

January 23, 2012

300 Bullrun Road
Florence, MT 59833

Ravalli County Commissioners
215 S. 4th Street
Suite A
Hamilton, MT 59840

RECEIVED

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Ravalli County Commissioners

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Dear Commissioners,

Attached is a letter that we sent to the various members of the Montana FWP commission and director.

We are sending you a copy as it is our comment regarding the proposed wolf / predator policy that you have tentatively adopted to be submitted to FWP when finalized.

We are strongly opposed to the direction that the commission has taken regarding wolves in the county, including extending the hunting season and trying to get trapping instituted.

Your hunting season proposal is outrageous in that it runs well through the denning season for wolves. The resulting loss of adult wolves will leave pups to starve. There are no other big game species that we allow hunting when they have helpless young.

Your proposal gives all sportsmen and women a black eye and is poorly thought out. We ask that our letters be added into the official record in regards this issue as a public comment.

Sincerely yours,

Michael H. Koeppe

Lynn M. Koeppe

Michael and Lynn Koeppe

January 23, 2012

300 Bullrun Road
Florence, Montana 59833

COPY

Bob Ream, Chairman
521 Clarke Street
Helena, MT 59601

Dear Chairman Ream,

We have been watching with disappointment the actions of the Ravalli County Commissioners regarding wolves in the county. As 27-year residents of Ravalli County, we wanted to let you know of our feelings and observations of the current commission.

First of all, you should know that the current commissioners are ultra-conservative, "Tea Party" Republicans, well outside of the mainstream. Knowing the ideological leanings of the commissioners, it is our belief that their "Wolf - Predator Control Policy," was a pre-ordained conclusion. They went through the motions of soliciting public comments, but had their minds made up well before. They are part of a faction that is opposed to anything from the Federal government, including the wolf reintroduction.

The draft statement of their policy reads in part, "While some citizens within Ravalli County highly prize the existence of the wolf, there is no acceptable argument that this admiration of the wolf which simply values the sighting of this species supersedes or trumps the long heritage of hunting and family based activity within the Bitterroot." What "family based activity" are they referring to, and why are not the feelings of many residents that value the wolf's presence not acceptable arguments to the commission? The answer is apparent: the commissioners are basing their policy on prior held ideological biases.

We find it telling that these same commissioners that advocate killing wolves, are also the same people that ran for office opposed to stream setbacks and subdivision regulation. They have approved many large subdivisions turned down by prior commissioners and, apparently, there is no subdivision or development plan they don't approve of, no matter what wildlife habitat is destroyed. Frankly, their lack of concern for wildlife habitat is much more damaging in the long run than any wolves in the Bitterroot are to deer and elk populations.

There are many other factors that are affecting elk populations in Ravalli County besides predators, including previous over-hunting. In addition, the commissioners are promoting another "hysteria" about wolves that is not warranted. They actively encourage the idea that wolves are causing abnormal livestock losses around the valley, when, in fact, this is simply not the case.

They propose a hunting season that is inordinately long, from August 30th to June 30th, running through the denning season. This is both unconscionable and unethical, leaving

January 27, 2012

1000 Hill Road
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Bob Brown, Chairman
551 Olmsted
Honolulu, HI 96813

Dear Chairman Brown:

I am writing you to express my appreciation for the time you took to meet with me and the other members of the commission. I would like to thank you for your willingness to let us know of our feelings and observations of the current commission.

First of all, you should know that the current commissioners are ultra-conservative. They are well outside of the mainstream. Knowing the ideological feelings of the commissioners it is our belief that their "Wolf-Packer Control Policy" was an ordered conclusion. They went through the motions of soliciting public comment and had their minds made up well before. They are part of a faction that is opposed to anything that the Federal government including the wolf reintroduction.

The main concern of their policy was in part "What if some citizens within Hawaii County do not want the existence of the wolf, there is no acceptable argument that this situation of the wolf which strictly values the sighting of this species superseded or trumps the long history of hunting and family based activity within the district." What family based activity is referring to and why are not the feelings of many residents that value the wolf's presence or acceptable arguments to the commission? The answer is question the commissioners are basing their policy on prior held ideological biases.

The fact is that those same commissioners that advised killing wolves are the same ones that are in opposition to wolf reintroduction. It is a fact that the commission is not a neutral body and they don't approve of no matter what wildlife habitat is destroyed. Probably their lack of concern for wildlife habitat is what is causing in the long run that any wolves in the district are to be hunted and exterminated.

There are many other factors that are affecting the population in Hawaii County besides predators, including over-hunting. In addition, the commissioners are promoting a "system" about wolves that is not what we need. They are trying to change the idea that wolves are causing animal livestock loss around the valley, when in fact that is simply not the case.

They propose a hunting season that is not what we need. This is both an unethical and unethical way of hunting through the hunting season. This is both an unethical and unethical way of hunting through the hunting season.

orphaned pups to starvation. The killing of wolves with small pups, which cannot fend for themselves, will give sportsman a poor image with the public. It is not only cruel, but is politically foolish.

The commissioners are also advocating the addition of wolf trapping and snaring from November 15 – March 15th. In spite of the fact that there have been many well-publicized incidents of recreationists having unpleasant encounters with traps in Ravalli County, now the commissioners want to add another two months to the normal furbearer season which runs from December to mid-February. Frankly, the Bitterroot drainages are infested with traps, so much so that we, and many others, do not even recreate in the winter due to the hazards of pets encountering a trap. Now, the huge majority of outdoor enthusiasts will have to deal with even larger, more dangerous traps before hunting season ends and into the early spring. This is simply not acceptable to satisfy a small number of anti-wolf extremists in the county. Please keep in mind that only one quarter of one percent of Montanan's even trap, period. Ravalli County was also one of the counties where petition gatherers succeeded in the recent trap-free public lands initiative. This just adds more fuel to the fire!

Finally, the draft proposal states that baiting of wolves will not be allowed, but that killing wolves "incidentally over a bear bait" will be legal. How will this be enforceable? What is to prevent any person from buying a bear tag and then baiting wolves in? And what about all of the "SSS" activity being promoted in Ravalli County by the Republican Party? What effect has this already had on the county's wolf population?

The Ravalli County Commissioners are overstepping their bounds into Montana FWP territory and authority, while at the same time neglecting the proper management of normal county functions. They are not educated in wildlife biology, and their thinking is tainted by ultra-conservative political beliefs. They are not able to be objective concerning this issue, and their opinions should be considered as such. Please do not capitulate again to these county officials that are sticking their noses where they don't belong. It will just encourage more demands from them. It is time to start putting this wolf hysteria where it belongs – in the past.

Please do not encourage these people and this mindset any further.

Sincerely yours,

Michael and Lynn Koeppen