

CITES Technical Work Group Report



Report of the CITES 30th Animals Committee Meeting and Joint Meeting with the 24th Plants Committee 16-21 July 2018, Geneva Switzerland

INTRODUCTION:

The CITES Technical Work Group (Team), Buddy Baker, (Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries), Carolyn Caldwell (MAFWA CITES Technical Work Group Representative), Jim deVos (Arizona Game and Fish Department), Rick Jacobson (Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection) and Deb Hahn (Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies), represented the state fish and wildlife agencies and where applicable the Provinces and Territories at the 30th Animals Committee meeting held in Geneva, Switzerland and the Joint Meeting held with the 24th Plants Committee.

SUMMARY:

The Animals Committee discussed 30 substantive agenda items, including but not limited to: eels, coral, paddlefish, sea cucumbers, snake and turtle conservation; captive bred and ranched specimens; traceability; and the CITES Strategic Vision for the next 10 years (2021-2030). Sixty-four countries were represented with nearly 360 participants including a significant number of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) representing groups from the Humane Society International to Wildlife Conservation Society to Safari Club International Foundation. NGOs participated in the working groups and were vocal concerning matters before the Animals Committee. Some of the organizations pushed for restrictions in trade and additional species reviews. The Animals Committee was chaired by Mathias Lörtscher (Switzerland). Chair Lörtscher established 11 working groups. On July 20th and 21st, the Animals Committee met jointly with the Plants Committee and they established three working groups. Where issues of importance to the state agencies and/or the Provinces and Territories were discussed, more details have been provided below.



Key outcomes:

1. No additional wildlife traceability requirements were imposed. A strategy was developed to address traceability issues for the Standing Committee in October.
2. No decisions were agreed to that would impose new conservation or management requirements on the states for American eel conservation, although a proposal to list the species in Appendix II is still a possibility for the 18th Conference of the Parties (CoP) in 2019.
3. No decisions were agreed to that would impose new conservation or management requirements on the states for coral or paddlefish conservation. An Intersessional workgroup will be maintained to finalize the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) corals report.
4. The determination of species to be listed in Appendix III remains the discretion of the range country.
5. While two species of sea cucumber occurring in Hawaii and the United States Pacific territorial waters are included in an European Union (EU) Appendix II listing proposal being developed for CoP18 in 2019, the proposal should not impact the conservation and management in the states. The U.S. is on the edge of the species range, there is no international trade, and, in some cases, harvest is banned.
6. A proposed strategy for verifying the legal acquisition of CITES specimens was introduced and expected to be built upon at the Standing Committee meeting in October. We believe it will have implications for chain of custody and traceability of CITES-listed species and therefore their management.
7. Advances were made to positively impact the language in the draft CITES Strategic Vision.

CITES Technical Work Group Report

CITES Strategic Vision (AC30 Doc 7): The Team participated on the Standing Committee Strategic Vision Working Group established in December 2017. The importance of being on the working group was to incorporate more sustainable-use friendly language into a draft vision for consideration at the October Standing Committee and a final Strategic Vision at CoP18. The Team engaged with other working group members such as the Wildlife Conservation Society, World Wildlife Fund, FAO, and Chinese and South African delegations to gather their support for language. The Chair of the working group suggested more work will be done in advance of the Standing Committee with attention to crafting the Objectives and developing a GAP analysis to compare the content of the new Strategic Vision with the existing Treaty Decisions and Resolutions.

Eels, Including the American Eel (AC30 Doc 18.1 and Doc 18.2): Team members were satisfied with the Eel Working Group [outcomes](#). Substantial changes were made to the document submitted to the Animals Committee to separate recommendations for CITES listed eels (i.e., European eel) from non-CITES listed eels (E.g., American eel). As a result, it became clear that the recommendations for non-CITES listed eels were not prescriptive and should be easy for the states to comply with over the next few years. The Team met with the EU to discuss their position on listing American eel and talk about potential engagement with the state managers. Team members also spoke with our Canadian partners that manage American eel. The Team will engage with the states and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission to strategize leading up to CoP 18 and the 31st and 32nd Animals Committee as the EU may consider bringing an Appendix II listing proposal for all eel species.

Captive-Bred and Ranched Specimens (AC30 Doc 13): While there were no U.S. native species being reviewed by this working group, our Team monitored it and paid attention to discussions about the use of source codes for specimens in trade. Countries continue to express confusion in assigning the appropriate source code for trade of offspring when captive breeding stock is replenished with wild caught animals. This has also been a subject of debate for U.S. turtle farms. LEMIS data suggests a significant amount of miss-labeling of U.S. turtle shipments. Team members will be meeting with the USFWS following the Animals Committee meeting to address this concern.



Sturgeon and Paddlefish (AC30 Doc 17.2): Discussions surrounding sturgeon and paddlefish did not result in any new issues or requirements. The focus of CITES is to improve identification of paddlefish and sturgeon species in trade by using DNA technologies. This is especially important as more caviar in trade is from species in aquaculture.

Precious Corals (AC30 Doc 19): While the Precious Corals Working Group's decisions and recommendations were adopted by the Animals Committee, none of the decisions should have conservation and management impacts in the near term. The working group did not do more than that because the FAO corals report was received too late to review and comment. The Team will review the report to make sure it is accurate and acceptable for the state agencies. We will participate in the Intersessional working group in preparation for the Standing Committee.



CITES Technical Work Group Report

Appendix III Listings ([AC30 Doc 31](#)): Two Team members participated on the Appendix III Intersessional working group that formed following the 29th Animals Committee in 2017. The work group's charge was to identify biological and trade characteristic of Appendix III species. There was no support for developing a list of species that CITES recommends a Country list in Appendix III. It is clear some NGOs see a list as an opportunity to impede trade rather than leaving the decision to the discretion of the range country. While the idea of developing a list was broached by several working group members, it was again shot down and the report of the working group reflected that decision. We were satisfied with the wording and outcomes of the document submitted to the 30th Animals Committee. The discussion of the document in plenary was brief with no significant changes to its content. The document will be presented to the Standing Committee for consideration in October and we will continue to monitor the issue.



Snakes ([AC30 Doc 27.1](#)); and Tortoises and Freshwater Turtles ([AC30 Doc 28](#)): There were no areas of concern with either document. The first document summarized the outcomes from an Asian snake workshop where participants learned how best to apply CITES source codes for snake exports; inspect snake captive breeding facilities; implement techniques for differentiating between wild and captive-bred snakes; and conduct Non-Detriment Findings. The second was a report from the Secretariat that compiled available guidance materials for conducting turtle surveys, monitoring techniques, assessing impacts of offtake, and implementing adaptive management programs for making Non-Detriment Findings for turtles and tortoises.



Photo: Thomas Quine

Sea cucumber proposal by the EU ([AC30 Doc 30.1](#)): The EU developed an Appendix II listing proposal in consultation with the species range countries for four species of sea cucumbers to be presented at CoP18 in 2019. Hawaii and the U.S. Pacific territories are included in two species' ranges. However, AFWA members are at the edge of the species range, there is no international trade, and, in some cases, harvest is banned. The Team spoke to the EU about the proposal and reminded them that the state agencies manage the species. This proposal should not impact the states but we will have additional discussions with Hawaii to keep them informed of future CITES actions.



CITES Technical Work Group Report



Additional Meetings, Discussions, and Side Events of Note

- **Traceability of Wildlife in Trade** - Our Team met with sustainable use partners about traceability of wildlife concerns. Some CITES countries and NGOs see an opportunity to increase the number of CITES species with expanded traceability systems beyond CITES permits through a prescriptive and overarching approach. The meeting helped to formulate a strategy to effectively influence the direction of the working group. We will meet with sustainable use partners at the Standing Committee and will help produce three documents for the Standing Committee.
- **North American Turtle Trade** - Members of our Team met with several NGOs as well as a member of the IUCN Turtle Specialist Group to discuss the current knowledge of international trade (legal and illegal) in native North American turtles and tortoises. We believe a better understanding of the trends in market demands of native North American species for food and the pet trade is needed. We talked with organizations about possible funding sources to conduct an analysis of existing LEMIS and the CITES trade databases to identify trends and volume of trade. We have also scheduled a follow up meeting with USFWS to discuss mining the CITES trade database.
- **American Alligator** - Outside of the context of the CITES Animals Committee, a Team member met with the President of the Swiss Watch Strap Makers Association to discuss the complications to U.S. alligator producers brought about by the luxury brands desire to use the CITES process to expand their traceability requirements as an alligator watch strap marketing tool. The message was met with a degree of understanding and an invitation to share the concern at the upcoming meeting of the International Crocodylian Farmers Association meeting in New Orleans, LA in September.
- **International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation (CIC)** - The CIC hosted a meeting to discuss lions, leopards, and international hunting issues, which the Team attended. Although not of direct impact to states, provinces and territories, the implications of decisions in CITES related to sustainable use of non-native species can have an impact.
- **Assistance to Iranian Delegation** - At the request of the U.S. Delegation, the Team, accompanied by a staff person from the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, met with the head of the Iranian delegation to provide guidance on how best to use crocodile farming to enhance conservation of the “Mugger” Crocodile (*Crododylus palustris*).
- **Sustainable Use Side Event** - Several members of the Team attended the side event “Models for sustainable use - the experience of vicuna in the Andes.” It highlighted an excellent example of community-based conservation efforts that have led to the increase in wild vicuna populations, the preservation of local traditions, and economic incentives through sustainable trade in vicuna fiber.
- **Legal Acquisition** - A side event reviewed the draft guidance document, a draft resolution, and amendments to several existing resolutions on verifying the legal acquisition of CITES specimens. The document and resolutions (draft and amendments) were prepared by the CITES Secretariat for consideration by the Standing Committee in October. The Team only received the draft documents at the end of the Animals Committee meeting and no opportunity to comment has been provided yet. The Team will engage on as it will undoubtedly have implications for chain of custody and traceability throughout the life of a specimens/article involving CITES listed species.

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