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***Wisdom in Predator Restoration:
The Story of the Mexican Gray Wolf
In the Southwest***

A deep chest bawl echoes from rimrock to rimrock, rolls down the mountain, and fades to the far blackness of the night. It is an outburst of wild defiant sorrow, and of contempt for all the adversities of the world.

Aldo Leopold

Introduction

In this essay, I use the virtue of wisdom to frame, evaluate, and justify the reintroduction of the Mexican Gray wolf in the Southwest United States. Philippa Foot in her essay “Virtues and Vices” gives this two-part definition of wisdom: “In the first place the wise man knows the means to certain good ends; and secondly he knows how much particular ends are worth.”¹ In looking at the wolf, I will first show how reintroduction is justified by good ends. Second, I will look at the practical work of reintroduction to evaluate whether the means are furthering the ends.

An end is an object of attainment for which we act. The ends of wisdom must be good ends, not just any end. The end must be valuable and worthy of us. I argue that there are three good ends that justify this reintroduction. First, there is the end of making amends. Second is the end of promoting wildness. Third is the end of making ourselves

¹ Philippa Foot, *Virtues and Vices and Other Essays in Moral Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1978), 1-18

good again. To evaluate how we are reaching these ends, I look to the federal reintroduction program, the management of wolves, and the conflict over the wolf reintroduction. To evaluate these means, I pay particular attention to our historical treatment of the Mexican Gray Wolf. I use the Aspen Pack as a case study in the treatment of reintroduced Mexican Gray Wolves. The Aspen Pack was released into the Blue Range wolf recovery area in 2004.

To begin I will give a brief history of the Mexican Gray Wolf. We must always remember the actual wolves, for as Philip Hallie has pointed out, we obscure the nature of cruelty when we neglect attention to the victims. After explaining this history, I will be able to show why there are good ends in wolf reintroduction that we should strive for.

The History of the Mexican Gray Wolf – On Wolves and Extermination

Wolves ranged the Southwest from the Pleistocene epoch, over ten thousand years ago, until they were exterminated in the 1940's by a concentrated effort by the livestock industry. When people started ranching on a large scale in the late 1800's, the Cattlemen's Association and later the federal government put bounties on the heads of wolves as well as other predators such as the bears, mountain lions, and coyotes. In 1899, the Silver City Enterprise ran an ad from the Cattle growers of the Sapillo offering \$50 for every gray wolf and \$15 for every mountain lion. By 1909 when the federal government paid the bounty, wolves were worth \$15 dollars and mountain lions \$10. Wolves and other predators were a threat to the livestock industry. In 1913, the *Silver City Enterprise* explained the killing of predators,

“This kind of warfare of the Forest Service and Stockmen against cattle and sheep destroying beasts is the result of a general and in some instances serious loss by grazing permittees. With the high prices of cattle nowadays, the stockmen feel the loss of every beef animal lost or killed far more than in the old days of larger herds and lower prices. It is said that a bear will kill \$300 worth of cattle in a season while a wolf or a lion destroys \$300 or more.”²

The wolf was completely eradicated from the Southwest, but the mountain lion was not. Both lions and wolves have high reproductive rates and can handle high losses. Wolves, however, forms strong pair bonds and raise the young together. The strong family ties, the sociability of wolves, the vocal howling, and the long weaning worked against the wolf.

The early wolves were trapped, shot, and dunned, which means that pups were taken out of their dens and clubbed. Later, federal employees in Predator and Rodent Control (PARC) used strychnine to kill wolves. The use of poison was an efficient means to kill large quantities of wolves. There are old black and white photos of wolves hanging from fences or trees – they look like large German Shepherds with manes. Other photos show wolves—limp and hanging over the running board of the first automobiles. Sometimes men posed with live wolves caught in traps.

The last wolf killed in Texas was an old female, snowy white, with a stiff tail. She had eluded scented baits and traps for five years and had a five hundred dollar bounty on her head. By chance, in 1925, a ranch foreman rode up upon her. She didn't notice the horse or the rider. The foreman shot twice, killing her.

² *Silver City Enterprise*, (newspaper) November 1913

The Mexican Gray Wolf was eliminated from the United States by the 1940's. The US Cattlemen's Association started sending hunters down to Mexico to kill any remaining wolves. They didn't want any stray wolves wandering back up to the United States. It is important to note that there was no opposition to the extermination of wolves.

David Brown puts it bluntly:

No group or organization opposed the [the livestock organization's] single-minded purpose. Sportsmen and their associations, state game and fish departments, the U.S. Forest Service, and the U.S. Biological Survey all abetted the quest; almost none of them resisted it. Nor were the naturalists and protectionists a factor in hindering the wolf's demise. No voice was raised for a rational and effective program to maintain a small but representative wolf population while one existed.³

This is the history that has been handed down to us. The goal of reintroduction must be seen against this history.

The Goals of the Reintroduction of the Mexican Gray Wolf

As I mentioned in the introduction, there are three ends that justify the reintroduction of the wolf in the Southwest. These are good ends because they are valuable and show a profound recognition of the wolf and of our role in the destruction of the wolf. The ends are making amends, promoting wildness, and becoming good again.

I will explore each in turn.

Making Amends

The virtue of reciprocity can guide us as we consider our relationship with the wolf, with ourselves, and with the land. Reciprocity is a moral virtue. To reciprocate is to

³ David E. Brown, editor, *The Wolf in the Southwest: The Making of an Endangered Species* (Silver City: High Lonesome Books, revised edition 2002) p 2

give something back. The important aspects of reciprocity are twofold. First, there is giving back for the goods we receive. Second, there is the making of amends for the harm we have done. In human relationships, reciprocity is a social virtue in that it maintains strong and healthy relationships. It is easy to see why strong human relationships are built if we give back for goods that we receive and make amends for the harm we have caused.

Reciprocity is easily translated into our relationship with nature. First, reciprocity is a recipient's virtue. A virtuous person will see the proper way to respond to the goods she has received. Clearly, the goods we receive are not only from human sources. We rely on water for our life and on the earth for sustenance. Second, reciprocity, like the virtues of attentiveness, intimacy, and humility, is in a class of virtues that expand our moral vision beyond the human. For example, we can be attentive to another person as well as to an osprey. We can stand humbly before a great speaker as we can before the magnificent Teton Mountains. Similarly, a virtuous person can recognize the importance of responding reciprocally to another. She can work on behalf of the river which sustains her community, and she can make amends to the wolves who suffered under human management.

The Endangered Species Act (ESA) embodies this concept of reciprocity with regard to our relationship to other species. This act asks us to recognize the harm that we have caused others species and make amends for that harm. Congress declares that, “various species of fish, wildlife, and plants in the United States have been rendered extinct as a consequence of economic growth and development untempered by adequate concern and conservation” and “other species of fish, wildlife, and plants have been so

depleted in numbers that they are in danger or threatened with extinction.”⁴ The use of the word ‘untempered’ highlights that our growth has not been moderate nor thoughtful.

The purpose of the ESA is, “to provide a means whereby the ecosystems upon which endangered species depend may be conserved, [and] to provide a program for the conservation of such endangered species and threatened species.”⁵ The ESA calls for the listing of species irrespective of cost and the designation of critical habitat.

An individual who illustrates the virtue of reciprocity is Aldo Leopold. Early in his career, he participated in and implemented a predator eradication program. Yet, he recognized the harm he caused and worked to make amends. In “Thinking Like a Mountain,” Leopold says that only the mountain has lived long enough to listen objectively to the howl of the wolf. In a sad and painfully honest rendition, Leopold writes about the time that he shot and killed a wolf:

We were eating lunch on a high rimrock, at the foot of which a turbulent river elbowed its way. We saw what we thought was a doe fording the torrent, her breast awash in white water. When she climbed the bank toward us and shook out her tail, we realized our error: it was a wolf. A half-dozen others, evidently grown pups, sprang from the willows and all joined in a welcoming melee of wagging tails and playful maulings ...

In those days we had never heard of passing up a chance to kill a wolf. In a second we were pumping lead into the pack, but with more excitement than accuracy: how to aim a steep downhill shot is always confusing. When our rifles were empty, the old wolf was down, and a pup was dragging a leg into impassable slide rocks

We reached the old wolf in time to watch a fierce green fire dying in her eyes. I realized then, and have known ever since, that there was something new to me in those eyes – something known only to her and to the mountain. I was young then, and full of trigger-itch; I thought that because fewer wolves meant more deer, that no wolves would mean hunters’ paradise. But after seeing the green fire die, I sensed that neither the wolf nor the mountain agreed with such a view.⁶

⁴ Endangered Species Act of 1973, 16 U.S.C.A. § 1531 2(a)(1)-(2)

⁵ 16 U.S.C.A. § 1531 2(b)

⁶ Aldo Leopold, “Thinking Like a Mountain,” in *Sand County Almanac* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1970) p. 138-39

Leopold illustrates the virtue of reciprocity, because he spent a lifetime making amends for the harm he helped create. He made his amends through education, activism, and literature. He helped establish the wilderness system. He formulated the land-ethic, which defines morality in terms of the integrity, stability, and beauty of the land. His life work was dedicated to helping others see what it would mean to think like a mountain. The harm can not be taken away. This wolf lost her life in an act of senseless cruelty, gunshots without thought. But, Leopold learned from his mistake and worked to make things right.

We can not blame one person or one historical time period for the loss of the wolf. We are all to blame. The loss rides upon all our shoulders and it is each of our responsibility to make amends. The act of wiping out wolves in the entire region is extremely radical and demands a radical answer. Yet, the answer is simple. Give the wolves back their home. We have caused harm to the wolves and their habitat, and thus we need to make amends by reintroducing wolves and restoring their home. We have taken their lives and their home, so we need to give back their lives and their homes. Simple, crystal clear.

This act of making amends is done on behalf of the wolf and for the wolf. The question is what value should guide us as we make amends to the wolf. Ned Hettinger and Bill Throop, in “Refocusing Ecocentrism: De-emphasizing Stability and Defending Wildness” have made a convincing case that the value of wildness should be a guiding value for natural systems.

Promoting Wildness

Ned Hettinger and Bill Throop argue that we should not look to the stability of the environment to make normative claims, but rather we should look to intrinsic values such as “diversity, complexity, creativity, beauty, fecundity, and wildness.”⁷ They argue that wildness is a crucial value, because it shows the importance of valuing something not under human control. The value of wildness helps justify restoration of natural systems, because through restoration, nature can exist in its wild state, without the human imprint dominating the landscape. They use the reintroduction of the Gray wolf in Yellowstone as a case study. Since the wolf had previously existed in the landscape, putting the wolf back reduces the overall human impact on Yellowstone.

Hettinger and Throop are interested in the value of wildness in natural systems. Their analysis applies equally to the landscape of the Southwest, especially in the wolf recovery area of New Mexico and Arizona. This includes the Gila National Forest, the Gila Wilderness, and the Apache National Forest. This county is beautiful and awe-inspiring. It is a land of contrast – from high rugged mountains with fir and aspen to low arid land of cactus and sage. Yet, it is also a land that has been domesticated and made into a large pasture for cattle. Most predators have been killed or their populations severely diminished. We have looked at the fate of the wolf, but there was also the severe reduction in mountain lions, the elimination of grizzlies, and the elimination of the jaguar. Anything that could prey on cattle or people was removed, making it a pleasure ground for cattle in the same way Yellowstone is a pleasure ground for people. So, as Hettinger and Throop show, the reintroduction of the wolf will bring wildness back into

⁷ Ned Hettinger and Bill Throop, Refocusing Ecocentrism: De-emphasizing Stability and Defending Wildness” *Environmental Ethics* 21 (1999) p 4

the system itself. But, we need to remember that the Gray wolves reintroduced in Yellowstone were wild-caught wolves. In contrast, the Mexican Gray wolves have spent generations in captivity.

This reintroduction can potentially bring wildness back to the Mexican Gray wolves themselves. Until 1998 when the reintroduction of this wolf began, this species existed only in captivity. The only way to allow these wolves to become wild again is to allow them freedom in a home range, where they can hunt, sleep, eat, play, and raise their young. The landscape will shape them as much as they shape the landscape. So, the hope in wildness is also a hope for the wolves themselves.

Making Ourselves Good Again

The notion of making amends and wildness considers how we should approach the wolf. Yet, there is also a redemption for ourselves—a way to change who we are. In *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hossieni, the main character Ali is tormented by his past. As a boy, he watched a rape and attack of his best friend, Hassan. Ali did nothing to help Hassan; he was frozen with fear and a concern for his own safety. Then, Ali betrayed Hassan, because he was unable to live with the guilt of his own actions. Twenty five years later, when Ali was living in California, he received a call from an old family friend. The friend had said, “Come. There is a way to be good again.”⁸ It was then that Ali learned that Hassan was his illegitimate half brother; they shared the same father. Ali also learned that Hassan and his wife had been killed by the Taliban. Ali went back to Afghanistan to find Sohrab, Hassan’s son. He risked his own life to save Sohrab from

⁸ Khaled Housseini, *The Kite Runner*, (New York: Riverhead Books, 2003), 192

poverty, rape, torture, and death. This is the way that Ali made himself good again and made his father good again. By saving the boy, Ali redeemed himself and his history.

I tell this story, because it points to our human condition. We are not the same people after exterminating an entire species. We must act to make ourselves good again, so that we can live our lives without guilt or remorse, horror or sorrow.

This notion of making ourselves good gets to the heart of our humanity. It addresses the question of who we want to be, of how we see ourselves in relation to others. Ali went from a coward and a liar to a brave man with integrity. We can go from thoughtless people who kill animals for our own economic gain to people who have respect for nature and other species. We show who we are through our action. We are able to redefine ourselves and make ourselves good again. It is an act of redemption, a way of becoming better people.

The Practical Side – Knowing the Means to Certain Ends

As mentioned wisdom has two parts. A wise man knows how much certain ends are worth and a wise man knows how to reach them. In this section, we will look at the practical means to the good ends discussed above. The means must promote and reflect the ends. I'll evaluate the wolf reintroduction program to see if they are meeting the ends.

The Captive Breeding and Reintroduction Program as a Means to Making Amends

The Endangered Species Act was passed to protect endangered species from extinction and to protect critical habitat. PARC, the agency responsible for eradicating

predators was transformed into the Fish and Wildlife Service, the agency responsible for the reintroduction of the Mexican Wolf. And, one of the top predator hunters, Roy T. McBride, was hired to capture some of the few remaining wild Mexican Gray wolves in Mexico.

In 1970's Roy McBride was down in the state of Durango in Mexico hunting wolves for the Cattlemen's Union. The wolves had been exterminated in the United States, but not from Mexico. The problem for the U.S. cattlemen was that some of these Mexican wolves were working their way up to the United States.

In 1977, Roy McBride switched jobs and became a live trapper for the U.S. government. A tall man with a weathered face, McBride was smart and resourceful. It was no easy task to find the few remaining wolves in the rugged areas of Mexico. Yet McBride knew wolves and he knew wolves associated with cattle. So, McBride went to banks that secured cattle loans and asked about livestock losses due to predation. He also talked with cattle buyers who bought cattle from Indians living deep in the Sierra. He followed the stories of wolf depredations and found some of the few remaining wolves. He captured six wild wolves from Chihuahua and Durango.

These six wolves became known as the McBride Lineage in the captive breeding program. One of the most important wolves was five year old female wolf trapped in Durango in March of 1978. She was called Nina, the girl, and was the only captured female. Researchers worried that she would not be able to produce pups for long given her age and the fact that she was in captivity. But, even in captivity, Nina produced many litters – her body swelling with life. Without her, the McBride lineage would have ended.

There are two other lineages of Mexican Gray wolves. One is the Ghost Ranch lineage. The male had been wild caught in June 1959 near Tucumcari, New Mexico. The female had been wild caught in July 1961 near Yecora, in Sonora Mexico. The other lineage is the Aragon lineage. These wolves, a male and a female, were found in captivity in Mexico City at the Aragon Zoo.

There are seven founder wolves in these lineages. Founder wolves are those who have unique genetic material and who produced offspring. The McBride Lineage has three founders: Nina, Maximilian who was a wild wolf caught by McBride in 1980 in Chihuahua, and an unknown wild wolf who was Nina's mate. When Nina was captured she was pregnant and had her pups two months into her captivity. The other founders are the two wolves of the Ghost Ranch Lineage and the two wolves of the Aragon Lineage. All of the Mexican Gray wolves in existence can trace their ancestry back to these seven founder wolves.

The federal government has an extensive effort to save the Mexican Gray Wolf from extinction. The United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) runs the program. They maintain an extensive studbook which provides the ancestry and history of every Mexican Gray wolf (with the exception of any wild born pups who are not captured or relocated). There is the captive breeding program consisting of zoos and wildlife parks. There are 31 facilities in the United States and 15 facilities in Mexico. The Mexican wolves are routinely transferred among the zoos in order to ensure the health and genetic diversity of the wolf population. The purpose of this program is to raise wolves for reintroduction into the wild.

There are three pre-release facilities. These are the half-way houses between the captivity and the wild. The Ladder Ranch near Truth or Consequences, New Mexico is part of the Ted Turner Endangered Species Fund. The Sevilletta Wildlife Management Facility is near Socorro, New Mexico. Wolf Haven is in Tenino, Washington. The wolves in these facilities are in large enclosure and have little, if any, human contact. The purpose is to prepare the wolves for release into the wild.

Some wolves will be released into the Blue Range Recovery Area which covers 6800 square miles of east central Arizona and west central New Mexico. This includes the Apache and Gila National Forests and the Gila Wilderness. It is alpine country with an abundance of water, elk, and deer. This recovery area is affectionately referred to as the Blue Free.

This federal program is an intensive and expensive program to work on behalf of the wolves. It is a massive effort to fulfill the requirements of the ESA and to make amends for the harm we have caused. The great effort of this program matches and attempts to make up for the harm we have caused. By giving the wolves back their lives and their habitat, we are making amends for the harm we have caused.

Promoting Wildness and the Management of the Wolves

Currently, the management of the wolves undermines the wildness of wolves. The Mexican Wolf, unlike the wolves reintroduced to Yellowstone, are captive bred. They were raised in captivity, generation after generation, for over twenty years. Because of this, the Mexican wolves face many obstacles.

First, captive animals released into the wild have more difficulty. As Brown points out efforts to reintroduce pen-raised animals have a low success rates.⁹ The released wolves, who had previously been fed, must learn to hunt and survive. Many times the wolves are released with pups, so the pack will stay together. This puts additional strain on the wolves.

Second, the Mexican Gray wolves have been over-managed which undermines the wildness of the wolves. The situation is perilous almost to the point of absurdity. As Rick Bass points out, “our government *is going to take captive semi-domestic Mexican wolves and turn them out into a landscape vastly reduced in ecological health.*”¹⁰ The diet and habitat of the wolves in the captive breeding program make wolves semi-domestic. The 1982 Mexican Wolf Recovery Plan recommends a minimum area of 10,000 square feet area surrounded with fencing or other barrier to allow a pair of wolves with pups to carry out their basic life functions. The Recovery Plan also recommends a diet of dog chow (like Purina or Ken-L Ration), Zu-Preem, Central Nebraska Feline Diet, or a meat mixture (half dog food, half meat)¹¹ So, we need to take wolves that are fed dog food and live in a large pen, and allow them to be wolves who hunt and kill elk and who roam over large territories. This is a large task and this is why, at a minimum, we need to get wolf pack into the recovery area and leave them there. They need to learn to fit the land, need to learn to become wolves once again. Wolves eat elk and deer and cows. Dogs eat Purina.

⁹ Brown, epilogue

¹⁰ Rick Bass, *The New Wolves: The Return of the Mexican Wolf to the American Southwest*, (New York: The Lyons Press, 1998) p. 99-100

¹¹ U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 1982. Mexican Wolf Recovery Plan. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Albuquerque, New Mexico. P. 79 (housing criteria) (There are larger soft release pens that allow wolves to get accustomed to an area before release.), p. 81 (diet criteria)

The over-management of wolves is largely due to the fact that cows are everywhere in the Blue Range Recovery Area. Wolves are usually relocated after any depredation. The USFWS also has a three-strike policy, so if a wolf depredates livestock three times, he will be killed. Plus, wolves run into dogs, come into campgrounds, attack calves, and eat horses.

The recovery of the Mexican wolf has been rather unsuccessful as compared to other programs in the Northwest United States, including Yellowstone. I will trace the history of the Aspen Pack to give a sense of the management of these wolves. The story of the Aspen pack is typical.

While reading the history of the pack, it is helpful to keep in mind Nettinger and Throop's definition of wildness: "something is wild in a certain respect to the extent that it is *not humanized* in that respect. An entity is humanized in the degree to which it is influenced, altered or controlled by humans."¹² This means that most of the Mexican Gray wolves are not wild. They are bred to increase genetic diversity, they are moved from zoo to zoo; they are fed and given veterinary care. Wolves that will be released have little human contact, but clearly each wolf is marked by the human hand. In looking at the Aspen pack as an illustration of the extensive management, we must not forget that the eventual goal of the USFWS program is to have wild-born pups who are not captured nor collared; pups who remain in the wild and can be wild.

On his dam's side, Diablo, the alpha male of the Aspen pack, traces his ancestry back to the McBride Lineage. Nina is his great-grandmother; his great-grandfather is Maximilan. Another generation removed is the wild wolves. On his sire's side, seven generations removed are the founders of the Ghost Ranch lineage. Diablo's mate,

¹² Nettinger and Throop, p 12

AF667, is a descendent of the MacBride Lineage on her dam's side and of the Aragon Lineage on her sire's side. These two wolves, living now in the Gila wilderness, have given birth to two litters in the wild. These pups are supposed to become the type of wolf that Nina once was.

Diablo was born in the Sedwick County Zoo in Wichita, Kansas in April of 1997. Nine months later he was transferred to the Ladder Ranch in the foothills of the Black Range of the Gila in New Mexico. Diablo's mate, AF667, was born at the California Wolf Center in Julian, California in April of 2000. Like most wolves, she wasn't given a name, but was given a number designation. She was transferred to the Ladder Ranch in November of 2003. In July of 2004, Diablo and AF667 were released into the Blue Free with their three young pups who had been born at the Ladder Ranch.

The Aspen pack was in the Blue Free for less than a year, before they were recaptured. The wolves had been frequenting the Blue River Corridor which made their contact with people and livestock more likely. There were two reports. A dog had been injured by a wolf and required first aid. A calf had been injured, but did not require treatment. The researchers decided to transfer the Aspen pack to a more remote location.

Diablo was captured first in April of 2005. He was penned up along in their range to attract his mate. Wolves have strong pair bonds and will stay mated until one dies. His mate stayed away, wary perhaps. He was sent to Sevilleta. His mate was left in the Blue Free, denning, with her new pups. The researchers left food for her, becoming surrogate mates, until they located the den. Then they trapped her and took the pups.

They tranquilized the wolves and then packed them out on mules. They were sent to Sevilleta to join Diablo. The two adults and their three pups were released in to the

Blue Free in New Mexico two months later. Their range is east of the Gila cliff dwellings. The wolves are monitored and tracked by use of GPS collars. They are currently in the Gila, but their well-being may be threatened. In January 7th, 2007, the Aspen Pack killed a horse on a hobby ranch while the owners were away (the family keep two houses and only live on the ranch part time). Since, wolves have their litters in April the USFWS may be waiting for the birth of the pups before deciding what to do with the wolves.

Wolves live long and are social. They transmit their knowledge over generations. The reintroduced wolves are vulnerable, because they lack a cognitive map of the new area. In 2001, the USFWS commissioned an independent report to evaluate the success of the reintroduction. Among other things, the report recommends less intensive management. This includes not recapturing wolves when they have a minor confrontation with livestock or when they wander outside the recovery zone. Leaving packs in the wild promotes pack stability. Second, the report recommends that USFWS develop population estimation techniques that are not based exclusively on telemetric monitoring. For example, the FWS could use track station surveys or genetic sampling of hair or fecal material.¹³ As it is now, wolves wear heavy GPS collars. The researchers will fly over to find the wolves and then note their location. They also use the GPS collars to see if there are any wolves around livestock depredation. This is invasive and the report recommends that humans take a less pronounced role when they monitor and track the wolves. The researchers recommend fewer interventions by humans.

¹³ Paul C. Paquet, John A. Vucetich, Michael K. Phillips, Leah M. Vucetich, *Mexican Wolf Recovery: Three Year Program Review and Assessment*. 2001. Prepared by the Conservation Breeding Specialist Group for the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, Albuquerque, New Mexico, p. 61-62

On one level our intervention has been good. The number of Mexican Gray wolves was dangerously low at the start of the program. The wolves are monitored and controlled to protect the genetic diversity of the species and keep the wolves safe. Yet, as it is currently, the management has become over-management. The wolves are handled extensively, fed, tranquilized, and de-fleaed. They are monitored. Our intervention is destroying the wildness value that is what we are trying to protect and promote.

Even so, the USFWS is working toward the goal of wildness. Pups are now being born in the wild, and if there is no incident, they are left in the wild, uncollared and free. The hope for wildness lies with these pups.

Making ourselves good again and the human community

The idea of making ourselves good again is interesting, because there is the question of who is becoming good. In general, the majority of Americans support wolf reintroduction. People join environmental groups, sign petitions, and donate money. Yet largely, these are people who may never see a wolf in the wild, who are content knowing that the packs roam the Southwest United States, and who feel strongly that the wolves should be given their home.

The ranchers in the Southwest are generally opposed to reintroduction. Their argument is that wolves cut into already slim profits, that wolves are vicious, and that wolves can harm people as well as livestock. When the wolves were first reintroduced in 1998, Laura Scheberger, president of the Gila Permitees Association that represents New Mexican Ranchers, said: “You either remove the cattle and the people, or you remove the

wolves. That's the bottom line."¹⁴ Some ranchers believe that, "the main objective of the [reintroduction] project is to put ranchers out of business."¹⁵

To understand the rancher's perspective, I interviewed Terrell Shelley, a fourth generation rancher in southern New Mexico.¹⁶ He lives near Silver City, New Mexico, in the heart of wolf-recovery territory. Terrell Shelley is accustomed to hard work and understands the land.

"People don't know anymore what it is like to work on the land. These city folks are too many generations off the farm," he says. He resents people who come from the city and support wolf reintroduction when they don't know what it is like to ranch or to raise cattle. Wolves, he says, were eliminated because they were destructive – not only to cattle, but to people.

"It is just a matter of time," he said. "All those people say that there are no known wolf attacks on humans. But there are old stories. It is just that there weren't any newspapers before the turn of the century."

Any time a rancher loses a cow or calf, it cuts into already slim profits. Recognizing that livestock will be killed by wolves, the environmental group Defenders of Wildlife set up the Bailey Wildlife Wolf Compensation Trust which will compensate ranchers for animal losses due to wolf predation. The \$200,000 trust is funded by private donations and is meant to shift the economic burden from the ranchers to people who support wolf reintroduction. The program covers sheep, goats, dogs, horses, cattle, and

¹⁴ *Tucson Citizen*, "Cow Killing Stirs up New Mexico Ranchers" December 30, 1999, page 5C. Michael Robinson, from the Center for Biological Diversity, responded: "If ranchers insist wolves and cows can't coexist we know which one should leave."

¹⁵ Mexican Wolf Blue Range Reintroduction Project 5-year Review: AMOC Responses to Public Comment Component, p. 17

¹⁶ Personal interview with Terrell Shelley. Silver City, New Mexico. February 3, 2007

calves. Ranchers are given fair market value of the animal up to \$3,000. Terrell Shelley says that the fund does not cover the actual value of the animal and it is often hard to prove that the animal was killed by wolves.

“You are just not compensated,” says Shelley, “The animal could be in remote country for weeks. By the time you find it, there is no way to prove anything.”

David E. Brown, author of *Wolf in the Southwest*, cautions that “because wolves take to killing livestock almost everywhere year-long grazing occurs, it appears unrealistic to expect released wolves to avoid the most obvious feed source.”¹⁷ So where there are wolves and cattle, there will be conflict.

In this country, it is always been best to keep the ranches as large as possible. But ranching is becoming more and more difficult. Shelley knows many ranchers who have just given up. They subdivide their ranches and move. For Terrell Shelley, the conflict is about local people being able to live their lives and make decisions about things that affect their livelihood.

“It’s not about animals. It is about money and power and people coming in to take control,” he says.

Shelley complains that the perspective and knowledge of the local people is often overlooked as national environmental groups and federal agencies frame the issues in terms of environmental assessments, federal regulations, and endangered species.

“They make you sound like the dumb kid on the block,” Shelly says.

In many ways, Shelly’s argument has merit. He is a fourth generation rancher who is faced with the possibility of losing his livelihood. Yet, sometimes an action is wrong, regardless of the economic consequences. For example, slavery was eliminated

¹⁷ Brown, epilogue

even though there was resistance by Southern landowners and even though there was a fear of the economic consequences. As Aldo Leopold has cautioned us, we need to understand value apart from economic value.

Local ranchers in New Mexico and Arizona do not hold the good ends discussed in this essay. In general, they do not see the value of making amends for the harm done to wolves. Indeed, the ranchers think that the elimination was a good thing. They do not value the wildness of wolves and the landscape. Wolves kill cattle. Ranchers want a landscape where it is safe to put their cows into, to graze and survive until it is time for round-up and slaughter. Finally, there is no notion of becoming good again, for their perception of themselves is already good. For the most part, ranchers feel like the underdog in a battle with federal agencies and environmentalists. This is ironic since it was the livestock interests that fueled the elimination of the wolf.

Yet, as the Paquet report aptly points out, the public owns the wildlife, not private individuals. If a wolf wanders into private property and does not cause an identifiable problem, the USFWS is not required to remove the wolf even if the landowner demands such an action.

Such an approach to wolf recovery is consistent with the determination in the United States that the public owns wildlife, rather than private landowners. Within limits, landowners can manage their property in a way that promotes or hinders the welfare of wildlife. However, through laws enforced by state and federal officials, citizens decide under what circumstances wildlife can be captured or moved or killed from public and private land.¹⁸

The Paquet report does not attempt to evade the cow question by assuming that by intensive management that depredation will be eliminated. Rather this report meets the problem head on. The report states: “Livestock are omnipresent in the Blue Wolf

¹⁸ Paquet, p. 66.

reintroduction area. Because of the extensive temporal and special distribution of livestock, interactions with wolves are unavoidable.”¹⁹ The report asks that the FWS remain responsive to wolf-livestock incidence, but also asks that the livestock producers take responsibility: “livestock producers using public lands can make a substantive contribution to reducing conflicts with wolves through improved husbandry and better management of carcasses.”²⁰ Currently, livestock producers are asked to voluntarily manage their animals and to pick up carcasses that may habituate wolves to cattle.

There is no denying that the reintroduction of the Mexican Gray wolf is causing conflict in the community. This is part of a long standing conflict in the area over environmental issues such as the Gila trout, the Mexican Spotted owl, logging, and now the wolf. The film “Whose Home on the Range” produced by Ben Daitz²¹ documents the large toll of this conflict on human health and well-being. A rural physician in Catron County was seeing large amounts of stress and stress-related disease in his patients, ranchers and environmentalists alike. There was a high incident of depression, poverty, substance abuse, distrust, and anxiety. The documentary showed how people could overcome their conflict by working together on environmental issues. A core group of ranchers, environmentalists, federal employees and health care workers worked together in thinning ponderosa pines which were encroaching on grasslands. This project worked well, but maintaining grasslands is far from reintroducing a predator. The lines around wolf-reintroduction are hard and bitter. Terrell Shelley said that his community is really only the community of ranchers.

¹⁹ Paquet, p. 54.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ben Daitz, producer, *Whose Home on the Range*, Bulldog Films, 1999

The conflict also causes problems for the wolves. Of the eleven wolves first reintroduced, at least five were shot to death. By 2005, 23 wolves have been killed by illegal shooting. Most of the deaths go unsolved.

Some livestock owners have learned to coexist with wolves. They, more perhaps than traditional ranchers or environmentalists, are doing what it takes to be good again. The Holders, ranchers in Greenlee County, Arizona, are hybrid rancher-environmentalists. Will Holder's family has been ranching in Arizona for generations and his wife is a self-proclaimed city-girl. At first, they ranched like everyone else, letting their animals out alone on private and public land. Now, they raise predator-friendly beef which is the land version of dolphin friendly tuna. They do not kill any predators.

The Holder's admit that this is an intensive way of ranching. They keep their cattle in close herds and teach them to be afraid of wolves. They teach the cattle to bunch up, because a loose animal is likely to be attacked by a mountain lion or wolf. They also do not dehorn their animals so that the cattle can protect themselves. The Holders point out how the cattle in Africa respond. They have large horns and they will form a circle, butts in and horns out. If a predator tries to attack they will go after it.

When there are wolves in the area, a herder will stay with the cattle 24 hours a day. Sometimes this is Will. Other times, the Holders will take their kids and go camping with the cattle. They touch their cattle to keep the human scent on them. And if they see wolves, they will scream and bang pots. Jan Holder says that they basically act like a bunch of idiots. They want wolves to be afraid of people as much as they want their cows to protect themselves from wolves.

There is a niche market for predator-friendly beef. Their company is Ervin's Natural beef and they sell under a "Wolf Country Beef" label. To obtain the label, they signed an agreement with Defenders of Wildlife saying that they will not lethally control predators and that they would allow predators to colonize on their land. The Holders have not lost any cattle to wolves, but if they do, they will be reimbursed by Defenders. The Holders get double the price of other beef.

The Holders are the epitome of wisdom. They embody the good ends. They are ranching in a new way and forging a new relationship with wolves. They are outside; they allow wolves to be wolves; and they allow their cows to become wilder. They are one family, among many ranchers, who are re-envisioning what it means to be a rancher in wolf country—not by taking out the wolf, but by adapting practices that protect their cattle from wolves and other predators.

Conclusion

This essay shows that reintroduction of the Mexican Gray wolf conforms to the virtue of wisdom, with qualification. In its first part, wisdom is about good ends. The good ends of wolf reintroduction are making amends, promoting wildness, and becoming good again. The second part of wisdom is knowing the means to the ends. The reintroduction of the Mexican Gray wolf is well on its way to making amends, especially through the ESA and federal wolf reintroduction program. Now we must work on the other ends. We must manage the wolves less intensively, so that they can inhabit wildness in themselves and in the landscape. And we need to support ranchers like the Holders who are helping make people good again.