

Edit: Idaho cries big, bad wolf once again

Devin Rokyta/Moscow-Pullman Daily News Editorial Board

In a seemingly never-ending battle to vilify and treat wolves as inhumanely as possible, Idaho state officials and Idaho For Wildlife, which pretends to be dedicated to the preservation of the state's wildlife, have once again combined to embarrass the Gem State and solidify the fact it is incapable of responsibly and ethically managing the predator.

To start, the good people at Idaho For Wildlife sponsored the first statewide competition in decades to hunt wolves and coyotes in Idaho. The event, scheduled for the weekend of Dec. 28-29 in Salmon, is the first to be held in the continental United States since 1974, the year wolves across the country came under protection of the Endangered Species Act. The tournament offers cash and trophies for killing the largest wolf and the most female coyotes. Children as young as 10 are welcomed to compete - what a way to instill a proper respect for wildlife. The event amounts to nothing more than, as some wildlife conservationists have described it, "an organized killing contest."

"Stacking up dead animals and awarding children for killing them has no place in a civilized society," Lynne Stone, director of the Boulder-White Clouds Council, an Idaho conservation group, said.

We couldn't agree more. Clearly the organizers have little respect for wildlife and no understanding of history and the disastrous consequences of such barbaric trophy hunts and practices.

Never to be outdone, state officials hired a hunter to track down and kill wolves from two packs roaming far away from humans in the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness. The officials claim they are trying to aid the recovery of elk populations and that they are contracting out the job, like states once did when wolves were characterized as vermin predators, because the targeted animals are in areas often too difficult to reach for sport hunters - you know, locations where they can avoid conflict with humans.

All of this comes in light of the fact that Idaho's wolf population is declining, as evident by numbers from game managers in January that estimated the state's wolf population at 683, an 11 percent drop from the year before and nearly 200 fewer than when the species' numbers were at their peak in 2009.

Taking the facts and repeated actions into account, we can only come to one conclusion about the goal of Idaho officials and members of Idaho For Wildlife - and that's the eradication of wolves.