



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, January 10 - 16, 2009

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

Final 2008 minimum estimates of the number of wolf packs, total wolves, breeding pairs, the number of confirmed livestock killed by wolves, and wolves killed to address wolf-livestock conflicts will be available in early March 2009 when the 2008 Annual Report is completed and made available to the public. Until then, all media reports of wolves and/or livestock losses should be interpreted with a dose of caution, as numbers provided to the media have been preliminary estimates.

Flights: Laudon flew in northwest Montana on January 14. Lance flew the East Front on January 16. Bradley flew in western Montana on January 13.

FWP encourages hunters, landowners, and other outdoor enthusiasts to report wolves through the online reporting button or to send in one of the pre-printed postcards available at all FWP offices, many US Forest Service offices, and license providers throughout the state. Information provided by the public helps FWP more accurately monitor wolf numbers and distribution in Montana.

Wolf - Livestock Activities

Around the 14th, a dog owner reported to Bradley that a wolf had injured a dog in the Salish Trail area within the Brooks Creek pack territory. The dog is expected to live. The owner did not want WS to look at the dog, but did want FWP to be aware of it and reported that 3 gray wolves were seen.

On the 16th, WS confirmed that wolves killed 2 calves on private land near Polaris in the Grasshopper Valley (Pioneer Mtns.). WS also noted one injured calf as probable during the same investigation.

This was the second incident on private land in the area since December 2008. A kill permit was issued to the second livestock owner. FWP authorized a total of 4 wolves to be removed (includes one killed on the 8th) due to the ongoing wolf activity in close proximity to livestock. On the morning of the 17th, three wolves were killed. While retrieving carcasses, WS discovered that a fourth wolf had been injured. It was subsequently euthanized due to its injuries.

Outreach and Education Activities

On January 14, Lance attended a meeting of the Butte Skyline Sportmen's group. He provided an update on wolves, status of delisting, and the state program. About 25 people attended.

It's getting to be the time of year when wolves disperse in search of mates just ahead of the breeding season. Wolves can act aggressively towards domestic dogs and kill dogs at any time of year, but that is especially the case during the wolf breeding season when wolves are inherently more aggressive towards each other and compete for breeding opportunities. During the months of December – February, FWP and WS notice an increase in wolf-dog encounters for domestic dog breeds. FWP reminds people that when wolves are in the area, please be aware that they may attack or injure dogs. It often helps to keep dogs in secure kennels or inside buildings at night and to not let them roam freely when humans are not around. When fresh wolf sign is found, place dogs on restraints and keep supervised. The 10j rule across the southern Montana Experimental Area allows individuals to harass or kill a wolf attacking or molesting their livestock and stock animals including pets. Across northern Montana in the Endangered Area, federal regulations do not allow the hazing, harassing or killing of wolves by private citizens. If you have concerns or problems with wolves close to your residence or your domestic livestock or pets, please inform the wolf specialist or FWP Office nearest you.

Research Activities

Nothing to report.

Law Enforcement and Related Activities

On the 11th, FWP Warden Matt Heaton, Laudon and his dogs Mukwa and Sammie, and a hunter went to the field to retrieve a dead wolf from the Ashley pack area. The hunter reported the carcass during the hunting season, but all parties could not come together until 1/11. There has been substantial snow since the original report and prospects of relocating the carcass were medium at best. The dogs accompanied the party in hopes of being effective in locating the carcass under snow. Eventually the hunter was able to locate the approximate area, and the dogs found the carcass under 1 foot of snow within 5 minutes. The carcass was retrieved and will be examined at FWP's Wildlife Lab in Bozeman.

On the 13th during a routine monitoring flight, a collared wolf with its collar on mortality mode was found on the Idaho side of the MT/ID border. It is in very remote terrain. The wolf was originally a member of the Sula pack and it had dispersed in spring 2008 and appeared to have joined the Painted Rocks pack in the West Fork of the Bitterroot. ID colleagues were notified.

Other

NEW -- Delisting Update:

On January 14th, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) announced its decision and intent to delist wolves in the Northern Rocky Mountain Distinct Population Segment. USFWS announced that it decided to delist in the states of Montana and Idaho in their entirety, the eastern half of Oregon, the eastern half of Washington, and a small part of Utah. The entire state of Wyoming would remain listed due to the lack of an approved state plan and laws.

Upon publication in the Federal Register (the printed record of federal agency decisions), the decision would take effect 30 days later. Publication is expected during the week of January 27th. Additional information about delisting in the northern Rockies is available at the USFWS website: <http://westerngraywolf.fws.gov>.

When the decision actually takes effect 30 days after publication, Montana's laws, administrative rules, and the state plan take full effect. Wolves will automatically become classified as a species in need of management under Montana law.

Current Management in Montana:

FWP, through an interagency cooperative agreement, is still the lead agency for all wolf conservation and management (within the bounds of federal regulations) so long as adequate federal funding continues to be made available. FWP will continue to monitor wolves, do public outreach, and guide and direct research activities. No public hunting or trapping is allowed. USDA Wildlife Services is still the agency to investigate causes of injured or dead livestock and carry out FWP's decisions to address conflicts, as guided by federal regulations. Montana will continue to stay involved in litigation and any future delisting developments and will continue to seek the most efficient, successful path to delisting. FWP will also continue its collaborative work with Montana Tribes, other state and federal agencies, and the Montana Livestock Loss Reduction and Mitigation Program.

Check the wolf pages on the FWP website for important information and updates:
<http://fwp.mt.gov/wildthings/wolf/default.html>.

Montana Livestock Loss Reduction & Mitigation Board:

The terms of several Board members appointed by Governor Schweitzer and selected from the list provided by the FWP Commission expired on January 1, 2009. On January 15th, the FWP Commission initiated the nomination process to fill the vacancies. The purpose of the board is to administer programs and funds to minimize livestock losses caused by wolves and to reimburse livestock producers for wolf-depredation losses. Prospective board members must be knowledgeable or experienced in at least one of the following subjects: raising livestock; livestock marketing, sales, or breeding associations; wolf and livestock interactions; wildlife conservation; administration; and fundraising. The addition of fundraising experience to the list of qualifications reflects the board's leading role in generating financial support for the program.

Nominations / letters of interest for the board must be submitted by Feb. 15. Address nominations to Livestock Loss Reduction and Mitigation Board Nominations in care of Wildlife Division, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks; P.O. Box 200701; Helena, MT 59620-0701. E-mail nominations to FWP at fwpwld@mt.gov.

The bill sponsored by Montana's Senator Tester to fund a grant program for reimbursement of wolf-losses and proactive projects was included in an Omnibus Public Lands Bill that contains more than 150 public lands, water and resources bills. The U.S. Senate passed the bill. It is now in the U.S. House of Representatives. It is contained within S22.

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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.

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