



Marc Cooke
President
Wolves of the Rockies
Stevensville, Montana

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Dear Members of the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission,

In 1995, the return of gray wolves to Yellowstone National Park marked the beginning of one of the most successful wildlife restoration efforts in North America. Among the first wolf families established following reintroduction was **Mollie's Pack**, named in honor of former U.S. Secretary of the Interior Mollie Beatty. More than thirty years later, the pack remains one of Yellowstone's most recognizable wolf families and continues to contribute to one of the world's longest-running and most respected carnivore research programs.

This summer, Mollie's Pack established a den and raised pups on public land within the Shoshone National Forest, outside Yellowstone National Park but within **Wyoming Trophy Game Management Area 1**. If the pack remains there when Wyoming's wolf hunting season opens on **September 15, 2026**, every member of the pack—including this year's pups—will be legally vulnerable to harvest. Even before the hunting season begins, members of the pack face the risk of incidental capture in lawful traps or snares set for other species.

Under **Wyoming Statute § 23-1-302(a)(i)**, the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission has the authority to establish, shorten, or close hunting seasons within specific areas when circumstances warrant. On behalf of Wolves of the Rockies, I respectfully request that the Commission exercise that authority by **temporarily closing Trophy Game Management Area 1 to wolf harvest during the 2026 season if Mollie's Pack remains within the area**. Such a decision would represent adaptive, science-based wildlife management that recognizes an exceptional biological and public-interest circumstance while having little effect on Wyoming's overall wolf management program.

Mollie's Pack is not simply another wolf pack. It is one of the best-known and most intensively studied wolf families in North America. For decades, the Yellowstone Wolf Project has monitored the pack, producing scientific information that has advanced our understanding of predator-prey relationships, wolf behavior, disease ecology, genetics, social structure, dispersal, and ecosystem dynamics. The knowledge gained from Yellowstone's wolves has influenced wildlife management and conservation far beyond the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. Protecting the continuity of this pack preserves an internationally recognized scientific resource whose value continues to grow with each passing year.

The pack is also home to **1090F**, the oldest known wolf currently living in Yellowstone National Park. Wolves that survive to such an advanced age are exceptionally rare in the wild. Individuals

like 1090F provide scientists with unique opportunities to study longevity, leadership, reproduction, resilience, and the stability of wolf family groups over time. Every additional season that such an animal survives contributes new scientific knowledge that simply cannot be recreated once it is lost.

Wildlife management is most effective when it is flexible enough to respond to extraordinary circumstances. Wyoming has long demonstrated its ability to manage wildlife through science, professional judgment, and adaptive decision-making. This situation presents an opportunity to apply those same principles. A temporary closure of a single Trophy Game Management Area would acknowledge the exceptional scientific importance of Mollie's Pack while remaining fully consistent with Wyoming's broader wolf management objectives.

Such a closure would have only a minimal effect on statewide hunting opportunity or population objectives. By contrast, the loss of Mollie's Pack—or key members of the pack—would permanently diminish one of the most valuable long-term wildlife research populations anywhere in the world. The scientific, educational, ecological, and economic value of these wolves extends well beyond the boundaries of Yellowstone National Park and is recognized by people from around the globe.

For these reasons, I respectfully ask the Commission to give serious consideration to this narrowly tailored request. Protecting Mollie's Pack through one temporary, localized closure would demonstrate that Wyoming's wildlife management framework is capable of recognizing exceptional situations and responding with thoughtful, science-based stewardship.

The Commission also has an opportunity to strengthen public confidence in Wyoming's wildlife management. In recent years, highly publicized wildlife abuse cases—including the Cody Roberts wolf cruelty case and the felony plea involving the mistreatment of a moose—have drawn national and international attention and have raised serious concerns about Wyoming's image among many members of the public. While these incidents do not reflect the ethics of the vast majority of Wyoming's hunters or sportsmen, they have nonetheless damaged the state's reputation. This decision presents an opportunity to demonstrate that Wyoming's wildlife management is guided by ethics, sound science, and thoughtful stewardship.

We also respectfully encourage continued efforts to prevent conflicts before they occur by working cooperatively with livestock producers to voluntarily relocate or temporarily remove livestock from the immediate denning area while pups are being raised. Preventing conflicts is almost always preferable to responding after depredations occur. Proactive measures can reduce livestock losses, minimize future management removals, and support long-term coexistence between working ranches and native wildlife.

Ultimately, this decision reaches beyond a single hunting season. It asks whether Wyoming is willing to recognize that some wildlife resources possess exceptional scientific, educational, ecological, and public value. Mollie's Pack represents one of those rare circumstances. For more than three decades, this remarkable wolf family has contributed to one of the world's premier

carnivore research programs, providing knowledge that has benefited wildlife professionals, universities, conservation organizations, and management agencies across North America.

Thousands of people travel to the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem each year hoping to experience wolves in the wild. Those visitors support local communities, restaurants, hotels, outfitters, photographers, guides, and countless other businesses throughout Wyoming and Montana. Living wolves have become an important part of the region's outdoor economy, and few packs are more recognized or more valued than Mollie's Pack.

A temporary closure of Trophy Game Management Area 1 for the 2026 wolf season would have little effect on Wyoming's overall harvest objectives, yet it would preserve an internationally recognized scientific resource and demonstrate that Wyoming is willing to exercise its management authority when extraordinary circumstances warrant. Adaptive wildlife management is not simply about meeting harvest objectives—it is also about recognizing when unique situations deserve unique consideration.

This Commission has the statutory authority, the professional expertise, and the opportunity to make a decision that will be respected by scientists, wildlife professionals, hunters, wildlife watchers, and the public alike. Choosing to temporarily protect Mollie's Pack would reinforce confidence that Wyoming's wildlife management decisions are based on careful evaluation, sound science, and responsible stewardship rather than inflexible policy.

Mollie's Pack has become part of Yellowstone's conservation legacy. The remarkable wolf known as **1090F** has survived for more than a decade in one of North America's most challenging landscapes, contributing invaluable scientific knowledge every year she has lived. Once these wolves are gone, they cannot be replaced, and the opportunity to continue learning from them is lost forever.

On behalf of **Wolves of the Rockies**, I respectfully ask the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission to temporarily close **Trophy Game Management Area 1** to wolf harvest during the 2026 season if Mollie's Pack remains within the area. This modest, targeted action would preserve one of the world's most significant long-term wolf research populations while demonstrating Wyoming's commitment to adaptive, science-based wildlife management and ethical stewardship.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this request and for your continued service to the wildlife resources entrusted to your care.

Respectfully,



Marc Cooke

President

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