Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

MONTANA WOLF PROGRAM
WEEKLY REPORT

To: Interested Parties

From: MFWP Wolf Program Coordinator, Carolyn Sime

Subject: Wolf Program Activities and Related Information, June 28 – July 11, 2008

Contributors to the Montana Wolf Weekly are Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP), Universities, USDA Wildlife Services (WS), the National Park Service (NPS; Glacier NP; Yellowstone National Park will be reported in the Wyoming Wolf Weekly), US Forest Service, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, and the Blackfeet Nation.

Highlighted activities relate to: monitoring, wolf – livestock interactions, outreach and education, research, law enforcement, and other miscellaneous topics of public interest. The Weekly Report will be available on each Monday, covering the previous week. It and other wolf program information (including the 2007 annual report) can be found at: http://fwp.mt.gov/wildthings/wolf/default.html.

Wolf Monitoring Activities

FWP welcomes volunteer Shona Wilson! She started on June 21st in NW Montana. Shona has a Master's degree from Southern Illinois University working on raccoon resting site use and characteristics. She brings with her a wealth of knowledge and trapping experience with small mammals, reptiles and mesocarnivores.

Boyd, Whitehead, and Wilson had been trapping the Murphy Lake pack and caught a male on the 23rd. A female was caught on the 29th and it was collared with a University of Montana GPS collar.

Whitehead surveyed the Swan area for the Squeezer pack. He observed 8 pups. Laudon and Whitehead started a trapline.

Bradley conducted a monitoring flights on June 30th and July 7th. Laudon flew on June 30th and July 7th.

Laudon and Brent Lonner (FWP Wildlife Biologist in Fairfield) scouted and trapped in the North Fork of the Sun River (Bob Marshall) on the Red Shale pack. They have been scouting areas of

previous public and agency wolf reports and have been trapping. They had a pull out and had a wolf check out sets on another day, but no captures. Nonetheless, they did confirm the pack still exists in the drainage. We are especially interested in getting additional reports and may try again

On July 1, Asher captured a yearling female in the Mill Creek pack and deployed on of the University of Montana GPS collar.

Wolf - Livestock Activities

On the 7th, WS confirmed one dead calf on private land near Florence in the Brooks Creek pack territory. Seven yearling cattle had also been chased through a fence. Two to three wolves were involved. On the 10th, the same landowner had a single wolf in his cattle again and he shot at it, but did not injure or kill it. After that, FWP authorized lethal control. On the 11th, WS confirmed a second dead calf and also shot a wolf on the same ranch in the vicinity as the cattle. FWP has also increased monitoring efforts.

On the 10th, WS confirmed a 600-pound heifer on private land west of Superior. WS was authorized to remove 1 wolf and killed an adult in close proximity to the cattle on the 11th. The livestock owner is considering moving his cattle to a different place.

Efforts to remove the Freezeout pack are ongoing through July 20. On adult has been killed so far. WS had confirmed over 30 sheep died in three separate incidents on private land south of Dillon.

Outreach and Education Activities

Nothing to report.

Research Activities

Jonathan Derbridge, a former FWP wolf team employee and volunteer, is now pursuing a Master of Science degree at the University of Montana. Jonathan is studying under Dr. Paul Krausman, the new Boone and Crockett Professor in the College of Forestry and Conservation. Jonathan's work involves locating wolf packs, home sites and collecting hair and scat samples. Jonathan and Dr. Krausman will analyze stable isotopes in wolf hairs and perform more traditional scat analysis to help FWP answer questions like "what do wolves eat and how much?"

Law Enforcement and Related Activities

On July 1st, a wolf was killed when caught chasing cattle on private land in the East Fork of the Bitterroot near Sula. The individual reported the incident. FWP Warden Lou Royce conducted the investigation and concluded that the circumstances and actions complied with state law. The uncollared adult male was likely a member of the Trail Creek pack.

Other

On the 9th, Edwards testified in Wahsington DC before the US Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee Subcommittee on Public Lands and Forests about SB2875 which is entitled the Gray Wolf Livestock Loss Mitigation Act of 2008. The bill is initially co-sponsored by Montana Senator Tester and Wyoming Senator Brasso. Other western Senators were supportive. The bill would provide a 50:50 matching federal grant to the states of Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming for predator compensation and is part of Edwards ongoing efforts to generate funding (both public and private donations) for the Montana wolf reimbursement program. While in Washington DC, Edwards also met with the offices of Representative Rehburg and Senator Bauchus.

Edwards has also been in the process of increasing awareness about funding needs of the Montana wolf reimbursement program

Wolf Litigation: On May 29th, Judge Malloy heard oral arguments in regards to a request for a preliminary injunction (would place the species back under federal regulations) while the main northern Rockies delisting litigation proceeds. As of Friday July 11, no ruling had been issued.

On June 12, the FWP Commission considered a proposal to establish a quota for a wolf season in the fall of 2008, pending a federal court ruling on a request for an preliminary injunction. The Commission approved a tentative wolf hunting quota of 75 wolves statewide and is requesting public comment. Last February, Commission had previously approved the structure of a wolf hunting season, including creation of three wolf management units. The proposed statewide quota would be as follows: 38 in Northern Montana's wolf management unit 1, with a subquota of two wolves in the North Fork Flathead Subunit; 22 wolves in Western Montana's wolf management unit 2; and 15 in Southwestern Montana's wolf management unit 3. . To comment, go to the FWP web site at fwp.mt.gov on the Hunting page and click on the red links. Comments may be mailed to: FWP-Wildlife Division, Attn: Public Comment, P.O. Box 200701, Helena, MT. 59620-0701. FWP is accepting public comment through July 18th.

Also on June 12, the FWP also approved FWP to initiate formal rule making to remove the wolf from the state's endangered species list and reclassify it as a species in need of management. The proposed rule also spells out the manner and types of wolf control methods (lethal and non-lethal) that can be used to address wolf-livestock conflicts. Formal public hears are schedueld for 6pm in Bozeman July 16, in Missoula July 17, and Helena on July 18. All are being helf at the FWP Regional offices. For more information visit FWP online at fwp.mt.gov. Click Recent Public Notices. Comments, can be sent to Wildlife Division, Wolf ARM Public Comment, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, P.O. Box 200701, Helena, MT 59620-0701, or via e-mail to fwpwld@mt.gov. Comments will be accepted through July 25.

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To learn more about Montana's recovered wolf population, the Montana program and to help FWP monitor wolves by reporting wolf sign, visit FWP at: www.fwp.mt.gov/wildthings/wolf.

To anonymously report a dead or injured wolf or suspected illegal activity, call: 1-800-TIP-MONT.

To request an investigation of injured or dead livestock, call USDA Wildlife Services directly in western Montana / Helena area at 458-0106 or in eastern Montana / Columbus area at: 322-4303. Or call your nearest FWP representative to have your call referred to Wildlife Services.

If you have a confirmed or probable livestock loss due to wolves, USDA Wildlife Services will supply you with a copy of the Loss Reimbursement Application form. For more information, see http://liv.mt.gov/liv/LM/index.asp. Or, contact the Livestock Loss Reduction and Mitigation Program Coordinator George Edwards at the Montana Department of Livestock at 444-5609.

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