

## Dolores Malchow

Even though I reside in the Puget Sound area (for now), I have travelled to the Grouse Flats area of Washington since I was 13 years old for hunting purposes and recreation. My husband and I purchased land there in 1968 and travel there, usually with family, at least every five weeks. This year I spent the full summer there in order to escape the overcrowding noise and chaos of the Seattle area.

The thing that startled me most this summer is that I did not see a cow or calf elk and only a handful of deer for two full months in the whole area of eastern Grouse Flats. My neighbors in the central part of the Flats reported the same phenomenon. It was spooky and sad. Watching the game has always been a part of my therapy over there. It's ironic that the land purchased by Fish & Game from the 4-0 ranch has less 'game' than I've ever seen.

Another part of my Grouse Flats escape is hiking in the woods. I normally carry a pepper spray for an occasional bear. The cougars seem to stay away. But now I always carry a high caliber pistol for protection from the growing wolf population. On this same note I am reluctant to allow others, especially our grandchildren, to leave our cabin area without an armed escort. This is new in the last few years. Family picnics and hikes felt safe in the past and we didn't worry about predator problems. Bears and cougars are hunted but the wolves are not so they seem to have minimal fear of humans.

In order to cover the cost of property taxes and maintenance, we lease our property to local ranchers. Several ranchers lost cattle to the wolves this summer on Grouse Flats. They are realizing a very small profit from their ranching and it is made worse by the stress on the herd of these increasing wolf numbers. Our income from these leases will be eliminated if the ranchers continue to lose cattle and are forced to move their cattle to another area.

Finally, as a resident of the West side of Washington, I am puzzled as to why the environmentalists and politicians of Seattle and Olympia have a say in what happens on the East side of the state. Most of the people I know in the Puget Sound area have no clue where the Blue Mountains of Washington are. They seem unconcerned with the livelihood and safety of the residents on the East side. They seem to value, instead, reintroducing dangerous predators (wolves and grizzly bears) to areas that the farmers removed them from over a century ago, for good reason. If these animals need to be in Washington, they should be put in Seattle and Olympia near where their promoters live.

Thank you for letting me voice my opinion on this.