

Joint Resolution No. 2005-41

A JOINT RESOLUTION TO AFFIRM THE GRAY WOLF A PREDATOR SPECIES IN NEED OF MANAGEMENT IN BEAVERHEAD, CARBON, GALLATIN, MADISON, PARK, STILLWATER, AND SWEET GRASS COUNTIES.

WHEREAS, the health safety and welfare of the citizens of the undersigned counties is the responsibility of the County Commissioners who are elected by the citizens of those counties; and

WHEREAS, the 2003 Montana Legislature enacted Section 87-1-217, MCA, requiring the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks to manage large predators, including gray wolves, with the primary goals being to preserve citizens' opportunities to hunt large game species, to protect humans, livestock, and pets, and to preserve and enhance the safety of the public during outdoor recreational and livelihood activities; and

WHEREAS, the 2005 Montana Legislature enacted SB 461 which requires collaring of at least one wolf in each wolf pack that is active near livestock or near a population center in areas where depredations are chronic or likely; and

WHEREAS, the 2005 Montana Legislature enacted HJ 29 which urges the Montana Congressional Delegation to seek restitution for Montana citizens who have been damaged by the introduction of gray wolves into Montana; and

WHEREAS, the Montana Gray Wolf Conservation and Management Plan calls for developing a compensation program. A working group of Montana citizens and agencies developed the Montana Livestock Loss Reduction and Mitigation Program which have developed a reimbursement program for losses caused by gray wolves. The program does not as yet have a board or source of funding; and

WHEREAS, a majority of County Commissioners have received written and oral input describing gray wolf harassment and predation on livestock and wildlife, and the predation and harassment of livestock and wildlife has forced unnecessary intangible social and economical impacts on the undersigned counties, and the County

Commissioners have the statutory authority to establish predatory animal control for protection of livestock; and

WHEREAS, recent adoption of the final 10(j) Rule under the Endangered Species Act allows additional steps to protect livestock and dogs from attacks by gray wolves; and

WHEREAS, big game hunting is a major component of the custom and culture of the citizens of the undersigned counties as an integral part of the subsistence of many citizens, and the introduction of the gray wolf into Yellowstone National Park has affected the elk herds in the Yellowstone Park Ecosystem and impacts the recreational and subsistence hunting opportunities of the citizens in the counties within the Yellowstone Park Ecosystem; and

WHEREAS, the United States Government has delegated the responsibility for the management of gray wolves to the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service; and the Montana Department of Livestock is authorized to supervise the destruction of predatory animals; and

WHEREAS, the gray wolf population has reached the level necessary for gray wolf recovery and delisting; and

WHEREAS, neither the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks nor the United States Fish and Wildlife Service is adequately notifying all counties or their citizens of the location of gray wolves; and

WHEREAS, USDA Wildlife Services has been identified in the Montana Wolf Management Plan as the agency responsible for investigating and responding to wolf/livestock conflicts; and

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the undersigned County Commissioners do hereby request that the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks or the United States Fish and Wildlife Service immediately initiate a process to notify all counties and their citizens of the location and movement of gray wolf packs and provide a 24 hour contact phone number.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the undersigned County Commissioners request that the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks aggressively follow the direction of SB 461, an act which requires the attachment of a radio-tracking collar to at least one gray wolf in a pack that is active near livestock or near a population center.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the undersigned County Commissioners do hereby affirm that gray wolves are a predator species in need of management in the undersigned counties in Montana.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the undersigned County Commissioners request Congress and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service to expedite the process to delist, relegate management authority, and provide full funding to Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks and Montana Department of Livestock.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the undersigned County Commissioners support HJ 29.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the undersigned County Commissioners request the Governor of Montana to appoint a Board of Livestock Loss Reduction and Gray Wolf Damage Mitigation to implement the program and that it be funded with Federal monies.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the undersigned County Commissioners do expect the Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks to recognize and utilize the expertise and experience of the USDA Wildlife Services in managing wolf/livestock conflicts.