



MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

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Meeting Date: January 28, 2021

Agenda Item: Region 3 Wolf Season Review as Required by 2021 Wolf Regulations

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 30 Minutes

Background: When the Fish and Wildlife Commission adopted the 2021-2022 wolf season regulations, they included a statewide threshold of 450 wolves that, if reached, would trigger a review by the commission. They also adopted regional thresholds based on the proportion of the estimated statewide population for each region. For example, it is estimated that 18% of the statewide population is in Region 3, so the threshold for Region 3 was 18% of 450 = 82.

As of January 26, the statewide wolf harvest is 181, and the wolf harvest in Region 3 is 75.

Recognizing the potential to reach the threshold of 82 harvested wolves in Region 3, the commission is meeting to evaluate wolf harvest in Region 3 and potentially taking some action in response. They could make no adjustments and allow the season to continue as is, they could set another threshold at which they would again evaluate harvest, or they could adjust wolf hunting and trapping regulations in part or all of the region.

Public Involvement Process and Results: The wolf season proposal included extensive public comment before final adoption. FWP has maintained a dashboard on its website where wolf harvest can be monitored by Wolf Management Unit (WMU), Region, and statewide. That site is updated daily. The department has also been tracking the pace of wolf harvest relative to previous years and issued a news release that included a graphic showing harvest in 2021-22 relative to past seasons dating back to 2009. That news release and graphic are linked here: <https://fwp.mt.gov/homepage/news/2022/january/0120-with-almost-two-months-remaining-wolf-harvest-on-par-with-past-seasons>

Alternatives and Analysis: The commission could allow the season to continue as is, they may adjust wolf hunting and trapping regulations in part or all of the region, and they may establish a new threshold that would trigger a further evaluation. For example, the current adoption calls for a statewide review after reaching 450 wolves harvested in 50 wolf increments. An option would be to implement a proportional threshold based on percent of population in Region 3, which would be at a harvest of 91 wolves ($18\% \times 50 = 9$. $82 + 9 = 91$).

Agency Recommendation and Rationale: The department has not identified biological concerns for the wolf population in Region 3 and can provide information to the commission on total harvest, location of harvest, pace of harvest, harvest time and methods, but has no recommendation at this time.