

2008 CITES Report

(Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora)

MEETING TIME & PLACE

97th AFWA Annual Meeting, September 2007; Louisville, KY

Joint State/Federal CITES Meeting & AFWA International Relations Committee

73rd North American Wildlife & Natural Resource Conference, March 2008; Phoenix, AZ

Joint State/Federal CITES Meeting & AFWA International Relations Committee

CITES 17th Plants & 23rd Animals Committee Meetings, April 2008; Geneva, CH

CITES Working Table 13th Trilateral Committee for Wildlife & Ecosystem Conservation and Management, May 2008: Veracruz, MX

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

CITES Technical Work Group also conducted business via three conference calls in 2007

ATTENDANCE – CITES Technical Work Group Representatives

Carolyn Caldwell- MAFWA (Ohio Division of Wildlife)

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

Buddy Baker- SEAFWA (South Carolina Department of Natural Resources)

Noel Kinler – SEAFWA (Louisiana Department of Wildlife & Fisheries)

Dale Toweill- WAFWA (Idaho Fish and Game)

Mike Berger- U.S. CITES Delegate & International Relations Committee Chair (Texas Parks & Wildlife)

Don MacLauchlan- Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

International treaties and conventions, by nature, 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 international treaties such as the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). 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 30+ years ago. Understanding the potential impacts of international treaties to state fish and wildlife agencies requires a thorough working knowledge of these treaties. The original intent of CITES was to ensure globally sustainable use of natural resources. However, today this arena is a place for extremists to promote preservation instead of conservation using emotional rhetoric instead of biological and scientific facts. Extremists will continue to be a threat to state management authority. States must continue partnering with the federal government and actively participating in CITES. The CITES Technical Work Group, which comprises four regional Association representatives, the AFWA International Relations

Director, and the Chair of the AFWA International Relations Committee, was initiated in 1994 and has proven to be both effective and efficient.

Earlier this year, the CITES Technical Work Group initiated a national survey to assess the status of bobcat throughout its North American range. The on-line survey was distributed to the lower 48 state wildlife agencies as well as Canada and Mexico. It was designed to best replicate the approach used previously (1981) but it also addressed bobcat range expansion and changes in bobcat density. The ultimate goal is to revise the CITES Appendix II delisting proposal and to provide an "updated" national and North American bobcat population estimate. Data analysis of the 47 responding states should be completed in June.

An outcome of the CITES 23rd Animals Committee Periodic Review of the Felidae Working Group was a directive of the U.S., Canada, and Mexico to meet with all the Felidae species European range countries to discuss the bobcat look-alike issue in a scientific (as opposed to an emotional) context, with actual data and evidence. With the approval of the USFWS, the CITES Technical Work Group will participate in the European range country meeting and will take the lead on developing a revised Felidae identification manual.

Also during the 23rd Animals Committee, the Humane Society unsuccessfully attempted to have black bear, river otter, and sandhill crane included in significant trade review. With input from the CITES Technical Work Group concerning state wildlife agency management, population status assessment, and harvest regulations the three species were dropped from consideration. The Chief of the U.S. CITES Scientific Authority feels the removal of these species from significant trade review consideration at the international level will likely prompt information requests from the Humane Society relative to harvest and management of black bears and river otters. State agencies should be prepared to deal with these issues.

The 2006 Appendix III CITES annual report indicated 197,466 map turtles (*Graptemys* spp.) and 27,667 alligator snapping turtle (*Macroclermys temminckii*) were exported live from the U.S. Within the MAFWA, Missouri is the only state currently with a federally licensed turtle farm. Most of the turtles are exported from Louisiana, Arkansas, and Mississippi. The majority of alligator snapper exports went to Hong Kong and Taiwan; the most of map turtle exports were *G. p. kohnii* to a number of European and Asian countries.

The CITES Technical Work Group is continuing to push for a nationwide non-detriment finding for river otter. The USFWS is conducting its 5-year finding for all currently approved States and Tribes this year. Our goal is to include all currently approved state programs with otter export programs and as new states apply they would provide initial documentation concerning population status and harvest regulations as required under federal regulations. From that point forward approved state wildlife agencies and Tribes would only need to report minimal information annually (similar to what is currently required for bobcats) during the 5-year period that the non-detriment finding is valid. We believe this would greatly reduce the administrative burden to the state wildlife agencies and further streamline the process.

The CITES Technical Work Group secured a one-year small grant from the USFWS to assist with expenditures directly associated with participation of four regional AFWA CITES

Technical Work Group representatives and the AFWA International Relations Director at national and international CITES meetings. In the grant application \$79,736 of personnel costs were documented by our respective state wildlife agencies as in-kind annual support for CITES work. The CITES Technical Work Group works alongside the Federal government and is actively engaged in international treaties where rules are enacted and wildlife management is discussed.

Finally, there has been steadily growing opposition to sustainable wildlife management at the international and national level. From a CITES perspective, in 1988 there were three NGOs at the Animals Committee meeting and at the 2006 Animals Committee there were 44 participating NGOs. Some of the most vocal NGOs who regularly participate at CITES include: International Fund for Animal Welfare, Species Survival Network, David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation, the Humane Society (U.S. & International), Animal Welfare Institute, Defenders of Wildlife, and TRAFFIC. These organizations utilize significant financial resources to promote their agendas and to influence the decisions of these international meetings.

Earlier this year, one NGO requested “equal time as the States” with the USFWS to discuss CITES matters. The group suggested that they had as much of a right to engage the USFWS in species-specific discussions as did the CITES Technical Work Group. The NGO did not comprehend (nor apparently care) that the CITES Technical Work Group was comprised of state agency personnel discussing wildlife management issues for which the states have statutory authority.

DIRECTOR ACTION ITEMS

Assist the CITES Technical Work Group in identifying and securing long-term funding that will allow proactive participation in CITES and ensure state fish & wildlife agency authorities are not compromised.

Recognize the importance to the CITES Technical Work Group of having an AFWA staff person knowledgeable and engaged in international issues active in Washington DC.

DIRECTOR INFORMATION ITEMS

North American Bobcat Population Survey Initiated

At the 2007 CITES Conference of the Parties (CoP), the bobcat delisting proposal was voted down due to several concerns including the use of an outdated 1981 bobcat population estimates. The CITES Technical Work Group is developing strategies to revise the proposal for the next CITES CoP meeting in 2010. One significant element for the proposal is to generate population data to develop a national and North American bobcat population estimate. From the CITES Delisting Proposal (CoP14 Prop 2): *"In 1981, it was estimated there were 725,000 to 1,017,000 bobcats in the United States."* We believe that the 1981 estimate was produced by estimating bobcat range (e.g., area) in each state and using average home range size estimates or density estimates to produce statewide figures.

Earlier this year, with the assistance of Gordon R. Batcheller, NY Department of Environmental Conservation, and the members of the AFWA Furbearer Conservation Technical Work Group, the CITES Technical Work Group initiated a national survey to assess the status of bobcat throughout its North American range. The on-line survey was distributed to the lower 48 state wildlife agencies as well as Canada and Mexico. It was designed to best replicate the approach used previously (1981) but also addressed bobcat range expansion and changes in bobcat density. The ultimate goal is to revise the CITES Appendix II delisting proposal and to provide an “updated” national and North American bobcat population estimate. Data analysis of the 47 responding states should be completed in June.

CITES 23rd Animals Committee Meeting: Periodic Review of Animal Species Included in the CITES Appendices

During the CITES 23rd Animals Committee Meeting in April, the Periodic Review of the Felidae Working Group was charged with determining which of the world’s cat species needed a biological and significant trade review to determine appropriate listing under CITES. This review has critical importance to state agencies, since bobcat Appendix II listing has resulted in a significant tracking and monitoring system for bobcat harvests nationwide. To date, only the review of the *Lynx* species (including bobcats) has been completed. This review, done by the U.S. delegation, was conducted in order to advance a proposal to remove bobcats from the Appendix II listing.

All range country members for bobcats (United States, Canada, and Mexico) were directed to meet with range countries for European lynx and Iberian lynx within the year to address “look-alike” issues as they pertain to illegal international trade. This is a significant and fortuitous outcome, as it provides opportunity for the U.S. to meet directly with counterparts in the European Union to specifically address the greatest hurdle to bobcat Appendix II delisting: the issue of threats to endangered species associated with smuggled European species entering illegal trade by being masqueraded as bobcats. European representatives blocked a de-listing proposal at the 2007 14th CoP, based primarily on those concerns. A meeting with all range countries where these concerns can be addressed in a scientific (as opposed to an emotional) context, with actual data and evidence would be beneficial. The Working Group also proposed updating the CITES Identification Manual for all Felids worldwide, to take advantage of recent improvements in identification methods. With the approval of the USFWS, the CITES Technical Work Group will participate in the European range country meeting concerning the “look-alike” issue and will take the lead on developing a revised Felidae identification manual.

CITES 23rd Animals Committee Meeting: Review of Significant Trade in Specimens of Appendix-II Species

As during the CITES 23rd Animals Committee Meeting in April, the Review of Significant Trade Working Group went through a list of 45 individual species and genera to determine which need taxon and country-specific status assessments or evaluation of threats relative to the Scientific Authorities’ non-detriment findings. Such a review would be used to determine if non-detriment findings remain appropriate, and might result in a change in

CITES status. Three North American game species - black bear, river otter, and sandhill crane - were identified from the preliminary list of taxa;

The Humane Society of the United States recommended that North American **black bears** be considered for a significant trade review. Black bears are listed on Appendix II. This was unexpected with the potential to result in a huge amount of work for states involved in black bear harvest and management, including the potential for either CITES tagging requirements (as are presently in place for bobcats and river otters) or consideration for listing in Appendix I (and prohibition of international trade). Responses by delegates from the United States and Canada relative to international trade issues and an intervention from the AFWA CITES Technical Work Group representative addressing population distribution, status, harvest, and population monitoring resulted in dismissal of this species from further discussion.

In addition, Humane Society International proposed that **river otters** be considered for worldwide trade review, based on old harvest data (1995) and increases in international trade. River otters are currently listed on Appendix II as a “look-alike” species. Coincidentally the USFWS is considering a proposal by the state agencies to develop a nationwide non-detriment finding reevaluated on a five year basis as opposed to annual non-detriment findings completed by each individual state agency. The trade review, if accepted, could have de-railed this process, potentially requiring annual documentation by the state agencies. Again, information provided by delegates from the United States and Canada relative to international trade issues and an intervention from the AFWA CITES Technical Work Group representative addressed river otter distribution, population status, harvest, and population monitoring resulted in having this species dropped.

The Humane Society of the United States requested that **sandhill cranes** be considered for significant trade review, based on harvest and international transport (largely hunter-killed birds entering the United States from Canada). Following discussion of the merits of this proposal, it was dropped from consideration.

The Chief of the U.S. CITES Scientific Authority feels the removal of these species from significant trade review consideration at the international level will likely prompt information requests from the Humane Society relative to harvest and management of black bears and river otters. State agencies should be prepared to deal with these issues.

CITES Appendix III Turtles

The U.S. listed alligator snapping turtles (*Macrolemys* [= *Macrochelys*] *temminckii*) and all 12 species of map turtle (*Graptemys* spp.) on CITES Appendix III (effective June 14, 2006). These listings do not affect domestic trade nor do they limit legal export but rather serve as a mechanism to assess the level of international trade of these species and help to ensure that export activities are not adversely impacting wild populations in the U.S.

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the MAFWA, Missouri is the only state currently with a federally licensed turtle farm. Most of the turtles are exported from Louisiana, Arkansas, and Mississippi. The majority of alligator snapper exports went to Hong Kong and Taiwan; most of the map turtle exports were *G. p. kohnii* to a number of European and Asian countries.

Nationwide Non-Detriment Finding for River Otters

The CITES Technical Work Group is continuing to push for a nationwide non-detriment finding for river otter. The USFWS is conducting its 5-year finding for all currently approved States and Tribes this year. Our goal is to include all currently approved state programs with otter export programs and as new states apply they would provide initial documentation concerning population status and harvest regulations as required under federal regulations. From that point forward approved state wildlife agencies and Tribes would only need to report minimal information annually (similar to what is currently required for bobcats) during the 5-year period that the non-detriment finding is valid. We believe this would greatly reduce the administrative burden to the state wildlife agencies and further streamline the process.

CITES Technical Work Group Funding

The CITES Technical Work Group secured a small grant from the USFWS to assist with expenditures directly associated with participation of four regional AFWA CITES Technical Work Group representatives and the AFWA International Relations Director at national and international CITES meetings for 2009. These include meetings with the USFWS, the Interagency CITES Coordination Committee, CITES Plants & Animals Committees, CITES Conference of the Parties, Trilateral Committee for Wildlife and Ecosystem Conservation and Management and several national and regional meetings where CITES is an agenda item. In the grant application \$79,736 of personnel costs were documented by our respective state wildlife agencies as in-kind annual support for CITES work. The CITES Technical Work Group represents the interests of the 50 state fish and wildlife agencies and participates to insure state wildlife agencies are represented in proposals considered by international treaties and conventions. Rules established under international treaties can usurp or cloud state authority and limit how states manage their wildlife and how our citizens' use and enjoy the resource. The CITES Technical Work Group works alongside the Federal government and is actively engaged in CITES where these rules are enacted and wildlife management is discussed. This grant helps it make possible for the USFWS to meet its obligations as set forth in 43 CFR Part 24.5.

TIME & PLACE OF NEXT MEETING

98th AFWA Annual Meeting, September 2008; Saratoga Springs, NY

Joint State/Federal CITES Meeting & AFWA International Relations Committee