

FREE

On Wisconsin Outdoors



with the
Dick Ellis Experts

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DICK ELLIS

Wolf Hunt Meets Harvest Goal

Are state population numbers far understated?

Wisconsin hunters took just three days to harvest 216 wolves during the February hunt, reinforcing the belief of thousands of Wisconsin sportsmen that the official stated population of 1195 wolves is significantly below the actual count. The harvest of 216 wolves is 8 percent over the harvest quota of 200 wolves unanimously voted for by the Natural Resources Board on February 15. Heading into the hunt, 119 wolves were allocated for state hunters with permit holders determined through an application/drawing process, and 81 wolves allocated to the Ojibwe Tribes in accordance with their treaty rights within the Ceded Territory.

“Putting the season together, we’re looking for a quota that will not result in a significant population change,” said DNR Wildlife Biologist Randy Johnson at a media briefing held Feb 25. “The population models are a big part of that and yet there is also always uncertainty.”

“There’s still a probability that a quota of 200 may reduce the population or it may allow the population to expand. At 216, we’re at a relatively small percentage over total quota. I would say there is low concern at a population level of any significant effect there.”

Following established precedent, the Ojibwe tribes elected not to contribute to harvest numbers despite claiming their allotted quota of 81 wolves. In Wisconsin’s three previous wolf hunts held in 2012/13, 2013/14 and 2014/15, the Ojibwe also claimed their allotment but did not participate in the hunt, contributing 0 wolves to each harvest total. Contacted directly by OWO, a spokesman for the Great Lakes Indian Fish & Wildlife Commission (GLIFW) said that approach remained consistent going into the 2021 hunt.

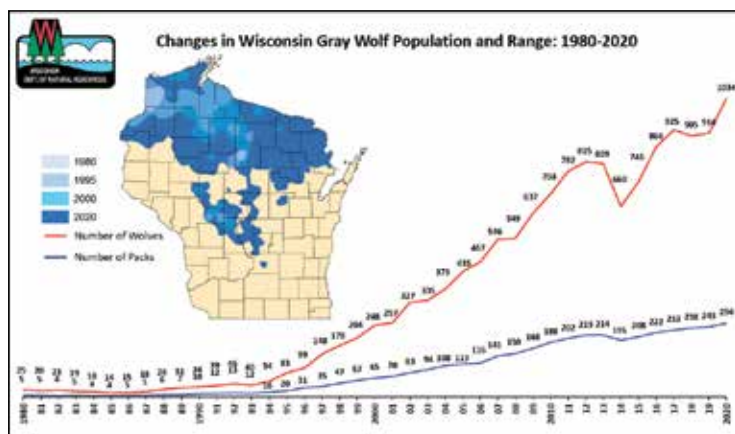
“As in previous wolf hunting and trapping seasons, Ojibwe tribes opted not to issue permits to individual tribal members,” said Charlie Otto Rasmussen for GLIFW. “For Ojibwe leaders and wildlife managers, the best use of tribal wolf quota declarations is to keep live animals, live wolves on the landscape, performing their important role in maintaining healthy ecosystems.”

“Statewide wolf hunting seasons are not an effective approach to addressing local livestock depredations. Hunting wolves is not necessary to protect humans. This past season is an example of poor wildlife management, made worse by the state’s inability to control the kill.”

On Wisconsin Outdoors’ Publishers respectfully disagree. A total harvest goal of 200, almost precisely hit, was the priority and should be the post-season focus. After four consecutive non-contributing harvest seasons by the Ojibwe, future management goals should acknowledge and accept that 0 will be a constant regardless of harvest allotment claims by the tribes. State harvest goals should be set higher accordingly; this after all is a game management issue.

From extensive personal field experience in the north country, years of discussion with trappers, avid hunters and wildlife experts, and ongoing scrutiny of Wisconsin wolf management, other related subjects need to be addressed. Problems include apparent inaccurate pack and overall population counts and proper correlating harvest goals; and wolf predation of whitetail deer particularly in the high wolf population territories of Wisconsin that have negatively affected both deer hunting participation and the overall economy.

A state recovery plan initiated in 1989 set a goal of reclassifying the wolf



The 1999 Wisconsin Wolf Management Plan, and 2006/2007 addendum, established a state management goal of 350 wolves. As the above graph shows, that goal was met in 2004. Since then, through a series of legal moves, proper management has been prevented allowing wolf numbers to skyrocket. As of this writing, and taking into account the 216 wolves taken during the 2021 hunt, Wisconsin’s wolf population is still 629 above the recommended Wisconsin Wolf Advisory Committee goal of 350. 1195 (Wisconsin DNR stated wolf population before the 2021 hunt) - 216 (Number of wolves taken during the 2021 hunt) = 979 (Present Wisconsin wolf population) - 350 (Wisconsin Wolf Advisory Committee recommended goal) = 629 (Wisconsin wolves above the recommended goal).

from state endangered to threatened once the population remained at 80 or more wolves for three consecutive years. The 1999 Wisconsin Wolf Management Plan and plan addendum in 2006/07 delisted the wolf from state-threatened to a non-listed species when the population reached 250 and set a management goal of 350 animals outside of tribal reservation lands.

The real story following the 2021 harvest season is that the Wisconsin wolf population is approximately 630 animals over the recommended management goal if we accept the state pre-hunt population count of just under 1200 animals. Common sense, though, and the post-season harvest number of 216 wolves taken by Wisconsin hunters in just three days provide anecdotal evidence that the wolf population is probably much higher than 1200 animals. Expert trappers and hunters utilized and trusted as sources of expertise for decades by this outdoor columnist place the population conservatively at 2000 animals.

As efficient as the Wisconsin hunter is, hunters even using dogs would not be able to take more than 18 percent of the Wisconsin population in less than three days if 1200 accurately reflected real numbers, especially knowing that the wolf is a wary and elusive prey. They also point to population counts ignoring non-traditional wolf territory south of highway 64, and missing packs and lone animals both on southern terrain and in traditional count areas north. They provided OWO trail cam evidence as evidence

Many Wisconsin deer hunters believe the population is much higher based on increased sightings of wolves and sign, and decreased sighting and harvesting of deer in direct correlation. Many label the sighting of deer as rare or even non-existent.

“I have hunted northern Bayfield County for 58 years,” James M. Johannes emailed OWO February 28. “I know the area I hunt very well

and I have witnessed and understand the cyclical impact that winter, forestry, bear, coyote and bobcats have on the deer herd. There have, however, been two noteworthy changes over the years in the area I hunt. The first is pulping activity which has been extensive and should have been great for the deer herd. The second is the secular explosion of the wolf population which I know from trail cam pictures is at least twice the latest DNR estimate in our area.”

“The fact that it is nearly impossible to find a deer, or any sign of deer, in our heavily pulped area attests to the overwhelming impact the wolves have had on deer. What was once a quality hunting experience is now an exercise in futility. If this continues it will be nearly impossible to interest future generations of hunters in partaking in the once great tradition of quality big woods public deer hunting in Wisconsin.”

OWO Bear expert and columnist Mike Foss misses quality deer hunting in northern Wisconsin. He labels the decline in the deer hunting experience directly related to the increase in wolves, devastating. The conflict, he said, between those who make management decisions and the hunting public is coming to a head.

“It’s growing to a boiling point but it’s a good thing that it is moving toward that,” he said. “People need answers. They want truthful answers. And they deserve it. We’re losing our tradition of hunting in Wisconsin.”



A wolf pack that includes at least 9 animals is caught on trail camera in Northern Bayfield County October 19, 2020.

DICK ELLIS

Crying Wolf

Foundation of truth imperative to sound management

There is no room for crying wolf in wolf management.

Proper wolf management begins with establishing an accurate current population estimate, establishing a population goal, and establishing a harvest goal to reach the intended population number. Reaching the population goal through harvest is not at all about who harvests the animals, but it is imperative that all participating parties act in good faith.

Following established precedent, the Ojibwe tribes elected not to contribute to harvest numbers despite claiming their legally allotted quota of 81 wolves in the 2021 hunt recently concluded. As In Wisconsin’s three previous wolf hunts held in 2012/13, 2013/14 and 2014/15, the Ojibwe also claimed their allotment but did not participate in the hunt, contributing 0 wolves to each harvest total. Contacted directly by OWO, a spokesman for the Great Lakes Indian Fish & Wildlife Commission (GLIFW) said that approach remained consistent going into the 2021 hunt.

“As in previous wolf hunting and trapping seasons, Ojibwe tribes opted not to issue permits to individual tribal members,” said Charlie Otto Rasmussen for GLIFW. “For Ojibwe leaders and wildlife managers, the best use of tribal wolf quota



declarations is to keep live animals, live wolves on the landscape, performing their important role in maintaining healthy ecosystems.”

“Statewide wolf hunting seasons are not an effective approach to addressing local livestock depredations. Hunting wolves is not necessary to protect humans. This past season is an example of poor wildlife management, made worse by the state’s inability to control the kill.”

On Wisconsin Outdoors’ Publishers respectfully disagreed. A 2021 total harvest of 216 wolves was very close to the intended goal of

200, and the Wisconsin wolf population remains alive and well. In fact, it is our opinion that pre-wolf hunt numbers were closer to 2000 animals, at minimum, than the 1195 estimate used by the DNR.

OWO has submitted to Wisconsin DNR personnel leading the wolf management effort 35 questions and received answers which are posted for your review under Ellis Blogs on our homepage at www.onwisconsinoutdoors.com. OWO questions specific to tribal participation in the wolf harvest are below. Tribal intent of contributing 0 toward state wolf harvest goals is clearly established, despite consistent tribal allotment claims to 50 percent of the intended overall harvest in the ceded territories. The state refusing to acknowledge that fact will be a monumental roadblock to establishing and maintaining healthy wolf numbers in the future.

Moving forward, after four consecutive non-contributing harvest seasons by the Ojibwe, current management goals should acknowledge and accept that 0 will be a constant regardless of harvest allotment claims by the tribes. State harvest goals should be set higher accordingly.

This is a wolf management issue. Period. It requires honesty in the numbers to reach the intended population goal.

The wolf management questions below are some of 35 questions submitted by OWO to the DNR and posted with answers under Ellis Blogs at www.onwisconsinoutdoors.com. The DNR is also seeking public input on the Fall 2021 wolf harvest season and ongoing revision to the state's wolf management plan. Connect with Wolf Management Plan. Comment by May 15.

Was it the assumption of NRB/DNR when setting the harvest quota that the tribes would attempt to harvest the allotment they claim, or did the 200 wolf harvest goal reflect the belief that the tribes would harvest 0 animals?

The total harvest quota is determined based on biological and scientific data. The Ojibwe tribes have legal treaty rights to declare for up to 50% of allowable harvest within the ceded territory. The DNR made no assumptions about tribal harvest intentions. Once the tribal declaration was received by DNR, permit numbers available to state hunters were calculated.

With tribal harvest numbers the last 4 seasons being 0, should future harvest goals be set knowing that the tribal contribution to the harvest total will be 0?

The DNR will continue to include tribal consultation as part of the process to establish annual harvest quotas and use that consultation to inform quota recommendations.

The 2021 hunt began with allotments of 119 for state hunters and 81 for tribal members. Was the DNR harvest goal 200 or 119, regardless of tribal contribution to the harvest?

The full quota is divided between the state and tribes (119 wolves are allocated to the state, and 81 wolves are allocated to the Ojibwe Tribes in response to the Tribes' declaration and in accordance with their treaty rights within the Ceded Territory). The DNR strived to meet the statewide quota (119) as close as possible, but it was difficult in the February season based

on the number of tags that were issued under the current season structure and the reporting timelines.

Specific to that goal, would you define the final harvest of 216 wolves as acceptable or unacceptable?

Following the tribal declaration of 81 wolves in the ceded territory, the DNR harvest goal was 119 wolves in the February season. Out of honor and respect for tribal treaty rights, harvesting 216 wolves was undesirable. Biologically speaking, the harvest goal of 200 wolves was intended to maintain the population at current levels. In that case, harvesting over the harvest goal is undesirable as well, but there is variation in the expected outcome of this harvest and the additional harvest is not expected to have significant long-term population impacts.

Is it the tribes' written right by treaty to claim but not harvest their wolf allotment?

The Ojibwe tribes have legal treaty rights to declare for up to 50% of allowable harvest within the ceded territory.

What is the primary food source of the wolf in Wisconsin?

White-tailed deer.

How many deer on average will an adult wolf consume in one year?

Research in Minnesota estimated on average each wolf consumes 15-20 adult sized deer per year or their equivalent.

What would have been the estimated recruitment number of new pups this year if a hunt had not been held and assuming the population is 1200?

The estimate of 1,200 wolves (in approximately 256 packs) is from April 2020. Assuming an average litter of 5 pups apiece, the population would be expected to double immediately following in spring 2020. The spring population will decline throughout the year influenced by prey availability and the multitude of mortality sources and reach its low point again the following winter. 🐾

JOHN ELLIS
Proper Management of Wisconsin Wolves Good for all concerned... including the wolves

Wolves, like all animals, need to be properly managed. The Wisconsin Wolf Advisory Committee recommended a management goal of 350 wolves for our state in 1999, and reaffirmed that number in 2007. That goal was met in 2004. Since then, a series of legal moves has prevented proper management and allowed the wolf population to skyrocket. Today, following the 2021 hunt, Wisconsin still has approximately 630 more wolves than the recommended management goal of 350.

This is not a question of some people liking wolves more than others; I count myself among those who like them. Rather, it's a simple question of proper wolf management. Three hundred and fifty wolves was recommended for Wisconsin and 350 wolves should be the management goal going forward. After three consecutive years of a stable population of 350, the impact should be assessed and numbers adjusted accordingly. That will serve all concerned... including the wolves. 🐾



DICK ELLIS

By the Numbers...

OWO opinions, comments and considerations on wolf management



2 elephants are in the room taking up space but largely ignored anytime the Wisconsin wolf management issue is being debated. One, 218 wolves tagged in the February hunt does not translate to a kill 86 percent over the intended harvest of 200, but rather to an outcome that hit very close to goal.

Two, with 22,400 square miles covering Wisconsin's ceded territory alone, hunters reaching the harvest goal of 200 in just 1.5 days in February reinforce the reality that Wisconsin has many more wolves over the landscape than the 1195 population estimate used pre-hunt by DNR.

You will continue to hear "slaughter" as used by anti-hunters and "wolf advocates" to inaccurately define the harvest total. We'll keep telling you the truth. The wolf is alive and well in Wisconsin.

81 wolves claimed by the Ojibwe as part of the tribes' harvest allotment within the ceded territory in the recently concluded hunt should not have been considered by DNR in the preseason calculation of total harvest goal to be targeted. The obvious intent of the tribes now and in the future as established over Wisconsin's last four hunting seasons is to harvest 0 wolves.

2 plus 0 will never equal 4 and DNR will never reach the harvest goal as is their responsibility pretending that the 2 claimed by the tribes will ever come in.

5.9 million people reside in Wisconsin. Less than 1 percent of the population is Native American. The masses are depending on the small minority to be forthcoming in their harvest intentions. A commitment to truth is imperative. The tribes, of course, are welcome to participate in the harvest. They are not welcome to use their legal claim to 50-percent of wolves to be harvested within the ceded territory as a mechanism of protection.

11 tribes of Wisconsin will meet with DNR in July in consultation on both the upcoming November 2021 wolf season harvest and long-range wolf management plans. When asked in a wolf advisory committee meeting June 22 by a committee member representing Hunting/Trapping organizations if the minutes to that tribal meeting would be made available to the Wolf Advisory Committee, DNR would not commit. Consistently, DNR uses the word, "transparency" to define its wolf management work specific to the Wisconsin resident. Transparency has consistently not been the case.

1 new organization, Hunters for Wolves, does not reflect the stand of the vast majority of Wisconsin hunters on the issue. The organization's apparent theme as seen on 3 recently erected billboards reads "Real Hunters Don't Kill Wolves". I rest my case.

The wolf is offered to consumers by DNR through Wisconsin's endangered species license plate program but is not endangered at all. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service removed the wolf from the federal endangered species list on January 4, 2021, returning management authority to state agencies. The wolf plate, with the words "Endangered Species" prominently displayed, is offered with a \$25.00 rebate by DNR through December. In this time of intense debate over Wisconsin wolf numbers,

every person not in the know encountering the plates beautiful graphic of the wolf with the message, "Endangered Species" will be receiving a powerful, but untruthful, message.

1 wolf will consume 15 to 20 adult deer annually which is one more reason that it is imperative for DNR to estimate the wolf population accurately now, and manage the wolf population correctly in the future. Man is the true apex hunter. Our deer hunting opportunities in particular in northern Wisconsin's most densely traveled wolf territory continues to decline. According to Deer & Deer Hunting magazine, more deer were killed by wolves than hunters in 2019 in Iron, Jackson, Douglas and Forest Counties.

The wolf is to be admired, for many reasons and we look forward to having him live among us far into the future. The wolf is also to be managed, correctly and in balance with all other species, including man.

And that, DNR, is your obligation, first and foremost. 🐾



This photo of a large whitetail buck literally being eaten alive by two wolves was taken from a video now posted on the OWO website at www.onwisconsinoutdoors.com. Know that the video is graphic and difficult to watch, and includes the death wails of the buck as it slowly dies.

Why is this important? One, it is imperative that the wolf in Wisconsin live in proper predator/prey balance with other species here. The Wisconsin wolf population is mandated by law to be managed at 350 animals. OWO believes the current wolf population may now be as high as 5000 wolves. Know that one wolf will eat up to 20 adult deer annually, and multiply the kill seen here, if we are correct, by 100,000 wolf deer kills annually. Know too that due to the actions of a few radical groups overly represented on the DNR Wolf Advisory Committee, the wolf was placed prior to the 2022 season on the Federal Endangered Species list by another liberal judge.

The wolf is alive and too well in Wisconsin. Despite propaganda you read and hear in the Wisconsin media, the most recent Wisconsin wolf hunt in 2021 was neither a "slaughter", nor 83 percent over harvest goal of 200. The 218 wolves taken by the Wisconsin hunter exceeded the DNR harvest goal by just 9 percent. Hunters reaching the harvest goal in less than 3 days over vast amounts of territory reinforces the reality that many more wolves roam the Wisconsin landscape than the DNR, tribes, or radicals would have you believe.

Watch the wolf-deer video Wisconsin, and ask those you know to watch the video too. Read OWO reporting on the wolf issue over the past year on these 8-pages, consider other media reporting on this issue, and reach your own conclusions. Our promise to you is to bring truth in reporting to the best of our abilities.

DICK ELLIS

Casting Truth on the Wolf Issue

Who supports a Wisconsin population of 350 or less?

You're not alone in believing that Wisconsin wolf population is grossly understated by the DNR, and that the numbers need to be maintained at 350 animals or less.

Who Supports A Wolf Population Goal Of 350 Or Less In Wisconsin?

- Thirty-six Wisconsin County Boards have passed resolutions supporting a wolf goal of 350 or less, including several Boards voting for as few wolves in the state as 100, 80, or 50 or less. These 36 county boards are the elected representatives of 1,266,000 Wisconsin citizens.
- The Board votes: Barron, Burnett, Vilas, Taylor, Florence, Forest, Iron, Jackson, Lincoln, Marinette, Oconto, Oneida, Price, Shawano, Waushara, Waupaca, and Grant all passed unanimously. Adams 16 for, 2 against; Ashland 16 for, 2 against; Clark 27 for, 1 against; Langlade 14 for, 3 against; Rusk 10 for, 1 against; Sawyer 10 for, 2 against; Douglas 22 for, 2 against; Wood 14 for, 3 against; Bayfield 9 for, 3 against; Portage 22 for, 2 against; Marathon 32 for, 2 against; Marquette 16 for, 1 against; Richland 13 for, 8 against; Outagamie 30 for, 4 against; Juneau & Polk motion carried, voice vote. Washburn voted for 50 or less: 11 in favor, 9 opposed; Iowa voted 100 or less: 13 in favor, 7 opposed. The 7 opposed wanted 50 or less. Lafayette voted 80 or less: 15 for, 1 against.
- The Wisconsin Farm Bureau's 46,000 members support a wolf goal of 350 or less.
- The Wisconsin Farmer's Union supports a wolf goal of 350.
- The Wisconsin Cattleman's Association supports a wolf goal of 80, the original recovery number.
- The Indianhead Polled Hereford Assoc., Northern Wisconsin Beef Producers Association, and Wisconsin Hereford Association all support a wolf goal less than 350.
- The Wisconsin Bowhunters' Association Board and membership supports a wolf goal of 350 or less.
- The Wisconsin Wildlife Federation, representing 200-plus organizations, supports a wolf goal of 350 or less.
- The Wisconsin Trappers' Association supports a goal of 350 wolves.
- The Wisconsin Bear Hunters' Association supports a goal of 100 wolves.
- In an attitude study done by the Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies, UW Madison, 66.5% of respondents favored a wolf population of 350 or less - Wisconsin Wolf Policy Survey - Changing Attitudes, 2001 - 2009, Adrian Treves, et al.
- The Wisconsin Conservation Congress (WCC) Spring Hearing in 2011 voted overwhelmingly in favor of reducing the wolf population to 350 or less (3989 for/827 against, passing in all 72 counties). 350 or less was again approved by WCC delegates at the 2013 annual convention.

Where Did The Number 350 Come From?

In the Wisconsin Wolf Management Plan approved in 1999 and 2007, the goal was 350 wolves. The DNR is currently mandated by law to manage state wolf numbers to 350. 🐾



What You Need to Know Before the Fall Wolf Hunt

After the February 2021 Wolf Hunt, Wisconsin had a conservative estimate of 900 wolves in the state based on the DNR's own pre-hunt numbers (Many, including this publication, believe those pre-hunt numbers were far below the actual numbers). Since then, and once again conservatively, 600 more wolves were born and survived bringing the state population to 1500 today.

If the upcoming Fall Wolf Hunt harvest goal of 300 animals is met, the state of Wisconsin will still have a minimum of 1200 wolves. That is 343% more than the recommended management goal of 350; a goal that the vast majority of you want.

Our state wolf population is out of control and growing because of DNR mismanagement.

DICK ELLIS

November Wolf Hunt Halted

Skyrocketing numbers now left unmanaged

If ever a spotlight was placed on the fox guarding the henhouse, it would be when the DNR was named defendant in a lawsuit brought by radical advocacy groups intent on stopping the fall 2021 wolf hunt. The hen house, in this case, includes the state deer herd, livestock interests, hospitality businesses that serve dwindling deer hunter numbers in northern Wisconsin, and the hunter himself. Conflicts caused by too many wolves continue to increase. They're about to get much worse.

Dane County Judge Jacob Frost issued a preliminary injunction in late October that blocked the wolf hunting season slated to begin November 6. In his ruling on the lawsuit brought by plaintiffs Animal Wellness Action, Center for Humane Economy, Friends of Wisconsin Wolf and Wildlife, Project Coyote and Wisconsin resident Pat Clark, Frost ordered the DNR to set wolf quotas of zero in each management zone for the season.

On Wisconsin Outdoors has closely scrutinized and reported on DNR wolf management practices extensively throughout 2021. Despite being mandated by law to manage state wolf numbers to 350 under a Wolf Management Plan, the agency abandoned that ceiling long ago, claiming falsely the number was a starting point. The Wisconsin Wolf Management plan with a goal of 350 was approved in 1999 and 2007. With spring pup recruitment estimated at 600, the current population estimate is 1,500 wolves.

Despite continuous DNR claims of science-based management and transparency neither occurred. A DNR public survey in 2021 designed to steer management decisions was emotion-based with questions soliciting how respondents "felt" about the wolf in Wisconsin. Respondents could participate even if non-residents, and vote as often as they wished.

A Wolf Advisory Committee appointed by DNR was stacked in favor of anti-hunting and wolf advocacy groups despite the minority in committee representing many more residents in favor of wolves being managed by set law. For example, 36 Wisconsin County Boards, elected representatives of 1,266,000 Wisconsin residents, support a wolf goal of 350 or less.

DNR also included in total harvest goals Ojibwe tribal claims to 50 percent of wolf harvest allotments in ceded territories, knowing the tribes would not harvest any animal due to viewing the wolf as a spiritual brother. This fact of state mismanagement was first brought to the public by OWO, knowing that overall management numbers would fall far short of goal without tribal participation. OWO has also scrutinized court-ordered rights that give tribes 50 percent of the harvest in ceded territory. Clearly, the tribes' right is to "take" or "harvest". It is not to use a court order as a mechanism of protection for the wolf.

Ojibwe tribes in Wisconsin also have a lawsuit pending against the DNR and Natural Resources Board (NRB), claiming the fall wolf hunt would have knowingly discriminated against the Ojibwe tribes by acting to nullify their share. Although defendants in the suit, the DNR and NRB are not in alliance. The NRB majority, working for the people of Wisconsin as an advisory board to the DNR, had set a quota of 300 wolves for the November hunt that accounted for tribal intent to again claim allotment but not contribute to the harvest. In an unprecedented move, the DNR rejected the NRB recommendation and set the quota at 130 including 74 wolves that would again be claimed but not harvested by the tribes.



With the judicial ruling halting the November hunt, no harvest will take place and wolf-human conflict will surely escalate severely. For the DNR... mission accomplished.

"With the state defending the hunt and their proven long-time record of minimizing hunts or avoiding harvests, it is no surprise," said Laurie Groskoph, a member of the wolf advisory committee and trusted source for OWO. "I feel the level of incompetence within the DNR is unprecedented." Read Groskoph's entire article at www.onwisconsinoutdoors.com under Outdoor News.

"Why the DNR is trying to protect and expand state wolf populations is difficult to understand," said Mike Brust, President of the Wisconsin Bowhunters Association. "I was directly involved in the existing wolf management plan and its revision. I can say for a fact that the 350 was intended as a population goal that we should manage to, exactly as the plan states. That is contrary to new 'interpretations' by Secretary Cole, Deputy Secretary Ambs and Keith Warnke, who now say it was only a starting point. None of whom were there at the time."

Brust said analysis in 2015 used the DNR's own information of existing numbers of wolves and pack locations, combined with the DNR's own estimate of the average number of deer taken per wolf and in 5 northern counties found wolves took more deer than hunters did. "The wolf population was substantially less then, and the number of wolves was based on the minimum over-winter count, not the larger actual population or the mid-summer population. Obviously, in much of the North, wolves now take many more deer than hunters do. Clearly that has a devastating impact on businesses in the North that depend on deer hunting revenue."

"But keep in mind, it's an anti-hunters dream. If wolves control the deer, there will no longer be a need for hunters." 🐾

JIM ELLIS

The Wolf Factor

And the decline of Wisconsin deer hunting

What is going on with Wisconsin's deer hunting? The numbers below reflect the decline in deer killed by hunting from 1998 through 2020. The numbers were supplied by the Wisconsin DNR and for simplicity 3 year averages were taken in 5 year blocks so you don't have to read endless numbers.

3 year averages over 22 years also covers variations in the severity of winter and its impact on deer population.

Gun kills in 2018-2020 are down 197,977 on average annually from the 1998-2000 time period.

Wisconsin firearms hunters killed 593,932 less deer in 2018-2020 compared to 1998-2000.

Bow kills in 2018-2020 are up 13,660 on average annually from the 1998-2000 time period.

Wisconsin archery hunters killed 40,980 more deer in 2018-2020 compared to 1998-2000. This increase does not explain the reduction in gun kills because we're still down 552,952 deer killed by gun and archery hunters combined from 2018-2000 when compared to 1998-2000.

From this writer's perspective the two greatest impacts are the purposeful reduction in deer herd because of fears of CWD and the increase in the wolf population due to not managing the numbers.

If CWD is a real threat, then baiting and feeding should immediately be banned statewide instead of waiting to see what counties are testing positive before the ban. If baiting and feeding bans assist in CWD reduction, why wait for the disease to show up before reacting? It's like saying smoke until you get lung cancer...then quit smoking.

The wolf advocates say that based on modeling the wolf numbers are not out of control and don't have much impact on deer hunting success.

The model that I was given from the "wolf expert," formerly a Wisconsin DNR employee and now an activist for the group bringing

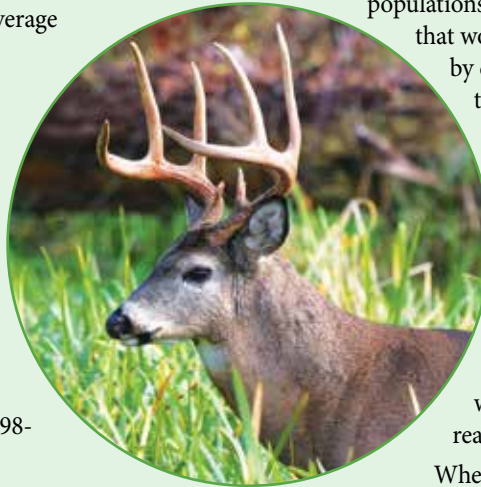
lawsuits to prevent wolf hunting, never shows any increase in the wolf population no matter what number of wolves you start with. So we know the model is incorrect because the wolf population has grown by their own estimates to over 1,100 wolves in 2020 from 250 wolves in the year 2000. The DNR also uses other modeling instead of actually counting wolves to estimate population.

The same advocates who say the wolves don't reduce deer populations enough to negatively impact deer hunting say that wolves are needed to reduce over browsing of forests by deer and reduce car/deer accidents. Deer browse; they are not harmful to forests.

Logically you can't say wolves reduce the deer herd enough to prevent over browsing and car/deer accidents but don't impact hunting success negatively.

Information regarding wolf pup survival rates and population growth, received from a different and trusted wolf expert, puts the population of wolves in the state at over 5,000 wolves. We need an actual count, not modeling to reach the accurate number of wolves.

When proper management does call for deer reduction in any Wisconsin Deer Management Unit, man, not an overpopulation of wolves, is by far the most effective tool to accomplish the goal. Control of deer herd numbers is the job of hunters, not wolves. 🐾



	Total Gun Kill <i>Includes Muzzleloader</i>	Total Bow Kill <i>Includes Crossbow</i>	Total kill
1998-2000 Average	420,984	84,767	505,751
2003-2005 Average	396,482	92,543	489,025
2008-2010 Average	282,500	90,119	372,619
2013-2015 Average	233,440	85,457	318,897
2018-2020 Average	223,007	98,427	321,434



JIM ELLIS

Wolf Mismanagement

The logic factor in the decline of northern Wisconsin deer hunting

In a recent issue of *On Wisconsin Outdoors*, I looked at the decline in deer hunting success over the past two decades in Wisconsin, and asserted that the three biggest problems were wolves, Chronic Wasting Disease, and poor management of both by the DNR.

In this issue, I'll look with more detail at wolves.

As I write, a federal judge has relisted the wolf as endangered. To show how ridiculous this is, I found the "Summary of the Wisconsin DNR Wolf Management Plan, Prepared by the US Fish and Wildlife Service on October 27, 1999."

According to the summary:

Numerical Targets and State Reclassification/ Delisting/ Relisting Criteria

Minimum population management goal is 350 (late winter counts) outside of Indian Reservations.

250 wolves (outside reservations) for one year - State delists and wolves become "protected non-game species."

80 for three years (already achieved) - State reclassified to threatened (done in October 1999).

Decline to less than 250 for three years - State relists as threatened.

Decline to less than 80 for one year - State relists/reclassifies as endangered.

Under Habitat Protection in the summary, it calls for vegetation management that provides younger forests and winter vegetation cover that favor wolf-prey species (deer and beaver).

Population Management

Four management zones are established to provide different wolf management practices. However, after the wolf is Federally delisted, Tribes will determine wolf management practices on tribal lands.

Zone 1 - Northern Forest - 18,384 square miles in northern Wisconsin, including 634 square miles of Indian reservation; contains 90 percent of the state's primary wolf habitat and can support 300 - 500 wolves.

Depredation problems will be resolved



The use of hounds to push wolves past hunters with firearms is often criticized as "barbaric" by anti-hunting groups who thrive on misinformation. This photo of wolves eating a large buck alive emphasizes the need for proper game management in Wisconsin, including the proper balance of predator and prey currently lacking.



This trail cam photo taken in Bayfield County in 2022 captures a gray wolf with bear cub in its mouth.

by government trapping within 1/2 mile of the depredation site and translocation or euthanizing. Landowners will be reimbursed for their losses to wolf predation. Management actions to be encouraged on public land include protection of dens and rendezvous sites, access management and management of forests to promote prey species. There will be no coyote hunting during the deer firearm season.

Words have meaning.

1) According to the report, Zone 1 is 90 percent of the state's primary wolf habitat and can support 300 to 500 wolves. So, statewide, the maximum that can be supported is 555 wolves.

2) Currently, according to the Wisconsin Gray Wolf Monitoring Report (April 15, 2019, through April 2020), the wolf population count is 1,034 - 1,057. That is a minimum of 697 wolves over carrying capacity in the state based on the Wisconsin DNR's own plan.

Based on information I have received from a member of the wolf advisory board and the survival rate of pups, it's likely that the population is 5,000 wolves. If this is correct, we're 4,640 wolves over the number that the habitat can support.

3) According to the report, Zone 1 is 18,384 square miles and includes 634 square miles of Indian reservation. The Indian reservation

makes up 3.4% of this area so they can manage 12 - 17 wolves based on the statement under "population management" that Tribes will determine management practices on tribal lands.

4) At the time of the summary, Wisconsin's deer herd was 1,900,000 strong and could support up to 555 wolves.

5) Wisconsin's deer herd is currently 1,250,000. That's 35 percent less deer, so logically we can now support 360 wolves statewide.

Zone 2, according to the summary, could support 20 - 40 wolves.

Zone 3, according to the summary, could support 20 wolves maximum.

Zone 4 has almost no potential for wolf colonization.

After the state delisted, landowners can kill wolves in the act of attacking pets or livestock. Currently this is not allowed.

Public Harvest is not included in this plan summary, but it does discuss the possibility of public harvest after the statewide population (outside Indian reservations) reaches 350 wolves.

Based on this plan and all of the data, there is no way the wolves should be relisted, and it's the duty of the Wisconsin DNR to challenge this ruling in a higher court.

If we're going to get back to the days of great deer hunting and all of the benefits that go along with it, we're going to have to demand that we manage the wolves back to 360 - the supportable number based on the current deer population in the great state of Wisconsin. 🐾

JIM ELLIS

The Wisconsin Wolf

Far from endangered and a need for delisting

In the January-February issue of *OWO* we looked at the decline in Wisconsin deer hunting success from the year 1998 to 2020 using numbers from the DNR.

In the year 2000 it was estimated that there were 250 wolves in the state and we had fantastic deer hunting. The wolf population has since increased a minimum of 450% to as much as 2,000%. Combined kills by gun and archery hunters are down 552,952 when comparing the years 2018-2020 to 1998-2000.

In the July-August issue of *OWO* we looked at the DNR's own plan and the fact that the state could only support 555 wolves when the deer population was at 1,900,000. The deer population is now estimated to be 1,200,000 so the statewide maximum wolf population needs to be 360 wolves. Based on estimates of pup survival given to *OWO* by a trusted source of expertise on the state Wolf Advisory Board, we think the wolf population is near 5,000.

This issue we again examine the misinformation and purposeful propaganda coming from the DNR, animal rights radicals and mainstream media that has dishonestly contributed to the recent relisting of the Wisconsin wolf as endangered and federally protected. Lie number one is that the latest wolf hunt exceeded harvest goal by 83 percent. As reported in the *OWO* column "Wolf Hunt Meets Harvest Goal-Are state population numbers far understated?" published in the March-April issue, the harvest goal for the February 2021 hunt was 200 as unanimously voted for by the NRB.

"There's still a probability that a quota of 200 may reduce the population or it may allow the population to expand," said DNR Wildlife Biologist and wolf program head Randy Johnson at a media briefing held post-hunt February 25. "At 216, we're at a relatively small percentage over total quota. I would say there is low concern at a population level of any significant effect there."

It's a lie to say the harvest quota was anything but 200. 216 wolves were killed or 16 over the goal of 200. The overharvest is 8 percent, not 83 percent. The fact that Ojibwe tribes elected not to contribute to harvest numbers despite claiming their allotted quota of 81 wolves is a non-factor to the harvest goal.

As reported by *OWO*, in Wisconsin's three previous wolf hunts held in 2012/13, 2013/14



Pine Camp Curve sends this photo of seven wolves on a bait in Ashland County. Every one of 16 bear bait sites over 100 miles are being hit by wolves.

and 2014/15, the Ojibwe also claimed their legal allotment but did not participate in the hunt, contributing 0 wolves to each harvest total. After four consecutive non-contributing harvest seasons by the Ojibwe, future management goals should acknowledge and accept that 0 will be a constant regardless of harvest allotment claims by the tribes. State harvest goals should be set higher accordingly; this after all is a game management issue.

In a 2013 Wisconsin Outdoor News column, Bill Vander Zouwen, then DNR Wildlife Ecology Section chief said "If you approve a quota for 275 wolves, we have an obligation to try to meet that quota in our harvest. That's what you're expecting, that's what the public is expecting. We have to look at past (tribal) performance, and the leadership of the DNR will have to make a decision on what to set aside for the tribes."

In the article, Vander Zouwen said the agency expected an estimated 13 percent decrease in the minimum wolf count with that quota. "That's still conservative," he said, noting that research shows that wolves can sustain a 30 to 35 percent annual loss before numbers start to drop. "The objective is for a sustainable wolf population and to reduce the population. It's a very diverse issue, and we recognize that. In my 30 years with the DNR, I never expected to be involved in wolf management."

Vander Zouwen said this when the population was estimated to be 800 wolves. Once we get the wolves back to 350 we need to hunt 30-35 percent annually to keep them at that level. We need an accurate count of the wolf population, not estimates.

That rings even more true today. In the same

article, Mike Riggle then the new chairman of the Conservation Congress' wolf committee, said the congress has long supported managing wolves to a goal of 350. "This is a highly charged and emotional issue on both sides, but you have to agree that the wolf population is a success story," said Riggle, a veterinarian. "The Conservation Congress supports the harvest quota. We're pleased that it's 275, but that should be exclusive of tribal harvest." These statements confirm that the quota is the quota regardless of what the tribes elect to harvest. Saying anything else is a lie.

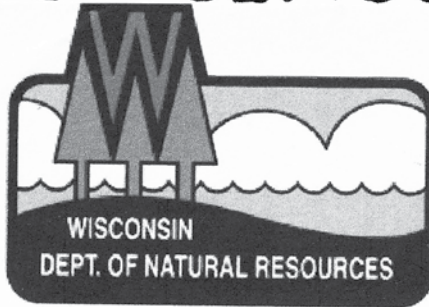
The second major deception concerns the population of wolves in Wisconsin. DNR currently estimates the wolf population count at 1034-1057 wolves using the 2020 minimum population count as stated in the "Wisconsin Gray Wolf Monitoring Report (15 April 2019 Through 14 April 2020)". According to the report, the wolf pack range was estimated to be 23,313 square miles and wolf density is estimated to be one wolf per 22.0-22.5 square miles of wolf pack range. This was calculated by dividing probable wolf pack range by the minimum population count in the report.

The same report estimates deer density in the contiguous wolf pack range at 24 deer per square miles, or 528 times wolf numbers in the wolf territory. One wolf per 22 square miles and 24 deer per square mile is obviously incorrect. We are asked to believe that 2,380 wolf permit holders killed 20 percent of the wolf population in just two plus days of hunting. If every permit holder was in the field for the entire legal shooting hours, each one would have to cover 9.8 square miles and 1 in every 11 hunters would make contact with a wolf and kill it.

570,901 deer hunters during the 9 day gun hunting season killed 17% of the estimated deer population. Deer density is 528 times the wolf density, according to the DNR, yet we only kill 17% in 9 days compared to 20% of the wolves in just over 2 days. This doesn't hold up to anyone looking for the truth.

Lie number 3 is the sale of endangered license plates with pictures of wolves on them. Currently the wolf is the only mammal on the plates. When people see them they think the wolf is endangered. Wolves are considered endangered both federally and by the state if they number 80 or less. The ruling by an activist judge saying they are endangered does not change this. 🐾

HELP SHAPE WISCONSIN'S DEER SEASON



ATTEND 2022 DEER SEASON PLANNING MEETINGS
MARCH 21-31

