



SIERRA CLUB

MONTANA CHAPTER

Stop Senseless Attacks on Wolves

HB 176, HB 258 and HB 259 threaten Montana's wolf population by greatly expanding hunting/trapping

Oppose HB 176 (Rep. Maness), HB 258 and HB 259 (Rep. Fielder)

- These bills eliminate the authority of the Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission) to regulate wolf hunting/trapping, **requiring an unlimited quota to reduce the wolf population to 550 (HB 176).**
- HB 176 was amended yet again to require Fish, Wildlife, and Parks (FWP) to permit inhumane methods of killing wolves, such as baiting traps/snares and night hunting on private lands. It also requires FWP to use modeling data from the previous year to calculate the number of wolves to be slaughtered, which would likely lead to outdated and incorrect population estimates, making it possible that the wolf population will dip below the stated threshold.
- Lawmakers are disingenuously attempting to use population thresholds to reduce the wolf population by as much as possible while trying to avoid relisting under the Endangered Species Act.
- HB 258 and 259 **require** more extreme hunting measures including an **extended wolf hunting season through June - putting whelping mothers and newborn wolves at risk (HB 258), and requiring the Commission to authorize an unlimited quota per person, baiting of traps and snares, and night hunting with infrared scopes on private lands (259).** These bills circumvent the Commission and its public decision-making process for managing wolves.

The Most Recent Attack on Montana's Wolf Populations

Wolf populations have been under attack in Montana for many years. Proponents of reducing their population even further argue that they are destroying ungulate populations and posing undue hardships on livestock producers. The attacks on wolves have become increasingly senseless with proponents determined to reduce wolf populations even though these reductions are neither economically sound nor scientifically based.

- In 2021 several bills were passed substantially increasing the means with which people could kill wolves with one intent - to reduce the wolf population.
- Each year since, the Commission has increased the wolf hunting quota and is currently facing litigation regarding their wolf management tactics. In fact, the fiscal note for HB 176 mentions the existing litigation and how it might conflict with this bill.
- Montana's elk population is healthy. Starting in 2019, FWP permitted 3 elk per hunter, and added shoulder seasons to allow for the hunting of elk for six months out of the year. This is not indicative of declining elk herds. During the hearing for HB 176 and the now defeated HB 222, FWP testified that they have more elk than managers would prefer in most regions of the state.
- Claims that the wolf population has to be further reduced to protect elk is blatantly false. At some large ranches in Montana, FWP supports draconian elk culling practices that kill large numbers of elk - including close range shooting of elk along fencelines. This belies the argument that wolves are adversely impacting elk population numbers.

For more information about our legislative work, contact Caitlin Piserchia at caitlin.piserchia@sierraclub.org.

- These bills violate any sense of ethical, fair chase hunting, and would allow the killing of pregnant females and pups just out of the den. It also allows hunting when wolf pelts are in poor condition.
- FWP does not allow the hunting of other species during the summer. These bills set up inherent conflicts between users on our public lands – and may endanger hikers, bikers, campers, etc..
- Given the expansion of chronic wasting disease in Montana, the role wolves play on the landscape in removing sick and weak animals is more important than ever.

These bills are inhumane and ill conceived. Please call your legislator and urge them to vote NO.

FOR HB 258 and 176 WHICH HAVE PASSED the Senate Fish and Game Committee: Sample call script for calling your Senator: (Call 406-444-4800 and ask to leave a message for your Senator between 7:30 and 5). [Please remember to be polite]

“Senator { }, My name is {FIRST LAST} and I’m a constituent calling from {town}. I’m calling to urge you to vote no on HB 176 and HB 258. These bills unnecessarily target wolves for further slaughter at a time when they are needed more than ever on the landscape to combat such issues as Chronic Wasting Disease within the elk and deer populations. Please do not allow the unnecessary expansion of wolf killing measures just to placate a very small but vocal minority. Vote no on HB 176 and HB 258 as the vast majority of Montanans support fair chase ethical hunting – not the unmitigated removal of wolves.”

FOR HB 259 which is awaiting Executive Action in the Senate Fish and Game Committee: Sample call script for calling the Senate Fish and Game Committee: (Call 406-444-4800 and ask to leave a message for the Senate Fish and Game Committee between 7:30 and 5). [Please remember to be polite]

“Senator { }, My name is {FIRST LAST} and I’m a constituent calling from {town}. I’m calling to urge you to vote no on HB 259. This bills unnecessarily targets wolves for further slaughter at a time when they are needed more than ever on the landscape to combat such issues as Chronic Wasting Disease within the elk and deer populations. Please do not allow the expansion of wolf killing measures just to placate a very small but vocal minority. Vote no on HB 259 as the vast majority of Montanans support fair chase ethical hunting – not the unmitigated removal of wolves.”

Check out the current bill text and bill updates on [HB 176](#), [HB 258](#), and [HB 259](#) on [bills.legmt.gov](#) for more information & [our website](#) ([sierraclub.org/montana](#)) to get more involved.