



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Gray Wolves in the Northern Rocky Mountains

From: Gray Wolf Recovery Coordinator, Helena, MT

Subject: Status of Gray Wolf Recovery, Week of 5/21/07 to 5/25/07

NEW WEB ADDRESS - The 2007 annual interagency wolf report (covering all 2006) can be viewed at <http://westerngraywolf.fws.gov/annualreports.htm> . It has maps of wolf pack locations and home ranges, tables of wolf numbers and depredations, discussions of litigation and funding issues, summaries of scientific studies, an extensive bibliography, and additional information.

Monitoring

A NPT field crew has been attempting pup counts on the Florence, Lick Ck., and Blue Bunch packs. So far they have observed a single pup at Blue Bunch and been unable to locate litters for Florence and Lick Ck. In addition they scouted for wolf sign in the Cold Springs pack home range but found nothing definitively wolf-like.

IDFG and WS got reports of a wolf inside a domestic elk pen in eastern Idaho south of Tendoy that reportedly had killed an elk. Under the federal 10j rule, domestic elk and deer are not considered livestock so no response was initiated. The individual was told that shooting at the wolf was illegal and that he needed to chase the wolf out of the pen using nonlethal methods, as any wild animal, especially a listed species cannot be held in captivity.

Over the last 2 weeks Michael Lucid hired and trained 4 new wolf technicians to assist him in locating undocumented and non radiocollared wolf packs in the Selway Bitterroot Wilderness and to test a new model designed to help locate wolves in the future without radio collars. Welcome to Kari Holder, Lacy Robinson, Jonathan Ball and Josh Vale. They will be working in coordination with USFS, outfitters and guides, and other FG staff throughout the summer. IDFG also hired Nate Borg to cover wolf management duties in the Southwest Region while Michael Lucid is working in the Wilderness. Additionally, Carter Niemeyer is back on board and started working this week. Like the wolf population, our wolf crew is growing!

Michael and crew attempted to capture a wolf in the Timberline in order to place a GPS collar and train his crew. They also saw a wolf run across the road in front of them they were sure was carrying a blaze orange highway cone. They did not speculate as to why they thought it was carrying the cone.

Kris Boyd (MFWP) and Laudon (MFWP) followed up on information reported by Arlie Burk (local houndsman and logger assisting the MFWP wolf program) and confirmed a new den area by the Murphy Lake pack. A short duration trapline was attempted with no success. Trapping will resume after the Memorial Day weekend.

Wolves in YNP are in dens and pup counts are beginning to be reported. One pack has already moved to a second den location.

Twelve known wolf packs in Wyoming have denned: Beartooth, Sunlight, Absaroka, South Fork, Carter Mtn., Gooseberry, Greybull River, Washakie, Buffalo, Teton, Pacific Creek, and Huckleberry. Efforts are ongoing to confirmed additional denning packs.

Susannah Woodruff was hired by the USFWS as a wolf biologist working out of Jackson, WY. USFS biologist Dylan Taylor will also be working with the USFWS wolf program. Both biologists will be trapping/radio collaring wolves, confirming new packs and successful reproduction, and assisting with livestock conflict control this summer.

Control

During the 3-day Memorial Day weekend, there will be several WS supervisors "on-call" to receive reports on wolf/livestock conflicts. Please call and/or leave a message with any of these WS employees, but if you don't get a return call within an hour, please call one of the others:

George Graves (statewide calls): 208-861-9186 (George is borrowing a cell phone from a co-worker, so if you hear a woman's voice on the message, please go ahead and leave a message).

Craig Maycock (southeast Idaho): (cell) 208-681-3083

Chuck Carpenter (southern Idaho): (cell) 208-539-2082

A NPT trapping operation on private property where ID WS recently verified a wolf-dog depredation, was terminated on 5/24 after several days without observed wolf activity in the area. A wolf was temporarily captured on 5/20, but pulled out of the trap. NPT personnel have offered to hold an informational meeting for the residents of this area if such can be arranged for the week of 5/28 - 6/1.

MT WS confirmed a calf killed by wolves e. of Hamilton in the Bitterroot Valley on Wed. 5/23. The Skalkaho pack is believed responsible as the incident occurred close to where this pack was believed to have denned last year. A depredation occurred on this same ranch last September and 1 wolf was removed at that time. FWP authorized WS to collar 1 wolf and kill 2 wolves and a SOS permit was issued to the ranch manager for 2 wolves.

Ted North (Montana Wildlife Services), captured and collared a male wolf believed to be of the Hog Heaven pack (previously uncollared) on 5/22. This action was conducted in response to a depredation on the Salish Kootenai reservation early this month.

Wildlife Services investigated a probable wolf killed calf in Big Sheep Creek (sw of Dillon) today, 5/24. WS will be scouting the area and trapping/collaring will be attempted if fresh wolf sign is found.

On 5/21/07, MT WS collared a breeding female in the Swan lake Pack. On 5/23/07, MT WS trapped and euthanized 1 wolf from the pack. WS confirmed 2 more wolf-killed calves belonging to the same landowner who previously lost calves to wolves. Control is still ongoing to remove 1 more wolf..

On 5/19/07, an adult grey male wolf was trapped and radio collared in the Taylor Fork drainage in the Gallatin Valley. The wolf is probably a member of the Cougar 2 Pack which is denning in the Taylor Fork this year.

On 5/23/07, MT WS trapped and radio collared a grey adult male wolf (≥ 5 years) from the Hog Heaven Pack on the Flathead Indian Reservation. This pack was involved in a depredation on 5/1/07 and have been observed in close proximity to livestock. Control is complete at this time.

Research

Dave Ausband (Univ. of MT research associate heading up the NPT grant project on testing alternative methods of censusing/monitoring wolves) met with Mack and Holyan on 5/23-24 to program and test GPS radiocollars. Nine of them will be distributed between NPT and IDFG wolf biologists for deployment in 4 study areas in the state this spring/summer.

Information/Education and Law Enforcement

The telephone situation at the new NPT office in McCall still has not been solved. Anyone needing to contact Mack (208-634-9556), Babcock (208-634-9557), or Holyan (208-634-9558) should use the cellular numbers shown here. Faxes can be sent to 208-634-4097. Sorry for the continued inconvenience.

Steve Nadeau gave a presentation to the IDFG Commission on wolf management on May 17. On May 18 and 19, Steve participated in ICL Wild Idaho events and spoke with about 150 people including assisting in two Wolf Walks and talks, as well as participating on a panel discussion regarding what delisting means to Idaho wolves and the public. On May 22, Steve gave a presentation to a couple hundred IDFG employees at In Service Training regarding the future of wolf management after delisting in Idaho. Steve and the wolf program were presented employee of the year award for outstanding management/leadership and coordination by director Cal Groen. Steve wants to thank wolf staff, regional biologists, conservation officers, bureau staff, front desks, leadership, and everyone working on bringing wolves within the fold of big game management in Idaho for making the program a success. It is an award reflective of the hard work of many people. A special thanks to Michael Lucid, Jason Husseman and Carter Niemeyer.

WOLF DELISTING- On May 24, 2007 the Governor of Wyoming announced he had reviewed a proposed Service modification of the July 2003 Wyoming Wolf Management Plan and found "it to be a fair representation of how the contingent wolf plan I outlined to you in my May 18, 2007 letter would be incorporated into the state's regulatory framework for wolves should the bill become operative." The Service believed its modification made Wyoming's wolf management plan consistent with the 2007 wolf bill passed by the Wyoming Legislature and resolved all the issues that resulted in the Service not approving the 2003 Wyoming Plan. The Governor also stated that "it seems wholly appropriate for me to endorse these modifications as being consistent with my May 18, 2007 letter's characterization of Wyoming law- should House Bill 231 become operative. It is therefore appropriate to include this draft plan in your proposed rule to de-list gray wolves in the Northern Rocky Mountains." The Service believes that if approved by the Wyoming Legislature this plan it will provide an adequate regulatory mechanism for wolf management in Wyoming. In addition Legislative approval would allow the more flexible 2005 experimental rule to immediately become effective in Wyoming. The Service intends to modify the NRM delisting proposal to include delisting in all of Wyoming and to re-open the public comment period later this summer. The opportunity to review and comment on the modified delisting proposal and the modified Wyoming plan will be widely publicized. The Service still intends to make a final decision about wolf delisting in the NRM DPS by February 2008.

On 4/21/07, Doug Smith spoke to 2 groups (approx. 200 people) at Wolf Park, Indiana. On 4/23/07, he spoke at NPCA (approx. 100 people) in Minnesota. On 5/15/07, Doug spoke at the Wildlife Film Festival in Missoula, MT. On 5/19/07, he spoke at a YPF Board field trip.

On 5/22/07, Jimenez , Woodruff, and Taylor attended a 2-day drug/handling class given by Terry Kreeger (WYG&F).

On the 22nd, Bangs gave a presentation to about 10 employees of the USFWS Division of Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration in Arlington, Va.

The Service's weekly report can be viewed at <http://westerngraywolf.fws.gov/> . This report is government public property and can be used for any purpose. Please distribute as you see fit.

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