

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, August 14 – August 20, 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.

Wolf Monitoring Activities

Field work continues in southwest MT in the Blacktail, Madison, and Gallatin areas.

On 8/18, FWP caught and radio-collared an adult female from the Barfite pack in NW MT north of Troy.

Flights: None this week.

Wolf - Livestock Activities

On 8/13, WS confirmed a calf was killed by wolves in the North Fork of Wall Creek south of Ennis in the Horse Creek pack territory. On 8/12, had FWP authorized removal of the rest of the pack after repeated confirmed livestock deaths. On 8/17, 2 more calves were confirmed killed in the North Fork of Wall Creek and two wolves were killed that same day. On 8/18, 3 more calves were confirmed killed, but 2 of the calves may have been killed a few days ago. Efforts to remove the remaining wolves are ongoing.

On 8/17, WS confirmed an adult cow was killed on public land in the territory of the Kootenai South pack on the west side of Kooconusa Reservoir in northwest Montana. WS had set traps and captured / radio collared an adult male. No lethal control has been authorized at this time.

Outreach and Education

See below for an update on Judge Molloy's ruling which reinstated Endangered Species Act Protections for the wolf throughout the northern Rocky Mountains. See <http://fwp.mt.gov/wolf> for the latest information regarding what the ruling means for Montana, what changes and what doesn't. FWP's most recent media releases are also available.

On 8/17, Sime gave a wolf program update at the Pachyderms Club luncheon in Helena. About 25 people attended.

On 8/20, FWP met with members of hunting and livestock organizations to discuss Montana's next steps given reinstatement of federal Endangered Species Act protections for the gray wolf throughout the northern Rockies. FWP sought to provide information to assist with understanding of the issue, current challenges, and potential future options. Some options are legal and would be pursued through the court system. Some are legislative (Congress), and some options would seek to change management on the ground (to include pursuing federal authority for a conservation hunting season). FWP also sought feedback about those options and any additional ideas. About ten different organizations were represented and an additional 20 or so individuals attended.

Research Activities

Nothing to report.

Law Enforcement and Related Activities

On 8/19, a yearling male wolf was hit by a car on Highway 191 near Daly Creek (north of West Yellowstone). It is most likely a member of the Cougar 2 pack. Yellowstone Park staff responded.

Other Updates

Defenders of Wildlife Statement about Wolf Compensation

On 8/20, Defenders of Wildlife issued a press release announcing that it will end their wolf compensation program, as of September 10, 2010. Visit the Defenders of Wildlife website for additional information.

Northern Rockies Delisting Litigation in Missoula Federal Court

On 8/20, FWP announced it would appeal the federal district court ruling that reinstated federal Endangered Species Act protections in the northern Rockies. The requisite documents are being prepared.

Background: On 8/6, federal Endangered Species Act protections were reinstated through a ruling from the federal court. The court ruled that the federal Endangered Species Act does not allow the federal government to subdivide a distinct population segment so that a species is listed in part of it and delisted in the other part. The ruling stated that the wolf must either be listed or delisted as one unit within the Northern Rockies region. Further, given that the current Wyoming wolf management plan and regulatory mechanisms are not approved by the federal government and are considered inadequate, federal protections must be reinstated throughout the region.

Wolves across northern Montana are now legally reclassified as federally endangered. Wolves across southern Montana are reclassified as experimental, non-essential. Different federal regulations apply to each area. See <http://fwp.mt.gov/wolf> for information about the federal regulations and other updates.

Montana has been exploring options with the USFWS regarding ways to change management on the ground to reflect the wolf population's secure, recovered status and the need to manage the population through hunting. Work to develop options in the event of a relisting had already been underway and will continue.

2010 Wolf Hunting Season

Because the federal court ruling reinstated Endangered Species Act protections for wolves throughout the northern Rockies, the 2010 Montana wolf hunting season is canceled.

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 next regularly scheduled meeting of the full Board is expected to be October 18, 2010. The program coordinator can be reached at 444-5609.

Since its first meeting in spring of 2008, the Montana Livestock Loss Reduction and Mitigation Board has prioritized the available funding to pay claims for livestock death losses due to wolves that USDA Wildlife Services investigated and determined to be confirmed or probable. Recently, Program Coordinator Edwards provided the following summary information.

- From April to December 2008, MLLRMB paid a total of \$87,317.68 in claims to 51 different livestock owners for a total of 74 cattle, 149 sheep, 7 goats, 2 guarding dogs, 1 horse, and 4 llamas (i.e. for confirmed and probable death losses).
- For the entire calendar year 2009, MLLRMB paid a total of \$140,755.52 in claims to a total of 58 livestock owners for a total of 104 cattle, 256 sheep, 3 goats, 2 guarding dogs, and 1 horse (i.e. for confirmed and probable death loss).
- Thus far in 2010 (January through July), MLLRMB has paid out \$47,204.83 in claims (compared to \$34,641.10 during the same period in 2009). MLLRMB has reimbursed for the confirmed or probable death loss of 52 cattle, 23 sheep, and 1 horse. Total payments in 2010 through July exceed the amount during the same period in 2009 because of the combination of higher cattle losses compared to the same period in 2009 (even though sheep losses are lower in 2010) and higher overall market prices for both cattle and sheep (value of the animals lost).

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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.