



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, October 24 – October 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 Blackfoot 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

A game warden from Alberta has reported that dispersing wolf NW410M was legally harvested in Canada on 10/21/09. NW410M was a member of the Dutch pack (North Fork Flathead), and was capture and collared November 2008. He dispersed on 5/9/09 of this year and was harvested 163 miles to the north near Calgary, Alberta.

Hunters, other recreationists, and landowners can help FWP monitor the population by reporting wolf observations, tracks, or sign through the FWP online reporting button [Contact Us - Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks](#), by contacting the closest wolf specialist or FWP office, or mailing a wolf observation card.

Flights: None this week.

Wolf - Livestock Activities

On 10/24, WS confirmed two yearlings as injured near Wisdom (Big Hole Valley), one died later. This area had several confirmed incidents and lethal removals by WS and by a producer defending livestock in April and May. The Battlefield pack is thought to occupy this area. WS has been authorized to lethally removed the remaining packing members likely to be 3 or 4 animals.

On 10/26, WS confirmed two calves killed by wolves near Jackson (Big Hole Valley) on private land. This is the Miner Lakes pack territory. The last confirmed incident was earlier in May and WS lethally removed 3 wolves from the Miner Lakes pack. WS has been authorized to lethally remove 5 wolves from the Miner Lakes pack.

On 10/28 WS removed a female pup from the Lydia pack. There is a prescription for 1 more wolf to be removed.

On 10/29, WS confirmed 2 calves as being killed by wolves on private land in the Bear Creek area near Cameron (Madison Valley south of Ennis). This is in the Black Mountain pack territory and the rancher has been seeing up to 5 wolves. The one and only radio was removed from this group during the summer by a private citizen in accordance with the state statute allowing take of wolves to defend livestock. There are currently no radios in the group. WS was asked to remove 2 wolves and an attempt will be made to get another collar in the group. A permit was issued to the landowner.

On 10/30, FWP referred a call from a livestock owner south of Ryegate to WS. WS investigated and examined older dead cattle and scouted the area for wolf sign, in addition to documenting coyote tracks. A second livestock owner in the area had also reported losses of missing calves from earlier in the summer. Although a hunter had reported seeing 4 black wolves, WS determined the cause of death to be unknown and no wolf sign was found.

Outreach and Education

Numerous media interviews occurred.

FWP wolf and bear specialists, along with other staff, met with two biologists from Sweden who were visiting Montana to learn about bear and wolf conflict resolution approaches, tools, and wolf hunting. FWP learned more about approaches taken in Sweden for similar management / conflict challenges and also about specific fencing designs. The Swedish visitors accompanied FWP staff during field work and it was a good opportunity to learn from each other.

Research Activities

Nothing to report at this time.

Law Enforcement and Related Activities

Wolf NW351F, a disperser from the Cilly pack (north Swan Valley) who paired with a male and appeared to be trying to establish a new territory south of Holland Lake this year, was found on mortality during a wolf monitoring flight on 10/22. The incident is under investigation.

Around 10/10, a downed power line in the Pinkham Creek drainage south of Eureka was discovered by crews with Lincoln Electrical Cooperative. Officials believe a dry tree fell on the high-voltage power line sometime during the summer, but it did not hit the ground or touch anything significant enough to ground out the line and cut the power, which in turn would have alerted the Cooperative of the problem. Eventually something did cause the power to go out and officials responded. Two wolves (1 male pup, 1 male adult) from the Lydia pack were found dead (electrocuted) along with 4 bears, 2 deer, a coyote, and a turkey vulture. The deer were likely first to be electrocuted and the carcasses attracted the other species, which readily scavenge. All the animals were in varying stages of decomposition. No humans were injured.

Other Updates

Northern Rockies Delisting Litigation

On 6/2, a coalition of 13 groups challenged the USFWS delisting decision in Federal District Court in Missoula (9th Circuit). 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 9/8, the injunction request was

denied, but the main lawsuit is moving forward. Written briefings by all parties will be completed by late January 2010. A hearing date for oral arguments has not been set, but is expected to be not long after completion of written briefings.

Montana state laws, administrative rules, and the federally-approved management plan remain in effect and wolves are classified and protected under Montana law as a species in need of management. The FWP Commission has the authority to issue rules and regulations regarding the protection and periodic taking of the animal (as through hunting seasons for example). FWP is the lead agency for wolves, assisted by USDA Wildlife Services if wolves are confirmed to have injured or killed livestock.

Montana 2009 Wolf Hunting Season:

On 10/25, the general fall big game season opened throughout Montana. The wolf hunting season also opened throughout Montana, except for the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness area in WMU 3, which was closed on October 9. The backcountry season in the Bob Marshal Complex west of the continental divide first opened on 9/15 and remained open on 10/25. Wolves harvested during the early backcountry wilderness seasons count toward the total quota for the entire WMU. These backcountry wilderness areas are smaller geographical areas within the larger Wolf Management Units.

A total of 12 wolves were harvested during the early wilderness area season (3 in WMU 1 and 9 in WMU 3). On 10/25, the opening day of the general fall season, a total of 10 wolves were harvested. Through 1:30pm on Friday 10/30, a total of 36 wolves had been harvested. FWP's reporting and update procedure calls for each day's updating process to begin at 11:00 am. By 1:30pm on the same day, the FWP website and the harvest status information phone message (1-800-385-7826) is updated. Wolves that are reported harvested after 11:00am each day are captured in the next day's update. As progress towards filling quotas indicates that a WMU is nearing its total hunter harvest quota, FWP increases vigilance in tracking the hunter harvest reporting so that the closure process can be initiated and even "after hours" as appropriate. There is a public notice requirement of 24 hours before FWP can close any hunting season.

Hunters are required to report their harvest within 12 hours and to personally present a skull / pelt or the whole carcass to an FWP representative within 10 days. Compliance with the hunting regulations has been good. Hunters are also required to determine whether the season is still open in a particular WMU of interest prior to going hunting.

The statewide total quota is 75. FWP's wolf quota was based on data from Montana's wolf population and a model that simulated various levels of harvest. The model assumed that all harvest related mortality would be in addition to all other mortality, regardless of the cause, and similar to previously observed levels. This enabled FWP to examine a number of worse case scenarios and account for previous levels and types of mortality at the same time prior to finalizing a hunting quota. Because illegal mortality has already been factored into the model, FWP does not count agency lethal control, illegal mortality, death by car / train strikes against the hunting quota.

The following table summarizes the harvest information through 1:30 am on Friday October 30. Harvest has been geographically distributed within each WMU and roughly distributed equally between male and female.

In WMU 3, the quota over-run of 1 wolf occurred due to the inherent lag in the protocol for any species with harvest managed on a quota. The time lag for wolf is the shortest of any species because

hunters only have 12 hours to report a harvest so that progress towards filling the quota is tracked more closely. On opening day (10/25) in WMU 3, hunters had reported 2 wolves harvested late in the afternoon. Two additional calls reporting harvest were received 9:15 - 9:25 pm. FWP initiated the closure process for WMU 3 at 9:45pm on 10/25 and closed the season one half-hour after sunset on Monday 10/26. The harvest status phone line message was also updated at 9:45 with the pending closure information. The quota over-run of 1 wolf in WMU 3 outside the Absaroka-Beartooth wilderness area is not biologically significant to the WMU 3 wolf population or the statewide population. However, FWP and the FWP Commission remain firm in their commitments to keeping the total statewide harvest at or below 75. Therefore, one wolf will be either subtracted from the quota in WMU 1 or WMU 2.

For the most current harvest status information, call 1-800-385-7826, 7 days a week. The recording is updated by 1:30pm each day. The FWP website is updated Monday – Friday by 1:30pm, but not on the weekends, so call the phone hot line.

As of 1:30pm 10-30-09	WMU 1 quota: 41 (subquota of 2, N. Fork Flathead)	WMU 2 quota: 22	WMU 3 quota: 12	STATEWIDE quota: 75
Early Backcountry Season (9-15 to 10-24)	3 wolves	CLOSED	9 wolves; permanently closed on October 9	12
General Fall Season (first week, 10-25 to 10-30)	11 (0)	9	4	24
Total Season to Date (through 11:30am, Friday 10-30-09)	14 (the quota is 34% filled)	9 (the quota is 40% filled)	13; CLOSED on 10-26-09	36 (the quota is 48% filled)

Montana Livestock Loss Reduction & Mitigation Board:

The Board met on October 23. The agenda and minutes from previous meetings are available at [Montana Department of Livestock](http://www.mt.gov/livestock). 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.