

WP Lyssie Burden

My family (four voting adults) and I think that creating a “post-recovery” plan for wolves, especially at this time, is absolutely premature. We know that Washington is still far from meeting goals set forth in the current plan for wolf recovery. We ask that instead of prioritizing a post-delisting plan, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife focus attention on and support for better current wolf-management strategies and the needs of stable wolf populations for the benefit of healthy ecosystems. These strategies would include: (1) Resolving, especially through nonlethal means, conflicts between livestock and wolves, which are currently happening in some of our state's best habitat for wolves (there MUST be some habitat allocation for healthy wolf populations); and (2) Conducting extensive public and rancher education and discussion on wolves. This program was emphasized in the current plan, but has not yet materialized, despite wolf expert opinion that public education is THE single most important action for successful wolf conservation. Under the current wolf plan (and any future ones), including management guidance, policies and protocols, especially those that could result in wolf kills, MUST be developed through science-based, public rule-making processes that result in fair, transparent, rational and enforceable strategies. We do not think solving wolf problems in the political arena is fair, wise or beneficial to any or all concerned. We therefore urge everyone in your agency to: (1) STOP ignoring the full scientific perspective to justify your wolf-killing; (2) Answer global calls by the many wildlife scientists who understand the importance of protecting and conserving apex predators; and (3) Use every opportunity to educate and inform the public on the value of top predators' role in balancing and creating healthy ecosystems. PLEASE STOP your current messaging that prioritizes livestock over wolves. Private profit should not trump ecological health, especially on public lands. People fail to see any reason to coexist with wolves if your department fails to explain how ecologically important wolves are, why they worth conserving and where they should continue to remain part of the picture in Washington State. Thank you for considering these comments from my family and me.