

# **2023 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)

112<sup>th</sup> AFWA Annual Meeting, September 2022; Fort Worth, TX

Joint State/Federal CITES Meeting & AFWA International Relations Committee  
CITES Conference of the Parties (CoP19), November 2022; Panama City, Panama  
88<sup>th</sup> North American Wildlife & Natural Resource Conference, March 2022; St. Louis, MO  
Joint State/Federal CITES Meeting & AFWA International Relations Committee  
CITES Turtle Listings, Implementation, and State Agency Responsibilities, March 2023;  
webinar

Joint State/Federal CITES Meeting; April 2023; Washington DC

CITES Interagency Coordination Committee, hosted quarterly by USFWS; virtual

CITES Technical Work Group regularly conducts business via phone and virtual platforms

## **CITES TECHNICAL WORK GROUP REPRESENTATIVES**

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

Scott Buchanan- NEAFWA (Rhode Island DEM, Division of Fish and Wildlife)

Buddy Baker- SEAFWA (SEAFWA CITES Technical Work Group Representative)

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

Deborah Hahn- Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies

Ryan Brown- U.S. CITES Delegate Representing the State Fish & Wildlife Agencies and  
International Relations Committee Co-Chair (Virginia Department of Wildlife  
Resources)

## **CITES OVERVIEW**

The Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES) is an international trade agreement among 183 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 19th Conference of the Parties; 2) Webinar: Freshwater Turtles Added to CITES Appendix II and How it May Affect the State Agencies; 3) State/Federal Coordination Procedure Update; 4) CITES and LEMIS Turtle Trade Data Analysis; 5) CITES Standing Committee Inter-Sessional Working Groups; and 6) Big Cat Public Safety Act.

## **DIRECTOR ACTION ITEM**

No action items at this time.

## **DIRECTOR INFORMATION ITEMS**

### CITES 19<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties

The most recent CITES Conference of the Parties (CoP19) was held in November 2022. Member countries met to review, discuss, and negotiate changes in the management and trade of the various animal and plant species covered by the treaty. At CoP19, reptiles and amphibians represented half of the 52 species proposals under consideration. Many of the adopted proposals affected turtle species that are native to the United States and are commonly farmed or harvested for commercial exports. Species that were included in Appendix II include mud turtles (*Kinosternon spp.*) and musk turtles (*Sternotherus spp.*) and the transfer of species from Appendix III to Appendix II included the alligator snapping turtle (*Macrochelys temminckii*), common snapping turtle (*Chelydra serpentina*), softshell turtles (*Apalone spp.*), and five species of map turtle (*Graptemys barbouri*, *G. ernsti*, *G. gibbonsi*, *G. pearlensis*, and *G. pulchra*). These new inclusions to CITES Appendix II went into effect on February 23, 2023.

In addition, all species of horned lizards (*Phrynosoma spp.*) were added to Appendix II. The Aleutian cackling goose, the short-tailed albatross, and the Puerto Rican boa were moved from Appendix I to Appendix II. The U.S. withdrew its proposal to add the timber rattlesnake to Appendix II.

### Webinar: CITES Turtle Listings, Implementation, and State Agency Responsibilities

Because of the number of new CITES Appendix II turtle listings, it was prudent to host a discussion between the USFWS and state agency staff as a first step in cooperation and communication on the implementation process. Sixty-five state agency staff participated in the March 28<sup>th</sup> webinar. The USFWS presented an overview of CITES and the new listings, a detailed description of the Legal Acquisition process, and the Non-detriment Finding (NDF) process. Substantial time was allotted for questions as well as to discuss information needs from the States concerning native turtle species management and wild collection regulations. A second webinar is likely to occur later this year.

### CITES Federal/State Coordination Procedure Update

As designated under the U.S. Endangered Species Act, the USFWS is the lead agency for implementation of CITES in the United States. State wildlife agencies are partners in U.S. CITES implementation because of their role and authority in implementing fisheries and wildlife management at the State level. In the interest of enhancing communication and coordination with appropriate State agency staff regarding the evaluation and development of listing proposals and other CITES-related policy and administrative actions, the USFWS and AFWA (CITES Technical Work Group) developed a formal Federal/State coordination procedure in November, 1997 that was last updated in 2014.

The coordination procedure was established to develop effective processes for authorized representatives of State Fish and Wildlife Agencies to provide meaningful and timely input on USFWS regulatory proposals and other policy and administrative actions regarding CITES implementation, and allow for dialogue well in advance of decision-making deadlines. In addition, these procedures provide a process to resolve policy and administrative conflicts that undermine the efficient and effective implementation of CITES. Periodically reviewing and updating this document is important especially with significant personnel changes within the USFWS who may not be as familiar with the role of the States in CITES.

### CITES and LEMIS Turtle Trade Data Analysis

The CITES Technical Work Group is in the process of contracting the United Nations Environment Program World Conservation Monitoring Center (WCMC) to conduct an analysis of international trade in North American turtles. WCMC is an independent CITES data analysis service respected within the CITES community as a non-biased service. Were this data to be analyzed by the States, the U.S. government or an NGO, the results would inherently be challenged as biased.

The purpose of this project is to synthesize available turtle trade data (CITES and LEMIS) from 2000 to present to assist state and federal wildlife agencies in making informed decisions and recommendations relative to state, national and international issues pertaining to turtle management, regulation, and trade. This will be achieved through developing an international trade status report on all United States turtle species and is expected to be completed by the end of the year.

### CITES Standing Committee Inter-sessional Working Groups

Members of the CITES Technical Work Group were invited to join several inter-sessional working groups formed by the CITES Standing Committee (SC). The SC provides policy guidance concerning the implementation of the Convention and oversees the management of the budget. It also coordinates and oversees the work of the CITES Plants and Animals Committees, carries out tasks given to it by the CoP, and drafts resolutions for consideration by the CoP. At least one Team member is serving on the following working groups: reducing the risk of future zoonotic disease emergence associated with international wildlife trade; labeling systems for trade in caviar; livelihoods; sharks and rays; and movement of wildlife diagnostic samples.

### Big Cat Public Safety Act

While not specifically a CITES matter, the Big Cat Public Safety Act (BCPSA) is important to any State Wildlife Agency that has dealt with escaped big cats. The BCPSA was signed into law on December 20, 2022 requiring private big cat owners to register their animals by June 18, 2023. The BCPSA places new restrictions on commerce in, possession, breeding, and use (including public contact) of certain big cat species (referred to as “prohibited wildlife species”). “Prohibited wildlife species” is defined as “any live species of lion, tiger, leopard, cheetah, jaguar, or cougar or any hybrid of such species.” Violators of the BCPSA are subject to civil and criminal penalties, and big cats bred, possessed, imported, exported, transported, sold, received, acquired, or purchased contrary to the provisions of the BCPSA are subject to forfeiture.

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

The next meeting will be the CITES 32<sup>nd</sup> Animals Committee, June 19-23, 2023; Geneva, Switzerland.

Respectfully submitted May 23, 2023,

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