

Senate Natural Resources Committee
Video Conference – Ironwood Michigan
January 28, 2015
Testimony in Opposition to SR 0007



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On behalf of the National Wolfwatcher Coalition and as a U.P. resident, I urge the Senate Natural Resources Committee to reject Resolution 7 by voting no.

When it comes to wolf issues, Senator Casperson likes to tell tall tales. He uses fear mongering tactics in an effort to persuade his colleagues and mislead the public. In November 2013, Senator Casperson was forced to apologize for fabricating a story involving wolves. Even then, he was less than truthful; claiming he had only learned his statements were untrue. As soon as I learned of his 2011 resolution, I provided the facts to his office, but he ignored them and pushed through his personal agenda.

In his apology speech, Senator Casperson said, and I quote, "Words matter. Accuracy matters." end quote. But, once again, Senator Casperson has greatly exaggerated the facts.

He claims in this resolution, and I quote, "In 2014, deadly wolf attacks on livestock and dogs increased 75 percent in Michigan's Upper Peninsula" end quote.

The U.P. has about 900 working farms with about 50,000 head of cattle. In 2014, 26 livestock animals were killed by wolves at 14 farms (+9 missing, 3 injured). More than 25% of these attacks occurred at one farm. This does represent an increase over 2013 (when 13 livestock animals were killed by wolves) and followed Michigan's only wolf hunt. The pattern is consistent with other evidence that suggests that the indiscriminate killing of wolves can lead to an increase in depredations.

In 2014, 16 hunting dogs were killed by wolves. Each was either in training or pursuing game. According to DNR, there is little correlation between wolf populations and attacks on dogs. For example, in 2003, there were about 321 wolves & 11 attacks on dogs. These attacks most often occur when wolves are protecting pups at rendezvous sites. Wolves are also attracted to bear baiting sites as regulations allow unlimited amounts of meat, meat products, dog food, fish

products and cat food. Wolves guard these food sources and perceive other canids...strange wolves, coyotes and dogs as intruders.

Senator Casperson claims to and I quote “support scientifically-based state management” end quote, yet this resolution states, and I quote, “Gray wolves increasingly endanger people and domestic animals as they encroach more and more on developed areas, and they also impact other wildlife.” Senator Casperson offers no scientific data to support his statement because there is none.

Words matter. Accuracy matters. Wolves pose little risk to humans. In the past century, there have been a handful of attacks in all of North America. Since 1965, there have been at least 34 fatal dog attacks in Michigan alone, an average of one every 1 to 2 years. In 2013, DNR reported 10 hunting accidents with one fatality. Last year, there were 10 non-fatal hunting accidents.

Research shows deer numbers are affected less by predators than factors such as weather, food, habitat quality and human hunters.

Research also shows that wolves actually strengthen the deer herd by culling the spread of diseases within the deer population. Bovine Tuberculosis has had an enormous effect on the Northern Lower Peninsula Michigan deer population, the livestock industry and Michigan's economy since the disease was discovered in Michigan in the mid-90s. Epizootic hemorrhagic disease (EHD) an acute, infectious, often fatal viral disease killed nearly 15,000 Michigan deer in 2012. It is no coincidence that these diseases have been found in deer populations where there are no wolves.

Contrary to statements contained in Resolution 7, the scientific data shows that the Michigan wolf population is stabilizing and has actually shown slight declines since 2011 with a count last year of 636 animals.

Senator Casperson has also misinterpreted the court's ruling. First and foremost, this ruling has absolutely no impact on the state's ability to kill wolves that have become habituated to humans. Wolves could always be killed and will continue to be killed if and when they pose a threat to human safety.

Although the Michigan wolf population has exceeded the numeric goals for delisting to be considered, there were additional criteria that the Judge was required to evaluate including the impact of combined mortality factors such as disease and human takings and the adequacy of state regulations.

Wolves in the Great Lakes region were delisted January 2012 giving the states the authority to oversee wolf management. In each of the states, the legislature undermined the intent and spirit of the wolf management plans. Since 2012, more than 1,500 Great Lakes wolves have been killed through recreational hunting and trapping resulting in a substantial reduction in wolf populations in the region. This added human caused mortality constitutes a threat to the

species as the scientific research shows that wolf populations self-regulate and hunting is not necessary to manage wolves.

If this committee still feels compelled to pass a resolution, then I suggest the language be changed to reflect the facts. I also recommend that you support the federal classification of Michigan wolves as threatened. This is a reasonable approach, supported by many organizations, the general public and scientific literature. Threatened status would afford wolves adequate protections while allowing for lethal control of wolves responsible for conflicts.

Words matter. Accuracy matters.

Legislators, who refuse to use facts, ignore scientific data and make decisions based on misinformation and fear mongering tactics are a far greater threat to Michigan citizens than wolves.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Respectfully submitted,

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