

Mary Hood

I am a founding member of the International Wolf Center in Ely, Minnesota. I've seen wolves in the wild in the Canadian Rockies and at Yellowstone. Wolves are social creatures with a family life much like ours. They are shy of humans. If the loss of a little livestock is what it takes to preserve these magnificent animals, I'm happy for ranchers to be reimbursed as long as they are following the correct protocol on private land. I believe public lands are for the people, not for ranching. Please vote to save and preserve these gorgeous animals. Every creature in the web of life is connected. Wolf presence actually improves prey health, as studies at Yellowstone have proven. I want my children, grandchildren, and descendants to be able to observe and photograph wolves in the wild! 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. Thank you for considering my comments.