

International Relations Committee

Meeting Summary & Action Report • September 17, 2026

Meeting Date & Time: September 17, 2026 | 10:15 AM – 12:00 PM EDT
Chairs: Ryan Brown (Virginia DWR), U.S. Co-Chair • Stephen Casselman, Canadian Co-Chair

Committee Charge & 2026 Global Horizons

The International Relations Committee serves as AFWA’s vital sounding board, integrator, and policy developer on international conventions, multilateral agreements, and cross-border initiatives. The Committee actively advances Canadian and Mexican collaboration, cultivates partnerships throughout Central/South America and the Caribbean, and ensures U.S. and Canadian state, provincial, and territorial conservation interests are strongly defended. The 2026-2027 Draft Work Plan is available on the [Committee website](#).

2026 International Timeline:

Date	Treaty / Convention Body	Key Strategic Relevance
March 23 – 29, 2026	CMS CoP15	Americas Flyways Framework & Global Taking Initiative review
June 30 – July 3, 2026	SPAW Protocol (Scientific Body)	Wider Caribbean marine & coastal biodiversity protection
July 13 – 17, 2026	CITES 34th Animals Committee (AC34)	Review of Significant Trade, look-alike criteria, eel conservation
July 27 – Aug 1, 2026	CBD SBSTTA-28	Scientific assessment of Sustainable Wildlife Management
October 19 – 30, 2026	CBD CoP17	Global adoption of Voluntary Sustainable Wildlife Guidance
November 2 – 6, 2026	CITES 78th Standing Committee (SC78)	Policy, trade governance, compliance, and enforcement

One Health (Jason Sumners and Lorisa Smith (Missouri Department of Conservation))

- **Transition from Task Force to Standing Committee:** Following recommendations developed by the AFWA One Health Task Force, the Association formally chartered a One Health Committee. Its

mission is to collaborate across internal committees and external wildlife/public health sectors to elevate fish and wildlife health on landscapes within the One Health framework.

- **Pervasive Cross-Committee Mandate:** Wildlife health is an integrated discipline that underpins management, harvest, and ecosystem resilience. Director Sumners emphasized that the committee's mandate extends across all AFWA working bodies. They will introduce a resolution at the Business meeting for approval that will guide next steps.
- **Educational Video Rollout:** Director Sumners showcased an educational video created in partnership with Conservation Visions. The asset effectively conveys the interconnections between human well-being, wildlife health, and sound habitat stewardship. Broader public distribution plans are being established, with arrangements to share the video directly with the Canadian Wildlife Directors Committee.

Canadian Wildlife Directors Committee (CWDC) Report (Stephen Casselman (Canadian Co-Chair))

CWDC provides executive leadership, inter-jurisdictional coordination, and strategic direction across Canada's provinces and territories. Operating sub-committees focus on key conservation sectors: Furbearer Management, National Boreal Caribou, Endangered Wildlife Recovery (RENEW), Polar Bear Management, Wildlife Health, Moose Management, and Bison Management.

Core Priorities and Current Technical Dialogues:

- **National Policy & Sustainable Use:** Maintaining rigorous tracking and reporting on wildlife health, harvest frameworks, species recovery, and international trade.
- **Emerging Management Topics:** Big game remote sensing, biodiversity offsets, Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) transmission containment, landscape connectivity corridors, mitigating bird and bat mortality from wind power infrastructure, and addressing invasive species.

CITES Updates (CITES Technical Work Group (Buddy Baker, Gordon Batcheller, Carolyn Caldwell, Stewart Liley))

At the 34th Animals Committee (AC34) in Geneva, Other than Queen Conch, there were no U.S. or Canadian native species included in the RST process. Queen Conch was included for Nicaragua due to sharp trade increases, but reassuringly, no decisions made here will adversely impact management in Puerto Rico or the U.S. Virgin Islands, where take remains prohibited. Technical Work Group members joined two intersessional working groups, one notably including eel conservation. The Team held productive, side-margin alignment discussions with federal partners (the U.S., Canadian, and Japanese delegations), as well as the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC), and sustainable-use organizations. The complete technical report is available on the [AFWA website](#). An eel enforcement

side event with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission and Maine for the next Animals Committee is being considered for the next Animals Committee.

USFWS International Affairs Update (Bridgette Fahey (USFWS))

At the 34th Meeting of the Animals Committee (AC34) in July 2026, Dr. Thomas Leuteritz was nominated as the North America regional member for the intersessional period between CoP20 and CoP21, subsequently being elected Vice Chair of the Committee and selected to chair the intersessional working group on Ranching of Aquatic Species. Led by Deputy Assistant Secretaries Jenifer Chatfield (Department of the Interior) and Ruth Perry (Department of State), the U.S. delegation joined 12 intersessional working groups while advancing priorities centered on evidence-based decision-making, reduced administrative burdens, and the economic and conservation benefits of legal wildlife trade. The delegation pushed back against expanding the Committee's scope into unrelated mandates and cautioned that overly restrictive trade measures incentivize illegal markets. In addition, addressing CoP20's delayed listing of *Holothuria lessona*—one of seven CITES-listed sea cucumbers for which the U.S. serves as a range State—AC34 established key themes for upcoming background documents and technical workshops, focusing on species identification, harvest and export monitoring, traceability, and enforcement capacity.

At the 28th meeting of the Plants Committee (PC28) held July 20–23, 2026, in Geneva, Switzerland, two U.S. native species saw actions. The endangered, North and South Carolina-endemic mountain sweet pitcher plant (*Sarracenia rubra jonesii*) was selected for Periodic Review under Resolution Conf. 14.8 (Rev. CoP20), with U.S. review and analysis expected ahead of PC29 in 2027. Furthermore, despite providing Non-Detriment Findings for 2023–2025, the United States was voted into Phase 1 of the Review of Significant Trade (RST) for American ginseng (*Panax quinquefolius*) following a proposal by China. To manage legal exports and support sustainable harvest, the Service relies on its CITES Export Program (CEP) that currently encompasses approved state programs across 47 jurisdictions for furbearers, 22 for American ginseng, and 9 for American alligator.

IUCN World Conservation Congress (WCC) Resolutions, CBD, & CMS (Deb Hahn (AFWA) and Shane Mahoney (Conservation Visions))

The IUCN World Conservation Congress adopted over 140 resolutions. AFWA has organized these outcomes into strategic priority categories based on potential impacts to state-based wildlife management authorities.

Engagement Tier	Resolution / Motion	Description & Strategic Focus
High Priority / Direct Engagement	Res 65 & 81: Sustainable Use	Establishes a Task Force to formally review and update the IUCN Policy Statement on Sustainable Use; calls for science-based international management standards.
High Priority / Direct Engagement	Res 121: Subnational Category	Supports full IUCN voting membership for subnational agencies; California and Massachusetts have formally applied.

High Priority / Direct Engagement	Res 134: Direct Exploitation	Calls for identifying wild harvested species in need of new international listings under multilateral agreements.
Emerging Concepts	Res 91: Free Evolution	Urges recognizing ecosystems operating entirely without human intervention as a core conservation objective
Emerging Concepts	Res 113: Longevity Conservation	Evaluates impacts of harvesting older and larger individuals; challenges harvest structures based on age, size, and sex.
Emerging Concepts	Res 55: Ocean Intrinsic Value	Encourages legal frameworks acknowledging intrinsic ocean values in governance.
Follow with Interest	Res 6, 57, 107, 97, 98, 93	Regional 30x30 targets (Res 6); confiscated wildlife standards (Res 57); pet trade regulation (Res 107); One Health (Res 97/98); Indigenous knowledge (Res 93).

- **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD):** The Voluntary Global Guidance on Sustainable Wildlife Management successfully advanced out of SBSTTA-28 and is slated for formal adoption at CoP17 in October 2026. Brazil is a proponent advocating for a dedicated formal programme of work on sustainable use under the Convention.
- **Convention on Migratory Species (CMS):** Following CMS CoP15, the Committee will continue monitoring implementation of the Americas Flyways Framework and participate in next steps under the Global Initiative on the Taking of Migratory Species.
- Other topics were discussed such as the review of the EU seal ban, new IUCN member applications, and the One Health focus of the next CIC assembly.

Action Items & Next Steps

Focus Area	Action Detail
CITES Engagement	Coordinate with USFWS International Affairs, agencies, and partners leading into CITES SC78 (Nov 2–6, 2026). Actively participate in the intersessional working groups on eel conservation and trade.
IUCN Resolution Rollout	If needed, schedule an IR Committee virtual meeting once the Resolution 65 Task Force releases engagement instructions to coordinate state/territorial/provincial positions and engagement.
CBD CoP17 Tracking	Track adoption of the Voluntary Global Guidance on Sustainable Wildlife Management and Brazil's proposal for a sustainable use programme at CoP17 (Oct 19–30, 2026).

One Health Outreach	Collaborate with Conservation Visions and MDC on the distribution of the One Health video and share with the CWDC.
Future Committee Meeting	The next in-person meeting of the International Relations Committee is scheduled for March 2027.

Meeting Attendance

Committee Members Present	Partners & Guests
Ryan Brown (Virginia DWR, U.S. Co-Chair)	Bridgette Fahey (USFWS)
Stephen Casselman (Canadian Co-Chair)	Torin Miller (Sportsmen's Alliance Foundation)
Mike O'Brien (Fur Institute of Canada)	Zuzu Gadallah (CWS)
Gordon Batcheller (NEAFWA CITES Rep)	Lawrence Green (Botstiber Institute for Wildlife Fertility Control)
Stewart Liley (NMDGF, WAFWA CITES Rep)	Joe Crocker (Canadian Wildlife Service)
Jason Sumners (Missouri Dept. of Conservation)	Stephanie Boyles Griffin (Humane World for Animals)
Lorisa Smith (Missouri Dept. of Conservation)	Sarah Funck (FL Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission)
Will Dillman (South Carolina DNR)	Madeline Demaske (Safari Club International)
Shane Mahoney (Conservation Visions)	
Deb Hahn (AFWA Staff)	