

## OUR VIEW

### Idaho's war on wolves spreads to Montana and Wyoming

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Posted: Monday, May 14, 2012 1:00 am | Updated: 9:19 am, Mon May 14, 2012.

Devin Rokyta, for the editorial board |

It's been just over a year since a budget rider by U.S. Rep. Mike Simpson, R-Idaho, removed wolves from federal protection under the Endangered Species Act.

For many in Idaho, that's a reason for celebration, with nearly half of the state's wolf population killed. To date, 378 wolves have been eliminated by hunting or trapping, and the hunting season remains open in two zones. Those numbers, of course, don't include wolves killed illegally, a number some estimate at up to 100. Yes, quite a victory.



We, however, see it as the mark of the beginning of short-sighted policies and the same sort of practices that led to wolves being virtually eliminated from the lower 48 states.

Unfortunately, without some sort of federal intervention, the situation for wolves in Idaho and neighboring states, Montana and Wyoming, appear ripe for getting much worse. Idaho is set on maintaining course, and now Montana and Wyoming are ready to follow more extreme measures at reducing wolf populations.

Wyoming is poised to pass a management plan that would protect wolves as trophy game animals in an area in the northwestern portion of the state and set a quota of 52 for that area. However, wolves that wander out of the trophy game area or Yellowstone National Park can be shot on sight.

In Montana, after a supposedly "unsuccessful" wolf hunt last year that saw hunters fall short of the state's quota of 220, eliminating 166, the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Commission tentatively has approved a plan that would do away with most quotas, expand the season and allow trapping. Despite pleas from hunters and ranchers to further reduce numbers in the state, the need for the new plan is questionable at best, especially after the commission's chairman, Dr. Robert Ream, said statistics show that the elk population statewide is at an all-time high of 112,000.

Since Simpson's rider, Idaho, Montana and Wyoming have negated years of progress in reestablishing wolves to the region and restoring a natural balance, and the end doesn't appear to be within sight. This myopic view of wildlife management leads to extinction events. Sadly, only federal management can cure it.

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