

# B.C.'s Wolves Deserve Better

by Chris Genovali  
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**There** has been much controversy over the "Draft management plan for the Grey Wolf in British Columbia" recently put forward by the provincial government's Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resources.

This is a deeply flawed management plan that contains many scientifically unsound and uninformed objectives. The plan also represents an exaggerated view of the impacts of wolves on both the livestock industry as well as hunting opportunities, while failing to consider the many ecological and economic benefits of having significant wolf populations in B.C. The plan identifies conservation as important, but focuses almost exclusively on population control with little regard for conservation of wolves. Further, the recommended strategies inappropriately conflate and confuse management of wolves with conservation of wolves. The plan promotes contradictory strategies that include protection of wolf populations, hunting and trapping of wolf populations, control of wolf populations, protection of livestock on public lands, and culling of wolves to protect caribou.

There is little evidence that the best available science informed the development

of the proposed management framework or was incorporated into the plan itself. As an

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example, the scientific literature cited and used to support the proposed management strategies is noticeably deficient, particularly relating to conservation of wolves and contemporary conservation science. The superficial use of literature and failure to cite and consider relevant peer-reviewed publications suggests carelessness, a lack of necessary proficiency and knowledge, or an agenda that predetermined the content of the management plan.

Despite rhetoric about conservation, the main thrust of B.C.'s wolf management plan is clearly predator control with the goal of reducing predator impacts on

hunnable species like moose, elk and deer, plus contributing to a presumed reduction in livestock conflicts. Any rational review of the impact of wolves on B.C.'s hunting opportunities, as well as livestock industry, would demonstrate that there is no "problem" in need of solving. Raincoast Conservation Foundation is strongly opposed to any increase in wolf hunting and/or trapping and recommends that the province revamp and reconsider the fundamental assumptions behind hunting predators.

Conservation and wildlife "damage management" are in a period of profound change. However, many government agencies are not in synch with contemporary public and scientific opinion. Public pressure now demands that those involved with management of wolves must consider a wide range of public interests that often appear to conflict with one another. These interests include wildlife conservation, biological diversity, and the welfare of animals on the one hand, and the exploitation (i.e., killing) of wildlife for purposes of recreation and livelihood on the other.

At minimum, a conservation plan for wolves in our province should include

establishment of protected areas for wolves. The B.C. Ministry of Environment has an unfulfilled initiative that advocated the creation of "preservation areas" that are "remote and of sufficient size to ensure the long-term viability of wolves." In these areas, wolves were not to be killed, and the primary objective was to "maintain viable populations of wolves in their natural state." Moreover, another Ministry publication noted: "the ecosystems that offer the best opportunities for the continued existence of these wolf-ungulate populations are those which have not yet been substantially altered by human development ..."

A truly enlightened and progressive conservation plan; however, would abolish the notion that it is acceptable to kill wolves for sport and trophy.

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*Photos by Klaus Pommerenke. ✨*



