

BUFFER ZONES AROUND NATIONAL PARKS to protect wolves

BACKGROUND & MAJOR POINTS

Wolves are ecologically important to our wilderness as a top predator and keystone species. Their presence and numbers indicate intact wilderness and a healthy ecosystem. Where wolves have decreased in numbers, biodiversity is also greatly decreased.

Currently, wolves are protected within the boundaries of National Parks. Within the boundaries wolves suffer high mortality rates due to collisions with vehicles and trains, as well as disturbance from human activities and facilities. Outside of the Park, wolves face the extra risks of hunting, trapping, and poisoning. Only 5 % of wolves in the Central Rockies die of natural causes; and have less than 1% chance of surviving 10 years². Most Park wolves are killed by people.

Due to a limited amount of habitat suited for prey along the valley bottoms, wolves in the Rockies require vast territories. Wolves will ALWAYS be partially dependent upon adjacent provincial lands used by landowners, recreationists, etc.

Cover these major points in your correspondence:

- The wolf population in the Central Rocky Mountains is among the lowest density of wolves in the world
- Our protected areas within the Rockies are not big enough to maintain a healthy population of wolves
- The territory of every wolf pack in the National Parks extends OUTSIDE of the protected areas
- Human-caused mortality is the biggest threat to long-term health of wolf populations in the Central Rocky Mountains

SAMPLE LETTER

Dear Mr. _____

As the number of grey wolves declines in the Central Rockies, a cascade effect is being observed. Small mammals, fish, insects, birds, amphibians, ungulates, tree species and vegetation all suffer¹. As a keystone species, wolves maintain the balance and diversity within our natural ecosystems.

Wolves are protected within our National Parks, but their total annual mortality exceeds their total annual gain. Over 4 years (winter 1999-spring 2004), 13 adult wolves died WITHIN the boundaries of Banff National Park, which greatly exceeds a sustainable rate of loss². A wolf pack living within Kootenay National Park requires a territory of 2800 km² because only ¼ of the valley is suitable for prey³. Wolves collared in Kootenay National Park travel as far as 250 km outside of Park boundaries³. Even with sufficient prey and habitat within a park, the number of wolves declines as they travel outside the boundaries; hunting and trapping are major contributors. A year-round ban on hunting/trapping in the areas surrounding National Parks will likely reduce the annual mortality rate of wolves, keeping their population stable.

Grey wolves are an endangered species worldwide. It is unacceptable for your government to sit by and watch these top predators disappear. **A healthy wilderness depends on wolves.** We need to take measures to save the wolves in the Central Rocky Mountain regions of Canada.

Wilderness tourism can mean long-term financial benefits for our country; as an example, the reintroduced wolves of the Greater Yellowstone area benefits the U.S. Northern Rockies' economy to the tune of **\$35-million tourist dollars** annually⁴. We can improve our conservation efforts and image, attracting millions, by protecting the long-term health of our wilderness. **It is time for action**, not further studies. I look forward to your response on creating a 50 km buffer zone around protected areas where wolves cannot be hunted.

Yours truly,
(Your Name)

1. Hebblewhite et al., "Human Activity mediates a Trophic Cascade caused by Wolves," *Ecology* 86 (8), August 2005
2. Banff National Park of Canada, HJD 7/30/2004
3. Kootenay National Park of Canada, *Natural Wonders and Cultural Treasures*, accessed June 2007
4. Defenders of Wildlife (*defenders.org*), 2006 statistics, accessed June 2007

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