

Erin Hauge

It is premature to be considering a post-recovery plan for wolves when the state of Washington is still far from meeting the goals that would indicate true recovery in the current wolf management plan. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife must focus its attention on current wolf management goals, which include:

- The Department must resolve conflicts between livestock and wolves using nonlethal methods. Currently wolf conflicts are occurring in some of the state's best habitat for wolves, much of which is on our public lands. As a reminder, wolves on public lands must be held in trust for all citizens and should not be killed at the behest of a few ranchers using public lands for grazing. Public-lands grazing is a privilege, not a right. And there are many nonlethal methods that, when applied consistently and correctly, have been proven to be effective in controlling and even eliminating livestock-predator conflicts.
- The Department has an obligation to conduct deep and wide-ranging public education on wolves. While this component is emphasized in the current wolf management plan, WDFW has not put much effort into developing effective and inclusive education outreach on living with wolves. WDFW has failed to connect with the public despite the fact that wolf experts say public education is the SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT action that can be taken for successful wolf conservation.
- Wolf management plans must be developed through a science-based, public rule-making process that is transparent and that results in rational and enforceable management strategies. Under the current plan, management is using lethal control, which is unacceptable, unsustainable and goes against sound, science-based management. The Department's actions have continued to kill wolves despite public outcry. These wolves die to placate a very small number of people who are already taking advantage of our public lands and resources at \$1.35 per cow/calf per month to run their cattle. Not only is that a basement bargain at twice the price, it is not necessary to wipe out entire wolf packs to be able to manage them. Killing multiple wolves living on public lands to prevent livestock loss is not management. It is simply killing wolves. To be considered a scientifically motivated Department that is respected for being forward-thinking, effective and rational, WDFW must:

- Stop cherry-picking science to justify a political decision. The Department's wolf-killing placates a few ranchers who should be using nonlethal management methods applied in a consistent and correct manner and blatantly are not.
- Get in step with the scientific global call to protect and conserve our apex predators. We are in a mass extinction crisis, stop participating in the crisis and manage wolves through nonlethal methods.
- Develop a public education and outreach program that extols and promotes the value of top predators for keeping ecosystems healthy. And stop sending the message that the state prioritizes livestock over wolves by stopping the Department's wolf killing. The public will only see the value of coexisting with wolves if the Department explains that wolves are ecologically important and worth conserving. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife has a responsibility to conserve and protect wolves and all wildlife held in the public trust in perpetuity. And that will only happen if the Department ceases to kill wolves as a blanket solution, begins to talk to the public about coexisting with wolves, and works with livestock operators to use nonlethal solutions that are applied with oversight and guidance in a consistent and correct manner. Please focus on the critical wolf recovery and conservation that still needs to happen. The Department is not yet in 'post-recovery' mode for wolves. There is more work to do. Thank you for your consideration.