

International Relations Committee - Report

Meeting of March 28, 2024
Ryan Brown (Virginia), Co-chair
Christie Curley (Ontario), Co-Chair

Meeting convened from 10:00am to 12:00pm. There were 25 people in attendance.

Upcoming meetings and opportunities:

- CBD Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical, and Technological Advice (SBSTTA): May 13 to 17, 2024
- CITES Animals and Joint Animals and Plants Committees: July 12 to 19, 2024
- IUCN Regional Conservation Forum and US National Committee Annual Meeting: August 20 to 22, 2024

Committee Culture and Engagement (Deb Hahn):

- Updated the Charge: The Committee updated its charge to include “Increase the diversity of voices informing discussions, positions, and products.”
- Invited and welcomed a broad range of voices: Sebastian Winkler, Craig Bruce, and Tristan Beijer
- Finalized power point guidance that helps ensure accessibility.
- Discussed how we can make the meeting space more inclusive, although we haven’t found a way to adapt the seating arrangements to address this.
- We are considering developing guidance that would inform our work and development of work products.

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. There has been significant turn over of Directors in the past year.

The CWDC’s work plan for 2023/2024 includes:

- 1) Collaboration to develop a 2030 Biodiversity Strategy for Canada. 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 the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (COP15) at Montréal in December 2022. This includes commitments to address climate change, use nature-based solutions, and plant 2 billion trees.
- 2) Species such as polar bear and caribou are still a high priority.
- 3) Identifying opportunities, particularly at the provincial and territorial level, to engage with other sectors to improve our understanding and encourage collaboration under a One Health framework. This would include coordination with AFWA should the association prioritize leadership in the One Health space.

CITES Technical Work Group Update (Buddy Baker, Gordon Batcheller, Carolyn Caldwell, Stewart Liley): Carolyn Caldwell and Gordon Batcheller presented on behalf of the CITES Technical Work Group

(Team). In February, the CITES Team went to DC to meet with the USFWS International Affairs staff for two days to discuss CITES issues. The team met new USFWS staff, discussed critical issues, and laid out a timeline for communication and collaboration leading up to the Conference of the Parties in the Fall of 2025. We also have an almost final draft of our updated coordinating agreement. The request for tag orders went out to state agency staff in March. The deadline for orders is April 15th. We worked with USFWS to implement a new system that hopefully streamlined the ordering for both the states and the USFWS. AFWA is hosting webinars about the CITES furbearer and alligator tagging and export programs in April. In addition, USFWS staff is attending the SE alligator meeting this week and will attend the furbearer meetings in May, which is an excellent opportunity to develop relationships, answer questions, and raise concerns. The next CITES meeting is the Animals Committee in July. The conference of the parties will be in late 2025. The USFWS notice asking for public input into what species and decisions they should bring forward to the CoP was published this past weekend. The Team anticipates many herps will be considered for US proposals. We have a pilot project to analyze US turtle trade data underway that will inform decisions. The initial report will be available in May.

A discussion about the most recent NDF workshop and its outputs resulted in a recommendation to assemble a small group to look at the outputs of the workshops (the modules). The intent is to assess how practical they are for countries to implement, to provide support for simplified NDFs where there is low risk, and address any other issues in preparation for the Animals Committee.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, International Affairs Report (Elsa Haubold): Elsa, Acting Assistant Director, provided an update on USFWS International Affairs, which include the following.

Trilateral: The U.S. will be hosting the [Trilateral](#) Committee in San Diego from April 28th to May 2nd, 2024. The priorities include climate change, diversity and inclusion, integrating human dimensions, technology innovation for conservation, and zoonotic disease.

CITES Updates:

- **Preparations for Conference of the Parties (CoP) 20 in late 2025:** They published the first Federal Register notice asking for public input about what species, resolutions, and decisions the US should advance to CoP. The deadline for comment is May 21st. The second notice will be published in October. The third notice in July 2025 will be followed by a public meeting and then a final notice likely in September 2025.
- **CITES Export Program:** The Program helps to facilitate international trade in American ginseng, American alligator, and furbearers. Alligator and furbearers require a tag for export. The request for tag orders went to the states and tribes in March. Deadline for submitting tag orders is April 15th.
- **CITES and ESA Permitting:** They are working with a contractor to improve and streamline the permitting process. They will begin to implement the recommendations this summer.

Elephant 4(d) Final Rule: IA is finalizing a rule to increase protection and conservation of African Elephant. Staff reviewed the almost 140,000 public comments received to revise the draft rule. The final rule was published just after the meeting.

International Priorities and Partners Discussion: To hear from more voices and bring in more perspectives from across the globe and discuss issues of common concern, we were joined by Sebastian Winkler (Director General International Council for Game and Wildlife Management (CIC), Craig Bruce (Director, Conservation and Communities, Jamma International), and Tristan Breijer (Policy Advisor for FACE). Some common themes emerged from the discussion including the global wildlife

economy, One Health, wildlife health, wildlife values, and relevancy. We also discussed some of the outcomes of the Convention on Migratory Species CoP.

The International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation (CIC) is a non-profit, international NGO, with diplomatic status in Hungary and is a union of state & civil stakeholders advocating for conservation through sustainable use. The CIC is active in over 80 countries and represents more than 40 million hunters. They work on policy through CITES, Ramsar, CMS, CBD, etc. and are a founding member of the Collaborative Partnership on Sustainable Wildlife Management (CPW). They have a One Health program in Mongolia. The CIC created the Sustainable Use Navigator and supports research on a variety of topics. They try to provide a platform for under-represented voices to be heard in international forums. The next CIC General Assembly will be in April in Portugal. The overarching theme is bridging, which includes a session on connecting with conservation professionals and work in North America. The CIC Programme aligns with the Global Biodiversity Framework and in particular Targets 4, 5, and 9. Tristan Breijer shared some of activities of the [European Federation for Hunting and Conservation](#) (FACE). Established in 1977, FACE represents the interests of Europe's 7 million hunters as an international non-profit-making non-governmental organization. FACE has been a member of IUCN since 1987 and participates in various specialist groups. They have observer status to CITES, CMS, AEWA and the Bern Convention. Sixteen staff sit in Brussels, working on Conservation and Wildlife, Legal and Public Affairs as well as Communications matters. FACE is the secretariat of the European Parliament's Intergroup on "Biodiversity, Hunting, Countryside", supported by over 130 MEPs from different political groups. It promotes the role of hunting and sustainable use. They are monitoring and acting on trophy import bans under consideration in Europe. They are using their social acceptance research to run campaigns and increase awareness about hunting and sustainable use. Topics of importance over the next 5 years include invasive annual species listings, farming policy reform, hunting challenges, and social acceptance. Craig Bruce shared his experience with biodiversity conservation and working to support local communities in the management of their natural resources. Jamma International champions community conservation in Southern Africa. It aims to support impactful and effective projects that have communities at their heart, facilitate sustainable use of natural resources while delivering real conservation benefit. He supports the promotion of community based natural resource management. He also shared his thoughts about the global wildlife economy and how US policy has direct implications for biodiversity conservation in Africa.

The CMS Conference of the Parties (CoP) was held in February. Numerous agenda items were reviewed by AFWA, state, provincial, and territorial staff; and partners that have specific expertise. Our overarching goal was to bring the perspectives of on-the-ground wildlife managers to help ensure resolutions, actions, and decisions are implementable and reasonable and support the conservation of wildlife in the US or Canada and our migratory species. One theme that was evident across the documents is an increased focus on domestic trade in CMS-listed species. The issues we will monitor and/or engage in include human wildlife conflict, species listings, the use of wild meat, animal culture and wildlife management, and flyway conservation.

Action Items / Resolutions / Motions

- Assemble a team to look at CITES NDFs in preparation for the Animals Committee.

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
Don Morgan, USFWS
Mike O'Brien, Fur Institute of Canada
Will Dillman, South Carolina DNR
Matt Eckert, Colorado Parks and Wildlife
Gordon Batcheller, NEAFWA
Carolyn Caldwell, MAFWA
John Jackson, Conservation Force
Sherri Russell, Missouri Department of Conservation
Angela Somma, NOAA/NMFS

Non-Committee Members Attendees:

Shane Mahoney, Conservation Visions
Tristan Beijer, FACE
Elsa Haubold, USFWS
Sebastian Winkler, CIC
Craig Bruce, Jamma International
Robert Fisher, USGS
Matt Kedziora, NAVFAC Far East
Patricia Dwyer, Canadian Wildlife Federation
Henri Ferre, INVERSA