



Öster Malma, 12.11.2012

Mr Janez Potočnik
European Commissioner for the Environment
European Commission
1049 Brussels, Belgium

Dear Commissioner Potočnik,

On behalf of The Swedish Association for Hunting and Wildlife Management (SAHWM) and the Swedish Kennel Club, we are writing to you regarding the future of the Swedish wolf management. Recent developments may provide the foundation for resolving this contentious issue and get a sustainable management in place. However, other stakeholders have recently approached you with a letter containing erroneous statements, once more jeopardizing the transition from conflict to management. Thus, we feel it is necessary to provide our view of the actions undertaken and the merits of the proposals made.

There is support for maintaining the wolf in viable populations in Sweden and both of our organisations also support having a limited but viable wolf population. At the same time, Swedes support managing the wolf population through hunting. Swedish research shows that there is a direct relationship between wolf population density and damages to livestock and pets. Also, scientific surveys show that we already have a situation where a majority of the inhabitants in a number of municipalities where wolves occur want to see a significant decrease in the national goal for the wolf population. Furthermore, all available scientific knowledge shows that attitudes to wolves are becoming more and more negative where wolves occur. Thus, decreasing local density and regulating the wolf population size is not only advocated by a few stakeholder groups, but by the local societies where wolves occur.

Clearly, any successful wolf management must be based on sound, science based conservation biology, socio-economic considerations and societal carrying capacity. In the recently published study by the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) on the favourable conservation of wolves, a range of different populations and genetical input was presented. It is our understanding that the Swedish government chose one of the lower figures for favourable conservation status suggested by the SEPA, corresponding to 180 wolves, for this very reason. We feel that the Swedish government clearly have made the choice most likely to result in a successful management, with the necessary acceptance from the local community.

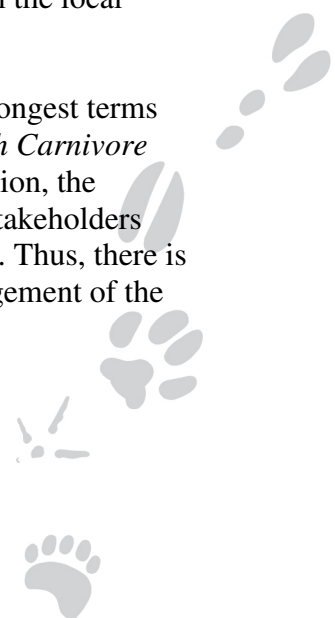
Unfortunately, the position of the Swedish government was contested in the strongest terms by *the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation*, *WWF Sweden* and *the Swedish Carnivore Association* in the Swedish media and in a letter to the commission. In our opinion, the statements and allegations made are misleading, at best. In this manner, these stakeholders have succeeded in causing more polarisation and conflict around the wolf issue. Thus, there is a very real risk that we are moving even further away from a sustainable management of the Swedish wolf population.

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The abovementioned NGOs also contested the efforts of the SAHWM to create acceptance for genetic reinforcement. Contrary to what is claimed, substantial efforts have been undertaken to increase acceptance for reinforcements of the genetic status of the wolf population. We feel that we were very successful, as long as reinforcements were part of a management where the population was regulated at the level now suggested by the government through hunting. The abovementioned NGOs have undertaken no actions at all to increase acceptance.

The stakeholders have claimed that several of the levels for favourable conservation status, suggested by the SEPA based on the best scientific knowledge available, would lead to the extinction of wolves in Sweden. Even more surprisingly, the stakeholders claimed that the Swedish minister for the environment had suggested 180 wolves as a ceiling, rather than as a FRP for the Swedish wolf population. You will now have met with the Swedish Minister for the Environment and no doubt she will have clarified the position of our government.

In previous years, we have shown that regulating the wolf population through hunting can be performed with high precision and that certain individuals can be targeted. Thus, we advocate a comprehensive management plan with clear conservation objectives, where hunting is one of many management tools.

Our two organisations of almost 500 000 members have a strong representation all across rural Sweden. In our opinion, there is little or no patience left in the local communities harbouring wolves. Thus, we feel it is of vital importance to get a management involving active actions along the lines we have suggested up and running as soon as possible.

Commissioner Potočnik, we would like to remind you of your astute remark at the recent celebrations of the FACE 35th anniversary: what would be most appropriate for the wolf issue is to have it decided at the national level. We urge you to let this be the case also in Sweden.

Yours sincerely,

Swedish Association for
Hunting and Wildlife Management

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