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Minnesota Wolf Population Declines 25%

MINNEAPOLIS, MN (July 9, 2013) – Today, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) released results from the 2012-13 count of the state’s wolf population that shows the population has declined 25% since the last comprehensive count performed in 2007-08. There are now estimated to be 2,211 wolves in Minnesota, based on an estimated population range of 1,652-2,641. Previous counts performed between 1997 and 2007 showed that the wolf population had been stable and not expanding without recreational wolf hunting and trapping.

“We are disappointed that the survey shows a significant decline in the Minnesota wolf population. This is a strong indication that we can’t afford another recreational wolf hunting and trapping season,” said Dr. Maureen Hackett, founder of Howling For Wolves. “There is no scientific reason to hunt wolves. We call on the DNR to refocus on their original management goals for wolves, which are to ensure the long-term survival of the wolf in Minnesota, and to resolve conflicts between wolves and humans.”

Plans for another wolf hunting and trapping season this fall are underway despite DNR wolf experts admitting they are unable to fully assess the impact of last year’s hunt on the population. They are planning to spend additional resources to study the results of the hunt after the fact while there are clear indicators that post-hunt we are experiencing a significant decline in wolf pack numbers, pack sizes and overall population. The 2012-13 wolf population estimate is the lowest the population has been since 1988 when it was estimated to be 1,521 wolves. Given all of the scientific uncertainty expressed by the DNR wolf experts, we call upon the Governor and the DNR Commissioner to suspend the wolf hunt in the interest of protecting a valued state resource.

The DNR has no plans to conduct another comprehensive survey in winter 2013-14, instead only a portion of surveying will be completed focusing on territory and pack sizes. The reproduction rate of wolves following the state’s first regulated wolf hunt is unknown to DNR wolf experts that claim there are no direct estimates available for determining wolf pup survival rates. There is no way to know the number of breeding wolves killed and how this impacts the wolf population going forward.

“The random killing of non-problem wolves for sport does not serve either of the DNR management goals for wolves, and in fact, it undermines them,” according to Dr. Hackett. “Howling For Wolves is committed to finding non-lethal solutions that minimize conflicts with wolves and increases tolerance in Minnesota for these top predators that are vital to the health of our north woods ecosystem. Wolves are valued by the vast majority of Minnesotans.”

Minnesota law already allows people to kill wolves that are perceived as threats. Farmers and residents living in wolf range can already take lethal action if needed to protect their animals. A recreational wolf hunt does nothing to address the root cause of conflicts that stir up anti-wolf sentiments. Instead, we should focus resources on non-lethal prevention methods for our farmers.

The 2012-13 recreational wolf hunting and trapping season killed 413 wolves: 216 shot in early season hunting, 197 trapped in the late season trapping. Approximately 75% of trapped wolves were killed with wire snares that can cause slow deaths from painful brain bleeding. Nearly 60% of wolves were killed on public lands.

[Howling For Wolves](#) (HFW) is a wolf advocacy organization that aims to educate the public and policy-makers about wolves to foster understanding and tolerance, and to ensure their long-term survival in Minnesota. HFW seeks innovative non-lethal solutions for conflict prevention and coexistence where wolves are perceived to be a threat. We oppose the random killing of non-problem wolves for sport and the cruel methods utilized. We do not oppose other forms of hunting conducted in a humane and ethical manner where the animal is consumed. HFW current efforts focus on the Minnesota’s gray wolves, which is the largest and only original wolf population remaining in the lower 48 states.

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