

Adam Mendonca, Supervisor of Gila National Forest  
Victoria Christiansen, Interim Chief of the Forest Service

June 8, 2018

Via email: [amendonca@fs.fed.us](mailto:amendonca@fs.fed.us), [vcchristiansen@fs.fed.us](mailto:vcchristiansen@fs.fed.us)

Dear Forest Supervisor Mendonca and Forest Service Interim Chief Christiansen,

This is to request the immediate cancelation of the livestock grazing permit issued to Craig Thiessen for the Canyon del Buey allotment in the Quemado Ranger District of the Gila National Forest and any other Forest Service permits that he holds. Mr. Thiessen pleaded guilty last month to violating the Endangered Species Act by knowingly and intentionally trapping and killing with a shovel a Mexican gray wolf on the Gila National Forest and the Canyon del Buey allotment in February 2015. The victim was a male, ten-month-old pup of the Willow Springs Pack, a wolf family that, in part due to this brutal killing, no longer exists. We ask that you act under authority of 36 C.F.R. 222.4(a)(6) to immediately cancel Mr. Thiessen's permit as a deterrent against similar crimes by other livestock permittees and to accord with the American public's interest in equitable and just uses of the public lands.

The Department of Justice's press release claims that Mr. Thiessen's guilty plea will serve as a deterrent to others who might consider similar violations. However, as explained below this seems unlikely, and if the Forest Service fails to act it will contribute to the misplaced incentives that by no means deter wolf-killing violators of the Endangered Species Act. Mr. Thiessen was sentenced to just one year of probation and a paltry \$2,300 in restitution to the Mexican Gray Wolf Recovery Program, plus a ten-dollar administrative fee. That is a fraction of the sum that he received from taxpayers. In 2015, Mr. Thiessen accepted more than \$255,000 in livestock subsidies and in 2016 -- after the wolf-killing -- more than \$44,000. Moreover, Mr. Thiessen is ranked the second-highest farm-subsidy recipient in the 87281 zip code, having taken in \$387,788 between 1995 and 2016, with the vast majority of that taxpayer money coming to him the year of and the year following his crime.<sup>1</sup>

The public should not subsidize Mr. Thiessen's private business after his brutal, violent and unconscionable crime.

Notwithstanding Mr. Thiessen's advantageous plea to a misdemeanor for killing a threatened species, in actuality the Mexican gray wolf is gravely imperiled, with just 114 wolves in the wild in the U.S. and about half of them in the Gila National Forest. Illegal killings of wolves are the largest causes of loss to the population and play a significant role in thwarting progress toward recovery and imperiling the Mexican wolf with extinction. Every wolf in the population may play an important role in recovery; every killing is consequential.

In this case, as well, this young male pup was important not just to his family, the Willow Springs Pack; important not just to the Mexican wolf population as explained; not just to an American public rooting for his charismatic and long-persecuted subspecies, the Mexican wolf; but the wolf was also important to the boy who bestowed the animal a name upon birth -- "Mia Tuk" -- as part of an annual pup-naming contest. Now in sixth grade, Jaryn Allen of Albuquerque has joined this letter in demanding further justice for the wolf he named in 2015.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://farm.ewg.org/persondetail.php?custnumber=A09948075>;  
[https://farm.ewg.org/addrsearch.php?search\\_input\\_text=87821](https://farm.ewg.org/addrsearch.php?search_input_text=87821).

Given Mr. Thiessen's admission to knowing misconduct — a violation of the terms and conditions of his grazing permit and federal regulations — and given the long-lasting deleterious impact on the public interest, we are asking you to use your authority to protect the Gila National Forest and its wildlife that is conveyed at 36 C.F.R. 222.4(a)(6), to immediately cancel any and all grazing allotment permits that he holds:

**§ 222.4 Changes in grazing permits.**

(a) The Chief, Forest Service, is authorized to cancel, modify, or suspend grazing and livestock use permits in whole or in part as follows:

....

(6) Cancel or suspend the permit if the permit holder is convicted for failing to comply with Federal laws or regulations or State laws relating to protection of air, water, soil and vegetation, fish and wildlife, and other environmental values when exercising the grazing use authorized by the permit.

Please note that there is no requirement to send Mr. Thiessen a Notice of Non-Compliance. His permit(s) may be suspended or cancelled immediately.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely endorsed by,

Karen Michael, Secretary, Board of Directors  
Animal Defense League of Arizona  
Phoenix, Arizona

Jessica Johnson, Chief Legislative Officer  
Animal Protection of New Mexico  
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Michael J. Robinson, Conservation Advocate  
Center for Biological Diversity  
Silver City, New Mexico

Bryan Bird, Southwest Program Director  
Defenders of Wildlife  
Santa Fe, New Mexico

Tara Thornton, Program Director  
Endangered Species Coalition  
Washington, D.C.

Connie Poten, President  
Footloose Montana, Inc  
Missoula, Montana

Tom Hannagan, President  
Friends of Ironwood Forest  
Tucson, Arizona

Sandy Bahr, Chapter Director  
Grand Canyon Chapter of the Sierra Club  
Phoenix, Arizona

Emily Renn, Executive Director  
Grand Canyon Wolf Recovery Project  
Flagstaff, Arizona

Shelley Silbert, Executive Director  
Great Old Broads for Wilderness  
Durango, Colorado

Kellye Pinkleton, Senior State Director, Arizona  
Humane Society of the United States  
Phoenix, Arizona

Louise Kane, JD, Founder  
Justice for Wolves  
Eastham, Massachusetts

Anna Mohr-Almeida, CEO  
Kids CAN  
Mesa, Arizona

Mark Horlings, Chair of the Conservation Committee  
Maricopa Audubon Society  
Phoenix, Arizona

Donald A. Molde, Co-founder and Mark E. Smith, Director & CEO  
Nevada Wildlife Alliance  
Incline Village, Nevada

Tom Jervis, President  
New Mexico Audubon Council  
Santa Fe, New Mexico

Adam DeParolesa, Outreach Coordinator  
North American Wolf Foundation  
Ipswich, Massachusetts

Wally Sykes, Co-Founder  
Northeast Oregon Ecosystems  
Joseph, Oregon

Susan Waters, Owner/Writer/Producer  
Northern Lights Communications  
Missoula, Montana

Mary Katherine Ray, Wildlife Chair  
Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club  
Winston, New Mexico

Kevin Bixby, Executive Director  
Southwest Environmental Center  
Las Cruces, New Mexico

John Davis, Executive Director and David Parsons, Carnivore Conservation Biologist  
The Rewilding Institute  
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Trish Swain, Director  
TrailSafe Nevada  
Sparks, Nevada

KC York, President  
Trap Free Montana Public Lands and Trap Free Montana  
Hamilton, Montana

Donna Stevens, Executive Director  
Upper Gila Watershed Alliance  
Silver City, New Mexico

Greta Anderson, Deputy Director  
Western Watersheds Project  
Tucson, Arizona

Kirk Robinson, Ph.D., Executive Director  
Western Wildlife Conservancy  
Salt Lake City, Utah

Thomas Hollender, President  
White Mountain Conservation League  
Nutrioso, Arizona

Christopher Smith, Southern Rockies Wildlife Advocate  
WildEarth Guardians  
Santa Fe, New Mexico

George Nickas, Executive Director  
Wilderness Watch  
Missoula, Montana

Maggie Howell, Executive Director  
Wolf Conservation Center  
South Salem, New York

Marc Cooke, President  
Wolves of the Rockies  
Stevensville, Montana

Nancy Meister, President  
Yuma Audubon Society  
Yuma, Arizona

Jaryn Allen  
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Steve Barkley  
Bozeman, Montana

Brad Bergstrom, Ph.D.  
Valdosta, Georgia

Nancy Joan Braun  
Missoula, Montana

Elaine Carrick  
Reno, Nevada

Carol Fifer  
Bozeman, Montana

Margaret Flint  
Silver Springs, Nevada

Shan Guisinger, PhD  
Missoula, Montana

Anja Heister, PhD  
Missoula, Montana

Thomas Hulen  
Tempe, Arizona

Leah L. Jones  
Reno, Nevada

John E. Lee IV  
Bozeman, Montana

Malcolm R. MacPherson, PhD  
Santa Fe, New Mexico

Amanda McCoy  
Waddell, Arizona

Rebecca A. Murray  
Bozeman, Montana

Stephanie Myers  
Las Vegas, Nevada

Jean C. Ossorio and Peter M. Ossorio  
Las Cruces, New Mexico

Ruth Rudner  
Tobacco Root Mountains, Montana

Jennifer Simeo  
Reno, Nevada

Fred and Elaine Voltz  
Carson City, Nevada

Department of Justice  
U.S. Attorney's Office  
District of New Mexico

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Friday, May 25, 2018

## **Catron County Man Sentenced for Federal Misdemeanor Wildlife Violation Arising Out of Killing of Mexican Gray Wolf**

ALBUQUERQUE – U.S. Attorney John C. Anderson and Acting Special Agent in Charge Phillip Land of the U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of Law Enforcement of the Southwest Region, announced that Craig Thiessen pleaded guilty yesterday to a federal misdemeanor wildlife violation arising out of the taking of a Mexican gray wolf. Immediately after entering the guilty plea, Thiessen was sentenced to a one-year term of probation and was ordered to pay \$2,300 in restitution to the Mexican Wolf Recovery Program.

In announcing the guilty plea and sentence, U.S. Attorney John C. Anderson said, “Mexican wolves were listed as an endangered species in 1976, prompting recovery efforts to save the species from extinction. The Justice Department is committed to working with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and our other law enforcement partners to protect the Mexican gray wolf and other vulnerable species so they remain on our planet for future generations.”

“The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service works closely with our partners to protect imperiled species both at home and abroad,” said Acting Special Agent in Charge Phillip Land of the U.S. Department of Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of Law Enforcement of the Southwest Region. “This defendant knowingly took a Mexican gray wolf, the rarest subspecies of gray wolf in North America. The defendant's guilty plea should serve as a deterrent to those who choose to knowingly harass and take wildlife unlawfully. We will continue to work with the Department of Justice and others to bring these offenders to justice.”

During yesterday's proceedings, Thiessen, 46, of Catron County, N.M., entered a guilty plea to an information charging him with the taking of threatened wildlife. In entering the guilty plea, Thiessen admitted that in Feb. 2015, in Catron County, N.M., he intentionally captured a Mexican gray wolf in a trap on his grazing allotment in the Gila National Forest

and hit the wolf with a shovel. Thiessen admitted knowing that the animal was a Mexican gray wolf because it bore a tracking collar, which is affixed to all Mexican gray wolves in the area.

This case was investigated by the U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of Law Enforcement of the Southwest Region, and is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney John Balla of the U.S. Attorney's Las Cruces Branch Office.

[http://www.santafenewmexican.com/news/local\\_news/man-sentenced-for-trapping-killing-wolf/article\\_e02c5510-d2d4-5e27-80eb-bf4f5fcf0a09.html](http://www.santafenewmexican.com/news/local_news/man-sentenced-for-trapping-killing-wolf/article_e02c5510-d2d4-5e27-80eb-bf4f5fcf0a09.html)

<http://www.krqe.com/news/crime/new-mexico-man-pleads-guilty-to-killing-mexican-gray-wolf/1199984986>

<https://www.abqjournal.com/1176747/catron-county-man-pleads-guilty-to-killing-mexican-gray-wolf.html>

<https://mexicanwolves.org/index.php/news/1415/51/Third-Annual-Mexican-Wolf-Pup-Naming-Contest-Results>