

HOUSE BILL NO. 176

INTRODUCED BY S. MANESS, L. SCHUBERT, E. ALBUS, T. SHARP, R. GREGG, C. COCHRAN, E.
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HINKLE

A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT REVISING WOLF HUNTING LAWS; ~~REQUIRING ALLOWING~~
~~REQUIRING~~ AN UNLIMITED GRAY WOLF HUNTING QUOTA WHEN THE WOLF POPULATION IS 450-550
WOLVES OR HIGHER; ~~PROVIDING AN EXCEPTION FOR THE AREA NEAR YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL~~
~~PARK; REQUIRING PROVIDING-REQUIRING THAT~~ THE FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION TO ~~MAY~~
AUTHORIZE ~~CERTAIN HUNTING AND TRAPPING PRACTICES WHEN THE POPULATION IS ABOVE 550~~
~~WOLVES; DURING THE UNLIMITED QUOTA THE ISSUANCE OF MULTIPLE WOLF LICENSES TO~~
~~APPLICANTS, THE HARVEST OF AN UNLIMITED NUMBER OF WOLVES BY A SINGLE INDIVIDUAL, THE~~
~~USE OF BAIT FOR WOLF HUNTING OR TRAPPING, AND THE HUNTING OF WOLVES ON PRIVATE LAND~~
~~OUTSIDE OF DAYLIGHT HOURS WITH THE USE OF ARTIFICIAL LIGHT OR NIGHT VISION SCOPES;~~
~~PROVIDING THAT THE FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION EMPLOY CERTAIN HUNTING AND TRAPPING~~
~~PRACTICES WHEN THE POPULATION IS BETWEEN 450 AND 550 WOLVES;~~ REQUIRING DATA
CONSISTENCY IN DETERMINING WOLF POPULATIONS USING INTEGRATED PATCH OCCUPANCY
MODELS; AND AMENDING SECTION 87-1-901, MCA."

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

Section 1. Section 87-1-901, MCA, is amended to read:

"87-1-901. Gray wolf management -- rulemaking -- reporting. (1) Except as provided in subsection
(3), the commission shall establish by rule hunting and trapping seasons for wolves with the intent to reduce the
wolf population in ~~this the~~ state to a sustainable level, but not less than the number of wolves necessary to
support at least 15 breeding pairs 450 wolves, which is the sustainable number of wolves that allows the state
to retain a delisted status for wolves. Trapping seasons must allow for the use of snares by the holder of a
trapping license.

(2) (A) For game management purposes, the commission ~~may apply different management techniques depending on the conditions in each administrative region with the most liberal harvest regulations applied in regions with the greatest number of wolves shall~~ MAY SHALL institute an unlimited statewide quota when the total population in the state equals or exceeds 450-550 wolves, EXCEPT IN AN AREA IMMEDIATELY ADJACENT TO YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK AS PROVIDED IN SUBSECTION (2)(C). In doing so, the commission ~~may~~ shall MAY SHALL authorize:

(a)(i) ~~the issuance of more than one Class E-1 or Class E-2 wolf hunting license to an applicant;~~
(b)(ii)(i) the trapping or snaring of more than one wolf by the holder of a trapping license;
(c)(iii)(ii) the harvest of an unlimited number of wolves by the holder of a single wolf hunting or wolf trapping license;
(d)(iv)(iii) during the wolf trapping season, the use of bait while hunting or trapping wolves as long as no trap or snare trap is set within 30 feet of exposed bait visible from above; and
(e)(v)(iv) the hunting of wolves on private lands outside of daylight hours with the use of artificial light or night vision scopes.

(B) WHEN THE TOTAL POPULATION EXCEEDS 450 BUT IS LESS THAN 550, THE COMMISSION ~~SHALL~~ MAY APPLY DIFFERENT MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES DEPENDING ON THE CONDITIONS IN EACH ADMINISTRATIVE DISTRICT. THE MOST LIBERAL HARVEST REGULATIONS MUST BE APPLIED IN DISTRICTS WITH THE GREATEST NUMBER OF WOLVES. IN DOING SO, THE COMMISSION ~~SHALL~~ MAY AUTHORIZE:

(i) THE ISSUANCE OF MORE THAN ONE CLASS E-1 OR CLASS E-2 WOLF HUNTING LICENSE TO AN APPLICANT;
(ii) THE TRAPPING OR SNARING OF MORE THAN ONE WOLF BY THE HOLDER OF A TRAPPING LICENSE;
(iii) THE HARVEST OF AN UNLIMITED NUMBER OF WOLVES BY THE HOLDER OF A SINGLE WOLF HUNTING OR WOLF TRAPPING LICENSE;
(iv) DURING THE WOLF TRAPPING SEASON, THE USE OF BAIT WHILE HUNTING OR TRAPPING WOLVES AS LONG AS NO TRAP OR SNARE TRAP IS SET WITHIN 30 FEET OF EXPOSED BAIT VISIBLE FROM ABOVE; AND
(v) THE HUNTING OF WOLVES ON PRIVATE LANDS OUTSIDE OF DAYLIGHT HOURS WITH THE USE OF ARTIFICIAL LIGHT OR NIGHT VISION SCOPES.
(C) THE UNLIMITED STATEWIDE QUOTA PROVIDED FOR IN SUBSECTION (2)(A) DOES NOT APPLY TO THE

GEOGRAPHIC AREA ESTABLISHED AS WOLF MANAGEMENT UNITS 313 AND 316 IN THE 2024 VERSION OF THE WOLF AND FURBEARER TRAPPING AND HUNTING REGULATIONS PUBLISHED BY THE DEPARTMENT. UNITS 313 AND 316 MUST BE MANAGED PURSUANT TO 87-1-304(7) AND (8).

(3) The commission shall adopt rules to allow a landowner or the landowner's agent to take a wolf on the landowner's property at any time without the purchase of a Class E-1 or Class E-2 wolf license when the wolf is a potential threat to human safety, livestock, or dogs. The rules must:

(a) be consistent with the Montana gray wolf conservation and management plan and the adaptive management principles of the commission and the department for the Montana gray wolf population;

(b) require a landowner or the landowner's agent who takes a wolf pursuant to this subsection (3) to promptly report the taking to the department and to preserve the carcass of the wolf;

(c) establish a quota each year for the total number of wolves that may be taken pursuant to this subsection (3); and

(d) allow the commission to issue a moratorium on the taking of wolves pursuant to this subsection (3) before a quota is reached if the commission determines that circumstances require a limitation of the total number of wolves taken.

(4) Public land permittees who have experienced livestock depredation must obtain a special kill permit authorized in 87-5-131(3)(b) to take a wolf on public land without the purchase of a Class E-1 or Class E-2 license.

(5) When determining wolf populations using integrated patch occupancy model estimates, the department shall use the same modeling criteria for estimates made for subsequent years to ensure the data results are able to be interpreted consistently. THE DEPARTMENT MAY USE NEW MODELING TECHNIQUES IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE INTEGRATED PATCH OCCUPANCY MODEL TO ESTIMATE THE WOLF POPULATION MORE ACCURATELY.

~~(5)~~(6) The department shall report annually to the environmental quality council in accordance with 5-11-210 regarding the implementation of 87-5-131, 87-5-132, and this section."

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