JEFFERSON COUNTY LARGE PREDATOR POLICY

DRAFT

WHEREAS, Grey Wolves have been populating Montana since the 1980's, and

WHEREAS, Grey Wolf populations have continued to grow naturally, and

WHEREAS, Grey Wolves were introduced into Yellowstone National Park near the Montana Boarder in the 1990's against the wishes of the State of Montana, and

WHEREAS, the biological and temporal requirements to delist the wolves (100 wolves or 10 breeding pairs) had been surpassed by December of 2002, and

WHEREAS, the State of Montana wanted to have a cushion for State management of 150 wolves with 15 breeding pairs, and that goal was reached before 2004, and

WHEREAS, the wolf population has now exploded to exceed 800 known wolves and according to some experts, the wolf population has more than doubled that amount, and

WHEREAS, the exceedingly high wolf population coupled with increases in lion and grizzly bear populations have resulted in catastrophic decreases to our big game herds and increased predations on our domestic livestock, and

WHEREAS, wolves are known to carry several diseases that could be contagious to domestic livestock and humans, and

WHEREAS, 87-1-217 MCA list three goals of the Fish, Wildlife, and Parks Department for the management of large predators in order of priority as follows; (a) protect humans, livestock, and pets; (b) preserve and enhance the safety of the public during outdoor recreational and livelihood activities; and © preserve citizens' opportunities to hunt large game species., and

WHEREAS, Article IX Section 7 of the Montana Constitution states: Preservation of harvest heritage. The opportunity to harvest wild fish and wild game animals is a heritage that shall forever be preserved to the individual citizens of the state and does not create a right to trespass on private property or diminution of other private rights., and

WHEREAS, 87-1-217 MCA (6) states: The department shall ensure that county commissioners and tribal governments in areas that have identifiable populations of large predators have the opportunity for consultation and coordination with state and federal agencies prior to state and federal policy decisions involving large predators and large game species.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the following will be the policy of Jefferson County Montana regarding large predators.

1.) Coordination is required between all State and Federal agencies and the Jefferson County Commission on ANY matters at all related to large predators that are within, could be

within, or are adjacent to the political boundaries of Jefferson County.

2.) The Jefferson County Commission demands immediate coordination of all State and Federal agencies that are involved in the management of large predators within, could be within, or are adjacent to the Jefferson County political boundaries.

3.) The Jefferson County Commission is willing to accept the numbers put forth by the State of Montana of 150 wolves or 15 breeding pairs as sufficient for the continued existence of wolves in Montana.

4.) The Jefferson County Board of Commissioners asserts that it is the County Commissioners responsibility and duty to protect the health, safety, and welfare of our citizens, protect the agricultural and tax base of our county, and protect the right to harvest game animals as guaranteed by the Montana Constitution.

5.) Jefferson County Resolution 41-2008 asserts the county's legal standing and requests coordination with all federal and state agencies maintaining jurisdiction over lands and/or resources within Jefferson County. This resolution 41-2008 is hereby made a part of this policy.

6.) Jefferson County acknowledges that large predators are a part of our landscape and accepts that fact.

7.) Jefferson County is willing to co-exist with these large predators, so long as they do not have an adverse impact on the health, safety, and welfare of our citizens, do serious harm to our agricultural and tax base, or decimate our large game herds.

8.) Jefferson County will coordinate with as many other counties in Montana as may be impacted by large predators, with the intent of solving differences and presenting a united message to take to the state and federal governments.

9.) Jefferson County will participate in a sub-committee of the Montana Association of Counties (MACO) dealing with large predators, and will be willing to pay milage and per diem for county representatives to attend meetings until those costs could be taken over by MACO.

RESOLUTION 41-2008

ASSERTING JEFFERSON COUNTY'S LEGAL STANDING AND REQUESTING COORDINATION WITH ALL FEDERAL AND STATE AGENCIES MAINTAINING JURISDICTION OVER LANDS AND/OR RESOURCES LOCATED WITHIN JEFFERSON COUNTY, MONTANA

WHEREAS, the Board recognizes its mandate provided in Montana statutes to (1) protect and enhance the public health, safety, and welfare of the citizens of the County, (2) protect the tax base and encourage the economic stability of the County, and (3) encourage the agriculture and forestry industries and other businesses for future growth; and

WHEREAS, the State of Montana has enacted laws which empower the Board of County Commissioners to develop land use, resource management, and environmental planning processes necessary to serve the pubic health, safety, convenience, and welfare; and

WHEREAS, laws and regulations of the United States ("Federal Laws") and of the State of Montana ("State Laws") mandate that planning and actions of the Federal and State agencies must be coordinated with the plans of local government, these specific laws being in part the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA), the National Forest Management Act (NFMA) and the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA); and

WHEREAS, community values that express and guide Jefferson County's comprehensive plan, known as the Jefferson County Growth Policy, are: to sustain and strengthen the economic well-being of Jefferson County's citizens; to protect and maintain Jefferson County's rural character and the community's historic relationship with natural resource development; and to preserve and enhance the rural, friendly and independent lifestyle currently enjoyed by Jefferson County's citizens, and

WHEREAS, the Jefferson County Growth Policy provides for intergovernmental coordination by instituting regular meetings with state and federal agencies that control substantial property in Jefferson County to ensure full consideration of county concerns as

policies are formulated concerning issues including public access, wildlife management, grazing rights, and fire suppression. The Growth Policy further mandates the involvement and interaction between local government and the state and federal government in all phases of planning. As decisions made at the state and or federal level can significantly impact local governments, Jefferson County's Growth Policy finds that it is imperative that communication exists between all levels of government, and

WHEREAS, the Board has passed resolutions that support Jefferson County's reliance upon natural resources including Resolution 31-2002, a Resolution to Adopt a Right to Farm and Ranch Policy, Resolution31-2004, a Resolution to Adopt a Right to Mine Policy, Resolution 32-2004, a Resolution of the County Commissioners of Jefferson County, Supporting Active Forest Management, and Resolution 06-2006, a Resolution Supporting Mineral Exploration in Jefferson County, and

WHEREAS, the Board recognizes the need for a reliable source of funds from use of resources on Federal lands wherefore Federal Lands comprise approximately 70% of land ownership within Jefferson County; and

WHEREAS, State owned land is found in the County and the Board recognizes its legitimate interest in the management of that State land; and

WHEREAS, the economic base and stability of Jefferson County is largely dependent upon commercial and business activities operated on Federal and State owned, managed, and/or regulated lands that include, but are not limited to recreation, tourism, timber harvesting, mining, livestock grazing, and other commercial pursuits, and

WHEREAS, NEPA states that Federal agencies must coordinate their management plans and actions with local government plans to make them consistent and requires assessment of the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of Federal agency planning decisions on the environment including the ecological, aesthetic, historic, cultural, economic and other impacts that may occur as a result of private and/or governmental actions; and

WHEREAS, the Board implements coordination of Federal land management with the

County to promote sustainable revenue from the Federal Lands; and

WHEREAS, the Board recognizes the applicability of the aforementioned Federal Laws and State Laws to its duties and requires full participation of the Board in the planning and regulatory processes of all Federal and State agencies which have any jurisdiction within the County; and

WHEREAS, the Board recognizes that meaningful local government involvement requires more than the timely exchange of information and places an additional responsibility on Federal and State agencies to incorporate the goals, objectives and policies of local government into Federal and State plans and decisions affecting any area under the local government's jurisdiction; and

WHEREAS, the Board desires to continue developing a policy to facilitate Federal and State coordination with the County including the creation of a county natural resource advisory task force and the development of a resource plan by said task force.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board requires that all Federal and State planning and actions affecting the County be coordinated with the County adopted plans, resolutions, and ordinances, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that all Federal and State agencies administering land or conducting activities in the County be notified of adoption of this resolution implementing coordination.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Jefferson County Board of County Commissioners this 25th day of November, 2008.

Dated this 25th day of November, 2008.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
Jefferson County, Montana

ATTEST: