

CITES Technical Work Group Report



Report of the CITES Virtual 73rd Standing Committee (5 to 7 May 2021), the 31st Animals Committee Meeting and Joint Meeting with the 25th Plants Committee (31 May to 4 June 2021, and from 21 to 24 June 2021)

INTRODUCTION:

The CITES Technical Work Group (Team) represented the state fish and wildlife agencies and where applicable the Provinces and Territories at the virtual meetings of the 73rd Standing Committee, the 31st Animals Committee, and the Joint meeting with the 25th Plants Committee, and on numerous CITES working groups.

SUMMARY:

The Committees created working groups throughout 2020 and early 2021 to continue implementing the Convention while in-person meetings were not possible. Those working groups addressed the conservation and management of paddlefish, sharks, American ginseng, and corals. The Standing Committee, chaired by Carolina Caceres, discussed approximately 11 substantive agenda items with the most applicable item being implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on the implementation of the Convention. The Animals Committee and Joint meeting with the Plants Committee agendas included approximately 31 substantive items including but not limited to eels, coral, paddlefish, and turtle conservation; captive bred and ranched specimens; and the CITES Strategic Vision. The Animals Committee was chaired by Mathias Lörtscher (Switzerland).

Chair Lörtscher established 7 working groups. When the Animals Committee met jointly with the Plants Committee, they established 3 working groups. These were the first ever virtual CITES meetings and the most attended meetings of the Animal and Plants Committees. Between the Animals and Plants Committee meetings, there were over 600 delegates representing 86 CITES Parties (countries) and more than 250 representatives of over 100 observer organizations. The Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) were diverse from the Humane Society International to Wildlife Conservation Society to Safari Club International Foundation. Future CITES Committee meetings that provide in-person and virtual participation opportunities would be ideal. Conducting Committee meetings solely through a virtual format significantly reduces the Team's ability to maintain our highly visible presence, reduces opportunities to present positions/interventions, and hampers our ability to maintain and enhance strong working relationships with country representatives, the CITES Secretariat, and other sustainable use organizations. Where issues of importance to the state agencies and/or the Provinces and Territories were discussed at these Committee meetings, more details have been provided below.



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KEY OUTCOMES:

- **Zoonotic Diseases and Trade:** Along with 32 other Parties and 31 other observer organizations, the Team is a member of the working group on the role of CITES in reducing risk of future zoonotic disease emergence associated with international wildlife trade, which will conduct its work over the next 5 to 6 months.
- **Paddlefish:** The Team is a member of the Labelling System for Trade in Caviar Working Group. The Animals Committee endorsed the study on *Identification of species and hybrids, source and geographical origin of sturgeon and paddlefish (Acipenseriformes spp.) specimens and products in trade* and asked this working group to consider it in its deliberations. The study will be shared with paddlefish range states to determine if there are any issues or concerns.
- **Sharks:** The Team is a member of the Sharks and Rays Working Group, which will work over the coming months to consider legal acquisition and other issues.
- **American Ginseng:** The Team is a member of the Trade in Aromatic and Medicinal Plants Working Group as it relates to the conservation and management of American ginseng.
- **American Eel:** The Team was a member of the working group on eels. No decisions were agreed to that would impose new conservation or management requirements on the states or Provinces for American eel conservation, although a proposal to list the species in Appendix II is still a possibility for the 19th Conference of the Parties (CoP) in 2022.
- **Precious Corals:** The Team was a member of the Precious Coral Working Group. The working group recommendations specifically recognized the importance of science-based management for conservation and sustainable use and the need for better information on their conservation and sustainable use. No decisions were agreed to that would impose new conservation or management requirements on the states for coral conservation.
- **Species Listed in the Appendices:** The sub-species of the Aleutian Canada goose (*Branta canadensis leucopareia*) and the Short-tailed Albatross (*Phoebastria albatrus*) were included under CITES Appendix I in 1975. At CoP 19, the U.S. will submit a proposal to move the sub-species to Appendix II, which was supported by the states, because there is no known risk to the species from international trade. The U.S. will also submit a proposal to move the Short-tailed Albatross to Appendix II for the same reasons. The Animals Committee supported both recommendations.



- **Seahorses:** Prior to the Animals Committee meeting, the Team gathered management and conservation information from the states about seahorse (*Hippocampus spp.*) conservation and management. The responses were shared with the Animals Committee. NOAA is providing funding to support a study on seahorse trade. There may also be an expert workshop on the implementation and enforcement of CITES for international trade in seahorses.

CITES Technical Work Group:

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To learn more about the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, visit the CITES website at: <http://www.cites.org/>