

**MONTANA WOLF PLANNING: PROCESS, PROGRESS...MORE PROCESS
AND MORE PROGRESS...**

THERE IS A LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL!^{TWS}

Carolyn A. Sime
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
490 N. Meridian Rd. Kalispell, MT 59901

Former Governor Racicot appointed the Montana Wolf Management Advisory Council in April 2000 by to advise Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks (FWP) as it prepares a management plan for the gray wolf (*Canis lupus*) upon federal delisting. The Council was a diverse group, representing the interests of conservationists, hunters, landowners, livestock producers, outfitters, educators, and others. Governor Martz directed FWP to use the work of the Council to frame the "Montana Wolf Conservation and Management Planning Document." While the planning document reflected what a state wolf management plan could be, FWP still needed to explore various alternatives before adopting a management plan in full compliance with the legal requirements of the Montana Environmental Policy Act. Using this document as a basis for discussion, FWP opened the "scoping" comment period for its wolf management environmental impact statement (EIS) in February 2002. FWP collected about 6700 individual comments. Because wolf recovery and eventual state management are issues of such great significance to Montana, Governor Martz reappointed the original Wolf Management Advisory Council. FWP consulted with the Council prior to finalizing the EIS alternatives. Ultimately, FWP crafted five alternatives that ranged from little to no management to aggressive management. The Council's work will be presented as one of the alternatives. FWP's Wolf Conservation and Management Draft EIS will be released in late winter, 2003. FWP will accept public comments on its draft EIS at a series of community work sessions, via written letters, or email. FWP expects to complete the EIS in summer, 2003. More information can be found at www.fwp.state.mt.us.