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With yet another wolf death in Colorado, it's well past time for leadership to step up and stem what is undeniably a hostile environment created by anti-wildlife activists. This is a human — not wildlife — problem that will take a human solution, top-down.

It's a simple ask, really.

And it can happen if even one of our Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commissioners, at their June 11 and 12 meetings, are willing to stick their necks out and do the right thing.

I even have the script. A moral public trustee would simply say: "It's not OK to run over wolves with snowmobiles for thrills to kill them. And it's not OK to applaud such vile acts happening in Colorado at our public meetings."

And: "It's also not OK to obstruct government airplanes from landing, while carrying AR15s, and scaring the bejeezus out of citizens and government employees, nor is it OK to trespass on good ranchers as you hunt down wolves."

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You may think this is an obvious thing to do, but it isn't. What our leaders say matters. It sets the tone and can prevent more horrific killing and cruelty toward a federally protected and ecologically valuable species. Our leaders have the power to foster a new order of nonlethal coexistence.

Said plainly, it's high time for leadership to soundly repudiate hostility to wolves and to acknowledge in public that wolves bring vast benefits to Colorado's ecology, and to call for coexistence — not killing — in serious order.

Unless commissioners publicly set the right tone to address what is a human problem, nonlethal coexistence will never happen. We can do so much better. But our leaders need to stop ignoring the problem, making callous excuses or hiding from pissing off the anti-wildlife activists bearing semiautomatics.

Since reintroduction began last December, multiple wolves have died — the vast majority involving serious wounds and/or fatalities at the hands of humans.

This week, news reports that a wolf has died in northwest Colorado.

This past week, a young male wolf pup of the Copper Creek pack was killed in Pitkin County after officials say they were forced to relocate the pup away from Grand County, where a rancher reportedly operated an open carcass pit of livestock serving as an attractant. That wolf was reported to be depredating on livestock. If that rancher had not had an open pit, that would have stemmed the ensuing problem.

In March, officials killed a Colorado wolf that crossed into Wyoming.

In September, in Grand County, a male gray wolf with a GPS collar that had a gunshot injury to its rear leg was found dead.

In January, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service asked for information about who shot a gray wolf captured in Grand County last August.

CPW leadership must set the right tone to protect wildlife because a hostile climate toward wildlife is a human problem and presents the major obstacle to non-lethal coexistence.

Circling back to the examples with a bit more detail, I encourage citizens to call on our commissioners to say and offer, out loud:

- A swift, long-overdue rebuke of the crowd that applauded running over wolves with [snowmobiles](#) at a public meeting in Garfield County that was about reintroduction efforts. This was recorded at a public meeting with local media present and dozens of wildlife agency staff in attendance. The reference of support for cruelty and for killing wolves for fun was about Cody Roberts, a hound hunter who ran over a young wolf in Wyoming, then paraded her in a bar before shooting her dead.
- A stark condemnation of anti-wolf activists disrupting government work and

diverting an airplane carrying wolves. As reported in the news, activists brandished AR15s, trespassed and threatened citizens and government workers, all while an airplane carrying wolves to Colorado was set to land in Eagle County. That plane was diverted to Denver International Airport because of activists in real time, who were against wolves and who amassed on the ground, as detailed in an online anti-wolf group called Wolf Tracker. The plane diversion and obstruction of government business was also confirmed by staff at CPW.

Wolves are not villains and do not deserve killing or disdain. Our leadership at our wildlife agency should realize a majority of Colorado citizens, including in rural places, respect wolves for bringing balance back to nature, to stem disease and keep whole ecosystems healthy. And we would very much like to see them receive the healthy respect — out loud and in public — they so rightly deserve. And so do the good people of Colorado.

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