

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, May 15– May 21, 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

The Montana Wolf Program 2009 Annual Report, FWP Quick Facts about the report, and a media release are available at: <http://fwp.mt.gov/wolf>. The full report can be found by scrolling down the Wolf Program Home page to Reports // look for 2009 Annual Report or click on the photo link for 2009 Annual Report.

On 5/19, CSKT and MT WS collared and released a lactating female northeast of Niarada in the old Salish territory. It is unknown if this is the Irvine pack or the Dry Forks pack or a new group of wolves. She will be monitored intensively until we can discern which pack it is.

Flights: Asher flew on 5/16 in the Paradise Valley and south of Big Timber.

Wolf - Livestock Activities

On 5/13 MT WS confirmed a probable calf kill in the Selow pack territory. This is the fourth depredation by this pack in 6 months. On 5/18 MT WS confirmed another calf in the same area. CSKT authorized WS to remove 4 or more wolves from this pack. Control is ongoing. On 5/20 MT WS discovered a freshly killed cow in the Selow territory while conducting control actions. Later that day a black adult male was shot off the carcass. The remainder of the pack will be removed.

On 5/15, WS confirmed a depredation attempt on an adult cow north of Niarada. The cow's tail was almost bitten off and she collapsed in the owner's pen. She died on 5/18. She also had teeth rakes on her hindquarters and side. This is in the uncollared Dry Forks pack territory which is slated for removal and efforts to locate them are ongoing so that control can be completed.

On 5/17, WS confirmed that wolves killed a calf and determined a second calf was a probable kill on private land south of Butte. The Table Mountain pack is suspected to be involved. In this area the

producer shot a wolf legally under the state statute of defense of livestock on April 27. WS has been authorized to kill three wolves. Attempts are still being made to place a collar in the pack.

On 5/17, a wolf was trapped and killed by WS in the East Fork of the Bitterroot as part of ongoing control work on the Trail Creek pack. A second wolf was killed via helicopter on 5/19. Control work is finished at this time but traps are being left out for a few more days to try to put another radio-collar in the pack.

On 5/17, WS confirmed one dead and two injured calves on private land south of Wisdom in the Miner Lakes pack territory. Efforts to remove the pack are ongoing.

On 5/18, WS killed two wolves north of Wisdom that had joined up with the remaining collared wolf from the Bender pack. On 5/19, the collared wolf was killed, completing efforts to remove this pack.

On 5/18, WS killed the remaining 2 members of the Elevation Mtn pack this morning. The collared alpha female and an uncollared gray male were shot via helicopter. Control work is now finished and the kill permit has been revoked.

On 5/19, WS determined two calves as probable wolf kills on private land near Geyser. WS has been authorized to collar and release a wolf in this area.

On 5/21, WS confirmed a calf was injured on private land in the Ninemile west of Missoula. This is the third depredation on the same ranch in the last 2 months. Four wolves were removed in 2 separate actions after the first two events. FWP has currently authorized WS to remove 4 more wolves from the pack, leaving the breeding female, one other wolf, and if applicable, this year's pups. Traps have been set on the property and WS may choose to collar and release a wolf to help with the control efforts, as there are no collared animals currently in the pack.

On 5/21, WS confirmed one calf as killed by a wolf or wolves on private land northwest of Twin Bridges. It is unknown if the Table Mtn. pack is involved or if it was another pack in the area. A lone wolf has been seen in the area recently. WS has been authorized to collar and release a wolf to learn more about wolf activity in the area.

On 5/21, WS confirmed 2 wolves had chased 2 horses, running one through a fence resulting in severe injuries (broken leg and wire cuts) on private land near Helmsville. The horse had to be put down. This occurred on the same ranch that had recently experienced depredations by the Elevation Mtn pack, which was removed last week. FWP authorized WS to remove 2 wolves and issued a shoot-on-site permit to the landowner. A 2 yr old gray male was seen near the horse pasture and killed by the permittees on their property on 5/23.

Outreach and Education

Nothing to report.

Research Activities

Efforts to analyze data and publish peer-reviewed articles collaboratively with other agency and tribal partners are ongoing. Two new publications are now available pertaining to estimation of breeding pairs and wolf survival through 2004 in the northern Rocky Mountain Region:

Mitchell, M. S., J. A. Gude, D. E. Ausband, C. A. Sime, E. E. Bangs, M. D. Jimenez, C. M. Mack, T. J. Meier, M. S. Nadeau and D.W. Smith. 2010. Temporal validation of an estimator for successful breeding pairs of wolves (*Canis lupus*) in the U.S. northern Rocky Mountains. *Wildlife Biology* 16:101-106.

Smith, D.W., D. Murray, E. Bangs, J. Oakleaf, C. Mack, J. Fontaine, D. Boyd, M. Jimenez, D. Pletscher, C. Niemeyer, T. Meier, D. Stahler, D. Guernsey, J. Holyan. 2010. Survival of colonizing wolves in the northern Rocky Mountains of the United States, 1982-2004. *J. Wildlife Management* 74:620-634.

Law Enforcement and Related Activities

On 5/18, an FWP game warden investigated a report of an adult black wolf been struck by a vehicle and a second wolf (collared gray female) being shot under the Montana's state defense of livestock provisions. Both wolves were killed in a single incident which occurred north of Wolf Creek in FWP Region 4. FWP determined that the landowner reasonably concluded that an attack on his cows and calves had either just occurred or was imminent. Thus, there was no violation of MCA 87-3-130 and no charges will be filed. The two wolves were the remaining members of the Mitchell Mtn pack. The female wolf was not lactating.

Other Updates

Northern Rockies Delisting Litigation in Missoula Federal Court

On 4/23, Judge Molloy announced a hearing date for oral arguments in the legal challenge of the USFWS decision to delist the wolf throughout the northern Rockies DPS except Wyoming. The hearing will be June 15 at 9:00am in the Russell Smith Courthouse in Missoula.

Background: Montana's interests in support of delisting have been represented and brought forward through efforts by FWP in consultation with the Montana Attorney General's Office. FWP filed its last written brief on 1/28. FWP argued that: 1. for a variety of reasons, it is lawful for USFWS to establish different levels of protection for a species, subspecies or Distinct Population Segment under the Endangered Species Act; 2. the facts show that Montana's existing regulatory mechanisms will keep wolf populations well above the federal recovery criteria and encourage connectivity; 3. sufficient genetic exchange has taken place and will continue; and 4. Montana's hunting season is not a basis for relisting the gray wolf.

FWP Proposes 2010 Wolf Hunting Season

FWP and the FWP Commission request public comment on the proposed 2010 Wolf Season Elements and three different statewide Quota Alternatives (153, 186, 216). The Montana wolf population is predicted to decrease under each of the alternatives currently being considered by the Commission. All other season elements not specifically proposed for changes and public comment w are proposed to be the same as 2009. For reference, the 2009 Wolf hunting regulations may be found under "2009 Final Regulations" under Hunting/Regulations at the fwp.mt.gov website.

The public is asked to comment on the proposed changes from 2009, any of the items shown below (#1-10), the three statewide quota alternatives (153, 186, 216), any individual WMU quotas / subquotas, or any other concern related to this proposal:

To comment: 1. Attend one of 7 meetings to be held June 2, 7-9pm; 2. Mail written comments to: FWP – Wildlife Bureau, Attn: Public Comment, POB 200701, Helena, MT 59620-0701. 3. Submit electronic comments through the FWP Hunting page by clicking on the link Comment on Proposed

2010 Wolf Hunting Seasons Quotas and Hunting District Boundaries (<http://fwp.mt.gov/Hunting>). The comment period will close June 14 at 5pm.

Wolf season elements proposed for all statewide quota alternatives include:

1. No trapping proposed for the 2010 season.
2. Licenses proposed to remain over-the-counter general sale to residents and nonresidents with total harvest controlled via required reporting of harvest by successful hunters.
3. Any licensed hunter may take only one wolf in the year.
4. Fourteen WMUs with two subquota areas are proposed.
5. An archery only season is proposed for all WMUs from September 4, 2010 until 20% of the WMU quota or subquota is met but ending no later than October 17, 2010.
6. A backcountry rifle season is proposed to run from September 15, 2010 until the WMU quota or subquota is met but ending no later than December 31, 2010. This backcountry rifle season is proposed for WMU 150, deer/elk hunting district 280 portion of WMU 290 (subquota of 3) and deer/elk hunting district 316 portion of WMU 390 (subquota of 3).
7. The general rifle season for all WMUs with remaining unfilled harvest quotas/subquotas is proposed to run from October 23, 2010 until the total WMU quota or subquota is met but ending no later than December 31, 2010. A December end date reflects intentional management protection during wolf dispersal in early winter months of January and February. The 25% quota cap on December harvest that was applied in 2009 is not proposed for 2010.
8. Any wolf license purchased during an open season is proposed to not be valid until 5 days from the day of purchase. This would make the sale of wolf licenses consistent with the sale of bear and lion licenses in an Enforcement effort to address potential illegal harvest prior to license purchase (see additional justification provided).
9. Illegal harvest during the hunting season would count against the WMU quota.
10. Any WMU harvest over-run would be taken off other WMU quotas so that the larger area (northwestern Montana, western Montana and southwestern Montana) quota is not exceeded.

Additional details, such as the tentative distribution of the statewide quotas, can be found in the Interested Persons letter (see <http://fwp.mt.gov/Hunting>). Other background information, such as FWP's original proposal and analysis of various quota options can be found on the FWP Commission page by looking on the left navigation bar and then under Meetings (left navigation bar) and then Current Agendas (top of page): (<http://fwp.mt.gov/news/publicnotices/notice.html?action=getPublicNotice&id=2377>). For further clarification, you may also call the Wildlife Bureau office at 406-444-2612.

Montana Livestock Loss Reduction & Mitigation Board:

The Livestock Loss Reduction & Mitigation Board met on April 9th. The meeting was also broadcast on local access TV and streamed over the Internet.

The full agenda for this meeting is available at the Board's website www.llrmb.mt.gov. Look under Board and Meetings on the left navigation bar. The agenda 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.

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