

Shelli Gordon

I am very concerned that your agency is in the process of creating a “post-recovery” plan for wolves at this time. At best, this 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. This inaction on your part is in direct conflict with the current plan's intentions. 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. All species in an ecosystem are a vital part of that system and when one is eliminated it throws the entire system out of balance. Since cattle are not a natural part of the ecosystem they should be better managed and restricted from using public lands to graze. Thank you for considering my comments.