



# Keep Michigan Wolves Protected

November 5, 2013

Governor Rick Snyder  
P.O. Box 30013  
Lansing, MI 48909

Governor Snyder,

In the wake of the damning exposé by MLive this week revealing distortions and falsehoods brandished during the debate in Michigan to remove federal and state protections for wolves – arguments that played a decisive role in shaping the trajectory of the debate – Keep Michigan Wolves Protected asks that you direct the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the Natural Resources Commission (NRC) to cancel the wolf hunt slated to begin on November 15. Public policy should be grounded on the best information and science, and in this case, the state of Michigan fell far short of that. In fact, the rationale for the removal of wolves from the state’s list of protected species, and the subsequent opening of a trophy hunting season on a small wolf population, was predicated on a series of fraudulent claims, including claims that were included not just in the public debate but also in actual resolutions approved by state lawmakers.

You were asked to sign two bills directly on this issue – one designating the wolf as a game species, and a second bill to allow the NRC to remove the protected status for wolves and other species and designate them as game animals. In the run-up to these bills getting to your desk, advocates for them had invented trumped up charges against wolves or passed on information with no factual basis, as reported by MLive.

Whether it was false claims about “weapons of mass destruction” in Iraq during the Bush presidency, or claims that not a single American will lose his or her health care by the Obama administration, or the shutdown of the Congress by lawmakers last month, the public has enormous skepticism about politics and the things that elected officials and agency personnel will say and do to drive their policy goals. While the wolf issue may be a small matter compared to many other national or state public policy debates, the process here fell far short of a deliberative, factual, science-based discussion and was, in many respects, disgraceful.

Because the debate and policy decisions were predicated on demonstrably false claims, we ask that you direct the DNR to revoke authorization for the wolf hunting season and allow the Michigan voters to decide the issue one year from now. You would be cancelling just a single wolf hunting season, and given that Michigan has gone 50 years without such a season, you’d simply be preserving a long-standing policy and maintaining the status quo in order for the people to have a greater say and participation in the democratic process.

That’s how the decision-making process should have played out anyway. After lawmakers passed a bill in the lame duck session of the legislature in 2012 that you signed to make the wolf a game species, citizens gathered more than 250,000 signatures in a 67-day period to place a referendum on the ballot to give voters an opportunity to decide the issue. Even before that issue was certified for the ballot, but as an obvious attempt to nullify that citizen effort, lawmakers passed a second bill to give the NRC the authority to remove wolves and other species from the protected list. That was an undermining of voting rights and an end-run around a fair process. By suspending the hunt, you’d repair some of the damage done by that second legislative act, which was designed to subvert a constitutionally protected right of petitioning the government through the referendum process.

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We also ask, as a matter of government integrity and sound management, that you hold those accountable in your administration who were responsible for false and misleading statements associated with this issue. We urge you to conduct an independent investigation and get the facts on how a fair-minded examination of wolf management veered so badly into fictional accounts and misrepresentations.

The MLive series enumerates a series of gross misrepresentations by state lawmakers, DNR experts, and private citizens advocating for the killing of wolves. They include these facts:

- The language in House Resolution 48 of 2011 and Senate Resolution 39 of 2011, sent to Congress to support the removal of the Great Lakes population of wolves from the federal Endangered Species List, grossly distorted the details of a wolf sighting outside an Upper Peninsula daycare. The incident, cited in the resolutions by the authors, never occurred, and it was instrumental in drumming up fear about imagined wolf attacks on children.
- The Department of Natural Resources' fur bearer specialist and Michigan United Conservation Clubs' "Conservationist of the Year" Adam Bump intentionally misled public radio listeners with comments about wolves showing up in people's backyards. He has since renounced his false claims, but again, after the legislature took action on the resolutions and the two bills.
- The Natural Resources Commission solicited public feedback on the wolf hunt and then deleted or ignored more than 10,000 email comments from members of the public opposing the hunt.
- More than 60 percent of wolf-livestock incidents in the U.P. have occurred on a single farm, whose owner has a history of potentially criminal animal care, baited wolves using deer carcasses on his property, left bones and carcasses of cattle in his fields in violation of state laws and that also acted as bait, and still got tens of thousands in reimbursements and equipment and services that he squandered in his obvious attempts to exaggerate the impact wolves had on his property. The purported incidents of wolf depredation on his property were a central argument of lawmakers and others who demanded the hunt.

These revelations have done irreparable damage to the trust and integrity of public officials and government employees associated with pushing the hunt. The partial remedy is to allow citizens to decide this issue in November 2014, and cancel the wolf hunt scheduled to begin in just a couple weeks on November 15.

We urge you immediate consideration of these requests. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Jill Fritz

Director

Keep Michigan Wolves Protected