



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks' 2010 annual wolf program report summarizes efforts to implement the approved state plan during the first 7 months of 2010 and to the extent allowed by federal regulations after the wolf was relisted in August. Throughout the year, FWP led wolf monitoring, directed conflict management, coordinated research, and led outreach efforts. FWP works closely with Tribes, a variety of other state and federal agencies, interested organizations and individuals to continue the transition to managing wolves like other wildlife. Wolves were delisted in May, 2009. Wolves were relisted on August 5, 2010.

Montana's wolf conservation and management plan is based on the work of the wolf advisory council, a diverse working group. Its balanced approach ensures the long-term success of wolf recovery in a landscape where people live, work, and recreate. The plan seeks to manage the wolf population in concert with available habitat, prey species, livestock conflicts, and human safety - similar to Montana's other resident wildlife.

2010 Highlights

Wolf Numbers

- The population is secure but dynamic. Wolves share a landscape with people. Like other wildlife species, Montana's wolf population is subject to checks and balances, including strong reproduction in some areas, disease, vehicle strikes, and mortality due to conflicts with people.
- As of Dec. 31, 2010, FWP documented at least 566 wolves in 108 verified packs, 35 of which qualified as a "breeding pair." That's about an 8% increase from last year, compared to 4% in 2009 when total wolf mortality (including public harvest) appeared to slow down the rate of population growth. Wolf population growth rate picked up in 2010, due in part to the inability to proactively manage the population through fair chase, regulated hunting. A minimum of 140 pups were documented in 2010.
- The wolf population in each of the three areas grew slightly in 2010 and is distributed as follows:
 - Northwest Montana: at least 326 wolves in 68 packs, 21 breeding pairs.
 - Western Montana: at least 122 wolves in 21 packs, 8 breeding pairs.
 - Southwestern Montana: at least 118 wolves in 19 packs, 6 breeding pairs.
 - One and five packs occur on the Blackfeet and Flathead Indian reservations, respectively.
- Twenty-four packs straddle the Montana/Idaho border, and 18 of them are counted in Montana. Six others are counted in the Idaho population. Six packs straddle the Montana/Wyoming border, and four of them are counted in the Montana population.
- A total of 179 wolf mortalities were documented in Montana in 2010, 79% of which was livestock related (n=141 wolves). The remaining mortalities were: 1 legal harvest in Canada, 11 car/train strikes, 13 illegal, 3 incidental and agency-related, 1 self defense, and 9 unknown. Twelve packs were removed due to chronic conflicts with livestock.

Wolf Distribution

- Statewide, wolf distribution remained about the same, with one notable exception. A small pack was documented in the Snowies late in the year. New 2010 packs established primarily in the western third of the state. But wolves are great travelers and could show up anywhere in Montana. Many dispersal events were documented, and 21 new packs formed in 2010. Many others that started the year did not exist at the end of the year.
- About 90% of the Montana wolf population lives outside national parks on a combination of public and private lands.

Outreach Activities

- Increasing public awareness of wolves and their management is a top priority for FWP. FWP works with local communities to incorporate wolves into the landscape and to strike the balance between wolves and people. Other FWP staff, USDA Wildlife Services personnel, and our tribal wildlife partners also provided information and did public outreach.
- Outreach efforts take many forms, including one-on-one conversations, media interviews, printed materials, documentary films, FWP Outdoor Reports and press releases, and formal presentations.
- FWP's wolf staff gave a minimum of 49 formal presentations to about 3265 people in 2010, but literally reached thousands more about wolf ecology, wolf-livestock interactions, wolf-big game interactions, human safety, Montana's wolf plan, federal delisting efforts, and more. Dozens of media interviews occurred, too.
- FWP's wolf management Web pages are very popular and visitors spend more time on the wolf pages than the average of all other FWP Web pages visited. In 2010, the FWP wolf web pages were visited about 117, 623 times, a 7% increase from 2009. Wolf pages were visited about 325 times per day on average.

Wolf-Livestock Interactions

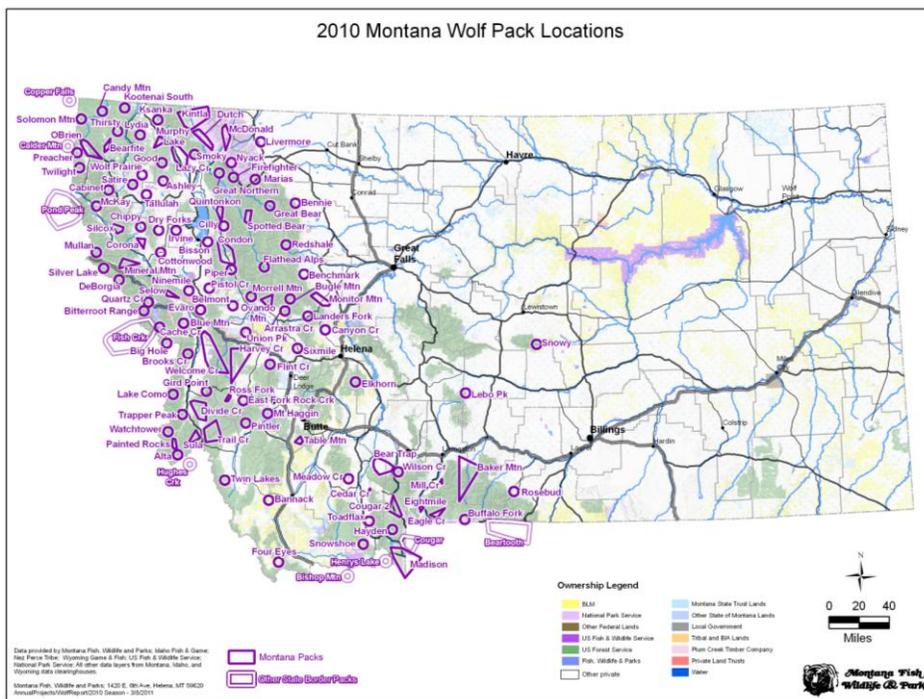
- Montana wolves routinely encounter livestock, though preying on them seems to be a learned behavior. Wolf depredation on livestock is difficult to predict in space and time.
- FWP and WS work together to reduce the risk of loss and address conflicts using a combination of non-lethal and lethal tools. With delisting, FWP decisions are guided by state laws, state regulations and the state plan. Conflicts are addressed on a case-by-case basis, striving to connect the agency response to the damage in space and time. This is similar to the approach taken when other wildlife species damage private property in Montana and lethal control is directed at the problem animals causing the damage.
- The Montana Livestock Loss Reduction and Mitigation Program got underway in 2008. The goals are to decrease of risk of livestock loss through proactive tools and to reimburse losses. The Governor-appointed Board meets twice a year. With a small Montana general fund appropriation and federal funding secured through a grant demonstration program, \$96,076 was paid in claims for confirmed and probable death losses in 2010. The total is expected to increase slightly as the final 2010 claims are processed.
- Confirmed cattle death losses decreased to 87 in 2010, and confirmed sheep death losses decreased to 64. Other confirmed livestock losses include: 3 llamas, 2 dogs, 3 goats, 1 horse, and 4 miniature horses. Other injury and death losses were not verified or were deemed "probable." Other impacts are difficult to quantify, but do occur.
- A total of 141 wolves were killed to prevent further depredations. Of those, private citizens killed 13 wolves caught actively chasing or attacking livestock either under the federal 10j regulation or the state defense of property law.

Funding, Delisting, and Litigation

- With Montanans' support, FWP took on the new responsibility of wolf conservation and management in 2004, contingent on federal funding. Federal funding continued in 2010. Montana is focused on securing adequate funding from federal and private sources for the long term.
- Wolves were delisted for a second time in May 2009 and legal challenges resumed. Montana intervened in the lawsuit. The wolf was relisted on August 5, 2010. The judge ruled that delisting the northern Rocky Mountain wolf population may not move forward without Wyoming. The 2010 Montana wolf hunting season was canceled. FWP tried several administrative avenues to implement a hunting season in 2010, but all were denied by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
- In October, FWP submitted a 10j proposal to remove wolves in the West Fork Bitterroot to address concerns about predation on the elk population. The 2008 10j regulation, however, has been challenged in federal court. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was still reviewing the proposal at year's end.

See: <http://fwp.mt.gov/wolf>

- to read and download the full Montana Wolf Conservation and Management 2010 Annual Report
- to report wolves and wolf sign
- to learn more about wolves, their management, and the state program



Who Do I Contact?

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (to get information about wolves and wolf management):

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USDA Wildlife Services (to request investigations of injured or dead livestock):

Kraig Glazier, Helena
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John Steuber or Mike Foster, Billings
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John.E.Steuber@aphis.usda.gov or Mike.Foster@aphis.usda.gov

To Report a Dead Wolf or Possible Illegal Activity:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:
Missoula, Montana: (406) 329-3000
Casper, Wyoming: (307) 261-6365

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks:
1-800-TIP-MONT
Nearest FWP Regional Office or game warden

To learn more about Montana's Livestock Reduction and Mitigation Program and the Board's work:

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