

Cindy Schwartz

I live on acreage in the Saltese Flats in Spokane County. From my early youth, I have been awed by the beauty and majesty of wolves, and dismayed by man's attempts at exterminating this species. For a state which is usually progressive and at the forefront of current issues, I am deeply disturbed by the "management" of wolves in our State, which seems to be a management involving killing these beautiful creatures for any claimed conflict between wolves and human civilization. Wolf recovery needs to be prioritized. We are not at a point where "post-recovery" can be discussed, as wolves have not recovered sufficiently. Washington is still far from meeting the goals set forth in the current plan. Further, this progressive state must develop non-lethal methods of dealing with wolf conflicts. There are innumerable more humane and environmentally sound methods of dealing with conflict than killing a pack. 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.