very minimal chance of escape.

COMMISSIONER SALOPEK: Stewart, as far as the Mexican Wolf , we discussed I think at one meeting, what was the original range land of the Mexican Wolf , Mexico compared to U.S.A.?

STEWART LILEY: Mr. Chairman, Commissioner Salopek, yes. The original historic range that we feel the Mexican Wolf is mainly Mexican, 90 percent of that historical habitat exists in Mexico with maybe 10 percent occurring in the United States in the very Southwest-most portion of the states, being the very southern end of New Mexico, Arizona.

COMMISSIONER SALOPEK: So, have you been visiting with the Mexican government? I mean, are they onboard? It seems like if we could get both countries on board it would make life a lot easier.

STEWART LILEY: Mr. Chairman, Commissioner Salopek, yes we have been in consultation with the Mexican government that's in charge of recovery of wolves in Mexico, that is both
Final

Sargapa and CONAP. And we are in cooperation with them, looking at historic range, what makes most sense in Mexico for the release sites. Mexico does have a goal of 2 different populations. They have looked at 6 release sites within historical range of the Mexican Wolf with the highest potential of recovery in their country.

COMMISSIONER SALOPEK: Thank you.

MALE SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN KIENZLE: Yes, sir.

COMMISSIONER RAMOS: I have several questions. First of all, since we're talking about historical range and 90 percent in Mexico, 10 percent Arizona, New Mexico, southern part of U.S. And I know that some of the goals are to sustain definitely a healthy herd and that requires 3 populations. Is that correct, Stewart?

STEWART LILEY: Mr. Chairman, Commissioner Ramos, yes. Right now, the concern is how many populations will prevent extinction throughout time in the wild. It's been thrown out from some of the models and the recovery team that 3 populations is the most desirable. We are at the process of looking at, is 3 the most and how many can constitute in each population. So, you know, we feel that Mexico can contribute significantly towards the recovery of wolves and their goal of having 2 populations in Mexico would be, I think, a very, a good goal for the wolf population.

COMMISSIONER RAMOS: So, currently we have 1 population obviously in New Mexico, Arizona, of approximately 109 wolves. So, looking into Mexico being 90 percent of that historic home range, we're looking at possibly getting 2 populations down there. And hopefully

alleviating, you know, historic range and expanding. I know some of the goals that have been mentioned to move on into northern New Mexico as well, things like that. So to me, I think this would possibly be a great study based on science having 3 populations. And if Mexico is very willing to that, currently what is our connection with Mexico and what conversations do we have going there.

STEWART LILEY: Mr. Chairman, Commissioner Ramos, through the recovery planning we are in consultation with Mexican biologists on looking at what we feel is suitable range within Mexico and also population parameters that might help the successful establishment of wolves in Mexico in historical range and suitable habitat.

COMMISSIONER RAMOS: So, I know that currently the U.S. is working on a recovery plan, hopefully having some goal numbers as far as how many wolves should be in the southern part of New Mexico, 10% of the historical home range and hopefully we will get that soon. But meanwhile, what does Mexico have as far as a recovery plan and are there any variances between the U.S. plan versus Mexico, and what are some things that we should be aware of.

STEWART LILEY: Mr. Chairman, Commissioner Ramos, Mexico does have a recovery plan for the Mexican Wolf. They created that in 2009. They call for 2 populations in their country. They looked at what historical range is in Mexico and they have established different release, potential release sites, in their country. In terms of differences, you know the hope is during this recovery planning process from our perspective is it is a bi-national plan that takes into account that both Mexico and the United States need to work together. It is not a plan that is solely driven on recovery in the United States.

COMMISSIONER RAMOS: So what does the habitat look like? One of my concerns is the habitat between the location and how deep into Mexico are these wolves going to be released into. And what has been, because currently what I'm hearing is that they have something like maybe 12 to 17 wolves down there, and these 5 wolves would be comingled with these wolves that are currently in Mexico. So how far are they from the border and what is the, I guess, habitat and prey availability between that point and the U.S.?

STEWART LILEY: Mr. Chairman, Commissioner Ramos, so yes, they are in the State of Chihuahua in Mexico, approximately I think about 200 miles south of the Mexican border. They are in the Sierra Madre with main prey source being the Coues white tail deer. Really that's their main prey type, and rabbits. This is the current wild population in Mexico, that's their biggest native prey diet. As you move farther into the Sierra Madre, in towards the U.S.-Mexico border, prey densities drop. As you move farther south into Mexico, prey densities increase as you get farther into that Sierra Madre Occidental and it is a lot better habitat farther south as you go down. So we have not seen any northern movement of the wolves in Mexico. Any movement that has happened has occurred to the south. In fact, maybe we've seen some movement of wolves that report out of the Blue Range into Mexico. One of the Mexican biologists brought it up at the last recovery meeting.

COMMISSIONER RAMOS: Thank you. I also have some comments. You know, one of the things I really like about Mexico getting involved with this recovery plan now is that the native prey base diet for these wolves being that their historical range is 90 percent again in Mexico, you know I like that plan a whole lot better than currently what the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is doing in New Mexico and the United States because we've introduced these wolves into new non-historic diets such as elk and therefore the Coues which they are found in Arizona

and New Mexico, so this has got to be more of their natural state being that Mexico probably is providing better habitat for that type of scenario.

STEWART LILEY: Mr. Kienzle, Commissioner Ramos, these wolves are smaller. Their evolutionary history did evolve with the smaller prey base, smaller prey items than, say, elk. So, yes, in Mexico where more of the native prey exists, it should be a better adaptation for these wolves in that they evolved with a smaller prey rather than evolving with elk.

COMMISSIONER RAMOS: Looking at long-term goals, so if science does prove that this population does do well, because currently what I'm looking at, a current report that just came out, that their data is dipping as far as number or at least this year as far as growth. So if the data is going to show us that Mexico is the right place for 2 populations, I would hope that we don't have to expand our United States habitat for these Mexican Wolves, and really try to, and I would hope that the U. S. Wildlife Recovery Plan also includes a goal with that number on when we can start managing those due to, you know, whenever we're going to control that population. Of course, conservation, the tool of hunting as well. But you know I am really concerned for that long-term goal and I hope that those discussions are on the agenda to really make sure that that is going to happen.

STEWART LILEY: Mr. Chairman, Commissioner Ramos, we would hope, too, that the plan, like we stated a bi-national plan that considers both Mexico and the U.S. and also has delisting criteria issued in the plan so we would know when management authority would be turned over to the state.

COMMISSIONER RAMOS: I'm sorry, and I do know I have another couple of questions and that is concerning here in New Mexico with these 5 wolves. And this may be a better question for Mr. Phillips. Chairman, Director, Mr. Phillips are you there.

MIKE PHILLIPS: Mike Phillips from Bozeman. Yes, sir.

COMMISSIONER RAMOS: Yes, sir. What is your assurance on this time frame, whether it be Plan A or Plan B? And I'm looking at the time frame. What is the maximum time they will be in New Mexico? I know you can kind of co-mingle both plans here. But what I've seen, you know, with other plans is, if it's a 3-month plan or a 4-month plan, it phases into a 6, 7, 8, 9 and eventually a possibility of them being released in the U.S., New Mexico particularly. I want to insure that that is not going to happen. And really, if you can give me, wrap my brain around that a little bit better.

MIKE PHILLIPS: Sure. Mike Phillips from the Turner Endangered Species Fund. I am not sure exactly which Commissioner asked the question but it's a good question. I think I caught all of it. I think the likelihood is that the animals, the Fish and Wildlife Service would like to move the animals as soon as possible. They would be allowed to breed at the Ladder Ranch and move to Mexico by early to mid-April. If that did not happen, if they could be shipped to the Ladder Ranch by early April if they are allowed to breed in Washington State. They would then, therefore, be allowed to whelp at the Ladder Ranch. That would take place the first part of May and then you'd need to let the puppies mature to a certain, maybe 8 weeks at least until they've been weaned. That would push the transport to Mexico out until early July. No matter what happens, these animals are scheduled. It's a hard schedule to go to Mexico; that's a firm decision that's been made. I think the Service has no intentions of releasing any of these animals in the

United States. It is, however, worth pointing out that we said to Chairman Kienzle and Director Sandoval and to Mr. Liley and others that we are more than willing to have the Ladder Ranch operate against the stipulation that wolves be placed against the stipulation, that no wolves would be directly released from the Ladder Ranch to New Mexico or Arizona that were older than 2 months of age in an attempt to make sure that we've done all that we possibly can to not contribute inadvertently to the release of habituated wolves. So, even if these animals were to stay at the Ladder Ranch past early July, once they get to that 2 month mark, once they get to that 8 week mark, they would no longer be available for direct release from the Ladder Ranch and that's a stipulation that we are more than willing to abide by. We were the ones that suggested that. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is in support of that as was expressed in a letter that was provided to Chairman Kienzle and Director Sandoval as part of our original permit request to bring wolves back to the Ladder Ranch. So that's the best I can do to give you a sense of the timing. I realize it's a bit unsettled because of the breeding season and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's desire to not move the female during the first 30 days of gestation.

COMMISSIONER RAMOS: Mr. Phillips, Commissioner Ramos speaking. So what would be the end date, the maximum time frame, that you would want these wolves here, worst case scenario? Whether it's Plan A or Plan B.

MIKE PHILLIPS: Mr. Chairman, Commissioner Ramos, Mike Phillips from Bozeman. As I look at the schedule in front of me, if the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is true to their word, those animals should be gone by mid-July at the latest. Now, it's possible that they aren't able to secure all the paperwork to move them to Mexico. It's possible they would need to stay longer than mid-July. That certainly is not our intention. But I would ask the Commission, would that be a problem? They are secure pens as Mr. Liley has confirmed. We are working on whatever

steps we can practically take to insure that the animals are not subjected to any husbandry protocols that might lead to habituation. It would seem that having them stay, if worse came to worse, would not be a bad thing. I would remind the Commission that the facility operated without so much as a whiff of a problem for many, many, many years.

MALE SPEAKER: Are you still there?

MIKE PHILLIPS: Yes. Mike Phillips from Turner. Yes, still here.

COMMISSIONER RAMOS: I'm not quite sure that I'm gathering a final date again for worst case scenario. My concern is, I know that we have a scheduled meeting to discuss with Mexico in April. Is that correct, Mr. Liley?

STEWART LILEY: Mr. Chairman, Commissioner Ramos, that is correct. In April we do have a meeting with the Mexican government.

COMMISSIONER RAMOS: So, let's say they are there til July, my concern is what if the conversations do shift and let's say for whatever reason Mexico didn't want them over there? What would then happen next with these wolves?

MIKE PHILLIPS: Mr. Chairman, Commissioner Ramos, Mike Phillips from Bozeman. I think I heard you ask what would happen if Mexico didn't want them. Is that the question?

COMMISSIONER RAMOS: Yes. I mean worst case scenario. I think what I'm getting towards is, what is the time frame, maximum time frame, that they will be in New Mexico? That's what I'm looking for.

MIKE PHILLIPS: Mike Phillips from Bozeman. I don't know that I can give you a definitive answer to what might happen under a worst case scenario. We have no reason to believe that our
Final

colleagues in Mexico will change their minds. However, we know that the State of New Mexico understandably wishes for every option to advance wolf recovery in Mexico, every option be exercised. It's a reasonable desire, it is a desire that I hold, too. And this is a decided step in the direction of realizing whatever opportunity Mexico has to offer the Mexican Wolf recovery program. There is no way, for example, that 2 populations can be established in Mexico if we don't have a routine, predictable, safe way to move animals from the United States to Mexico given that some of the animals in the captive breeding program are held in distant spots in the United States. The Ladder Ranch could be a very useful stopover for animals headed to Mexico. This could be the beginning of many transfers that move animals to release in Mexico. I see this as a wonderful opportunity for the State of New Mexico to act in a solid fashion on the belief that Mexican Wolf recovery has to be connected to Mexico in a very intimate and functional way.

COMMISSIONER RAMOS: Mr. Phillips, what I'm hearing is that your opinion and your recommendations, if let's say we get this population well established and doing well in Mexico and we want to continue a second population in Mexico, what your recommendations would be to continue towards that and so what do you think you would recommend as far as New Mexico as far as to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, what would be your recommendations being that the 90 percent of the historical range is in Mexico and the small 10 percent is in New Mexico. Thus, expansion, and it seems like we are already on the north end of that historical range. So what would be your recommendation?

MIKE PHILLIPS: Mr. Chairman, Commissioner Ramos, Mike Phillips from the Turner Endangered Species Fund. I do have the decided honor to serve on the Mexican Wolf Recovery Planning Team. I suppose that's what you'd call us. Mr. Liley is on that team as well. We are
Final

meeting next week in Arizona to continue very specific discussions about Mexican Wolf recovery. Commissioner Ramos, if I was convinced that *canis lupus baileyi* could be recovered in a manner that was consistent with the spirit and intent of the Federal Endangered Species Act with a great deal of restoration work being in Mexico, I'd be fully supportive of that. I'm not sure that it is possible. I have done as much work to assess habitat suitability as anybody. And there are some concerns that Stewart and I and others are going to address head-on very soon. But if indeed the gray wolf in the southwestern United States, what we commonly know as the Mexican Wolf, if much good recovery work could be done in Mexico I would be fully supportive of that.

COMMISSIONER RAMOS: Mr. Phillips, what are some of your concerns that they wouldn't do as well as you feel that, I'm kind of sensing that you think they're doing very well here in New Mexico. What would be some of those reasons?

MIKE PHILLIPS: Mr. Chairman, Commissioner Ramos, Mike Phillips from the Turner Endangered Species Fund. My concerns are based on a couple of issues that certainly are germane to the notion of transporting a family of five wolves from Washington State to the Ladder Ranch. Ultimately, I've been involved with this line of work enough to know that sometimes the best thing you can do is let animals go and let them determine whether the habitat is suitable. So I fully support releases in Mexico even though I have concerns about habitat suitability. The Turner Endangered Species Fund is spending real money and real time helping our colleagues in Mexico. I would have equally but Val Asher is the very best field biologist left in the country working on grey wolves. The rest of us that might have laid claim to that title have

now retired behind desks. Val has done more than two trips now to Mexico to help our colleagues there with trapping techniques and handling techniques. So we are truly invested in Mexico in a real way. That said, Commissioner, here's my concerns. There are deep concerns about the availability of negative prey. There are deep concerns about the availability or the abundance of livestock. The pattern that we know from the United States with wild ungulates elk and deer for example, being common in livestock, being relatively uncommon is exactly flipped in Mexico, based on the data that we have been able to collect. So there's real concerns about the availability of food for free-ranging wolves. That then is combined with the near lack of public land in Mexico. 95% of the country is privately owned. What we know from the United States is, it's highly likely that the Gray Wolf would have actually been exterminated across the country, absent the Superior National Forrest in Minnesota. It's not coincidental that the last wolves that hung on in the Continental United States were found in a National Forrest. It's not coincidental that every wolf recovery action that's taken place in this country has been connected to large tracks of public land. And you don't see those types of opportunities in Mexico. Commissioner Ramos, I hope I'm wrong, but when I look at what little I know about wolf recovery, I see a need for two things. I see a need for ungulates and I see a need for large tracks of public land and I don't see those things in Mexico. With that said, I'm honored to be going back to Mexico with Mr. Liley and others. We're going to take another look, maybe there are new data available that will give me confidence about the abundance of native prey and then I would only be concerned about the near, complete lack of public land in Mexico as a place for large carnivores to find some security of human caused mortality. It's really, I mean it's really quite simple, it all relates to human caused mortality. As to that, the wolf would never be in danger. Commissioner Ramos, thank you for the question but, and I really true sincerely hope

that I'm wrong, but that's my impression at this point and it's been the impression I've had now for quite some time. But I'm excited to continue diving into the details. Maybe there's a light bulb yet to go off.

CHAIRMAN KIENZLE: Thank you, sir. Anything else?

MIKE PHILLIPS: Chairman Kienzle and Commissioner Ramos, Mike Phillips again from Turner Endangered Species. If I could add to that though, it really doesn't detract in any way my concerns about what Mexico may or may not provide for Mexican Wolves, it doesn't take away in any way from the appropriateness of moving the five animals from Washington State to the Ladder Ranch. As I said, sometimes the most important thing that we can do, is let animals go and let them show us what is and what isn't suitable habitat. The animals in Washington have been identified as important for release in Mexico and that is facilitated if we can get them to the Ladder Ranch.

COMMISSIONER RAMOS: Sir, I'm not questioning the Ladder Ranch. I know your assurance with the facilities. I think my biggest concern is the U.S. Fish and Wildlife housing these wolves there for over an extended time to our original goal here. That's my main thing. I think you all have state of the art facilities. I appreciate the efforts to improve them after our Commission meeting last time and jumping on that, on board. I know that right now that right now we're kind of pressing for time as far as why we're even having this emergency meeting. I

know that, you know, we definitely want to be involved here but again, it's that insurance of that time frame, if that doesn't work out.

CHAIRMAN KIENZLE: Commissioner Ramos, I think we can address that through the department.....

MIKE PHILLIPS: Mr. Chairman, Commissioner Ramos, Mike Phillips from Turner again. All I can say Commissioner Ramos is the United States Fish and Wildlife Services has given me indication that they are determined to get these animals to Mexico. Mexico is determined to receive these animals but there is a wolf at the Ladder Ranch that's also scheduled to go to Mexico, alone there, he's scheduled to go. He would be part of this transport as well. All five wolves from Washington plus this wolf currently at the Ladder and any puppy born would be part of a transport of animals to that Laredo Border Crossing. I think the service is going to act on this if we give them half a chance.

CHAIRMAN KIENZLE: Thank you, sir. Commissioner Ryan?

COMMISSIONER RYAN: Yes, I just want to say, Mr. Phillips, this is Commissioner Ryan and then also directed Mr. L and the Department. I want to applaud the Ladder Ranch and the Department's efforts to cooperate in this manner and also with the Mexican Government. I think this is something that we can really get behind and support and I have every hope that, you know
Final

Plan A or Plan B work out and that further studies and data gathered from Mexico show a glimmer of hope for the wolf down in Mexico because I believe the science shows that's their native range. So, I just want to say thank you to the Ladder Ranch and to the Department for cooperating and you know, this is the type of plan that I can certainly get behind.

CHAIRMAN KIENZLE: Yes, sir?

COMMISSIONER ESPINOZA: Commissioner, Chairman Kienzle, Mike, Commissioner Espinoza here. I too want to applaud the efforts of you guys. You know, we've talked before. What you are doing now is in step with what you've done in the past. You know, you're behind the Wolf Recovery; you put your money where your mouth is. I like what I'm hearing for what you're doing and working with Mexico and you know, whether you're hesitant as far as the prey base down there but at least we're doing something down there. I've talked to Stewart at depth with what he's doing down there and I'm really encouraged about what we're doing down in Mexico. I applaud what you're doing again and the Ladder Ranch and cooperation with you know, updating the facility to address our concerns about human habituation, etc. So, keep it up. This is something that I think, that obviously I will personally stand behind the lot. I hear that you're going to look into doing this more and more often and bring more wolves in to where we can take them to Mexico. And I'm sure you're going to give us assurance of Plan A or Plan B, something changes that you're going to bring that before the Commission again or before the Department. If any little change happens, just understanding the cooperation's happened in the

past. I don't have a problem with that, again, I look forward to the future with the Mexican Gray Wolf in this Department and the Ladder Ranch. So, thank you again.

CHAIRMAN KIENZLE: I am going to take public comment today limited to one minute. Mr. Jones? Nice to see you again.

MR. JONES: I'm Don Jones, Los Alamos, New Mexico. I'm sure you recognize me from last summer when the calm storms so I'm not going to be giving you a tough time. I hope you all approve the transfer as described by Mr. Phillips. I do want to remind you however, that we still have a genetic issue with the New Mexico-Arizona Wolves that needs to be resolved and hope that we can move forward on that sometime in the near future. Thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN KIENZLE: Thank you. Adrienne Seltz [phonetic]?

ADRIENNE SELTZ: Good morning, Mr. Chairman and Commissioners. I just want to say that I want to really give kudos to Ladder Ranch and I encourage you to support them in their work. I mean they've been doing this for a long time without any kind of problems or incidences and I think that helping Mexico to build their population is a great idea too. But I want to echo what Don said, you know we do have a population on the ground that is genetically at the threshold. We need more wolves on the ground and even if they're in Mexico, you know, they may probably go south there but they may wander. They wander, that's what they do. They find
Final

where their habitat is and we happen to have a lot of really great habitat in the United States. So if we can help to create the health of our population and grow our population as the Fish and Wildlife Recovery Plan is indicating, that would also be great and I would encourage you to try to be open to having these animals here. I mean, it's just time where we need this for our environment. I'm not going to get all spiritual on you but we need these critters here. They were here first, before we were her and if they all go away, guess who's next? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN KIENZLE: Thank you. Michael Dax?

MICHAEL DAX: Good morning, Mr. Chairman and Commissioners. My name is Michael Dax. I'm the New Mexico Outreach Representative for Defenders of Wildlife and I would like to support the permit to hold these wolves but also reiterate what Mr. Phillips said about the lack of prey base and private land which creates more difficulties for full recovery. But agree with him that wolves can find their habitat and this is a good positive step to support private conservation. Thanks.

CHAIRMAN KIENZLE: Thank you. Jan Ravenwolf?

JAN RAVENWOLF: Hi, I'm Jan Ravenwolf from Sandia Park. Thank you for this opportunity and thank you for your interest in our spunky Mexican Wolves who are really working hard out there to survive. We land in the, in fact, how things are (indiscernible). We learned at the
Final

January 14th Meeting with you, with your Commission that in Santa Fe that the Turner Endangered Species Foundation permit for holding Mexican Wolves at the Ladder Ranch didn't expire until November of this year. So I guess, I'm not a lawyer, but I'm wondering why they have to apply for permission when they still have their permit, it hasn't expired yet. So that's one of the things I'm wondering about. And since the biologists and ecologists of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have been managing the Mexican Wolf Recovery Program for the last several years, they probably know precious to that population plummeted. Now the population is up and the numbers of fourth and fifth generation wild born survivors are up too. And my time is up and I just want to say that the wolves never chose to have a battle with the humans and they certainly know where they need to go far better than we. So, it wouldn't hurt to listen to them, please. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN KIENZLE: Thank you. Mr. Capra? You don't have to shout from the back of the room today.

STEPHEN CAPRA: Mr. Chairman, Commission, thank you. I'm Stephen Capra, I'm the Executive Director of Bold Visions Conservation. I'm the former Executive Director of New Mexico Wilderness Alliance. We've had the opportunity to do a number of things at Turner's Ranch. I can't say how much we support them. They're a tremendous organization. They're really a gift to the State of New Mexico. In listening to you, I'm getting a sense that you've got a little bit of a strategy here about let's get the wolves in Mexico and let's get them out of New Mexico or limit where they're going to be in New Mexico. I think that would be a flawed

strategy. I think one of the things this Commission needs to really think about long and hard is, your future. Where do you fit in the future of our state? If only 4% of this state hunts and 96% of the state doesn't hunt, that's a lot of people who support wolves in this state. The future of this Commission is dependent on evolving with the rational of who are state is and I urge you all to take a strong look at where you can fit in, in the future of this state. Otherwise, you will be extinct. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN KIENZLE: William Wiley?

WILLIAM WILEY: Commissioner, Chairman and Director Sandoval, my name is William Wiley. Just to give you a little background, I've lived in New Mexico since 1965. I'm a decorated combat vet. I'm a hunter and fisherman and I've been a republican since 1968. Thank you, Mr. Montoya. I would ask you to adhere to this and help the Ladder Ranch. They're genuine, they're respectful and I would ask the other thing, the thirty-thousand foot fact, is that you treat that the animals as much as you do treat the ranchers in this state because the animals should be protected. That's part of your charge Director Sandoval and I feel like that the ranchers are getting too much support in addition to them being subsidized by us because of the lower rates you get on rates that you have to pay for your animal unit. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN KIENZLE: Thank you, sir. Caren Callen?

CAREN CALLEN: I'm going to pass.

CHAIRMAN KIENZLE: Okay. Evelyn Bemis?

EVELYN BEMIS: Good morning Commissioners, Evelyn Bemis from Santa Fe. I'm super excited that it seems we may have a new beginning, both for the wolves and our dialog that seems to be respectful and healthy. I wanted to mention, I have visited the Northern Jaguar Reserve in Sonora, Mexico where they now have 60,000 acres. They hope to be a hundred but that wouldn't even be enough for the protection and viability of jaguars except for their program supporting ranchers around them through camera, motion cameras and every time a large carnivore passes by and it takes a picture, the rancher receives compensation and they've begun to see that their making better money off of the carnivores than the cattle. It doesn't have to either or but it's again, this idea of working together. So I feel like this is a great start and I'm really hopeful. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN KIENZLE: Thank you. Van Klukkert. Did I get that right?

JIM KLUKKERT: No, it's Jim Klukkert.

CHAIRMAN KIENZLE: I'm sorry.

Final

JIM KLUKKERT: That's quite all right. You got the reply with Klukkert because usually it's something wrong.

CHAIRMAN KIENZLE: Okay, I'll call you Mr. Klukkert.

JIM KLUKKERT: Well, thank you, license and registration. I'm happy to be here Mr. Chairman and Commissioners. Particularly happy because in the last meetings that I've been at there's been considerable rancor, some very uncivil kinds of comments and I hope that as Evelyn said, that this is a new beginning. I think the best way to take advantage of that would be, give absolutely full consideration for this very small step that the Ladder Ranch is advocating for and the Turner Endangered Species Fund has a worldwide reputation for being the very finest. If we can get behind this and by we, I mean you. There has been a lot of, first skepticism and then anger and then rancor with a turndown of the SWAP and with turning away Ladder Ranchi's appeal and I don't want to characterize this because I am hoping truly that this is a fresh beginning and we can come together around this as opposed to continue to name call and back and forth like that. Thank you very much for your time Mr. Chairman and Commissioners.

CHAIRMAN KIENZLE: Thank you. I will say with regard to the SWAP, it will be on another Agenda this year.

JIM KLUKKERT: Great, thank you, Commissioners.

CHAIRMAN KIENZLE: That was kind of the opening shot but it's not the end of the line. We will revisit that.

JIM KLUKKERT: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN KIENZLE: Virginia Burse?

VIRGINIA BURSE: Chair and Commissioners, thank you. I am here because of my feelings and my grandchildren and my children and myself. I am interested in the interconnections of animals and plants and the whole natural world and as I get more, as I see the outside more and more, as my yard is a certified wildlife habitat, I am seeing more and more connections between plants and animals and people like me. And as science does investigate the health of human mental health, the outside is very important for our well-being. And so I lived in Montana, moved here in 1990. So I visited Yellowstone before and after wolves and I will tell you that the difference in the health after wolves were introduced was wonderful. Before, the park was really suffering. So please do all you can to support the survival of our wolves for everybody or your future children.

CHAIRMAN KIENZLE: Thank you. Stephen Pollind [phonetic]?

STEPHEN POLLIND: Yes, Mr. Chairman and Commissioners. I'm so delighted to support and hope that you will support this effort to allow these wolves to go through the Ladder Ranch on their way to Mexico because I think this is a great opportunity for New Mexico and Mexico to cooperate in an international effort to support the survival of endangered species. So I think that's such a good thing for our state to be involved in and supporting this effort. Thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN KIENZLE: Thank you. Commissioners, any further questions or comments? Anybody? From my perspective, I think this is a step in the right direction based on what Mr. Liley had to say today, it sounds to me like the Ladder Ranch is modifying its protocol's and I think we're getting to a better place. So based on that, I'm comfortable recommending an approval of this and I would entertain a motion to approve the Importation Permit Application subject to the Director's discretion in imposing reasonable conditions and protocol's on the importation and holding. And with that motion, I think that it will help address Commissioner Ramos's concern that the animals are held here long term. I think if we end up in a situation where they're held here long term, it may come back in front of the Commission again or the Director can exercise her discretion to try and resolve the issue. I think giving her some discretion in that regard resolves or addresses that issue. So that is my motion. I would entertain a motion to that effect.

COMMISSIONER: So moved Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN KIENZLE: Can I get a second?

COMMISSIONER: Second.

CHAIRMAN KIENZLE: Any discussion on that motion? Commissioner Ramos, does that help address some of your concerns? Whether you're for or against the motion, I mean does that help address?

COMMISSIONER RAMOS: Yeah, it's still that assurance piece, but yes.

CHAIRMAN KIENZLE: Okay. This is kind of like hunting. You know you just can't, your guaranteed a day in the field but not much else. So I appreciate that Mr. Phillips will work to move these animals to Mexico and if that doesn't happen in the most timely fashion, I don't sense that it's the Ladder Ranch's fault at the end of the day. Any further questions or comments or any amendments to the motion? All in favor?

ALL MEMBERS: Aye.

Final

CHAIRMAN KIENZLE: Any opposed? Motion carries.

[Applause]

DIRECTOR SANDOVAL: Mr. Chairman and Mr. Phillips, just as a matter of process, the Department will be moving that permit forward once I return to Santa Fe. Mr. Phillips, do you have any other comments or statements you would like to make?

MIKE PHILLIPS: Mr. Chairman, Director Sandoval, I'm still here. Mike Phillips from the Turner Endangered Species Fund. I appreciate this. I'm not quite sure what was voted on. I couldn't quite hear it but I heard clapping and so I'm hoping that's a good thing.

[Laughter]

DIRECTOR SANDOVAL: Mr. Phillips, the motion was made to approve the importation of the five animals with some discretion given to me as the Director and ensuring that we are adhering to either Plan A or Plan B and I'll get that off to you this afternoon.

MIKE PHILLIPS: Mr. Chairman, Director Sandoval, Mike Phillips from the Turner Endangered Species Fund. That's great. This is wonderful news for me. I promise we won't disappoint.

Final

CHAIRMAN KIENZLE: Thank you. Have a nice day. Can I get a motion? I don't think we've got anything else on the Agenda. Can I get a motion to adjourn?

COMMISSIONER: So moved.

CHAIRMAN KIENZLE: Is there a second? I need a second.

COMMISSIONER: Second.

CHAIRMAN KIENZLE: All in favor?

ALL MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIRMAN KIENZLE: We're adjourned.

In Re:

Game Commission Hearing

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APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

NEW MEXICO STATE GAME COMMISSION

SPECIAL MEETING

Albuquerque Marriott, Acoma Room

2101 Louisiana Blvd., NE, Albuquerque, NM 87110

Friday, February 26, 2016


9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.




Alexandra Sandoval, Director and Secretary



Date



Paul M. Kienzle III, Chairman
New Mexico State Game Commission



Date

AS/scd