

Report of the CITES 27th Animals Committee Meeting 28 April – 3 May 2014, Veracruz, Mexico

TO: Directors- Northeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
Directors- Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
Directors- Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
Directors- Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies

FROM: Jack Buckley- NEAFWA CITES Representative
Carolyn Caldwell- MAFWA CITES Representative
Buddy Baker- SEAFWA CITES Representative
Jim deVos- WAFWA CITES Representative
Deb Hahn- Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies
Curtis Taylor- U.S. CITES Delegate for State Fish & Wildlife Agencies

Introduction: Jack Buckley (Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife), Jim deVos (Arizona Game and Fish Department), Buddy Baker, (Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries), Carolyn Caldwell (MAFWA CITES Technical Work Group Representative) and Deb Hahn (Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies) represented the state fish and wildlife agencies at the 27th Animals Committee meeting and joint Plants Committee meeting held in Veracruz, Mexico from April 28th through May 3rd 2014.

Summary Overview: The Animals Committee discussed 23 substantive agenda items, including but not limited to: non-detriment findings; the review of significant trade in Appendix II species; the periodic review of animal species included in the Appendices; amendments to the Appendices; sturgeons; cheetahs; sharks; 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. Following introductory comments by the CITES Secretariat and agreement on basic operating procedures, the Animals Committee Chair Carolina Caceres (Canada) began the meeting.

Chair Carceres efficiently moved through the 29 agenda items and established 8 working groups to advance matters related to agenda topics. In cases where issues of importance to the state agencies were discussed more details have been provided below.

- **Review of Significant Trade in Specimens of Appendix II Species**

Three members the CITES Technical Work Group participated in a 1-day Working Group focused on the review of significant trade in species on the Appendix II list. While this working group has a

pre-determined list of species to discuss, it is not uncommon for participants to propose additional native U.S. species to be considered for review. Unless a substantive intervention on the state & federal management and harvest regulations coupled with the general methodology used to estimate the population can be presented, the species may be included in the significant trade review. This review requires a thorough evaluation of the species, legal acquisition and non-detriment findings as well as a comprehensive review of the trade data.

The Animals Committee was directed to select species of "priority concern" for significant trade review (whether or not such species have been the subject of a previous review) in cooperation with the CITES Secretariat and experts, and in consultation with range countries. In order to assist with this selection, UNEP- World Conservation Monitoring Center (WCMC) provided an initial list, based on an extended analysis of trade, for identifying candidate species for review. The working group reduced this list is based on a review the biological, recorded trade data and other relevant information on Appendix-II species subject to significant levels of trade.

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. During the working group discussion the United Kingdom recommended polar bear be reviewed and stated they didn't think the review process would be difficult or lengthy. The Netherlands, Norway and Canada also supported it. The US and Israel did not. Other countries were silent. A few animal rights NGOs (e.g., CBD and IFAW) also intervened against it. With Alaska's concurrence, Jim DeVos (WAFWA CITES rep) provided an intervention in support (Attachment 1). When the final decision was made the Working Group Chair noted that 2 range countries and the U.S. State Fish & Wildlife agencies supported the review and therefore it was accepted into significant trade review. The working group's recommendations are revisited during the Plenary and can be amended if enough objections are voiced.

During the Plenary session the Secretariat introduced agenda item (AC27 Doc 12.5) concerning additional species to be included in the list of species for Significant Trade Review. The Chair then invited comments from the Animals Committee, countries and observers. There were several editorial corrections noted. The US delegation made an intervention stating that the US government is a strong supporter of the significant trade review process and would not oppose the significant trade review of the polar bear but that the outcome of such a review would not preclude a country from bringing a listing proposal to the next Conference of the Parties in 2016. No other countries intervened nor was the polar bear discussed any further by the Animals Committee or range countries. As the Chair moved on to open discussions of other species proposed by the working group, the Safari Club Foundation intervened, and also on behalf of Americas Fur Resources Council, in support of the significant trade review of polar bear. The CITES Technical Work Group was prepared to present a second intervention (Attachment 2) in support of the significant trade review but did not because there was not any opposition voiced. 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.

- **Snake Trade and Conservation Management Working Group**

The CITES Technical Work Group worked with partners to monitor and direct discussions in the Snake Trade Working Group so as not to allow the process to negatively impact crocodilians and specifically not to negatively impact American Alligator trade. The working group focused on a review of the studies commissioned by the Secretariat pertinent to Decision 16.102 to examine traceability systems for a sustainable international trade in South-East Asian pythons.

Efforts were successful in keeping the working groups' direction relegated to snakes so as not to interfere with the current highly successful traceability measures for crocodilians. The Snake Trade Working Group made recommendations on;

- (1) Enforcement and monitoring of production systems.
- (2) Dealing with python skin stockpiles
- (3) Considerations for traceability systems

Worth noting is that the working group, in developing recommendations for traceability for snakes, referenced the long standing and highly effective systems already in place for crocodilians and encouraged the Standing Committee to draw upon Res.Conf.11.12 (crocodile traceability system) in developing recommendations for a snake traceability system.

• **Sturgeon and Paddlefish**

A member of the CITES Technical Work Group participated in a Sturgeon and Paddlefish Working Group. The working group focused on a review of Resolution Conf. 12.7 (Rev. CoP14) specifically, reporting requirement by the Secretariat under the resolution, and stock assessment methodology currently being used by Caspian Sea states to assess status of sturgeon stocks. The Working Group was Chaired by Switzerland and included representatives from Australia, France, Canada, Republic of Korea, Germany, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Japan, China, Poland, International Caviar Importers Association, WWF, the United States, TRAFFIC International, and the Association of Northeast Fish and Wildlife Agencies. The Working Group reached a consensus on the following recommendations to the Animals Committee:

1. In light of the lack of response of range states to the reporting requirements under Resolution Conf. 12.7, in order for the Animals Committee to be able to fulfill its mandate, the Animals Committee will encourage the Standing Committee to consider ways to improve the reporting of the range states.
2. In doing so the Standing Committee should amongst others consider the following aspects: possible impacts on wild populations of increasing trends on aquaculture facilities, including range states, and potential illegal, unreported, unregulated fishing activities.
3. Concerning document AC27 Doc. 21.3 Annex, submitted by Germany, the Animals Committee will ask the Standing Committee to consider the document and make appropriate recommendations to CoP17 (2016).

The work of this group is relevant to future management of paddlefish by moving toward a benchmark methodology for stock assessment of sturgeon and paddlefish. In addition, trends in aquaculture of sturgeon and subsequent shift from wild harvest may have significant impacts on commercial paddlefish fisheries in the United States.

• **Periodic Review of Species Included in Appendices I and II**

Several CITES Technical Working Group representatives participated in the Periodic Review Working Group which was given the mandate to 1) identify lessons learned through Periodic Review and provide advice on its implementation, 2) draft advice on the review of Felidae and the species selected for review between CoP15 and CoP17 and also evaluate if these reviews should be stopped, or otherwise provide guidance on how information, participation and support from

range States could be obtained, 3) Make recommendations on the implementation of Decisions 16.124, 16.125 and 16.126, and 4) review the information and reviews presented in documents AC 27 24.3.3 to 24.3.7, and make recommendations to the Committee on the listing in the Appendices of the species concerned.

A significant portion of the working group discussion focused on a 3-year review of the status of the African lion led by Namibia and Kenya and based on the best available science as provided from African governments, lion researchers, and an international database that monitors CITES trade. The report concluded that African lions were appropriately listed by CITES in Appendix II (commercial trade allowed but regulated with permits) and no further restriction of trade were warranted. The report further documented that habitat loss and retaliatory killings by humans were the leading threats to lions, not international trade. These conclusions were submitted for adoption by the Animals Committee. During the meeting, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) verbally reported they would have a revised assessment of big cats later this year that would have new scientific information available for African lions and show that lions living in West and Central Africa are genetically identical to the Asiatic lion (*Panthera persicus*) which is a different subspecies from the African lion (*Panthera leo*). As a result the Animals Committee postponed a decision on the status review of African lion until the 2015 Animals Committee meeting.

- **Climate Change**

The CITES Technical Work Group has been monitoring this issue. Unlike previous Animals Committee meetings, there was minimal discussion of climate change during this meeting. However, the US delegation did make note of potential implications to polar bears on several occasions.

- **An Additional Note from AC27**

During the meeting the CITES Technical Work Group sent an email to Dr. Rosemarie Gnam, Chief of the USFWS Scientific Authority, as a follow up to a conversation we had with her concerning the US introduction of AC27 Doc 24.3.5 and the use of the terminology "over hunting" when discussing the threats to the species. As was mentioned to her, we believe it would be more appropriate to use "over harvest" or "excessive killing" instead of over hunting. She was asked to make note of our concern for future use of terminology when discussing threats. Below is an example from a document prepared by the United States government for the Animals Committee:

AC27 Doc 24.3.5.....Threats

Conservation threats to tokudae are poorly known, but **overhunting** has been suggested as the primary cause for low population levels leading to its extinction (Perez 1972; Service 2009b; Wiles and Payne 1986). For mariannus, historical factors, as well as known and potential threats, consist of **hunting**, habitat loss (due to development, agriculture, introduced ungulates, and invasive non-native plants), and predation by brown treesnakes.....

To learn more about the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, visit the CITES website at: <http://www.cites.org/>

Attachment 1: Intervention Provided by the WAFWA CITES Technical Work Group Representative in Significant Trade Review Working Group

Thank you Madam Chair.

My three colleagues and I are here representing the 50 state fish and wildlife agencies within the United States. We work in partnership with the national government. We participate in CITES meeting collectively as four Regional Associations of Fish & Wildlife Agencies.

On behalf of the 50 state fish and wildlife agencies within the United States that we represent, we support the inclusion of the Polar Bear (*Ursus maritimus*) in the list of taxa being considered for possible inclusion in significant trade.

The estimated global Polar Bear population is 20-25,000 and the area of distribution of this species extends over several million square kilometers and is not restricted.

Over the past 5 or 6 years Polar Bear has been the subject of much discussion and numerous proposals within CITES. Gathering data and analyzing the impacts of actual trade in Polar Bear will enhance the decision making process of the Animals Committee.

CITES is a treaty that focuses on the sustainability of species in international trade. We applaud the efforts of Parties to uphold the intent and purpose of the Treaty and to list species in the appropriate CITES Appendix when trade is an actual threat to sustainability of the species in the wild.

Attachment 2: Intervention Prepared by the CITES Technical Work Group Representative in Significant Trade Review Working Group as a Second Intervention if Needed

Thank you Madame Chair.

On behalf of the 50 state fish and wildlife agencies within the United States that we represent, we support the inclusion of the Polar Bear (*Ursus maritimus*) in the list of taxa for inclusion in significant trade review.

Gathering data and analyzing the impacts of actual trade in Polar Bear will enhance the decision making process of the Animals Committee.

We support the efforts of Parties and the Animals Committee to uphold the intent and purpose of the Treaty and to list species in the appropriate CITES Appendix when trade is an actual threat to sustainability of the species in the wild.

Thank you.