

April 30th, 2023

Members of the Conference Committee on Environment, Climate and Energy (HF 2310)

Re: Please oppose any prohibition of potential future managed wolf season.

We, the undersigned organizations, respectfully ask you to oppose the House provision in HF 2310 that would prohibit a future wolf season in Minnesota. This provision was a last-minute floor amendment added to the House version on April 17th, without consideration, testimony, or other public input at a legislative committee hearing. We believe a major policy change such as the status of a wolf hunting season in Minnesota should be addressed within traditional policy legislation, not added as an amendment to a major spending or policy bill without public or DNR input.

We also urge you to support active and responsible wolf management within Minnesota. Wolf population estimates are well above target population numbers. The USFWS set a recovery goal of 1,251-1,400 wolves in Minnesota, a number that was expanded by the DNR to 1,600 wolves. Wolves have surpassed both goals with a current population of around 2,700. With an increasing human population and resulting habitat fragmentation, this is not an ecologically sustainable population. Therefore, we believe active wolf management is the responsible thing to do.

Importantly, the wolf was reinstated to full protection as threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) in February 2022 by federal court order. There is not a current season and cannot be one until wolves are removed from ESA protections. In the meantime, wolf predation on Minnesota's wild deer herd is excessive which severely undermines the rich tradition of deer hunting in the state of Minnesota. The same can be said of moose populations in several areas with the potential for similar problems with our elk herd.

A responsible wolf management plan may include scientifically controlled seasons in the future, should the wolf be delisted at the federal level. The wolf population is concerning to Minnesota hunters, trappers, conservationists, farmers, breeders, and others. We recognize this is a culturally sensitive and challenging issue with strong opinions put forward by all stakeholders. The issue deserves proper legislative hearings and consideration through the official legislative process, and we ask that any efforts to have this "prohibition" become law without due process be opposed.

Minnesota Deer Hunters Association

The Sportsmen's Alliance

Minnesota Forest Zone Trappers Association

Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation

Safari Club International

Minnesota State Cattlemen's Association

Ruffed Grouse Society

Minnesota Elk Breeder's Association

Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation

MN Backcountry Hunters and Anglers

MN State Chapter - National Deer Association

Minnesota Trapper's Association