

Cecil Scott

Let me be clear, Washington: You DO NOT WANT to lose your wolves. We have, back here in the Northeast. And it isn't pretty. Lyme Disease is soaring -- it is a public health crisis at this point. Overabundant deer are destroying nascent forests and low-lying vegetation and causing dangerous auto crashes, even in under-populated areas like the Adirondacks. There aren't enough hunters to keep up with these numbers. The next-level-down predators, coyotes, are also over-abundant and over-confident. They can be a danger to humans, especially children. It is foolish to thwart nature. Don't do it. 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. I know you understand their importance, so it is wrong to keep silent about it. Thank you for considering my comments.