

Procedure for Handling of Petitions against Current Listings on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™. Version 3 (22 November 2021)

Introduction

Assessments published on The *IUCN Red List of Threatened Species*™ are open to challenge. Petitions may be made against current listings of species, subspecies, varieties or geographic subpopulations (hereinafter referred to as taxa). Petitions against historical listings (i.e., those that have since been updated with a new listing for the taxon in question) are not considered. Petitions may only be made on the basis of the IUCN Red List Categories and Criteria: Version 3.1 (<https://www.iucnredlist.org/resources/categories-and-criteria>) and in reference to any supporting information accompanying the listing. It is not possible to change listings for political, emotional, economic, or other reasons not based on the IUCN Red List Categories and Criteria.

Disagreements with Current Listings

Any party may contact the IUCN Red List Unit (RLU) at any time to express disagreement with any current listing. If this disagreement is based on scientific or technical grounds, the RLU will check with the party and the relevant Red List Authority (RLA) or Assessor (in the absence of an RLA) whether they have already discussed the listing to try to resolve the issue. If both parties have already spent at least 4 weeks discussing the listing and have failed to resolve the disagreement, a formal petition may be submitted. If no discussions have already taken place, the RLU will put this party in contact with the relevant RLA or Assessor with intention of resolving the disagreement without entering a formal petition process. In the event of a disagreement concerning the listing of a species that is in the process of being reassessed, the RLA will seek to involve the party expressing disagreement in the reassessment process, with the objective of reaching consensus on the new listing.

The RLU will check-in on discussions 4 weeks after initial notification of the disagreement. If an agreement has been reached during discussions, one of the following actions will happen:

- a) The assessment remains unchanged on the Red List website.
- b) The taxon is reassessed and the new assessment is submitted in time for publication in the next available Red List update.
- c) The RLU creates a corrected assessment to replace the current published assessment in the next available Red List update.

If both parties request more time for discussions, this will be granted (to a maximum of 4 weeks). The RLU will again check-in on progress at the end of the extended discussion period.

If no agreement is reached after discussions, the party disagreeing with the assessment may then file a formal petition against the assessment.

The Formal Petitions Process

If the above process is not successful in resolving the disagreement, a formal petition may be submitted. The flow diagram in [Annex 1](#) presents a summary of the formal petitions process; the process is described in detail below.

A formal petition should be very brief (2 pages maximum), and should summarise the points of disagreement, with explicit reference to the Red List category and criteria under which the species is listed. The steps to follow for filing petitions are outlined below:

Petition submission and validation

- 1) Formal petitions must be submitted to the RLU. The RLU will acknowledge receipt of the petition, and will inform the petitioner of the date on which the petition was received; this is the formal petition **start date**.
- 2) The RLU will consult with the IUCN SSC Standards and Petitions Committee (SPC) to determine whether the petition has been filed on the basis of the IUCN Red List Categories and Criteria. This will result in one of the following outcomes:
 - a) **Petition rejected:** if the petition has not been made on the basis of the IUCN Red List Categories and Criteria, it will be returned to the petitioner by the RLU with an explanation as to why the petition cannot be considered. This response will be sent to the petitioner within 4 weeks of the [start date](#).
 - b) **Petition accepted:** if the petition is accepted, the process will move on to [step 3](#). In the IUCN Species Information Service (SIS; the IUCN Red List data management system), the assessment will be highlighted as 'petitioned'; if the petition process is not completed before the next scheduled Red List update, the published assessment will be flagged as petitioned.

Discussion between the parties

- 3) If the petition is accepted by the SPC, the RLU will send the petition to the RLA or Assessor/s (if there is no RLA) responsible for the assessment (the RLA or Assessor/s are hereafter referred to as "the RLA"). Within 4 weeks of the [start date](#), the RLU will request the RLA and the petitioner to discuss the formal petition with the objective of reaching an agreement between them. The RLA and the petitioner will be given 8 weeks from the date that the RLU refers the petition to them to reach agreement.

In seeking to reach agreement, the RLA and the petitioner should discuss the issues outlined in the formal petition letter. They should determine whether they are using the same underlying data. They should clarify whether the disagreements are due to factual discrepancies, as opposed to differences of either interpretation or application of the IUCN Red List Categories and Criteria.

- 4) If the RLA agrees with the petition, or if the petitioner and the RLA come to an agreement, the petitioner must request the RLU to halt the petition and to action one of the following outcomes:
 - a) The original assessment remains unchanged. The 'petitioned' flag will be removed from the assessment in SIS, and will be removed from the published assessment on the website in the next scheduled Red List update.
 - b) The taxon is reassessed and the new assessment is submitted in time for publication in the next available Red List update.

- c) The RLU creates a corrected assessment to bring minor modifications into the assessment, while keeping the original Red List category and criteria. The corrected assessment will replace the original published assessment in the next available Red List update.
- 5) If the petitioner and the RLA are unable to agree within the time period set in [step 3](#), the petition will then enter [step 6](#) in the process.

Justification preparation and submission

- 6) At the end of the time period set in [step 3](#), the RLU will notify both the petitioner and the RLA that each of them should submit justifications for their case to the SPC via the RLU. The justifications should reach the RLU within 16 weeks from the date that the RLU issues this notification. The justifications must follow the guidelines below:
 - a) Justifications must be submitted electronically as PDF files; paper files will not be accepted.
 - b) They must not be longer than eight (8) pages of A4, excluding the list of references (i.e., if printed double-sided, the main justification text should be within four sheets of A4 paper).
 - c) All text must use Arial font, 12-point.
 - d) Include the available data to support the argument.
 - e) Include a synopsis of the failed negotiations, a brief statement of the reasons for the dispute, and a clarification of any factual discrepancies (e.g., different sources of data or information used).
 - f) All data used in the justifications must either be referenced to publications that are available in the public domain, or else be made available to the SPC. The data provided should be clearly linked to the use of the IUCN Red List Categories and Criteria.
 - g) If the petitioner fails to submit a justification within the set time period and in the required format, the petition will be dropped, and the RLU will inform the SPC of this. If the RLA fails to submit a justification within the set time period and in the required format, the petition will go forward.
 - h) Requests for an extension to the deadline for submitting justifications will not normally be considered, unless there are exceptional circumstances. Any request for such an extension should be submitted to the RLU at least 2 weeks before the deadline, who will refer it to the Chair of the IUCN SSC Red List Committee. Generally, the maximum time limit to any requested delay is 4 weeks, with only one such request being considered from each party. However, in unusual circumstances, such as multiple petitions directed to the same RLA, a longer extension may be granted, at the discretion of the Chair.
- 7) The RLU will send the justifications from each party to the other at the end of the time period set in [step 6](#), or within 1 week of both justifications having been received. Both parties have 3 weeks in which to provide a 1-page addendum to their justifications, should they choose to do so. Any addendums received after the three-week period will not be considered. The parties may not make any changes to the original justifications.
- 8) At the end of this 3-week period, whether or not an addendum is received, the RLU will send the justifications to all members of the SPC for review and

confidential comment. The SPC may choose to circulate the justifications to other independent expert reviewers for confidential comments. The Chair of the SPC should, if at all possible, receive these comments within 8 weeks of the date of receipt of the justifications. If needed, the SPC may seek clarification of particular issues from the RLA and the petitioner. The SPC may seek reviews from external experts to assist its deliberations. In instances in which the RLA failed to submit a justification, the SPC will make every effort to obtain a balanced set of confidential comments from reviewers.

Deliberation and ruling

- 9) The SPC will consider the justifications and the confidential reviews. It will make a ruling on each petition within 16 weeks from the time that the justifications were circulated to the SPC by the RLU. In the case of multiple petitions, a longer period may be granted, at the discretion of the Chair of the IUCN SSC Red List Committee. The SPC will issue a notification that will include a full rationale and explanation of each ruling, but will not include a record of the deliberations that the SPC made to reach its decision, and the names of any reviewers will be kept confidential. The SPC will send this notification to the RLU.

Notification and publication of final ruling

- 10) Upon receipt of the SPC's notification, the RLU will send this to both the petitioner and the RLA. Any changes will appear in the next available update of *The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species*[™]. The notification of the ruling on any petition, and any resulting change in listing, will be placed on the IUCN Red List website.

Petitions against listings based on an old version of The IUCN Red List Categories and Criteria

If a formal petition is made against a listing based on an old version of the IUCN Red List Categories and Criteria, and the petition is based on the Categories and Criteria, then the RLA in question will first be requested to update the listing so that it is based on the current version of the categories and criteria. The RLA will be given 24 weeks to do this from the original receipt of the formal petition by the RLU. The RLA should consider the additional information provided by the petitioner. Once the RLA has updated the listing, the petitioner will be so informed and asked whether or not they wish to proceed with the petition against the new listing. If the RLA fails to meet this deadline for updating the listing, the petition will proceed according to the process outlined in steps 5-9 above, and the final ruling of the SPC will provide an updated listing for the taxon in question, using the current version of the IUCN Red List Categories and Criteria currently.

General Principles

Acknowledging Communications. During the formal petitions process, the petitioner, the RLA, the SPC, and the RLU should acknowledge the receipt of all correspondence among them as soon as possible after arrival, so that any failure in delivery is detected as early as possible.

Confidentiality. While a petition is being considered, the associated documents (including justifications made by the petitioner and the RLA) are confidential documents that are not made available to third parties. The SPC will circulate the

justifications only to independent expert reviewers who agree to adhere to the confidentiality of the process and accept that their reviews will eventually be made public, but not attributed. Final rulings on petitions made by the SPC will include both justifications, and the reviews (without the names of the reviewers), in the documentation placed on the IUCN Red List website.

Repeated petitions. In order to prevent continuing petitions on the same species, the SPC will not accept a petition, subsequent to the first petition, if it is not based on new information.

Reassessment of Species following a petition. The first time that a species is reassessed following a petition, the reassessment will be reviewed by the SPC.

Impartiality. The IUCN SSC Red List Committee and the RLU are responsible for ensuring that the process for handling petitions is adhered to, and that evaluations of petitions are carried out professionally and impartially. Prior to publishing the ruling on a petition, the Chair of the SPC will send a brief report to the Chair of the IUCN SSC Red List Committee confirming that the above process was followed to reach the decision, or outlining any deviations from the process that had to be made. The IUCN SSC Red List Committee (excluding the SPC), the IUCN SSC Steering Committee, the IUCN SSC Chair, and the IUCN Secretariat (including the staff of the Red List Unit), have no rights to intervene in the petitions process, or to involve themselves in the substance of any petition.

Special Cases

Deviations from the Process. Every effort will be made to avoid deviations from the process as laid out, above. However, any petitions requiring such deviations should be approved in advance by the Chair of the IUCN SSC Red List Committee.

Complaints about the Petitions Process. If there is an assertion that the above procedure has been violated, then a formal and documented complaint may be submitted to the IUCN SSC Chair.

Annex 1: Flow Diagram of Formal Red List Petitions Process

- All timelines noted in the diagram below are based on the deadlines outlined in the petitions process. Actual timelines will depend on response times and requests for deadline extensions. Please refer to the petitions process document for details.
- Figures noted within the diagram refer to the steps outlined in the petitions process document (see *The Formal Petitions Process*).

