



IUCN Canid Specialist Group
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Oxford, 10th November 2020

To the Government of France,

RE: France wolf culling quota

I am writing to you as the Chair of the IUCN SSC Canid Specialist Group, the global body of scientific experts around wild canids. The IUCN Canid SSC Canid Specialist Group provides technical information and advice on all matters concerning wild canids, including their status in the wild, threats they face, their conservation requirements, and management recommendations.

The wolf population in France has recovered from being extinct in the 1930s to a population of around 580 individuals with most packs residing in the forested areas of the Jura and Alps. This French wolf population is part of the larger wolf population across the European Alps and falls under the jurisdiction of the EU Habitats Directive.

We understand there are plans to increase the wolf quota in 2021 to remove around 20% of the currently estimated 580 wolf individuals. Such an increased quota is neither recommendable from a scientific nor a conservation point of view due to the following reasons:

- It is estimated that the wolf population in France requires a minimum viable population of 550 individuals to survive in the wild. A population with fewer individuals will face extinction from natural disasters or demographic, environmental, or genetic stochasticity.
- Recent studies are indicating that lethal removal is not the most effective method to counter and mitigate livestock depredation conflict, as the killing of wolves results in pack instability and territorial turmoil. Stable packs occupying stable territories are clearly the preferred option from a human-wolf conflict mitigation, animal welfare, and wolf population conservation perspective. This can be achieved with a combination of non-lethal methods and monitoring.
- Furthermore, increasing the wolf quota to 20% of the population is not in line with the EU Habitats Directive and goes against the advice from the European Commission.

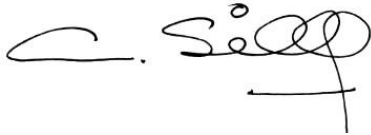
The IUCN SSC Canid Specialist Group urge the French government to:

- adhere to the relevant science, the EU Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC), and the public opinion of the French people (with the majority being in favor of wolf protection) and reduce the hunting quota of wolves, rather than the proposed increase in the said quota for 2021;
- strictly monitor the effectiveness of preventive measures and compensation schemes on conflict mitigation with livestock producers;
- investigate thoroughly whether non-lethal measures are adopted and implemented by livestock producers to comply with strict criteria for derogation in the Habitats Directive;

- suspend hunting of wolves with immediate effect, until there is a scientific basis for wolf hunting and strict criteria for derogation in the Habitats Directive are fulfilled.

The IUCN SSC Canid Specialist Group offers its technical and scientific advice to the French government for support in implementing the above steps.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Sillero'. The signature is stylized with a large initial 'C' and a series of loops for the name 'Sillero'. A horizontal line is drawn below the signature.

Prof Claudio Sillero
Chair, Canid Specialist Group