## Elaine Gerhardstein

Creating a "post-recovery" plan for wolves at this time is premature, as Washington is still far from meeting the goals set forth in the current plan. Instead of racing to create a post-delisting plan, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife must instead focus its attention on current wolf-management needs. This includes: (1) Resolving, through nonlethal means, conflicts between livestock and wolves, which are taking place in some of the state's best habitat for wolves; and (2) Conducting extensive public education on wolves. This is emphasized in the current plan but has not been done by you, despite the fact that all wolf experts say public education is the single most important action to take for successful wolf conservation. Additionally, under the current wolf plan and any future wolf plan, management guidance, policies and protocols — and especially those which could result in wolves being killed — must be developed through a science-based, public rule-making process that results in transparent, rational and enforceable strategies. Therefore I urge you to: (1) Stop cherry-picking science to justify wolf-killing; (2) Answer the global call by scientists to protect and conserve apex predators; and (3) Use every opportunity to extol the value of top predators in keeping nature healthy, and cease current messaging that prioritizes livestock over wolves. The public will fail to see any reason to coexist with wolves if the department fails to explain that wolves are ecologically important and worth conserving. 4) As you are the conservation experts, teach the public why apex predators like wolves are important, to humans as well as to other species. Serve ALL of the public, not just ranchers and farmers who complain of predation when they put their livestock under the wolves' noses. What right do they have to demand that you decimate an entire species, which is supposed to be recovering? Sensible measures (i.e., an armed guard on horseback) need to be taken for animals who are allowed to range free. 5) Let the people in your state learn to form a positive attitude toward wolves. If you continue to put bounties on this species, the public will continue to think that the only good wolf is a dead wolf. Thank you for considering my comments.