



October 26, 2015  
Jon Jarvis, Director  
National Park Service  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Director Jarvis:

As concerned scientists, we have great interest in the Isle Royale population of wolves and their interactions with moose and the forest. We agree with Dr. John Vucetich, a Michigan Tech University biologist who studies the ecological interactions and wildlife on Isle Royale, that the National Park Service should take immediate action to bolster the population of wolves on Isle Royale. Wolves play an important role in ecosystems through their predatory activities. Their direct impact on prey numbers and behavior creates a series of indirect effects that trickle through an ecosystem affecting species that seem ecologically and taxonomically very distant. These trophic cascades are very important in areas that evolved with carnivores. Study after study has shown that when trophic structure is dismantled, ecosystems simplify, oscillate to extremes, and degenerate—sometimes to complete collapse.

As of March 2015, when Isle Royale wolves were last counted, there were three wolves remaining, while the number of moose is at 1250 and climbing. The wolves are inbred and weak. Population and evolutionary genetics demonstrate that a downward vortex of inbreeding, causing a loss of vigor and fitness of the remaining small population, is virtually inevitable unless unrelated wolves are moved to Isle Royale at least once every wolf generation. It is almost certain that they cannot recover their former numbers on their own. Warming climate means that ice bridges allowing mainland wolves a chance to migrate to the island are becoming too infrequent to be a viable alternative. The best option is for the Park Service to physically relocate wolves to the island, as they did in Yellowstone National Park in 1994 and 1995 and as was done by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in the Southwest to restore a wild population of Mexican gray wolves. A precedent for restoring wolves to both national parks and pristine wilderness areas has been set.

Without increasing the number of wolves to a point where they can exert their ecological function, Isle Royale National Park is headed toward an over-browsed and damaged forest (affecting a whole suite of wildlife species negatively), while the moose are headed toward overpopulation, starvation, and population collapse. Wolves would restore balance to the system, and their numbers on Isle Royale should be augmented now. Delays in acting will only worsen the situation for the forest and the wildlife.

Sincerely,



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The Honorable Gary Peters, United States Senate

Mr. Cam Sholly, Regional Director, National Park Service

Ms. Phyllis Green, Superintendent, Isle Royale National Park

e-cc:

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow United States Senate

The Honorable Mazie Hirono United States Senate

The Honorable Martin Heinrich United States Senate