

Guide to completing the draft wolf plan review questionnaire

For the first time in more than 20 years, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources is updating the state's wolf management plan. The DNR is currently accepting public comment on its draft plan and wolves need you to speak out against trophy hunting and trapping.

Background information

The wolf plan provides guidance on how the state manages wolves and covers important topics such as population monitoring, coexistence strategies and education and outreach. While the draft plan does not specify whether there would be a trophy hunting and trapping season on wolves if they were to lose their federal Endangered Species Act protections again, it does provide a decision framework (Appendix 2) that lays out the factors to consider in making such a decision. There are no sound scientific, economic or ethical justifications for allowing the trophy hunting and trapping of wolves. Still, the decision framework specifically states that a potential objective for a season could be simply to provide "outdoor opportunity" for those few who want to kill them. Wolves are highly intelligent, familial and social animals who keep our ecosystem healthy and biologically diverse. They should not be allowed to be killed for fun.

How to use this guide

The DNR is collecting public input on its draft wolf management plan through an online survey. Because the survey is cumbersome, we have drafted suggestions below for how to offer meaningful comments. Each of the comment boxes provided in the survey has a 255-character limit.

For each multiple-choice question in the survey (excluding the demographics questions at the end), we have highlighted our suggested answer based on our thorough reading of the draft plan. For each short answer question, we have provided bulleted suggested talking points in blue text. Due to the character limit for this type of question, we invite you to choose one or two of the talking points and use it/them to write your answer IN YOUR OWN WORDS. Please DO NOT use the talking points verbatim, as individual answers are most likely to be meaningfully considered by the DNR.

You can review the draft wolf management plan here: <https://files.dnr.state.mn.us/wildlife/wolves/wolf-plan.pdf?20220623-14>

When you are ready to complete the survey, you can do so here (you may need to sign in or create an account): https://engage.dnr.state.mn.us/wolf-plan/survey_tools/wolf-plan-update-draft-plan-review

Questionnaire guide

OVERALL PLAN COMMENTS

This questionnaire asks for your feedback on each of the sections of the plan specifically. If you would like to make any comments about the plan as a whole, please make them here.

1. *Do you have overall comments on the draft wolf plan? (255-character limit)*
 - While I appreciate that the decision framework laid out in Appendix 2 does not prescribe an outcome, the truth is that there is simply no scientific or ethical justification for wolf trophy hunting and trapping. Therefore, the plan should not allow for such seasons, even if wolves lose their federal protections.
 - Allowing wolf hunting and trapping can destroy entire packs and leave young wolves to starve. It has been shown to increase wolf poaching and decrease social tolerance for wolves. Wolf hunting and trapping should not be allowed in the updated plan.
 - Contrary to points made in the plan and in Appendix 2, Minnesota's previous wolf hunting and trapping seasons were not without consequence. More than 400 wolves were killed during Minnesota's first wolf season, including 120 pups. Not only did the season go against sound science and ethics, but a scientific study demonstrated many detrimental genetic consequences to the population just a year later.
 - Table A.1., which lays out the percentage of the wolf population that could be killed if the population is at a certain threshold and a season is established, contradicts the table in Figure 3. For example, if the population is between 1,600 and 2,000, Figure 3 indicates that the state should be cautious with the population and implement enhanced monitoring to determine the factors contributing to population decline. Yet Table A.1. implies that a season could still be established if wolves are delisted, and up to 5% of the population could be killed. The percentages given in Table A.1. also do not factor in that allowing wolf hunting and trapping increases wolf poaching.

2. *Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the draft wolf plan?*

- a. *Very satisfied*
- b. *Satisfied*
- c. ***Neutral***
- d. ***Dissatisfied***
- e. *Very dissatisfied*

We encourage you to choose the highlighted option that best represents your own thoughts about the plan.

VISION FOR WOLVES

The draft wolf plan articulates the following vision for wolves:

Minnesota's wolf population will continue to be healthy, widespread across suitable range, and stable after decades of recovery from historical lows. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) supports the presence of a healthy wolf population in the state, where many Minnesotans appreciate wolves for their intrinsic value and for their ecosystem and social benefits. Wolves on the landscape also bring challenges and require collaborative solutions to address human-wolf conflicts. The best available ecological, social, and cultural knowledge will inform wolf conservation.

3. *Do you have comments on the vision for wolves? (255-character limit)*

- I appreciate that the vision includes some of the many benefits wolves provide, including keeping our ecosystem healthy and biologically diverse.
- I appreciate that the vision recognizes the intrinsic value of wolves. Like all wildlife, wolves are valuable in their own right as individuals.

- Wolf management must be based on the best available science, social values and ethics.
- Wolves self-regulate their own populations. The Minnesota wolf plan should prioritize wolf stewardship and allow wolves to fill their ecological role, resulting in self-sustaining, self-regulating populations.
- The vision should also address the many challenges wolves face, including climate change, habitat loss and poaching.

INTRODUCTORY CONTENT

Following the vision for wolves, pages 1-21 of the plan cover foundation information to provide context for the remainder of the plan.

- I. *Introduction*
 1. *Vision for wolves*
 2. *Plan purpose and structure*
 3. *Plan context*
 4. *Planning process*
- II. *Background and current conditions*
 1. *Minnesota's wolf population*
 2. *Wolf management governance*
 3. *Wolf hunting and trapping*
 4. *Wolf depredation management*
 5. *Wolf research and monitoring*
- III. *Strategic issues*
 1. *Diverse and changing wildlife values*
 2. *Tribal wolf interests*
 3. *Resources to support Minnesota wolf management*
 4. *Wolf predation*
 5. *Wolf population objectives*
 6. *Wolf research and monitoring need*
4. *Do you have comments on the introductory content in the draft wolf plan? (255-character limit)*
 - The plan should be rooted in the best available science and Traditional Ecological Knowledge, social values, and ethics.
 - The plan's discussion of the results of the 2019-2020 study of Minnesotan's values, beliefs and attitudes is problematic. Deer hunters and livestock owners represent a small segment of the population. Yet, these subsets of the population were singled out to be surveyed separately, and the results of their surveys are discussed as though they should be weighted equally to the survey of all Minnesota residents. This contradicts the plan's correct statement that mutualistic values (that is, that wild animals are part of our social community and deserving of caring) are increasing in the state.
 - The introductory content describes Minnesota's previous wolf trophy hunting and trapping seasons as "well-regulated." However, there are no scientific or ethical reasons to trophy hunt or trap wolves. Recent studies demonstrate that wolf hunting and trapping can rip apart wolf families, increase conflicts with livestock and increase wolf poaching.

PLAN GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The goals in this plan are long-term, outcome-oriented purpose statements. Public input was instrumental in formulating these goals. Pages 21-29 of the plan include the following goals:

- Goal 1. Maintain a well-connected and resilient wolf population
- Goal 2. Collaborate with diverse partners to collectively support wolf plan implementation
- Goal 3. Minimize and address human-wolf conflicts while recognizing diverse wolf values
- Goal 4. Inform and engage the public about wolves in Minnesota and their conservation
- Goal 5. Conduct research to inform wolf management
- Goal 6. Administer the wolf program to fulfill agency responsibilities and public and partner needs

Below each of the goals, this plan lists objectives and strategies:

- Objectives are activities or outputs that support plan goals that can be tracked to determine progress through the life of the plan.
- Strategies are specific, actionable statements describing how the DNR will achieve its goals and objectives.

Please refer to the draft plan in responding to the questions below on each of the plan's goals. There is no specific question about Goal 6 since it is internal agency focused.

5. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with Goal 1?
 - a. Very satisfied
 - b. Satisfied
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Dissatisfied
 - e. Very dissatisfied
6. Do you have any comments about Goal 1? (255-character limit)
 - Wolves self-regulate their own populations based on prey and habitat availability, as well as their own territorial and social nature. They do not need to be "managed" to arbitrary population objectives.
 - Objective 1B indicates that "management actions" (often code for killing wolves) should be considered if the wolf population is above 3,000 and wolf distribution is expanding. No scientific justification is given for this threshold, and it seems arbitrary.
7. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with Goal 2?
 - a. Very satisfied
 - b. Satisfied
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Dissatisfied
 - e. Very dissatisfied
8. Do you have any comments about Goal 2? (255-character limit)
 - I appreciate the goal of collaborating with diverse partners, including sovereign tribal, institutional partners and NGOs on research and monitoring, coexistence and education.
9. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with Goal 3?
 - a. Very satisfied
 - b. Satisfied
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Dissatisfied

e. Very dissatisfied

10. Do you have any comments about Goal 3? (255-character limit)

- I appreciate the emphasis on the use of nonlethal conflict prevention methods. The best available science shows that nonlethal tools are the most effective means of preventing already rare conflicts.
- Scientific research demonstrates that killing wolves does little in the long run to prevent conflicts between livestock and wolves, which are already rare. In fact, killing wolves can actually exacerbate conflicts by disrupting wolves' complex social structure.
- Private wolf trappers should never be used to kill wolves in response to conflict.
- I appreciate Objective 3C to provide the public with information about wolf conflicts and agency response in a transparent way. This should be done in a timely manner.
- Euphemisms such as "wolf control" and words that imply maliciousness on the part of wolves, such as "depredation," should be removed from the plan and replaced with more accurate language.

11. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with Goal 4?

- a. Very satisfied
- b. Satisfied
- c. Neutral
- d. Dissatisfied
- e. Very dissatisfied

12. Do you have any comments about Goal 4? (255-character limit)

- The public should be informed about wolf population monitoring, conservation and management in a timely, transparent and easily accessible manner.
- Any efforts to engage wolf stakeholders should reflect the values of all Minnesotans, most of whom value wolves and do not want them trophy hunted or trapped.

13. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with Goal 5?

- a. Very satisfied
- b. Satisfied
- c. Neutral
- d. Dissatisfied
- e. Very dissatisfied

14. Do you have any comments about Goal 5? (255-character limit)

- Under Objective 5C, it is imperative that the values of all Minnesotans are taken into account. The results of surveys of small subsets of the population, such as deer hunters or livestock owners, should not be discussed as though they are weighed equally to surveys of all Minnesota residents. If subsets of the population are surveyed separately, wildlife watchers and other outdoor recreationists who do not hunt/trap should be surveyed as well.
- I appreciate Objective 5D to advance the information about and use of nonlethal tools to prevent already rare conflicts with livestock.
- I have concerns about Objective 5E. Wolves are highly intelligent and social animals and should not be killed in the name of research.

PLAN PARTICIPATION

Please answer these questions on your own, as they apply to you as an individual.

15. How much of the draft plan did you read before beginning this questionnaire?
 - a. All
 - b. Most
 - c. Some
 - d. None

16. Did you participate in any of the input opportunities offered for this plan update? (Check all that apply.)
 - a. No/I don't remember
 - b. I attended a virtual open house in September-October 2020
 - c. I completed an online questionnaire in September-November 2020
 - d. I participated on the Wolf Plan Advisory Committee or Wolf Technical Committee
 - e. Other (please specify)

TELL US ABOUT YOURSELF

Please answer these questions on your own, as they apply to you as an individual.

17. Which of the following represent your primary interests in wolf conservation and management? (Check all that apply.)
 - a. Farming/ranching and livestock depredation
 - b. Impact of wolves on deer and deer hunting
 - c. Impact of wolves on moose and moose hunting
 - d. Wolf protection
 - e. Wolf hunting and trapping
 - f. Wolf depredation on pets and other domestic animals
 - g. Wolf ecology and research
 - h. Other (please specify)

18. Are you a Minnesota resident?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

19. What is your gender identity?
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
 - c. Nonbinary
 - d. Prefer not to answer
 - e. Prefer to self-identify

20. What is your race/ethnicity?
 - a. White
 - b. Black or African American
 - c. Hispanic or Latino
 - d. American Indian or Alaska Native
 - e. Asian or Asian American
 - f. Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
 - g. Prefer not to answer
 - h. Prefer to self-identify