

# IUCN/SSC Otter Specialist Group

*... leading global otter conservation*



**Otter Specialist Group**

## **Gran Paradiso Otters in the Alps Manifesto**

### ***A transborder approach to a common conservation strategy***

ACKNOWLEDGING that conserving biodiversity and maintaining the resilience of aquatic ecosystems is essential for “sustainable nature for human well-being”, a priority area for the International Union of Conservation for Nature (IUCN);

RECOGNIZING that the Eurasian otters, given protection, clean rivers, and a good food supply will return to former habitats and can thrive and prosper once again;

APPLAUDING the return of otters in the Alpine region and the European Union due to improved water quality and conservation measures taken by the respective governments and due to the positive attitude of local communities;

AWARE that hitherto the eight Alpine countries have pursued different management approaches to monitoring the return of their otter populations;

RECOGNIZING that a local environmental accident or problem in one country can directly or indirectly influence and threaten the sustainability and food security of the aquatic ecosystems of neighboring countries;

AWARE that otters are persecuted for perceived fish losses, and that otter populations also decline due to factors such as pollution, road mortality, reduction of prey through overfishing, invasive alien species and increasing climate change impacts;

UNDERLINING the importance of otters as symbols of healthy wetlands and rivers, as well as freshwater biodiversity;

FINALLY our ultimate goal is to restore viable otter populations in the Alps that can exist in a favorable conservation status, compatible with human activities

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### ***The IUCN-SSC Otter Specialist Group at its European Otters in the Alps: towards a common strategy across boundaries meeting, 10-12 October, 2018***

APPLAUDS the ongoing research on otters in Alpine border countries that documents the key role that otters play in balanced wetland ecosystems;

URGES the expansion of research to include fish community population studies, potential predator impacts, and otter populations dynamics;

RECOMMENDS that governments in Alpine countries, along with their local wildlife agencies and otter researchers, establish an international network for sharing data and monitoring protocols, best practices, and mitigation actions. Such coordinated cost-effective programs would also assist in transborder otter population expansion and conflict resolution;

EMPHASIZES the importance of restoring ecosystem connectivity by reducing barriers;

STRESSES the value of identifying priority areas that have a good chance to be recolonized by otters in the short term;

UNDERLINES the importance of exploring the impacts on otter populations of culling, road mortality, and other threats such as heavy metal run-off, new compounds, and undetected agricultural pollutants;

EMPHASIZES the necessity to actively involve local communities in the entire otter conservation process through participation and conservation education programs.

CALLS ON IUCN members, National Committees and other SSC Specialist Group members in the Alps to initiate discussions and assist in strengthening coordination for the conservation of otters and their freshwater habitats in their respective countries.