

# CITES

# **2014 MAFWA Committee Report on the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)**

## **MEETING TIME & PLACE**

AFWA Annual Meeting, September 2013; Portland, OR

Joint State/Federal CITES Meeting & AFWA International Relations Committee

Paddlefish Workshop, January 2014, Kansas City, MO

79th North American Wildlife & Natural Resource Conference, March 2014; Denver, CO

CITES Technical Work Group Meeting & AFWA International Relations Committee

Interagency CITES Coordination Committee, hosted monthly by USFWS in Washington DC

CITES Technical Work Group also conducted business via numerous conference calls

## **CITES TECHNICAL WORK GROUP REPRESENTATIVES**

Carolyn Caldwell- MAFWA (MAFWA CITES Technical Work Group Representative)

Jack Buckley- NEAFWA (Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife)

Buddy Baker- SEAFWA (Louisiana Department of Wildlife & Fisheries)

Jim deVos- WAFWA (Arizona Game & Fish Department)

Deborah Hahn- Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies

Curtis Taylor- U.S. CITES Delegate Representing the State Fish & Wildlife Agencies and

International Relations Committee Chair (West Virginia Division of Natural Resources)

## **CITES OVERVIEW**

International wildlife trade is estimated to be worth billions of dollars annually. Trade is diverse, ranging from live animals to a wide array of products derived from them including food products, fur and leather goods, tourist curios, and medicine. CITES (Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) is an international trade treaty enacted in 1973 to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten species' survival. CITES works by subjecting international trade in specimens of selected species to certain controls. These require that all imports, exports and re-exports of CITES species have to be authorized. The species covered by CITES are listed in three Appendices, according to the degree of protection they need. Appendix I includes species threatened with extinction. Trade in specimens of these species is only permitted in exceptional circumstances. Appendix II includes species not necessarily threatened with extinction, but for whom trade must be controlled in order to avoid utilization incompatible with their survival. Appendix III contains species that are protected in at least one country, which has asked other CITES countries for assistance in documenting trade.

International treaties impact state fish and wildlife agencies and represent a continuous and pressing challenge to resource management. Left unchecked, additional regulations and burdensome oversight will result from restrictions adopted through these international treaties. For example, some state management and harvest decisions for bobcats and river otters stem from restrictions dictated by the federal government resulting from CITES actions taken more than three decades ago. The original intent of CITES was to ensure globally sustainable use of natural resources. Over the past decade, NGO participation (e.g., HSUS and the Animal Welfare Institute) has greatly increased and pushed a protectionist/no use approach in CITES for well managed species. Protectionists outnumber sustainable use advocates 6:1.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Office of International Affairs, administers CITES for the United States. The USFWS solicits input and feedback on issues of importance from the state fish and wildlife agencies through the CITES Technical Work Group of the International Relations Committee of AFWA. The Technical Work Group consists of one representative from each of the four regional associations who work on behalf of states in concert with the USFWS on CITES matters. This state-federal partnership has been effectively working since 1994.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OVERVIEW**

CITES updates presented in greater detail in this document include: 1) Development of a paddlefish assessment and to conduct a webinar and workshop to engage USFWS and the state fish and wildlife agencies in discussions on paddlefish management and conservation; 2) CITES Wolf Export Program; 3) Electronic Permitting; 4) North American native softshell turtle species inclusion in Appendix III; 5) State Fish and Wildlife Agencies role in and their authority to manage wildlife in the U.S.; 6) International Crocodilian Specialty Group (CSG) meeting this summer (2014) in Louisiana; and 7) the CITES 27<sup>th</sup> Animals Committee Meeting.

## **DIRECTOR ACTION ITEM**

No action items at this time.

## **DIRECTOR INFORMATION ITEMS**

### **Paddlefish (*Polyodon spathula*)**

Two years ago we reached out to the State Fish and Wildlife Agency Directors and Fish Chiefs to ask about taking on a paddlefish project on behalf of the state fish and wildlife agencies. You supported this endeavor. Since that time we have used funds from USFWS to contract the development of a paddlefish assessment and to conduct a webinar and workshop to engage USFWS and the state fish and wildlife agencies in discussions on paddlefish management and conservation. Our goal was and continues to be to support the state fish and wildlife agencies authority to manage paddlefish.

In 2013, Alexi Sharov, Michael Wilberg and J. Robinson prepared a report entitled, "Developing Biological Reference Points and Identifying Stock Status for Management of Paddlefish (*Polyodon spathula*) in the Mississippi River Basin." The report was circulated as a draft for comment to all the states known to have Paddlefish in their waters. On January 17, 2014, the authors presented their findings in a webinar sponsored by the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) that allowed for questions and discussion of the results and their implications. On January 28, 2014,

AFWA facilitated a discussion between state representatives, USFWS staff and other interested parties at a face-to-face meeting in Kansas City, Missouri.

At the January 2014 workshop, 34 state fish and wildlife agency staff participated. Their time and effort to review the report and participate in the webinar and workshop were greatly appreciated. At the workshop, they identified important next steps and advanced paddlefish management discussions that hopefully will be helpful to state fish and wildlife agency management and conservation of paddlefish. Those steps included developing regional management plans, increasing coordination on regulations and management objectives, etc.

Since the meeting, we have been talking with LCCs, USGS, USFWS and others on potential funding for data compilation and research. Also, commercial states have been discussing a

potential future proposal on data collection through the Competitive State Wildlife Grants Program and they are advancing the development of basin wide management plans.

### **CITES Wolf Export Program**

The states and the CITES Technical Work Group have been working with U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service for nearly two years seeking export approval for wolves. Western states are under increasing pressure to develop export ability. Without the outlet to market wolf pelts some states are concerned that harvest numbers will decline presenting a wolf management problem. The CITES Technical Work Group had several meetings with USFWS International Affairs staff in recent weeks in order to facilitate a more expedient effort. Efforts were met with good results. U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service reported that the final rule should be released on or about May 6, 2014. Publication in the Federal Register will likely follow in about one week and the rule should be effective 30 days from publication. This is just the first step in the process, with the next step being States with harvest seasons applying for approval as a CITES export program for the species. The CITES export program authorization process should have been completed by the USFWS prior to the 2013 harvest season but was delayed until this year. According to our ongoing communication with the USFWS, they anticipate everything being in place for the 2014 harvest season.

### **Electronic Permitting**

The CITES Technical Work Group continues to stay engaged with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service on the topic of electronic permitting. The impediments to moving electronic permitting forward are not well understood at this time but appear to be related to issues of time and resources of USFWS and perhaps some complications with US Customs initiatives for their proposed electronic International Trade Data Systems (ITDS). We will continue to follow up on this issue with the USFWS and through discussions with the Head of the CITES Management Authority as well as the Swiss Chair of the CITES Electronic Working Group who we continue to work closely with concerning e-permitting pilot projects in the European Union.

### **North American Native Softshell Species Inclusion in Appendix III as a Result of the Numerous Asian Softshell Turtle CITES Appendix II Listings**

Over the past four years there has been significant dialogue between the USFWS and the state fish and wildlife agencies concerning international trade of smooth softshell (*Apalone mutica*), spiny softshell (*Apalone spinifera*), and the Florida softshell (*Apalone ferox*) and the benefits of listing these species in a CITES Appendix. With the listing of many species of Asian softshells at CoP16 (2013) there will continue to be increased demand for North American native species in international markets. To ensure that trade in this species is legal, the United States is still evaluating an Appendix III listing. An Appendix III listing could be implemented by the United States if deemed warranted to track the origin and volume of specimens in international trade and to determine if an Appendix II listing is necessary.

### **State Fish and Wildlife Agencies Role in and Their Authority to Manage Wildlife in the U.S.**

The CITES Technical Work Group received a multi-state grant in 2013 to conduct regional seminars and webinars, and to develop outreach materials for state fish and wildlife agencies. Our goal is to help state agency staff better understand the impacts and relationship of international treaties and conventions to their state management authority. Another component is to provide outreach materials to international partners. The materials will explain the role of state fish and wildlife agencies and how conservation is implemented in the US. Increased

understanding of the state agencies' role in and authority to manage wildlife will further improve our standing and reputation in international forums. The first workshop will be held at the SEAFWA meeting in October with the first webinar soon to follow. Regional seminars will be held in 2015 for NEAFWA, MAFWA, and WAFWA.

### **International Crocodilian Specialty Group**

Preparations are being made to host the International Crocodilian Specialty Group (CSG) meeting this summer in Lake Charles, Louisiana. The annual meeting of the CSG was last hosted in the US in Gainesville, Florida in 2002. The CSG is one of more than 100 species specialist groups operating under the auspices of the Species Survival Commission (SSC) of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the world's largest consortium of conservation organizations and agencies. The CSG works closely with CITES to promote crocodilian conservation and legal trade that does not threaten the survival of these important reptiles. The (CSG) is a worldwide network of biologists, wildlife managers, government officials, independent researchers, non-government (NGO) representatives, farmers, traders, tanners, fashion leaders, and private companies actively involved in the conservation of the world's 23 living species of crocodilians. The CSG network of experts advises governments and wildlife management agencies, evaluates the conservation needs of crocodilian populations, initiates research projects, conducts surveys of wild populations, provides technical information and training, initiates conservation programs, etc.

Working meetings of the CSG are held every two years. Here, CSG members and others have an opportunity to present their work as well as meet and exchange ideas with others working in various parts of the world. Papers presented during working meetings are published as CSG Proceedings. The working meetings also provide a venue for the meeting of the CSG Steering Committee. Louisiana is especially pleased that the CSG has accepted their bid to host these meetings in the US in 2014.

### **CITES 27<sup>th</sup> Animals Committee Meeting**

The MAFWA, NEAFWA, and WAFWA CITES Technical Work Group members and Deb Hahn (AFWA) represented the state fish and wildlife agencies at the CITES 27th Animals Committee and the joint Plants Committee held from 28 April to 3 May 2014.

The Animals Committee discussed 23 substantive agenda items, including but not limited to: the review of significant trade in Appendix II species; the periodic review of animal species included in the Appendices; amendments to the Appendices; sturgeons; and snake trade and conservation management. One hundred ninety-nine people were registered for the meetings which including a significant number of NGOs representing groups such as the Humane Society International, Species Survival Network, and the Animal Welfare Institute. These organizations participated in all of the working groups and were vocal concerning many of the matters before the Animals Committee. Invariably these organizations offered interventions that were pushing for greater restrictions in trade or were arguing for Appendix I listings. The CITES Technical Work Group actively participated in 4 of the 8 work groups formed during the meeting-- the review of significant trade in Appendix II species, the periodic review of animal species included in the Appendices, Sturgeon and Paddlefish, and Snake Trade and Conservation Management.

Our Canadian colleagues reached out to the CITES Technical Work Group just before the meeting to discuss their interest in adding the polar bear in the significant trade review. By doing so, they felt CITES would show that there is no significant trade in the species thereby weakening

the US government's next polar bear uplisting proposal that they will likely submit to the Conference of the Parties in 2016. With Alaska's concurrence, Jim deVos (WAFWA CITES rep) provided an intervention in support. When the final decision was made the Working Group Chair noted that two range countries and the State Fish & Wildlife agencies supported the review and therefore it was accepted. The Animals Committee adopted a list of 20 species of priority concern which included the polar bear. There are no other US native species currently on the list for Review of Significant Trade.

#### **TIME & PLACE OF NEXT MEETING**

AFWA Annual Meeting, September 2014; St. Louis, MO

Joint State/Federal CITES Meeting & AFWA International Relations Committee

Respectfully submitted by,

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