

DNR: 2021-2022 Winter Wolf Survey results and wolf management plan update

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MADISON, Wis. – The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) today announced that the 2021-2022 overwinter number of pack-associated wolves is estimated between 812 and 1,193 within the pack-occupied range, with the most likely estimate being 972 wolves in a total number of packs estimated to be between 243 – 352 packs, with a most likely value of 288 packs. The complete 2022 annual wolf monitoring report will be available on the DNR's [Wildlife Habitat webpage](#) once ready.

While the wolf population estimate is lower than the previous winter, the current population remains nearly as large and widespread as it has been in recent years. The observed decline does not indicate a wolf population in biological jeopardy.

Indicators Point To A Healthy And Biologically Secure Wolf Population

Multiple population indicators point towards a healthy, secure wolf population in Wisconsin. The distribution of wolves and the estimated number of packs in the state was similar to past years. The average home range size of wolves this year was estimated at 66 square miles, which is also similar to recent years.

The winter tracking surveys did show a decrease in average pack size in all zones from the previous winter. This decrease is consistent with observations following previous wolf hunting and trapping seasons in Wisconsin.

DNR Confident In Estimate And Wolf Population Model

The DNR is committed to reliable, scientifically sound decision making. The type of model that is used is a scaled occupancy model that is based on techniques widely used by the scientific community to monitor wildlife populations. The model is similar to those being used by other state agencies to estimate their wolf populations. The DNR tested the model for multiple years before its implementation in 2020 and has proven to be reliable across that span of time. This methodology has been evaluated by the scientific community and published in a peer-reviewed scientific journal.

The DNR uses data from multiple sources to monitor wolves in Wisconsin. These science-based techniques include winter snow tracking surveys, GPS-collared wolves, assessment of mortalities and public observation reports. The data collected annually is a result of a significant amount of on-the-ground monitoring which the department will continue as it is a critical part of maintaining a sustainable population into the future.

Update On The Wolf Management Plan

The DNR has been working to finalize a draft of the updated wolf management plan. A public review and comment period will follow release once it is available. The public is encouraged to check the DNR's [wolf management plan webpage](#) for the most recent information on the plan. The draft plan is anticipated to be ready for public review this fall.

We appreciate the public's interest in seeing the plan as soon as possible. It is important to take the time necessary to ensure the draft is reflective of the input received from the Wolf Management Plan Committee, Wisconsin's tribal nations and the public.