



MICHIGAN DNR IS ASKING FOR PUBLIC OPINION

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The Michigan DNR is in the process of updating the 2015 Wolf Management Plan and is asking for input via a citizen survey. [COMPLETE THE SURVEY](#) by **January 31, 2022**

If you have additional documentation you wish to submit regarding the survey, send to Shawn Riley rileysh2@msu.edu If you wish to submit comments or scientific evidence regarding the development of the Wolf Plan Update, send those comments to dnr-wmac@michigan.gov

The survey aligns with the [2015 Wolf Management Plan](#) which had four principle goals 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 first four questions address these goals with the option of selecting: Very Satisfied; Somewhat Satisfied; Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied; Somewhat dissatisfied; Very dissatisfied

Question 5 gives you the option to write what you would like see changed in the goals (You can use any of my suggested comments for goals 1-4 and include in Question 5).

Goal 1 (Question 1) – Maintain a viable wolf population

Background: A viable population is a minimum population. The 1992 Recovery Plan for the Eastern Timber Wolf indicated: “A population of at least 200 wolves . . . is believed to be large enough to be viable, as well as to have sufficient genetic diversity, to exist indefinitely in total isolation from any other wolf population” (USFWS 1992:25). The DNR adopted this

standard in 1997 for removing wolves from the State list of threatened and endangered species when there were 200 wolves in the state for 5 consecutive years. This was achieved and wolves in Michigan are now classified as a game animal.

Suggested comments: Wolves should not be managed based on an artificial population goal. We support the plan which states "This plan does not identify a target population size, nor does it establish an upper limit for the number of wolves in the State."

Goal 2 (Question 2) - Fully Support the Goal to facilitate wolf-related Benefits

Suggested comments: DNR has done little to promote the ecological, cultural or intrinsic value of wolves. DNR must actively pursue this goal through press releases and social media

Goal 3 (Question 3) – Minimize wolf-related conflicts

Background: The goal itself is good. The plan states, “wolf-related conflicts can be best handled on an individual basis” which we support. DNR does address wolf-livestock conflicts on a timely basis but has done little to educate the public about perceived conflicts.

Suggested Comments: DNR must do more to educate the public regarding perceived threats to human safety; predator/prey relationships; must educate producers and hound hunters on effective ways to minimize conflicts.

Goal 4 (Question 4) – Science base wolf management with socially acceptable methods

Background: The goal itself is good. The plan states, “A process of social deliberation is often necessary to determine which science based management approaches are acceptable to individual stakeholder groups and society at large.”

Suggested Comments: Using scientific data, the DNR needs to increase social tolerance for wolves through an educational campaign

Strategies

The next section of the survey addresses the 12 strategies of the plan. Each strategy is summarized with the option to add comments.

Strategy 6.1 (Question 6) – This strategy places a strong emphasis on educating the public.

(Question 7) Suggested Comments: DNR must improve working relationships with wolf advocacy groups; update the website with an annual monitoring report summarizing the wolf population, known wolf mortalities and the causes of those mortalities; update the website with verified livestock predation; address misinformation in the press and social media; consider adding a chapter to the Hunter Education course covering wolf biology, the benefits of wolves to the ecosystem, predator/prey relationships and penalties for poaching.

Strategy 6.2 (Question 8) – Maintain active research

(Question 9) Suggested Comments: DNR should update the website with the results of the many wolf related research projects DNR has supported. Support research to determine impact wolves may have in minimizing diseases in deer, elk and moose.

Strategy 6.3 (Question 10) – Enact and enforce regulations regarding wolves

(Question 11) Suggested Comments: DNR must work with legislators to increase fines and penalties for the poaching of wolves so that the fines and penalties for killing a wolf are similar to those for illegally killing deer, elk or moose.

Strategy 6.4 (Question 12)– Maintain sustainable populations of prey

Background: Michigan has a robust deer population. Research demonstrates that weather, not wolves has the greatest impact on deer survival.

(Question 13) Suggested Comments – Update the Deer Hunting Digest with information about predator / prey relationships and the positive ecological role of wolves

Strategy 6.5 (Question 14) – Maintain habitat to sustain wolf population / prey

Background: DNR has implemented many projects, including grant opportunities to improve deer habitat. Michigan's Upper Peninsula has vast areas of public lands for wolves

(Question 15) Suggested Comments – DNR should work closely with large private landowners to insure linkages for wolf dispersal and major logging corporations to minimize disturbances at den and rendezvous sites

Strategy 6.6 (Question 16) – Manage effects of diseases on the wolf population

(Question 17) Suggested Comments – DNR should post the results of any studies, disease detection, parasites detected during the collaring of wolves and/or necropsies to their website.

Strategy 6.7 (Question 18) – Achieve compatibility between wolf distribution and social carrying capacity

Background: DNR has done nothing to improve social tolerance of wolves. In Michigan, residents are allowed to feed deer, near homes which sometimes attracts wolves, yet the practice continues.

(Question 19) Suggested Comments – DNR must make a concerted effort to counter misinformation in the press and on social media. DNR must create informational bulletins

(and post to the website) factual information about wolves and DNR must issue press releases regarding the benefits of wolves and living with wolves.

Strategy 6.8 (Question 20)– Facilitate positive wolf-human interactions and other wolf related benefits

Background: DNR has done nothing to promote opportunities for the general public to experience and appreciate wolves, nor have they issued any press releases highlighting the benefits derived from the presence of wolves (key components of this strategy)

(Question 21) Suggested Comments – The DNR must do more to educate the public about wolves by updating the website and issuing regular press releases. Add a chapter to the Hunter Education Course, covering wolf biology, the relationship of predator/prey and the positive benefits of wolves to the ecosystem and penalties for poaching.

DNR must strengthen their relationship with Native American communities and the cultural value of wolves to Native Americans.

Strategy 6.9 (Question 22) – Manage actual and perceived threats to human safety

Background: DNR has done nothing to counter misinformation being spread about threats to human safety or ways to minimize habituation of wolves. Unfortunately there have been several instances of wolves being habituated and when those animals have been lethally removed, it is those instances that are publicized leading the public to believe all wolves pose a threat. DNR regularly issues press releases advising residents to remove bird feeders to minimize habituation of bears, yet, does not discourage the feeding of deer near residences.

(Question 23) Suggested Comments – The DNR must update the website with scientific data addressing perceived and actual threats to human safety; The DNR should discourage the feeding of deer near occupied dwellings.

Strategy 6.10 (Question 24) – Manage predation of domestic animals

Background: DNR does a good job in working with producers. In the past year, the DNR hired a contract employee with Wildlife Services to address non-lethal measures at farms. The UP of Michigan has about 900 working farms with about 50,000 head of cattle, yet only a handful of farms routinely experience a conflict. In 2021, there were 12 events (9 at one farm), with a total of 4 farms that experienced a conflict.

(Question 25) Suggested Comments – DNR should post statistical data regarding livestock predation on their website

Strategy 6.11 (Question 26) – Minimize negative impacts of captive wolves and wolf-dog hybrids

Background: The Michigan Wolf-Dog Cross Act (Public Act 246 of 2000) prohibits the ownership and possession of wolf-dog hybrids, except under permit.

(Question 27) Suggested Comments – Continue to support the prohibitions associated with the ownership of wolf-dog hybrids

Strategy 6.12 (Question 28) – Develop socially and biologically responsible management recommendations regarding public harvest (hunt) of wolves – for wolf related conflicts / public recreation

Background: The 2013 Michigan wolf hunt was promoted to the general public as necessary to reduce conflicts and established three hunting zones. However, the statistical data DNR used to create those zones, included farms that had one incident over a three year period. DNR made the zones so large and included vast tracts of public lands where no conflicts had ever occurred. And while, the hunt was promoted as necessary for conflict resolution, it really was to provide a recreational hunt. Wolves were killed just outside Porcupine Wilderness State Park, Sturgeon Gorge Wilderness area and Black River Scenic area. Meanwhile, no wolves were killed near one of the farms that has had repeated conflicts (In 2021, that particular farm had 9 events).

(Question 29) Suggested Comments: Lethal action should only be implemented when non-lethal measures have failed. Any action should be conducted in a timely manner (as of strategy 10) and must be directed towards the offending wolf or wolves. With wolves under state management, DNR can (and has) implemented lethal control; producers and dog owners are allowed to kill any wolf in the act of attacking their livestock or pet; producers can be issued permits to allow individuals to shoot wolves on a farm that has experience predation. These actions make a wolf hunt to resolve conflict unnecessary.

There is no scientific evidence to support the need for a wolf hunt (to resolve conflict or a recreational hunt). Predation has remained low; Wolves pose little risk to humans (and can be killed regardless of federal status if such an event should occur); Wolves are not negatively impacting deer populations.

(Question 30) Additional Comments:

Voters of Michigan have already spoken:

In 2014, proposal 1 was put before voters and would have allowed wolf hunting seasons and the designation the wolf as a game animal. This proposal was rejected 54.9% to 45%

Proposal 2 would have allowed the Natural Resources Commission to directly designate game species and determine hunting seasons. It was rejected 63.8% to 36.1%

It should be noted that Michigan United Conservation Club and MI Hunting Dog Federation (each who hold a seat on the five person Wolf Management Advisory Council) were among the top financial contributors promoting a Yes vote for both ballot initiatives.

Michigan has a good Wolf Management Plan, however, most of the components of the plan, in particular, educating the public about wolves have never been implemented.

DNR needs to develop a plan to address the poaching of wolves. At WMAC meetings, in the presence of Conservation Officers, individuals claim to know of those who have taken matters into their own hands. We have heard threats that if a wolf hunt is not authorized, even more poaching will occur. While some is just talk, across various hunting social media sites, whenever a photo or an article about wolves is posted, it is common to see remarks of “bang”; or “if I see one, it will be dead”. While I realize it is the responsibility of each organization to patrol its own site, DNR could issue periodic press releases, as part of its education outreach, by explaining that a wolf crossing a field or seeing a wolf while in a deer blind is not justification to kill a wolf and violators will be prosecuted. DNR could also ask for the public’s help in identifying poachers.