

## **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, May 1 – May 7, 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**

The Montana Wolf Program 2009 Annual Report, FWP Quick Facts about the report, and a media release 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.

On 5/5, Bradley trapped and collared a yearling female wolf this southeast of Evaro (between LaValle Creek and the Flathead Reservation). There is sign of multiple wolves in the area and this is a new documented pack we're calling the Evaro pack. The 2 wolves that were seen (and the one that was shot) northeast of the Wye last week were likely part of this pack. Based on sign, this pack spends time on the Flathead Reservation as well and FWP and the Tribal Wildlife Program staff are in touch. The pack size is unknown at this point.

On 5/8, FWP Warden Fegely picked up an adult male gray wolf that was hit and killed on I-90 near Alberton. Unknown pack is affiliation.

After conferring with colleagues in Idaho and Wyoming, FWP has learned the origin of the collared wolf that was killed on private land when caught chasing cattle south of Butte on 4/27 (see last week's Weekly). The wolf was originally collared as a member of the Druid Peak pack in Yellowstone National Park and had dispersed. It was last found in the park on March 17 and had been wandering around alone for a spell before YNP staff lost track of it around the 17th. The adult female wolf had mange and was skinny. FWP was unable to determine whether the wolf had joined up with Table Mountain pack but continues to stay in close contact with area landowners.

Flights: Ross flew in the Gallatin / Madison / Gravelly area on 5/7. Bradley flew in the Missoula / Lower Clark Fork area on 5/7.

### **Wolf - Livestock Activities**

On 5/1, a calf was reported killed by wolves on private land near Sula south of Darby. WS confirmed it as a wolf kill on the 2nd and the Trail Creek pack is believed responsible. FWP has authorized WS to remove 2 wolves from this pack. Traps were set near the kill site and the landowner was issued a shoot-on-site permit.

On 5/2, WS investigated a report of a dead calf on private land west of Augusta and determined it was killed by a coyote. On 5/4, WS investigated a report of a calf being killed by wolves on private land southwest of Augusta. WS determined that it was a probable wolf kill. The calf was mostly consumed but signs of both grizzly bear and wolf canine puncture marks were visible in the hide. No tracks could be detected, although recent grizzly bear and wolf activity have been noted in the area. This area is frequented by the Benchmark pack which is uncollared. On 5/9, WS confirmed that a calf was killed by a wolf on private land southwest of Augusta. This is in the historic range of the Benchmark pack which remained uncollared at the end of 2009. Tracks of at least two wolves have been seen in this area during the winter and it is not known if the Benchmark pack still persists or has denned. On May 8 WS and FWP collared and released a wolf in this area. It is unknown at this point in time if the collared wolf belongs to the Benchmark pack or even if the Benchmark pack was involved. WS and FWP will monitor wolf activity to gather more information on wolf and/or pack activity in the area. WS has been authorized to remove 3 wolves through trapping or by aerial gunning on the affected ranch to link the depredations and removals closely in space and time.

On 5/3, WS investigated a report of a cow being killed by wolves on private land near Belt. It was determined that it was not killed by wolves, cause of death was unknown.

On 5/5, WS investigated a report of a dead calf being killed by a bear or wolves on private land Northeast of Townsend. It was determined that a bear had killed the calf.

On 5/4, WS confirmed a calf was injured by wolves in the Ninemile west of Missoula and died soon thereafter. FWP authorized WS to kill any wolves that returned to the kill site within the first 3 days of the kill to try to target offenders. One wolf was trapped and killed this morning 5/6. If any more wolves are killed within the 3 day period the control action will be finished - otherwise FWP has authorized the removal of 1 additional wolf for up to 45 days. A calf was killed on this same ranch on March 18<sup>th</sup>, and 2 wolves were removed at that time.

On 5/6, WS confirmed that a yearling was injured by wolves on private land in the west Big Hole. Tracks of at least two wolves were seen and the Miner Lakes pack is suspected to be involved. The management prescription of pack removal will be renewed with this latest incident and this landowner has been issued a SOS permit. Efforts to remove the pack have been ongoing since mid February – 4 calves have been killed and 1 yearling injured on private lands own by three different livestock producers.

On 5/7, WS caught and killed a 2-year old collared male in the Ninemile that returned to the depredation site. Traps were pulled and control work is complete at this time. Two wolves total have been removed since a calf was confirmed killed on 5/4 in a plan to try to target offenders near the depredation site.

On 5/7, WS removed two wolves from the Cedar Creek area of the Madison Valley. Control work is completed.

### **Outreach and Education**

On 5/6, Lance, Alt, Boccadori, and Fager met with the Big Hole Watershed working group to discuss wolf management in relation to livestock depredations and big game populations. About 20 people attended.

On 5/7, FWP attended a meeting of the Montana Environmental Quality Council (an interim Legislative Committee). FWP Director Maurier provided updates about the status of the Montana wolf population, FWP's proposed 2010 wolf hunting season, delisting litigation, and how volunteers help FWP monitor the wolf population. The Council heard testimony from Dr. Valerius Geist (Professor Emeritus, University of Calgary) and Dr. Helen Schwantze (Wildlife Veterinarian, British Columbia) about *Echinococcus granulosus*. The Council also heard public comments on the tapeworm, wolf-caused livestock impacts in the Madison Valley, and a few other wolf-related topics. Meeting information (agenda, minutes, presentation materials etc) is available at:

[Montana Legislature: 2009-2010 Environmental Quality Council --  
http://leg.mt.gov/css/Committees/interim/2009\\_2010/environmental\\_quality\\_council/default.asp](http://leg.mt.gov/css/Committees/interim/2009_2010/environmental_quality_council/default.asp)

### **Research Activities**

Nothing to report.

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

This week, an individual from Kalispell plead guilty in federal court in Missoula to violating the Endangered Species Act by illegally shooting and killing a wolf. The incident occurred in October 2008 and the wolf was a federally-listed species at the time. He was sentenced to two years probation and fined \$3,000. Federal prosecutors said he reported killing a wolf that was approaching him while he was hunting deer. He said he shot the wolf in the chest, but a veterinary medical examiner with the USFWS National Wildlife Forensics Lab in Ashland, Ore., determined that the wolf was shot in the back left side.

### **Other Updates**

#### *Northern Rockies Delisting Litigation in Missoula Federal Court*

On 4/23, Judge Molloy announced a hearing date for oral arguments in the legal challenge of the USFWS decision to delist the wolf throughout the northern Rockies DPS except Wyoming. The hearing will be June 15 at 9:00am in the Russell Smith Courthouse in Missoula.

Background: 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.

#### *FWP Proposes 2010 Wolf Hunting Season*

FWP will present its proposed 2010 wolf hunting season to the FWP Commission on May 13. FWP will propose to create 14 wolf hunting units and will ask the Commission to consider 2 alternative

statewide harvest quotas of 186 and 216 wolves. Subquotas will be proposed in three areas to limit harvest during early season backcountry wilderness hunts and including the area directly north of Yellowstone National Park. FWP is also proposing a wolf “archery-only” season from September 4 to October 17) to mirror similar opportunities provided for black bear and mountain lion. The season is proposed to close on December 31, or sooner when the quota for that particular management unit is reached. The quota alternatives of 186 or 216 are predicted to reduce the Montana wolf population by 13% or 20%, respectively.

The Commission will take public comment that day and is expected to select a tentative quota (or range of quotas) and other season details for further public comment. The comment opportunity will extend through June 14 at 5pm. The public can attend a statewide meeting, slated for June 2, to learn more and comment in person. Alternatively, written comment will also be accepted through regular postal mail or electronically through the FWP website. The FWP Commission is expected to make final decisions about the quotas and other season details at the July 8 meeting.

The May 13 Commission meeting will be held in the Old Supreme Court Chambers on the third floor of the Montana State Capitol in Helena, starting at 8:30am. Other items are on the agenda in addition to the wolf hunting season proposal. The full agenda, proposal, and the background documents are available on the FWP Website at <http://fwp.mt.gov>. Look under the heading FWP Commission on the left navigation bar and then under Meetings (left navigation bar) and then Current Agendas (top of page). Audio of the May 13 meeting will be available through the FWP web site (follow similar links, but click on Audio Coverage instead of Current Agendas). Video will not be available.

Montana Livestock Loss Reduction & Mitigation Board:

The Livestock Loss Reduction & Mitigation Board met on April 9<sup>th</sup>. The meeting was also broadcast on local access TV and streamed over the Internet.

The full agenda for this meeting is available at the Board’s website [www.llrmb.mt.gov](http://www.llrmb.mt.gov). Look under Board and Meetings on the left navigation bar. The agenda and minutes from previous meetings are available at [Montana Department of Livestock](http://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 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.