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NOTE TO THE GUIDELINES FOR POPULATION LEVEL MANAGEMENT PLANS FOR LARGE CARNIVORES

The Habitats Directive places an obligation on Member States to take actions to achieve good conservation status for the species covered by the Directive. However, for species with large ranges such as the brown bear, wolf, lynx and wolverine, the regional populations of these animals often cut across national borders. In such circumstances, it is difficult, if not impossible, for one Member State to manage and protect its large carnivores in the absence of concerted and convergent actions being taken by its neighbours. In addition, with large carnivores starting to return to locations from which they have been absent for decades or even centuries, there is a very high potential for conflicts between the large carnivores and humans. It is therefore important that neighbouring Member States sharing a large carnivore population (sub-population) develop integrated plans for the management of these populations.

In the light of the considerations set out in the preceding paragraph, DG Environment decided to launch an EU initiative to develop guidelines for a population based management of large carnivores. The guidelines which follow have been prepared through two service contracts awarded following two separate open calls for tender: "Guidelines for Population Level Management Plans for Large Carnivores" (070501/2005/424162/MAR/B2) and "Awareness raising campaign on large carnivores" (07030302/2006/453851/MAR/B2) with Instituto di Ecologia Applicata. The experts from the Large Carnivore Initiative for Europe have had a key role in drafting these guidelines.

These guidelines have been discussed in the Habitats Committee meeting and its Scientific Working Group, in 15 national workshops and final comments were received in the pan-European Large Carnivore Conference held in Slovenia on 10.-11.6.2008. In addition comments have been received from governments and other experts and organisations.

The status of this document

The Guidelines at hand are the final document of the above mentioned work as produced by the contractor. DG Environment considers that effective management of large carnivore populations which are shared between Member States can only be achieved through shared and co-ordinated management plans as described in the attached

guidelines. These guidelines represent best practice for the management of large carnivore populations and DG Environment accordingly recommends them to the authorities in the Member States. The guidelines are not legally binding but do constitute a reference point against which DG Environment will monitor the actions taken by the Member States in fulfilment of their obligations under the Habitats Directive. Clearly a Member State cannot be held responsible for the failure to develop a co-ordinated management plan if one (or more) of its neighbours does not agree to develop such a co-ordinated plan.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Patrick MURPHY', enclosed within a large, irregular, hand-drawn oval shape.

Patrick MURPHY
Head of Unit