

## PRESS RELEASE:

Trap Free Montana and Wolves of the Rockies filed a lawsuit in December 2021 and asked a judge to eliminate the use of infrared and other night hunting aids and to prevent the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks from allowing aerial spotting and hunting of wolves.

The complaint contends changes were made to the Montana 2021 wolf regulations without public comment. The request for a temporary restraining order was denied on January 28, 2021.

"Wolves of the Rockies and Trap Free Montana want to thank Robert Farris-Olsen of Morrison, Sherwood, Wilson & Deola law firm for a solid and defensible argument before Lewis and Clark County District Court Judge Michael McMahon," said Marc Cooke, president of Wolves of the Rockies.

"Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks and Commission have a responsibility under the Public Trust doctrine to manage wildlife responsibly to ensure their sustainability for present and future generations of Montanans," said Marc Cooke.

"Since Montana's 2002 wolf management plan and the 2009 wolf delisting, wolves in Montana have been classified as a 'species in need of management'. Rather than reclassify wolves as 'game' or 'furbearers', wolves are now being treated as 'predators'. Altering the 2021 wolf regulations, the killing of wolves is further eased with the added use of night vision, thermal, and infrared imagery, and to the arsenal, the spotting and shooting of wolves from aircraft. This arbitrary species classification is somehow being used to try to justify the exclusion of the public in the due process of these additives," said KC York, president and founder of Trap Free Montana/TFMPL.

During the February 10th, 2022 hearing for a preliminary injunction, Attorney Farris-Olsen stated, "The department does not have the authority to change regulations." He went on to say, per Montana statute, "The Commission shall establish the hunting, fishing, trapping rules of the department. The Department doesn't get to just simply change regulations or adopt some implied interpretation of those regulations simply because it wants to. It needs to follow the process, and that process wasn't followed here."

Montana FWP received ~ 25,000 public comments and consistent with the 2021 legislative bills the far majority were in opposition to the aggressive measures proposed and the killing of more wolves.

"Transparency in the department is waning, too. It all diminishes public faith in Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks and the Commission. This is taking a tremendous toll, emotionally and financially, on all those who care about wolves. But we are here today, and we will be here tomorrow to right wrongs we feel conducted by the Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks and Commission," said Marc Cooke.

“Montana’s wildlife management system is broken. The public has been ignored, denied public comment, kept in the dark, and violated in our constitutional right to participate. The wolves, however, are paying the ultimate price with their lives,” said KC York.

Judge McMahon plans his decision after March 1st.