

## **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, March 6 - 12, 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. The Wolf Program Home Page can be found at <http://fwp.mt.gov/wolf>. If you get an error page, go to the FWP Home page and look for Montana Wolves under Fish & Wildlife

### **Wolf Monitoring Activities**

FWP announces the availability of the 2009 Annual Report. A media release and the FWP Quick Facts Summary are available at: <http://fwp.mt.gov/wolf>. The full report can be found by scrolling down the Wolf Program Home page to Reports // look for 2009 Annual Report or click on the photo link for 2009 Annual Report. Here are just a few highlights:

- As of Dec. 31, 2009, FWP documented at least 524 wolves in 101 verified packs, 37 of which qualified as a “breeding pair.” That’s about a 4% increase from last year, compared to 18% the previous year. The rate of population growth is slowing down, in part because of the dampening effect of the combination of public harvest and agency control and because the best habitat is already occupied. Nonetheless, mortality was not high enough to stop or reverse population growth and the population is secure and well above recovery levels. A minimum of 166 pups were documented in 2009.
- Wolf Management Unit 1 accounted for the majority of the increase. Numbers in western and southwestern Montana remained stable or decreased slightly. Twenty-three packs straddle the Montana/Idaho border, and 14 of them are counted in Montana. Nine others are counted in the Idaho population. Additionally the Montana population grew of its own accord through numerous dispersals and formation of new packs.
- A total of 255 wolf mortalities were documented in Montana in 2009, 57% of which was livestock related (n=145 wolves). The remaining mortalities were: 68 legal harvest, 8 car/train strikes, 16 illegal, 1 incidental and agency-related, 2 natural, 2 electrocuted, 1 self defense, and 12 unknown.

On 3/2, while doing routine coyote work, WS opportunistically darted and collared 2 different wolves in the Madison Valley (near Cedar Creek).

On 3/13, FWP and YNP personnel retrieved a dead wolf with mange outside of Gardiner. 383M dispersed from the Slough creek pack and was the last collared animal in that pack. Cause of death was due to emaciation and exposure.

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: Bradley flew in western MT (Lower Clark Fork, Bitterroot areas on 3/11-12. On 3/11, Lance flew in the Big Hole.

### **Wolf - Livestock Activities**

On 3/8, WS killed one wolf that was in cattle in the Big Hole on private land. This wolf was alone, and most likely was not associated with a pack.

On 3/9, WS confirmed that a cow was injured by wolves in the Big Hole on private land. The cow had to be killed. The incident mostly likely occurred as a previous incident in late February. Efforts to remove the Miner Lakes are already ongoing.

On 3/11, control work for any remaining wolves in the Bender pack, thought to be one. No livestock losses have been reported since 1/15.

### **Outreach and Education**

Nothing to report.

### **Research Activities**

Nothing to report.

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

Nothing to report.

### **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. One could be scheduled at any time, but there is no requirement for an oral hearing.

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. Use the following shortcut link and be sure to update your bookmarks: <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 death 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.