

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE COCHISE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
SPECIAL MEETING HELD ON  
TUESDAY, MAY 13, 2025**

A special meeting of the Cochise County Board of Supervisors was held on Tuesday, May 13, 2025 at 5:30 p.m. in the Board of Supervisors' Hearing Room, 1415 Melody Lane, Building G, Bisbee, Arizona.

Present: Frank Antenori, Chairman; Tom Crosby, Vice-Chairman; Kathleen L. Gomez, Supervisor

Staff Present: Sharon Gilman, Interim County Administrator  
Lara Loewenheim, Clerk of the Board

Chairman Antenori called the meeting to order at 5:31 p.m.

***ACTION***

**Board of Supervisors**

1. Town Hall for public comment regarding the impacts of the Mexican Gray Wolf on local residents, ranchers, and businesses.

Chairman Antenori outlined the meeting guidelines, emphasizing the order of speakers based on their application times to the clerk of the board. He stated each speaker would have three minutes, with the possibility of additional time for questions from fellow supervisors. He stated a brief recess was scheduled for around 6:30, and the meeting was expected to conclude by 7:30, allowing each supervisor to make closing statements. He stated the purpose of the meeting was to gather public feedback on a proposed resolution concerning the Mexican gray wolf's impact on local residents, ranchers, and businesses in Cochise County.

Supervisor Gomez made a motion to move agenda item number 1. Vice-Chairman Crosby seconded the motion.

Sonia Gasho stated that Cochise County is not a suitable area for wolf habitat. She expressed for the Sheriff's Office and the ranch patrol for their efforts.

William Scott Huber, a Portal resident, emphasized the importance of maintaining current efforts until federal delisting criteria for the Mexican gray wolf are met.

Kate Scott noted that ranchers are compensated for confirmed livestock losses and mentioned two cows specifically, with only those two cases having been officially confirmed.

James A. Schmidt, a retired wildlife services professional, expressed concern about the expanding wolf population and highlighted that taking action against wolves is

prohibited.

Dirk D. Sigler emphasized that ranchers are not a unified group, urged against polarization, and encouraged gathering broader expertise to pursue a constructive approach that considers both concerns and the benefits of wildlife ecotourism.

Zachary Palma, ecologist, shared insights from his work in Sonora, Mexico, and he identified two major challenges: groundwater overextraction and the need to protect watersheds.

Ethan Bonnin, biologist, spoke in support of watershed restoration. In response to the Board, Mr. Bonnin clarified that their comments were focused on public lands, specifically those managed by the Bureau of Land Management, Forest Service, and state land trusts, not private lands, which individuals can use as they choose. He expressed respect for ranchers and support for continued food production and emphasized that the health of watersheds and communities depend on better land management.

Cheryl Knott was called upon but did not speak.

Michael Gregory was called upon but did not speak.

Cyndi Tuell advocated for the two known Mexican gray wolves in Cochise County, noting that the male was shot and the female's pups died, though she has since been re-released with a new mate in the Chiricahua and Coronado areas.

Ginger Lynn Cheney voiced strong support for taking a firm stance on the wolf issue, advocating for delisting and defunding the program.

Mike D. Wear, Willcox resident, raised the issue of potential hybridization and crossbreeding between wolves and coyotes.

Erin Hunt spoke in opposition to delisting the Mexican gray wolf, emphasizing its status as an endangered species and part of the region's natural heritage.

Jacob Kartchner criticized the lack of management by U.S. Fish and Wildlife and labeled the experiment a failure due to their refusal to relocate problem wolves.

Gary A. Thrasher, a veterinarian, stated that over one million acres of federal and state lands are tied to grazing allotments, which are critical to the operation of local ranches.

Tricia Gerrodette, a San Simon resident, called for more parties to come together and for all relevant information to be presented, noting that this is a new issue for ranchers.

Supervisor Gomez explained that the Eastern Arizona Counties Association has been working on this for a long time, and tonight's session was an opportunity to hear from various experts and the public. She assured that a resolution would be worked on thoughtfully but not voted on at this meeting.

Nancy Thomas, a licensed veterinarian, emphasized that wolves have a right to be in the area, stating they don't kill for sport, and stressed the importance of preserving wildlife habitats, including water resources.

Colleen Savage argued that wolves do not stay on public land and will breed with other animals, leading to potential hybridization.

Allison Morse, a Portal resident, emphasized the importance of protecting wildlife, stating they deserve respect as they are part of the natural environment.

Ann Prezyna, a wildlife conservation advocate, expressed support for welcoming wolves back into the landscape, noting their role in restoring ecological balance.

Dr. Aletris Neils, worked with the Mexican gray wolf for 25 years, described them as docile and mentioned that they do not fear humans when encountered and she emphasized that coexistence with the wolves is possible and offered assistance to local ranchers.

Chairman Antenori called a recess until 6:45 p.m. at 6:37 p.m.

Chairman Antenori resumed the meeting at 6:45 p.m.

Aurelia Bugbee Neils, an 8-year-old home schooled student, mentioned being part of a group that was founded to protect wildlife and described how she has spent time with wild wolves.

Diane W. Davidson, a Portal resident, expressed understanding of the need for compensation to ranchers but also highlighted the impact of climate change, which she believes is severely damaging property.

Craig Miller, a regional representative for Defenders of Wildlife, shared his long-standing involvement with the Mexican wolf program and emphasized the importance of the Endangered Species Act in reflecting society's concern about the impact of species preservation.

Erica Prather, a labor organizer, pointed out that while wolves have been confirmed in the area, their numbers are in decline, and she argued that it's not an emergency but a chance to create jobs and address broader concerns with real solutions.

William M. Riggs, IV, mentioned that recommendations have been made for hot wire fencing as a potential solution to protect livestock from wolf predation.

Supervisor Gomez clarified that while such analyses had been done in other areas, particularly in northern Arizona, no similar analysis was performed before the recent wolf introductions.

George Morin argued that wolves have always been present in the region.

Don Lackner, representing Cochise Grant Cattle Growers, discussed the impact of wolves on ranchers and the local community, emphasizing that the area lacks a sufficient prey base to support the wolves.

David Thompson, a cattle rancher, criticized the federal government for releasing wolves in Cochise County without consultation, citing inadequate prey and the difficulty of monitoring herds, and suggested using wireless fencing and collars to contain the wolves.

Tina Thompson, a fifth-generation rancher from District 3, expressed concern that the lack of a sufficient prey base would force predators to target cattle, and she argued that ranchers are not being fairly compensated for their losses.

Phillip Klump reflected that 40 years ago, the federal government began discussing wolf reintroduction, stressing that payment for wolf kills needs to be simplified, and advocating for ranchers' rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Ed Ashurst, a lifelong resident, argued that wolf depredations on private land and rancher-funded water improvements threaten Cochise County's tax base and unfairly burden local ranchers.

Tammy Sue Smith, an eighth-generation cattle rancher, criticized the wolf program as taxpayer-funded and harmful to ranchers, calling it preventable and labeling the wolf a "beast of desolation" that is not essential.

Shaye Lynn Clemson, an eighth-generation rancher, urged protection of ranching for future generations, questioned the investigation process for wolf kills, raised health concerns over disease, and called for wolves to be defunded and delisted.

Hagen Clemson, an eighth-generation rancher, reported multiple cattle killed by wolves, including suspected sport kills.

Steven Smith expressed pride in the ranching industry and urged the Board of Supervisors to help, criticizing the wolf program's shifting goals, reporting 25 to 30 cattle lost in four months, and warning that wolves from Mexico may be relocated to the U.S. under federal control.

John Ladd criticized the wolf program for shifting goals and ineffective collar tracking, called for it to be defunded and delisted, and noted that subsidies are failing due to lack of funding and manpower.

Jose Torres shared his first encounter with grey wolves while living in rural California, describing livestock losses including goats and a neighbor's llamas, and noted the difficulty in distinguishing between wolf and mountain lion attacks.

Amy Mone expressed a personal connection to wolves, emphasized land stewardship and collaboration, and voiced appreciation for the work of ranchers while advocating for coexistence.

Chairman Antenori summarized that opinions received on delisting were evenly split, with some opposition from outside Cochise County. He addressed concerns about private property rights and the Fifth Amendment, proposing 100% compensation for losses and the need for further investigation of depredation evidence. He emphasized that the expanded recovery area, insufficient prey base, and increased wolf impacts on cattle raise the need for a balanced approach, including the possibility of transferring management to Arizona Game and Fish and allowing regulated hunting. He stated the resolution will be posted for public comment, and further discussions on striking a balance between private and public land use will continue.

Vice-Chairman Crosby emphasized the county's constitutional stance and referenced the 2021 resolution, highlighting concerns over federal overreach, particularly by the Secretary of Agriculture. He argued that wolves and coyotes could interbreed, criticized the influence of environmentalists, and expressed skepticism about federal collaboration, warning that the government would continue to change its goals and overstep its bounds.

Supervisor Gomez acknowledged the environmentalist perspective but stressed the importance of balancing both sides and understanding Cochise County's unique

situation. She highlighted the lack of proper analysis of prey populations and the challenges ranchers face, noting that wolves were never permanently in the county. She emphasized the need for compensation and a resolution that respects both ranching and ecotourism, aiming for a balanced approach that protects the Mexican wolf without placing undue burden on ranchers.

Chairman Antenori adjourned the meeting at 8:03 p.m.

APPROVED:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Frank Antenori, Chairman

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Lara Loewenheim, Clerk of the Board