

Cynthia Cannon

Increasingly, studies support the role of predators in healthy ecosystems. Wolves in Washington are part of healthy ecosystems throughout our state. To that end, I implore you to develop a new wolf plan that supports pack development and sustenance, de-conflicts current land use with ungulate herds, and improves public understanding of wolves. At this time, creating a “post-recovery” plan for wolves is too early. We’ve even lost packs in our state under the current plan. 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. As one of the most contentious issues, the Department needs to resolve—through nonlethal means—conflicts between livestock and wolves. Particularly since these are taking place in some of the state's best habitat for wolves; and 2. Improve Washingtonians understanding of wolves by 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. 3. 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: a) Conduct a full SEPA analysis to develop wolf-livestock protocols based on science, public input and rule-making. Stop cherry-picking science to justify wolf-killing; b) Answer the global call by scientists to protect and conserve apex predators. Stop state-sanctioned hunting or trapping of wolves or designation of wolves as game mammals; and c) Predators are part of the healthy ecosystem equation. 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.