

# Environmentalists protest hunting bison plan in Poland

January 2 2017

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In this March 16, 2010 file photo bison are pictured at a reserve in the Bialowieza forest, in Bialowieza, eastern Poland. Environmentalists are protesting plans by the authorities to allow hunters to kill 10 bison in the Borecka forest saying the protected animals should be allowed to die of natural causes. Greenpeace had gathered well over 7,000 signatures by Monday afternoon, Jan. 2, 2017, on a letter asking Prime Minister Beata Szydlo to stop the plan. (AP Photo/Czarek Sokolowski, file)

Environmentalists are protesting Poland's plan to allow hunters to shoot bison, while authorities say it is necessary for the well-being of the oversized herd and will earn money for its upkeep.

Greenpeace had gathered almost 9,000 signatures online by Monday afternoon on a letter asking Prime Minister Beata Szydlo to stop the plan. The opponents say Europe's largest mammals, which live in old-growth forests in northeastern Poland, are endangered and protected by law, and a symbol of Poland's nature.

There are over 1,500 [bison](#) in Poland, mostly living freely in state-owned reserves but also on private farms. The bulls can weigh over 900 kilograms (1,984 pounds) and stand some 1.9 meters (6.2 feet) tall.

Environment authorities have allowed the hunting of 10 bison in the Borecka forest before April, saying the [herd](#) there is too large and threatened with tuberculosis. With 15 calves born in 2016, the herd has 111 [animals](#), while it should be around 95, authorities say.

They say limited hunting allows for a controlled elimination of weak animals, while earning funds for fodder and other care for the herds. Some sick bison have been shot in recent years in other regions in Poland.

Paid events are regularly organized in Poland for foreigners who want to hunt deer, wild boar, hares or other small wild animals.

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