



Senate Committee on Financial Institutions and Sporting Heritage

CR 23-047

Gray wolf harvest regulations

March 4, 2025

Good morning, Chair Stafsholt and members of the Committee. My name is Scott Karel, and I am the Wildlife Regulations Policy Specialist for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. With me today to help answer questions is Eric Lobner the Director of the Wildlife Management Program and Randy Johnson, Large Carnivore Specialist. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of CR 23-047, related to gray wolf harvest regulations.

CR 23-047 achieves two primary objectives. First, it will codify, with housekeeping updates, provisions of emergency rule EmR1210, which went into effect on August 18, 2012. EmR1210 was an emergency rule passed in response to 2011 Act 169 (Act 169), which required the department establish a wolf harvest season when wolves are removed from the federal and state endangered species lists. This emergency rule created harvest regulations and established a claims program for when wolves are not listed as an endangered species. Non-statutory provisions of Act 169 state that this emergency rule remains in effect until a permanent rule takes effect. This rule also updates terminology as needed to enhance consistency across statutes, other provisions of administrative code, and practice. These rules found in EmR1210 were used to regulate each of the previous wolf harvest seasons.

Second, it will implement recommendations from the new wolf management plan. In October 2023, the department finalized, and the Natural Resources Board approved a new wolf management plan after almost three years of development and extensive public input. This new management plan recognizes that the wolf population has biologically recovered in Wisconsin and outlines management objectives focused on long-term sustainable management. This includes addressing wolf-related conflicts and implementing a regulated wolf harvest season consistent with state and federal law. CR 23-047 proposes to implement recommendations from this new plan that require changes in administrative code. These updates are generally consistent with policies established in the emergency rule. For example:

- This rule will provide that the department may issue wolf harvest tags that are specific to a certain zone or zones instead of tags that are valid in any open zone statewide as occurred in previous harvest seasons. This will allow the department to increase or decrease the number of permits available in a certain zone dependent on historic success rates, making wolf permits consistent with all other limited draw species. This approach will also allow zones to stay open for longer than previous wolf harvest seasons, give the department additional flexibility to increase hunting pressure on wolves in areas where conflict is occurring, and provide more opportunity for wolf season participants.
- This rule will reduce the time a successful hunter or trapper must register their harvest from 5 p.m. the day after harvest to within eight hours after the wolf has been recovered. This change was identified to provide the department harvest data more quickly, thus improving the ability to

predict harvest rates and correspondingly close an individual zone when the harvest objective is met.

- This rule will provide protections for occupied wolf dens.
- It will create a dog training season for wolves which is open in a zone or subzone when that zone is open to wolf harvest.
- This rule will create an enhanced reimbursement rate for producers that have multiple confirmed livestock depredation events within the same grazing season. This change would allow the department to reimburse losses at a rate of 25% above fair market value. This approach is intended to help producers cover expenses beyond those directly related to the loss of livestock including decreased weight gain, damage to fences and other related issues.
- This rule will also update wolf management zones, continuing to use a six-zone structure with updated boundaries and creating additional subzones. These subzones are not zero-quota areas. Instead, these will allow the department to increase or decrease harvest pressure based on the subzone objective.

Approval of a rule package is a necessary step to prepare for a future public wolf harvest season if wolves should be removed from the federal endangered species list. Currently, wolves remain listed, and no wolf harvest season can occur at this time. Nevertheless, the department is working hard to ensure harvest season plans and necessary administrative rules are in place so that if a change occurs in the future, a wolf season can be implemented in a timely fashion consistent with state law and the wolf management plan.

On behalf of the Department of Natural Resources, we would like to thank you for your time today. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Judy Anghey

Wolves –

They give birth, they see,
they smell, and they feel.

They learn, they hear,
they fear, they heal.

They are hunters, they are guides,
they follow, they are wild.

They get surprised, they get wounded,
they get sick, they get confronted.

They have conflicts, they protect,
they can be playful, they will react.

They get tired and exhausted,
they get old and irritated.

They have families, they have pups,
they have parents, they have luck.

They are social, they can be happy,
they can be sad and can be funny.

They can struggle, they can starve,
they can bleed, and can be harmed.

They can be chased and they can cry,
they can be trampled, they can die.

They are hunted, they are blamed,
they are hated and they are chased.

They can be lonely, can be lost,
they can mourn, they can love.

Is this all familiar?

Living being, just like Us.



Wisconsin Bear Hunters' Association, Inc.

March 4th, 2025

Senate Committee on Financial Institutions and Sporting Heritage
330 SW
Madison, Wisconsin 53703

Dear Chairman Stafsholt and Members of the Committee on Financial Institutions and Sporting Heritage,

The Wisconsin Bear Hunters Association (WBHA) cannot support Clearinghouse Rule 23-047 as written. We made our objections clear to the Natural Resources Board before they voted to advance the rule. We ask the committee to request the following changes:

- 1 - The rule changes the emergency rule to make tags zone specific. This limits the opportunity for hunters to find a location to hunt wolves if some of the zones have already closed due to trapping. In order to be fair to hunters and trappers the tags should be statewide.
- 2 - The rule changes the time to register a wolf from 5:00 pm the following day to 8 hours post harvest. This new timeline is unnecessarily short and does not match other fur bearing species like bobcats. We support keeping the current timeline.
- 3 - The new zones contain subzones 1A and 1B. We expect these new subzones to have zero or very low harvest quotas. We cannot support these buffer zones as they limit hunting access and provide havens for depredating wolves. We support elimination of these subzones.
- 4 - The entire harvest quota regime in the new rules will be based on the new wolf management plan. As we have some major concerns with the plan it is hard for us to support a harvest rule tied to that plan. Until we have some agreement on a new plan and especially on a target for the overwinter population, we cannot give our support to this rule.

WBHA asks the Senate to consider these changes to Clearinghouse Rule 23-047 affecting chapters NR 10 and 12 related to gray wolf harvest regulations. We cannot support the passage of this rule unless the above changes are made.

For more information, please contact the Wisconsin Bear Hunters' Association, 608-819-0150.

I'm Lois Lehmann my ecosystem is 212 Harvard Dr, DeForest Wisconsin 53532. It is a privilege to be here to speak at this public hearing about another member of our state, the timber wolf and their family. I am a lifelong Wisconsinite, a retired public school teacher, a mother of twin sons, a grandmother of two girls and one hunter/EMT worker, one beagle mix rescue and Barney. Heidi teaches me the ins and outs about the relationship between predator and prey.

I am knowledgeable about the 2023 Wolf Management Plan and refer to it where it sits conveniently on my desktop and flashdrive. A topic in the Plan that I am familiar with and that in my mind needs context is **Adaptive Management** (C. S. Holling). The approach has been around since the 1970s and is described as **learning by doing**. When we are dealing with a standard of a finite 350 apex species such as the Timber Wolf, we are ignoring or unable to be aware of the uncertainty of events and changing attitudes over 10 years before the next plan is adopted. How can we monitor that an ecosystem is healthy and balanced when events such as wildfires affect the habitat of wildlife in the Natural world. Wildfires such as the Bear Paw fire in 2024 degrade the habitat of all species and products. What will animals do who live in this area of 26 acres? The timing and location of fires will have different effects on the populations. The timber wolf family will disperse if the wildfire occurs after birthing season and raising of their offspring. Randy Johnson, Large Carnivore Specialist, observes dispersal of Wisconsin wolves on connectivity pathways between MN, Wisconsin, MI and Canada As if a Wisconsin wildfire as a single event is not already a challenging for firefighters and all flora and fauna, altering the predator-prey relationship, the Canadian wildfire in 2024 resulted in air quality alerts for many weeks. Surviving herbivores have lost their food supply for the short term, but not all seed regeneration will occur (M. Turner) for the long term.

The Advisory Committee provides an important function of keeping the scientists, managers and stakeholders collaborating on testing new strategies and tools to reduce wolf-livestock conflicts, and wolf-human conflicts, both actual and perceived. At the core is openness to accept new ideas and test them, self-correct when failure occurs.

62% of Wisconsinites opposed a recreational hunt of wolves in a 2022 survey by an independent polling firm. Bradshaw In MN 86% of those surveyed want the same number of wolves or more, and a majority believe protecting individual wolves is important. Two bills in 2014 struck down the proposed hunt in MI.

I support passing rule 23-047. However, I will continue to advocate for changes in the law and regulations that impact the harms done to individual wolves and their families. Learning is a life-long endeavour and I commit to be open-minded about the uncertainties of the future and admit to failure followed up with self correction and from others I engage with. Lois Lehmann



MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of the Senate Committee on Financial Institutions and Sporting Heritage

FROM: Jordan Lamb, on behalf of the Wisconsin Cattlemen's Association and the Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation

DATE: March 4, 2025

RE: **Joint Comments for Information Only - CR 23-047, Relating to Gray Wolf Harvest Regulations**

The Wisconsin Cattlemen's Association (WCA) and the Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation (Farm Bureau) represent Wisconsin beef and dairy producer across Wisconsin. We are deeply concerned about the current management of the gray wolf population in Wisconsin and we appreciate the opportunity to submit these joint comments about management of the gray wolf in Wisconsin.

Support for a Wolf Harvest. Both the WCA and the Farm Bureau support a regulated wolf harvest in Wisconsin. Farmers need effective tools to protect their livestock from predatory wolves and to manage the growing wolf population. A hunting season is a critical component of responsible population management. Therefore, we urge the immediate establishment of a wolf hunting season in Wisconsin as soon as gray wolves are federally delisted.

Support Wolf Population Goal of 350 Wolves. As previously stated in our comments on this issue, Wisconsin has far exceeded its goal for a sustainable and recovered wolf population. We believe current estimates underestimate the actual wolf population, leading to increasingly severe impacts on Wisconsin farmers. We continue to support a statewide population goal of 350 wolves as appropriate and sustainable.

We are also deeply concerned that the Department has announced it will not provide an updated population estimate for 2024. Typically, the Department conducts an annual wolf count and includes that data in the federally required report to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. However, we understand that no updated wolf population estimate will be available this year, raising serious concerns about transparency and informed management decisions.

Increase in Wolf Depredations on Livestock in 2024. In 2024, the Department recorded 84 confirmed or probable cases of wolf depredation, up from 69 in 2023 and 49 in 2022. Wolves killed 87 animals, including domestic livestock such as beef calves and hunting dogs. According

to the Department's data, this marks the third consecutive year of rising wolf depredations in Wisconsin.

Wisconsin Farmers Need Improved Management Tools and an Improved Depredation Compensation Program. Wisconsin farmers require more effective tools to protect their livestock, improved rapid response times when depredations occur, and a compensation program that fully accounts for their losses. While wolf depredations can be quantified, the indirect impacts on livestock—such as stress-induced pregnancy loss, reduced fertility rates, lower weight gain, changes in calving patterns, increased maintenance costs for pastures and fencing, and other predator-related disruptions—are significant and costly.

We appreciate the Department's acknowledgment of these direct and indirect losses, but acknowledgment alone does not resolve the problem. Non-lethal management tools have proven ineffective in the long term, and the current depredation compensation program fails to fully reimburse farmers for their losses. We urge the Department to collaborate with farmers to establish a comprehensive compensation program that covers both direct and indirect losses caused by wolf depredation and we further urge additional funding for depredation payment to Wisconsin farmers for livestock losses.

Support for Delisting the Gray Wolf. The Wisconsin Cattlemen's Association and the Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation respectfully request immediate action and advocacy to appeal to Congress for the federal delisting of the gray wolf. Delisting would provide Wisconsin farmers with greater conflict management options and ensure a more balanced approach to wolf population control.

CONTACT: Jordan Lamb / jordan@thewelchgroup.org / (608) 819-0150

Thank you for this opportunity to speak before this committee today.

My name is Dana Herman and I live in a rural area of NW Wisconsin in Washburn County. Wolf packs have been verified in this area, and myself, my family, and friends have never had any problems living with wolves.

I am outside with my dogs every day, including evenings, and I have never had any issues with wolves nor have I ever felt worried, frightened or hesitant in any way while in the woods.

In Oct. of 2023, while at the NRB meeting, I supported the new WDNR Wolf Management Plan and Wolf Management Rule - even though I do NOT support recreational hunting of wolves.

Specifically I support the following and ask that these elements stay included in the proposed rule relating to gray wolf harvest regulations in WI:

- **Adaptive Management instead of a population goal.** (This is a best practice that was supported by scientists and is how most natural resources are managed in Wisconsin.)
-
- **New statewide zones and subzones with tags that are zone-specific.** The rule language must read, "Tags that are specific to a certain zone." (In the 2021 hunt, tags were issued for any zone in the state, so as zones closed, people would just move to any open zone, leading to a cascading amount of pressure all at the same time.)
-
- **Protect den sites from being disturbed or destroyed.**
-
- **The registration time to report a wolf kill reduced to 8 hours** (in the past, a 24 hour period led to excessive over-kill of wolves)
-
- **The time allowed for hound training on wolves is only allowed when the time a harvest zone is open for hunting.** And hound training will close as the respective zone closes to hunting. Previously this was open 365 days a year. **Additionally, hunters are not allowed to use hounds at night.**
-
- And finally, I support **The "low quota" subzones around Tribal lands.** It is **incredibly important to respect the deep cultural significance that ma'iingan (the wolf) has to the Ojibwe.** Having these low-quota subzones around Tribal lands will help protect reservation wolf packs from being entirely wiped out if a hunting season were to occur. To do otherwise would show a complete disregard for the Tribes ability and, federally protected right, to effectively **co-manage** the off-reservation ceded territory. Ma'iingan is a treaty-protected resource, and as such the Ojibwe tribes have the right to manage this species in cooperation with the State of Wisconsin.

(these low quota subzones were created that extend around 6 miles around their reservation land to help protect reservation wolf packs)

As I stated prior, I do not support recreational hunting of wolves, but I do support this rule because it is a good compromise. Compromise seems to be lacking a bit these days. When I grew up we were taught to respect elected officials because they worked together, across the aisle, for the good of the people and state they served and were able to compromise.

Over the last year I have watched and listened to public meetings throughout communities in the north held by elected officials where citizens stood up and shouted things like "Shoot wolves on sight". Some of the elected officials sitting up at the front tables during these meetings clapped and smiled as these statements were shouted, ~~by doing so encouraged their constituents to do just that - shoot wolves~~ Encouraging such behavior is not only wrong, but it does nothing to address the real issues that people are facing and simply fuels the fire of fear and hatred.

The WDNR has worked incredibly hard over the years to create a plan and rule, based on science and with a vast amount of input from stakeholder groups.

In Oct. 2023, you were handed a wolf management rule on a silver platter which will allow you to hunt, trap and kill wolves including with the use of bait and hounds, and yet here we are again still debating this rule.

I respectfully ask that this committee approve, as is, the proposed rule relating to the gray wolf harvest regulations.

Thank you,

Dana Herman

Good afternoon members of the Senate Committee on Financial Institutions and Sporting Heritage. I am Kerry Beheler, a constituent of WI's 17th Senate District.

I am a member of Wisconsin's Green Fire Science Council and Wildlife Work Group, and the Sierra Club of WI Wildlife Team. I was the WI DNR Wildlife Health Specialist for 14 years. I am also an upland game bird hunter, and a deer hunter.

I represent myself today

I ask you to support the permanent wolf rule, WM-03-21, as it is currently written and was passed by the Natural Resources Board in October 2023.

Aspects of the rule I support include

1. Using Adaptive Management for the wolf population rather than an arbitrary, numeric population goal.

WI
The DNR has stated a commitment to wolf management and conservation based on the best available science, rather than a numeric population goal.

2. I support establishing statewide overall zone-specific and subzone harvest permits.

3. I support low quota subzones that extend around Tribal reservation land to help protect reservation wolf packs.

4. I support an 8 hour registration time period to report a wolf kill.

5. I support restricting the time allowed for hound training on wolves. Hound training on wolves will be "closed", that is not allowed, as soon as the hunting quota is reached in that specific zone.

Did you know that wolves fulfill valuable ecologic functions, contributing to the health and diversity of ecosystems where they live?

Wolves are blamed for decimating the WI deer herd. This is simply not true. Weather and poor deer habitat have a far greater impact on deer populations than wolves. Research suggests that wolves actually strengthen deer populations, and may limit the spread of diseases such as Chronic Wasting Disease, by removing sick animals.

The wild free-ranging northern WI deer herd has the lowest number of CWD cases. This is where the wolves live.

WI DNR has stated "whether predators can truly reduce CWD prevalence and spread remains unknown and more research is needed." There is significant overlap between current WI CWD infected deer locations and wolf range.

Effective measures for controlling CWD remain elusive. Supporting natural control of infected deer by supporting and analyzing wolf predation in WI is an area that deserves further study.

Thank you for consideration of my comments on wolf rule WM-03-21, the administrative rules which will govern future wolf management in Wisconsin.

When discussing WI conservation issues, it is important to have all the facts. Species managed using the best available science, with criteria established under state regulatory frameworks, ensures smart stewardship.

I believe it is imperative we support the implementation of scientific wolf management practices in WI.

Thank you.

Sincerely, Kerry Beheler Mount Horeb WI 53572

Testimony for Wisconsin State Senate Public Hearing on Wolf Management Rule

Good afternoon, Senators. My name is Patricia Pesko, and I am here today as a Wisconsin resident who cares deeply about responsible wildlife management. I want to thank you for your time and your commitment to maintaining Wisconsin's outdoor traditions while ensuring sound conservation practices.

The wolf management rule before you is the product of **years of stakeholder input**—from scientists, conservationists, hunters, farmers, and tribal nations. It represents a **balanced**, science-based approach that prevents the mistakes of the past while keeping wolf populations stable and conflicts manageable. I urge you to uphold this rule without backsliding on the progress we've made.

Four key provisions in the rule are particularly critical:

1. **Zone-Specific Harvest Tags** – In 2021, a lack of zone-specific tags led to an uncontrolled rush, causing severe overharvest in some areas. The new rule ensures **more controlled, sustainable hunting** by keeping harvests **localized and within manageable limits**.
2. **Tribal Buffer Zones** – This rule respects the **cultural and ecological significance of wolves** to Wisconsin's tribal nations by establishing low-quota zones around reservation lands. It upholds the spirit of cooperation between the state and tribes while ensuring that wolves remain part of our shared natural heritage.
3. **Faster Kill Reporting** – Moving from a 24-hour to an **8-hour** reporting window is a simple but **crucial improvement**. In past hunts, delayed reporting allowed excessive take before limits could be enforced. A tighter window ensures **real-time monitoring and prevents another uncontrolled hunt like 2021**.
4. **Regulating Hound Training on Wolves** – Under the current system, hounds can be trained to chase wolves **year-round**, leading to unnecessary wolf stress, disruption of breeding, and deadly conflicts between dogs and wolves. This rule wisely restricts training when quotas are met, reducing **wildlife suffering and potential conflicts**.

Each of these provisions reflects a **smart, measured approach**—one that **protects Wisconsin's hunting heritage, respects our tribal partners, and ensures we never again experience the kind of regulatory failure we saw in 2021**.

In closing, I urge this committee to respect the **years of work and public input** that went into crafting this plan. Let's keep politics out of science and ensure that Wisconsin's wolf management remains **effective, responsible, and fair**.

Thank you for your time.

March 4, 2025

Testimony by Wisconsin's Green Fire on Wolf Management Rule

Chair Stafsholt and members of the Committee on Financial Institutions and Sporting Heritage:

Wisconsin's Green Fire (WGF) supports CR23-047 relating to gray wolf harvest regulations and supports passage of the rule.

My name is Adrian Wydeven. I am representing Wisconsin's Green Fire (WGF). I worked at the DNR for many years and chaired the team that developed the 1999 Wolf Management Plan. Thank you from WGF for the opportunity to comment on the Wolf Management Rule. WGF is a statewide organization that supports sound science in natural resources management.

WGF commends the DNR for developing a sound science-based, socially responsible, and culturally sensitive conservation plan for gray wolves in Wisconsin. We support the DNR's focus on ecological benefits of wolves, balancing potential conflicts and cultural concerns while using an adaptive management approach. We agree with the configuration of zones and subzones for managing wolves in Wisconsin and especially appreciate subzones around Indian reservations to better protect wolf packs living on reservations, as well as the establishment of subzones 1a and 4a that better focus harvest in areas of intense livestock depredations.

The wolf rules provide for wolf harvest quotas based on the negative or positive outcomes from the wolf population. This system is how we currently manage deer, bears, turkeys and other wildlife, and allows DNR to raise or lower harvest quotas based on these metrics. At current wolf population levels and distribution, numeric goals are no longer appropriate for setting wolf harvest quota.

We also support 8-hour call-in requirement for wolf harvest registration that will help prevent overharvest of wolf quota for specific zones. We support restricting wolf trap size in November to 7 inches maximum spread to reduce the chance of capture of bears active at that time and reduces the chance of injury to incidentally caught domestic dogs.

WGF supports the Department changing from minimum counting methods to using Occupancy Modeling for estimating the state wolf population. Occupancy modeling is a state of the art method for estimating wildlife abundance, and is appropriate for the extent of the wolf population that currently occurs across 1/3 of Wisconsin. While the unusually mild winter in 2022-2023 did not allow DNR to adequately track wolves for a reliable wolf population estimate, such estimates will again occur with normal winter weather. There is no indication drastic changes have occurred in the wolf population.

WGF understands that current statutes require the DNR to hold a wolf hunting and trapping season, and the proposed wolf management rules provide a reasonable approach for implementing a well-regulated wolf harvests in the state.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment.

Adrian Wydeven,
Member of the Wildlife Working Group of Wisconsin's Green Fire, Cable WI

Page 1 of 1

Good afternoon, Senators.

My name is Peter David, and I am here to discuss the wolf harvest rules.

I am a retired wildlife biologist who spent my career working for the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission, where I worked on wolf issues with other professionals in 3 states. I live and recreate in Wisconsin wolf range. I am here today representing Timber Wolf Alliance.

TWA's mission is to use science-based information to promote an ecologically-functional wolf population in areas of suitable habitat, and wolf coexistence.

We have moved beyond wolf recovery and into the period of sustainable stewardship. The proposed rule package recognizes this, and it is time to put these rules on the books.

Wisconsin has welcomed wolf recovery. The 2022 public attitude survey found that among people in wolf range with an opinion, 62% wanted as many or more wolves. Statewide, the figure was over 77%. These figures trended upward from the 2014 survey, even as the wolf population itself increased. We are re-learning to live with wolves.

Wolves are also re-learning to live with us.

If you examine data from USDA-Wildlife Services gathered over the past 20 years, you will see that while the wolf population increased from roughly 400 to 1000, there has **not** been an increasing trend in: verified wolf complaints; in the number of farms with verified depredations; the number of cattle depredated, the number of pet dogs depredated, or human health and safety situations. The number of hunting dogs depredated has, unfortunately shown a small increase, but even this factor has been flat over the last decade.

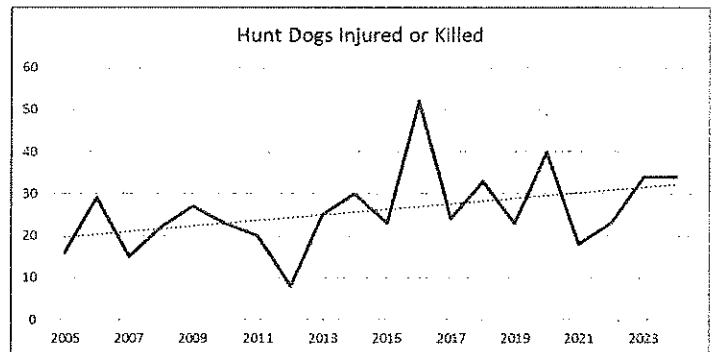
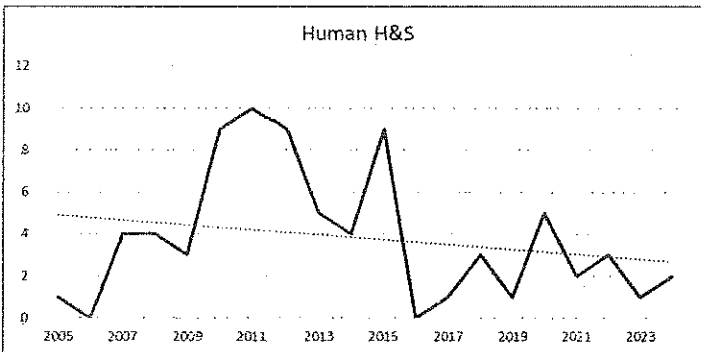
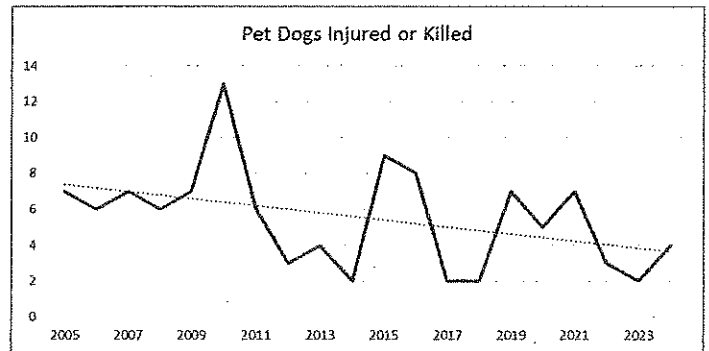
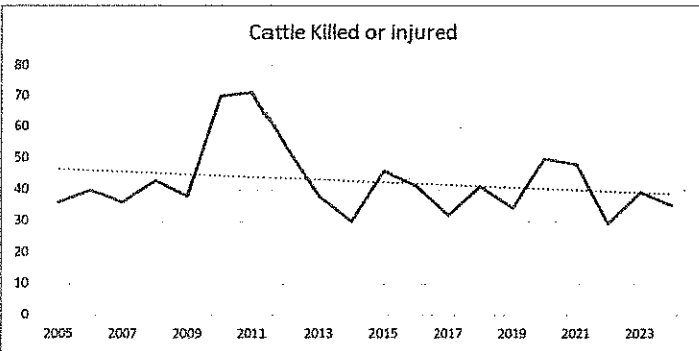
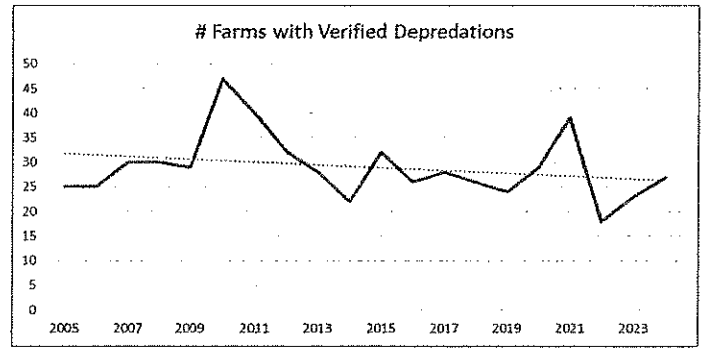
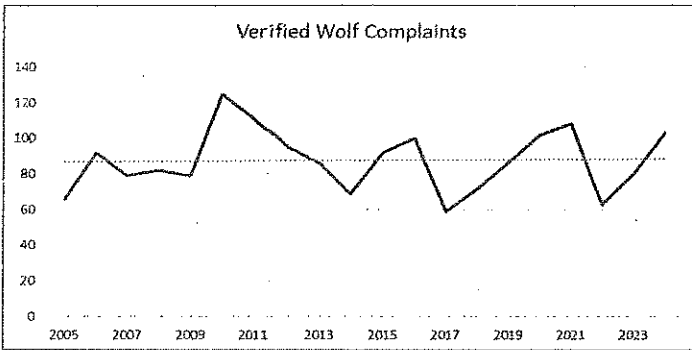
The Wolf Plan approved by the Natural Resources Board recognized both sides of this story by developing a scientifically-sound, socially responsible, and culturally appropriate plan that focuses on issues rather than arbitrary numbers, and embraces adaptive management - just as is already done for many other species in the state.

I suspect everyone in the room can find something to quibble about in this package. It is a compromise. Nevertheless, these changes are important to remove uncertainty going forward, and to markedly improve our ability to steward the wolves for all our citizens, in a cooperative manner with Wisconsin's tribal partners.

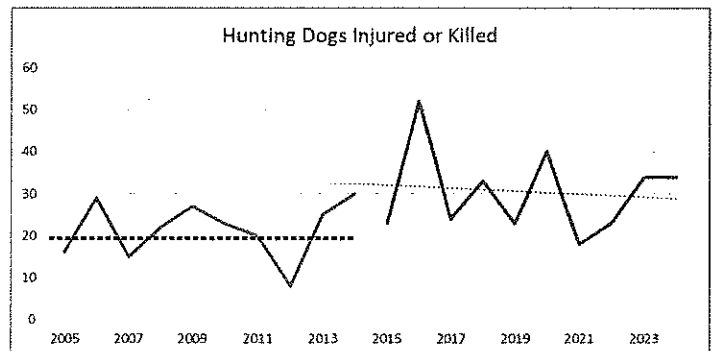
Nothing in this package is onerous, and it should be supported by anyone interested in improving wolf stewardship. The changes in zones, permitting and registration are critical to improving harvest regulation, and avoiding the national black-eye Wisconsin gained in 2021. The protection of wolf dens, limits on wolf trap sizes in November, and restrictions on the training period are important to protect wolves, bears and other wildlife, as well as dogs.

In short, it is time to advance this rule package, and take the next step in embracing our responsibility to the public, and to the non-human world we are entrusted to protect. Thank you for your time.

Trends in Wisconsin Wolf Depredations. USDA APHIS Data



Over the last 20 years the Wisconsin wolf population grew from roughly 400 to 1000. Over this time, various forms of wolf complaints have shown appreciable year-to-year variation, but the long-term trends in verified wolf complaints, the number of farms with verified depredations, the number of cattle killed, the number of pet dogs depredated, and the instances of human health and safety have been flat or trended slightly downward. Only the number of hunting dogs depredated has shown a small increase, and this increase appears to be associated with an increase in the practice of hound training after the state eliminated the Class B bear license. The trend in hunting dogs depredated has been flat for the past decade.





WISCONSIN WILDLIFE FEDERATION

213 North Main Street, Suite 100, PO Box 460; Poynette, WI 53955 • (608) 635-0600 • (800) 897-4161
www.wiwf.org

AFFILIATED WITH THE NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION

March 4th, 2025

President:

Connie Polzin
6771 Firetower Rd
Rhineland, WI 54501
715-360-3903
noisycreek71@yahoo.com

First Vice President:

Terri Roehrig
5588 County Rd H
Mondovi, WI 54755
920-540-2775
troehrig@yahoo.com

Second Vice President:

Mark Kakatsch
N2975 County Rd. EE
Neosho, WI 53059
414-688-8936
horicon69@gmail.com

Treasurer:

David Verhage
1111 Chadwick Ct.
Plover, WI 54467
715-344-3497
DavidDebiV@charter.net

Secretary:

Sam Johnson
10960 Straubhaar Rd.
Blue Mounds, WI 53517
608-807-8170
Sjohnson9@carthage.edu

Past President:

Kevyn Quamme
W6970 Hwy B
Dalton, WI 53926
608-209-3872
kevynabc@gmail.com

Executive Director

Cody Kamrowski
N1601 Sandberg Rd.
Melrose, WI 54642
715-896-5445
cody@wiwf.org

Business Manager:

Lindsay Alt
PO Box 460
Poynette, WI 53955
608-635-0600
lindsay@wiwf.org

RE: Wisconsin Wildlife Federation Testimony on Gray Wolf Harvest Regulations (CR 23-047)

Hello Committee Chair Stafsholt and members of the committee,

My name is Cody Kamrowski, executive director of the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation (WWF), we represent over 200 affiliated clubs, organizations and associations throughout the State of Wisconsin. I want to thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony surrounding WWF's positions around the gray wolf harvest regulations (CR23-047). Here are specific items we wanted to take note of.

When it comes to the management zones, we believe management zones allow for a customized management and harvest quota to meet the needs of the wildlife managers and various geographical areas. Sovern tribal nations have the right to engage in wolf management, harvest and to work with wildlife managers. Additionally, these very wildlife managers at DNR also need to manage wildlife for all citizens of Wisconsin. As shown in the prior seasons, the collective tribes have not used their quota allotment. This does negatively affect state wildlife managers ability to follow the management plan, set quotas and effectively manage the population. As stated in the management plan, the opportunity to have an increased quota in subzones around tribal lands is allowable. We would encourage a review of the allotted quota in these areas and this would be a great opportunity for review and partnership with the wolf advisory committee once it is created.

The Wisconsin Wildlife Federation opposes the registration time change and strongly urges this rule remain 5pm the day after harvest. This maintains consistency with other game registrations and minimizes confusion for participants. This change is reactionary to the 2021 wolf harvest season and not representative of the 2012-2014 wolf harvest seasons. Between the new management zones and agency staff monitoring the harvest, we have great confidence in the agency's ability to assess and close seasons responsibly for the animal as well as the season participants.

After conversations with agency staff, the use of light emitting optics and use of a flashlights for night hunting wildlife is incredibly nuanced. We agree with the overall scope/objective of the rule. But further clarification and straightforward language should be addressed in the legislature when it comes to legal night hunting activities to ensure participants are engaged in a safe, responsible manner and avoiding violations due to nuanced regulatory language.

WWF opposes the section that prohibits the use of foothold traps more than 7 inches for non-water sets and recommends up to 8 inches. Upon consultation with the WI Trappers association and review of the Best Management Practices for Trapping Wolves in the United States (Second Edition) published by the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies in 2016 the inside dimensions can be up to 8 inches. Additionally, upon conversation, the 750 sized pan trap is an ideal trap for this implication as well as its high regard for humane capture and hold. But the trap size is between 7 and 8 inches and moving to 8 inches allows for the use of this highly regarded trap. Additionally, according to the DNR's Dog Trap Incidents between 1997 and 2012 when foothold traps larger than seven inches were allowed on dry land, of the 76 incidences of non-targeted dogs being caught in non-water traps, not one was in a trap size greater than seven inches.

After consultation with the WI Trappers Association. The topic of dispatching an animal in a trap located within 50 feet of a sand, gravel, or dirt road is tricky. The use of single projectile firearms is prohibited, only shotgun firearms can be used to hunt in this capacity. We would like to see one exception be made. The exception would be for a rimfire firearm that is being exclusively used for the dispatching of a trapped animal. We ask this because a trapped wolf has to legally be dispatched with a firearm, but if the trapped wolf is within 50ft of a sand, gravel or dirt road, that individual is in violation regardless. This recommendation would apply to all trapping activities and we ask the legislature to update state statute to reflect this exception we are requesting.

I want to thank the DNR staff for their insight and willingness to engage in several conversations and answering WWFs questions preparing for today and I want to thank you all for the time and opportunity.

Cody Kamrowski

My name is Diane Cain

I am from Hixton, WI in Jackson County

Thank you for allowing me to speak. I live on a farm in the Central Forest Zone where a pair of wolves and I surprised one another, allowing me to look into the wolf's eyes. I felt a spiritual connection calling me to be a voice for wolves and that is why I needed to be here today.

I will be disclosing to you statements made by wolf hunters February 21-23, 2021; obtained by utilizing visual and audio observations including social media. The comments were shared by credible sources who observed the wolf hunt. My sources will remain confidential for their protection.

I am speaking to you in support of the Wolf Management Rule as drafted in 2023 because I recognize the Rule represents progress.

The top 5 things in the rule that should not change are:

- 1. Using adaptive management of the wolf population rather than an arbitrary, numeric population goal.**

My county of residence is approximately 60 % forested. The county and state forests in Jackson County are home to an array of wildlife including wolves and elk totaling 190,600 acres of public lands. The remaining 40 % is predominately farmland comprised of dairy, beef, hog, alpaca & sheep farmers with private tracts of woodland interspersed. WI DNR Wolf Depredation Reports confirm no livestock depredations in Jackson County from 2016-2024 verifying Wolves and livestock can coexist in farmland.

(Jackson County, Wisconsin's County Forest is over 122,600 acres. The Black River State Forest encompasses approximately 68,000 acres of public land in Jackson County.)

- 2. Establishing new statewide overall zone-specific and subzone harvest permits.**

Per JC "Don't stop now; the zone closures are more of a suggestion" Per Shannon, "Wherever they get shot, let them lay and you still have a tag."

These comments showcase a shooting gallery mindset which may be mitigated by this new rule.

- 3. Low quota subzones that extend 6 miles around Tribal reservation.**

Protections of Ma'iingan and ceded territories of the Ojibwe is imperative.

4. Registration time to report a wolf kill is now 8 hours.

Per Katie, “have him wait 24 hours b4 registering so they don’t shut the season down early”. Per Brian “and if this happens don’t register them until Saturday”.

Such gaming of the system perhaps will be reined in with the 8-hour registration time frame.

5. The time allowed for hound training on wolves has been restricted

“Another wolf hunting party was encountered in the national forest off Cty RD O. This 2nd hunting party had 13 vehicles with 10 of the trucks outfitted with partially full dog boxes, all were actively participating in the hunt, strung out along a dirt road watching for the wolf to cross followed by their hounds. Hound hunters Tyler and his hunting buddy bragged about the ability to participate in several wolf hunts despite neither hound hunter having an actual permit to kill a wolf.”

Perhaps limitations on wolf hound training will hinder scenarios such as these.

In summary I support the Wolf Management Rule.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to my testimony.

I am a houndsman and a true conservationist! I've consulted, advised, educated and guided wildlife resource professionals, youth, law enforcement and hunters in Wisconsin. I've always been cognoscente of how my actions, harvests and opinions that effect the environment. In my considerations and experiences, I have come to realize some concepts of wildlife management are simply ignored due to emotional attachment and or irrational perceptions. In Wisconsin wolves are that wildlife. Wolves deserve a place in Wisconsin's ecosystem just as other wildlife. Wolves have recovered and expanded in the Great lake's region, Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin, by every measurable standard ever set by the federal government and the states. We have put in place, management plans to sustain those populations while maintaining some of their effects on the environment and civilization. Wolves have effectively become "loved" by the anti-hunting communities, not due to their beauty or hierarchy as wildlife, but rather "loved" because they errored hunting attitudes and hunting opportunities abroad. Hunters and wildlife conservationists realize that continuing to protect wolves, when not needed, is in fact detrimental to wolves themselves, effectively "loving them to death". Appreciating and respecting wolves on the landscape is to manage them and their effects to a level where their health is stable, their negative effects are minimal and tolerance of that species is sustainable. We are in a critical stage with those attributes at high risk in Wisconsin. Michigan, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and many other states have established wildlife management plans for wolves to effectively sustain the population long term and those states should be allowed too legally do so. We, conservationists, Houndsmen and Houndswomen will continue the efforts to delist wolves in the great lake regions and abroad because it's the right thing to do for wolves, the environment, other wildlife and outdoor recreators. We feel the current structure of wolf management in Wisconsin is as viable and sustainable of a plan as any in the country and do not think the proposed changes are what wolves need. We have a tried-and-true system and all attributes that further complicate and over protect wolves are simply emotional reactions to common sense wolf management, which is what we already have in place! Now, let's focus on why the state government, " DNR" and the governor is not working, hand to hand with organizations and legislators to delist wolves in Wisconsin. Wolves need it and so do Wisconsin's farmers, hunters and recreationists.

Respectfully,
Lucas withrow
WBHA vice president



Formerly called the Humane
Society of the United States and
Humane Society International

1255 23rd St. NW, Suite 450
Washington, DC 20037
202-452-1100
humaneworld.org

**Testimony in support of Clearinghouse Rule 23-047 as written
By Megan Nicholson, Wisconsin State Director
Humane World for Animals**

March 4, 2025

Good afternoon, Chair Stafsholt, Vice Chair Jagler, Ranking Member Dassler-Alfheim, and members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Megan Nicholson and I am the Wisconsin state director for Humane World for Animals, formerly called the Humane Society of the United States. On behalf of our Wisconsin members and supporters, I am speaking in support of this rule as written. While our organization remains opposed to wolf trophy hunting and trapping, this rule is a necessary step toward preventing the frenzied and cruel wolf season that embarrassed our state in February 2021 from happening again.

Specifically, we support provisions reducing the time an individual has to report when they killed a wolf to within 8 hours, allowing the DNR to issue tags that are zone-specific, prohibiting the purposeful destruction or molestation of known wolf dens, and continuing to prohibit the use of telemetry gear for locating wolves unless authorized by the department. These provisions help prevent the state from going over quota, and prevent cruelty to wolf pups in dens and the use of a method that violates fair chase principles.

We also support the continued requirement that individuals seeking compensation for livestock losses must cooperate with the implementation of recommended non-lethal abatement. Scientific studies consistently demonstrate that non-lethal solutions that *prevent* conflicts are more effective than killing wolves. In fact, killing wolves can lead to greater conflicts by creating social chaos within the wolf population.

Finally, while we are opposed to the use of hounds to hunt wolves because it is irresponsible and unethical to purposefully pit domestic dogs against wolves, we support the provision that limits hound training on wolves. Using hounds to chase down and corner wolves stresses nontarget wildlife like deer and ground-nesting birds, and often cause trespassing conflicts.

Wolves are not only valued as individuals and as members of a family group, but they also provide incredible benefits to our ecosystem and our economy. They reduce deadly deer-vehicle collisions that are costly to families and society. It is vitally important that our rules limit wolf killing and harm to the extent allowable by law.

In sum, while we do not support the trophy hunting and trapping of wolves, we appreciate the changes that were made, and we respect the public process this rule went through. I urge you to move this rule forward as written. Thank you for your time and I'll stand for any questions.