

Susan Hildreth

Wolves are a crucial part of our ecosystems. They only hunt weak or injured herd animals, this reducing overcrowding of other species. We have a duty to protect them for future generations of children. As an individual, I have read extensively about the importance of their presence in balancing our other wild species populations, and their role in preserving species of grasslands by hunting only weak, older and injured animals, thus making more grasslands available for other herbivores who rely on available grasslands to live. We MUST protect wolves because we need them to balance out ecosystems and for future generations to see God's wilderness that humans need to treasure, appreciate and love so we can realize their beauty. 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.