

Montana State Senate



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The Big Sky Country

July 17, 2012

Joe Maurier, Director of FWP
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Director Maurier,

On March 1, 2010 Montana's wolf protocol to address wolf-livestock conflicts changed the state's wolf management from an incremental approach to "adaptive management" in which the size of the wolf population directs a more conservative or liberal management with respects to regulated hunting and the use of lethal control to address wolf-livestock conflicts.

However, Pat Flowers, Region 3 Supervisor appears to have his own wolf management plan for that part of the state and is continuing the incremental management practices of the past. Mr. Flowers appears oblivious to state law and the "Montana Protocol To Address Wolf-Livestock Conflicts" of March 1, 2010. Director Maurier, how many other Region Supervisors are also ignoring state law and your agency's own protocol? For any law to be successfully implemented it must be implemented consistently across the state.

FWP is the lead agency for wolf conservation and management in the state and cooperates with the USDA WS in the case of injured or dead livestock. Agency response decisions that WS implements may be affected by any number of logistical constraints, weather, availability of personnel and equipment, or factors specific to wolves in that area or some other "local circumstances."

To address the other "local circumstances", the 2011 Montana Legislature amended 87-1-217. Policy for management of large predators—legislative intent. Section (6) "The department shall ensure that county commissioners and tribal governments in areas that have identifiable populations of large predators have the opportunity for consultation and coordination with state and federal agencies prior to state and federal policy decisions involving large predators and large game species.

Today in Madison County, unfortunately, wolf management history is repeating its self with area ranchers facing historical high loss of livestock due to wolves---and grizzly

EQC
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Exhibit 15

bears. During the summer of 2010, when grizzly bears of the area descended on a grazing allotment the ranchers were forced to call off the herders they had hired to protect their cattle from wolves. When that summer ended, three small ranching families had lost a total of 80 head of livestock to these two large predators.

Pat Flowers, Region 3 Supervisor, has stated in his Region 3 Wolf Management, that "We will not attempt to collar wolves in areas of the Region that have substantial grizzly bear populations except when we expect grizzly bears are denning. This will avoid inadvertent trapping of grizzly bears and avoid substantial safety risk for our employees and in some cases the public".

If this is indeed the case, then how will the state of Montana manage and control wolves according to law in Southwestern Montana? This alone is a prime example for the FWP and USDA WS, and US Department of the Interior Fish and Wildlife Service to consult and coordinate with the Madison County Commissioners ---- for the safety of ALL of the county's citizens and visitors.

If Region 3 is not allowing wolf trapping due to grizzly bears, this creates an emergency situation and the loss of trapping, as a vital management tool, must be addressed and mitigated immediately. This mitigation cannot happen unless the County Commissioners are at the table with the state and federal wildlife management agencies.

Director Maurier, please plan on attending the September EQC Meeting and answer the following:

How will FWP implement 87-1-217 Section (6)? By that time Madison County Commissioners should be at the same table with FWP and the federal wildlife agencies.

On page 2 of the Montana Protocol to Address Wolf-Livestock Conflicts, it states this protocol will be assessed through time to determine its effect on agency response times and related costs, livestock losses, and the wolf population. Will you bring this protocol assessment to the September EQC Meeting and answer the following in each FWP Region from March 1, 2010 through August 2012. (All questions are based on the Montana wolf population at above 15 breeding pairs.)

- 1) an assessment of each Region:
 - a) agency response times
 - b) related costs
 - c) livestock loss
 - d) wolf population

- 2) How many Regions allow WS to take any wolves at or near the confirmed depredation site by calling/shooting without first obtaining FWP authority?

- 3) How many Regions allow the extension to any and all wolves caught overnight in traps?

4) How many Regions allow WS the option to set traps in an effort to put out a collar without first contacting the FWP?

5) How many Regions respond back to WS within 24 hrs?

6) How many FWP employees have contributed to lethal control efforts in their Region since March 1, 2010?

7) Is FWP authorizing increasingly aggressive levels of lethal control, to include full pack removal?

It is vital that state law and agency protocol to be implemented consistently in each Region across the state to ensure that all Montana citizens are afforded equal protection under the law.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Debby Barrett". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Senator Debby Barrett, SD 36

c.c. Madison County Commissioners
Beaverhead County Commissioners
Jefferson County Commissioners
Montana Association of Counties