



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

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 29 – September 4, 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: <http://fwp.mt.gov/wildthings/wolf/default.html>.

Wolf Monitoring Activities

The wolf field team in northwest Montana continues to put significant effort into survey work in the Lower Clark area of western MT. Wolf activity has been verified in some places. Field work continues.

FWP welcomes new, seasonal hire Karen Loveless. Her first day was 9/2. She will be based out of Missoula and work primarily in western MT. She is just finishing up her MS degree from Trent University on wolves and also has significant prior field experience working in the Greater Yellowstone area (e.g. bear, bear/human conflicts, wolf / ungulate studies). She replaces a previous seasonal employee who accepted a full time job.

Flights: : Lance flew south of Butte / Big Hole Valley on 9/1. Lance flew north of Helena / East Front on 9/2.

Wolf - Livestock Activities

Follow up / Clarification: The last MT Wolf Weekly reported that on 8/28, WS confirmed that a wolf or wolves killed 1 ewe and 6 lambs as well as injuring 8 additional lambs. This incident occurred south of Cascade. A previous Weekly had reported that FWP installed electric fladry for some bed grounds on this same ranch. The sheep that were injured / killed on 8/28 were not within the fladry barrier and were in a different area of the ranch at the time of the incident.

On 8/29, WS investigated a report of sheep being killed by wolves near Grant (SW MT). It was unconfirmed as wolf and WS could not determine the exact cause of death.

On 8/31, WS confirmed a calf as being injured by wolves in the 3 Dollar Bridge area south of Ennis. In the past this has been part of the Horn Mountain pack territory. Because of recent confirmed depredations, efforts to remove 2 wolves from this pack were already authorized and underway. No wolves have been killed yet.

On 9/1, WS investigated a dead calf in the Lydia pack territory west of Fortine (NW MT) and confirmed it was killed by wolves. The calf was killed on private land (a private parcel surrounded by US Forest Service land that also is part of a grazing allotment with use permitted to the owner of the dead calf). This is the first depredation for this pack this year. There were no confirmed losses last year and unverified losses (missing livestock) were also low. The initial response by FWP was to increase monitoring to learn more about the whereabouts of the Lydia pack compared to the Murphy Lake pack, as the loss occurred in an area that could have been either one and FWP/WS strive to connect any lethal management response closely in space and time to the incident and to the appropriate pack. On 9/2, FWP authorized removal of 2 wolves from the Lydia pack by WS and issued a permit to the livestock owner. FWP also explained the state laws / regulations to the owner.

On 9/3, WS confirmed 2 lambs were killed by a wolf or wolves on private land near Lincoln. It is unknown whether a new pack or dispersing animal was involved. FWP has asked WS to collar and release a wolf. FWP also affirmed with the owners that state law / regulations (currently in effect in the absence of an injunction) allow a wolf or wolves seen actively attacking, killing, or threatening to kill their sheep or herding / guarding animals to be killed.

On 9/3, Bradley and Loveless installed fladry on private land near Superior. By-products from a private mink farm seem to be an attractant to wolves who regularly pass through this area. Fladry was installed around an irrigated pasture where wolves had been chewing soft irrigation pipe causing damage to the pipes.

Outreach and Education

On 9/3, Sime participated on a panel discussion after a showing of the film Lords of Nature in Missoula. Others interests represented on the panel were livestock production, ecotourism, wolf advocacy, and academia. About 130-140 people viewed the film and about 50-60 participated in the moderated audience / panel dialogue afterward.

Research Activities

Nothing to report at this time.

Law Enforcement and Related Activities

On 8/29, FWP LE investigated a report of a wolf being killed by a private citizen when the wolf was found chasing a dog on private land at the south end of the Bitterroot Valley (Trapper Peak pack). The individual reported the incident right away and FWP LE completed the onsite investigation on the same day. FWP LE determined the shooting to be lawful. FWP had received numerous reports going back to the spring of this collared wolf chasing livestock on private land and the wolf had been chasing domestic bison prior to chasing the dog.

Other Updates

Northern Rockies Delisting Litigation

As of 9/4 at the end of the day, no decision had been issued by the Missoula Federal Court Judge regarding the request for a preliminary injunction. On 8/31, a hearing was held in the case. The plaintiffs (a coalition of 12 groups and the Greater Yellowstone Coalition) presented oral arguments in

support of an injunction. The federal government, Montana and Idaho each had opportunities to present their oral arguments in opposition. The Judge ended the hearing by saying he would issue a ruling as quickly as he could.

Background: Delisting in the northern Rocky Mountains (except Wyoming) took effect 5/4/09. On 6/2, a coalition of 13 groups challenged the USFWS delisting decision in Federal District Court in Missoula (9th 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 attorneys, 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 10th Circuit (Cheyenne Wyoming) challenging USFWS’s rejection of Wyoming’s regulatory framework and state plan.

Montana 2009 Wolf Hunting Season:

Wolf hunting licenses went on sale in Montana on 8/31. As of 9/4 at noon, FWP had sold a total of 5,909 resident and 24 non-resident licenses. Total hunting mortality is pre-determined by the statewide quota even though licenses sales are unlimited (as many hunters as care to participate are able to purchase the license to hunt a wolf). Hunters are required to report a successful harvest within 12 hours. FWP carefully tracks progress towards filling the quotas and would close the season as soon as the quota was reached. FWP still 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 has a refund policy in place in case the season is blocked or cancelled part way through. FWP encourages the public to check the FWP Wolf Page and the FWP Hunting Page often for the latest news and updates. See also: See <http://fwp.mt.gov/hunting/planahunt/wolf.html>.

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: 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 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 <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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