

Michigan Department of Natural Resources – Wildlife Division

Wolf Talking Points

Updated: 5/23/2016

- Due to human safety risks, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) authorized the lethal removal of three wolves from a farm in Ontonagon County.
- After extensive hazing and non-lethal control techniques, these wolves continued to attack livestock, even in the presence of humans, including a DNR technician.
- Two of the wolves are GPS collared and data suggest these wolves continue to occupy the area of the farm, even after hazing and non-lethal control techniques have been employed.
- USFWS determined it is not reasonably possible to eliminate such a threat by live-capturing and releasing the wolves elsewhere.
- USFWS authorized U.S. Department of Agriculture Wildlife Services staff to act as their agent to euthanize three wolves in accordance with the US Endangered Species Act of 1973 implementing regulations (50 CFR 17.21(c)(3)(iv)).
- Human health and safety is the highest priority and is an essential part of sustaining the recovery of the gray wolf in Michigan.

Population Status of Wolves in Michigan

- The 2016 wolf population survey estimates there was a minimum of 618 wolves in the Upper Peninsula. The 2014 minimum population estimate was 636 wolves.
- The confidence intervals of the 2014 and 2016 estimates overlap, thus we can't say with statistical confidence that the population decreased.
- Over the past few years, Michigan's minimum population estimate has hovered between 600 and 700 wolves.

Legal Status of Wolves in Michigan

- In December of 2014 a federal court judge has ordered the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to return wolves in the Great Lakes region to the federal endangered species list.
- It is illegal for Michigan citizens to kill wolves attacking livestock or dogs.
- Under endangered species status, wolves may be killed by citizens only in the immediate defense of human life.
- The return to federal endangered species status also means DNR wildlife and law enforcement officials no longer have the authority to use lethal control methods to manage wolf conflict.
- The federal court order came in response to a lawsuit filed by the Humane Society of the United States challenging the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's decision to remove wolves in the Great Lakes Distinct Population Segment from the federal endangered species list in January 2012.
- The ruling affects wolves in Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin.
- If federal protections are removed, Michigan and other involved states would have the ability to manage wolves in a sustainable manner, by utilizing sound scientific principles.

Wolf Recovery in Michigan

- Since the winter of 1993-94, combined wolf numbers in Michigan and Wisconsin have surpassed 100, meeting federally established goals for population recovery.
- The Michigan recovery goal of a minimum sustainable population of 200 wolves for five consecutive years was achieved in 2004.
- Michigan's Wolf Management Plan was crafted with the help of a panel representing a wide span of interests ranging from Native American tribes to trappers, hunters and environmentalists. The plan was updated in 2015.