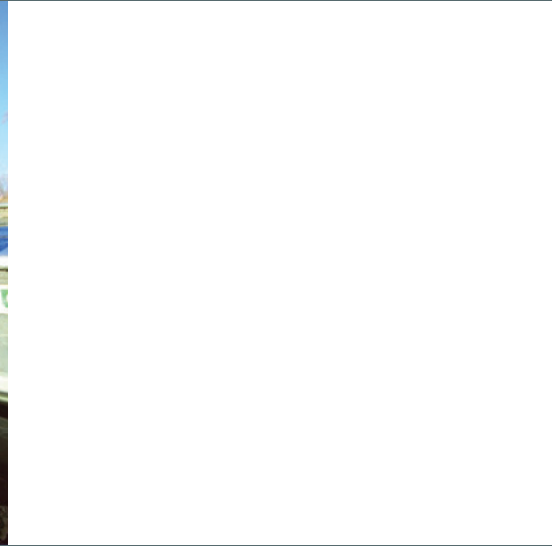


CITES TECHNICAL WORK GROUP — *Representing your state*





The United States government, acting through the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS), is a signatory to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) Treaty which entered into force in 1975. The Treaty and its implementation directly impact state fish & wildlife agencies. Because this is a treaty, state fish & wildlife agencies do not have direct negotiation powers or voting authority.

CITES was an effort to ensure that international trade in wild animals and plants was sustainable and did not result in exploitation. International wildlife trade is estimated to be worth billions of dollars annually. Trade is diverse, ranging from live animals to a wide array of products derived from them including food products, fur and leather goods, tourist curios, and medicine. Some of the species which are listed in the CITES Appendices are abundant game species in the United States, including bobcats, river otters, black bears, sturgeon and paddlefish.



Since the United States is a signatory to CITES, state fish and wildlife agencies are bound by the terms of the treaty. This can impact the ability of state fish and wildlife agencies to manage fish and wildlife if harvested species are in international trade. State fish and wildlife agencies needed a mechanism to voice state agency perspectives on resource needs to the U.S. federal government especially when they disagreed with the federal position. In order to effectively provide input into CITES, the state agencies must participate on a regular basis in the decision meetings of the federal government and attend CITES meetings, which are typically outside of the United States.

It is not feasible or practical for all 50 state fish and wildlife agencies to participate. Therefore, the approach using regional state association representatives was initiated in 1992 and has proven to be both effective and efficient. The CITES Technical Work Group is composed of one representative from each of the Regional Associations. The group functions under the leadership of the Chair of the Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) International Relations Committee and works very closely with the AFWA International Relations Director.

THE CITES TECHNICAL WORK GROUP IS COMPRISED OF ONE REPRESENTATIVE FROM EACH OF THE REGIONAL ASSOCIATIONS.



**WHY IS IT
CRITICAL THAT
THE STATES
BE ACTIVE
PARTICIPANTS
IN CITES?**



The CITES Treaty is complex and includes numerous Resolutions and Decisions.

CITES Conference of the Parties (CoP) considers problems of implementation of the Treaty and its effectiveness. The results of its deliberations are in the form of recommendations that are either in Resolutions or in Decisions. The Resolutions are generally intended to provide long-standing guidance. The Decisions, however are of a different nature. Typically they contain instructions to a specific committee or to the Secretariat. This means that they are to be implemented, often by a specified time, and then become out of date.

Many of the 180 countries that are member parties to the CITES Treaty do not support sustainable use regardless of the species population status. Also, over the past decade participation by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) "Observers" to CITES has greatly increased especially protectionist/ no use organizations.

The protectionist groups are well organized, and have significant resources and funds to influence countries' decisions and Treaty outcomes. These NGOs should be familiar to state fish & wildlife agencies as they include International Fund for Animal Welfare, The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) & Humane Society International (HSI), Species Survival Network, Natural Resource Defense Council, Animal Welfare Institute, and Greenpeace. For this reason, it is important to have

state fish & wildlife agencies represented to advocate for sustainable use.

Without continuous monitoring and involvement in CITES, management authority of species can fall under federal regulation through CITES Appendices listings and Treaty implementation requirements within the U.S.

Examples include look-alike species such as the bobcats and river otter, non-detriment finding reporting requirements, quotas and harvest restrictions on sturgeons and paddlefish, and oversight by the USFWS which result in added tracking & tagging requirements for international trade that must be implemented by the state fish and wildlife agencies.

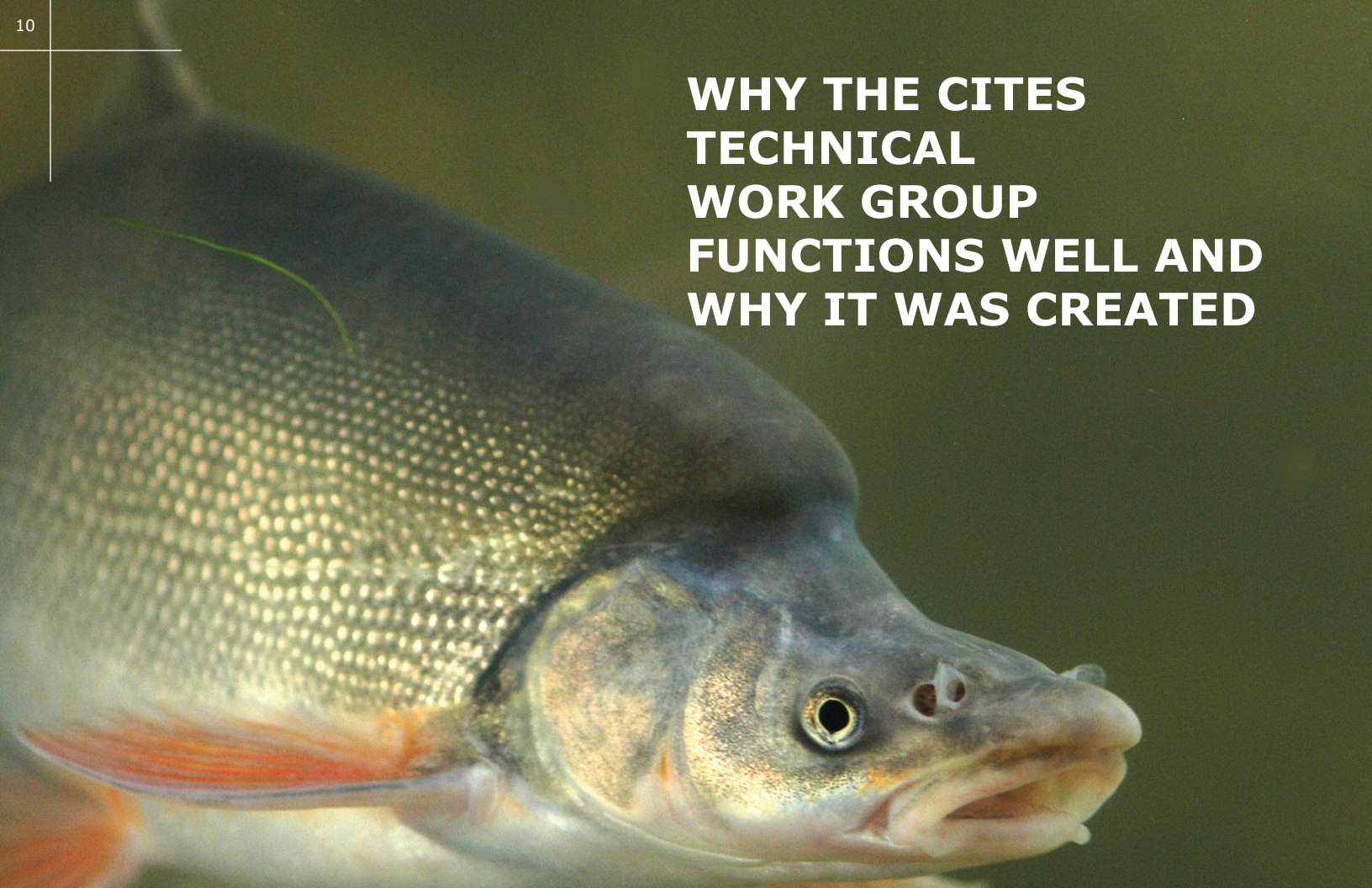
The United States participates in many international conventions and protocols that impact fish and wildlife management.

When the United States makes a commitment internationally, they commit the states. It is critical that the states be active participants in CITES where our Federal partners are making binding commitment on the states. These international agreements can impact the way state fish and wildlife agencies manage their resident fish and wildlife and what actions they may take when there is a shared responsibility between the states and the federal government for certain species.

In 1983, recognizing this need for states' participation, language was added to the Code of Federal Regulations to ensure the states were involved in these processes: 43CFR § 24.5 International agreements.



PROTECTIONIST GROUPS ARE VERY WELL ORGANIZED, AND PROVIDE SIGNIFICANT RESOURCES AND FUNDS TO INFLUENCE COUNTRIES' DECISIONS AND TREATY OUTCOMES.

A close-up photograph of a fish, likely a trout or salmon, showing its head and scales. The fish is positioned on the left side of the frame, facing right. The scales are highly detailed, showing a fine, grid-like pattern with a metallic sheen. The fish's eye is prominent, and its mouth is slightly open. The background is a dark, muted green color.

**WHY THE CITES
TECHNICAL
WORK GROUP
FUNCTIONS WELL AND
WHY IT WAS CREATED**

It is not practical or feasible for each state fish and wildlife agency to actively engage in CITES.

In 1997, the USFWS and AFWA outlined a regional system of representation to ensure that all the states would have a voice in CITES and the USFWS would not be dealing individually with a large state contingent on international matters. This approach would enable representatives of the state fish and wildlife agencies (CITES Technical Work Group) and AFWA to fully participate in preparations of all materials for future CoPs; to participate in all the interagency CITES Coordination meetings; and to hold special sessions between USFWS staff and the CITES Technical Work Group representatives and the AFWA International Relations Director. The coordinated special sessions are most often

convened at the AFWA Annual Meeting, Regional Association meetings, the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference, and at other times as necessary. The USFWS intended this expanded procedure to achieve a line of communication that would be fully consistent with the government-to-government coordination approach that was envisioned in Section 204(b) of the Unfunded Mandates Act of 1995, Public Law 104.4. Furthermore, this solidified the appointment of the State Fish and Wildlife Agency Director – serving as the AFWA International Relations Committee Chair – as part of the United States delegation beginning at CoP11 (2000).

The CITES Technical Work Group provides continuity and is efficient.

Working as a team makes it easier to maintain expertise in both the issues and the process. It is also an asset in building and maintaining a rapport with the international community. For example, at CoP16 (2013), the United States proposed to list the polar bear in Appendix I effectively ending all international trade of this species. The U.S. proposal stated that while climate change is the main threat to the species, an Appendix I listing could contribute to protecting the species. In extensive discussions, parties expressed divergent views on whether the polar bear met the scientific and trade criteria for uplisting. Among supporters, the Russian Federation highlighted its concerns that legal international trade facilitates illegal trade and poaching of Russian sub-populations. In addition, interventions in support were given by the Natural Resources

Defense Council (on behalf of the International Fund for Animal Welfare and the Humane Society International) and the Center for Biological Diversity. Canada opposed the U.S. proposal, stating that the polar bear does not meet the criteria for an appendix transfer and that uplisting the species would put the integrity of the Convention at risk. A compelling intervention was presented by the Inuit representative about the livelihood of his people and the sustainable conservation mechanisms already in place for the polar bear. The CITES Technical Work Group developed and presented an intervention opposing the Appendix I listing because international trade, for which the CITES treaty is based, is not threatening the sustainability of the polar bear in the wild. The states believe that this proposal is in direct opposition to the North American Model of Sustained Use Management. The US proposal failed to reach the 2/3 vote necessary

for adoption. Feedback from participants indicated that the intervention provided by the CITES Technical Work Group was influential in the vote on the Appendix I listing proposal.

Strengthening statutory partnership with our Federal counterparts provides real value.

The CITES Technical Work Group provides biological expertise (directly or through species experts within the states) and can strengthen the US position internationally while assuring states' positions are made known.

During the 23rd Animals Committee in 2008, the Humane Society unsuccessfully attempted to have black bear, river otter, and sandhill crane included in significant trade review. With input from the CITES Technical Work Group concerning state wildlife agency management, population status assessment, and harvest regulations, the three species were dropped from consideration.



WHAT DOES THE CITES TECHNICAL WORK GROUP DO?

THE CITES TECHNICAL WORK GROUP PROMOTES STATE FISH & WILDLIFE AGENCIES' INTERESTS IN THE CITES PROCESS



- Develops a comprehensive understanding of CITES and how it works and the potential impacts to state fish & wildlife agencies
- Maintains expertise in both CITES issues and the process



- Ensures states' authority is defended
- Serves as a liaison between the states and the USFWS
- Engages in all aspects of CITES international negotiations and domestic implementation with the USFWS



Photo: Jesse Lee Varnado



- Actively monitors, reviews, and provides objective input on CITES
- Identifies and recommends ways to improve CITES and its implementation
- Informs and seeks input from the State Fish & Wildlife Agencies
- Is recognized as *“the representatives of the 50 state fish and wildlife Agencies that have statutory authority over resident wildlife and are the management authorities with respect to species conservation and sustainable management”* at CITES meetings



www.fishwildlife.org

