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**Testimony to:** The Senate Natural Resources, Environment, and Great Lakes Committee

**In opposition to:** SB 1350 to add wolves to the list of game species in Michigan

**Date:** November 8, 2012

Dear Chairman Casperson and Members of the Senate Natural Resources, Environment, and Great Lakes Committee,

The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), the nation's largest and most effective non-profit animal protection organization, with more than 415,000 members and supporters in Michigan, opposes SB 1350 to add wolves to the list of game species in our state.

The gray wolf in Michigan is still recovering, and occupies only 5 percent of its historic range. Because of this, post-delisting management of Michigan wolves should be undertaken with great caution. Instead of rushing headlong into an open season on wolves, our state's principal goal should now be the implementation of its management plan, which advises the use of non-lethal controls, education, and scientific research. The state's Guidelines for Lethal Control of Wolves by Livestock and Dog Owners in Michigan allow farmers and dog owners to take lethal actions when non-lethal measures are ineffective. Farmers are compensated for verified losses caused by wolves, and a grant is available to provide non-lethal deterrence measures to reduce depredations. These measures should be sufficient to deal with problem wolves, yet still allow the wolf population to continue its recovery.

Further, if the reason a hunt is desired is to reduce the number of wolves in a given area, sufficient evidence may not exist to show that would be successful in reducing conflicts. The Wolf Management Roundtable's "Recommended Guiding Principles for Wolf Management in Michigan" advises against reducing wolf abundance at large geographic scales, because not only would it not necessarily reduce negative interactions, it could "unacceptably restrict positive interactions desired by the public, and could promote an inaccurate public perception regarding the relationship between wolf numbers and the risk of conflict." They also found that, "Previous management experience suggests most wolf-related conflicts are best handled on a case-by-case basis, and managing individual conflicts by reducing wolf numbers at a broad geographic scale would be inappropriate."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Recommended Guiding Principles for Wolf Management in Michigan: Report of the Michigan Wolf Management Roundtable to the Director of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources," November 2006.

The wildlife of Michigan belongs to all of its citizens, and a wolf hunt is not supported by a majority of its residents. A 2010 MSU statewide public opinion poll and found that “Most residents, including hunters, Northern Lower Peninsula (NLP) residents and minorities, highly value wolves, are not interested in hunting them and support the role of science in making decisions.”<sup>2</sup> And a 2004 survey by Angela Mertig found overall high support for wolf recovery efforts, and that as long as wolves did not injure people, the majority of residents supported a “hands-off” approach. That study also found that Michiganders do not support consumptive uses—that is, hunting or trapping—of wolves in our state.<sup>3</sup>

The DNR’s Wolf Management Plan goes on to say that the state may, “If biologically defensible, legally feasible, and supported by the public, develop a program to offer opportunities for the public to harvest wolves for recreational or utilitarian purposes.” So far, from the reasons stated above, **a case has not been made that a hunt is indeed biologically defensible or legally feasible, and it is certainly not supported by a majority of the public.**

In addition, on Monday, Oct. 15—the day of the first public wolf hunting and trapping season in the Great Lakes region in more than 40 years—The HSUS and The Fund for Animals served notice that they will file suit against the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to restore federal protections for Great Lakes wolves under the Endangered Species Act. The hope was that sensible policies would prevail in the Great Lakes states, but wolves this fall are being trapped and killed at irresponsible levels. The groups are also asking the states of Wisconsin and Minnesota to postpone wolf hunting and trapping until the case can be decided on the merits. Michigan alone is in the position to avoid this process by deciding against a hunt and allowing responsible and biologically sound management principles to prevail.

On behalf of our many members and the citizens of our state who value and treasure the wolf, we ask that you do not support SB 1350 to add wolves to list of game species in Michigan. Thank you.

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<sup>2</sup>“Toward improving the effectiveness of wolf management approaches in Michigan: insights from a 2010 statewide survey,” Lute, Gore, Nelson & Vucetich

<sup>3</sup>Mertig, A. G. (2004). *Attitudes about wolves in Michigan, 2002. Final report to Michigan Department of Natural Resources.* Michigan State University: East Lansing, Michigan.