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Groups sue DNR over wolf hunting rules

Plaintiffs want restrictions on use of dogs to hunt wolves

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MADISON, Wis. - Various plaintiffs, including humane societies and organizations, filed a lawsuit Wednesday against the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and the Natural Resources Board, asking the court to stop the DNR from authorizing the use of dogs for wolf hunting.

The Dane County Humane Society, one of the plaintiffs in the case, said the plaintiffs are seeking reasonable rules to protect dogs from injury or death.

"Dane County Humane Society is proud to be a plaintiff in this case, upholding laws that protect dogs from unnecessary suffering," said Gayle Viney, public relations coordinator for DCHS, in a statement. "We are grateful for the opportunity to help bring this matter to the court, and we hope that the rules can be rewritten to provide reasonable protections for dogs used by hunters."

"The plaintiffs encompass a spectrum of Wisconsin citizens from across the state -- hunters, landowners, ecologists, volunteer trackers and community humane societies -- who object to the state-sanctioned use of dogs to hunt wolves without the restrictions needed to prevent deadly animal fighting in violation of Wisconsin animal cruelty law," said Jodi Habush Sinykin, the attorney representing the plaintiffs in the case, together with Robert L. Habush of Habush, Habush & Rottier, S.C., and Carl Sinderbrand of Axley & Brynelson, LLP.

According to the plaintiffs' filings with the court, other than prohibiting wolf hunting with dogs at night, the DNR has failed to impose restrictions on training and hunting with dogs as necessary to comply with the statutory directive that dogs be used to "track or trail" wolves and to curtail unsafe proximity between dogs and wolves.

The plaintiffs said evidence submitted as part of the lawsuit, through expert affidavits, points to the high risk of hunting dogs suffering severe injuries or being killed during engagement with wolves in the absence of restrictions that prevent the risk of direct physical encounters between the two canine species.

Nationally acclaimed expert in canine training and behavior, Patricia McConnell, Ph.D., also filed an affidavit in support of the plaintiffs' claim to enjoin the use of dogs to hunt wolves in the absence of reasonable restrictions imposed by DNR.

According to McConnell, on-leash requirements for dogs training and hunting wolves, certified training and breed restrictions are all necessary to prevent dogs from confronting wolves and, in turn, from suffering severe injuries and death in the ensuing fight.



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McConnell said that, in her professional opinion, without thoughtful and clear regulations, "Wisconsin's wolf hunt will be little more than state-sponsored dog fighting."

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