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, September 11 - 24, 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
FWP and WS documented the dispersal of 5-year old female wolf from the Absoraka pack just northwest of Cody WY to an area about 20 miles north of Helena. The wolf had produced pups in 2010. She was originally collared in October 2007. The collar was still functional, but previous efforts at scanning for missing frequencies in the NRM had not located her until she was killed as a part of a lethal control effort after death losses of sheep and goats on private land. She was killed on 9/13 (see Livestock section below).

Field crews are still out working.

Flights: Bradley flew in the Bitterroot and Phillipsburg area on 9/15-16. Lance flew south of Butte and along the East Front on 9/23.

Wolf - Livestock Activities
On 9/5, WS investigated a wounded calf that later died of its injuries. Another dead calf carcass was found on 9/4, but could not be located at the time of the WS investigation on 9/5. The livestock owner reported seeing 1 black and 4 grays on 9/4. The incident occurred on private land southeast of Livingston near the Baker Mountain pack territory. Additional field work has occurred to determine whether trapping or lethal control is warranted.

On 9/9, WS confirmed a calf was injured by wolves in the Bitterroot Valley east of Stevensville (10j area). The calf was likely injured several days prior but took some time to round up. The Welcome Creek pack denned near this herd of cattle and wolves have been active in that area throughout the summer. In June a bunch of cattle were run through a fence and a cow and calf were run into an old barn and died as a result. Wolves were strongly suspected at the time. FWP stepped up monitoring efforts afterwards and set up a volunteer range rider to also help increase monitoring. Seven calves have been reported missing in the past month. The Welcome Creek pack numbers 7-9 adults and has a litter of 7 pups. FWP has authorized Wildlife Services to remove up to 5 members of the pack, preferentially removing a combination of pups and adults.

On 9/10, WS removed a black adult male from the Horse Creek pack south of Ennis. On 9/21 WS removed the gray radio collared female and another gray (unknown sex and age) wolf and the control action for the Horse Creek Pack is finished.

On 9/11, WS confirmed a calf was killed by the Ovando Mountain pack in the Blackfoot Valley north of Ovando. FWP authorized 3 wolves to be removed. WS flew on 9/12 and completed the control action by killing 3 wolves. Three adults remain, including 2 collared yearling males, and at least 1 pup is present.

On 9/12, WS removed 2 wolves from the Canyon Creek area north of Helena. On 9/13, an additional wolf was killed completing lethal control efforts. One of the adults killed was collared and dispersed from the Absaroka pack near Cody Wyoming in October 2007. This wolf was not known to be in the area. Death losses of 2 goats and 1 sheep had been previously confirmed by WS on private land.

On 9/13, WS confirmed one calf as being killed and another as injured by wolves in the Horn Mountain Pack territory. On 9/16, WS confirmed a calf as being killed by wolves in the West Fork of the Madison south of Ennis and found another dead calf that they called a probable wolf kill near the Antelope Basin area. The Horn Mountain Pack was established 4 years ago and has had multiple confirmed losses each and every year. There have been numerous "incremental" removals each time and frequent losses have been occurring this summer. WS has been authorized to do a full pack removal of the Horn Mountain Pack which is estimated to be 9 or more wolves. On 9/16, 1 wolf was killed. On 9/23 and 9/24, WS removed 4 more wolves from the West Fork of the Madison. Efforts to remove an estimated 5 remaining wolves are ongoing.

On 9/15, WS investigated a dead calf that was found by a producer on 9/14 and confirmed it as a wolf kill. The producer was gathering cows to move to a lower pasture and heard a cow bellering and rode upon 2 wolves (1 black /1 gray) feeding on the dead calf. When WS rode upon the carcass they jumped a grizzly bear off of it, the bear had already claimed and buried the calf. Cows have been moved and the producer does not want a control action. No control action at this time.

On 9/17, WS looked at and confirmed a calf as being injured by wolves in the Strickland Creek area North of Trail Creek in the Paradise Valley. Monitoring has been increased to determine if this is new wolf activity and a collaring effort is warranted. No lethal control has been authorized at this time.

On 9/21, WS investigated report of wolf kill in the Big Hole near Jackson. It was unconfirmed, and wolves did not kill the calf.

Outreach and Education

On 9/14, FWP officials attended a Montana Legislative Committee meeting of the Environmental Quality Council which has oversight responsibility for FWP. Updates were provided on steps FWP and the FWP Commission have taken to regain full management authority for wolves since relisting on August 5 and FWP's intention to appeal Judge Molloy's ruling to the 9th Circuit. FWP officials also answered questions of the Council. Mr. Steve Dougherty from the Department of Interior Secretary's Office also attended and answered questions. The Council also took public comment.

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.

Research Activities
Nothing new to report.

Law Enforcement and Related Activities
On 9/12, FWP picked up a dead black pup on 9/12 in the Brackett Creek area of the Bangtail Mountains west of Clyde Park, MT. Cause of death is under investigation. FWP will be scouting the area for wolf activity.

On 9/17, FWP euthanized a gray male pup from the Ksanka pack near Eureka in northwest Montana. The animal was emaciated and in very poor condition. Cause of death is under investigation.

Other Updates
On 9/15, FWP submitted an application to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to obtain a permit to allow a conservation hunt for wolves using the FWP Commission approved final 2010 wolf hunting season framework. FWP sought the authorization to create a conservation hunt in order to relieve population pressures and associated biological, social, and political pressures that currently jeopardize support of wolf recovery in Montana. FWP requested an expedited review process to have the permit in hand by early November to enable hunting this year. Such requests usually take the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 90 days or more for processing. The Service could approve or deny Montana's request.

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.
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> 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.

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 for now. FWP is in the process of exploring ways to secure regulatory authority from the federal government to move forward with a fair chase hunting season.

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.

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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.

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