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Once Endangered - Now Hunted?

By Susan Bence

March 13, 2012 | WUWM | Milwaukee, WI

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Two noteworthy things happened in Wisconsin on January 27 of this year.

The federal government officially took the gray wolf off the endangered species list.

On the same day, state legislators introduced a bill to allow people to hunt and trap the

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native predator.

The state Senate approved the bill last week.

Today the Assembly is slated to vote.

WUWM environmental reporter Susan Bence talks with a scientist who hopes for “moderation”.

At last count, wildlife biologists and volunteers tallied just over 800 wolves in Wisconsin – primarily in the northern forested third of the state and a pocket in the middle.

Adrian Treves - associate professor in the Carnivore Coexistence Lab at UW-Madison – says the news is good for the state’s native food web.

The wolf helps keep the white-tail deer population in check.

Treves says too many deer in a concentrated area leads to “over browsing.

“When the deer could browse uninterrupted by a predator, they would over-consume and damage several species of plants and trees. With the wolf back, at least in the center of their wolf pack ranges, we’re starting to see some vegetation recovering - native plants and trees of Wisconsin recovering and starting to reproduce as they once did,” Treves says.


The wolf’s resurgence has also come with a downside, especially in far northwestern

Wisconsin, where forest gives way to farmland.

Wolves have attacked livestock.

The proposed bill creates a wolf hunting and trapping season from October 15 through the end of February.

Treves hopes the final version will only send hunters to pockets where wolves have caused harm.

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