



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 17 – 30, 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

On the 18th, WS collared and released a yearling female caught in a coyote trap in the north end of the Paradise Valley.

Last spring, a wolf collar was found in the Upper Danaher (headwaters of the South Fork of the Flathead, south end of the Bob Marshall Wilderness). The collar had to be sent to the manufacturer for identification. The collar turned out to have been placed on a female wolf originally captured on 9-21-02 in the Gates Park area (N. Fork of the Sun River, east side of the Bob Marshall Wilderness) as a member of the Red Shale pack. The wolf had not been located since 3-30-04. The collar was chewed off by other wolves and the fate of the wolf between 3-04 and where/when the collar was found is unknown. The Upper Danaher area is not within the known territory of the Red Shale pack at the time.

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 26. Bradley flew in western Montana on the 26th. Asher flew in southwest Montana on the 20th.

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

On the 17th, a dog owner reported that a yellow lab had an incident with a wolf in the Sweathouse Creek area within the Brooks Creek pack territory. The dog was not injured, but owner wanted FWP to be aware and reported that 3 wolves were seen. Bradley met with them on the same day.

On the 20th, WS collared a wolf in the Grasshopper Valley area as part of efforts to address wolf-livestock conflicts.

On the 20th, WS collared a wolf in the Horse Prairie area south of Dillon as part of efforts to address wolf-livestock conflicts.

On the 21st, efforts to remove two wolves in the Big Hole Valley north of Wisdom (Pintler pack) concluded. WS was authorized to remove a total of two wolves and the livestock owner had been issued a permit. WS killed 1 wolf and no further depredations have been reported.

On the 27th, Bradley received a report of a dog being attacked in the Monture Creek area of the Blackfoot Valley. The attack occurred about 10 days ago. The dog received numerous stitches and is expected to survive. The owner was not sure if the injured were caused by wolves or something else, though wolf tracks were seen in the area recently. A new pair may be forming in this area.

Outreach and Education Activities

On the 20th, Asher attended a meeting of the Boulder River Watershed Group (south of Big Timber). She gave a wolf update and the group discussed the possibility / feasibility of getting a rider for this upcoming grazing season.

Research Activities

Nothing to report.

Law Enforcement and Related Activities

On the 30th, FWP Warden Curtin retrieved the carcass of a wolf hit by a car on Lolo Pass (Hwy 12). It was a dispersing wolf from the Lazy Creek pack (had been fitted with a GPS collar in the summer of 2008 as part of a University of Montana research project).

Other

NEW -- Delisting Update:

On the 20th, as was expected, the new incoming administration put a “hold” on all new federal regulations that were not finalized and published in the Federal Register as of the 20th. The hold affects all federal agencies, all pending federal decisions, all subject areas. This was not a surprise as every new incoming administration for the last 20 years has done similar and put a “hold” on the previous administration’s pending decisions. All new, incoming federal department / agency heads are directed to review rules not yet published and decide what should be done. Options are to approve them and move forward, modify them first and then publish them, or not publish them in order to take a different course of action.

Since the wolf delisting decision (rule) announced on January 14 was not yet published in the Federal Register, its publication will be delayed while it is being reviewed by new, incoming federal officials. The reviewers will examine the biological data and legal merits of the decision. It is not known how long the review process will take and when a decision will be made. Secretary of the Interior Salazar will make the decision. Additional information about delisting in the northern Rockies is available at the USFWS website:
<http://westerngraywolf.fws.gov>.

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.

George Edwards completed the 2008 report and submitted it to Defenders of Wildlife.

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.