

Written Testimony: SF 2062: Open season for taking wolves prohibition

For: Environment, Climate, and Legacy Committee hearing

Date: 4/13/2023

Dear Environment, Climate, and Legacy Committee:

Thank you for reading this testimony to the committee regarding wolf population control and saving our Moose in Minnesota from extinction. To introduce myself, I have been an advocate for Minnesota Moose since 2012. I created a group focused on the saving our threatened Moose called "Howling for Moose Minnesota" in 2017 with over 600 members and was on the DNR's Wolf Planning Committee.

The most recent, 2023 DNR/Tribal moose survey shows **the moose population in Minnesota down 30% over last year**, so the downward spiral of our moose population continues. **Since 2006, our moose population is down 65%**. We had close to 9000 moose in the moose range in 2006 and currently have around 3200 moose remaining (See chart attached). So this discussion about wolf population management is timely and very relevant to moose recovery because moose are a main food source for wolves. **Wolves are the largest cause of Moose mortality in Minnesota.**

SF 2062 proposes to eliminate hunting wolves in the state (wolf population management). The elimination of wolf population management in the Moose range will eliminate a critical tool towards helping our moose recover their population, and will handcuff wildlife managers. These types of proposals are counterproductive for Moose recovery, and runs counter to the state's own biologist's recommendations (Glenn DeGuidice, MN DNR), and eliminates an important tool.

Wolves are the largest cause of Moose mortality in Minnesota. This is corroborated by the DNR's own study (attached), as well as tribal biologists. 40% of all adult moose and 80% of all newborn calves are killed by wolves each year, making population recovery unlikely, if not impossible, with the current wolf densities in the remaining moose range.

All options/tools need to be available to our wildlife managers to do their jobs and help protect our moose. Wolf advocates, deer advocates, ranchers, tribes, all need to give up some ground to protect our moose. But if you vote to eliminate wolf hunting as a tool, you will do more harm to moose, and endanger their existence. Choosing between moose and wolves, should not be a choice! Both species are important, but there needs to be a realistic and viable population balance.

Reducing wolf numbers for the purpose of **moose recovery is popular in Minnesota**. I was a part of the wolf advisory committee set up by the DNR, and the data presented by the public input surveys (on DNR website) show that people support a reduction in wolf population if for the benefit of moose in Minnesota. Very few want to see wolves gone, as they are as iconic a symbol of Minnesota, as are the moose. But balance needs to be returned to the Moose Range after years of little to no wolf control within the moose range.

Moose advocates and Howling for Moose Minnesota support the following actions to help protect our moose:

1. Reduce wolf numbers to increase year over year calf recruitment through higher calf and adult moose survival rates. (not doing)
2. Reduce deer numbers in the moose range to attempt to control brain worm transmission. (doing)
3. Improve habitat within the Moose range. Outdoor Heritage money has been allocated for this effort already.

4. Delay Elk introduction into the remaining moose range until we have a viable, live animal, Chronic Wasting Disease test (under development).

The most important lever we can pull that we have not attempted (due to court rulings) is reducing wolf populations where Moose exist. We hope the committee will consider this testimony and its facts, and not support a ban on wolf population management as a tool to help protect our moose. Moose need your help urgently.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Scott Engle', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Scott Engle
Howling for Moose Minnesota