

Patricia Silver

The wolf population has not recovered yet. If DFW lifts hunting/killing bans, wolves will be hunted to extinction. They are valuable to keeping natural balance in their territories by hunting the animals that could become a pestilence if their numbers are not controlled naturally by this apex predator. Wolves are magnificent wild animals that should be protected. Ranchers have means to protect their livestock — i.e. powerful motion-activated lights to scare wolves away and electric-shock fencing to discourage wolves from entering their fields. The Wolfe population has not recovered enough to declare open season on them and they could become extinct in that geography due to eliminating their protections prematurely. 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.