

# THE 78TH MEETING OF THE CITES STANDING COMMITTEE



ASSOCIATION *of*  
FISH & WILDLIFE  
AGENCIES

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2025

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REPORT



# INTRODUCTION

Buddy Baker, (SEAFWA), and Gordon Batcheller (NEAFWA) represented the state fish and wildlife agencies at the 78th meeting of the CITES Standing Committee 3-8 February 2025 in Geneva, Switzerland. Additionally, Toni Kerns (Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission), and Deirdre Gilbert (Maine Department of Marine Resources) also attended..

## SUMMARY OVERVIEW

The Standing Committee was chaired by Rosemarie Gnam (United States) who kept the meeting on track, while navigating a packed agenda. The agenda for CITES meetings continues to grow, partly due to mission drift. As a result, an extra day was added to this year's Standing Committee meeting.





# KEY OUTCOMES

## 1

The Team worked to strengthen relationships with sustainable use partners and build connections with Country delegates.

## 2

The direction that the Parties may take with eels remains unclear. A draft (and sensible) genus wide resolution on *Anguilla spp.* was not approved by the Standing Committee but instead will be taken up at the Conference of the Parties (CoP) in fall 2025. The states supported a strong resolution as an alternative to a possible genus-wide *Anguilla* listing proposal which would include American eel. The postponement of the decision increases the possibility of a listing proposal at the CoP.

## DISCUSSION ITEMS/OUTCOMES

### Building Capacity

Important discussions were held about the budget and staffing of the CITES Secretariat in Geneva. These are the professional who provide administrative support and policy coordination for the Parties. No decisions were reached, and budget issues will be taken up again at the CoP in fall 2025.

### Update on CoP20

The next CoP is being hosted by Uzbekistan, November 24-December 5, 2025. An Uzbek official made a “Welcome to Uzbekistan” presentation. Later, it was also announced by Panama that they have submitted a proposal to the Secretariat to once again host a CoP, in 2028. CoP19 was also held in Panama.

### U.S. Government Delegation

Due to travel restrictions, federal attendance was about one-half of normal for these meetings. Nevertheless, representatives of the U.S. Scientific and Management Authorities were there, along with the USFWS Office of Law Enforcement and State Department personnel. On most substantive issues, the U.S. made a statement that “The U.S. is unable to take a position due to the change in Administration.” The U.S. delegation performed well under difficult circumstances.

### **Eels (*Anguilla spp.*)**

The Team is closely following and engaged in the eel discussions. The Team is a member of the Standing Committee Eel Working Group that is considering the development of a CITES *Anguilla spp.* Resolution. With the CoP in 2025, there are also discussions about

whether American eel should be listed in CITES. The Team is in close coordination with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) and individual states as needed to ensure the states have a voice in these discussions.



The American eel. Via [Flickr](#).

ASMFC's and Maine's attendance was important and helpful. This enabled them to see firsthand how the Parties consider complicated issues such as the conservation of eels worldwide. We held meetings with the Chairman of the IUCN eel specialist group, and with the Secretary General of CITES to discuss the implications for an Appendix II listing of either American eel, or the entire genus. We also worked to advance our position with members of other delegations, including China and Canada.

Following discussion of the draft resolution, the Chair formed a drafting working group who was tasked to seek consensus on key elements of the resolution. After a day of work, they reported back that they were unable to reach consensus.

### **Zoonotic Diseases**

A work group continues to work on a resolution defining the role of CITES in managing the spread of zoonotic diseases. There is considerable division over whether this issue is beyond the mandate of the treaty.

### **Regulation of Fungi**

There was a brief but inconclusive discussion about incorporating various species of fungi into the CITES portfolio. The Parties previously determined that fungi could be included, but the mechanism for doing so has not been determined.

### **Other Issues**

The Standing Committee continues to address other important issues including treaty compliance, significant trade review, rules of procedure and the role of indigenous people and rural communities in the decisions of CITES.



# ADDITIONAL MEETINGS, DISCUSSIONS, AND SIDE EVENTS OF NOTE

## **Reception Sponsored by Sustainable Use Organizations**

The Team was invited to a reception hosted off-site by several non-governmental organizations (NGO) that support wise and sustainable use of natural resources, including Safari Club International (SCI), and International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation (CIC). This reception was well attended, and included members of several important delegations (e.g., China, Canada, and several African countries). It was also attended by the current CITES Secretary General, along with prior Secretary Generals.



## **CITES Regulations of Musical Instruments**

The Team attended a side event that focused on the movement of musical instruments by professional musicians. Two CITES-regulated woods are considered essential for woodwind instruments (e.g., oboes made from “ebony” wood), and stringed instruments (i.e., bows made from “Pernambuco” wood from South America). Some animal products are also used in musical instruments (e.g., lizard skins are used for certain gripping surfaces). The organizations representing professional musicians and instrument makers seek relief from unnecessary CITES controls. The musical instrument group shares many of our issues, particularly those related to delays in international movement of non-critical products and samples.

## **Trophy Hunting**

The Team attended a side event that featured presentations from representatives of African countries (Zimbabwe, Namibia) on the importance of hunting to local economies. While those benefits are clear to many, it was also obvious that many non-governmental entities who do not value sustainable use of animals have a problem with hunting under those conditions. Nothing was resolved.





### **eDNA**

The Team attended a side meeting sponsored by WildTechDNA, who presented a product that enables rapid species identification using DNA analysis using a field-capable kit. The idea is to develop procedures for field personnel (e.g., at Ports of Inspection) to rapidly identify animal samples. Once fully developed this procedure could be an important tool for managing illegal trade in protected eel species shipped as American eels.

### **Simplified Permits**

The Team worked with a consortium of NGOs from the biomedical community and zoo associations to develop a strategy to advance a process of simplified permits or even exemptions for disease diagnosis or for conservation purposes. This would have great significance to our state black bear biologists who are having a difficult time getting timely permits to ship hair samples to Canada for genetic analysis. It could also assist with cross border translocations of Mexican wolves, queen conch, and Sonoran pronghorn.

