# 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 22 - 28, 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**

On 8/23 WS collared and released a black male pup NW 546 from the Selow pack on a CSKT trapline. Efforts to capture and collar an adult are ongoing. This is the old Hewolf Mountain pack territory.

This week, MFWP confirmed with NPS Wolf Project staff that SW147M (a wolf that dispersed from the 8-Mile pack in the Paradise Valley into Yellowstone National Park) is still alive and is routinely seen with up to three other wolves (2 are known to be females). This wolf is monitored by NPS staff.

Flights: None this week.

## **Wolf - Livestock Activities**

WS completed its investigation and reported final results of the sheep incident south of Dillon. On 8/18, WS concluded 82 dead buck sheep as confirmed killed and 40 buck sheep as probable killed by wolves. WS also determined that the losses occurred within a short span of 1-3 days and likely comprise a single incident, as all appeared to have died at about the same time. The sheep owner has been putting lime on the carcasses to discourage scavenging. Nonetheless, bears had been scavenging and thus clear confirmation that 40 were killed by wolves was not possible – thus 40 were concluded as probable. The total of 122 includes injured animals that died during the August incident. Previously in July, WS confirmed 26 buck sheep were killed (includes injured which died as a result of the attack) in the same pasture. FWP authorized lethal control of three wolves that had been in the area and believed responsible for the July incident (1 gray was killed; 1 black was mortally wounded and suspected to have died; 1 black wolf is still alive). One uncollared adult wolf from the Centennial pack was killed on 8/18 upon authorization by FWP because it was found within about ½ mile of the sheep band on the morning of 8/18. The pack now consists of 2 collared adults and a litter of pups of the

year. Control work is completed for the Centennial pack. However, WS is still authorized to kill one or both black wolves if found in the area where the sheep depredations occurred.

On 8/27, WS investigated a report of a calf being killed by wolves on private land near Feely. WS concluded that it was an unconfirmed wolf kill. The calf died of natural causes and some coyotes had fed on it.

On 8/28, WS investigated a report cow being killed by wolves in Elk Park near Butte. WS concluded that it was an unconfirmed wolf kill and died of natural causes and bears and coyotes had fed on it.

On 8/28, WS confirmed that a wolf or wolves killed 1 ewe and 6 lambs as well as injuring 8 additional lambs. The wolves involved are unknown at this point, a lone black wolf has been seen 2 months prior on the ranch. WS has been authorized to collar and release one wolf to learn more about wolf numbers and activity in the area. Previously, FWP had installed electrified flagging in the area to night pen two different bunches of sheep. The sheep that were attacked were not within the flagging barrier at the time of the attack and thus will be moved and guard dogs will be utilized. The landowner does not want trapping near the sheep and dogs so no traps have been set. WS will continue to work with FWP and the landowner for the potential of other trapping areas near the depredations.

#### **Outreach and Education**

On 8/21, Lance gave an evening campground program at Lewis and Clark Caverns, a Montana State Park. Aug 21. About 25 people attended.

On 8/24, FWP Director Maurier hosted a media teleconference call with interested reporters regarding the first Montana fair chase wolf hunting season. He and other FWP staff fielded questions about the Montana hunting season regulations, the status of the Montana wolf population, livestock losses, and litigation, among other topics. FWP also published new information about Montana's wolf hunting season. See Wolf Hunting Guide - Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks to learn more.

## **Research Activities**

Nothing to report at this time.

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

Nothing to report at this time.

## Other Updates

## Northern Rockies Delisting Litigation

On 8/24, the Missoula Federal District Court scheduled a court hearing on the preliminary injunction request for Monday 8/31. Montana and the other intervenors who support the federal delisting decision and oppose the request for a preliminary injunction are not expected to have an opportunity to speak. Thus, the State of Montana / MFWP filed written materials to the Court by the noon deadline on 8/28. Montana opposes the request for a preliminary injunction.

<u>Background</u>: Delisting in the northern Rocky Mountains (except Wyoming) took effect 5/4/09. On 6/2, 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. On 7/31, Montana / MFWP was granted intervenor status allowing full participation in the legal proceedings. Other intervenors supporting the federal government are: the State of Idaho / Idaho Fish and Game Department, Sportsmen for Fish and Wildlife, Safari Club International, and Montana Farm Bureau Federation / Idaho Farm Bureau Federation / Mountain States Legal Foundation. On 8/20, a preliminary injunction request was filed, requesting that wolves be placed back on the Endangered Species list while the court decides the main case within the next year – thus preventing a fall hunting season in Montana and Idaho. On 8/28, all parties filed written documents in support / opposition to the injunction request to the Court by noon. The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation was granted permission to file a "friend of the Court" brief in opposition to the preliminary injunction request and also did so on 8/28.

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 making final preparations for a possible 2009 hunting season, but advises that whether or not a hunting season actually occurs will depend on the outcome of the request for a preliminary injunction. If granted, an injunction 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.

The 2009 Wolf Hunting Regulations have been printed and have been distributed to FWP offices and license providers. Regulations are also available at: <a href="http://fwp.mt.gov/hunting/regulations.html">http://fwp.mt.gov/hunting/regulations.html</a>.

FWP plans to begin selling 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. Should the season be canceled, refunds will be available in some circumstances. See <a href="http://fwp.mt.gov/hunting/planahunt/wolf.html">http://fwp.mt.gov/hunting/planahunt/wolf.html</a>.

#### Montana Livestock Loss Reduction & Mitigation Board:

The next Board meeting is scheduled for October 23 in Room 152, Montana Capital Building. Interested persons can listen on the Internet. The meeting time and agenda will be announced. 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.

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