

For immediate release:

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Howling for Wolves in Duluth

Wolves, wildlife tourism and expanded public grazing

MINNEAPOLIS, MN (September 7, 2012) American Indian leaders and Minnesotans from around the state rallied in Duluth on Friday to voice their opposition to the state wolf trapping and hunting season beginning November 3rd.

Howling for Wolves founder, Maureen Hackett, MD addressed the group about our current wolf-based economy and why all Minnesotans should care about maintaining the wildlife viewing tourism we rely upon while simultaneously supporting our livestock industry.

The public debate about the \$150,000 MN recently spent on trapping and killing wolves with livestock problems needs to be viewed in the context of the \$400 million annual wildlife viewing industry of which wolves are a key draw to our state. Killing wolves by sport hunting and trapping puts our ecotourism dollars at risk. Minnesotans must come together and recognize that our lucrative tourism industry depends on strong branding and our wolf is uniquely suited toward drawing even international tourists.

For centuries the wolf has been hated and persecuted. It has been viewed as a competitor for agriculture while taming our wild lands in America by European settlers. The majority of Minnesotans see beyond this fear and hatred as we conserve our wilderness habitat so that we and our visitors can experience wildlife. We are unique as a state because we have these public lands that we depend on economically and spiritually. The wolf and other wildlife must be part of our decisions so that we do not lose these valuable assets while responding to demands for our livestock. Such plans in the works for our conservation land includes allowing livestock to graze on public lands. If we do not recognize the value of the wolf and other wildlife and work to compensate farmers in a manner that avoids animosity toward the wolf, we can lose economically and certainly culturally as wolf livestock conflicts become more common with public land grazing and possibly more common with this year's wolf hunting and trapping season.

"We are about to take our agriculture into the wilderness," says Maureen Hackett, MD of Howling for Wolves. "We must have livestock, we must have farmers and we in Minnesota are sitting on a goldmine in eco-tourism. We need to recognize the value of the wolf and act accordingly. The Game and Fish bill set aside .50 of every license (fishing and hunting) for wolf livestock problems. Those livestock owners who have wolf conflicts can be compensated and still see the value to the rest of Minnesota economically for having wolves. We as a state can give the farmers a cost of doing business supplementation and when useful, prevention techniques. This discussion must occur as we move cattle into the wilderness. We can all agree that the wolf attracts a percentage of our travel industry and this means that the wolf pays its way."

Hackett's public land grazing refers to comments made by DNR Commissioner Tom Landwehr on TPT's Almanac on August 3, 2012. Landwehr discusses plans to restore two million acres of Minnesota land to prairie, wetlands and grasslands where cattle grazing on these conservation grasslands is part of the equation. Landwehr stated when asked if livestock could be run on this land, "Absolutely. Grazing is not only compatible with grasslands, it's desirable."

Sandra Skinaway, Chairwoman of the Sandy Lake Band of Mississippi Chippewa, will be among Friday's protesters. *"Ma'iingan (Wolf) is a part of my culture and in a sense, a part of me. In the Ojibwe Creation story, the wolf is brother to the Ojibwe people. To hunt, torture, and kill any animal for sport is inhumane and cowardly. There is absolutely no justification in allowing a wolf hunt in Minnesota. Furthermore, the Sandy Lake Band of Mississippi Chippewa will not allow the hunting or trapping of the wolf on the lands within the Sandy Lake Indian Reservation in McGregor, Minnesota. Our lands will be a sanctuary for the wolf."*

The wolf was delisted from the endangered species list after 40 years of protection. This year, the Minnesota DNR will allow for the first wolf trapping and hunt season after abandoning the MN wolf management plan of 2001 which called for full public comment, sound scientific data and five years prior to proposing a season on the wolf.

About:

Howling for Wolves was created to be a voice for wild wolves. We aim to educate the public about our wolf population and let people know how they can take action to keep wild wolves in a self-sustaining existence. Minnesota is the only lower 48 state that has its original wolf population.

Learn more at www.howlingforwolves.org

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