

I am Terry B Johnson and I was an employee of AGFD until I retired in September 2011. As an endangered species policy specialist with pretty solid international (North American) credentials earned over a 40-year career, I now do contract work for AGFD (and other clients in AZ and elsewhere) on ESA-related policy issues. However, in this reply, I represent nobody other than myself.

That being said, my comment on this latest piece of their tripe is just that: it is their typical distorted perspective, this time on a serious and substantive proposal by several EIS Cooperating Agencies and supported by various stakeholder organizations. Contrary to the gross misrepresentation by Robinson and Bahr, the proposal provides a balanced approach that well serves Mexican wolf conservation, yet it does so without causing unnecessary, unmitigated impacts on residents directly affected by presence of wolves.

The Proposed Alternative also reflects the fact that USFWS has grossly mishandled most Mexican wolf issues (and virtually all the more important ones) since 1998, with the exception of a few very bright years a decade ago when Dale Hall was Region 2 Director and then when John Morgart was Mexican Wolf Recovery Coordinator. USFWS does many things very well throughout the country but Mexican wolf conservation has not been one of them. I have been extensively involved in this since 1982 and I have seen how USFWS makes this brand of sausage. The process is ugly and the product is inedible.

Is the Proposed Alternative perfect? Certainly not. Even I don't agree with everything in it and I wrote 99% of it for my clients, with substantive input from nearly 100 contributors, including scientists, lawyers, biologists, agency representatives and local stakeholders. Although probably not a single supporter agrees with everything in the alternative, the clear consensus among all the supporters was and is that this is a much more realistic, viable starting point for building a Preferred Alternative than what USFWS has put on the table.

What the blind opposition reflected in the CBD "sound bites" press release fails to note (among many relevant issues) is that the Proposed Alternative

represents a significant departure from the "no wolves at all" position that some key supporters have taken in the past. They also fail to note that the alternative is a DRAFT that has been submitted for USFWS to evaluate through public NEPA process as well as through the EIS Cooperators Interagency Planning Team they have convened for exactly that purpose. Finally, their depiction of the Federal-State issue (i.e. ESA authorities) is grossly inaccurate, as can easily be proven by reading the law and the regulations and agreements through which it is implemented. And as usual, they fail to address Tribal issues. But vetting and comprehensive evaluation would all take time and these folks don't spend much time looking at facts that are not consistent with their biases and agendas.

For the Cooperators Alternative to generate so much instant hostility from the usual self-appointed spokespersons for "wolves everywhere and above all; facts and all other resources and humans be damned" suggests strongly that it has merit and that worries them. I certainly believe it has considerable merit. It neither surprises me nor disconcerts me that Robinson and Bahr see in it only what they can't abide; a commitment to ensure that ALL the affected resources and values are appropriately considered while managing for substantive wolf conservation over the long term.

I hate to invoke the ghost of Spiro Agnew, but the public has little to learn from such "nattering nabobs of negativism." Unfortunately, their kind of discourse (syllogistic soundbites about complex issues) sells the Internet chatter and newsprint off which you make your living. Too bad, because the EIS process for Mexican wolf conservation is a serious matter that deserves scrutiny by serious journalists, something that modern news media rarely allow or even promote any more.