



# INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE

## WHO we are

The International Relations Committee guides and/or engages on international conventions/treaties, initiatives, agreements, and policies that impact U.S. state and Canadian provincial and territorial fish and wildlife agencies. The Committee's core responsibilities revolve around shaping and implementing an international relations strategy to achieve effective, high-impact engagement, and providing a platform for wildlife agencies and NGOs to discuss international conservation issues that impact management and conservation in the U.S. and Canada.

## WHAT we do

- Develop positions international matters of interest to AFWA members including agreements, conventions, regulations and initiatives.
- Further relations with countries across the globe
- Monitor and participate, as needed, in the relevant agreements, conventions, and initiatives.
- Serves as AFWA's source, sounding board and integrator of information and discussions about international issues.

## WHY participate in IUCN?

The Association is a member of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). IUCN can be an important ally in promoting sustainable use principles and science-based conservation. Founded in 1948, IUCN's is focused on supporting the conservation of nature in an equitable and ecologically sustainable way. Today it has more than 1,400 members including the U.S. and Canadian governments and approximately 130 U.S. and Canadian NGOs. To have a voice in conversations around zoonotic diseases, wildlife trade, use, and consumption; otter and waterfowl conservation; the sustainable use of wildlife; and more membership and engagement is necessary.

## HOW CITES impacts you?

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) can be a management tool but only with active participation in the Convention. To have the most effective and efficient engagement, the CITES Technical Work Group was created in 1992. It includes one member from each state regional associations and the AFWA International Relations Director. The Work Group engages partners; develops positions; participates in CITES meetings; and collaborates with USFWS to provide input on species status, management, and international trade to help ensure that actions taken through CITES support the conservation of wildlife in the U.S. and Canada. For example, state tagging programs for bobcats stem from federal restrictions resulting from CITES actions 40+ years ago. Some CITES turtle trade regulations can support state management. The Work Group was part of an informal partnership that help retain state and territorial management of polar bears when it was attempted to be listed in CITES Appendix I in 2013 and 2016.

## WHAT does the Trilateral mean to you?

The Trilateral Committee for Wildlife and Ecosystem Conservation and Management (Trilateral) was created in 1995 by the federal wildlife agencies of the United States, Mexico, and Canada. This agreement formally brought together for the first time the three nations of North America. They meet annually. There are six active working tables: CITES, Ecosystem Conservation, Executive, Law Enforcement, Migratory Birds, and Species of Common Conservation Concern. The states and AFWA participate on almost all of them. The states also have a seat on the Executive Table, which Stewart Liley (NM) currently holds. Historically the states that participate the most in this committee are the border states. However, this Committee has worked on grasslands conservation, monarch conservation, and other issues that are a priority for many states and Provinces.

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## CURRENT ISSUES AND TOPICS:

**Wildlife Trade, Use, and Consumption; Zoonotic Diseases; and One Health:** These discussions are front and center across the globe. There are proposals to ban wildlife trade, use and consumption in international fora and the U.S. Congress; develop new protocols under the UNCTOC; and broaden the mandate of CITES. One way to engage has been with the position paper developed by the Committee, *Wildlife Conservation, Consumption, and Use in a Post-COVID-19 World*.

**Turtle Conservation and Management:** The Committee developed a case study to help support state agencies' conservation and management of turtle and tortoises as it relates to international trade to ensure populations are sustainable.

**Supporting Legal and Sustainable Hunting and Livelihoods:** The Committee approved a document titled *Background Information Regarding State and Provincial Restrictions on the Importation of Wildlife Lawfully Harvested Abroad*. The document outlines the important considerations when contemplating such policies.

**The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) Sustainable Use Assessment:** Submitting comments on documents like the IPBES Sustainable Use Assessment is an important role of the Committee. The reason we recommend that our members review these documents is because they influence U.S. government policy and decisions at international conventions. In the end, this should be an influential document supporting the sustainable use of wildlife.

**CITES non-detriment finding (NDF) for the exportation of bobcat (*Lynx rufus*):** The USFWS Division of Scientific Authority- International Affairs made a positive CITES non-detriment finding (NDF) for the export of bobcat (*Lynx rufus*) taken in the contiguous 48 U.S. States. Currently, 41 States and 32 Tribes have approved multi-year CITES export programs for bobcat. Facilitated by the Committee, this decision was made possible by the status and management information provided by the states and Dr. Nathan Roberts. Historically the USFWS made NDFs annually for each state. After discussions with USFWS, agreement was reached for a single U.S. range-wide non-detriment finding conducted every 5 years instead of annually. The ability to export pelts is important to sustainable use, fur trade, and our Canadian partners as well.

**AFWA Sustainable Use Resolution:** The Committee submitted a resolution reaffirming AFWA's support for sustainable use and regulated trade in some species.

**Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF):** CBD is a legally binding instrument that aims to promote "the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components, and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources." Countries and NGOs have been developing the GBF to guide nature conservation for the next 30 years. The Committee has been facilitating the review and comment of the GBF since January 2020 so that our voice is heard and helps guide the Framework.

**Open letter to World Health Organization (WHO) and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP):** AFWA joined more than 250 conservation and development experts and organizations, from international agencies to community groups representing millions of people in sending a letter to the heads of the WHO, the UNEP, and other UN and inter-governmental bodies. The letter recognized the need to tackle illegal and unsustainable wildlife trade but also that wholesale, far-reaching bans on wildlife trade not only risk negative social, economic and ecological consequences but may also fail to address other key sources of zoonotic disease risk.



**Canadian Co-Chair:** Travis Ripley (Alberta)  
**US Co-Chair:** Rick Jacobson (Connecticut)  
**Staff:** Deb Hahn (International Relations Director)

"Decisions are made in global forums that impact conservation in the U.S. and Canada. It is critical that we are at the table and have a voice in those discussions to help guide those decisions." ~Sara Parker Pauley, 2020-2021 AFWA President