

From: Dave Mech
To: Mason, Russ (DNR)
Subject: Special Session of the Michigan Natural Resources Commission

Russ,

I received your proposed wolf hunting regulations and am impressed with how well thought out they seem to be.

I note that the concerns of the Wolf Management Advisory Council, (which includes representatives of conservation, hunting, agriculture, tribal, and animal advocacy groups) were considered in devising your regulations, and that your intent is to “minimize the impact” to the UP wolf population and to target “packs that have a history of conflicts.”

I also note that you have had many nuisance complaints about wolves in all three of your proposed management zones and have tried various non-lethal and lethal methods to deal with them, yet the complaints persist. With the number of wolves you have documented, your proposed public harvest levels of 20% seem properly conservative for a first-year harvest goal.

I should point out here what I believe is an interpretive error on p. 4. Your wolf-population estimates, and those of other states, are necessarily minimums. Given that, I do not think it is logical mathematically to conclude from your 2011 and 2013 figures, that the population has declined. For example, if you had a minimum of 687 wolves in 2011, you could have had as many as 700 or 750 or more. If that is true, then it is also true that a minimum of 658 in 2013 means you could have had 700, or 750 or even 800 in 2013. Thus you cannot deduce anything more from the figures than that each year you had these minimum number of wolves.

Nevertheless, from both a wildlife management and a public relations perspective, your wolf hunting regulations seem to be appropriate.

As for Option 1 or 2, that is, of course, a logistical issue and not a biological one. The same goes for the method of take and all the other regulations. Biologically the only part of your proposed regulation that matters is the quota, and that seems appropriate.

Your intent to collect biological data and specimens from harvested wolves will add to other basic information you have and is to be commended. One additional and relatively easy piece of data you might want to consider collecting from each wolf is information about the epiphyseal closure or growth plate on the front ankle. If this growth plate (about 3-5mm wide) is red and apparent, the animal is a young-of-the-year. If not, it is older than 1 year. Although you will obtain the same information from tooth sectioning, it usually takes many months to receive the ages from the aging company, whereas you would have the young-of-year: > 1-yr old ratio almost immediately after the season closes.

Some minor issues I should mention include the following:

p. 4 – statements in the last and the next-to-last paragraph seem to conflict. In the last paragraph, it states “one wolf removed,” whereas in the previous paragraph, it is 17.

p. 6 – A major heading “Regulations for All Management Units”, just before “Wolf Season Dates” would make it clearer that everything below applies to all 3 units rather than just to unit C.

p. 8 – Similarly just before “Hunting Devices”, a major heading “Regulations Applying to Either Option” would make clear that these regs apply not to just Option 2.

p. 8, next-to-last paragraph – many wolves can break out of No. 3 traps. No. 4 are preferred by most trappers, including biologists.

In my opinion your proposed wolf hunting regulations also fully comply with the Manifesto on Wolf Conservation approved by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (<http://wolfspecialistgroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/04/WolfManifesto.pdf>).

The opinions expressed above are my own and do not necessarily reflect the official views of the agencies with which I am associated.

L. David Mech

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