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, August 9 – August 22, 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 volunteers Quinn Harrison (who will be working with field crews in R2 for August and September) and Ilona Popper (R1).

On the 12th, Bradley, Adkins, and Harrison captured 3 wolves in the Trapper Peak pack in the Bitterroot Valley. They recaptured female SW170 and replaced her VHF collar with a University of Montana GPS collar. They also caught an adult male and placed a VHF collar on it. A pup was also caught and was pit tagged / released. Efforts will now shift toward trapping in the Divide Creek pack.

On the 13th, trapping efforts concluded south of Troy (NW MT) with no success. The pack had left the area despite significant efforts by the crews in a remote area.

Field efforts in the Candy Mountain pack (NWMT) and/or the Lazy Creek pack are underway.

Popper and Whitehead surveyed the Bull River area and detected wolf presence, but pack activity still remains unknown.

On the 18th, Smucker and Harrison caught a female pup in the Divide Creek pack. She was pit tagged and released. Efforts are ongoing to put a University of Montana GPS collar on an adult member of this pack.

On the 20th, Asher and Lance caught a yearling female in the Red Shale pack in the N. Fork of the Sun River in the Bob Marshall Wilderness. They collared it with a University of Montana GPS collar.

Flights: On the 5th, Bradley did a monitoring flight in W Montana. On the 8th, Lance did a monitoring flight in the Big Hole area of SW Montana. On the 12 and the 19th, Laudon did a monitoring flight in NW Montana. On the 12th, Ross did a flight in the western half of SW Montana.

Wolf - Livestock Activities

On the 6th, WS confirmed 9 dead lambs and 1 dead ewe south of Dillon in the Blacktail Mountains on state school trust land. The incident likely happened on the 4th or 5th. Tracks of a single wolf (possibly another) were found. This is not likely to be the Freezeout pack as it is not known to travel that far to the southwest. WS was asked to collar and release a wolf in the area so that we can determine whether there is a new pair / pack in the area. The sheep operation uses night pens, herding dogs, a propane cannon, and a light/siren device. On the 7th when sheep were let out of the night pen, 3 additional injured lambs were found and had to be euthanized. On the night of the 8th, the dogs woke the owner when a wolf came back. The wolf was run off but not before a ewe was injured. WS confirmed it on the 9th and the ewe had to be euthanized. Total confirmed losses are 12 lambs and 2 ewes. Efforts to place a collar are ongoing, but WS has been authorized to kill any wolves caught in the sheep and the owner is aware of the federal regulations that allow hazing, harassing, or killing a wolf caught attacking livestock in the experimental area. No further losses have been reported and no wolves have been killed or collared.

On the 9th, WS confirmed that a calf was attacked a multiple wolves on the north end of the Gravelly's on public land. The incident was seen from afar by a rider, but the rider could not get to there in time to stop the attack. The calf had to be euthanized. There are no known packs in the area and WS will be trying to capture and collar any wolves in the area.

On the 11th, WS confirmed a dead calf in the Meadow Peak pack territory. Initial response will be to continue to monitor the area and the pack (which does not appear to have denned). No other depredations have been reported in this area so far this year.

On the 12th, WS confirms a dead calf on a public grazing allotment in the Murphy Lake pack territory. A second dead calf was confirmed on the 15th and two other calves were injured. WS was authorized to kill 1 wolf while working off the calf carcasses. The livestock owner has been checking his cattle more often. While the pack had initially left the area, WS confirmed a third

dead calf on the 19th and its badly injured mother could not be located after initially being seen near the dead calf. WS is now authorized to kill a total of 2 wolves. Efforts are ongoing.

Two calves were killed by wolves presumably from the Livermore Pack north of Browning on the Blackfeet Reservation. The depredation investigation was conducted by tribal managers and confirmed by Wildlife Services agent Hoggan on August 14th. The Livermore Pack was involved in previous depredations. WS and tribal managers plan to remove 2 wolves and radio collar others so the pack can be more closely monitored, as called for in the Blackfeet Wolf Management Plan.

Correction: Previous sheep losses in May / June on private land south of Dillon were due to the Freezeout pack. A total of 4 (not 5 as previously reported) adults were killed between May 29 and July 25, including the collared animal. One to three adults and a litter of pups remain and no further sheep losses have been documented since June 11.

Outreach and Education Activities

Nothing to report.

Research Activities

Nothing to report.

Law Enforcement and Related Activities

On the 7th, a Forest Service crew reported finding a dead wolf pup (about 30 pounds) in the backcountry up the North Fork of Fish Creek. The Bitterroot Range pack is known to use this area, which is remote and has low human use. The mortality is under investigation.

On the 11th, the carcass of a collared wolf from the Fishtrap pack in Northwest Montana was recovered. The mortality is under investigation.

Other

Wolf Litigation: On Friday July 18th, 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 Rockies. 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 to do protect their livestock. See the FWP website for important information and updates: http://fwp.mt.gov/wildthings/wolf/default.html.

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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.

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.

2008-08-22 Montana Wolf Weekly.pdf