

International Relations Committee - Report

Meeting of March 9, 2021

Rick Jacobson (Connecticut), Co-Chair

Travis Ripley (Alberta), Co-Chair

Meeting convened from 9:00am to 11:00am ET. There were 36 people in attendance including 14 Committee members.

Upcoming meetings in 2021:

- CITES Standing Committee: May 5-7
- Trilateral Committee for Wildlife and Ecosystem Conservation and Management: May 17-20
- Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA): TBD
- International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) World Conservation Congress: September 3-11
- Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) Animals and Plants Committees: AC31 31 May – 1 June 2021; PC25 2-3 June 2021; AC31/PC25 4 June 2021; AC31/PC25 resumed 21 June 2021; AC31 resumed 22 June 2021; PC25 resumed 23 June 2021; AC31 or PC25 resumed 24 June 2021 (contingency)
- CBD Conference of the Parties (CoP): TBD in October and November

International Relations Workplan Update: Deb Hahn

Deb shared the International Relations Committee's (IRC) charge and provided an update on workplan items that have been accomplished, are ongoing, or are delayed. Although some actions were delayed until 2021 because of meeting cancellations, several things continued as planned. Virtual subsidiary meetings were held, and document reviews were conducted for the CBD and the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF). AFWA continued its engagement with the Advisory Committee on Subnational Governments. The CITES Technical Work Group developed a turtle trade case study. AFWA participated in the IUCN motions development and voting process through online consultations. We continued work as a member of IUCN US National Committee's Executive Committee. A significant amount of time was spent engaging with partners (E.g, WWF, WCS, IUCN, CITES, federal partners, etc.) and in dialogues and webinars on wildlife trade, use and consumption and COVID/risks of future pandemics. This led to the development of the AFWA position paper on this issue that was approved at the September Business Meeting. A white paper was developed around restrictions on importation of specific species. Thirty-nine states have contributed almost 3.2 million USD for on-the-ground conservation actions to support the conservation of state Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN). For more information on CITES, see the CITES Technical WG report.

DEI Discussion: Rick Jacobson

President Sara Parker Pauley (MO), along with Education, Outreach & Diversity Committee Chair Tony Wasley (NV), requested that each Committee reserve some time to focus on integrating diversity, equity, and inclusion into the work of your committees. Currently, the Committee (without asking how each member identifies) has about twice as many men and women and little racial diversity. One idea was for the co-chairs to send a letter to the Directors asking for them to identify staff that would be interested in engaging with the Committee in an intern-like fashion. We would ask that the Directors consider diversity of gender, racial, sexual orientation when making a recommendation. This would allow staff lower down within the agencies to learn about international conservation issues and allow

the Committee to engage a more diverse community in its discussions. The Committee mentioned considering how to make sure our work is inclusive including membership on working groups etc.

Canadian Wildlife Directors Committee: Travis Ripley

The Canadian Wildlife Directors Committee (CWDC) is composed of the wildlife directors and agency leads representing the jurisdictions/agencies (13 Provinces and Territories and Environment and Climate Change Canada, Parks Canada Agency, and Fisheries and Oceans Canada) with responsibility for wildlife conservation in Canada. Updates included the following.

Pan-Canadian Approach to Wildlife Health (PCAWH)

- Seek endorsement of a nationwide governance approach to wildlife health
- Focus on developing a stable system to address funding and program delivery including:
 - o sharing information and developing guidance on procedures for shared wildlife disease issues
 - o oversight for emergency or crisis outbreaks
 - o coordination on surveillance
 - o liaising with Stakeholders, Indigenous Partners and NGO's

Advancing Species at Risk Transformation

- Focus on multi-species approach
- Highlight shared responsibilities between Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS) and Provinces /Territories
- Take stock of progress on priority species, priority places and priority threats
- Evaluate all areas of improvement operationally

Nature Based Climate Solutions

- Linkage to post 2020 global biodiversity targets
- Ongoing discussion and engagement point between CWS and Provinces /Territories

Updating Strategic Priorities

- Review and highlight updates on strategic priorities for the CWDC

CITES Technical Work Group Update: Carolyn Caldwell, Buddy Baker, Mike Bednarski, Stewart Liley

Stewart Liley (Chief, Wildlife Management Division, New Mexico Department of Game and Fish) is the new WAFWA representative on the CITES Technical Work Group. He replaces Jim DeVos who retired in January 2021. Although there has been only one international CITES meeting in the past year and a half, the Technical Work Group continues to represent the state agency and when applicable Provincial and Territorial interests in CITES. They are members of intersessional working groups on corals, caviar, sharks and rays, and medicinal plants (for ginseng). Implementation of CITES continues in the U.S. The Work Group had a virtual meeting with US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) staff in February to discuss CITES issues, future priorities and continued cooperation on issues coming up at the Standing, Animal, and Plant Committee meetings. The Standing Committee will meet in early May. The Animals and Plants Committees will meet at the end of May and June. The Work Group will attend these meetings and prepare positions and conduct outreach to Directors to get input on issues, as needed. The Work Group has been supportive of the USFWS efforts to move to an e-permitting system and will continue to provide support when they can.

Next steps to address outcomes of September's Panel Discussion: Travis Ripley

In September, a panel that included members from Arizona Game and Fish Department, Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS); USFWS; and the International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation (CIC) discussed several issues. Priorities were developed. Attendees were asked whether the priorities were still accurate or if there were any edits/updates. There were edits recommended to the CITES priority.

One Committee member also noted the importance of the voting guide to get the correct people at the table in IUCN. The final list includes the following. Most of these have or are being acted on by Committee members and other partners.

1. Actively engage in CITES discussions which includes eels, precious corals, seahorses, conservation of African species, discussions on how to engage local people, and captive breeding related issues.
2. Follow and actively engage in IUCN conversations around wildlife trade and consumption including developing emergency motions.
3. Develop a voting guide about IUCN candidates related to sustainable use of wildlife. CIC is leading the charge on this.
4. Ensure GBF targets maintain support of sustainable use and trade and livelihoods.
5. Follow and engage as needed in WHO's One Health approach.
6. Continue to engage in the IUCN motions process and cooperate to understand each other's positions and where possible develop joint positions.
7. In general, the belief was that CITES is not the appropriate place to deal with wildlife health issues.
8. Consider what we need (e.g., a new treaty) to address biodiversity, wildlife health, human health or what is being called the One Health approach.
9. Engaging in IUCN to help it regain its status as a leader on conservation issues.
10. Maintain CITES support of sustainable, legal trade.
11. Drive action on wildlife conservation through the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF).

In addition to the priorities, the Committee acknowledged that the Wildlife Society (TWS) is now a member of IUCN. They are determining how best to engage. A recommendation was made to gather partners together in April or May to talk about the upcoming World Conservation Congress. Part of the Congress will occur whether it is virtual, in person, or a mix of the two. USGS is the focal point for DOI on CBD and IPBES. There will be an opportunity to provide comments on the sustainable use assessment this summer.

Edinburgh Declaration: Rick Jacobson

AFWA has engaged in the development of the GBF and as a partner to the Advisory Committee for Subnational Governments. Because of this and in order to help ensure member priorities are reflected in the GBF, AFWA also participated in the *Edinburgh Process for Subnational Governments, Cities and Local Authorities on the Development of the Post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework*. One output of the meeting was the Edinburgh Declaration. The intent of the Declaration is to set out the aspirations and commitments of the wider subnational constituency of the CBD in delivering for nature over the coming decade. They are asking for governments and organizations to sign the Declaration by the next CBD CoP (scheduled for November 2021). Current signatories to the Declaration can be found [here](#). The Committee developed a briefing document on the Declaration and solicited input from members twice. There were mixed opinions about AFWA signing the Declaration. The final decision was to gather more information regarding the GBF (We hope there is a final draft of the GBF that we can refer to this summer.) and what our federal partners think about the Declaration. With that information, a second briefing paper will be developed to share with members in August and the Committee will make a final recommendation at the September meeting.

Restrictions on Importation of Species at the State, Provincial, and Territorial Level: Rick Jacobson

A working group was formed at the September 2020 meeting to look at the issue of restricting the importation of certain species at the state, provincial and territorial level. The working group produced

a white paper that was shared with Committee members for comment in March. Those members that responded and meeting attendees were supportive of the white paper and felt that the information could be useful to members who are faced with these issues. There was not agreement on whether the white paper should include a recommendation that AFWA support or oppose such measures. A few ideas emerged. One was to remove the recommendation. A second was to alter the recommendation to say "AFWA recommends the states consider this information when they are faced with this issue." There was also consideration of an informal peer review process of the body of the paper. The decision was made to share information about the discussion with the Executive Committee and have the co-chairs recommend a path forward to advance the body of the white paper at least.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, International Affairs Report: Anna Seidman

Five US FWS Programs (IT, ES, IA, MB, OLE) have been working intensely over the past year to develop a new online ePermitting platform. The intent is to reduce processing burden, provide data driven decisions, and uphold the public's trust in fulfilling our conservation mission. The Service is implementing the new ePermits system through a series of releases, each of which will make available new functionality.

The USFWS received a petition dated December 9, 2019, from the State of Louisiana entitled, "Petition for Rulemaking to Correct the American Alligator Regulations at 50 C.F.R. § 17.42(a) Pertaining to the Sale of Hides" requesting that a provision of the special rule pertaining to the American alligator be amended or deleted to remove the requirement that sale or transfer of American alligator only be allowed "in accordance with the laws and regulations of . . . the State or Tribe in which the sale or transfer occurs." For reasons other than those identified in the petition, the Service published a proposed rule (Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Regulations Pertaining to the American Alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*) (Proposed Rule) to amend the Alligator 4(d) rule on January 19, 2021 (86 FR 5112). The comment period on this proposed rule closes on March 22, 2021.

There will be a virtual CITES Standing Committee meeting on May 5-7, 2021 and the agenda is on the website. The USFWS published the first Federal Register Notice for CITES CoP19 on March 2, 2021. The notice announces that the Service is soliciting recommendations from the public for amending Appendices I and II of CITES as well as recommendations for resolutions, decisions, and agenda items for discussion at CoP19. The nineteenth regular meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP19) is tentatively scheduled to be held in Costa Rica, March 3-14, 2022.

The 2021 Meeting of the Trilateral Meeting will be held 17-20 May 2021. The United States, as this year's host, is planning a virtual meeting, with sessions running daily from 1:00-5:15 pm EST. The CITES Working Table will convene to discuss issues of mutual interest pertaining to the Standing, Animals, and Plants Committees and to discuss any North American Regional preparations for CoP19. Unlike the other Working Tables, the CITES Table along with the Law Enforcement Table are closed meetings, open to invited government personnel only.

U.S. Forest Service, International Programs Report: Greg Butcher

The Forest Service's International Programs works to prevent the listing of internationally shared species which are primarily found on national forest and grasslands. They support on-the-ground actions and research, monitoring, and outreach. They provide financial support to 20 different NGOs many of which are coalitions of groups. This includes Environment for the Americas, Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN), Birds Caribbean, Birdlife Americas and the Monarch Joint Venture. They have an international initiative call the Copper River Delta Migratory Bird Initiative and work on the conservation of grasslands birds in North America. The program coordinates

with Southern Wings and works with many of the same partners and on many of the same projects. This include shorebird conservation in NW Mexico, grassland conservation in the Chihuahua Desert, and more.

Partner for Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (PARC) have been working on the addressing turtle trafficking. They had a workshop at the Conference.

Action Items / Resolutions / Motions

1. Develop a briefing document on the Edinburgh Declaration to share with members in August.
2. Engage the US State Department on the Edinburgh Declaration.
3. Schedule a meeting of partners to prepare for the IUCN World Conservation Congress.
4. Develop a one-pager about the intent and purpose of the International Relations Committee to better inform state agencies about the Committee.
5. Advance the white paper in order to recommend a way forward.

THREATS AND EMERGING ISSUES IDENTIFIED:

N/A

NEW OPPORTUNITIES IDENTIFIED:

N/A

Submitted by Rick Jacobson and Travis Ripley

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