

# MICHELE COSTELLO-LETTAU

Once again, we find ourselves having to defend our native wildlife species-the ever-vilified wolf. We are forced to petition, comment and advocate for an animal native to our country and Washington State - an animal once eradicated and brought back only to be managed to keep the lowest numbers possible. We are told they need managed to protect rancher's livestock and to protect undulates that, we are told, are decreasing in numbers. However, non-biased studies are not taken into consideration. There is no definable, viable and non biased proof that wolves decimate other animal populations. Those reports are from hunting advocates. That is biased and non-scientific. So here we are. We are making a decision to take a vilified species off the endangered species list based on hunters and ranchers. Washington is killing off intricate and complex families for livestock kill on PUBLIC lands.

Last I heard, this was a government by the people and for the people and the majority of the American people, the majority of those in Washington State, want wolves to remain protected. We are not run by special interest groups. Putting the fate of wolves in your state control is actually making a decision based on 1/4 of the country and solely on hunter and ranchers as well. This is not what propels our country and your state forward. States obviously cannot be trusted to manage wolves as those who manage them are biased and are backed by the hunting and ranching groups that wish to eradicate wolves. How is this sound science?

Where wolves' numbers are managed by the state, why are those making the decisions vested in big game hunting, trophy hunting and big oil, gas and cattle associations? How is that equitable conservation decision making? It is not equitable conservation. It is one-sided management which is not only irresponsible but unethical.

I cannot fathom a world where the USFAW and the Federal and State governments are blind and deaf to what is permitted to happen to wolves in this country and in your state. We are no longer a nation of cowboys and ranchers. We are much more than that.

Has every senator and every representative of every state been sent videos of the blatant torture hunters and ranchers inflict on wolves as means of "population control?" Have you stopped to think that repeat offending ranchers are setting up wolves for failure. Have you considered how your state is setting up wolves for failure? Because if not, you are asking them to makes decisions based on ignorance and biased information. Why hide the truth?

Wolves need some federal protection-as do all predatory animals-or else it would be a free for all slaughter. Even game hunters are disgraced and distancing themselves from wolf hunters because of their extremes and barbaric practices.

In what country do we live where such barbaric measures are approved to kill an indigenous species? How do I explain to my young adult students that this blatant zealous eradication of an indigenous animal is considered acceptable to a government "dedicated" to understanding and protecting the many indigenous species of our country? Why they would allow the causation of unnecessary pain on an animal already being marked for death. What is it inside of them that a slow death from any means is acceptable in this day and age?

Wolves are indigenous to this country and roaming the land is instinctual. What do you expect a predator to do when prey is around?

How about working with the wolf advocate groups who want to see a BETTER plan so farmers, hunters and wolves can cohabitate? They have no other stake in this. At what cost is legally torturing a species OK so another species can be killed by man. And I use the word torture with the utmost certainty. Essentially we preserve the species we want to kill for sport or food but if any other species challenges us, they are reduced to near nothing.

You may say wolf advocates are the extreme but there are extremes on both sides and what has been allowed to happen to wolves this far is an extreme. Also, states should not be allowed to continue to keep managed control of wolves. They have failed thus far. So where is the middle ground? We have brought wolves back from the brink of extinction only to persecute them once again. It is narcissist to believe wolves need controlled by us. They control their own numbers. That is a proven fact.

We set the bar for other countries. We ask South American countries to protect their rainforests, yet we rape our land continually. We rally behind such animals like African Elephants and the African Rhino and condemn poaching of those indigenous species, yet we eradicate ours. We condemn Canada for their Harp Seal slaughter yet we viciously open up the killing of our own indigenous species. Why are we so hypocritical? Why can't we model what we want and need other countries to do. We are not above them.

America has lost face on so many affairs; this is one where we can set the bar. Advocate groups have no vested interest other than stopping the unnecessary torture and murder of wolves. Work together.

Please show us that you are making a change for the better-not a step backwards in the evolution of human compassion. Keep wolves protected. Ranchers need sanctioned and held responsible for careless livestock grazing and baiting. Wolves are not a nuisance animal. They are not an individual state's animal. They are OUR animal. They are North American wolves and everyone deserves a say in what happens to our native wildlife.

This is my plea as someone responsible for not only student upbringing, but also their education. AFTER ALL, they will be making the laws that dictate your world someday.