

MONTANA WOLF PROGRAM WEEKLY REPORT

To: Interested Parties

From: FWP Wolf Program

Subject: Wolf Program Activities and Related Information, October 23-Nov. 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 2009 annual report) can be found on the FWP website.

Wolf Monitoring Activities

Hunters and private landowners are especially encouraged to report observations of wolves or wolf sign to FWP through the online feature at <http://fwp.mt.gov/wolf> (look for the green Report a Wolf box), by mailing a pre-printed post card available at license agents, or calling the nearest FWP office.

Laudon and Cavedon conducted a trapline, 10/6 – 11/5, in the North Fork Flathead for the uncollared Kintla pack. No wolves were captured but population data was collected.

Flights: Flight monitoring reports present information on the whereabouts of collared wolves on the day of the flight. Every 4-6 weeks, FWP staff fly to observe wolf packs and obtain counts throughout the year. Flight reports are grouped for packs according to geographic area. Flight information can be found on the FWP website at:

<http://fwp.mt.gov/wildthings/management/wolf/r2report.html>

Wolf - Livestock Activities

October 25 - In early September FWP authorized Wildlife Services to remove up to 5 members of the Welcome Creek pack in the Bitterroot Valley in response to livestock depredation, preferentially removing a combination of pups and adults. This control action has reached the end of the 45 day control window and traps have been pulled from the area. Two adult males were removed from the pack. It appears as though there's been some turnover within the pack and there may not have been as many members as previously believed. Only 3 pups have been recently documented. The livestock producer already has most of his cattle out of the area and is removing the last bunch this week.

On October 24 a livestock producer in the Big Hole legally shot a wolf harassing cattle north of Wisdom.

On October 29 Wildlife Services investigated a report of a horse being killed by wolves in the Pipestone area. WS determined that the injuries were unconfirmed and not from a wolf. Injuries were determined to be from a dog and the owner euthanized the horse.

On Friday November 5th a hunter reported a possible wolf attack on his horse while hunting in the backcountry in the East Fork of the Bitterroot. He was camped 10.5 miles up the main trailhead and reported seeing 7-9 wolves on Wed. night and hearing them howling. His horse, which was tethered, broke free and disappeared. He eventually found the horse back at the trailhead very stirred up and with some cuts on its right rear leg. Wildlife Services looked at the horse on Monday morning the 8th and determined the leg injuries were not caused by wolf bites and were likely incurred from running through brush, debris etc. There are 2 collared packs in the East Fork but neither matches the description of the wolves seen in this incident. FWP will be following up to try to determine what pack is in the area.

Outreach and Education

Bradley gave a presentation on wolf management to a University of Montana class on Montana Wildlife on 10/26. On the 27th she met with the Blackfoot Challenge Landowner Advisory council and discussed recent wolf management issues.

Research Activities

Law Enforcement and Related Activities

On Wednesday November 3rd, a man hiking with his 2 dogs came upon a dead wolf in the South Fork of Lolo Creek, west of Missoula. The carcass was retrieved and is under investigation by USFWS LE.

On October 30th, an elk hunter reported an incident with a pack of wolves at a site where he had taken a bull elk. The hunter killed the elk in drainage of the South Fork of the Flathead on Friday, October 29. On Saturday, the hunter and a companion reported that they went back with horses to the site to retrieve the meat and they encountered a pack of wolves at the site. They felt threatened and shot at the wolves, then they left the site, leaving the elk quarters. The hunter contacted FWP and on Monday a warden accompanied them back to the site. The warden documented that one wolf was killed, and multiple tracks at the site confirmed that a pack of wolves had been present. The elk had been fed on by wolves and a grizzly bear. Because wolves are federally classified as endangered, FWP has turned over the information to the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service enforcement agent who will follow up on the incident.

Other Updates

Bitterroot Wolf 10(j) Proposal:

On 10/7, the FWP Commission approved FWP to seek public comment and obtain scientific peer review on a proposal to remove wolves in the West Fork of the Bitterroot due to unacceptable impacts of wolf predation on the elk herd (which is not meeting population objectives for calf

recruitment or total elk numbers). The complete proposal can be found under “Opportunity for Public Comment” found on the Hunting page of the FWP website fwp.mt.gov.

Proposal details:

- Reduce wolf numbers in HD 250 (West Fork of Bitterroot) from the minimum of 24 counted in December 2009 to a year-end minimum of 12 wolves represented by 2 – 3 packs from 2010 through 2015; objective = 12 wolves in 2-3 packs in HD 250
- 100 “agents of the state” are drawn from a pool of applicants, not more than 10% nonresidents
- Hunting only from one half hour before sunrise to one half hour after sunset; no baiting or electronic calling/amplification; 12 hour reporting with 48-hour check-in
- Hunting license purchase required to keep pelt and skull
- Fall 2010/Winter 2011 season to start with USFWS approval not before Dec 15, 2010 and running until quota is met, not later than Feb 28, 2011;
- 5-year proposal to USFWS with annual FWP Commission process and rules; proposed management options available for annual definitions by FWP Commission include fair chase hunting or trapping by the public, control actions by agency personnel or designees, or any combination approved by the Commission

Public comments sought:

- Deadline for public comment is 5pm Wednesday November 10, 2010
- Written comments can be sent to: FWP – Wildlife Bureau, Attn: Public Comment, POB 200701, Helena, MT 59620-0701.
- Electronic comments can be submitted by cutting and pasting the following link into your web browser line:<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/D3ZL3GL>

Pending public comment and peer reviews, FWP may advance a final proposal to the FWP Commission at the next meeting November 18 in Helena. If approved by the FWP Commission, FWP would submit a final 10(j) proposal to the USFWS for federal consideration and approval. FWP would seek expedited review. USFWS can approve the proposal or deny the proposal.

Northern Rockies Delisting Litigation

On 10/1, FWP filed its appeal with the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, seeking to overturn the Missoula District Court ruling that returned the region’s wolf population to the federal endangered species list. The federal government and Idaho also filed appeals.

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 Livestock Loss Reduction & Mitigation Board:

LLRMB held its fall board meeting on October 18th.

For agendas and minutes of previous meetings, see the Board's website: 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](http://liv.mt.gov). 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.