

International Relations Committee - Report

Meeting of September 24, 2024
Ryan Brown (Virginia), Co-chair
Christie Curley (Ontario), Co-Chair

Meeting convened from 1:00am to 3:45:00pm. There were XX people in attendance.

Important meetings and opportunities:

- October 20, 2024 Provide input to the IUCN 20-year Strategic Vision and Programme 2026-2029
- Convention on Biological Convention Conference of the Parties (CoP): October 21 to November 1, 2024
- Ramsar Wetland Convention, 64th Standing Committee: January 20 to 24, 2025
- CITES 78th Standing Committee: February 3 to 8, 2025
- ~July 2025: Deadline for submission of species proposals, resolutions, decisions, and other documents for CoP 20.
- October 2025: International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) World Conservation Congress (WCC)
- September or December: Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) 20th Conference of the Parties (CoP)

International meeting timeline and opportunities for the next two years: CBD, IUCN, CMS, ISO

Biodiversity Standard Development, etc. (Deb Hahn, AFWA): The coming year to year and a half includes key international meetings and opportunities to influence the global conservation agenda and ensure that the state, provincial and territorial priorities and voice are heard. You can access a copy of the meeting and important deadline timeline [here](#). Important events and meetings include the IUCN WCC and the motions develop process leading up to that meeting, the development of an ISO standard for biodiversity, wetland conservation through the Ramsar Convention, and CITES meetings. The Committee will prioritize its engagement, work with global partners, and engage our members when input is needed.

Canadian Wildlife Directors Committee Update (Christie Curley): The Canadian Wildlife Directors Committee (CWDC) is composed of the wildlife directors and agency leads representing the jurisdictions and 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. The committee is one of five national committees that currently provide advice and support to the federal, provincial, and territorial senior government officials who are responsible for wildlife conservation and biodiversity.

CWDC will be exploring how they can collectively support the recently released *Canada's 2030 Nature Strategy* which is focused on halting and reversing biodiversity loss. This new initiative is to support Canada's adoption of the Kunming-Montréal Global Biodiversity Framework, which occurred at the 15th Conference of the Parties to CBD at Montréal in December 2022. This includes commitments to address climate change, use nature-based solutions, and plant 2 billion trees. They are looking at a whole of government and society strategy to its implementation.

They are also interested in the climate assessment that is being developed with USGS especially the policy recommendations.

CITES Technical Work Group Update (Buddy Baker (SEAFWA), Gordon Batcheller (NEAFWA), Carolyn

Caldwell (MAFWA), Stewart Liley (WAFWA))

CITES, the Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, is an important international agreement that governs trade of listed species. AFWA established the Work Group in 1994 to ensure that state, provincial, and territorial agency perspectives were brought to the table during discussions with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and at CITES meetings.

The Work Group attended the 33rd Animals Committee (AC) in Jul. There were no critical decisions being made at the meeting, but the Team had important discussions about eels, seahorse, corals, and other topics. The [Technical Work Group's Report](#) is available on the International Relations Committee's webpage. Every three years, CITES convenes a Conference of the Parties (CoP). In preparation for CoP 20, the USFWS published a Federal Register notice. It asked the public for recommendations for possible U.S. submission at CoP20 including species proposals to amend the CITES Appendices. The public recommended hundreds of species. We are reviewing the merits of the native species. To this end, we had discussions at the AC meeting, are in communication with the USFWS, and are looking at the LEMIS trade data, as well as talking informally with state, provincial and territorial wildlife agencies to gather more information.

In the coming weeks and months, the Work Group will be reaching out to the regional associations and individual states, provinces and territories to gain insights and input on key issues likely to be taken up at the next CoP, including species listing proposals. Input from species experts is very important.

The recently completed report *Overview of the International Trade in United States Turtle Species 2000-2023* is available on the [International Relations Committee website](#). The purpose was to conduct a pilot assessment of trade using U.S. turtle trade data.

USFWS International Affairs Update: (Hila Levy): Hila Levy started as the USFWS's Assistant Director for International Affairs in July. She reported on a variety of key topics. Improving the permitting process and alleviating burdens to permit applicants is a priority. They have made notable improvements over the past year including digitizing the top five applications, which are all for the export of wildlife listed in CITES, reducing the amount of work needed to submit paper applications. A third party, comprehensive needs analysis of the permitting program identified opportunities to innovate and optimize the process to better serve permit applicants and maximize conservation outcomes. They are working to implement the recommendations from this analysis as funding and resources are available.

The U.S. is submitting a nomination of the Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge as a Wetland of International Importance through the Ramsar Convention. The North Carolina refuge spans over 110,000 acres and is one of the largest contiguous wetland tracts in both the state of North Carolina and along the Atlantic Coast of the U.S.

Next year, Canada (Environment and Climate Change Canada) will host the 29th Annual Trilateral for Wildlife and Ecosystem Conservation and Management Committee meeting in the spring. The following working tables will hold sessions, focusing on collaborative conservation projects and opportunities: 1) CITES (TBD), 2) Ecosystem Conservation, 3) Law Enforcement, 4) Migratory Birds, 5) Species of Common Conservation Concern, and 6) Executive. Bison and ocelot Letters of Intent are being developed to protect, restore, and advance conservation objectives across the three countries.

The CITES Export Program (CEP) is a permitting efficiency designed to allow States and tribes to export certain CITES Appendix-II listed species (American ginseng, American alligator, and 5 species of furbearers). The CEP streamlines permit applications and processing by making annual or 5-year

programmatic legal acquisition findings and non-detriment findings for the above listed species from approved state(s) or tribe(s) programs.

To prepare for the CITES CoP20 in accordance with USFWS CITES regulations (<https://cites.org/eng/app/appendices.php>) for public engagement and transparency, the U.S. informs the public about the CoP through a series of Federal Register (FR) notices, at least one public meeting and website postings in advance of CoP20. The first FR notice was published March 2024. In response to this FR Notice, they received over 150+ recommendations for native species inclusion or transfers from Appendix II to Appendix I. Native species recommendations included the non-CITES listed U.S. turtle species (22 species), rattlesnakes, American eel, gulper sharks, oceanic whitetip shark for a transfer to Appendix I, sea cucumbers, tarantulas and other U.S. spider species, arctic mammals, and white sage, along with several U.S. timber species. The Division of Scientific Authority is currently evaluating the recommendations to determine whether they meet the biological and trade criteria for inclusion in CITES Appendix I or II per Resolution Conf. 9.24. The next FR Notice (November or December 2024) will again solicit further information and comments from the public on species proposals that the United States is “likely, undecided, or unlikely” to consider for submission at CoP20

IUCN Sustainable Use and Livelihoods Specialist Group (SULi) Tools and the Global Wildlife Economy

(Shane Mahoney): Shane discussed a tool being developed to assess the value and sustainability of species use and documenting that use through the Five-Dimensional Sustainability Assessment (5DSAF) and the Species Use Database (SpUD). The use of wild species is culturally, economically, socially and historically important on a global scale. According to the IPBES Sustainable Use Assessment, 1 in 5 people rely on wild species for income and food, >10,000 wild species are harvested for human food, and 2.4 Billion (1 in 3) depend on fuel wood for cooking. Therefore, it is vital to achieve the sustainable use of wild resources to meet challenges of biodiversity loss and climate change. Developing and maintaining efficient and resilient wildlife economies requires a foundation of sustainable use. The SpUD identifies and documents different uses – providing evidence of the importance, culturally, socially, economically and for livelihoods based on species use. It is in the

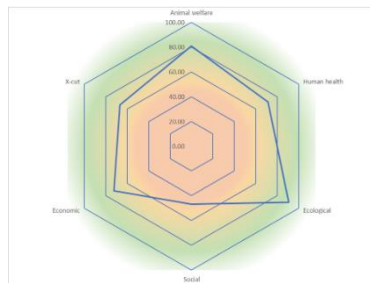


Figure 1: SDSAF Radar Diagram

early phases and currently has a limited number of case studies. The 5DSAF is in draft form and is being tested. It is a joint initiative of IIED, TRAFFIC, IUCN SULi, Endangered Wildlife Trust and EPIC Biodiversity – with UK Government Darwin Initiative support. The SDSAF assesses how sustainable a use is according to five principles – Ecological, Social, Economic, Animal Welfare, and Human Health. For each of the 5 dimensions it articulates 7 key principles. In addition, 7 cross-cutting

principles are relevant to all dimensions. Each of the principles is underpinned by 4 indicators which identify how closely the particular use of wild species is aligned with the principle. This allows a use to be scored based on the 5 principles and then overlaid on a radar diagram (figure 1) that highlights dimensions where the use is exemplary in meeting the principles or where it could use improvement.

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is embarking on a collaborative journey with a broad range of partners to develop a global programme that seeks to harness and leverage the existing opportunities in the terrestrial biodiversity (wildlife) economy toward sustainable land and wild species use for the benefit of people and the economy. This journey will result in a new global programme aimed at strengthening the biodiversity (wildlife) economy. A key approach of which is to

engage extensively across regions and themes to equip and enable the best outcomes in the development of the Theory of Change. To this end, UNEP is attempting to analyze the use of all wild species. They developed scoping documents for Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe, and North America (Canada and the United States). For the first time, we will know the full value around wild species use, which will help address concerns around governance of wild species use raised in CITES and CBD.

USGS Updates (Doug Beard): The USGS will have staff attending the UFCCC. They are the US Focal Point for IPBES. IPBES11 will be held in December 2024 in Namibia. IPBES is currently developing an assessment related to the synergies between business and biodiversity. They are in the later stages of development for assessments about the nexus between biodiversity, water, food and health; and transformative change.

Action Items / Resolutions / Motions

- Update the work plan for 2024 – 2025
- Outline priorities and key dates for receiving input and hosting virtual committee meetings

OTHER ITEMS MENTIONED:

NEW OPPORTUNITIES IDENTIFIED:

Submitted by Ryan Brown and Christie Curley

Committee Member Attendees:

Ryan Brown, Virginia Department of Wildlife Conservation
Christie Curley, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry
Mike O'Brien, Fur Institute of Canada
Will Dillman, South Carolina DNR
Stewart Liley, NM Game and Fish Department, WAFWA CITES Representative
Gordon Batcheller, NEAFWA CITES Representative
John Jackson, Conservation Force
Laura Conlee, Missouri Department of Conservation
Jen Sheehan, Arkansas Game and Fish Commission
Doug Beard, USGS
Hila Levy, USFWS

Non-Committee Members Attendees:

Rena KlukKiehl, PA Fish and Boat Commission
Dan Brooks, SCI Foundation
Travis Voyles, Commonwealth of Virginia
Tony Schoonen, Boone and Crocket Club
Maureen Madera Garcia, US Virgin Islands
Brooke Talley, Amphibian and Reptile Conservation
Steve Guertin, USFWS
Shane Mahoney, Conservation Visions
Tristan Beijer, CIC
Patricia Dwyer, Canadian Wildlife Federation
Marc Gaden, Great Lakes Fisheries Commission

Michael Lipford, Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources