



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 9 - 15, 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.

FWP seasonal Karen Loveless and FWP volunteer Seth Thompson have been doing snow track surveys in different parts of Region 2 to try to improve estimates of # of wolves in uncollared packs. This last week they worked in the lower Clark Fork, Lolo Pass, and Sula areas.

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: Nothing to report.

Wolf - Livestock Activities

On 1/10, MT WS verified that wolves killed 2 llamas on a large animal sanctuary north of Hot Springs on the Flathead Reservation. That brings the total to 9 since February 2009. Efforts to collar and release a wolf and remove up to 2 are ongoing.

On 1/14, WS confirmed that a yearling was killed by wolves on private land near Wisdom. The Bender pack (new in 2009) was detected near the depredation site. WS has been authorized to remove one wolf.

Efforts to remove the remaining wolves in the Mitchell Mountain pack north of Helena concluded this week after 45 days had gone by without further wolf-livestock incidents. WS did not complete full

pack removal of the Mitchell Mountain pack despite the presence of a radio collared wolf and ground / aerial efforts. Field conditions were challenging. The landowner was notified that the kill permit was no longer valid. If new wolf-livestock incidents are confirmed in the area, lethal efforts can resume for up to 45 days again.

Efforts to radio collar and lethally remove a wolf incrementally from the Pintler pack (Big Hole Valley) also concluded this week. No wolves were killed or radio collared in the Pintler pack. If new wolf-livestock incidents are confirmed in either of these areas, lethal efforts can resume for up to 45 days again.

Outreach and Education

On 1/9, Bradley gave a talk at the Deerlodge Conservation District's annual livestock seminar. About 60 people attended.

On 1/14, the FWP Commission and the Montana Board of Livestock held a joint work session. Two separate agenda items were brucellosis (animal health update, surveillance, and FWP elk hunter surveillance effort) and wolves. Wolf topics included FWP's wolf management program (duties and activities of the dedicated staff as well as other FWP staff), funding (federal funding for FWP management, USDA Wildlife Services Congressional directives for wolf/grizzly bear, disposition of 2009 state wolf hunting license revenue, and status of \$110,000 FWP provides to USDA Wildlife Services for assistance with wolf management), delisting litigation (the process, status of current case, and significance to achieving successful delisting), and efforts to reimburse wolf-caused livestock losses through the Montana Livestock Loss Reduction and Mitigation program. Staff from both agencies attended and answered questions. The Montana Livestock Loss Reduction and Mitigation Board Chair and coordinator also attended, as did a representative of Wildlife Services and members of the public. The work session was streamed on the Internet through the FWP Commission Web Page. Meetings are announced ahead of time so check the Commission Web Page about future meetings.

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.

Research Activities

Nothing to report.

Law Enforcement and Related Activities

On 1/9, a gray female wolf pup, likely from the DeBorgia pack was hit and killed on I-90 near St Regis. The carcass was retrieved by FWP after a report from MT Department of Transportation.

On 1/15, a livestock owner shot and killed a wolf that was harassing cattle on private land south of Butte. No other wolves were seen in the area. A FWP game warden investigated the shooting and determined it to be lawful under MT law and administrative rules. It was a collared female that had dispersed from the Sapphire pack, although the collar was no longer functioning and FWP had lost contact with the wolf prior.

Other Updates

2009 Wolf Hunting Season Summary

A complete and detailed summary of the 2009 wolf hunting season is available on the FWP Wolf Program Home page.

Northern Rockies Delisting Litigation in Missoula Federal Court

The schedule for parties to submit written briefs to the court in a staggered fashion has been followed by all (US Department of Justice representing USFWS, plaintiffs, and interveners). The last briefs will be filed by the end of January. A hearing date for oral arguments has not been set, but is expected to be not long after completion of the written briefing schedule.

FWP (on behalf of the State of Montana) is intervening in the lawsuit in support of the USFWS delisting decision. Montana's position is that Montana's track record of wolf management is proven and adequate, 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.

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, leaving a delisted, state-based legal framework in place in Montana while the main lawsuit moves forward.

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.

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 next full Board meeting will be April 9 in the Montana Capitol and Internet streaming is expected. The full agenda will be publicized as the meeting date approaches, but is expected to include funding and rulemaking.

On 1/14 at the joint work session described above, Board Coordinator Edwards reported paying about \$139,000 for confirmed and probable livestock death losses due to wolves in calendar year 2009. 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.