



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
PO Box 168
Yellowstone National Park
Wyoming 82190

IN REPLY REFER TO:

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CERTIFIED

DEC 16 2021

The Honorable Greg Gianforte
Office of the Governor
Montana State Capitol Building
P.O. Box 200801
Helena, Montana 59620-0801

Dear Governor Gianforte:

In the span of less than three months, at least 12 Yellowstone National Park wolves have been killed within Montana's wolf management units 313 (Gardiner) and 316 (Cooke City), just north of the park boundary. This exceeds the total harvests of park wolves taken from those two units in any previous year and we're only halfway through the State's hunting season.

Due to the extraordinary number of Yellowstone wolves already killed this hunting season, and the high probability of even more park wolves being killed in the near future, I am requesting that you suspend wolf hunting in 313 and 316 for the remainder of this season. I am also asking that you and the Commission strongly consider reinstating appropriate quotas in 313 and 316 in future hunting seasons. Quotas were originally put in place not only to protect the Yellowstone wolf population, but also to protect the corresponding economic and tourism interests of Montana that are derived from wolf watching in the park. We have succeeded together over the past years at achieving both of these important objectives without affecting Montana's ability to accomplish its statewide wildlife conservation goals.

The State's data shows little to no wolf-related depredation incidents occurring in northern Yellowstone and also shows that the elk population in northern Yellowstone is "At" the population objectives set by the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) Department. On a larger regional scale, FWP-Region 3, which includes northern Yellowstone, shows the region's elk population "Over" the objectives set by the State.

The State of Montana benefits directly from conservation investments, tourism, and wildlife viewing in and around Yellowstone. Visitors to Yellowstone spend hundreds of millions of dollars each year in communities within 50 miles of the park. Tourism to Yellowstone supports thousands of jobs and has an estimated overall benefit of \$640 million to the area's economy. The positive economic impacts of visitors viewing wolves in Yellowstone is estimated to be well over \$30 million annually, much of which is spent in local Montana communities and counties.

Wolves in Yellowstone represent over a quarter century of partnership with Montana and many other stakeholders who understand their value to Yellowstone. As we move into Yellowstone's 150th anniversary next year, the time is right for us to focus on how we can work together to accomplish our mutual objectives. Whether those objectives are strengthening transboundary wildlife conservation, providing quality visitor access and enjoyment, or improving the condition of local and state economies, our decisions today will shape what Yellowstone will look like tomorrow.

While you understandably expect me to consider the impacts of Yellowstone decision making on Montana, I am again asking that you similarly consider the impacts of Montana's decision making on Yellowstone. I appreciate the longstanding cooperative relationship Yellowstone has enjoyed with the State on a variety of major issues over past years. I believe there are no issues in which we cannot find common ground and ask for your assistance and leadership in helping achieve our mutually beneficial goals.

I look forward to keeping the lines of communication open and working cooperatively with you and your staff. I am also happy to travel to Helena to meet with you in person on this important topic. If you have any questions, please contact me at (307) 344-2002.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Sholly', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Cameron H. Sholly
Superintendent