

Mexican Gray Wolf Reintroduction

Why is it important to restore Mexican gray wolves to New Mexico? The presence of large predators, including wolves, has many beneficial effects on native ecosystems. The loss of these animals has many detrimental effects. (Estes, *et al.*, Trophic Downgrading of Planet Earth, 2011, copy provided to Senator Morales) One example is that when wolves are present in significant numbers, elk spend less time grazing along streams. Vegetation along stream banks recovers, leading to increased populations and diversity of nesting birds, fish, and other native wildlife. Keeping elk moving is also important to the growth of aspen to stabilize slopes and protect watersheds after massive fires like the ones in the Southwest this summer.

What is the legal status of the Mexican gray wolf under New Mexico law? The Mexican gray wolf (*Canis lupus baileyi*) is listed as endangered on the New Mexico state list of endangered species.

<http://www.bison-m.org/reports.aspx?rtype=13&status=%27201%27,%27202%27>

What obligations does the legislature have under state law to conserve the Mexican gray wolf? The preamble to the New Mexico Wildlife Conservation Act (the state analogue to the federal Endangered Species Act) contains the following:

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION ACT

Sections 17-2-37 through 17-2-46 NMSA 1978

The legislature finds and declares that:

- A. species of wildlife indigenous to the state that may be found to be threatened or endangered should be managed to maintain and, to the extent possible, enhance their numbers within the carrying capacity of the habitat;
- B. the state should assist in the management of species of wildlife that are deemed to be endangered elsewhere by prohibiting the taking, possession, transportation, exportation, processing, sale or offering for sale or shipment within this state of species of wildlife listed on the United States lists of endangered fish and wildlife, unless such actions will assist in preserving or propagating the species;
- C. adequate funding should be made available to the department of game and fish by annual appropriations from the general fund or from other sources separate and apart from the game protection fund for management of threatened or endangered species; and
- D. because the management and recovery of threatened or endangered species are the responsibility of and a benefit to all of society, the costs of management and recovery should be the responsibility of all sectors of society, and those costs should be minimized and should be borne by federal, state and local governments with contributions from the private sector.

How popular are wolves with the public in New Mexico? A statewide, independent public opinion survey of 507 registered New Mexico voters, conducted between April 25, 2008 and May 11, 2008, found that 69% of New Mexico voters either *strongly support* (37%) or *somewhat support* (32%) the reintroduction of the Mexican gray wolf into the Gila and Apache National Forests. Detailed report on the survey at:

<http://www.mexicanwolves.org/pdf/Reading18WolfSurveyNM.pdf>