AMPHIBIAN & REPTILE CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Chair: David Golden (NJ)
Vice-Chair: Thomas Eason, PhD (FL)

Date: September 21, 2022
Time: 8am-11:00 am CDT

https://www.fishwildlife.org/afwa-acts/afwa-committees/amphibian-reptile-committee

Agenda

8:00 am **Call to Order/Introductions/ Review of Agenda**
David Golden, New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife

8:10 **Recovering America's Wildlife Act (RAWA) Updates**
Sean Saville, Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
ssaville@fishwildlife.org

Sean Saville provided updates on RAWA including the possibility that it could be included in the continuing resolution slated for the following week. If it does not make it into the continuing resolution, then there are several additional vehicles for the bill. Overall, support is strong and things are looking optimistic.

8:15 **Amphibian and Reptile Conservancy (ARC) ; in-person**
JJ Apodaca, PhD, ARC Executive Director
JJ@arcprotects.org

Dr. JJ Apodaca is the Executive Director of the Amphibian and Reptile Conservancy (ARC). His research focuses on prioritizing areas important to the conservation of herpetofauna at both the macro and micro scales.

ARC is working on expanding the Priority Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Area (PARCA) network across the United States. Currently, half of the states are completed, and there is opportunity to engage additional states in this process. PARCAs integrate with SWAPs and focus on landscape scale conservation of herpetofaunal species. ARC is also working on the ground in some of the PARCAs, conducting projects such as eDNA metabarcoding, habitat restorations, and more. They launched a new website and interactive PARCA map in the spring.

8:30 **Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (PARC)**
Michelle Christman, PARC Federal Agencies Coordinator
michelle_christman@fws.gov

Michelle Christman is with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and is the Federal Agencies Coordinator for Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (PARC).

***PARC** is working on multiple education opportunities such as Amphibian Week, Wild Turtle Week, and a new campaign on Every Turtle Counts with engagement from influencers like Jeff Corwin. They hope states will help to promote these coordinated messages on herp conservation. PARC also selected Dave Collins with the Association of Zoos and Aquariums' Saving Animals from Extinction (AZA SAFE) American Turtles Program as the 2021 Alison Haskell award winner.*

In terms of species conservation, in the last year, PARC published the Timber Rattlesnake Conservation Action Plan (TRCAP), multiple herp disease factsheets, hosted two herp disease webinars, and continued to monitor the herp disease alert systems (HDAS). The Collaborative to Combat the Illegal Trade in Turtles (CCITT) hosted a workshop for the Northeast in February, DoD PARC has published 14 species profile videos and multiple best management plan documents, and BLM has published a Strategic Plan for Amphibian and Reptile Conservation.

8:45 **BSAL Working Group Update**
Kerry Wixted, Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
kwixted@fishwildlife.org

Kerry Wixted is the Amphibian, Reptile, and Invasive Species Program Manager for the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.

*On a One Health note, the **Bsal Working Group** has met twice since its inception last September. They are working on creating a survey for state wildlife vets and managers to understand needs to address Bsal if it were to hit North America. The North American Bsal Task Force in conjunction with the Working Group will be hosting a public webinar in November/December this year. We also will be reaching out with information on the herp disease alert system to ensure we have the best contacts for alerts.*

8:55 **Texas Parks and Wildlife Update**
Paul Crump, PhD, State Herpetologist
paul.crump@tpwd.texas.gov

Dr. Paul Crump has been a reptile and amphibian conservation biologist in the Nongame and Rare Species Program at Texas Parks and Wildlife since early 2018. There, he focuses on the conservation of high priority herp SGCNs and on developing habitat restoration initiatives on private lands.

Paul gave an overview of herp conservation in Texas, breaking down how most of the funding (~90%) spent in Texas goes towards research instead of conservation. Based on Species Status Assessments, TXPWD looked at information gaps as barriers to action for different SGCN herp species in the state, and they found that enough information was available for well-monitored conservation actions to proceed for 33 species, but only 10 species had conservation actions occurring. One issue might be that conservation is harder to implement than research. Since TX has a lot of private land, they need more funding for incentives and support for conservation initiatives. Overall, they would need an extra $10-15 million to remove all of the information barriers, but the question remains: do we need to know "everything about everything in order to do anything for something?"

9:15 **CITES update; in-person**

Carolyn Caldwell, MAFWA CITES Technical Work Group Representative
MAFWACITES@gmail.com

Carolyn Caldwell has served as the MAFWA's CITES Technical Work Group Representative since 2003. She worked 31 years at the DNR and served her last 20 as Ohio's Wildlife Diversity & Endangered Species Administrator. Favorite herps include the blue-spotted salamander, wood frog, spotted turtle, and smooth greensnake.

*The next **CITES** Conference of the Parties (CoP 19) will occur in November 2022, and committee members were updated on this process and species proposed for listing. AFWA submitted a comment letter in May 2022 to the USFWS on the 24 species proposed for listing. Committee members assisted with providing data for AFWA's positions on many of the reptile species proposed for listing changes.*

AFWA's Position by Species

- *Mud turtles: support Appendix II listing*
- *Musk turtles: support Appendix II listing*
- *Map turtles: do not support Appendix II for G. pseudogeographic or G. ouachitensis; support Appendix II for G. barbouri, ernsti, gibbonsi, and oculifera.*
- *Pond turtles (Actinemys): do not support Appendix II listing/do not object to Appendix III*
- *Painted (Chrysemys), Chicken (Deirochelys), Slider (Trachemys) and Cooters (Pseudemys): do not support Appendix II listing/do not object to Appendix III*
- *Alligator and common snapping turtle: do not support Appendix II listing*
- *Softshell turtles: do not support Appendix II listing*
- *Desert horned lizard: do not support Appendix II listing*
- *Timber rattlesnake: do not support Appendix II listing*

U.S. Proposals to Amend the CITES Appendices are available on the CITES website: https://cites.org/eng/cop/19/amendment-proposals/provisional

9:30 **Break**

9:40 **Illegal Trade in Turtles (CCITT) Update & Discussion**
Scott Buchanan, PhD, Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management
scott.buchanan@dem.ri.gov

Dr. Scott Buchanan has been the herpetologist with the Rhode Island Division of Fish & Wildlife since 2018. He is a co-founder and co-chair of the Collaborative to Combat the Illegal Trade in Turtles and recently received the Northeast PARC Award for Excellence in Herpetofaunal Conservation.

Scott Buchanan from Rhode Island provided an update on the illegal trade in North American turtles and the Collaborative to Combat the Illegal Trade in Turtles (CCITT). This ongoing problem threatens many turtle species, and CCITT uses a multifaceted approach to address this issue by engaging agency biologists and law enforcement, researchers, and others. In the past year, CCITT has held a virtual workshop for the Northeast, is working on messaging around #EveryTurtleCounts, and will have an article published in the Oct/Nov issue of The Wildlife Professional. We hope more states will support in this effort with the Committee and CCITT to continue the current momentum on this conservation crisis by having additional staff join the CCITT.

9:55 **Resolution in Support of Enhancing Regulatory, Collaborative, and Strategic Capacity to Combat the Illegal Trade in Turtles**
Gordon Batcheller, Administrator of the Legal Strategies Advisory Committee, "Think Tank" gordon.batcheller@gmail.com

Gordon provided background on how and why the resolution came about as well as how the Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Committee, Legal, and Law Enforcement Committees all worked on the language and asks.

10:05 **Committee Work Plan Discussion**
David Golden, New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife

The committee reviewed the 2021-2022 workplan objectives and established a draft workplan for 2022-2023.

Review of 2021-2022 Objectives:

1.Lead formation of a Bsal working group to coordinate with the federal Bsal taskforce. The working group will explore options for increasing Bsal awareness and developing an early detection protocol using the Bsal strategic plan. In progress.

2. Plan regional workshops to address illegal turtle trade. Work in conjunction with legal and law enforcement committees to address illegal turtle trade with the goal of drafting a resolution for committees to review and revise at the North American conference. Partially completed/ In progress.

3. Work with CITES Technical Work Group to provide amphibian and reptile information as needed. Completed.

4. Coordinate with the PARC Disease Task Team to provide learning opportunities for committee members on herpetological diseases. Partially completed/ In progress.

5. Establish quarterly (or as needed) ARCC member calls. Partially completed/ In progress.

10:20 **Partner and State Roundtable**
Federal, state, and other partner updates

SC- working on changing regulations and authority in regard to herp collection as well as outreach to state law enforcement. So far, they have received enthusiastic and positive feedback.

NJ- coordinating on where to focus attentions and increasing resources to use. This week is the NJ Transportation and Wildlife Conference.

FL- reviewing prohibition on captive breeding of terrapins at commissioner meeting.

NE- working with NE DOT on massasauga and timber rattlesnakes and roads. Capturing and tagging to look at road crossings and how to decrease road impacts. This is being funded by DOT.

MO- released 1,000th head-started hellbender. Working on the SSA process for chicken and Blanding's turtles. They have strong support from agents and train at every agent class on identification, venomous snake handling, etc.

10:55 **Wrap-up Discussion**

11:00 am **Adjourn**