

June 2, 1997

David Parsons
Mexican Wolf Recovery Program
U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service
P. O. Box 1306
Albuquerque, NM 87103-1306

Dear Mr. Parsons:

In reading the recent status report of April 1997, I was shocked to see that the wolves from the Ghost Ranch lineage were being included in the captive breeding program. In the early days of Mexican Wolf Recovery, the origin and genetics of the Ghost Ranch animals were discussed and investigated *ad nauseam*. In fact, the conclusion by all members of the early recovery team was that the animals were wolf-dog hybrids. This was the primary factor behind the decision to seek and capture the remaining wild population, because it was the only pure genetic stock available.

I was sent to inspect the Ghost Ranch animals that were in captivity at the *Living Desert Zoo* at Carlsbad and the private collection of Norma Ames. While some of the animals had some wolf characteristics, some specimens showed more dog than wolf. Nobody, dead or alive on the planet earth, has caught as many wolves in Mexico as I have. But none of the wild wolves resembled the animals that I saw represented in this captive collection. The explanation that the Ghost Ranch animals "do not look like wolves because of captivity and diet" is science right out of the *Twilight Zone*. The real reason that many of the Ghost Ranch animals look like dogs is because that is what they are.

With the understanding that the Endangered Species act does not protect hybrids, all the wolves from Norma Ames and Carlsbad Zoo were anesthetized. Since you have now revised history, and consider the Ghost Ranch animals are actually wolves, wouldn't the anesthetizing of these wolves be considered a "taking" of endangered species? Aren't you likewise guilty of a "taking" by

mixing the hybrids with the wolves? How are these facts going to be handled by law enforcement and have you notified them?

I have remained neutral about the reintroduction of the Mexican wolf in Arizona/New Mexico, because I don't believe it to be any of my business. But dumping out a bunch of hybrids to kill livestock, game animals, and restricting traditional activities is just taking it too far. If the Ghost Ranch animals are true wolves, then what are the animals that I took out of Mexico---- that are so different? And why was I sent to catch them when these other animals were already available? If you are concerned about genetic variability, why not augment the Mexican Wolf genes with those from Canada? Isn't that exactly what is going to happen in the wild when the reintroduction in Idaho and Wyoming meet with the reintroductions from the Southwest? By including the Ghost Ranch hybrids in the breeding program, you are threatening the validity of genetics of the entire wolf reintroduction program, both North and South.

When the first Mexican wolf is killed by some rancher or trapper, and it enters the courts as a legal matter, you will never be able to convict anyone of killing a true wolf. The early records of the recovery meetings, the credentials of the participants, and their conclusions will be contrary to your case, and they are a matter of public record---easily recovered. You may put dog blood in the wolves, but you will never take it out. And you will forever cloud the issue of what it is you have released into the wild. I believe you have made a serious mistake.

Sincerely,



Roy McBride



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

P.O. Box 1306
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87103

In Reply Refer To:
R2/ES-SE

Mr. Roy McBride
Rancher's Supply, Inc.
P.O. Box 725
Alpine, Texas 79831

JUL 23 1997

Dear Roy:

Thank you for your letter of June 2, 1997, expressing your views about the inclusion of the Ghost Ranch and Aragon lineages of Mexican wolves into the official captive breeding program for the subspecies. Your thoughts and opinions on matters relating to Mexican wolf recovery are always appreciated.

I am, of course, aware that wolves in the certified lineage all descend from the Mexican wolves you captured in Chihuahua and Durango, Mexico, in the late 1970's. I fully appreciate your concern about the management of these animals. The Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has been considering the question of the purity of the Ghost Ranch and Aragon lines for a long time. The Service rejected the first recommendation made in 1987 to merge breeding lines. We believed the scientific evidence was inconclusive at that time.

Advances in molecular genetics technology brought new information to bear regarding the purity of the Ghost Ranch and Aragon lines. The Service appointed a Genetics Committee to the Mexican Wolf Recovery Team in 1994, and asked the committee to review available data and issue findings regarding the purity of all three lines of captive Mexican wolves (Certified, Ghost Ranch, and Aragon). The committee found all three breeding lines to be pure Mexican wolves and recommended a careful merging of the lines. The Mexican Wolf Recovery Team supported the recommendation of the Genetics Committee. Enclosed is the report of the Genetics Committee; relevant scientific papers from peer-reviewed journals; and the internal memorandum containing the Service's decision to accept the recommendation of the Genetics Committee.

The Certified line contains the most genetic variation of the three lines and remains the backbone of the Mexican wolf captive population. The contribution you made by capturing the five Mexican wolves from Mexico remains extremely significant to the success of the Mexican Wolf Recovery Program and has not been diminished by

Mr. Roy McBride

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the merging of the other lines. The result of this merging will be a more robust Mexican wolf that contains even more of the original genetic diversity of this rare subspecies. This should enhance its chance of survival.

I know that you hold very strong views on this issue, and I do not expect this information to change your opinion about inclusion of the Ghost Ranch and Aragon lineages. I do hope, however, that the information will allow you to appreciate that the Service's decision was made only after considerable thought and deliberation using the best scientific information available. Perhaps we will have a chance to discuss this issue further at the upcoming Animal Damage Control meeting in New Mexico. I look forward to seeing you there.

Sincerely,



David R. Parsons
Mexican Wolf Recovery Coordinator

Enclosures