



GRETCHEN WHITMER  
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN  
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES  
LANSING



DANIEL EICHINGER  
DIRECTOR

November 10, 2022

The Honorable Jon Bumstead, Chair  
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on  
Natural Resources and Environment,  
Great Lakes and Energy  
P.O. Box 30036  
Lansing, Michigan 48909-7536

The Honorable Sue Allor, Chair  
House Appropriations Subcommittee on  
Agriculture and Rural Development and  
Natural Resources  
P.O. Box 30014  
Lansing, Michigan 48909-7514

The Honorable Ed McBroom, Chair  
Senate Committee on Natural Resources  
P.O. Box 30036  
Lansing, Michigan 48909-7536

The Honorable Gary Howell, Chair  
House Committee on Natural Resources  
and Outdoor Recreation  
P.O. Box 30014  
Lansing, Michigan 48909-7514

Mr. Tom Baird, Chair  
Natural Resources Commission  
P.O. Box 837  
Elk Rapids, Michigan 49629-0837

Dear Senators Bumstead and McBroom, Representatives Allor and Howell, and Chair Baird:

In compliance with Section 43540e(8), PA 451 of 1994, the Wolf Management Advisory Council (Council) is required to provide an annual report on recommendations concerning wolf management in Michigan. On March 11, 2021, Director Eichinger reconvened the Council and appointed six members. Council members include Jared Duquette, DNR Wildlife Division Chief, who is the DNR Director's designee and Council chairman; Miles Falck, representing tribal governments; Beatrice Friedlander, representing animal advocacy organizations; Richard Pershinske, representing agricultural interests; Mike Thorman, representing hunting and fishing organizations; and Amy Trotter, Executive Director of Michigan United Conservation Clubs, representing conservation organizations. The Council met 16 times between August 2021 and July 2022. The Council produced a list of 35 non-binding recommendations to the Legislature, Natural Resources Commission, and DNR regarding Michigan Wolf Management Plan updates or other aspects of wolf management. Please find the attached *Michigan Wolf Management Advisory Council Recommendations* and *Michigan Wolf Management Advisory Council Minority Reports*.

The legal status of wolves at the federal and state levels has changed several times, which impacts the ability of the DNR to manage wolves. In December 2014, a federal court decision returned wolves in the western Great Lakes Distinct Population Segment to the Federal List of Threatened and Endangered Species. Wolves in much of the lower 48 states, including Michigan, were removed from the Federal Endangered Species List in January 2021, only to be returned to the list in February 2022 due to a federal court decision that vacated a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service order. The Council has suspended meeting due to the federal listing of wolves as endangered, which supersedes state management authority.

November 10, 2022

If you have questions regarding this information, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Erik Eklund". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Erik" and last name "Eklund" clearly distinguishable.

Erik Eklund, Chief  
Finance and Operations  
517-284-5958

Attachments

cc: Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Natural Resources and Environment,  
Great Lakes and Energy Members  
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture and Rural Development and  
Natural Resources Members  
Senate Committee on Natural Resources Members  
House Committee on Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Members  
Natural Resources Commission Members  
Mr. Christopher Semrinec, Senate Fiscal Agency  
Mr. Austin Scott, House Fiscal Agency  
Mr. Chris Harkins, State Budget Director, Department of Technology, Management  
and Budget (DTMB)  
Mr. Jacques McNeely, DTMB  
Mr. Ryan Doll, DTMB  
Mr. Zach Hendrix, DTMB  
Mr. Daniel Eichinger, Director, DNR  
Ms. Shannon Lott, Natural Resources Deputy, DNR  
Mr. Trevor VanDyke, Legislative and Legal Affairs, DNR  
Mr. Taylor Ridderbusch, Legislative Liaison, DNR

# Michigan Wolf Management Advisory Council Recommendations

Michigan Wolf Management Advisory Council

2021-2022

## Meeting Motions Carried

1. To recommend the Department investigate and incorporate how to integrate the use of volunteers in assessing the wolf population.
2. To recommend the Department pursue a third-party evaluation of the methodology of the wolf survey on a regular basis.
3. To recommend the Department establish a dedicated 24-hour phone number for reporting human/wolf encounters/activity in addition to existing methods.
4. To recommend the Department prioritize working with partners (defined in 6.1.1 as “e.g., other agencies, tribes, and private organizations”), and engaging additional partners who represent a full range of perspectives on wolves.
5. To recommend the Department focus more information and education on positive interactions with wolves with both hunters and non-hunters.
6. To recommend the Department prioritize providing “unbiased accurate” information and dispelling rumors or inaccurate information, particularly important with the proliferation of misconceptions about wolves, and prioritize the evaluation of the effectiveness of the wolf-based information and education program.
7. To recommend the Department add to Section 6.2 - prioritize and expand its science-based research and literature review and regularly communicate the results to the public based on the following principles: actively seek research and funding partners who represent the full range of perspectives on wolves and wolf management.
8. To recommend the Department add to Section 6.2 - prioritize and expand its science-based research and literature review and regularly communicate the results to the public based on the following principles: increase cooperative working relationships with federally recognized Tribes.
9. To recommend the Department add to Section 6.2 – prioritize and expand its science-based research and literature review and regularly communicate the results to the public based on the following principles: address the impact and effects of climate change on wolves.
10. To recommend the Department add to Section 6.2 – prioritize and expand its science-based research and literature review and regularly communicate the results to the

public based on the following principles: examine effective non-lethal measures to address conflicts.

11. To recommend the Department add to Section 6.2 – prioritize science-based research and literature review that examines:
  - How to maintain prey populations required to provide for sustainable human uses and a viable wolf population.
  - Best management practices for public reporting of wolf interactions to fulfill the DNR's obligation to use best available science.
  - Adaptive behavioral shifts and stress-related mortality of deer due to predators and other influences.
  - The changing diet of wolves across seasons and the proportional impact of wolves on their prey (both game and nongame).
  - Whether wolves may limit diseases in ungulates.
12. To recommend the Department manages state land for “no net loss” of aspen and pursues partnerships to implement this strategy on all other lands.
13. To recommend the Department prioritize the cooperation with federal, state, and Tribal agencies and private landowners to identify and protect wolf habitat linkage zones, as currently stated in Section 6.5.2, Action 1.
14. To recommend the Department prioritize Section 6.3.3, Action 5, which states “recommend modification of the law, at the state level, to make penalties for illegally killing a wolf commensurate with other highly valued species with similar legal status (endangered, threatened, game, or protected animals).”
15. To recommend the Department incorporate wolf education materials into the hunter safety program.
16. To recommend the Department contact the prosecuting attorney association of Michigan to initiate a conversation about the importance of all fish and wildlife regulations, including the protection of wolves and hunter harassments laws.
17. To recommend the Department prepare a recommendation for a wolf hunting and trapping season across the UP.
18. To recommend Department prioritize working with the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) and the legislature to develop, implement, and enforce amendments to the Bodies of Dead Animals Act, MCL 287.651 et seq with the goal to prevent predator visitation to carcass dumps and consequent conflicts.
19. To recommend to the legislature that they ensure adequate appropriation of general funds for livestock compensation.

20. To recommend the Department prioritize working with MDARD and the legislature to develop and implement incentives for livestock producers to adopt practices to minimize conflicts with wolves.
21. To recommend the Department develop recommendations for voluntary methods of bearbaiting, including bait barrels, to minimize wolf visitation to bait sites.
22. To recommend the development of a rapid public awareness system for verified depredation events, in addition to current information sharing.
23. To recommend the Department request the legislature provide the Department with adequate general funding to staff, research, and implement non-lethal methods to minimize the risk of human-wolf conflicts.
24. To recommend the Department work with the legislature to amend Public Act 487 of 2012, regarding indemnification for missing animals, to require that the “history of losses” be limited to no more than three years prior to the filing of the current claim.
25. To recommend the Department be transparent in all updates and implementation of the Plan citing the evidence to support each update.
26. To recommend the Department prioritize facilitating positive wolf-human interactions by making use of appropriate communication channels.
27. To recommend the Department commission a public survey to examine the impact of wolves on natural resources based (both consumptive and non-consumptive) tourism and recreation activities in Michigan.
28. To recommend the Department utilize the data from the attitudes survey and other data to inform agency reactions to increase public tolerance for wolves.
29. To recommend the legislature provide the Department with adequate general funding to implement, evaluate, and refine a wolf-based public information and education program.
30. To recommend the Department explore the expansion of wolf-related ecotourism opportunities using best practices from other states and from the literature.
31. To recommend the updated Plan take into account differing value systems and attitudes regarding wolves, for example, the finding of a 2019 study, America’s Wildlife Values, supported by federal and state wildlife agencies and academic/research institutions.
32. To recommend the Department incorporate relatable and relative risk education such as comparison to other wildlife species in the implementation of action 6.9.1(2).
33. To recommend the Department prioritize working with the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) and the legislature to amend the Large Carnivore Act, MCL 287.1101 et seq., PA 274 of 2000, <http://legislature.mi.gov/doc.aspx?mcl-Act-274-of-2000> to add wolves of a species that

are native or non-native to this state, whether wild or captive-bred, including a hybrid cross with such a wolf, to the definition of "Large Carnivore".

34. To recommend the Department prioritize working with MDARD to coordinate enforcement of the Large Carnivore Act with regard to Michigan native species.
35. To recommend the legislature provide adequate general funding to support a full-time wolf coordinator position and/or hire an outreach coordinator to address wolf issues.

# Michigan Wolf Management Advisory Council Minority Reports

Michigan Wolf Management Advisory Council

Meeting Motions Carried – Minority Opinion

## **Motion Number: 21**

**Motion Language:** Council Member Thorman made a motion to recommend to the Department to develop recommendations for voluntary methods of bearbaiting, including bait barrels, to minimize wolf visitation to bait sites. The motion was supported by Council Member Falck. The motion passed. 5 yeas (Duquette, Falck, Pershinske, Trotter, Thorman) 1 nay (Friedlander)

### **Minority Vote Members:**

**Name:** Friedlander

**Minority Opinion:** The motion gives approval to the use of bait barrels, which should continue to be prohibited, after a 2-year trial period (2019-20) where they were allowed on DNR-managed lands; they usually contain grain which isn't a traditional attractant for wolves. The main issue here is bear baiting because the bait allowed does in fact attract wolves. These regulations must be evaluated to reduce wolf visitation.

## **Motion Number: 10**

**Motion Language:** Council Member Friedlander made a motion supported by Council Member Falck to add to Section 6.2 - Introductory – WMAC recommends that the DNR prioritize and expand its science-based research and literature review and regularly communicate the results to the public based on the following principles: use innovative and effective non-lethal measures to address conflicts. Council Member Trotter made a motion to amend the motion to – examine effective non-lethal measures to address conflicts. The amendment was supported by Council Member Pershinske. The amendment to the motion passed. 4 yeas (Kennedy, Pershinske, Thorman, Trotter), 2 nays (Falck, Friedlander).

### **Minority Vote Members:**

**Name:** Friedlander

**Minority Opinion:** The original motion recommended that the DNR “use innovative and effective non-lethal measures to address conflicts.” The motion that passed recommends only that the department “examine effective non-lethal measures to address conflicts.”

Sec. 6.10.3 of the Plan says: “this strategy places a high priority on developing, evaluating, and applying non-lethal management methods to reduce depredation problems.” (page 58 of 101); and “To the extent non-lethal methods are effective at eliminative or minimizing depredation

problems, lethal control of wolves will not be necessary.” (page 59 of 101), [https://www.michigan.gov/-/media/Project/Websites/dnr/Documents/WLD/Mgt/Wolf/wolf\\_management\\_plan.pdf?rev=3c38cb057cdf4cee9edcdb89b66eee5f](https://www.michigan.gov/-/media/Project/Websites/dnr/Documents/WLD/Mgt/Wolf/wolf_management_plan.pdf?rev=3c38cb057cdf4cee9edcdb89b66eee5f))

The motion that passed waters down this strategy.

**Motion Number: 16**

**Motion Language:** Chair Kennedy made a motion to recommend the Department contact the prosecuting attorney association of Michigan to initiate a conversation about the importance of all fish and wildlife regulations, including the protection of wolves. The motion was seconded by Council Member Thorman. Chair Kennedy called for a vote on the motion to recommend the Department contact the prosecuting attorney association of Michigan to initiate a conversation about the importance of all fish and wildlife regulations, including the protection of wolves and hunter harassment. The motion passed 5 Yea (Falck, Kennedy, Pershinske, Thorman, Trotter) - 1 Abstained (Friedlander). An amendment was requested to add “laws to hunter harassment” which was passed unanimously. Chair Kennedy called for a vote on the amended motion to recommend the Department contact the prosecuting attorney association of Michigan to initiate a conversation about the importance of all fish and wildlife regulations, including the protection of wolves and hunter harassment laws. The amended motion passed 5 yeas (Falck, Kennedy, Pershinske, Thorman, Trotter), 1 abstained (Friedlander).

**Minority Vote Members:**

**Name:** Friedlander

**Minority Opinion:** The original motion addresses a valid point: namely, that prosecutors should have a baseline of information about hunting and fishing regulations, because the Council received information that the enforcement varied by county. As we are the Wolf Management Advisory Council, it is appropriate that any recommendation specify wolves. The insertion of the hunter harassment law to the motion was without any factual basis and unrelated to the work of the Council. Michigan already has hunter harassment laws which prosecutors should be aware of ([http://www.legislature.mi.gov/\(S\(lavo25tncrtovy35oi4t50br\)\)/documents/mcl/pdf/mcl-324-40112.pdf](http://www.legislature.mi.gov/(S(lavo25tncrtovy35oi4t50br))/documents/mcl/pdf/mcl-324-40112.pdf)).

**Motion Number: 2**

**Motion Language:** Council Member Trotter made a motion supported by Council Member Pershinske to recommend to the DNR pursue a third-party evaluation of the methodology of the wolf survey on a regular basis. The motion passed 3 yeas (Thorman, Trotter, Pershinske), 1 nay (Friedlander), 1 abstain (Kennedy), 1 absent (Falck).

**Minority Vote Members:**

**Name:** Friedlander

**Minority Opinion:** This is a procedural recommendation and outside the purview of the WMAC.

The methodology used in the survey was published in a peer reviewed journal (Hammill, Lederle, Beyer and Drummer); the DNR is continually looking for ways to improve its methods.

The department performs a blind double check with Michigan Technological University; in the past, it has done multiple blind double checks internally over the years to check accuracy of individual trackers.

In the next few years, the department will evaluate two other methods of estimating the wolf population using occupancy models. One will use a similar track survey using a grid approach and the other will involve using trail cameras. In 2024 all three methods of estimating the wolf populations (current track survey, grid track survey and trail cameras) will be evaluated.

**Motion Number:** 1

**Motion Language:** Ask the DNR to investigate and incorporate how to integrate the use of volunteers in assessing the wolf population. The motion passed 4-1. 4 yeas (Trotter, Pershinske, Thorman, Kennedy), 1 nay (Friedlander), 1 absent (Falck).

**Minority Vote Members:**

**Name:** Friedlander

**Minority Opinion:** This motion is procedural and outside the purview of the WMAC.

The use of volunteers is problematic because of potential bias of the volunteers and the amount of training required including a certified wolf biology class and carnivore tracking class.

**Motion Number:** 14

**Motion Language:** The Department prioritizes Section 6.3.3, Action 5, which states “recommend modification of the law, at the state level, to make penalties for illegally killing a wolf commensurate with other highly valued species with similar legal status (endangered, threatened, game, or protected animals).” Supported by Council Member Friedlander. The amendment to the motion passed 4 yeas (Falck, Friedlander, Kennedy, Pershinske), 2 nays (Trotter, Thorman).

**Minority Vote Members:**

**Name:** Trotter

**Name:** Thorman

**Minority Opinion:** Hunters and conservationists have done significant legislative outreach to increase the penalties and restitution required for the illegal killing and possession of game species, including supporting Public Act 175 of 2013 and P.A. 187 of 2015. During that legislative process, the status of wolves was in flux due to two different Public Acts and their subsequent referendums, a citizen-initiated law, NRC actions, at least one state court and multiple federal court challenges, and a final public act in 2016 which restored most of the initiated law. Based on the WMAC public testimony, there is little public support from hunters and conservationists to enhance penalties when wolf conflicts cannot be managed legally, even when attacking dogs or livestock.