

Northwest Colorado Black-footed Ferret Recovery Program



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Memorandum

Date: April 21, 2008

To: Participants and Interested Parties

From: Brian Holmes, BLM – White River Field Office

Subject: Spring 2008 Black-footed Ferret Spotlighting Results, Wolf Creek, Colorado

The 2008 spring spotlight survey for black-footed ferrets in the Wolf Creek Management Area (WCMA) in northwest Colorado was held during the nights of April 14 – 17. A total of 12 people participated in the survey over four consecutive nights. Our survey focused on two colonies in the eastern portion of the WCMA which have historically had the highest ferret survival and kit production. The two colonies surveyed were the “Hay Barn Colony” (2,259 acres) and “Colony 25” (110 acres). A limited number of personnel available for the survey prohibited us from surveying any other colonies. An approximately equal combination of spotlighting from vehicles and from foot was employed, resulting in a total of 122 hours of search effort. Many thanks go out to all those that participated; without volunteers we would not be able to accomplish these surveys.

Surveyors identified 10 individual ferrets (Table 1), some on multiple occasions. An average of ~12 hours of survey time was required for each unique ferret observation. The average survey time required for each unique ferret observation was 12 hours during the spring 2007 survey and 18 hours during spring 2006. Ferrets were distributed throughout the two colonies surveyed, with nine ferrets located on Hay Barn Colony and one ferret located on Colony 25. While search effort was allocated approximately equally between searching from foot and searching from vehicles, most (7/10) observations came from vehicles, highlighting the greater efficiency of this technique. Four of the 10 ferrets observed during this survey were wild-born animals, including the first documented wild-born ferret in the WCMA, a female from 2005. In addition to the four observed during this survey, only two other wild-born ferrets have been documented in the WCMA to date - one from 2006 and one from 2007. Additional survey time is likely needed to adequately cover foot-based spotlight routes in Hay Barn Colony. Even though much of the area away from roads was covered multiple times per night over four consecutive nights, it was not until the final night that two ferrets were observed in these areas. For comparison, a similar survey effort (106 hours) completed in spring 2007 located nine

individual ferrets, but two more were subsequently found during more intensive surveys in the summer on Hay Barn Colony.

The 2008 post-breeding season spotlight survey will be held in the WCMA from August 13 – 22. During this time, we will capture unmarked, wild-born ferrets as well as survey additional areas of good habitat throughout the reintroduction area. Intense spotlight surveys will also be conducted continuously from late July to early October as part of an ongoing study of ferret resource selection within white-tailed prairie dog habitat.

Table 1. Black-footed ferrets observed during spotlight surveys in the Wolf Creek Management Area, Colorado – April 14 to 18, 2008.

Studbook #	Sex	Origin
4854	F	Captive - 2005 Release
4875	M	Captive - 2005 Release
5179	M	Captive - 2006 Release
5763	F	Captive - 2007 Release
5802	F	Captive - 2007 Release
5814	M	Captive - 2007 Release
WC05-01	F	Wild Born - 2005
WC06-02	F	Wild Born - 2006
WC07-02	M	Wild Born - 2007
WC07-03	F	Wild Born - 2007