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[WCTWS.Secretary@gmail.com](mailto:WCTWS.Secretary@gmail.com)

**Position Statement on:**

## **Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources' Draft Wolf Management Plan**

**By the  
Wolf Issues Committee  
Of the  
Wisconsin Chapter of The Wildlife Society (WCTWS)**

To:

**Randy Johnson, Large Carnivore Specialist**

**WI DNR, 107 Sutliff Ave., Rhinelander, WI 54501**

**Dear Mr. Johnson and the WDNR Wolf Plan Team:**

Congratulations on the tremendous achievement by you and your team in developing the draft wolf management plan. The Wisconsin Chapter of The Wildlife Society (WCTWS) appreciates the great effort in incorporating the latest science while paying careful attention to stakeholder concerns, cultural issues, and the public's attitudes toward wolves in Wisconsin obtained using the latest comprehensive attitude survey. The Draft Wisconsin Wolf Management plan (dated 11/09/2022) aligns closely with the guidelines set by The Wildlife Society Issue Statement on "[Wolf Restoration and Management in the Contiguous United States](#)" (TWS 2017).

The Wisconsin Chapter of The Wildlife Society is made up of 383 wildlife professionals across all career stages (i.e., from students to retired members) working for Tribal, State and Federal agencies, local governments, colleges and universities, and within the private sector in Wisconsin. Together, our membership contains years of experience in supporting sound science in wildlife conservation and management. We offer the following comments in support of and offer recommendations to help strengthen the Draft Wisconsin Wolf Management Plan.

**WCTWS supports these elements of the Draft Wolf Management Plan:**

- **Removing numeric goals** from the plan is appropriate given current wolf distributions and population numbers. This would create consistency with population objectives also used for deer, bear, wild turkey, and ruffed grouse management. We are pleased to see the Department move away from a population goal of 350 wolves, which is no longer consistent with estimates of potential carrying capacity or public attitudes toward wolves.
- **Redrawing wolf zones across Wisconsin** and the creation of **buffer zones around tribal reservations** will improve management effectiveness and help maintain viable wolf packs on Tribal Reservations and Lands.
- The plan appropriately includes a **rigorous focus on wolf population monitoring**, including using **occupancy modeling** to estimate wolf numbers.
- The plan stresses use of a **science-based management approach** for wolf conservation in an adaptive management framework.
- The plan continues to include **mandatory harvest registration** and **require in-person verification**.
- The plan strongly supports **continued education and outreach efforts**.

**WCTWS recommends the following additions and modifications to strengthen the Draft Wolf Management Plan:**

- **Core wolf areas in western Lincoln County were added to Zone 3 in transitional wolf range, but should be included to Zone 1**, where there is greater emphasis on ecological fulfillment.
- **More specific metrics of how wolf populations will be managed to achieve goals for each zone should be in the plan**, including average pack size, wolf density, pack turn-over and persistence, dispersal among zones, disease spread, and livestock and pet depredations. Metrics should be quantifiable and be monitored to measure success.
- **The plan needs to include a process to carefully balance numbers of permits issued for legal harvest to assure quotas can be met in a reasonable time period**. The plan should acknowledge trade-offs between satisfaction for a small number of hunters and trappers over a long season versus providing opportunity for many hunters and trappers over a shorter season. Long seasons risk disruption of snow track surveys needed to adequately survey the wolf population and could disrupt wolf breeding activity. Completing seasons by early December would limit disruption of surveys needed to assess the wolf population.
- The plan should **limit the training of dogs on wolves only during periods when wolf hunting or trapping is open in a specific zone**.
- The plan should **include a timeline for implementation**.

- The plan should **include a budget for plan implementation.**
- There should be a **periodic public attitude follow-up survey in the plan.**

Again, thank you for your extensive work on developing the Draft Wisconsin Wolf Management Plan, and thank you for giving the Wisconsin Chapter of The Wildlife Society an opportunity to comment. Good luck moving forward with this new plan in guiding wolf conservation in Wisconsin over the coming decades.

Sincerely yours,

Ken Pemble,

President WCTWS

CC: Randy Jurewicz, Chair,  
Wolf Committee, WCTWS.