



Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance
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Wolves belong in Wyoming

I am one of those “wolf lovers.” And if organizations can be labeled that way, then the Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance is a “wolf lover,” too. We believe that wolves belong in Wyoming. When wolves were brought back into the ecosystem, part of a healthy, functioning landscape was restored.

While wolves were gone, elk herds increased and hunting opportunities improved. No one saw the gradual deterioration of the wildlife habitat. When wolves came back, other wildlife species started acting like wild animals again; they became prey to more than just hunters. Elk spread out; their impact on localized areas decreased and allowed vegetation to return, and with it beaver, small mammals and birds. Before they were exterminated in the early 1900s, wolves were a part of the landscape for thousands of years. While their return may mean fewer elk for hunting, it does not mean that the balance that once existed between elk and wolves won't return, too, benefiting the herds and their habitat.

We hear the outfitters' concerns for their livelihood. But we have not heard that while segments of some herds have low cow/calf ratios, or low numbers, that these herds will collapse. We hear claims that are not supported by science. We also hear from Wyoming Game & Fish that elk hunter success remains high and overall herd numbers are over objective.

Maybe this is the greatest problem with discussions about wolves. People need to know the information they're getting is based upon scientific research. While someone can watch a wolf for a few minutes, an hour, or all day long, no one can make a knowledgeable statement about their observation beyond the limited behavior they saw. More information than that is needed to argue for policies that direct the management of wolves. Wyoming needs a management plan that incorporates gathering information and the ability to act to sustain a healthy ecosystem.

The Conservation Alliance believes that Wyoming and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service need to use the best available science for a wolf management plan that will work for the health of all species – predator and prey alike.

We not only love wolves, but like most of the people of Wyoming, we love the millions of acres around us, and the rest of the abundant and diverse species that share this land. Wyoming needs a management plan that balances all of this.

Louise Lasley, Public Lands Director
Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance