



# 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, December 19-25, 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**

On 12/16, wolf NW199M, a disperser from the Ksanka pack near Eureka was legally harvested by a hunter in British Columbia. FWP appreciates the collaboration of our Canadian colleagues. NW199M has been missing during MT monitoring efforts since 12/10/07. This appears to be a dispersal of about 23 miles. The kill location was on the opposite side of Koocanusa Reservoir, but there is no way to know the travel route taken by the wolf. Average dispersal distance for northern Rocky Mountain wolves is about 60 miles.

Up until the holidays, wolf staff renewed intensive field work through flights, snow tracking surveys, and combing through landowner / citizen / agency wolf reports. Efforts are aimed at verifying wolf packs and determining pack size and reproductive status. Official 2009 minimum population estimates (an 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: None this week.

### **Wolf - Livestock Activities**

On 12/21, WS killed 2 wolves from the Elevation Mountain pack near Helmville in the Garnett Mountains. Efforts are still ongoing to remove the remaining 3 wolves.

On 12/21, WS confirmed that a calf was killed by wolves on private property near Jackson in the Big Hole Valley. The calf is not expected to live. This is the fourth confirmed incident with the Miner Lakes pack despite previous incremental control efforts and some hunter harvest. WS has been authorized to lethally remove the Miner Lakes pack.

### **Outreach and Education**

Nothing to report.

### **Research Activities**

Nothing to report.

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

Nothing to report.

### **Other Updates**

#### 2009 Wolf Hunting Season Summary

A complete and detailed summary of the 2009 wolf hunting season has been completed and is being distributed as a separate document. It will also be available on the FWP Wolf Web page. As FWP continues to compile information and proof data for the 2009 annual report, minor revisions and corrections may occur. The 2009 annual report will provide its usual comprehensive record of Montana wolves and their management for the calendar year. The report is expected to be completed and available in early March, 2010.

#### 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 (9<sup>th</sup> 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.

Wolf Season Proposals Postponed until spring 2010:

FWP and the FWP Commission postponed consideration of the 2010 wolf hunting season. FWP and the public will first focus on the proposals for big game (e.g. deer, elk, antelope, bison, moose, sheep, goat, lion, black bear), upland game birds, and several statewide proposals during the month of January. The public can learn more about these proposals and comment, see [2010-2011 Proposed Hunting Seasons - MFWP](#). The public meetings schedule is also available. The deadline for public comment on these proposals is 5 PM on Friday, January 22, 2010.

Once the Commission makes final decisions on those proposals in February 2010, attention will then shift to wolf season regulations for 2010/2011 and the 2010 season quotas. FWP and the Commission are aware of the significant public interest and want to allow adequate time for consideration and public comment. FWP will alert the public through media releases and the Wolf Weekly Report when those meetings are scheduled and provide information about how to participate in the process. Working on the wolf regulations and quotas in late spring / early summer will still allow enough time for production of the regulations.

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.

=====

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](http://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.