

HOUSE BILL NO. 176

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HINKLE

A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT REVISING WOLF HUNTING LAWS; REQUIRING AN UNLIMITED GRAY WOLF HUNTING QUOTA WHEN THE WOLF POPULATION IS ~~450~~550 WOLVES OR HIGHER; REQUIRING THE FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION TO AUTHORIZE DURING THE UNLIMITED QUOTA THE ISSUANCE OF MULTIPLE WOLF LICENSES TO APPLICANTS, THE HARVEST OF AN UNLIMITED NUMBER OF WOLVES BY A SINGLE INDIVIDUAL, THE USE OF BAIT FOR WOLF HUNTING OR TRAPPING, AND THE HUNTING OF WOLVES ON PRIVATE LAND OUTSIDE OF DAYLIGHT HOURS WITH THE USE OF ARTIFICIAL LIGHT OR NIGHT VISION SCOPES; REQUIRING DATA CONSISTENCY IN DETERMINING WOLF POPULATIONS USING INTEGRATED PATCH OCCUPANCY MODELS; AND AMENDING SECTION 87-1-901, MCA."

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

Section 1. Section 87-1-901, MCA, is amended to read:

"87-1-901. Gray wolf management -- rulemaking -- reporting. (1) Except as provided in subsection (3), the commission shall establish by rule hunting and trapping seasons for wolves with the intent to reduce the wolf population in ~~this the~~ state to a sustainable level, but not less than the number of wolves necessary to support at least 15 breeding pairs 450 wolves, which is the sustainable number of wolves that allows the state to retain a delisted status for wolves. Trapping seasons must allow for the use of snares by the holder of a trapping license.

(2) (A) For game management purposes, the commission ~~may apply different management techniques depending on the conditions in each administrative region with the most liberal harvest regulations applied in regions with the greatest number of wolves~~ shall institute an unlimited statewide quota when the total population in the state equals or exceeds 450-550 wolves. In doing so, the commission ~~may~~ shall authorize:

1 ~~(a)~~(i) the issuance of more than one Class E-1 or Class E-2 wolf hunting license to an applicant;
2 ~~(b)~~(ii) the trapping or snaring of more than one wolf by the holder of a trapping license;
3 ~~(c)~~(iii) the harvest of an unlimited number of wolves by the holder of a single wolf hunting or wolf
4 trapping license;

5 ~~(d)~~(iv) during the wolf trapping season, the use of bait while hunting or trapping wolves as long as no
6 trap or snare trap is set within 30 feet of exposed bait visible from above; and

7 ~~(e)~~(v) the hunting of wolves on private lands outside of daylight hours with the use of artificial light or
8 night vision scopes.

9 (B) WHEN THE TOTAL POPULATION EXCEEDS 450 BUT IS LESS THAN 550 THE COMMISSION SHALL APPLY
10 DIFFERENT MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES DEPENDING ON THE CONDITIONS IN EACH ADMINISTRATIVE DISTRICT. THE MOST
11 LIBERAL HARVEST REGULATIONS MUST BE APPLIED IN DISTRICTS WITH THE GREATEST NUMBER OF WOLVES. IN DOING
12 SO, THE COMMISSION SHALL AUTHORIZE:

13 (i) THE ISSUANCE OF MORE THAN ONE CLASS E-1 OR CLASS E-2 WOLF HUNTING LICENSE TO AN
14 APPLICANT;

15 (ii) THE TRAPPING OR SNARING OF MORE THAN ONE WOLF BY THE HOLDER OF A TRAPPING LICENSE;

16 (iii) THE HARVEST OF AN UNLIMITED NUMBER OF WOLVES BY THE HOLDER OF A SINGLE WOLF HUNTING OR
17 WOLF TRAPPING LICENSE;

18 (iv) DURING THE WOLF TRAPPING SEASON, THE USE OF BAIT WHILE HUNTING OR TRAPPING WOLVES AS
19 LONG AS NO TRAP OR SNARE TRAP IS SET WITHIN 30 FEET OF EXPOSED BAIT VISIBLE FROM ABOVE; AND

20 (v) THE HUNTING OF WOLVES ON PRIVATE LANDS OUTSIDE OF DAYLIGHT HOURS WITH THE USE OF
21 ARTIFICIAL LIGHT OR NIGHT VISION SCOPES.

22 (3) The commission shall adopt rules to allow a landowner or the landowner's agent to take a wolf
23 on the landowner's property at any time without the purchase of a Class E-1 or Class E-2 wolf license when the
24 wolf is a potential threat to human safety, livestock, or dogs. The rules must:

25 (a) be consistent with the Montana gray wolf conservation and management plan and the adaptive
26 management principles of the commission and the department for the Montana gray wolf population;

27 (b) require a landowner or the landowner's agent who takes a wolf pursuant to this subsection (3)
28 to promptly report the taking to the department and to preserve the carcass of the wolf;

1 (c) establish a quota each year for the total number of wolves that may be taken pursuant to this
2 subsection (3); and

3 (d) allow the commission to issue a moratorium on the taking of wolves pursuant to this subsection
4 (3) before a quota is reached if the commission determines that circumstances require a limitation of the total
5 number of wolves taken.

6 (4) Public land permittees who have experienced livestock depredation must obtain a special kill
7 permit authorized in 87-5-131(3)(b) to take a wolf on public land without the purchase of a Class E-1 or Class
8 E-2 license.

9 (5) When determining wolf populations using integrated patch occupancy model estimates, the
10 department shall use the same modeling criteria for estimates made for subsequent years to ensure the data
11 results are able to be interpreted consistently. THE DEPARTMENT MAY USE NEW MODELING TECHNIQUES IN
12 CONJUNCTION WITH THE INTEGRATED PATCH OCCUPANCY MODEL TO ESTIMATE THE WOLF POPULATION MORE
13 ACCURATELY.

14 ~~(5)~~(6) The department shall report annually to the environmental quality council in accordance with 5-
15 11-210 regarding the implementation of 87-5-131, 87-5-132, and this section."

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