

# HOME

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Remaining

# Bring back the wolf

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Nate Downey/For The New Mexican

In last month's column, we discovered permaculture's zone zero centered in the human gut. This month, we'll explore the outer reaches of the typical permaculture landscape. Permaculture's five zones are numbered based on frequency of use. System components that require daily attention should be located in zone one as close as possible to the kitchen door. Components on the opposite side of the spectrum, those requiring only seasonal attention or annual upkeep, are located further from the kitchen door in zone four.

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We leave the fifth zone mostly alone. Here, nature runs wild. The chief resource we take is information. We study nature's patterns in zone five, so that we can mimic them in our landscape designs to increase efficiencies, productivity, and elegance upon completion of a project.

Science now tells us that predator-reintroduction programs are critical for bringing health back to our rivers. They not only help preyed-upon species by culling sick members from their overgrown herds, but they also change the behavior of the herds in positive ways. With wolf packs back in Yellowstone after a 70-year hiatus, their dinner can no longer lounge around overgrazing riverbanks. As herds are forced to keep moving, more vegetation is established in their wake.

In turn, this brings in beaver and other engineering species that slow the flow of water through riparian areas, and this revives entire watersheds. According to a short video called "How Wolves Change Rivers," at least 12 other animal species benefit from every ungulate killed by a wolf in the wild, and residual benefits to the soil (bone meal, blood meal, and nitrogen-packed carrion crap) are important, too.

In his essay *Arizona and New Mexico: Thinking Like A Mountain*, Aldo Leopold recounts a life-changing experience near the bank of a river (in zone five). There, he witnesses the death of a wolf that he and his buddies have just shot,

"We reached the old wolf in time to watch a fierce green fire dying in her eyes," Leopold wrote. "I realized then, and have known ever since, that there was something new to me in those eyes — something known only to her and to the mountain. I was young then and full of trigger-itch; I thought that because fewer wolves meant more deer, that no wolves would mean hunters' paradise. But after seeing the green fire die, I sensed that neither the wolf nor the mountain agreed with such a view."

As it turns out, the wolf and mountain were right, and the future father of the

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modern ecological movement learned the beginnings of an important lesson.

We need to care about zone five because the legacy of our state's essential water resources depends on it. Please send a howl out to Governor Martinez. Tell her to help return New Mexico's beloved lobos and their fierce green fire to the Land of Enchantment.



You can also head over to the Waldorf School's fundraiser at the Lensic Performing Arts Center on Sunday, Feb. 21, to see Richard Louv, author of Last Child in the Woods. His \$10 lecture, "The New Nature Movement," starts at 7 p.m. Find more info at [www.santafewaldorf.org](http://www.santafewaldorf.org).

*This story was corrected from an earlier version to note the Waldorf School's fundraiser.*

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