

Mary Anne Ericson

I'm writing to you as an educator with WolfWays, an organization co-sponsored by Wolf Haven International, whose director is a member of WAG. WolfWays provides free, science-based wolf education programs to schoolchildren in NW Oregon and SE Washington. It seems to me that instead of making "post-recovery" plans, WDFW should be focusing its efforts on providing extensive public education on wolves, focusing on their complex social lives and on their value in balancing ecosystems. The current plan lists public education about wolves as a goal, but this goal remains largely ignored and unmet, even though education -- along with valuing wolves' lives enough to refrain from killing them -- is crucial in increasing social tolerance. This is something I have experienced directly in my work as an educator. And where there is social tolerance, wolves stand the greatest chance of maintaining a stable population and doing their absolutely crucial job as apex predators. If you look at the growth trajectory of Washington's wolves, it's obvious that the recurring sprees of wolf killing by WDFW have taken their toll on recovery, as population growth overall has leveled off, and there are still no packs in one of the state's recovery zones. I fear that if Washington delists wolves, there will be pressure to institute a wolf hunting and trapping season even though there is absolutely no biological or ethical justification for killing wolves for sport. Wolf hunting would be a disaster not only for wolves' population numbers overall but also for their family life and culture. I fervently hope that any new plan that is developed for Washington's wolves will incorporate the best available science, will entirely rule out the killing of wolves on our public lands, and will prioritize the values of non-consumptive stakeholders, who after all represent a majority of citizens both in Washington and in neighboring states where wolves are likely to disperse. Thank you for considering my comments.