

## Mary Kraeszig

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. These factors include: (1) Resolving through nonlethal means the conflicts between livestock and wolves, which occur in some of the state's best wolf habitat; 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. Ignorance and misplaced fear regarding wolves are rampant, and the people who understand wolf biology least are unlikely to “achieve enlightenment” on their own. 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. This is not how science works. It’s all fact-based, the whole picture, not a partisan process; (2) Answer the global call by scientists to protect and conserve apex predators because they are the largest influence on their entire environment; 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. As a veterinarian and someone who has studied wolves for 4 decades, I know we must do better and can do better in balancing the needs of predators with the needs of ranchers. My family has a rural flock of 40+ chickens in an area with plenty of coyotes, raccoons, mink, and raptors. I know what it is to coexist with the native wildlife where I live. There is no reason why wolves need to bear an unwarranted stigma that is causing their extinction instead of restoring them to most of their historic habitats. Thank you for considering my comments.