

James Roberts

I love wolves. They are amazing creatures with as much right to their lives as you and I. We've killed a hell of a lot more of them than they have of us. We need to allow them to recover. Ranchers and other wolf haters must be forced to learn how to co-exist with wolves, with public support. We are a smart species. We can figure out how to live with wolves without continuing to exterminate them. They don't deserve it. My wife and I lived in Washington State for 30 years and raised our children there. We still care deeply about what happens there. We now live in the neighboring state of Idaho and what happens to wolves in Washington affects wolves in Idaho and vice-versa. 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.