

## Laura Saxton

I've lived in Washington State since 1989. I love the natural NW beauty and am an avid hiker, nature lover and animal advocate. I can't imagine living anywhere but here. I live in Renton next to a greenbelt. I have rabbits, deer, black bears and bobcats visit my property. All animals have intrinsic value and that value cannot be undermined by the needs of a few livestock owners. Any plan the department makes needs to reflect that the state holds wolves in trust for all of the public. 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. Annual growth is stagnating, the numbers in existing wolf packs is too small. The recovery goals are far off. Instead of rushing 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. Through educating and mandating that livestock owners use fencing, guard dogs and other methods known to deter wolves. (2) Conducting extensive public education on wolves. People need to be educated that wolves do not decimate ungulate herds in other western states and they can help stop the spread of chronic wasting disease. Wolves are necessary and important to our ecosystem. 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) Never sanction hunting or trapping of wolves or designate wolves as game mammals. (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. Thank you for considering my comments.