



FWP News

Wolves Relisted in the Northern Rocky Mountains

On July 18, a federal court in Missoula reinstated Endangered Species Act protections for wolves in the Northern Rocky Mountains – they are now reclassified back to **endangered** and wolves across Southern Montana are reclassified to **experimental**. While the new court ruling means federal wildlife officials will once again oversee wolf population management in the Northern Rockies, Montana will retain the authority to manage wolves according to federal regulations for as long as they remain listed.

“We’re disappointed with the ruling because Montana’s wolf population is healthy, growing and firmly established in our state,” said Jeff Hagener, director Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks in Helena. “Montanans have shown great patience and cooperation during wolf recovery and, on Montana’s behalf, FWP is committed to continue its participation in the legal proceedings.”

FWP intervened in the federal lawsuit and also opposed a request from about a dozen groups that sought a preliminary injunction from the federal district court in Missoula where the lawsuit was filed.

Federal regulations are now in effect for as long as they remain listed including:

- ♦ Endangered wolves in northern Montana can not be hazed, harassed, or killed by livestock owners or other private citizens.
- ♦ Experimental wolves in Southern Montana can be hazed or harassed when too close to livestock. Wolves could be killed by livestock owners if seen actively chasing, or attacking livestock or domestic dogs on either public or private land. The incident must be reported to FWP within 24 hours.
- ♦ USDA Wildlife Services agents investigate reports of injured or dead livestock and carry out FWP decisions if wolf predation is confirmed.
- ♦ State and federal officials can employ additional lethal and nonlethal controls of problem wolves in each area.
- ♦ Hunting or trapping of wolves is prohibited.
- ♦ Anyone could kill any wolf in self-defense or to defend the life of another person.

FWP will retain the authority to manage wolves according to the federal regulations for as long as they remain listed and during the litigation. An interagency cooperative agreement with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service grants authority to FWP to implement as much of Montana’s plan as allowed by federal regulations. FWP continues to be the lead agency for wolf monitoring, public outreach, research, and addressing wolf-livestock conflicts FWP and the FWP Commission had taken steps to develop a hunting season and adopt a hunting quota. However, in light of the federal court order, no licenses will be sold and no hunting would occur in the Fall of 2008.

To anonymously report an injured or dead wolf or suspected illegal activity, call: 1-800-TIP-MONT.

Disposition of Quarantine Facility Bison

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks is seeking pre-proposals/letters of interest from agencies and organizations desiring to house or hold bison that have been captured in Montana near Yellowstone National Park and have been held in a quarantine facility. Part of a Bison Quarantine Feasibility Study, the animals are being called “clean” of disease.

The primary goal of the bison quarantine feasibility study is to develop quarantine procedures, using the best available science and adaptive research strategies, that would allow bison from YNP to be accepted as free of brucellosis and suitable for the establishment of new public and Native American bison herds or to augment existing public and tribal herds in North America. Completion of the study also might provide insight to the feasibility of quarantine protocols and the reintroduction of bison to large grassland systems as one component of a broader bison conservation strategy.

There is an immediate need to place up to 42 bison (21 cows, 15-17 calves, and 4 bulls), with expectation of another 15-20 calves in 2009 from the pregnant cows.

Applicants are requested to submit a pre-proposal/letter of interest by September 1, 2008 to Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Wildlife Division, P.O. Box 200701, Helena, MT 59620

Pre-proposals will be evaluated by September 30, 2008. Applicants whose pre-proposals are selected for further consideration will be asked to develop a full proposal describing in more detail how they would meet the established criteria. Once a final selection is made, MFWP will complete an Environmental Assessment of the proposal. If, based on the assessment, the decision is to proceed, and if MFWP Commission approves, then bison could be translocated by February 28, 2009.

Pre-proposals should clearly articulate the applicant's vision for bison conservation, and how these quarantine bison fit within that vision. Options might include, but are not limited to: housing bison for later distribution to other restoration efforts or housing bison for incorporation into a free-ranging bison herd.

For the full list of criteria or more information contact: Ken McDonald, Wildlife Division Administrator, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks at 406-444-5645 or kmcdonald@mt.gov.

FWP Seeking *Public Comment* on Exotic Wildlife

The Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Commission is seeking public comment on additions and changes to the state's classification of exotic wildlife.

Birds, including 15 non-native crane and rail species and the Taita Falcon, found in dry country in Eastern and Central Africa would be added to the list of non-native controlled species allowed to be imported into the state for personnel possession with a controlled species permit.

The small spotted genet, a mammal from Africa, would be added to the prohibited species list.

Public comment is also being sought on a proposal for rescue facilities to temporarily house prohibited species until the animals can be relocated. The FWP Commission is required by law to classify exotic species into controlled, non-controlled or prohibited categories and to manage any associated permitting.

The import, possession and sale of exotic species is regulated in order to minimize the potential health and safety risks that these species may present to humans, wildlife, livestock and agriculture. A full list of classified exotic species is available at FWP's web site at fwp.mt.gov under Exotic Species. Exotic species not yet classified cannot be imported into Montana. Forms to petition for classification of an exotic species are available by calling 406-444-2449.

All animals imported into the state also require a Certificate of Veterinary Inspection from an accredited veterinarian and an import permit from the Montana Department of Livestock.

Public comment on the proposed rule changes may be made until Aug. 29 by email to: fwpexotics@mt.gov ; or by mail to: Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Attn: Beth Giddings, P.O. Box 200701, Helena, Mt. 59620.

A public meeting will be held Aug. 21 at 6 p.m. at the FWP Headquarters Building, 1420 East Sixth Ave., in Helena.

State acquires 5,000 acres near Pompeys Pillar

Pompeys Pillar – The acquisition of the Circle R River Ranch, about 30 miles east of Billings along the Yellowstone River, has been negotiated by FWP for \$5.2 million, nearly \$1 million less than its listed price. .

The property, nearly 4,000 acres, will become the first park to be established as a result of Governor Schweitzer's \$10 million Access Montana Initiative fund created in 2007. Public ownership of the deeded property will provide public access to an additional nearly 5,000 acres of state and federal lands. Approximately, \$266,000 of the fund was needed to help the project come to fruition.

The Access fund will additionally help purchase three to four other new state parks and as many as 30 smaller public fishing access sites across Montana.

As many as 50 campsites will be available for public use at the properties which will be managed for hunting and fishing access. Public use may begin as early as Sept. 1.

At a celebration event for the purchase, Schweitzer said, "We've got everything from catfish to elk here." "The legacy," said the Governor, "is about the families in the future. Families in the future of Montana are going to want to hunt and camp and fish, much the same way as we do today. And today we say that we are protecting their future."

However, Governor Schweitzer also warned that a tight budget could impact the future of the Access program at the 2009 legislative session.