

Re-Listing of the Eastern Grey Wolf



On Friday Dec. 19th U.S. District Judge Beryl Howell put the wolf back on the endangered species list in the Great Lakes region. Howell in Washington, D.C., ruled that the (previous) removal was "arbitrary and capricious" and violated the federal Endangered Species Act.

Is the federal ruling, returning the Eastern Grey Wolf to protected

status a matter of be *careful for what you wish for* in wolf advocate circles? Already the social media is strife with extreme comments on how wolf detractors will “take matters into their own hands.”

*Ed **** I'll shoot every damn one I see regardless of some windbag yuppie federal judge”*

*Matthew *****Let Ted Nugent come to Wisconsin with his AR and a helicopter and kill all the wolves!*

*Scott *****Does not effect me.. If they are seen they are shot. And the same goes with many people I know.*

*Travis *****F#%@ this they wouldn't of had to worry about it if they didn't bring them back in the first place we killed them off once for a good reason need to do it again(sic)*

ad nauseam....

Just as zealous anti-hunters can go overboard from the general public's opinion on the controversial subject, it appears the “kill them all” faction won't (and hasn't) done themselves any favors either with such fodder. Openly defying federal law (and previously state laws) won't win any points with citizens of the state who generally favor having wolves on the Wisconsin landscape.

Placing the wolf under federal protection takes control away from the states in the upper Midwest in managing their wolf populations- something that appears to create a backlash-at least behind the safety and anonymity of online comments.

Ron ********* *Guys that see wolves and have not pulled the trigger because they have a chance to take a legal one, now have no reason to not drop the hammer. Just saying - this could backfire in a bad way.*

Will the wolf's change in status by the ESA ruling really reverse perceived diminished poaching behavior? Some claim that instating a hunting season for wolves reduced incidents of poaching in the state, a fact that is difficult at best to verify and by some experts, highly debatable. In a letter this past fall to the USF&W service by The UW's Dr. Adrian Treves and others, the assertion was made that the state has under estimated wolf mortality figures. Not only did they question the underreporting of poaching in state studies, but also addressed the “new threat “-hound hunting and unrestricted unmonitored year round hound-training on wolves. At that time, previous to Wisconsin's wolf hunt beginning in October, they recommended emergency re-listing by the Secretary of the Interior as provided by the ESA.

Principal reasoning for this recommendation, besides the unprecedented hound issue and poaching concerns were Wisconsin's "unorthodox methods for analyzing wolf mortality data, which run counter to decades of scientific practice..." And which "conflicts with the use of best available science."

It appears that counter to some claims that a "liberal out east judge" made the re-listing decision out of ignorance of the species' recovery in the great lakes region, there were and *are* sound scientific concerns.

The ESA requires at least a five year monitoring period after de-listing. The final rule to remove wolves from ESA protection was published December 28th 2011 and went into effect 30 days later. In Wisconsin, by *April 2nd 2012*, political moves fast tracked a wolf hunting bill (act 169), which Gov. Scott Walker quickly signed into law detailing provisions for hunting, trapping and controversial hound hunting of wolves. Unlike a slow, measured and scientific approach to a possible hunting season predicted by then State wolf ecologist Adrian Wydeven, outside interests hastily and some claim recklessly, pushed through an ill-conceived hunt law.

Perhaps wolf hunt enthusiasts shot themselves in the foot by rushing to an immediate and perhaps too liberal of a hunting season?

[Nathan Vine](#), Stevens Point Journal Media journalist recently interviewed Melissa Smith, organizer of Friends of the Wisconsin Wolf, who was as surprised as most at the reversal by Judge Howell. She wondered if the judge's ruling wasn't influenced in part on Wisconsin's allowing the use of dogs and passing a wolf hunt law immediately after de-listing. (though Howell didn't specifically mention that in the ruling) "Wisconsin was originally supposed to have a five-year moratorium on hunting after the delisting, but that obviously went out the window in favor of politics," Smith said. "We don't want a wolf population that is just enough to keep it off the endangered list, and I don't think public opinion supports that either."

Her last statement is upheld by a survey released this past fall of Wisconsin residents both in and outside of state wolf range. A majority of survey respondents supported maintaining at least the number of wolves currently in the state-around 660. This opinion runs counter to a 1999 plan to keep a threshold of 350 animals. It's been demonstrated and generally agreed on by biologists, that the 350 number was based on old science and the state does have a higher carrying capacity.

One pro-wolf hunter from Stevens Point chimed in, "The judge is not an expert, and her decision had nothing to do with sound biology. We had experts who came up with an educated response to control these wolves, and it was working,"

The question remains who were “*we*” and who are these “*experts*?”

In a letter by retired WDNR wildlife biologist Dick Thiel to the Natural Resource Board a few short months after Act 169, he questioned that very issue. “In my opinion Act 169 is an example of legislation based upon twisted misinformation controlled by special self-interests.” Two of the bills authors, Reps. Suder and Rivard repeatedly testified at public hearings they “consulted with Department “experts.” However, It's clear from Thiel's letter, no prominent national wolf expert, nor even any within the WDNR scrutinized the law. Instead, a staff lawyer and department administrator were left to answer questions about a “species that was considered *federally endangered a mere 5 days* earlier – *to a hunted species.*”

There was further frustration by Thiel at the department

administration ignoring the latest published work by noted wildlife experts Dr. Timothy Van Deelen and Adrian Wydeven. *“To sum, the DNR’s Wolf Management Plan lacks crucial updates in both habitat parameter projections and population management profiles published in the 2009 book and made available since that time. Clearly the Department of Natural Resources is using outdated information from an antiquated plan to guide wolf harvesting in a state with no previous experience doing so.”*

So one has to wonder just how scientifically sound were the hunting seasons implemented by great lakes states and perhaps one consideration in affording ESA protection again? In Wisconsin at least, there is evidence there were concerns. “In order for science to drive wolf management decisions members of the Wolf Technical Science Committee constantly had to counter misinformation regarding wolves. This task is made more arduous when having to confront disinformation that vocal individuals and Stakeholder groups banter about in public arenas. In my opinion Act 169 is an example of legislation based upon twisted misinformation controlled by special self-interests.” Testified Thiel. That's a pretty damning statement by an internationally renown expert.

And the comments continue:

“Gray wolves are vermin that need to be slaughtered for the greater

good.”

Ed **** “I'll shoot every damn one I see regardless of some windbag yuppie federal judge”

Doug **** “Lets do our own wolf hunt! If we get caught, whats the worse that could happen? A fine and hunting privledges (sic) taken away? Big whoop! “

While wildlife advocates like Smith have expressed a desire to work with scientists toward a biologic and socially acceptable wolf population level, one is left to wonder if comments like these by the anti-wolf sect is just digging themselves in a deeper hole? By openly defying federal law it seems to dismiss immediately any and all opinions they may have for better or worse. Alarmingly yet for ethical hunters, there is a danger of being lumped into that faction by the non-hunting public-a place most of us don't relish or deserve to be.

As of now, the ruling puts a stop to the entire wolf season...just not the *cantankerous* issues. The end result being (hopefully) a more deliberate and considered approach to managing one of our most (undeservingly) controversial species.

“Killing everything that we don't like shows an utter lack of respect

for not only life, but for the intricate web of life that we are a part of.”-Greta Hyland