



# **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, July 26 – August 1, 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**

Smucker, Bradley, and Adkins have been trapping in the West Fork Bitterroot area. Had one pull out, but still trying.

Boyd and Whitehead have been trapping in the Spar Lake area, but no success so far. Wolves are in the area and they missed captures in a couple instances.

Lance, Ross and Asher have also been doing field work in their areas.

### **Wolf - Livestock Activities**

Catching up: Back on June 10, WS investigated 2 dead calves near Hobson (between Lewistown and Great Falls). WS determined it was a probable wolf predation event. Evidence was not quite consistent with black bear or mountain lion, but the calves were killed by a predator and large canine punctures were found. Back on July 15, WS investigated two dead cows on private land south of Hobson (between Lewistown and Great Falls). There was no evidence of predation, although a black wolf was reported to have been seen in the area.

On the 26<sup>th</sup> WS was working on the ground on private land near Florence where the Brooks Creek pack had previously killed cattle and llamas. The specialist shot two wolves as they were entering a pasture with cattle. This was the same pasture where wolves had chased and/or killed cattle previously. WS had also captured the adult male in the Brooks Creek pack and replaced the collar.

On the 29<sup>th</sup>, WS confirmed a calf as being killed by wolves in the Horn Mountain pack territory. FWP recently documented 9 (includes about 4 pups). WS confirmed a second calf as injured by wolves on the 30<sup>th</sup> and it died of injuries. The breeding adults are both collared. FWP asked WS to kill two uncollared yearlings. WS killed 2 uncollared adults on the 30<sup>th</sup> and the 31<sup>st</sup>, respectively. Control efforts are done and FWP will continue monitoring the pack and staying in close communication with the range riders.

On the 29<sup>th</sup>, WS confirmed that a wolf had killed a calf on private land in the Willoughby Creek area in the Bitterroot Valley. It is unknown if the wolf was a single disperser or affiliated with a pack. The calf had to be euthanized due to the extent of its injuries. The landowner will be checking livestock more frequently and watching for wolf sign. FWP will keep in touch.

On the 29<sup>th</sup>, WS reported that a dead adult-sized cow investigated in Tom Miner Basin north of Gardiner was unconfirmed – meaning that it was not killed by a wolf, though it had been scavenged by both bears and wolves.

### **Outreach and Education Activities**

On the 26<sup>th</sup>, Asher, FWP warden Derek Fagone, and WS Jim Rost attended and presented at an annual meeting of the West Boulder Preserve tenets south of Big Timber. They discussed wolves, wolf management, and the regulations. About 25 people attended.

On the 26<sup>th</sup>, Sime was in the FWP Building at the Montana State Fair in Great Falls to provide updated information and answer questions about wolves in Montana and the recent court ruling that reinstated Endangered Species Act protections. Other FWP staff [Auchly, Shinn, and others] attended the fair the rest of the week. Printed fact sheets were also available.

Also at the State Fair, Montana Livestock Loss Reduction and Mitigation Coordinator George Edwards had a booth in the Livestock Building with information to increase awareness of the program and solicit donations. George's display was awarded "Best Educational Exhibit."

### **Research Activities**

Nothing to report.

### **Law Enforcement and Related Activities**

On the 25<sup>th</sup>, the FWP Livingston game warden got a call about 2 pups being hit by a vehicle on the Eagle Creek Road outside of Gardiner. FWP wardens have been coordinating with USFWS law enforcement to determine if it was a valid report and looking into the situation.

On the 29<sup>th</sup>, Vasher investigated a report of a road-killed wolf on I-90. She found a husky with a blue collar on it, but no tags.

## Other

*Wolf Litigation:* On May 29<sup>th</sup>, 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. On Friday July 18<sup>th</sup>, the U.S. Federal District Court in Missoula, Montana, issued a preliminary injunction that immediately reinstated temporary Endangered Species Act protections for gray wolves in the northern Rocky Mountain DPS pending final resolution of the case. This includes all of Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming, the eastern one-third of Washington and Oregon, and parts of north-central Utah. The FWS and the interveners are evaluating legal options regarding the Court's order and the ongoing litigation. In the meantime, wolves across northern Montana return to the "endangered" classification and wolves across southern Montana return to the "experimental" classification – also known in Montana as "split status." FWP decisions about wolf-livestock conflicts in the endangered area are guided by the 1999 Interim Control Plan. FWP decisions about wolf-livestock conflicts occurring in the experimental area are guided by the 2005 and 2008 nonessential experimental population 10j regulations. Those regulations also guide what private citizens can do to protect their livestock. See the FWP website for important information and updates: <http://fwp.mt.gov/wildthings/wolf/default.html>.

In 2005, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) began offering funding to help minimize the conflicts between ranchers and endangered predators. Called the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), funds are available to cost share a variety of management practices to help decrease the potential of predator losses. Three new practices were added in 2008 to offer ranchers non-lethal, proactive measures to protect their livestock from endangered species such as grizzly bears and wolves. These new practices include: installation of specially designed electric fence around areas with concentrated numbers of livestock, such as calving and lambing lots; hiring and use of a herder to facilitate prescribed grazing and predator deterrence as an alternative to cross fences; and disposal of carcasses from farmsteads and feedlots. The EQIP sign-up deadline was July 1<sup>st</sup> for funded projects to be started in 2009. However, NRCS may have additional funds available if there are not a huge numbers of sign-ups at this time. Interested parties could still sign-up now with the understanding that funds might not be available technically until 2010, but there may still be unallocated funds for 2009. Contact your nearest NRCS office.

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