

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, July 10– July 16, 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 2009 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

This past week FWP crews were working in the West Fork of the Bitterroot. On 7/9 a gray adult male in the Painted Rocks pack was trapped and collared. On 7/10 a black yearling female was also caught and collared and traps were pulled in that area. Crews scouted extensively throughout the rest of the West Fork especially focusing in the Hughes Creek, Overwhich Creek, and Nez Perce drainages. Fresh sign was found in the Hughes Creek area but no good trap sites could be found. These areas will be surveyed again later in the summer.

On 7/13, Peter Brown (Blackfoot Valley range rider) located the uncollared Arrastra Creek pack northeast of Ovando. He saw 5 adults and 3 pups (all gray). FWP will be following up and trying to lay out a trapline in the area starting 7/15.

Flights: Bradley flew in Bitterroot Valley area of western MT on 7/15.

Wolf - Livestock Activities

On 7/3, WS investigated a report of sheep being killed over a couple of days and confirmed 5 sheep as being killed by a wolf and one injured sheep that had to be euthanized north of Helena. This incident occurred in the Canyon Creek area. WS was authorized to collar and release a wolf. Wolf activity has been sporadically reported in this area, but no pack activity had been confirmed to date. Not that far away, a few sheep had been confirmed killed in mid-June. Tracks of 2, maybe 3 wolves were seen and it was thought that a new pack had been forming. At that time, WS was authorized to kill a wolf and place a collar. On 7/5, a wolf was captured and collared. On 7/15, one wolf was killed. Other wolves and 3 pups were observed by WS. This new pack will be called Canyon Creek.

On 7/10, WS completed efforts to remove a total of 3 wolves from the 9 and two wolves were killed on 7/10. Two-three calves were confirmed killed by this pack.

On 7/12 WS investigated a dead calf in the Gravelly's west of Cameron. It was classified as a probable wolf kill. There will be no lethal control action at this time.

On 7/13, a livestock owner reported finding a dead calf (on a public grazing allotment) in the Tom Miner area North of Gardiner, with a gray wolf feeding on it. On 7/14, WS investigated and confirmed it as a wolf kill. A wolf was recently collared in this area so little information is known about the group other than a black and gray adult (the black being collared) were seen with 4 pups during a recent monitoring flight in the same area. Based in this information, we are assuming that this is a new pair with pups. The WS investigation indicated that one wolf was involved in the depredation and upon riding up to the carcass on the 14th the producer again saw a wolf leave the carcass and a large amount of the calf carcass still remained indicating again that there was a single wolf involved. Because of the pack make up there will be no control action at this time unless more information is gathered that there are more adult wolves present.

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

On 6/15, oral arguments were heard in Missoula Federal Court in the legal challenge of the USFWS decision to delist the wolf throughout the northern Rockies DPS except Wyoming. Oral arguments were presented by plaintiffs' attorneys, the Federal Department of Justice attorney representing USFWS, FWP Chief Counsel Lane, and ID Deputy Attorney General Strack. Judge Molloy said he would issue a decision as soon as possible.

2010 Wolf Hunting Season

The FWP Commission met on 7/8 and approved the final 2010 wolf hunting season regulations and quotas. The 2010 wolf hunting season, however, could be blocked by a lawsuit in federal court seeking to return the wolf to the endangered species list. In 2008, legal challenges prevented wolf delisting and a hunting season. An injunction request seeking to block the 2009 season was denied by the same federal judge hearing the delisting lawsuit.

Hunters are encouraged to check the FWP website or the nearest FWP office to get the latest information.

The Commission approved a statewide quota of 186 spread out across a total of 13 wolf management units (WMUs).

- In NW MT for FWP Region 1, the Commission approved a total quota of 68 across 6 different WMUs. The west side of the Bob Marshall quota will be 4, and the N. Fork Flathead quota will be 2. In NWMT for FWP Region 2, the total quota will be 34 across two different WMUs

(Lower Clark Fork and Blackfoot). IN NWMT for FWP Regions 4/6, the total quota will be 9 wolves in WMU 400.

- In W MT, there will be a single WMU 210 (Bitterroot / Upper Clark Fork / Big Hole / Tendoy) with a final quota of 34. The Scapegoat Wilderness area (deer/elk HD 280) has a subquota of 3 wolves within WMU 290 (Blackfoot).
- In SW MT, the total quota will be 41 spread across a total of 3 units for FWP Region 3 (east half) /5/7. The Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness area (deer/elk HD 316) has a subquota of 3 wolves within WMU 390 (Southcentral MT).

Other regulations and information:

- Each WMU is open to hunting during the dates established or until the quota (or subquota) is filled, whichever comes first; all seasons and WMUs close not later than December 31.
- Quota overruns in one WMU will be subtracted from another WMU nearby or the statewide quota.
- Archery only season will be Sept. 4 – Oct. 17; the number taken by archers not to exceed 20% of the total quota for that WMU.
- Backcountry rifle season will be Sept. 15 – December 31.
- Backcountry wilderness areas are either a unique WMU or have an assigned subquota.
- Limit of 1 wolf per hunter per year.
- A wolf hunting license will not be valid until 5 days after purchase if the hunting season has opened already.
- All hunters must report harvesting a wolf within 12 hours using the FWP phone reporting system.
- All hunters must present the hide and skull within 10 days of harvest to an FWP official for collection of biological information.
- FWP has the authority to initiate a season closure prior to reaching a quota when conditions or circumstances indicate the quota may be reached within the 24-hour closer notice period.
- WMUs will close within 24 hours of public notice; hunters can check on the status of a season to find out whether it is open or closed in the area they intend to hunt by calling FWP's Harvest Status line or checking the FWP website.
- No trapping or snaring season was authorized.
- Use of intentional bait stations, dogs, night vision, or electronic calls is prohibited.
- Wolf license cost will be the same as 2009: \$19 for residents and \$350 for nonresidents. Wolf licenses will be available online, at any FWP office, or license provider. The cost of any hunting license is established by the Montana Legislature, not the FWP Commission.
- Wolf hunting licenses will go on sale on August 23, 2010. The Commission established that there will not be a license refund if the hunting season is either blocked or closed part way through if the wolf is relisted under the federal Endangered Species Act through court order (i.e. as a result of the lawsuit challenging delisting). Hunters are encouraged to check the FWP website for the latest information.

The Commission also requested that FWP provide an update during the October 7 Commission meeting. The purpose will be to review the latest information about wolf population monitoring, wolf mortality, status of the backcountry and archery only seasons, etc. At this meeting, the Commission may or may not adjust wolf quotas in any WMU or at the statewide level based on the most current information. If any adjustments are made at that time, the Commission is expected to stay within the range it had previously considered and that was previously reviewed and commented on by the public (153-216 statewide).

Montana Livestock Loss Reduction & Mitigation Board:

The Prevention Subcommittee of the Montana Livestock Loss Reduction and Mitigation Board met on June 4 to begin crafting the Prevention side of the Board's Mission and overall program. Work is ongoing with this effort, a Funding Subcommittee, and a Rules Subcommittee.

The Board's website is www.llrmb.mt.gov. Look under Board and Meetings on the left navigation bar. Agendas and minutes from previous meetings are available at 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.