

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE COCHISE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
WORK SESSION HELD ON
THURSDAY, MAY 8, 2025**

A work session of the Cochise County Board of Supervisors was held on Thursday, May 8, 2025, at 10:00 a.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
Joe Casey, Interim Deputy County Administrator
Lara Loewenheim, Clerk of the Board

Attendees: Pascal Berlioux, Executive Director of Eastern Arizona Counties Organization
Cody Essary, Deputy Sheriff
Jesse Mitchell, Deputy Sheriff

Chairman Antenori called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

Board of Supervisors

1. Discussion and possible direction regarding matters related to Mexican Gray Wolf management and associated impacts on local communities.

Pascal Berlioux, Executive Director, presented this item using a PowerPoint presentation.

- Mr. Berlioux stated the Eastern Arizona Counties Organization (EAC), representing six counties since 1993, was introduced as a collaborative effort to strengthen rural influence in federal decision-making, particularly regarding natural resources. Explained the organization's role in influencing federal land management decisions, emphasizing the lack of authority rural counties have individually.
- EAC has engaged in major projects including wildfire mitigation and played a significant role in shaping the Mexican Wolf Recovery Plan revision, achieving a reduced cap from 650 to 320 wolves and legal protections for self-defense and domestic animal defense on private lands and securing depredation compensation.
- Additional accomplishments included securing over \$1.5 million in compensation for ranchers, influencing elk population management policy, discontinuing the release of human-habituated ("naive") wolves, and supporting cross-fostering efforts to improve genetic diversity for potential delisting.

Mr. Essary explained that his role is to serve as a liaison between the Sheriff's Office and the ranching community, providing updates on issues impacting local residents. He reported that two wolves released last year in the Peloncillo Mountains have since settled in the Chiricahua area, resulting in six confirmed livestock depredations, with another under review. He stated frustrations were shared regarding the lack of local resources,

delayed response times for investigations, and insufficient communication from federal agencies, particularly U.S. Fish and Wildlife. He stated the Sheriff's Office has sent a letter of support to Washington and emphasized the importance of listening to directly affected community members during the upcoming public hearing.

Vice-Chairman Crosby raised concerns about federal land jurisdiction, citing specific constitutional provisions such as Article I, Section 8, Clause 17 and Article IV, Section 3. He argued that the federal government lacks authority to acquire or control land beyond what is explicitly outlined in the Constitution, and criticized practices he viewed as unconstitutional overreach. Vice-Chairman Crosby connected these issues to the presence of wolves, stating there is no constitutional basis for federal wolf management programs, and pointed to the Tenth Amendment as justification for state or local control.

The Board and staff discussed the focus on challenges faced by ranchers and the perceived imbalance in legal effectiveness between wolf advocates and local communities. The Board raised ideas about litigation strategies through county or state legal avenues, as well as pursuing federal rule changes via the Federal Register instead of Congress. The Board and staff discussed short-term solutions like increasing compensation and involving local sheriffs in investigations were suggested alongside longer-term legal and legislative efforts.

Chairman Antenori adjourned the meeting at 12:21 p.m.

APPROVED:

Frank Antenori, Chairman

ATTEST:

Lara Loewenheim, Clerk of the Board