

Gila Livestock Growers Association
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Dear Members and Friends,

Please excuse me once again for taking my time about getting a newsletter out. So much has happened this year and so much of it was available in the news, that I allowed my campaign to be my main focus throughout the summer and fall. Needless to say I am playing catch up on everything now.

As many of you have probably already heard or read, Federal Judge Christina Armijo felt we didn't or shouldn't, have enough clout to make our case in the Mexican wolf suit. She ruled against us on Jan 31. We are still waiting word from Karen Budd Falen Whether it is worth appealing or not. The worst part of her ruling was that she stated livestock owners were not experts in the depredation of our own cattle and FWS are deferred to in their expertise and given a pass on our increased losses.

Meanwhile the USFWS has used both of her rulings to justify treating the affected public worse than ever. Since the rulings, the agencies have chosen to do away with the termination option in the 5-year review. The agency has yet to start NEPA and re-write the official changes to the final rule, yet they are making changes in rule if it suits them. They are also making every effort to avoid upholding their obligations to the local communities stated in the final rule. They have also completely done away with a local advisory committee as specifically stated in the Rule.

This blatantly arrogant attitude was never more apparent than in last weeks, 5-year review open houses. As you may recall, the 3-year review allowed a minute comment paper at the open houses. Even though the 3-year review showed they had done very little to allow people to participate, at least we had that little form to fill out. After many complaints, the focus of the 3-year review, was placed on making public participation more equitable and the agency had a large public input seminar to encourage recommendations over future management. There was terrific participation in that weeklong planning session.

A year and a half later, internal management changes put a stop to those plans and recommendations. Since AZ became the lead agency running the program, there has been a near total ousting of public participation. At this point, if you can't make the quarterly AMWAG meeting in whatever part of NM/AZ the FWS chooses to hold it, or you can't get your concerns to the AMWAG representative in your area, you are out of luck. That is the only participation the

affected parties will have, other than the occasional option to comment in writing in a manner that only focuses on promoting the program. No constructive criticism is allowed. According to the FWS, judge Armijo's rulings allow them this preference.

On the bright side:

Due to the lack of affect public participation allowed in the program and the 5-year review, we have been given an opportunity to express our positions to Congressman Pearce's staff in the next week. Please see the enclosed flyer for places and times and please attend one of these meetings. Your verbal written and pictorial presentations will be welcome and will be used to help our situation. For the 5-year review and Standard operating procedures comments please let me know if you need help commenting I will be putting together a summary and will be glad to talk to you. 505-772-5753. SOP due 2-29, 5 year due 3-10

Other than wolf, there are several US Forest Service plans that are also a concern in the Gila. The SO office is planning on using the EPA clean air standards to close roads in the Forest and that will be a big concern for the near future. Mysteriously, the CBD has sued it close several roads in the region at the same time.

As far as allotment hassles go, several of you have seen no let up by the agency even as some of you have finally seen some relief.

Those of you who are having USFS problems please keep me up to date on the situation, I'd be happy to assist in any way I can.

As many of you know, Kit Laney is serving his now 3 months, sentence at La Tuna Boot Camp in Anthony Texas. He has been there since Jan 3 and is doing well enough. He would welcome visitors. If you would like a visitor application please email or call and I will send one to you with instructions.

Please see the enclosed Flyer and pass it around to your neighbors and friends. I hope to see you all on the 14th.



Sincerely Laura Schneberger