



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, January 1 - 8, 2010

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

Staff resumed field work and flights to obtain final pack counts, verify reproduction, and to determine whether there are new packs in areas of suspected wolf activity.

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: Laudon flew on 1/6 and 1/8 in northwest Montana.

Wolf - Livestock Activities

On 1/1, a landowner south of Darby reported seeing 5 wolves in his cattle and one cow had been run through a fence. He shot at the wolves and was fairly certain he'd missed. The pasture has cows and calving is expected to start in early February. He called FWP to report the incident. In 2009, the landowner had a calf killed by wolves from the Trapper Peak pack.

On 1/4, an adult dexter cow was confirmed killed by wolves in the Fishtrap pack territory on private land in the McGinnis Meadows area between Libby and Kalispell. No lethal control has been authorized at this time and FWP is monitoring the situation.

On 1/6, two lion hounds were killed on public land by wolves from the Candy Mountain pack in northwestern Montana (between Libby and the Canadian border) while they were holding a cougar in a tree.

On 1/8, WS killed two wolves from the Miner Lakes pack (Big Hole Valley) as previously authorized by FWP in late December 2009. Control efforts for the remaining wolves are ongoing.

On 1/8, WS confirmed that wolves killed two calves on private land near Lemhi Pass west of Grant near the ID border. FWP has authorized the removal of 3 wolves from the Horse Prairie pack which was heard nearby. A kill permit was issued to the owner. After previous confirmed losses in December 2009, [dead calf 12/9, dead calf 12/29, 2 calves injured on 12/29 are still alive], 2 wolves were killed [12/31 and 1/5].

Laudon and Wenum responded to a report of a wolf being foot capered by a conibear trap and had gotten away with the trap. On site investigation revealed that it was actually a cougar, and the cougar could not be located.

Outreach and Education

On 1/7, Sime, Kujala, Lane, and Aasheim attended the Montana Outfitters and Guide's Association meeting in Billings to give updates, listen to comments, answer questions, and share information about wolf delisting litigation, the wolf hunting season, elk management, and other hunting season proposals.

On 1/7, Laudon attended a grazing allotment livestock owner permittee meeting hosted by the US Forest Service at the Murphy Lake Ranger Station in northwest Montana. About 21 in attendance including permittees, Forest Service, and Wildlife Services from around the Trego, Fortine, Eureka, and West Kootenai areas.

On 1/8, FWP staff (Sime, McDonald, Lane, Kujala, Kropp) attended the MT Environmental Quality Council (an interim Legislative Committee) meeting in Helena. FWP Commissioner Ream also attended. FWP gave an update on delisting litigation and staff answered questions posed by the Council members. Public comment was offered by many livestock producers from Beaverhead County and elsewhere. They expressed concern that FWP's incremental approach to lethal wolf control isn't working and that it is not aggressive enough, the ability of USDA Wildlife Services to effectively get the desired level of coyote control accomplished has been hampered due to restrictions on tools because of wolf presence and workload, preferences that the 2009 wolf hunting license revenue be used to pay for livestock compensation and to pay for lethal wolf control in addition to the \$110,000 of license revenue FWP has been providing, and suggested that wolf hunting regulations and quotas need to be adjusted for 2010. FWP provided some clarifications regarding kill permits, the purpose of using an incremental approach, the timeline for FWP decisions after livestock losses are confirmed (i.e. within 24 hours, often sooner, including weekends and holidays via cell phone), and the packs removed in the Blacktail area south of Dillon after significant sheep losses in 2009 and the pack that was removed in the same area in 2008. FWP also provided a brief summary of the 2009 wolf hunting season. Due to time constraints during this meeting, some topics were deferred to the March meeting. See the EQC web page under Montana Legislature/Committees for additional information.

During January, FWP wolf staff will be attending a few FWP hunting season setting meetings to listen to public comment about proposed regulations for deer, elk, and other species. No wolf proposals are being presented during these meetings, but wolf staff have been available to answer questions. The detailed 2009 Wolf Hunting Season Summary is now published on the FWP wolf web page.

About wolves and dogs this time of year: It is the time of year when wolves disperse in search of mates just ahead of the breeding season. From December through February, FWP and WS usually document an increase in wolf-dog encounters for all domestic dog breeds, particularly breeds used to hunt or pursue mountain lions as the dogs can be away from and out of sight of their owners for periods of time. Wolves can act aggressively towards domestic dogs and kill dogs at any time of year, but that is particularly true leading up to and during the breeding season when wolves are inherently more aggressive towards each other and compete for breeding opportunities.

FWP reminds people that when wolves are in the area, be aware that they may be especially aggressive towards dogs at this time of year. Because wolves may detect dogs and usually perceive them as “competitors” they sometimes return to the area. In rural or remote areas, FWP encourages dog owners to keep dogs in secure kennels or inside buildings at night and to not let them roam freely when humans are not around during the daylight hours. When fresh wolf sign is found, place dogs on restraints and keep supervised.

Montana state law allows individuals to non-injuriouly harass a wolf anytime it is too close to humans, livestock or domestic dogs. Citizens may also kill a wolf seen attacking or killing domestic dogs. The incident should be reported to FWP within 72 hours, sooner if possible. If you have concerns or problems with wolves close to your residence, outbuildings, your domestic livestock or pets, please inform the closest wolf specialist or FWP Office nearest you.

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 (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.

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.

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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.