

## Dorothy Dahm

Apex predators and stuff of legend, wolves enchant us with their beauty, intelligence, and complex family structures. Unfortunately, despite their ubiquity on t-shirts, posters, and calendars, wolves in the wild, including Washington State, still require protection. Washington's wolves have not yet recovered, so the Department of Fish and Wildlife's intention of creating a post-protections plan is premature. Instead, the department should focus on protecting and increasing existing wolf populations while mitigating human-wolf conflicts. The department must find non-lethal means of resolving wolf-livestock conflicts; part of this effort would entail educating the public about ways to co-exist with these predators. In any case, the department must rely on sound science to create a wolf-management plan. Such a plan would reflect the global consensus in the scientific community to protect and conserve large predators. It would not use poorly supported studies to justify the slaughter of wolves, nor would it prioritize the interests of ranchers over those of entire ecosystems. Wolves are living symbols of the American wilderness. If we drive these creatures to extinction, we will lose a part of our history and a part of ourselves. Thank you for your time.