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 30 – February 5, 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 on the FWP website.

NOTE: FWP has recently redesigned and reorganized its Website. We appreciate your patience as we work out a few more bugs. Effective Wednesday 2/10, the Wolf Program Home Page can be found at: http://fwp.mt.gov/wolf.

Wolf Monitoring Activities
Work continues on the annual report.

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 2/1, a livestock owner reported seeing a single wolf in cattle on private land near Cascade and shot at it. The wolf was not injured or killed and no cattle were found injured or killed. The incident took place on 1/29. FWP has been in touch with a group of landowners in this area as wolves have been seen in the area off and on for a year or so.

On 2/1, a herding dog was injured by what was probably a single wolf in the Davis Creek drainage south of Missoula. The dog was with several other dogs and a band of domestic goats. The injury was confirmed by WS on 2/4 and the dog is expected to live, but lost 1 eye. The incident took place in the Welcome Creek pack territory, but the collared animal from this pack was not believed to be in the area based on monitoring efforts in the last few days. A different member of the Welcome Creek pack or a single, unrelated wolf moving through the area may have been responsible.

On 1/25, wolves apparently harassed cattle calves in a pasture 30 miles south of Libby. The incident took place in the Fishtrap pack territory. On 2/2, Laudon and FWP volunteers (Boyd, Bahnson, Valan, and Bourg) installed electrified fladry around a 20 acre pasture on that same ranch. On 2/5, 2-3 wolves came back and circumvented the pasture and eventually entered the pasture through the electrified fladry, and reportedly injured a calf. That injury will be investigated by WS soon. These events coupled with a confirmed depredation on a neighboring ranch on 1/5 led FWP to initiate a control action to remove 2 wolves.

On 2/3, lethal control efforts for Miner Lakes (west side Big Hole Valley) expired. Two wolves were killed on 1/8 and none since. No further incidents of injured or dead livestock have been reported since 12/21/09.

On 2/4, the Camas Prairie pack was confirmed to have killed to calves on private land within the Flathead Indian Reservation near Hot Springs. Efforts to place a collar in the pack continue and CSKT authorized WS to remove 2 wolves. Options to install fladry are also being explored.

Outreach and Education
On 2/3, Sime, Lance and a few other FWP staff attended a meeting in Wisdom (Big Hole Valley) organized by area livestock producers. WS also attended. FWP provided updates and answered questions about local wolf packs in the area, wolf management, litigation, the influence on the ID wolf population along the MT/ID border, funding, and the hunting season. It was a very good discussion and we appreciated the invitation. About 65-70 people attended.

Research Activities
Nothing to report.

Law Enforcement and Related Activities
FWP Region 1 is investigating a dead wolf found 1/10 near Red Meadow in the North Fork Flathead River drainage.

On 1/30, a yearling wolf was killed accidentally in a snare placed for coyotes in the Wolf Creek area between Kalispell and Libby, north of Hwy 2.

On 2/5, WS was doing routine coyote control work on the west side of the Madison River south of Ennis. An effort to opportunistically dart a wolf took a different path after the wolf was fully anaesthetized and closely inspected. WS discovered prior injuries to a hind leg and the belly area. FWP and WS agreed that the animal should be euthanized and it was. The carcass was retrieved from the field for full necropsy. Interagency coordination was excellent.

Other Updates

Northern Rockies Delisting Litigation in Missoula Federal Court
Montana's interests in support of delisting have been represented and brought forward through efforts by FWP in consultation with the Montana Attorney General's Office. FWP filed its last written brief on 1/28.

FWP 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 online. As of 2/10, use the following shortcut link: http://fwp.mt.gov/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.

2010-02-05 Montana Wolf Weekly.pdf