

Janet Kavanagh

I live in The Dalles, with a view over the Columbia river to Washington. I hike in your beautiful state often, and believe generally that your state has a good environmental record, actually better than Oregon's. I learned about wolves, and their precarious position, as a child in the 1960s in California. My parents belonged to an environmental group and we got an LP of wolf calls that was utterly gorgeous music. Wolves are so important to the natural world, an apex species. They have an amazingly sophisticated family life, and are very intelligent and beautiful. You must focus on their recovery as a species and educate the populace to their value. I have been so glad to see the wolf population slowly grow again. Your proposed plans break my heart. 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.