



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 23 - 29, 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 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/wolf>.

NOTE: FWP has recently redesigned its Website. You will need to update your bookmarks. Effective Wednesday 2/3, the Wolf Program Home Page can be found at: <http://fwp.mt.gov/wolf>.

Wolf Monitoring Activities

Work continues on FWP's annual report. Efforts are underway to finalize monitoring information. At this time, FWP is projecting that the 2009 minimum population estimate will be about the same as the minimum 2008 counts. The number of packs is up slightly from 2008 to about 100. The total minimum number of wolves and the total minimum number of breeding pairs will be about the same (about 500 and 34 breeding pairs respectively). These preliminary estimates are subject to change as data continue to be proofed and corrected. Final 2009 numbers and more about wolves and their management in 2009 will be available when the annual report is published in March.

Hunters, other recreationists, and landowners can help FWP monitor the population by reporting wolf observations, tracks, or sign through the FWP online reporting button. You can also report wolves or wolf sign by contacting the closest wolf specialist or FWP office, or mailing a wolf observation card.

Flights: None this week.

Wolf - Livestock Activities

On 1/22, WS confirmed that a yearling cow that had been injured by wolves during an incident on private land west of Wisdom (Big Hole Valley) 1/14 had died due to its injuries. One yearling cow was confirmed during that incident and one wolf from the Bender pack was removed by WS on 1/20.

On 1/26, WS confirmed a calf as killed by wolves north of Wisdom (Big Hole Valley) on private land. The Bender pack was suspected to be involved with this incident and in incidents previously reported

west of Wisdom. Livestock death losses have been confirmed on two different ranches in the area. WS was authorized to lethally remove the remaining Bender pack animals – thought to be 1 or 2. A SOS permit was issued to the landowner.

MT WS removed 2 members of the uncollared Dry Forks pack on the Flathead Reservation near Lonepine. This is an area where llamas have been killed on multiple occasions. Efforts to collar a member of this pack are ongoing, but lethal control is complete at this time.

Mitchell Mountain (north of Helena) control efforts ended 1/28. No further livestock losses occurred and no wolves have been killed recently. WS reported seeing the collared animal alone on multiple occasions, but it was not killed despite FWP's authorization for removal. The landowner permit has expired.

Elevation Mountain (Garnet Mountains near Helmville) control efforts ended on 1/29. No further livestock losses occurred and no additional wolves were killed.

Outreach and Education

FWP has redesigned its Website. Beginning 2/3, the Wolf Program home page (and all the other information) can be found at: <http://fwp.mt.gov/wolf>. You can also find the link on the FWP home page under Fish and Wildlife – look for Montana Wolves. Be sure to update your bookmarks.

On 1/26, Sime gave a presentation at the monthly meeting of the Butte Exchange Club (a civic service organization). About 40 people attended.

On 1/29, Sime gave a presentation at the 10th Annual Rocky Mountain Front Land Manager's Forum. About 40 people attended. Other FWP staff also attended, as did WS.

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 is available on the FWP Wolf Program Home page.

Northern Rockies Delisting Litigation in Missoula Federal Court

The written briefing phase of the delisting litigation concluded on Thursday 1/28 – the deadline for interveners supporting the federal government's delisting decision to file their last briefs.

FWP's last brief argued that: 1. for a variety of reasons, it is lawful for USFWS to establish different levels of protection for a species, subspecies or Distinct Population Segment under the Endangered Species Act ; 2. the facts show that Montana's existing regulatory mechanisms will keep wolf populations well above the federal recovery criteria and encourage connectivity; 3. sufficient genetic exchange has taken place and will continue; and 4. Montana's hunting season is not a basis for relisting the gray wolf.

At this time, a hearing for oral arguments has not been scheduled but could be at any time.

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. 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.