

Wendy Harris

We have been told, with increased urgency by global scientists, that the human race is at risk of extinction if it does not stop actions that threaten the ability of our biosphere to remain functional. That means that at a local level we must make protecting and restoring the ecological health and function of our ecosystems our first priority. Unless we have healthy air, water, soil, and food, we can not survive. We have taken these things for granted in the past, but they are the ecosystem services and benefits that result from functional ecosystems. We also know that the most important indicator of a functional ecosystem is the biodiversity of native plants and animals. And that includes apex predators. We should avoid disrupting the natural balance of plants and animals found in our local ecosystems and where they have been degraded, they must be restored. Ecosystems are the result of millions of years of co-evolution between highly integrated and interconnected components so that the sum of the whole is greater than any of its parts. An intact ecosystem has a synergy that provides balance and resiliency that can absorb, to a certain extent, the blows and stresses provided by nature, and return to balance. That function and ability are lost when we threaten and destroy native species, and more so when that species is an apex predator. That is because prey animals are abundant, but predators live longer but are fewer in number. The loss of an apex predator can have a significant impact. This becomes even more important when dealing that wolves, which live in small packs. The death of even one pack member, particularly the alpa male and female, can destroy the entire pack. We must have our native wolves restored, and we must not shoot or destroy a single member or we destroy the pack. Like most predators, their populations are self-limiting and we should respect nature's wisdom and not create artificial numbers to placate economic interests. As a resident of this state, I am distressed that we allow livestock ranchers to have so much power and control over what is a natural resource crucial to public health and safety. If your occupation requires actions that are not in the public's best interest, it is time to find another occupation. In fact, we know that we must all change our diets and eat less meat if we are to feed the world in the future. With our own survival at stake, we need more wolves and fewer cows and sheep. I object to any form of livestock grazing on public lands. It degrades and destroys what belongs to the public domain and transfer wealth to private hands and that is unconscionable. Please protect wolves, who belong here and bring health and stability to our ecosystems and our people, and advocate for the end of livestock grazing on public lands. Be the good guys. Our very lives depend upon it.