

Tracey Loyd

My name is Tracey Loyd. I am a veteran and a citizen by birth in Washington state and I have lived here for almost all of my life. Now as a disabled senior citizen, one of my greatest joys is remembering the years I spent as a hiker and a camper in Washington, starting from when my dad took myself and my brothers camping as children. But even though I went into many wilderness areas I never heard wolves until I went to Yellowstone in 2014. That visit and the things I learned about wolves, crystallized my attitudes about wildlife recovery. Simply put, we need wolves. They are essential to a healthy ecosystem and we have far, far too few of them to realistically consider them recovered. Before you consider changing their status I urge you to research what their reintroduction has done for Yellowstone. It would be well to have the same positive changes occur in Washington state. 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.