

# Conservation Groups: Sue Wisconsin Natural Resources Board to stop illegal November wolf hunt

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**Madison, WI.** — Today Animal Wellness Action, the Center for a Humane Economy, Friends of the Wisconsin Wolf and Wildlife, and Project Coyote [sued the state of Wisconsin](#) over its reckless and politically motivated decision to authorize a quota of 300 wolves for the November wolf hunt, on top of the 218 known killed in a February hunt. The combination of two killing seasons in a single year, at these inordinately high levels and contrary to scientific data, may result in the destruction of more than half of the state wolf population in 2021, and puts the survival of the Wisconsin wolf population at risk.

The lawsuit alleges that the political appointees on the Wisconsin Natural Resources Board (Board) – including a hold-over member from the Scott Walker Administration who refuses to cede control of his seat – disregarded the recommendations from professional staff at the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and chose to set an arbitrary and unsustainable kill level without regard for the health and well-being of the wolf population or sustainable ecosystems in which the wolves play an integral role.

The lawsuit also alleges that the 2011 law that requires Wisconsin to hold an annual wolf hunt is unconstitutional. It asks the Dane County Circuit Court to overturn the law, reverse the quota set by the Board, and enjoin DNR from issuing licenses for the November hunt.

“The Natural Resources Board should know its role– to oversee and ratify the decisions of the professional staff at the Wisconsin DNR,” stated Paul Collins, AWA’s Wisconsin State Director and resident of Stoughton, WI. “Instead, the Board has

hijacked wolf management. The courts cannot allow this arbitrary and capricious decision-making to drive wildlife management decisions in Wisconsin.”

The last wolf trophy hunt in Wisconsin took place just 6 months ago, when hunters engaged in a 60-hour killing spree of at least 218 wolves, exceeding the quota set by the state by 83 percent. The injury to the wolf population was compounded as breeding females and dominant males were killed, thus impacting pup production and survival in the spring. Wildlife researchers have analyzed the February hunt and have conservatively estimated that hunters and poachers killed 27-33 percent of the wolves in the state, putting the current population as low as 695 animals.

“The combination of the February hunt and the planned fall hunt could result in a 60 percent decline in Wisconsin’s wolf population,” said Melissa Smith, founder of Friends of the Wisconsin Wolf and Wildlife. “That is extraordinarily reckless and cannot be allowed to happen. This is a species fresh off the federal endangered species list, with a current federal legal challenge arguing that the delisting itself was not warranted.”

Wolves number only slightly more than 5,000 across their range in the lower 48 states, and they face a panoply of threats. Without the shield of federal protection, the human persecution of wolves has ramped up in a way reminiscent of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century slaughter of the animals, with Wisconsin, Idaho, and Montana in particular unleashing ruthless wolf-killing plans for 2021.

“Of all the wolf-killing states, Wisconsin may be the worst because it is the only one to allow the barbarity of using hounds to chase, capture and kill wolves,” said Michelle L. Lute, PhD in wolf conservation science and National Carnivore Conservation Manager for Project Coyote. “These egregiously cruel methods and extreme kill quotas make clear the dire situation for not only wolves and dogs but for our ecosystems as well as science-based reason and democracy.”

The groups are represented by lawyers with Animal & Earth Advocates, Greenfire Law, and the Wisconsin-based Laffey, Leitner & Goode.