

British Columbia Wolf Management Plan Update

On November 14, 2012 the BC government unveiled its draft wolf management plan, with a short window of time allowed for public to comment on the draft and recommend changes.

The public comment period lasted for under three weeks during which 1,614 comments were received AGAINST the plan, and less than one third of this number (558) commented in support of it. Another 403 comments were deemed as unclear or "not relevant".

Since then...

Concerns about the proposal have been ignored as new hunting and trapping seasons have opened up; season lengths have been extended in some wildlife management units; habitat destruction continues unchecked; and killing contests and sterilization experiments are allowed to continue.

The BC government management plan for wolves is heavy on management but lacking conservation, ecology, and ethics. The proposed plan supports the:

- Elimination of wolves where they overlap with ranchers
- Aerial gunning of wolves where caribou herds are in severe decline
- Continued sterilization of wolves when a decade of this has not increased caribou numbers
- Ongoing slaughter of wolves through lax hunting and trapping regulations (no bag limits, no specific tag required, year-round killing in some regions).

Wolf killing contests, such as in Fort Saint John, BC, were exposed through the media this past year. Although hundreds of people from across the continent and even the globe wrote letters to government expressing their distaste for this, the response from FLRN was that it was completely legal. Legal does not mean moral nor just and British Columbia undoubtedly needs to update its code of ethics & laws when it comes to the rights of Nature.

A collective of concerned NGO's, First Nations, biologists and public citizens also urged the BC government to undertake a formal peer review process for the proposed plan. The government is refusing to do a proper peer-review of the draft and has refused a request to comment on or discuss changes made to the plan since the original draft. It will be releasing the plan on-line in the near future.

The BC governments' draft proposal brings us back to a time of fear-mongering. Wolves are currently being targeted from several directions and paying with their lives. This includes:

- incentive-based wolf hunting and trapping;
- killing wolves in the name of livestock concerns when little is being done in terms of preventing conflicts nor educating about how to do this,
- aerial killing of wolves where there are failing caribou herds, regardless of habitat alterations caused by humans
- on transportation routes across the majority of the province.

A better BC for all includes a future with iconic top predators; management of our natural resources in an ethical and sustainable way; and wild spaces where large carnivores can exist with their prey unprosecuted by humans.



Photo courtesy of Raincoast.org

Extended family members of wolf packs are often butchered in a human-dominated landscape, leaving pack members to continue on without them. Packs can also disintegrate after one of the leaders are killed, creating more breeding pairs and social chaos which could have been avoided. We can do better than this! Do not allow our ecosystems to become impoverished due to fear, misunderstanding and mismanagement. What is missing from the current BC wolf management plan? The incredible social nature and family bonds shared among this intelligent species. The intrinsic value and uniqueness of each individual that makes up the dynamic wolf pack as an apex predator. Sadly, wolf ecology and long-term conservation are also far removed from the currently operating plan.

Many wolf biologists argue that allowing wolves to express their natural social behaviour benefits the wider ecosystem as well as wolves. The number of wolves being killed across the province is at an all-time high since recording began.

The push for change has NOT ENDED. Your voice is needed now more than ever. Please tell the government CLEARLY that you oppose this plan and current management. Use your voice to speak against current wolf hunting contests and regulations, and to ensure that large carnivore core conservation areas are established. The minister responsible for management decisions is Honourable Steve Thomson; send an email to FLNR.minister@gov.bc.ca. Also contact Tom Ethier from the Resources Stewardship Division: tom.ethier@gov.bc.ca, your MLA and BC Prime Minister Kristy Clark: premier@gov.bc.ca. Public support is required to see changes made NOW to ensure a healthy wild future for wolves in BC.

Below is a list of things to consider including in your recommendations for changes to how wolves are treated in BC. We encourage you to ask for:

1. NO helicopter killing or sterilization of wolves.
2. NO leghold traps, snares or baiting.
3. Return to former species license, quotas, bag limits, restricted seasons, and mandatory reporting of kills for hunting wolves.
4. A decision and statement that lethal predator control is NOT an option for the recovery of mountain caribou and a stop to the Quesnel Highland wolf sterilization and removal project.
5. A provincial management plan for wolves that considers the social stability of packs as well as population size to ensure the long term conservation of the species in its most natural form.
6. A commitment to reduce wolf-livestock-human conflicts through prevention, and provision of educational initiatives and incentives for responsible husbandry practices.
7. Protect large tracts of habitat for wolves and their prey to preserve these systems in perpetuity; ensure that protected areas are large enough to support multiple wolf families with no hunting/trapping allowed.
8. A proper scientific peer review process to ensure that ecology and ethics may be incorporated into the plan and concerned conservation biologists can help to establish a plan that ensures wild wolves can thrive in families in perpetuity in BC, not merely exist. (This was denied.)

THANK YOU to those of you who have taken the time to make your voice heard.

TOGETHER we can make a DIFFERENCE

Sincerely,
Sadie Parr of JustBeings.com



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