



Court to review lawfulness of BC government's wolf cull

Province refuses to disclose documents to BC public

For immediate release

Vancouver, BC (July 7, 2021) – Pacific Wild Alliance, a BC-based conservation organization, filed court documents in 2020, asking the BC Supreme Court to review the lawfulness of the province's wolf cull program. The court is set to hear the matter beginning today, on July 7th, 2021.

The hearing will review the legalities surrounding the killing of wolves in the province. Pacific Wild wants to ensure that when decisions affecting the protection of wildlife are made in British Columbia, that lawful process is followed.

The BC wolf cull has been taking place since 2015, with approximately 1,000 wolves killed since that time. The majority of wolf killings have occurred via civilians shooting from helicopters. Pacific Wild believes that this goes against the Wildlife Act, as well as breaking Federal Aviation laws. Not only are wildlife at risk, but it is also a matter of public safety.

Rebeka Breder, counsel for the Pacific Wild states "We have maintained that allowing civilians to have access to loaded firearms on board commercial aircraft is inherently unlawful and violates certain aviation security laws." She continues "In addition, the decisions being made by various regional public service staffers fall outside of their authority because they simply do not have the discretion to issue permits to kill wolves from aircraft. The regulatory scheme governing the killing of wildlife from aircraft in this province needs a complete overhaul."

Said Laurie McConnell, spokesperson for Pacific Wild, "We are not deterred by the province's current behaviour and actions. In simple terms, Pacific Wild is asking the court to direct the government to cease the unlawful killing of wolves until it enacts a proper regulatory scheme. The continued mass extermination of wolves with aerial snipers creates further unnecessary risks for the public, for aircrew, and for our wildlife. The province's flagrant disregard for these public safety and wildlife conservation concerns will not go unchallenged. Accessing basic wildlife management information in BC should be simple and transparent, yet our legal challenge has been met with obfuscation, secrecy as if we were trying to access state secrets."

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Background

In 1988, the courts intervened in a similar case involving the Wilderness Committee. At that time the court held that the regulations governing the wolf cull were invalid. Despite this ruling, the government did not revise its regulations in any meaningful way. 30 years later, Pacific Wild is challenging those regulations again. History shows us that killing one species to save another simply does not work when the core issue of habitat protection is not adequately addressed

Numerous requests for access to public documents have been ignored.

The Lieutenant Governor's Council has given the responsibility of issuing permits to the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development's regional managers.

No playbook on who or how to guide regional managers in their decisions to grant permits to hunt wolves exists.

Due to Covid-19 and difficulties in obtaining hearing dates in 2020, the initial hearing was delayed until July 7th. Pacific Wild recently learned that during this delay, the province obtained specialized exemptions that allowed otherwise unlawful shooting activities to purportedly continue. They also rewrote certain provincial wildlife regulations in an apparent effort to get around the legal challenge. The province then issued all new permits under new legislation in a further attempt to block the court from reviewing the old permits. And now, the province is refusing to provide certain portions of the new information they have created, which has created unnecessary obstacles.