

Dept. of Natural Resources: 2023 Draft Wolf Management Plan is now available

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MADISON, Wis. – The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) today released [a revised draft of the 2023 Wolf Management Plan](#). The plan will go to the Natural Resource Board (NRB) during their meeting on Oct. 25, 2023.

The DNR began developing this updated draft plan in early 2021 to align its wolf management strategies with the current state of the wolf population and the desires of a diverse public. The DNR recognizes the biologically recovered status of wolves in Wisconsin, and this plan turns its attention from wolf recovery to long-term stewardship and sustainable management of wolves in the state.

The draft plan aims to guide the department's management efforts for the coming years and expresses the state's dual commitments of maintaining a sustainable and ecologically functional wolf population while also being responsive in addressing wolf-related conflicts and concerns. Both commitments are explicitly represented in the plan's overarching goal:

Ensure a healthy and sustainable wolf population

that fulfills the numerous ecological, cultural, and recreational benefits of wolves,

while being responsive in addressing and preventing wolf-related conflicts

and recognizing the diverse values and perspectives of all residents in Wisconsin.

Extensive public input was collected and considered when developing this draft plan. Prior to releasing the first draft plan in November 2022, the DNR created and

collaborated with a Wolf Management Plan Committee consisting of 29 stakeholder, tribal and external agency representatives. The DNR also consulted with Wisconsin's Tribal Nations and the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission (GLIFWC), reviewed scientific literature and studied current [public attitudes toward wolves](#) in Wisconsin. Then, the DNR held a 3.5-month public review and comment period where over 3,500 comments were collected. All comments were reviewed and considered in revising the draft 2023 Wolf Management Plan.

“The public’s interest and passion towards wolves and wolf management showed in the comments the DNR received,” said DNR Secretary Adam N. Payne. “This plan comes from years of dedicated effort and careful consideration, is flexible, actionable, and, most importantly, outlines a path toward responsible and sustainable wolf management. I am thankful to everyone who contributed, reviewed the plan or submitted a comment.”

How Does The Revised Draft Plan Compare To November’s Draft Plan?

Many parts of November’s initial draft plan received predominately positive feedback. Based on this feedback, the [revised draft plan](#) retains strong commitments to maintaining a healthy wolf population in the state, being responsive in assisting those who are negatively affected by interactions with wolves and relying on scientific research and data to inform management decisions. The revised version also maintains an emphasis on ongoing wolf population monitoring and collaboration with other agencies, Tribal Nations, stakeholder groups and the public. Additionally, the revised draft plan continues to recognize the ecological benefits and cultural importance of wolves to the people of Wisconsin.

Based on the public’s feedback, the revised draft maintains its recommendations intended to improve wolf harvest season implementation, such as a shortened harvest registration time and issuing zone-specific licenses. It also better describes how future wolf harvest quotas are recommended to be developed and allocated across management zones. This revision also preserved the updated wolf management zones and subzones, with one boundary modification made.

Other aspects of November’s draft plan have been strengthened in the revised draft plan through the public’s feedback. A common area of concern centered around expectations and uncertainty of future wolf population sizes when there is no numeric population goal. The plan continues to recommend an adaptive

management framework instead of a numeric population goal. However, the updated plan provides greater clarity on a projected population range based on the current management objectives. The revised draft plan also discusses how under this plan, natural wolf population dynamics and future wolf harvest levels are expected to maintain statewide wolf abundance at levels comparable to recent years (overwinter estimates of approximately 800 to 1,200 wolves), while also allowing for fluctuations in local wolf densities as necessary to achieve management objectives.

Other additions in the revised draft plan are intended to strengthen transparency and clarify misconceptions evident in the comments, including the clearer goal statement (reflected above), an improved executive summary to provide a concise description of the plan's vision and actions, and more specific metrics developed to help gauge the success of management actions.

A draft copy of the full revised 2023 Wolf Management Plan is available on [the DNR's Wolf Management Plan webpage](#). The DNR recommends that the public read the executive summary for a more concise overview of the revised draft plan before reading the rest of the plan.