

PROTECT MICHIGAN'S WOLVES

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: If the wolf has been delisted from the Endangered Species List, does that mean the population is recovered and ready for a sport hunting season?

A: No – after being driven to the brink of extinction, the gray wolf in Michigan has been under full legal protection for nearly 50 years, and on the federal Endangered Species List for nearly 40 years. Although wolf populations have been slowly recovering in the last four decades, there are still fewer than 700 wolves in the entire state, and wolves currently only occupy 5% of their historic range. Opening a hunting season on wolves so soon is premature and could be disastrous to their fragile population.

Q: Do wolves attack and kill livestock and pets, requiring a hunt to reduce these conflicts?

A: Though cases of wolves killing livestock are rare (fewer than 8% of ranches have experienced depredation¹), our wolf management policy gives property owners the legal authority to protect their livestock and dogs. Opening a sport hunting season on wolves is unnecessary because there is already a way to deal with wolves that kill livestock or dogs. Allowing the killing of the animals just for sport will accomplish nothing. A combination of state and private funding compensates ranchers for any livestock losses from wolves. Allowing a wolf hunt will do nothing to solve conflicts between property owners and wolves.

Q: Do people eat wolves?

A: No – wolves would be hunted only for trophies, and it means killing rare animals for no good purpose. Wolf hunting could mean allowing the same extreme practices that nearly wiped out this majestic species: painful steel-jawed leghold traps, the use of packs of dogs to chase down and kill wolves, shooting them point-blank over piles of bait, and aerial gunning where shooters aim from aircraft.

Q: Are wolves dangerous to human safety?

A: There has never been a recorded wolf attack on a human in Michigan. Wolves are afraid of people and do all they can to avoid them. Although wolves are predators, they pose no threat to public safety. An irrational fear of wolves should not drive the trophy hunting of these majestic creatures.

Q: Are wolves killing too many deer, and making it difficult for hunters to find deer to put meat on the table?

A: No. Wolves are an essential part of Michigan's ecosystem. The percentage of hunters harvesting deer in 2011 was actually higher than the percentage in both 2010 and 2009. On November 16, 2012 the Michigan DNR's "White-Tailed Deer" website stated, "check station numbers across the U.P. are above last year and some areas are double what they were last year indicating a very positive start to the season for many hunters."² It's important to have a healthy wolf population because they help to control the deer population. Wolves also help farmers and others who worry about too many deer. Without wolves in Michigan, the deer population could explode. Deer overpopulation can spread Lyme disease and cause damage to crops.



¹<http://www.petoskeynews.com/news/featured/pnr-federal-grants-for-nonlethal-wolf-controls-have-expired-20121207,0,3164340.story>

²<http://deer.fw.msu.edu/>



Q: Would allowing a wolf hunt help our economy?

A: Michigan's wolves are much more valuable to the economy through tourism opportunities. Michigan residents and out-of-staters travel to the Upper Peninsula to see wolves, moose, and other wildlife. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's 2011 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation, wildlife watchers in Michigan (both resident and non-resident) outnumber people hunting in the state by 6 to 1.³ Continuing tourism opportunities to view wolves is far more lucrative and sustainable than a hunting season on wolves, which could impose a negative public perception on Michigan's wildlife management. In their final report to the DNR's director, the Michigan Wolf Management Roundtable even advised against reducing wolf abundance at large geographic scales, because it could "unacceptably restrict positive interactions desired by the public."⁴

Q: How do Michigan's Indian Tribes feel about opening a wolf hunt?

A: Michigan's Indian Tribes oppose the hunting of wolves. They believe the wolf is a sacred animal, and it figures prominently in their history and their connection to the land. The wolf returning and gaining strength has been symbolic and important to Indian tribes in the Upper Peninsula because it shows that with respect and appreciation all living things can regain strength.

Q: Will a wolf hunt impact the Upper Peninsula's ecosystem?

A: Wolves play a significant role in the Upper Peninsula ecosystem, and it is important to have natural predators like wolves because they help control deer and other species from becoming overpopulated. Allowing a wolf hunt could result in a significant negative impact on Michigan's ecosystem.

Q: Why is a hunt being considered so soon after wolves have been delisted?

A: No species has been removed from the endangered list at such a low population level and then immediately hunted. The legislation to allow wolf hunting was rushed. Although it was in front of legislators for months, it was only brought up after the election with just a few weeks left in the year. The legislature decided to debate the issue during the holiday season and vote on it hoping the public was not paying attention. That is wrong. A wolf hunt is too important to leave to politicians trying to serve special interests.

Q: Does sound science support the opening of a wolf hunting season?

A: No – history has demonstrated that wolves can be severely impacted by predator control. Because people do not eat wolves and don't use the animal in any way, wolves would be hunted only for trophies –meaning that these rare animals would be killed for no good purpose. Allowing wolf hunting could mean especially inhumane and unfair practices, such as painful steel-jawed leghold traps, hunting over bait, aerial gunning from helicopters, and even using packs of dogs to chase down and kill wolves. This not science-based wildlife management – it's cruel and unsporting, and just pointless trophy hunting. The Wolf Management Roundtable group also agreed in its final report that a quota hunt was not a scientifically sound method of addressing wolf management. Wolves provide many ecological benefits to the ecosystem by preventing the overpopulation of deer and other wildlife, which can assist in curbing the spread of deadly diseases like Chronic Wasting Disease.

³U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2012. *2011 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation: State Overview*. U.S. Department of the Interior. Retrieved from: <http://digitalmedia.fws.gov/cdm/ref/collection/document/id/858>

⁴Peyton et al.(2006). *Report of the Michigan Wolf Management Roundtable to the Director of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources*. Retrieved from http://www.michigan.gov/documents/dnr/Final_Roundtable_Report_178862_7.pdf.