

October 4, 2017

To all parties involved in Mexican gray wolf recovery,

As we celebrate the Feast Day of St. Francis of Assisi, Patron of Ecology and animals, we express our concern for the endangered Mexican gray wolf, or “lobo.” As faith leaders in the Southwest, we call for a full recovery of brother lobo, because he is imbued by the Creator with inherent dignity, and because he is a vital member of the community of life in the Southwest.

Mexican wolves once roamed freely from Southern Colorado and the Grand Canyon to Central Mexico, but by the 1970’s were driven to the brink of extinction by human activity. Today, fewer than one hundred fifty Mexican wolves live in isolated pockets of habitat in Arizona, New Mexico, and northern Mexico, making them the most endangered mammal in North America. The wild population is small, scattered, and genetically inbred, leaving them vulnerable to extreme weather and disease. Hundreds of captive wolves await release from breeding facilities, but full recovery has been delayed for decades.

With the newly drafted Mexican wolf recovery plan under consideration by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the fate of lobos is in our hands. We call on all parties to commit to the full and timely recovery of Mexican wolves, based on the best available science, across their entire historic range. Further, when conflicts with livestock arise, we implore Fish and Wildlife to use non-lethal management techniques to resolve these conflicts.

Caring for all life on Earth is an ethical and moral responsibility for people of faith. In the faith shared by Jews and Christians, the book of Genesis proclaims that “God created the wild animals of every kind and pronounced all of them good” (Genesis 1:25). The Medieval Jewish scholar Maimonides wrote, “All the existent individuals of the human species and, all the more, those of the other species, are things of no value at all in comparison with the whole that exists and endures.” This September, many in the Christian tradition celebrated Creation Care month, preaching the values of stewardship and humility. In the Catholic parable of the Wolf of Gubbio, St. Francis made peace with the wolf by affirming its basic needs. This messages of coexistence and humility guide us today.

In the *Laudato Si* encyclical, Pope Francis calls for humanity to reverse the global trend of extinction:

“Each year sees the disappearance of thousands of plant and animal species which we will never know, which our children will never see, because they have been lost forever. The great majority become extinct for reasons related to human activity. Because of us, thousands of species will no longer give glory to God by their very existence, nor convey their message to us. We have no such right.”

To address this global loss of life, we have an opportunity to act locally. We hope that New Mexicans of all beliefs will come together to recover the majestic, ecologically essential Mexican gray wolf to its historic range in the Southwest.

In peace and all good,

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