



MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

Meeting Date: August 20, 2021

Agenda Item: 2021 Wolf Seasons and Quota

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 60 minutes

Background: Montana's wolf population is well established, and the department believes that the wolf population can support increased harvest without adverse biological effects. Consistent with direction from legislation adopted in the most recent session and the wolf management plan, the department has assembled options including the following tools:

- Increase bag limit and allow a person to take more than one wolf per license.
- Liberalize seasons in quota areas.
- Allow snaring during the trapping season and extend season dates. The following is also proposed in relation to the use of snares for wolves:
 - Must be equipped with a loop stop that will close to a loop no smaller than 2.5 inches in diameter (stop placed at no less than 8 inches from end of loop).
 - Must have a breakaway device rated at 1,000 lbs. or less installed on the loop end.
 - Must be placed such that the bottom of the snare loop is at least 18 inches above the surface.
 - Power-assisted (e.g., spring-loaded) snare locks are prohibited on wolf snares on public lands.
 - A relaxing snare lock is required on snares in lynx protection zones.

In addition, the department proposes re-visits to the commission at certain harvest levels and non-target captures, that all non-targets from traps and snares be reported, and that the wolf season be re-visited annually using the most recent wolf population data available.

Public Involvement Process and Results: Public comment was accepted for two hours through a virtual platform on June 30, 2021, and 49 people attended and predominately expressed opposition to wolf trapping and hunting. Written comment was accepted until 5 p.m. on July 26, 2021. Approximately 25,000 comments were received, of which about 19,000 were form letters in opposition to wolf harvest. About 90% of the remaining comments were in opposition hunting and trapping of wolves in general. About 1,000 of the non-form letters originated from addresses within Montana, and these were about evenly split between support for increased harvest and opposition to any take of wolves.

Alternatives and Analysis: Some adjustments to existing regulation are required by statute. The department developed a range from which the commission may select the preferred selection.

Proposed Motion: I move that the commission vote to adopt the 2021 wolf season regulations and quotas as follows:

- Bag limit of (____) wolves.
- Up to (____) wolves per hunting license.
- Trapping and snaring season dates of (_____).
- Snaring is allowed, on **(public and/or private lands) (with limit of ____ snares per trapper)**, with the following restrictions:
 - Snares must be equipped with a loop stop that will close to a loop no smaller than 2.5 inches in diameter (stop placed at no less than 8 inches from end of loop).
 - Snares must have a breakaway device rated at 1,000 lbs. or less installed on the loop end,
 - Snares must be placed such that the bottom of the snare loop is at least 18 inches above the surface of the ground.
 - If snares are allowed on public lands, power-assisted (e.g., spring-loaded) snare locks are prohibited on wolf snares on public lands.
 - A relaxing snare lock is required on snares in lynx protection zones (LPZ's).
- No night hunting is allowed except on private lands and **(in specific areas or statewide)**.
- No hunting over bait is allowed except on **(public and/or private) lands (in specific areas or statewide)**:
 - No trap or snare trap can be set within 30 feet of exposed bait visible from above.
 - Bait is defined as the meat or viscera of a mammal, bird or fish, or any part thereof more than one pound in weight. Bleached bones are excluded.
- Quotas around YNP and GNP **(are maintained subject to the above regulations OR there is no quota or limit on number of wolves)**.
- A harvest of 450 wolves shall initiate a commission review with potential for rapid in-season adjustments to hunting and trapping regulations. Thereafter, the commission shall be similarly re-engaged at intervals of each additional 50 wolves harvested, if season adjustments allow for additional wolf harvest. **OR** The season will close when a harvest of 450 wolves is reached, unless continued by the commission. Thereafter the season will close at intervals of each additional 50 wolves harvested unless continued by the Commission
- A non-target capture of one lynx or grizzly bear shall initiate a commission review with potential for rapid in-season adjustments to trapping regulations. Thereafter, the commission shall be similarly re-engaged for any additional non-target capture of lynx or grizzly bear.
- All non-target captures shall be reported to the department with 24 hours to include captures from foothold traps and snares.

All other aspects regarding regulations adopted for the most recent past season remain unchanged, except for those influenced by routine calendar rotations or by other proposals pending before the commission.