

FWP COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: December 8, 2011

Agenda Item: 2012 – 2013 Use of Hunters to Remove Depredating Wolves

Division: Fish & Wildlife

Action Needed: Approval of Final Rule

Time Needed for Presentation: 15 minutes

Background

Montana has authority and responsibility to manage wolves, which includes hunting seasons to address population size and distribution, and site specific responses to livestock depredation. USDA Wildlife Services is the primary entity for removing depredating wolves per FWP prescriptions. This proposal would add hunters as a mechanism to remove livestock-depredating wolves. Elements of this proposal are listed below. There is no change in this final proposal from the initial Commission adoption.

- To enhance timeliness, livestock producers would identify the hunters to be authorized.
- Livestock producers must allow a reasonable amount of no-fee wolf hunting access during the wolf hunting season.
- Hunters must have a valid wolf license.
- Hunters must report any kill within 12 hours.
- Hunters are meant to complement existing efforts by landowners and Wildlife Services.
- This hunter option is not required but may be implemented with coordination by livestock producers, USDA Wildlife Services and FWP.
- This hunter option is available whenever there is no need to specifically identify the age, sex, color or identify of any wolf prior to lethal removal.
- All lethal removals by livestock producers, USDA Wildlife Services and/or hunters must be consistent with FWP lethal removal prescription.

Public Involvement Process & Results

Public comment was accepted through Monday, Nov. 28. Comments will be forwarded to the Commission for their review. As of Nov. 17, nearly 100 comments were received. Consistent with other wolf discussions, there are diverse perspectives present in the comment. This includes strong expressions of support as it relates to filling the wolf harvest quota. Any final adoption will take place at the Dec. 8 Commission meeting.

Alternatives and Analysis

The objective is to maintain or enhance effective response to lethal removals made in response to livestock depredations. The addition of hunters represents a low-cost additional tool that may reduce time for removals and may increase the number of times lethal prescriptions are met. The status quo remains available as a management option.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

The proposal is aligned with known biology, management history and survey efforts and sits within the wide spectrum of public comment.

Proposed Motion

I move to adopt as final the process for wolf depredation removals by hunters in 2012 and 2013 as presented by FWP.