

Tina Blade

As a lifelong resident of Washington, I am very pleased that the state has adopted a wolf-recovery plan. The restoration of an apex predator like wolves not only brings back a powerful, beautiful predator to the state, but it helps restore a healthy balance to the ecosystem. So it is very discouraging that the goals set forth in the current plan have not been met. What's more, those goals are now being undermined by WDFW's move to a "post-recovery" plan. Given that the original goals have not been met, this move is premature, indeed. Instead of racing to create a post-delisting plan, the WDFW should instead attend to and support current wolf-management needs and ensure they are being met. This includes the following: (1) Resolve, through non-lethal means, conflicts between livestock and wolves. Such conflicts are taking place in some of the state's best habitat for wolves and are a huge, ongoing threat to successful restoration. (2) Conduct extensive public education on wolves. This is emphasized in the current plan but has not been done by WDFW, 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 that 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 co-exist with wolves if your department fails to explain how and why wolves are ecologically important and worth conserving. Thank you for considering my comments.