

July 17, 2012 Statement of Jodi Habush Sinykin
Attorney for Midwest Environmental Advocates
Before the Wisconsin Natural Resources Board Regarding
WDNR's Proposed Emergency Rule for Wolf Hunting and Trapping

Members of the Board, Chairman Clausen, Secretary Stepp, thank you for this opportunity to speak before you today both as an attorney with Midwest Environmental Advocates and as a life-long Wisconsin citizen concerning the proposed rule's deficiencies in three critical respects: first season quotas, harvest zones, and dog hunting regulation.

As I testified in May, the expedited "emergency" rule-making process that has been authorized to implement Act 169 not only represents an unjustified departure from traditional Wisconsin rule-making but heightens the need for a carefully controlled, limited wolf harvest to ensure that emergency rules do not result in long term biological harm to our state's newly recovered wolf species.

However, the rules that have emerged from this rushed process demonstrate no such restraint. The first season quotas and harvest zones proposed by the DNR are anything but conservative, especially in their failure to factor in accurate totals of other key causes of wolf mortality, in particular, illegal killings and landowner control actions.

In fact the DNR has offered no peer-reviewed scientific evidence in support of their quota numbers, an omission all the more concerning in light of the Department's chronic inability or unwillingness to control over-hunting and over-trapping of our state's wildlife over the past fifteen years, especially with regard to quota exceedances for furbearers year after year after year. No doubt, DNR's compromised ability to control excess harvests provides another reason that greater caution—not less—should be exercised regarding the quotas proposed for this year's hunting and trapping season for wolves. Conservative or not, quotas and goals are only as good as the Department's ability and resolve to enforce them.

For these reasons and more, the first season quotas need to be significantly reduced, ideally by half, and the harvest zones curtailed to those portions of the state experiencing livestock depredation problems, at least until such time as our state's outdated Wolf Management Plan is revised to take into account additive mortality, best-available science, and assessment of the indiscriminate impact of hunting and trapping on wolves' social structure and long-term viability.

I further draw your attention to the rule's regulatory void concerning the use of dogs as a method to hunt wolves. Other than prohibiting wolf hunting with dogs at night, the DNR has failed to impose the reasonable restrictions necessary to heed the statutory directive that dogs be used to "trail or track wolves" or to curtail unsafe proximity between dogs and wolves, a scenario certain to lead to animal fighting, grievous injuries, and deaths on the part of both dogs and wolves.

Even so, there is no easy fix for the rules' insufficiency in this respect because the rules' Scope of Statement approved on May 23rd notably failed to encompass dog training as a matter subject to Departmental regulation. Without the ability to impose reasonable restrictions on the training of dogs to hunt wolves—an activity which can be conducted for much of the year including the 4 ½ month hunting season—there is no way DNR can enforce the regulatory parameters needed to prevent irreparable harm from taking place in the coming weeks. Simply stated, hunters violating any proposed dog hunting rule will claim they were merely "training" their dogs and therefore not obliged to comply—an unmanageable situation to be sure.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak before you today.