

International Relations Committee - Report

Meeting of September 9, 2020

Rick Jacobson (Connecticut), Co-Chair

Travis Ripley (Alberta), Co-Chair

Meeting convened from 2:00 pm to 4:00pm ET. There were 47 people in attendance including 16 Committee members participating from Gatineau, Canada; Santa Fe, New Mexico, and Budapest, Hungary and many places in between.

Upcoming meetings in 2021 (date to be determined):

- Trilateral Committee for Wildlife and Ecosystem Conservation and Management
- Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA)
- International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) World Conservation Congress
- Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) Animals and Plants Committees
- CITES Standing Committee
- CBD Conference of the Parties (CoP)

IR Workplan Update

Deb Hahn

Deb provided an overview of International Relations Committee's (IRC) role and charge. Although several actions were delayed until 2021 because of meeting cancellations, several things continued as planned. The Convention on Migratory Species held its CoP in February and AFWA participated in work leading up to the CoP. Virtual subsidiary meetings were held and document reviews were conducted for the CBD. The CITES Technical Work Group developed a turtle trade case study. AFWA participated in the IUCN motions development process through online consultations. We also continued work as a member of IUCN US National Committee's Executive Committee. A significant amount of time was spent engaging with partners and in 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 will come forward for approval at the AFWA Business Meeting.

Canadian Wildlife Directors Committee

Travis Ripley

The Canadian Wildlife Directors Committee (CWDC) report highlighted the topics such as species at risk, changes to the Migratory Bird Convention Act, and invasive species work.

The Committee has incorporated a place-based approach to bringing back species at risk. The Provinces and Territories are working with federal colleagues to develop the best methods to do this. They continue to implement the National Polar Bear Conservation Plan linking federal and provincial plans together. Changes were made to the Migratory Bird Convention Act after consultations with the Provinces and Territories. The Committee continues to focus on aquatic and terrestrial invasive species including wild pig. They have a working group to advance invasive species work. The Canadian Wildlife Service is leading coordination on wildlife health. The Committee engaged on Chronic Wasting Disease

(CWD) work with veterinaries in Alberta and Saskatchewan to implement best management practices for CWD to stop spread. They are also support the Fur Institute of Canada's actions on international humane trapping standards.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, International Affairs Report

Anna Seidman

Although Anna is not new to the Committee, she introduced herself to the Committee for the first time at the Assistant Director of International Affairs for the USFWS. Her comments focused on their international grants programs, which have been suspended in some cases. They are working on improving program elements with new conditions to move forward with grant work that has been on hold since 2019. Another priority issue is permit modernization and rolling out an electronic permitting system. In May 2020 they worked with Migratory Birds, IT, and the office of Law Enforcement on a system for online form submission to allow more resources to go to conservation. The new system is coming soon. Deb Hahn and Buddy Baker noted the support from the state fish and wildlife agencies for an electronic permitting system.

Wildlife trade, use, and consumption and COVID/risk of future pandemics

Rick Jacobson

The global pandemic has had unprecedented social and economic impacts across the globe. Far reaching actions need to be taken to reduce our risk of a future pandemic. However, the virus's suspected links with a Chinese 'wet market' has led to calls to ban wet markets and restrict or end the trade, use, and consumption of wildlife internationally and in the U.S. Congress. Therefore, AFWA believes that taking actions related to this issue is important. With input from members agencies, AFWA developed a position paper titled *Wildlife Conservation, Consumption, and Use in a Post-COVID-19 World*. In general, attendees felt the position paper was in line with the discussions they are having. There continue to be questions about how we implement the recommendations. The Committee considered that in the future we may need a small group of people to add details on the how. The position paper was adopted at the 2020 AFWA Business meeting on September 15, 2020 and is available [here](#).

Key things to consider are that although COVID-19 likely originated from markets there are many avenues that future pandemics could take. We need to make sure we are considering all the biodiversity related issues including land use change and habitat destruction, domestic animal husbandry, human population density, travel, and human wildlife contact. There are also other policy discussions and frameworks that have relevance to this topic including climate change, CBD's discussions around wild bush meat, and indigenous rights. There are questions around what the roll of current treaties in reducing the risk of future pandemics. For example, should CITES be evolved to address wildlife health issues?

Additional recommendations from Committee members included engaging in discussions around multiple pieces of legislation in the U.S. Congress, providing information to policy makers to ensure any interventions are based on science, keeping abreast of the discussions that UNEP and the World Health Organization are having to address this issue in a nuanced way. Critical will be for our community to offer actions and not wait to have them decided for us.

Panel Discussion: What are the priority issues at upcoming meetings (IUCN WCC, CITES Animals/Standing Committees, CBD CoP)?

Travis Ripley

Panelists: Jim deVos, Arizona Game and Fish Department; Basile VanHavre, Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS); Anna Seidman: USFWS; Carolina Caceres, CWS; and Tamás Marghescu, International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation (CIC).

Potential Outcomes:

1. Themes/issues that rise to the surface that may be ripe for the IR Committee to address.
2. Understand issues where there is not agreement.
3. Beneficial connections and information shared.

Question for Panelists:

1. What are the issues (maybe 5-7) your agency/organization is going to engage on at one or all the following: IUCN WCC, CITES Animals/Standing Committees, and CBD CoP?
2. Are there any issues where AFWA through the IR Committee can help facilitate collaboration or take some other step to advance?

The panelist identified the following priority issues and actions.

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

Trophy Hunting through Legislation at the state, provincial, and territorial level

Rick Jacobson

The Committee ran out of time to discuss this issue. Rick briefly introduced it saying that entities are approaching U.S. state legislators to ban possession and trade of certain animal parts. He posed question whether the IRC should take on this issue in some way and whether we should craft language regarding trophy hunting at the state/local level. A few Committee members have expressed interest in working on this.

Action Items / Resolutions / Motions

THREATS AND EMERGING ISSUES IDENTIFIED:

N/A

NEW OPPORTUNITIES IDENTIFIED:

Submitted by Rick Jacobson and Travis Ripley

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