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Protests at the Governor's Mansion *Public outcry over upcoming wolf hunt/trap season*

MINNEAPOLIS, MN (August 16, 2012) - Dozens of protesters with Howling for Wolves (HFW) today protested the residence of Governor Mark Dayton urging the Governor to use his executive power and stop the 2012/2013 Minnesota wolf hunting and trapping season.

Organizers with the advocacy group, Howling for Wolves, are taking the lead and asking the Governor to stop the wolf hunting and trapping season set to begin on November 3, 2012. HFW is demanding the Governor to oversee the state of Minnesota's Department of Natural Resources (DNR) as they have misled the public as to the reasons for the hunt and the detrimental consequences of a hunt for the survival of Minnesota wolves.

"There is no need for a public wolf hunt, it is for sport and it will recklessly endanger our wolves," says Maureen Hackett, MD, founder of the HFW. "Minnesota wolves are part of our heritage and the only original population in the lower 48 states. They are a legacy species that Minnesotans want to pass on to the next generation. Trapping our legacy species for its pelts is also cruel and inhumane."

When the wolf hunting season was proposed by the DNR and discussed in the legislature, it was made clear by the wolf expert in testimony; L. David Mech, PhD, that hunting and trapping wolves was for social purposes (sport) only and not for wolf population control because wolves control their own numbers. According to Mech, there is no maximum number of wolves that we should have. Wolves reach a steady state with their habitat. While wolves die in high rates, the DNR does not have even a gross estimate of the number and distribution of wolves in MN since early 2008. The DNR is proceeding without any baseline data and they will have no way to know the effects of this additional source of mortality to the MN wolves.

The wolf population and distribution was last estimated in 2007-2008 as stable but not growing since 1998. In fact, the average pack size decreased to less than five wolves per pack.

Minnesota wolves are no longer under federal protection. They currently can be killed under new MN State law by residents who feel threatened (livestock and pets too) and now illegal wolf kills have less financial and legal consequences. Wolves already die at high rates and now there is a rush to a hunting season before understanding the true effects of the loss of federal protection for wolves. The DNR has not explained to the public all the ways that wolves die outside of a public random hunting and trapping season. Wolves die from human-caused deaths (poaching and livestock conflicts) and natural deaths including diseases and starvation.

With no baseline data, the DNR is also stating that the purpose of the wolf season is to solve livestock-wolf conflicts. But the state's own expert, L. David Mech, PhD testified that a wolf hunting and trapping season is not a solution to livestock-wolf conflicts.

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"To even suggest and advocate using a public and random wolf hunt to assist with livestock problems is irresponsible, misguided and purposefully misleading," Hackett explains. "There is no data that randomly killing non- problem wolves solves livestock-wolf conflicts. This DNR rhetoric must be pointed out to the public as a serious threat to the Minnesota wolf's survival."

The DNR's claim that wolf hunting for sport will solve livestock-wolf conflicts can easily become a self-fulfilling prophecy. When random, non-problem wolves surviving in functional packs are killed, even more wolf deaths will likely occur; some will be due to more livestock conflicts and other deaths will occur from increased starvation and stress prompting diseases. This will endanger the Minnesota wolf population and all the benefits (biological and cultural) of wolves to our civilization.

The public is now waking up and understanding that this is going to be predominantly a random wolf trapping season for pelts and that the DNR has not considered the 79% of those who answered the DNR survey stating they are opposed to any wolf season. The rush to shoot and trap wolves is not in the best interest of Minnesota. There are many reasons to keep Minnesota wolves intact. As the legacy species, wolves are a keystone eco-tourism attraction that is sustainable and year-round. In addition, wolves help maintain a healthy deer herd which is an economic base to the MN economy. The wolf provides a true wilderness experience for deer hunters who can have a chance to hear their howls and the wolf adds to the health of the deer herd by helping to limit the spread of diseases such as chronic wasting disease. Therefore, we respectfully demand that the Governor stop the upcoming wolf hunting and trapping season. Losing our wolves or even having only a token wolf population will have detrimental effects on the state of Minnesota, as we know it.

Actions:

On Thursday, August 9, Howling for Wolves founder , MD, hand-delivered a petition for rule change to DNR Commissioner Tom Landwehr. The DNR has up to 60 days to respond to the legal petition.

About Howling For Wolves:

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. Our current efforts focus on the Minnesota Gray wolf. Minnesota is the only lower 48 state that has its original wolf population. In January 2012, after 40 years on the Endangered Species List, the Minnesota wolf was de-listed. Now an immediate wolf trapping and shooting season is set to start in the fall of 2012. It is our mission to educate and motivate the public to speak up and even howl for the Minnesota gray wolf.

Maureen Hackett, M.D., the founder of Howling for Wolves, is a physician and triple board certified forensic psychiatrist. Hackett is a former United State Air Force officer with rank of Major and ran for Congress in the third congressional district in 2010. In 2003, Hackett was instrumental in the passage of Minnesota law providing for tobacco-free state hospital grounds.

For more information and resources: www.howlingforwolves.org

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