

Wrapping wolves with a red ribbon

By Michael Costello

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For a change, I like one of Idaho state Sen. Gary Schroeder's ideas.

Idaho has too many wolves. Few in Idaho would disagree with that. That's probably the unanimous opinion among elk hunters and guides who have seen the herds decimated. And I doubt that few, if any, ranchers hold much sympathy for wolves.

The conventional western wisdom would be to shoot them. But Schroeder has a better idea, or at least a deliciously impish idea: Box them up, wrap them up in a bow and send them to somebody else. Make them somebody else's problem.

Wolves seem to be popular everywhere they don't live. So why not share the love? I'd even like to suggest a few destinations.

The reason that Idaho is overrun with wolves is not because Idaho wanted wolves. Idaho has wolves because environmental romanticists from distant states that do not have to live with the wolves decided that Idaho should have wolves. It's just another manifestation of NIMBY, or the "not in my back yard" attitude that oozes from many environmental romanticists.

Politicians who hail from heavily paved states are happy to indulge their environmental fantasies in other people's states. For that matter, Washington's heavily paved Seattle views the rest of the state as its environmental playpen.

The trouble with having wolves in your backyard is not just that they eat pets, livestock and more desirable wildlife. When you have a wolf, or any other endangered species prowling your neighborhood, you are required to make all manner of accommodations to nurture that beast's population until it grows to nuisance proportions.

Schroeder's idea allows us to entertain ourselves with thought exercises imagining where we can send truckloads of wolves so that they may plague those who deserve to be afflicted the most.

First, send a truckload or two to California. California would be the ideal destination for wolves. Malibu comes to mind. After all, it was touchy-feely Californian style environmentalism that inspired wolf transplantation to the northern Rockies in the first place. Shouldn't Idaho invite Californians to share the love? And California has the right cultural attitude for making an aggressive predator feel right at home.

I can remember about 20 or so years ago when a cougar stalked, killed and partially ate a woman who was jogging on a trail near my parents' home. The Department of Fish and Game tracked the lion down and shot it. Bereaved Californians raised money to support the lioness' orphaned kittens. It was left to Rush Limbaugh to raise money nationwide for the motherless children of the jogger.

If Californians don't have a problem with feeding their citizens to predators, then they should feel quite comfortable with wolves lurking in their shrubbery.

I think we should send some wolves to New York and New Jersey. Both of these eastern states elect

politicians who feel not the slightest hesitation to inflict their views on people living on the opposite side of the continent. Minding their own business is not a part of their culture. And both states are fine examples of environmental NIMBYism. Anyone who has visited these states will quickly notice that vast swaths of former wildlife habitat now lie beneath asphalt and concrete.

To set their consciences right, perhaps they should agree to accept a few wolf packs. I'm sure they'd find it enlightening when their pets and livestock become a staple of the wolves' diets. And who can say? Perhaps bringing wolves to the region might even help those easterners thin out their rat population. It worked with elk.

The upper Midwest might be another good place for wolves. Turn a couple dozen loose in Chicago's Grant Park and see how the locals like having wolves prowling around looking for easy pickings.

And how about Wisconsin and Minnesota? Both states are notorious for sending to Washington some of the nation's most leftwing politicians. Minnesota deserves all of Idaho's wolves if only for inflicting Garrison Keillor on a decent world that deserves better. And if Minnesota ultimately sends a barbarian like Al Franken to the U.S. Senate, then they all deserve to be wolf bait as punishment. Wisconsin deserves wolves for sending the insufferably sanctimonious Russell Feingold to the Senate.

There is definitely something appealing about a sparsely populated, politically impotent western state like Idaho complicating the lives of large, densely populated busybody states. We can't do it with votes. How about with wolves?

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