

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
STATE OF MONTANA

BRIAN SCHWEITZER
GOVERNOR



JOHN BOHLINGER
LT. GOVERNOR

February 16, 2011

The Honorable Ken Salazar
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Salazar:

I write to you today regarding wolf management in Montana.

While almost everyone acknowledges that the Northern Rocky Mountain gray wolf population is fully recovered, as the Governor of Montana I am profoundly frustrated by the lack of any actual results that recognize Montana's rights and responsibilities to manage its wildlife. Montana has for years done everything that has been asked: adopting a model wolf management plan; enacting enabling legislation; and adopting the necessary implementing rules. Our exemplary efforts have been ignored. I cannot continue to ignore the crying need for workable wolf management while Montana waits, and waits, and waits. Therefore, I am now going to take additional necessary steps to protect the interests of Montana's livestock producers and hunters to the extent that I can within my authorities as governor.

First, for Montana's northwest endangered wolves (north of Interstate 90), any livestock producers who kill or harass a wolf attacking their livestock will not be prosecuted by Montana game wardens. Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks (FWP) wardens will be directed to exercise their prosecutorial discretion by not investigating or citing anyone protecting their livestock.

Further, I am directing FWP to respond to any livestock depredation by removing whole packs that kill livestock, wherever this may occur.

Still further, to protect the elk herds in Montana's Bitterroot Valley that have been most adversely affected by wolf predation, I am directing FWP, to the extent allowed by the Endangered Species Act, to cull these wolves by whole-pack removal to enable elk herds to recover.

At this point, I can do nothing less and still maintain my commitment as Governor to uphold the rights of our citizens to protect their property and to continue to enjoy Montana's cherished wildlife heritage and traditions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "B. Schweitzer".

BRIAN SCHWEITZER
Governor