

## **Interacting with Legislators and their Staff**

Legislative offices are typically overburdened and under-supported. This means that time is always at a premium. Legislators have schedule demands that can change quickly during the legislative session, and it helps to understand this may be the case when you visit. During the legislative session, meetings with lawmakers take place wherever the lawmaker needs to be at the time, which can be in their office, on their way to a meeting, or outside a committee meeting. Most meetings with a lawmaker or their office staff last 15 minutes during a legislative session, and it's best to be prepared for less time so you can get your most important concerns stated.

Please read through the list of tips below for effectively interacting with legislators and their staff.

- Be polite and respectful. You want the focus to be on the issue.
- Be prepared by studying the talking points and thinking about what you want to say.
- Be direct and let them know this is something you truly care about.
- Be ready to bring the focus back to something you want to talk about. Lawmakers will sometimes want to jump to another topic, but it's certainly appropriate for you to tell them that with all due respect you traveled here today to talk to them about (insert the topic you want to discuss).
- Be ready to ask them for their help, and have a clear way to communicate how you want their help.
- Do not be thrown off if the lawmaker asks you for information you don't know or don't have. They don't have all the information either. You can tell them politely that you don't know, but you will get back to them. If you need information for that lawmaker, please write a note and tell us.
- Do not assume they are well-informed on the issue; there is a lot of incorrect information out there on this topic.
- Do not let them make you think there is nothing they can do; they have the power to change the law. Keep in mind, changing the law is hardly ever fast or easy.
- Do not let them make you think your viewpoint isn't valid. Wolves are a public trust resource, this means that decisions about how wolves they are managed, is up to the people of Minnesota.
- Thank them for their time, and ask them to keep your thoughts in mind.

## Talking Points for Meetings

Wolves and wolf management are controversial topics at the legislature. Legislators have significant demands on their time, and as a result, many are poorly informed about wolf management. It's important for you to be informed with the facts, so that you can support your concerns about wolf management with evidence.

Please read through the list of talking points below to ensure you are prepared to educate your lawmakers.

- People have the legal authority to kill a wolf if they are a perceived threat to life, livestock or property (MN Statute 97B.645).
- We want to suspend the hunt until we have adequate data collection and full implementation of the Wolf Management plan.
  - establishment of databases for wolf-related information
  - efforts to reduce livestock losses for farmers
  - assessment of public attitudes towards wolves
  - clear understanding of important factors that influence population dynamics - such as disease and illegal wolf kills
- The wolf hunt is an elective and recreational activity, and is not intended to control the wolf population (DNR response Oct 2, 2012 "RE: Petition for Rulemaking")
- Prior to establishing the wolf hunt, the DNR failed to get the baseline wolf population surveyed prior to the state's first-ever wolf hunt. A baseline is a basic scientific measurement and failure to collect this information contradicts the DNR's claim that they are using a science driven approach to wolf management.
- The DNR does not actively monitor causes of wolf deaths due to disease, poaching, starvation, cars, and habitat loss. Possessing comprehensive data on these topics is crucial to making intelligent and data driven management decisions.
- We support reimbursing farmers for their fair market value for wolf-related livestock losses. We support the development and implementation of Best Management Practices to assist farmers in reducing this problem. To put this in perspective, statewide wolf-related livestock losses are typically less than 100 cows and calves, which occurs on about the same number of farms annually.
- Minnesotans value wolves and do not want them hunted. 79% of DNR survey respondents, including hunters, opposed shooting, trapping, and snaring wolves. Two-thirds (66%) of MN voters believe there is no need for a wolf hunt if Minnesotans already have the legal authority to kill wolves if the animal threatens people, livestock, and property.
- Studies of human attitudes towards wolves show that tolerance does not improve with a recreational hunting season. A recent Wisconsin study shows that the opportunity to hunt and trap wolves has not reduced animosity toward wolves by those who do not tolerate wolves.
- There is no evidence that wolves significantly affect the deer or moose population. Environmental factors are more likely causes of population decline for moose.

## Specific requests for legislators

Educating your legislators on the issue of wolf management using the provided talking points is important, but even more crucial are the specific requests you make of your legislators on your behalf. Legislators

work for the people of their district, their constituents, whether they voted for them or not. Their role is to respond to the concerns of their constituents. Framing your concerns in the form of specific requests helps guide legislative actions lawmakers can take on your behalf. Please realize that legislators have to balance the viewpoints of all the people in their district that express specific concerns.

Please read through the list below of specific requests to make of your legislator on Wolf Day and beyond.

- For Senators, please support S.F. 666, a bill currently alive in the MN Senate to reinstate a moratorium on wolf hunting. The lead author of the bill is Senator Chris Eaton.
- For Representatives, please support H.F. 1163, a bill currently alive in the MN House to reinstate a moratorium on wolf hunting. The lead author of the bill is Representative Jason Isaacson.
- For both Senators and Representatives, please support improved data collection and full implementation of the 2001 Wolf Management plan adopted by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.
- For both Senators and Representative, please support initiatives to eliminate the indiscriminate methods of baiting, trapping, and snaring of wolves in Minnesota.