



Chief Thomas L. Tidwell
US Forest Service
1400 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-0003

April 3, 2012

Copy via e-mail: info@fs.fed.us

Dear Chief Tidwell,

On behalf of our over 350,000 members and online supporters, we request an investigation into whether the trapping and treatment of the wolf depicted in the photograph below by Nez Perce National Forest employee Josh Bransford constitutes employee misconduct, and further, that you consider terminating Mr. Bransford's employment. It is our contention that the trapping of the wolf, which occurred on the weekend of March 16-18, 2012, violates Title 25, Chapter 35 of the Idaho Code, prohibiting animal cruelty.



According to a published report,

On March 16, a Friday, a US Forest Service employee from Grangeville, Idaho, laid out his wolf traps. The following Monday, using the name "Pinching," he posted his story and pictures on www.Trapperman.com. "I got a call on Sunday morning from a FS [Forest Service] cop that I know. You got one up here as there was a crowd forming. Several guys had stopped and taken a shot at him already," wrote Pinching. The big,

black male wolf stood in the trap, some 300-350 yards from the road, wounded—the shots left him surrounded by blood-stained snow.”¹

Section 25-3504 of the Idaho Code provides:

Every person who is cruel to any animal, or who causes or procures any animal to be cruelly treated, or who, having the charge or custody of any animal either as owner or otherwise, subjects any animal to cruelty, is, for every such offense, guilty of a misdemeanor and shall, upon conviction, be punished in accordance with section 25-3520A, Idaho Code.

Mr. Bransford’s actions directly and/or through negligence appear to violate Idaho’s statutory prohibition on animal cruelty. We are separately writing to the Idaho attorney general to request a state law-enforcement investigation.

A Forest Service investigation and possible disciplinary actions are independently warranted to uphold professional and ethical standards amongst members of the Forest Service workforce. The Forest Service icon “Smoky the Bear” was an orphaned cub rescued after a fire on the Lincoln National Forest, speaking to an agency that for decades took pride in a conservation ethic informed by humane principles. In contrast, this disturbing image of Bransford and the wolf sends a shockingly different message about Forest Service values.

We request a thorough investigation into Mr. Bransford’s judgment and ethics in placing a trap within sight of a public road in a region in which wolves are likely to be targets of sadistic behavior; and into any encouragement by Mr. Bransford, directly or tacitly, of the actions of the other individuals who shot at this doomed wolf to increase his misery.

We are sickened by the wholesale slaughter of an animal, the gray wolf, that, but for last year’s wolf delisting rider, would still qualify for protection under the Endangered Species Act in Idaho and elsewhere in the northern Rocky Mountains.

Please open an investigation into whether Mr. Bransford’s actions brought discredit to the Forest Service, take appropriate disciplinary measures, and – given the robust, continuing public interest in conservation of wolves – make public the results of the investigation.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

/s/

Kieran Suckling
Executive Director

¹ Gibson, James W. “Wolf Torture and Execution Continues in the Northern Rockies,” Earth Island Journal, 3/28/2012, available on-line at http://www.earthisland.org/journal/index.php/elist/eListRead/wolf_torture_and_execution_continues_in_the_northern_rockies/