

MICHIGAN
WOLF MANAGEMENT PLAN
UPDATED 2015

SUMMARY OF MANAGEMENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS



Michigan Department of Natural Resources
Wildlife Division
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The Michigan Wolf Management Plan

Updated 2015

Summary of Management Accomplishments

In June 2008, the Michigan DNR released the Michigan Wolf Management Plan providing strategic guidance for the management of wolves in Michigan. This plan was then updated in 2015. It was developed to help: 1) maintain a viable Michigan wolf population above a level that would warrant its classification as threatened or endangered; 2) facilitate wolf-related benefits; 3) minimize wolf-related conflicts; and 4) conduct science-based wolf management with socially acceptable methods.

The plan did not outline operational details of wolf management in Michigan. Operational details were specified within an adaptive-management framework, in which specific management methods were routinely adjusted and updated as local conditions, technology, regulations, and other aspects of management context changed. This document is a product of an evaluation of the operational details that have been used since 2015 to successfully manage wolves in Michigan. It summarizes those management accomplishments that have been, and for many activities continue to be, used to implement the 2015 Michigan Wolf Management Plan. This document also identifies potential management activities that may need additional effort to improve wolf management in Michigan.

This Summary of Management Accomplishments was informed by internal DNR evaluation of management actions. The management accomplishments and evaluation of performance are reported upon by the 12 strategies described in Chapter 6 (sections 6.1 - 6.12) of the 2015 plan. This document has two primary purposes: 1) to document and inform the public of the management accomplishments of the DNR and its management partners; and 2) to help inform the 2022 update to the Michigan Wolf Management Plan.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BMIC	Bay Mills Indian Community
DNR	Department of Natural Resources
KBIC	Keweenaw Bay Indian Community
LP	Lower Peninsula
MSU	Michigan State University
MTU	Michigan Technological University
NLP	Northern Lower Peninsula
NRC	Michigan Natural Resources Commission
PA	Public Act
RAP	Report All Poaching
SSM	Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians
SUNY	State University of New York
UP	Upper Peninsula
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
USFS	United States Forest Service
USFWS	United States Fish and Wildlife Service
UW	University of Wisconsin

Strategic Goals and Objectives from the 2015 Wolf Management Plan

6.1 Increase Public Awareness and Understanding of Wolves and Wolf-related Issues.

- 6.1.1 Coordinate with management partners to develop and implement a wolf-based information and education program.
- 6.1.2 Provide timely and professional responses to information requests.
- 6.1.3 Support training opportunities for staff and management partners involved in the wolf-based information and education program.
- 6.1.4 Evaluate the effectiveness of the wolf-based information and education program.

Management Accomplishments

The DNR has worked individually and with partners to:

- a. Provide information to farmers on how to minimize risk of wolf depredation of livestock.
- b. Train additional wildlife division staff on methods of release for wolves caught in traps to increase capacity for collaring wolves and assisting fur trappers.
- c. Update online maps showing where recent wolf depredation of dogs has occurred in order to keep hunters informed of potential problem areas.
- d. Provide information in the black bear hunting and fur harvester digests on how to minimize wolf depredation.
- e. Present information and provide speakers for a variety of events including the Midwest Wolf Stewards Meeting, Great Lakes Wolf Symposium, International Wolf Symposium, and university classes.
- f. Participate in professional conferences such as the Midwest Wolf Stewards Meeting, Great Lakes Wolf Symposium, International Wolf Symposium, and Native American Fish and Wildlife Society Great Lakes Conference.
- g. Maintain a website where the public can get information on wolf biology, wolf identification, living with wolves, and the management of wolves.
- h. Communicate with the public through timely press releases, radio and TV interviews, and public lectures to interested groups.
- i. Provide access and field trips for the press to understand wolf research and monitoring efforts.
- j. Develop a report covering the factors limiting deer abundance in the UP.
- k. Provide staff with up-to-date information to ensure they can assist the public with locating available resources for wolf information and education.
- l. Identify lead points of contact for the DNR on wolf management.

Contingent upon available staff time and resources, action items from the plan evaluation that may need additional effort include:

- a. Informing the public about where our information and education resources are located.
- b. Monitoring how useful information and education activities are to the public.
- c. Improving the ease of access to information on wolves.
- d. Focusing more information and education on positive interactions with wolves.
- e. Improving timeliness of website updates.
- f. Expanding wolf-related website content and updating wolf-related hand-outs.
- g. Expanding outreach to off-the-grid livestock producers.
- h. Re-producing wolf track refrigerator magnet to help identify wolf tracks and provide the RAP phone number for depredation reporting.
- i. Streamlining communication channels to notify staff and the public of regulation changes associated with wolves.

6.2 Maintain Active Research and Monitoring Programs to Support Science-based Wolf Management.

- 6.2.1 Monitor the abundance of wolves in Michigan.
- 6.2.2 Monitor the health of wolves in Michigan.
- 6.2.3 Investigate biological and social factors relevant to wolf management.
- 6.2.4 Coordinate with partners to support a wolf research program.

Management Accomplishments

The DNR has worked individually and with partners to:

- a. Conduct a winter wolf track survey of the wolf population every other year to produce a minimum population estimate.
- b. Investigate reports of wolves and search for evidence of wolves in the NLP.
- c. Collaborate with Mississippi State University and SUNY to conduct the Michigan Predator-Prey Project, evaluating the impacts of wolves and other predators, habitat, and winter weather on deer in the UP.
<https://campfirewildlife.com/projects/predator-prey/the-study/>
- d. Develop a variety of public outreach materials aimed at keeping the public up-to-date with the findings of the Michigan Predator-Prey Project.
- e. Work cooperatively through research or data-sharing agreements with individuals from USFWS, USDA Wildlife Services, SUNY, MSU, MTU, Wisconsin DNR, Minnesota DNR, SSM, KBIC, BMIC, UW, Trent University, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, Northland College, Notre Dame, and Hope College regarding wolf research and management.
- f. Fund wolf management and research with help from a variety of groups and agencies including USFWS, USDA Wildlife Services, Safari Club International, Safari Club International Foundation, and Michigan Involvement Committee of Safari Club

International.

Contingent upon available staff time and resources, action items from the plan evaluation that may need additional effort include:

- a. Repeating a statewide survey of public attitudes towards wolf management similar to previous studies.
- b. Evaluating the effectiveness of alternative survey techniques to reduce staff effort, limit potential for bias, and produce a more informative estimate of the wolf population.
- c. Developing more user-friendly research and management summaries.
- d. Better informing the public on where to find information on products from the Michigan Predator-Prey Project and other studies to help the public understand the impact of wolves on prey species.
- e. Developing an annual wolf report.
- f. Increasing cooperative working relationships with federally recognized Tribes.

6.3 Enact and Enforce Regulations Necessary to Maintain a Viable Wolf Population.

- 6.3.1 Ensure adequate legal protection for wolves.
- 6.3.2 Inform the public on regulations pertaining to wolves.
- 6.3.3 Investigate and penalize violations of wolf regulations.

Management Accomplishments

The DNR has worked individually and with partners to:

- a. Sustain a viable wolf population in the UP for the last 32 years.
- b. Provide press releases and an updated website to inform the public on changes in regulations pertaining to wolves.
- c. Create internal talking points for DNR staff to ensure that correct information is passed on to the public.
- d. Advertise the RAP line as the place to report wildlife violations including illegal killing of wolves.
- e. Investigate and pursue penalties for violation of wolf regulations. From 2015 through 2020 DNR Law Enforcement has investigated the illegal killing of 54 wolves.
- f. Provide DNR staff with information on regulation changes and implementation guidelines.
- g. Update guidelines for staff and post information online for public regarding PA 290 and 318 of 2008.
- h. Update guidelines for staff and post information online for public regarding the livestock producer control permit program.
- i. Monitor federal legal status of wolves and communicate relevant information

with staff and the public.

- j. Update Natural Resources Commission on any regulatory changes involving wolves.

No additional level of effort is planned beyond current levels.

6.4 Maintain Sustainable Populations of Wolf Prey.

6.4.1 Maintain prey populations required to provide for sustainable human uses and a viable wolf population.

Management Accomplishments

The DNR has worked individually and with partners to:

- a. Manage deer populations at levels necessary to provide for an array of public benefits, including abundant hunting opportunities, and not limit the viability of the wolf population.
- b. Establish and fund a multi-year research project (Michigan Predator-Prey Project) focused on providing greater understanding of the cumulative impacts of multiple predators, habitat, and winter weather on white-tailed deer.
- c. Establish and fund a multi-year research project (Deer Movement Study) focused on providing a greater understanding of winter migration and potential disease transmission in white-tailed deer. <https://campfirewildlife.com/projects/deer-movement/the-study/>

Contingent upon available staff time and resources, action items from the plan evaluation that may need additional effort include:

- a. Continue and expand upon existing camera surveys to monitor UP-wide deer abundance and distribution.

6.5 Maintain Habitat Necessary to Sustain a Viable Wolf Population.

6.5.1 Maintain habitat necessary to sustain adequate levels of wolf prey.

6.5.2 Maintain habitat linkages to allow wolf dispersal.

6.5.3 Minimize disturbance at known active wolf den sites.

Management Accomplishments

The DNR has worked individually and with partners to:

- a. Improve and maintain wildlife habitat on DNR lands by working through the forest management compartment review process.
- b. Work with USFS, The Nature Conservancy and other private land managers during their review process for endangered species.

- c. Create management plans for Deer Wintering Complexes throughout the UP.
- d. Work with the Upper Peninsula Habitat Workgroup to develop recommendations for improving deer winter habitat.

Contingent upon available staff time and resources, action items from the plan evaluation that may need additional effort include:

- a. Incorporating management recommendations from wolf habitat suitability and connectivity studies.
- b. Developing guidance to minimize disturbance at known den sites on DNR lands through the compartment review process.

6.6 Monitor and Manage Adverse Effects of Diseases and Parasites on the Viability of the Wolf Population.

- 6.6.1 Monitor the health of wolves in Michigan.
- 6.6.2 Assess the need to manage diseases and parasites in the wolf population.

Management Accomplishments

The DNR has worked individually and with partners to:

- a. Ensure staff follow the protocol for handling wolf carcasses.
- b. Send all wolf carcasses to the DNR Wildlife Disease Lab for necropsy to monitor health and disease prevalence.
- c. Update the tagging and tracking system for recording all the mortality information in a central database.
- d. Collaborate with university researchers to analyze wolf serum samples for pathogen prevalence.
- e. Collect other biological samples for future disease and parasite analysis.

Contingent upon available staff time and resources, action items from the plan evaluation that may need additional effort include:

- a. Resuming heartworm testing to monitor prevalence.

6.7 Achieve Compatibility between Wolf Distribution and Abundance and Social Carrying Capacity.

- 6.7.1 Promote consistent public understanding and appreciation of the benefits and costs associated with particular wolf levels.
- 6.7.2 Manage wolf-related interactions to increase public tolerance for wolves.
- 6.7.3 Manage wolf distribution and abundance as necessary to maintain positive and

negative wolf-related interactions at socially acceptable levels.

Management Accomplishments

The DNR has worked individually and with partners to:

- a. Provide information through a variety of forums on wolf numbers and associated benefits and cost.
- b. Provide case-by-case management of conflict situations to minimize negative consequences of the population of wolves. From 2015 through 2020, the DNR received 99 wolf activity reports. All complaints received recommendations on how to mitigate their wolf conflict.

Contingent upon available staff time and resources, action items from the plan evaluation that may need additional effort include:

- a. Finding additional methods to facilitate positive wolf-human interactions and other wolf-related benefits.
- b. Improving current wolf observation and non-depredation conflict reporting process.

6.8 Facilitate Positive Wolf–Human Interactions and Other Wolf-Related Benefits.

- 6.8.1 Inform the public on benefits derived from the presence of wolves.
- 6.8.2 Maintain a distribution and abundance of wolves adequate to maintain benefits at levels acceptable to the public.
- 6.8.3 Promote opportunities for people to experience and appreciate wolves.

Management Accomplishments

The DNR has worked individually and with partners to:

- a. Provide, through a variety of formats (website, new release, media interviews, conferences, and hand-outs), information on the ecological benefits of having wolves on the landscape.
- b. Maintain a viable wolf population with a UP-wide distribution.
- c. Provide individuals with information on where to have the best chance of hearing, observing sign of, or seeing wolves.
- d. Recognize cultural significance of wolves by including indigenous values in wolf management.

Contingent upon available staff time and resources, action items from the plan evaluation that may need additional effort include:

- a. Evaluating what other states are doing to facilitate positive wolf-related experiences.
- b. Spending more effort facilitating the non-ecological benefit of having wolves on the landscape, such as eco-tourism.
- c. Working with schools to develop more programs focused on understanding wolf ecology.
- d. Re-printing or developing and distributing revised wolf information materials.
- e. Expand upon cultural significance of wolves in future Wolf Management Plan updates.

6.9 Manage Actual and Perceived Threats to Human Safety Posed by Wolves.

- 6.9.1 Promote accurate public perceptions of the human-safety risks posed by wolves.
- 6.9.2 Provide timely and professional responses to reports of human-safety risks posed by wolves.
- 6.9.3 Minimize the incidence of rabies in wild and domestic populations.
- 6.9.4 Promote accurate public perceptions of the human-safety risks posed by echinococcosis.
- 6.9.5 Prevent or minimize the habituation of wolves.
- 6.9.6 Eliminate actual human-safety threats where they occur.

Management Accomplishments

The DNR has worked individually and with partners to:

- a. Provide information on living with wolves through our website, pamphlets, personal contact, and media interviews.
- b. Provide information on safety threats posed by wolves, especially associated with instances of a perceived threat.
- c. Develop procedures and training for staff and investigate all instances of threats to human safety posed by wolves.
- d. Develop and make available to the public wolf behavior modification kits (noise-making scare pistols) and, in some cases, provide flashing lights as another scare technique.
- e. Work with local health departments to test wolves for rabies when necessary and euthanize all sick wolves.
- f. Provide information to people in person, on how to avoid habituation of wolves to human activity.
- g. Provide case-by-case management of conflict situations to minimize negative consequences on the population of wolves. From 2015 through 2020, the DNR received 99 wolf activity complaints. All complaints received recommendations on how to mitigate their wolf conflict.
- h. Work with USDA Wildlife Services to develop protocols and apply them to remove

threats when deemed appropriate. Although Michigan has no documented wolf attacks on humans, 34 wolves have been euthanized because of threats to human safety since wolf recolonization

Contingent upon available staff time and resources, action items from the plan evaluation that may need additional effort include:

- a. Improving communication and education on real and perceived threats to human safety posed by wolves.

6.10 Manage Wolf Depredation of Domestic Animals.

- 6.10.1 Provide timely and professional responses to reports of suspected wolf depredation of domestic animals.
- 6.10.2 Minimize the risk of wolf depredation of domestic animals.
- 6.10.3 Eliminate or minimize ongoing wolf depredation of domestic animals.
- 6.10.4 Develop a program to allow livestock producers to control depredating wolves on their property.
- 6.10.5 Facilitate financial compensation for livestock losses caused by wolves.
- 6.10.6 Work with partners to reduce the likelihood for privately owned cervids lost to wolves.

Management Accomplishments

The DNR has worked individually and with partners to:

- a. Provide information to farmers on how to minimize risk of wolf depredation of livestock.
- b. Update guidelines for dealing with depredation to reflect the changing legal status of wolves.
- c. Train staff on how to investigate suspected depredation of livestock.
- d. Provide livestock producers with non-lethal tools to minimize wolf livestock conflicts such as: wolf behavior modification kits, fladry, flashing lights, strobe lights, and sirens.
- e. Provide non-lethal tools to DNR and USDA Wildlife Services staff, such as: rubber buckshot, rubber slugs, cracker shells, bird bangers, bird screamers, and propane cannons.
- f. Apply for, implement, and provide match funding for a USFWS non-lethal wolf grant.
- g. Work with eligible farmers to purchase fencing materials and place livestock guarding donkeys using the non-lethal grant funding.
- h. Update online maps showing where recent wolf depredation of dogs has occurred in order to keep hunters informed of potential problem areas.
- i. Provide information in the black bear hunting and fur harvester digests on ways to identify and avoid wolf conflicts.

- j. Ensure local wildlife staff are regularly updated on collared wolf locations during dog training and bear hunting seasons.
- k. Work with bear hunting groups and individuals on effective techniques to minimize wolf visitation to bear bait sites.
- l. Recommend rules and regulations pertaining to bear hunting to minimize potential wolf depredation issues.
- m. Work with USDA Wildlife Services on lethal and non-lethal methods for minimizing depredation risk to domestic animals.
- n. Update guidelines for staff and post information online for public regarding PA 290 and 318 of 2008.
- o. Update guidelines for staff and post information online for public regarding the livestock producer control permit program.
- p. Monitor and enforce compliance with PA 290 and 318 of 2008 as well as the livestock producer control permit program.
- q. Investigate 318 livestock depredation events and 94 dog depredation events since wolf recolonization.
- r. Work with MDARD to compensate livestock producers for losses caused by wolves. In total, Michigan has paid out \$194,912.18 for indemnification payments.

Contingent upon available staff time and resources, action items from the plan evaluation that may need additional effort include:

- a. Re-producing the wolf track refrigerator magnet to help identify wolf tracks and provide the RAP phone number for depredation reporting.

6.11 Minimize the Negative Impacts of Captive Wolves and Wolf–Dog Hybrids.

6.11.1 Minimize and deter the possession of captive wolves in Michigan.

6.11.2 Minimize and deter the possession of wolf–dog hybrids in Michigan.

Management Accomplishments

The DNR has worked individually and with partners to:

- a. Amend the Wildlife Conservation Order as necessary to reflect the changing legal status of wolves.
- b. Euthanize injured wolves to avoid long-term captivity.
- c. Work with local agencies and law enforcement officials with the identification and management of captive wolves and wolf-dog hybrids.

Contingent upon available staff time and resources, action items from the plan evaluation that may need additional effort include:

- a. Supporting inclusion of wolves as animals covered under the Large Carnivore Act (PA 274 of 2000).

- b. Investigating the methods and techniques of genetic assignment so testing can be done at the DNR Wildlife Disease Lab.

6.12 Develop Socially and Biologically Responsible Management Recommendations Regarding Public Harvest of Wolves.

- 6.12.1 Develop recommendations regarding public wolf harvest for the purpose of reducing wolf-related conflicts.
- 6.12.2 Develop and implement a policy regarding public wolf harvest for reasons other than managing wolf-related conflicts.

Management Accomplishments

The DNR has worked individually and with partners to:

- a. Legal status precluded work towards developing recommendations or policy regarding public wolf harvest.
- b. Monitor wolf-related conflicts, such as livestock depredations, dog depredations, and wolf activity reports.

Contingent upon available staff time and resources, action items from the plan evaluation that may need additional effort include

- a. Repeating a statewide survey of public attitudes towards wolf management similar to previous studies.
- b. When federal legal status of wolves has stabilized, the Wolf Management Plan is updated, and consultation has occurred with the federally recognized Tribes in Michigan; develop recommendations regarding a public wolf harvest if directed to do so by the Director of the Michigan DNR.