

2021 MAFWA Committee Report on the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)

MEETINGS TIME & PLACE

(meetings attended by one or more CITES Technical Work Group Representative)

110th AFWA Annual Meeting, September 2020; virtual

Joint State/Federal CITES Meeting & AFWA International Relations Committee
CITES Technical Work Group/USFWS International Affairs, February 2021; virtual
“Enhancing Cross-Jurisdictional Partnerships to Confront the Illicit Turtle Trade in the
Southeastern U.S.” Workshop, hosted by Southeast PARC- Turtle Networking Team,
February 2021; virtual

86th North American Wildlife & Natural Resource Conference, March 2021; virtual

CITES 73rd Standing Committee, May 2021; virtual

25th Trilateral Committee for Wildlife & Ecosystem Conservation/Management, May 2021;
virtual

CITES Interagency Coordination Committee, hosted quarterly by USFWS; virtual

CITES Technical Work Group also conducted business via phone and virtual platforms

CITES TECHNICAL WORK GROUP REPRESENTATIVES

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

Michael Bednarski- NEAFWA (Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources)

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

Stewart Liley- WAFWA (New Mexico Department of Game & Fish)

Deborah Hahn- Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies

Rick Jacobson- U.S. CITES Delegate Representing the State Fish & Wildlife Agencies and
International Relations Committee Co-Chair (Connecticut Department of Energy &
Environmental Protection)

CITES OVERVIEW

The Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES) is an international trade agreement among 182 countries (and the European Union) 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, re-exports, and introductions from the sea of species covered by CITES 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.

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 include: 1) CITES Treaty Implementation When In-Person Meetings May Not be Possible; 2) Zoonotic Diseases, Wildlife Trade, and CITES; 3) USFWS Modernization of its Permit System; 4) CITES Technical Work Group/USFWS International Affairs Meeting; and 5) Stewart Liley, WAFWA CITES Technical Work Group Representative.

DIRECTOR ACTION ITEM

No action items at this time.

DIRECTOR INFORMATION ITEMS

CITES Treaty Implementation When In-Person Meetings May Not be Possible

Annually CITES conducts most of its work through three in-person committee meetings. During 2020 all face-to-face meetings were postponed and, lacking approved rules of procedure for holding virtual committee meetings, the CITES Secretariat and the member countries struggled with how best to conduct business. Late last year several inter-sessional work groups were formed in an attempt to make progress on some matters typically handled at these meetings. In early May 2021, the CITES 73rd Standing Committee held its first formal meeting using a virtual platform. While this meeting had its largest attendance (800 participants representing 100 countries and 111 NGOs), discussions of agenda items were abbreviated and most participants only observed proceedings due to time restraints of the condensed meeting. This will likely be the same scenario for the upcoming Animals and Plants Committee meetings.

Obtaining more active participation by member countries in CITES has long been a goal of the Convention and we have supported measures that enhance communication and minimize barriers to countries and observer organizations wishing to participate. Future CITES Committee meetings that provide in-person and virtual participation opportunities would be ideal. Conducting Committee meetings solely through a virtual format significantly reduces the CITES Technical Work Group's ability to maintain our highly visible Regional Association presence, reduces opportunities to present positions/interventions on behalf of the state agencies, and hampers our ability to maintain and enhance strong working relationships with country representatives, the CITES Secretariat, and other sustainable use organizations. This topic will be further discussed in upcoming CITES meetings.

Zoonotic Diseases, Wildlife Trade, and CITES

The COVID-19 pandemic has heightened interest in zoonotic disease and the role of domestic and international wildlife trade. Throughout 2020 we witnessed calls for the complete ban of all import and export of live wildlife and the strengthening of the CITES treaty to prohibit international wildlife trade to reduce the risk of future pandemics. But CITES has no mechanism to include zoonotic diseases in its mandate. CITES regulates international trade in wildlife listed in its appendices, but it only does so to prevent species from over-exploitation. Nowhere in the text of the convention are countries obligated to stop or restrict trade because of the potential spread of zoonoses. The large majority of wildlife species internationally traded for human consumption are not even covered by CITES. An inter-sessional working group is being formed through the CITES Standing Committee to discuss and develop recommendations concerning the role of CITES in reducing the risk of future zoonotic disease emergence associated with international wildlife trade. There is overwhelming interest by countries and many NGOs to be invited to participate. Several of the CITES Technical Work Group representatives have requested authorization to participate through the CITES Secretariat. The Standing Committee

Chair will select members of the working group and will also lead the effort. Working Groups must have an equal ratio of country representative to NGOs. The working group is expected to complete its task in the next six months.

USFWS Modernization of its Permit System

The CITES Technical Work Group has been working with the USFWS on methods to simplify and expedite the process for CITES related permits since 2014. While early discussions focused on the need to streamline processes for issuing permits to state fish and wildlife agency research programs that were shipping black bear parts internationally for scientific purposes, we continued to be engaged as the USFWS moved forward with more comprehensive modernization of the permitting program. A key part of the modernization was the launch of the new ePermits system in October 2020 which allows the public to submit, track, and view most permits online, and the migration of existing active permits from the old system to ePermits. The USFWS will continue to tweak the ePermit process making it more efficient and allowing for more robust data analysis (visit: fws.gov/epermits).

CITES Technical Work Group/USFWS International Affairs Meeting

The CITES Technical Work Group held a virtual meeting with USFWS International Affairs staff in February 2021 to discuss pertinent CITES issues. While this was an abbreviated meeting, we discussed a variety of topics with emphasis on upcoming virtual Standing, Animals, and Plants Committee meetings, ePermitting, implementation of the Treaty when meetings cannot be held in-person, and the possible implications and restrictive measures for wildlife trade related to human health concerns. These meetings continue to offer meaningful information exchanges and provide opportunities to maintain and build connections with the staff.

Stewart Liley, New WAFWA CITES Technical Work Group Representative

Stewart Liley, Chief of Wildlife at the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, is the new WAFWA CITES Technical Work Group representative. He replaced Jim deVos (Arizona) in December 2020. Mr. Liley has participated in other international forums including the Trilateral Committee for Wildlife and Ecosystem Conservation and Management. We are pleased to have Stewart join the team.

SCIENCE-BASED MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES

CITES deals with the legal and sustainable international trade of plants and animals listed in its three appendices. For this reason, the CITES Technical Work Group will not be proposing any science-based management priorities at this time.

TIME & PLACE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be the CITES 31st Animals Committee and Joint Plants Committee Meeting, May/June 2021; virtual.

Respectfully submitted May 28, 2021,

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