## MONTANA WOLF PROGRAM WEEKLY REPORT

To: Interested Parties

From: FWP Wolf Program Coordinator, Carolyn Sime (406-461-0587)

Subject: Wolf Program Activities and Related Information, August 8 - 14, 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 2008 annual report) can be found at: <a href="http://fwp.mt.gov/wildthings/wolf/default.html">http://fwp.mt.gov/wildthings/wolf/default.html</a>.

# **Wolf Monitoring Activities**

Anna Valan begins work volunteering for the Montana Wolf Program on 8/10 in Northwest Montana. Welcome Anna!

On 8/10, Boyd, Edgley, Bahnson, and Valan began survey work in the FWP Region 1 portion of the Clark Fork. Laudon also will be working in the Clark Fork area following up on 2 different reports of pups. FWP is focusing efforts in the Lower Clark Fork using multiple crews to survey a significant amount of real estate as close to simultaneously as possible. This approach will help sort out wolf reports from throughout the area and verify wolf packs. FWP has not intensively surveyed the Lower Clark Fork like this in the past and is expecting to document new wolf packs.

Asher has been working in the Red Lodge area. Boyd and Edgley were working in the Swan Valley (see research section).

Flights: None.

#### **Wolf - Livestock Activities**

On 8/12 WS looked at and confirmed two calves as killed by wolves on public land allotment. One of the calves appeared to be killed 3 or so days ago and the second was more recent and killed within the last day or so. They were about 100 yards apart and in the same area as the last confirmed kill on 7/28. This is in the territory of the Horn Mountain pack and there are 4-5 adults remaining in the group. WS was authorized to remove two uncollared adults from the pack.

#### **Outreach and Education**

Nothing to report.

## **Research Activities**

On 8/8, Boyd and Edgley captured and collared (ARGOS) a 2 year old female in the Cilly pack. The GPS collars are being deployed for a University of Montana research project aimed to develop more cost efficient ways of monitoring the Montana wolf population. FWP should also get a more accurate accounting of wolf pack territory sizes across the state.

## **Law Enforcement and Related Activities**

Nothing to report.

# Other Updates

## Northern Rockies Delisting Litigation

Montana has been granted "intervener" status in the delisting litigation in the case being heard in Missoula Federal Court. Montana/FWP's participation in the lawsuit will support the federal delisting decision that took effect May 4, only from Montana's unique perspective and responsibility to conserve and manage resident wildlife.

The next step in the litigation is to finalize the schedule by which the case will proceed. The schedule, once established, will determine deadlines for filing information with the Court and possible hearing dates. At this time, no request for an injunction has been filed. Such a request could be filed at any time, however, and Montana / FWP would be notified if a request were to be filed.

Despite ongoing litigation and unless otherwise directed by the Federal Court, FWP is still the lead agency. FWP carries out wolf conservation and management (as a resident wildlife species classified as a species in need of management and thus mortality is regulated statewide), as outlined by Montana law, administrative rules, and the federally-approved state wolf plan.

<u>Background:</u> On June 2, a coalition of 13 groups, represented by the law firm EarthJustice, challenged the USFWS delisting decision in Federal District Court in Missoula (9<sup>th</sup> Circuit). The complaint alleges the USFWS delisting decision was an arbitrary and capricious violation of the federal Endangered Species Act for a variety of reasons. The Greater Yellowstone Coalition also filed a lawsuit challenging the federal delisting decision. The groups will be represented by their own attorney's, respectively, but the cases were consolidated by the Court. Additionally, the State of Wyoming filed a lawsuit in the 10<sup>th</sup> Circuit (Cheyenne Wyoming) challenging USFWS's rejection of Wyoming's regulatory framework and state plan.

#### Montana 2009 Wolf Hunting Season:

FWP is finalizing preparations for a possible 2009 wolf season with the awareness that developments in the delisting litigation could prevent the season from opening or could interrupt the season and close it prematurely. FWP encourages the public to check the FWP Wolf Page and the FWP Hunting Page often for the latest news and updates.

FWP plans to begin selling 2009 wolf hunting licenses on August 31 at FWP offices, online, and through license providers. Because the wolf hunting season is designed as a quota-based system, any interested hunter (resident or non-resident) can participate by purchasing a conservation license and a wolf hunting license. Wolf mortality will be closely monitored through a 12-hour, mandatory reporting requirement when a hunter is successful. Hunters are required to present the skull and hide to FWP for inspection and collection of biological information within 10 days of harvest.

A hunter may hunt wolves in any of the three wolf management units (or the North Fork Subunit of WMU 1) and so long as the season is open. A wolf management unit will close upon reaching the quota or the season closing date, which ever is first. A wolf management unit will be closed upon 24-hour notice when the quota has been reached.

If the wolf quota in any particular wolf management unit has not been reached by the close of the general deer/elk season (Nov. 29), wolf hunting could resume beginning December 1 and extend through December 31 – but no more than 25% of the total quota for that individual wolf management unit may be lawfully harvested during the month of December. Hunters will be able to obtain quota and harvest closure information through a telephone hotline.

Final 2009 Wolf Hunting Regulations are available at: <a href="http://fwp.mt.gov/hunting/regulations.html">http://fwp.mt.gov/hunting/regulations.html</a>. Additional information about the wolf hunting season will be available very soon.

<u>Other</u>: FWP is inviting hunters, landowners, outfitters, and others to get involved earlier than ever before to help set hunting seasons for the next two years (2010 and 2011). FWP is more formally asking the public for input on things they'd like to see changed or considered for any upcoming big game or upland game bird hunting season before FWP develops tentative regulation proposals. Public comment will be accepted August 4 – September 4. See <a href="fwp.mt.gov">fwp.mt.gov</a> to comment online or attend one of 7 open houses on August 27 at any FWP Regional Office, 6-9pm.

<u>Montana Livestock Loss Reduction & Mitigation Board:</u> The program coordinator can be reached at 444-5609.

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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: <a href="www.fwp.mt.gov/wildthings/wolf">www.fwp.mt.gov/wildthings/wolf</a>.

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 at the statewide office: 657-6464. 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 <a href="http://liv.mt.gov/liv/LM/index.asp">http://liv.mt.gov/liv/LM/index.asp</a>. Or, contact the Livestock Loss Reduction and Mitigation Program Coordinator George Edwards at the Montana Department of Livestock at 444-5609.

2009-08-14 Montana Wolf Weekly.pdf