



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, November 28 – December 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

Wolf staff are renewing intensive field work through flights, snow tracking surveys, and combing through landowner / citizen / agency wolf reports through the end of December. Efforts are aimed at verifying wolf packs and determining pack size and reproductive status. Official 2009 minimum population estimates (and other information about wolves and their management) will be available with the annual report in early 2010.

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: The following monitoring flights were conducted: Laudon flew in NW Montana 12/1-12/3. Asher flew in the Paradise Valley and south of Big Timber on 12/2. Bradley flew in western Montana on 11/30, 12/3, and 12/4.

Wolf - Livestock Activities

On 11/25, WS removed the remaining member of the Centennial pack in southwest Montana.

On 11/30, FWP authorized WS to kill the remaining members of the Mitchell Mountain pack which lives primarily on private land north of Helena. On 11/2, a guard dog was confirmed killed and FWP had authorized removal of 3 wolves. One wolf was killed on 11/19 and another on 11/29. On 11/30, WS confirmed that another guard dog had been killed. Losses had occurred with the pack previously in 2009 during the month of March (incremental control occurred at that time and two wolves were killed).

On 12/2, WS removed a wolf from the Black Mountain pack in the Madison Valley near Cameron. Control efforts ended and the livestock owner was notified that the kill permit is cancelled. Two calves had been killed on private land in late October.

On 12/3, WS confirmed that wolves killed a calf on private land in the Big Hole Valley northeast of Wisdom. Tracks of at least 7 wolves were seen. WS has been authorized to kill 3 wolves from the Pintler Lakes pack and attempt to place a radio collar. WS also investigated a report of a cow being killed by wolves and determined it was unconfirmed as a wolf kill.

On 12/4, WS killed a wolf on private land in the Big Hole Valley north of Wisdom from the Bender pack. The wolf was seen harassing cattle with two other wolves. This is in the same area that a heifer was confirmed injured by wolves on 11/19. The owner reported that the injured heifer from 11/19 has died. No further management actions will occur at this time.

Outreach and Education

Nothing to report at this time.

Research Activities

Nothing to report at this time.

Law Enforcement and Related Activities

On 11/28, a dead wolf was reported up the West Fork of the Bitterroot (southwest end of the valley) that appeared to have been killed by a mountain lion. The carcass had been cached in the typical way of a mountain lion. FWP confirmed that there were puncture wounds in the back of the skull and the "caching" behavior. The carcass had been fed on several times by the lion. Based on the location, the wolf was likely a member of the Watchtower pack. It was a 90 pound adult female.

Other Updates

Northern Rockies Delisting Litigation

On 12/2, FWP submitted its court brief arguing against a lawsuit filed by a coalition of environmental groups seeking to turn back the federal decision to remove gray wolves in most of the northern Rocky Mountains from the federal list of endangered species. The brief outlined how Montana's track record of wolf management is proven and adequate, Montana's belief that leaving wolves listed in Wyoming does comply with the federal Endangered Species Act, and that connectivity requirements have been met and will continue to be met into the future. The federal government's court brief had been filed the previous week on 11/23. The plaintiffs have until December 31 to reply to the federal government's brief and those filed by interveners, such as Montana, who support the federal decision.

Background:

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.

During the course of the litigation, Montana state laws, administrative rules, and the federally-approved management plan remain in effect. 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.

Upcoming FWP Commission meeting:

The FWP Commission will meet on December 10 to tackle a number of proposed 2010-11 hunting season items, including season dates, hunting district boundaries and quota ranges for antelope, bison, bighorn sheep, black bear, deer, elk, moose, mountain goat, mountain lions, and wolves. The meeting will begin at 8:30 in the Old Supreme Court Chambers at the Montana State Capitol. Live audio of the meeting will be steamed via FWP's Web site at fwp.mt.gov <<http://fwp.mt.gov/>>. Click the live audio button available Dec. 10. Helena Civic Television also will broadcast the meeting on Helena cable channel 11. The agenda is available at [Commission Agendas - Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks](#).

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](#). 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.