

Lunch + Legislation #10: What's Up With...

... Wolves in Legislatures, Agencies and Courts



Monday August 2, 12pm Eastern, via Facebook Live



**Attorneys
for Animals**

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF ANIMAL ADVOCACY

AFA's Role

MI Wolf Management Advisory Council Member

- Selected to represent animal advocacy interests
- 1 of 6 appointed by DNR
- Makes non-binding recommendations
- 1st meeting Wed. Aug. 4, 8:30A to 12:30P, Ishpeming, MI (*no remote participation*)
- Written comments accepted; email dnr-wmac@michigan.gov
- ***AFA to host debrief this month with Q&A, next steps, actions you can take: watch social media for time, details***



[WMAC page on DNR website has additional information](#)



**Attorneys
for Animals**

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF ANIMAL ADVOCACY

← ACT: Protect Michigan Wolves ...



Gray wolf photo courtesy of USFWS

Act: Protect Michigan Wolves

The Michigan Senate is pressuring state wildlife managers to open up a hunting season on gray wolves after a last-minute Trump administration action removing the animals from the federal Endangered Species Act. Your help is needed to urge the Michigan Natural Resources Commission (NRC) to remain committed to updating the Michigan Wolf Management Plan (MWMP) and asking Michigan citizens their views before making any significant wolf management changes.

Sierra Club, along with other groups, have sued to reverse the federal de-listing of wolves. However, in the meantime states with wolves have the authority to manage them, including holding wolf hunts. In Michigan decisions on which species can be hunted as well as hunting seasons are made by [the NRC](#).

Wisconsin held a wolf hunt, beginning on Feb. 22, with a goal of killing 118 wolves. By 5 p.m. two days later, 250 wolves had been killed. That same day, a Michigan Senate committee passed a resolution calling on the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the NRC to hold a hunt in Michigan this winter.

The DNR has resisted calls for an immediate hunt. They want to update the Wolf Management Plan, which dates from 2013, before even considering a hunt. The DNR also wants to do public opinion research to better gauge how Michigan residents feel about wolf hunting.

Sierra Club strongly supports this position, and we call on the NRC to stand firm, consult with Michigan tribes and consider state residents' views when they update the MWMP.

Send a message today to the Michigan Natural Resources Commission urging them to resist the political pressure to schedule a hunting season for wolves.

Tell the Michigan NRC: Resist Political Pressure to Schedule a Wolf Hunt

Topical, Political, Emotional, Long-Standing, *Complicated*



Federal management restricts “taking” of wolves, administered by USFWS (part of Department of Interior)

State management includes hunting, subject to individual wildlife agency decisions, sometimes with input of advisory council ... and other interests

“Executive Summary”: Will Wolves Be
***Protected under federal Endangered Species Act**
or
***“Delisted” and returned to state management**
Current status: state management



Source:
<http://www.ironwoodwolves.com/wolves-in-north-america.html> Note: map enlarged to focus on US



US Fish & Wildlife Service

- 1974: Wolves 1st protected under ESA
- Career scientists, administrators + political (administration appointees)
- Responsible for initiating “de-listing” – via complex, lengthy administrative process
- Several attempts to de-list overturned by courts in past 2 decades; BUT
 - 2017: gray wolves ID, MT, WY de-listed
 - Jan. 2021: final rule de-listing gray wolves in lower 48 states, impacting Western Great Lakes population (MI, WI, MN) (court challenge pending)



History of gray wolves in lower 48:
<https://wolf.org/gray-wolf-timeline/>

US Congress

- Bills to remove gray wolves permanently from Endangered Species Act protection introduced in 2015, 2016, 2017, 2019
- Current bill [H.R. 286.](#), introduced Jan. 12, 2021 (currently has 8 co-sponsors; AFA opposes!)
- Wolf advocates in Congress: e.g. 85 signed letter dated July 29, 2021, urging Interior Secretary Haaland to reverse decision and re-list as threatened



Courts

- Federal courts have overturned delisting decisions several times over the years, generally holding that USFWS did not apply the proper standard or procedure in its decision
- Cases generally brought by animal welfare, environmental organizations
- These decisions have the impact of shutting down wolf hunts (i.e., management taken away from states)
- *Wolf hunt proponents also use the courts*



- Obviously have crucial role in determining de-listing decisions (pro and con)
- Many oppose; for example:
 - 2019, during most recent de-listing process, 5 scientists commissioned by USFWS, expressed concern with USFWS's de-listing decision in [245-page peer-reviewed study](#)
 - May 2021 letter from 100+ scientists urging current Administration to restore ESA protections

Scientists



Stakeholders include:

- **State wildlife agency, governing body (in MI, DNR and NRC)**
- **Legislature**
- **Governor**
- **Attorney General**
- **Advisory Councils (in MI, Wolf Management Advisory Council)**
- **NGOs**
- **Voters**
- **Individual Advocates**

State Management



- Feb. 2021 wolf hunt after lawsuit (during breeding season)
- Quota of 119 wolves to be killed, but 2,400 hunting tags issued
- In 63 hours, 218 wolves were killed; hunt ended early
- [July 2021 study](#) estimates about 1/3 decline in population from Apr. 2020 to Apr. 2021 despite officials' claim that purpose of hunt was to *maintain* population
- Fall 2021 hunt just announced with 130 wolves targeted
- *Note:* WI law mandates hunt, has longer season than MI, MN

State Management: Case #1 WI



- State management for several years, but recent escalation
- Recent actions include newly signed law
 - allows choke-hold snares; extends hunting, trapping further into breeding season; no limit on number killed
 - Sets up bounty system
- 2021: Governor violated state regs in killing Yellowstone wolf without required training

State Management: Case #2 MT



- WMAC updating plan, DNR estimates approx. spring 2022 completion date
- Push among some legislators for wolf hunt in 2021; advocated for de-listing or hunt for many years
- NRC likely will support hunt
- History: hunt in 2013 before court overturned delisting; voters opposed hunt in 2014
- Pits Upper against Lower Peninsula
- Much interest among NGOs, wolf advocates ... and wolf hunting proponents
- AG joined brief in lawsuit seeking to overturn delisting (July 2021)

State Management: Case #3 MI





Thank you!

- **WMAC Orientation Meeting Debrief: Watch our social media for details**
- PPT available here: <https://www.attorneysforanimals.org/lunch-legislation/>
- Comments, questions, ideas for future episodes? Email info@attorneysforanimals.org, or message us on Facebook
- Missed an episode? [Check out our library](#)
- ***Next Lunch + Legislation: Monday, Sep. 13, noon NOTE DATE CHANGE (due to Labor Day holiday)***



**Attorneys
for Animals**

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF ANIMAL ADVOCACY