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For Immediate Release

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Governor Richardson Designates “Wolf Awareness Week”

(Santa Fe, NM) – Today Governor Richardson issued a proclamation designating October 15-19, 2007 “Wolf Awareness Week” throughout the state. The proclamation is part of a nationwide effort to highlight the essential role of wolves in maintaining healthy ecosystems.

“As keystone predators, wolves play a critical role in maintaining balanced ecosystems,” said Governor Bill Richardson. “We must redouble our efforts to promote healthy wolf populations coexisting with our communities and land stewards – both in New Mexico and across the country.”

In New Mexico, the Mexican gray wolf had been all but eliminated from its native range by the 1970’s. Its plight in the rest of its native range, which included portions of Arizona, Texas, and Mexico, also was grim. In 1976, the Mexican gray wolf was listed as endangered under the *Endangered Species Act of 1973* (ESA), and a captive breeding and recovery program was established the following year.

The Mexican Gray Wolf Recovery Program is led by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, with participation by the New Mexico Department of Game & Fish and other state and federal partners. At the end of 2006, there were 59 Mexican wolves in the recovery area that spans portions of New Mexico and Arizona. Work is ongoing to manage that population and grow it to a sustainable and healthy level.

For more information about the Mexican gray wolf recovery program, please visit <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/mexicanwolf/>.

Text of the Proclamation Follows:

WHEREAS, the wolf is a symbol of wilderness, our wildlife heritage, and an integral part of natural ecosystems; and

WHEREAS, a growing awareness of the benefits of maintaining biological diversity has raised public interest in the wolf; and

WHEREAS, *The Mexican Wolf Recovery Plan, as mandated by the Endangered Species Act of 1973, was adopted by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 1982 and the Blue Range Wolf Reintroduction project was initiated in January 1998, and the subsequent release of wolves into the Gila region of New Mexico and the Blue Range area in eastern Arizona; and*

WHEREAS, *the Mexican Wolf remains imperiled throughout the recovery area; and*

WHEREAS, *the New Mexico State Game Commission and the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish have redoubled their efforts to work with all interests to promote healthy wolf populations coexisting in reasonable compatibility with our communities and land stewards in New Mexico; and*

WHEREAS, *the survival of the wolf in the United States of America remains uncertain and depends upon continued public support and increased understanding of the essential role wolves play in nature;*

NOW, THEREFORE I, *Bill Richardson, Governor of the State of New Mexico, do hereby proclaim October 15-19, 2007 as: "Wolf Awareness Week" throughout the State of New Mexico.*