

Board Members and Friends: Please find below two articles from the public hearing on wolf management and delisting.. Matt Lallamont, Tom Hauge and Ralph/WWF are mentioned.. The article written by Paul Smith promotes the WWF strategy to push Paul Ryan and the Congress on getting legislation passed. Ralph reported it was a very entertaining hearing and he will bring the full Board up-to-date at the February Board meeting. Ralph will also represent the Federation at the Senate hearing on the bill next week.

Article 1: Conservationists line up against ending wolf management

By todd richmond, associated press

MADISON, Wis. — Jan 10, 2018, 4:40 PM ET

Conservationists pushed back Wednesday against a bill that would end state wolf management efforts and bar state police from investigating wolf poaching, saying the measure will open the door to indiscriminate wolf hunts and won't help get the animals off the federal endangered species list.

The bill will create a perception that hunting wolves is permissible even though the practice would remain illegal under both state and federal law, they said during an Assembly natural resources committee hearing. And they warned that wolf advocacy groups will seize on the legislation to argue to Congress that Wisconsin can't manage wolves and the animals should remain on the endangered species list.

"I am here because (the bill) is so unsound that it is an affront to our Wisconsin conservation tradition and invites a disrespect for law enforcement officers and the rule of law," environmental attorney Jodi Habush Sinykin said. "By barring state scientific research and basic population monitoring, (the bill) takes Wisconsin back 100 years, to a time when fear and ignorance determined our approach to wildlife."

Supporters fought back, saying the state needs to send a clear message to the federal government that it's well past time to delist Wisconsin wolves. The population is growing and farmers are suffering attacks on their livestock, they said.

"There's great harm being done to families across northern Wisconsin. Pets, animals, all the rest," Sen. Tom Tiffany, the bill's chief Senate sponsor, said. "It is time we get action and we need to do everything possible. We want to send a clear message that it's time (for Congress or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) to act."

The bill would prohibit the Department of Natural Resources from spending any money to manage wolves beyond reimbursing people for depredation losses. State law enforcement officers would be barred from enforcing any law relating to wolf management or that prohibits killing wolves. Poaching

would still be illegal since wolves remain on the federal endangered species list but only federal actors could investigate or prosecute. The bill wouldn't apply if the USFWS or Congress removes Wisconsin wolves from the list.

How to handle wolves has become one of the most contentious outdoor issues Wisconsin has grappled with over the last decade.

President Barack Obama's administration removed Great Lakes wolves from the endangered species list in 2012. Wisconsin held three wolf hunting seasons before a federal judge placed the wolves back on the endangered species list in 2014. The state Department of Natural Resources released data in June that suggest between 925 and 952 wolves now roam the state.

Conservationists say wolves belong on Wisconsin's landscape, but farmers in the state's northern reaches insist the animals are wreaking havoc on livestock and pets and something has to be done to reduce the population. The DNR confirmed 42 wolf attacks on cattle, hunting dogs, pets and sheep in 2017 and 76 attacks in 2016.

Legislation that would remove Great Lakes wolves from the federal endangered species list has stalled in the U.S. Senate.

Proponents and critics went back and forth for hours in front of the Assembly committee over the state bill.

Matt Lallemond, a member of the Northern Wisconsin Houndsmen Association and the Wisconsin Association of Sporting Dog Clubs, told the panel that federal legislators have had three years to remove wolves from the list "and they haven't made it a priority."

"The bill simply lifts the financial burden from the state of Wisconsin and puts it back on the federal government," he said.

Wisconsin Wildlife Federation member Ralph Fritsch said in written remarks to the committee that his group supports delisting wolves but the bill would work against that goal. He said wolf advocacy groups would use the legislation to show Congress that Wisconsin can't be trusted to protect wolves.