

2024 MAFWA Committee Report on the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)

MEETINGS TIME & PLACE

(meetings attended by one or more CITES Technical Work Group Representative)

CITES 32nd Animal Committee, June 2023; Geneva, CH

113th AFWA Annual Meeting, September 2023; Calgary, Alberta

Joint State/Federal CITES Meeting; February 2024; Washington DC

89th North American Wildlife & Natural Resource Conference, March 2024; Grand Rapids, MI

Trilateral Committee for Wildlife and Ecosystems; April 2024; Sandiago, CA

Webinars/in-Person meetings between the USFWS/IA and State Agency staff, March, April, and May 2024;

CITES Interagency Coordination Committee, hosted quarterly by USFWS/IA; virtual

CITES Technical Work Group regularly conducts business via phone and virtual platforms

CITES TECHNICAL WORK GROUP REPRESENTATIVES

Buddy Baker- SEAFWA (SEAFWA CITES Technical Work Group Representative)

Gordon Batcheller- NEAFWA (Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife)

Carolyn Caldwell- MAFWA (Ohio Division of Wildlife)

Stewart Liley- WAFWA (New Mexico Department of Game and Fish)

Deborah Hahn- AFWA (Missouri Department of Conservation)

Ryan Brown- U.S. CITES Delegate Representing the State Fish & Wildlife Agencies and International Relations Committee Co-Chair (Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources)

CITES OVERVIEW

The Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES) is an international trade agreement among 183 countries and the European Union to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten species' survival. CITES works by subjecting international trade in specimens of selected species to certain controls. These require that all imports, exports, re-exports, and introductions from the sea of species covered by CITES have to be authorized. The species covered by CITES are listed in three Appendices, according to the degree of protection they need. Appendix I includes species threatened with extinction. Trade in specimens of these species is only permitted in exceptional circumstances. Appendix II includes species not necessarily threatened with extinction, but for whom trade must be controlled in order to avoid utilization incompatible with their survival. Appendix III contains species that are protected in at least one country, which has asked other CITES countries for assistance in documenting trade.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service International Affairs (USFWS/IA), administers CITES for the United States. The USFWS/IA solicits input and feedback on issues of importance from the state fish and wildlife agencies through the CITES Technical Work Group of the International Relations Committee of AFWA. The Technical Work Group consists of one

representative from each of the four regional associations who work on behalf of states in concert with the USFWS/IA on CITES matters. This state-federal partnership has been effectively working since 1994.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OVERVIEW

CITES updates presented in greater detail include: 1) Furbearer Tag Distribution Process; 2) Federal Register Notice Soliciting Public Input for the Next CITES Conference of the Parties in 2025; 3) CITES Federal/State Coordination Procedure Update Nearing Completion; 4) CITES and LEMIS Turtle Trade Data Analysis: Pilot Assessment; 5) Information Sharing to Enhance CITES Implementation; 6) Law Enforcement Management Information System (LEMIS) Trade Data; and 7) Gordon Batcheller, New NEAFWA CITES Technical Work Group Representative.

DIRECTOR ACTION ITEM

No action items at this time.

DIRECTOR INFORMATION ITEMS

Furbearer Tag Distribution Process

Efforts continue with the USFWS/IA to streamline the furbearer tag distribution process. This year a standardized and simplified furbearer export tag order form, created by USFWS/IA, was distributed by AFWA to the States. Please note that having the year printed on the tags is not a federal requirement. We urge States to modify regulatory language, if need be, to eliminate a year designation so excess tags left over from previous years can be used in future years.

Federal Register Notice Soliciting Public Input for the Next CITES Conference of the Parties in 2025

The next CITES Conference of the Parties (CoP) will be in late 2025. At the CoP, member countries review and debate which species in international trade should be regulated as well as other aspects of CITES implementation. Developing species proposals, resolutions, decisions, and agenda items for consideration at the CoP begins in the U.S. with a request for public input. The first of a series of Federal Register notices was published in March, 2024. Later this year the USFWS/IA will announce the species proposals and documents related to resolutions, decisions, and agenda items that the U.S. is tentatively considering submitting for the CoP. Our Team is pushing to be included in discussions surrounding potential species proposals as early in the process as possible to minimize last minute requests for data and input from the States. We will share information as more details become available. Keep in mind that a significant number of the species the USFWS/IA will consider for amendments to the Appendices will fall under the heading of “Undecided” until very late in the process.

CITES Federal/State Coordination Procedure Update Nearing Completion

Since the inception of the CITES treaty, the state fish and wildlife agencies and AFWA have strived to collaborate with the USFWS/IA on its implementation. While the USFWS/IA is the lead for implementation of CITES in the United States, state wildlife agencies are partners

in CITES implementation in the U.S. because of their role and authority in fisheries and wildlife management at the State level. To ensure a continued effective partnership, an update to the Federal/State Coordination Procedure, first drafted in 1997 and revised in 2014, was initiated in 2023. Periodically reviewing and updating this document is important especially with significant personnel changes within the USFWS who may not be as familiar with the role of the States in CITES. A more robust version of the procedure is expected to be formalized in the near future.

CITES and LEMIS Turtle Trade Data Analysis: Pilot Assessment

A contract was executed in March with the United Nations Environment Program World Conservation Monitoring Center (WCMC) to conduct an analysis of international trade in North American turtles. WCMC is an independent CITES data analysis service respected within the CITES community as a non-biased service. Were this data to be analyzed by the States, the U.S. government or an NGO, the results would inherently be challenged as biased.

The purpose of this project is to conduct a pilot assessment of trade using U.S. turtle trade data. Trade data analysis is an important tool when evaluating the merits of new species listing proposals. At the last CoP (November 2022), numerous U.S. native turtles were listed in CITES and we believe more will be proposed at future CoPs. Therefore, having an international trade status report on all U.S. turtle species can help inform CITES decisions and how best to conduct future trade assessments. The report is expected to be completed in late July.

Information Sharing to Enhance CITES Implementation

The USFWS/IA CITES Export Program was created to streamline permit application processing and makes annual programmatic legal acquisition findings and non-detriment findings for certain native CITES-listed species from prior approved state programs.

We assisted the USFWS/IA by facilitating three webinars (alligators, furbearers, and ginseng) between state and federal agency personnel in March and April. We also coordinated in-person presentations by USFWS/IA staff at the meetings of the alligator working group (April) and the annual furbearer biologists (May). The webinars and in-person meetings provided an opportunity for state staff to learn more about the CITES Export Program and ask questions of the federal staff leads.

Law Enforcement Management Information System (LEMIS) Trade Data

We are working with the USFWS Office of Law Enforcement to get Law Enforcement Management Information System (LEMIS) trade data derived from legally mandated reports to the USFWS. We are specifically interested in the export volume of live specimens and products of native fish and wildlife state trust species. Having access to LEMIS trade data affords the Technical Work Group a better understanding of the trends in international trade of native species. The data will be used to evaluate the merits of proposals to amend the CITES Appendices for U.S. native species and to provide meaningful and timely input to the USFWS/IA in advance of decision-making deadlines. The trade data may also provide insight to the export of native species that cannot be legally collected (for

commercial purposes) from the wild but have trade volumes that may warrant further investigation by the states.

Gordon Batcheller, New NEAFWA CITES Technical Work Group Representative

Gordon Batcheller, Executive Secretary for the NEAFWA, is the new CITES Technical Work Group Representative for the northeast states. Many of you know Gordon who worked for the New York State Bureau of Wildlife for 35 years and since retiring in 2015 has served as the NEAFWA Executive Secretary. Mr. Batcheller replaces Dr. Scott Buchanan who accepted a position with the USFWS/IA. Gordon has fully immersed himself in the activities of our Work Group and we are pleased to have him onboard.

TIME & PLACE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be the CITES 33rd Animals Committee, July 12-19, 2024; Geneva, Switzerland.

Respectfully submitted May 24, 2024

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