

## International Relations Committee - Report

Meeting of March 21, 2023

Ryan Brown (Virginia), Co-chair

Christie Curley (Ontario), Co-Chair

Meeting convened from 10:00am to 12:00pm CT. There were 16 people in attendance.

Dates of upcoming meetings:

- Convention of International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) Animals Committee: June 19-23, 2023
- The Canada/Mexico/US *Trilateral Committee* for *Wildlife* and Ecosystem Conservation and Management (Virtual): June 27-30, 2023

**Committee Work Plan Review** (Deb Hahn): There were numerous actions that came out of the September Committee meeting. Here is an overview of the status of the actions.

- The Committee will update the AFWA position on the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) (completed). The updated GBF position was used to influence the negotiations.
- Develop and share key messages from the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) Sustainable Use Assessment (completed). See below
- The Committee recommended that AFWA not sign the Edinburgh Declaration (completed).
- The Committee identified Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) actions to implement before the next meeting in March 2023.
  - Include a DEI-related presentation on the next meeting agenda (completed). See below
  - Update the Charge to include DEI: “increase the diversity of voices informing discussions, positions, and products.” (ongoing)
  - Consider how we engage with more voices at the next Committee meeting. (ongoing) Without funding or a hybrid meeting we haven’t figured out a way to engage new voices that have a diverse set of backgrounds. However, we may have an opportunity at the September meeting to engage with First Nations representatives.
  - Communicate to AFWA that we encourage continued implementation of a hybrid meeting (completed).
  - Work with AFWA to develop power point guidance that ensures accessibility and inclusivity (ongoing).
  - Discuss with AFWA how we can make the meeting space more inclusive (ongoing). We haven’t found a way to address this with the seating arrangements.

**Understanding, Integrating, and Elevating the Importance of DEI in Conservation** (George Braxton):

George provided a presentation to help the Committee consider how to integrate DEI into the Committee work. Taking actions to promote Diversity, Equity and Inclusion is increasingly important to the sustainability and relevance of environmental conservation organizations, our habitats, and our economy. The US population is growing and changing. It is becoming more diverse. By 2043, over 50% of the US population will be comprised of minorities. We will also continue to see more diversity in the younger generations. The data shows that there is more gender and ethnic diversity in those graduating in the natural resources field. How do natural resource agencies who support and are engaged in conservation activities, become relevant to this growing and changing population without losing current participants and supporters? How do we get started? Be intentional and focus on

outcomes and not outputs. We must evolve to adapt and embrace a more diverse population. Listen to understand. Connect with those who are natural allies and have common interest. Learn more about other perspectives within conservation. Questions for the Committee:

- Why is this important to our mission?
- How inclusive are we today?
- What progress are we making?
- What have we done that has given us the best results?
- What should we stop doing?
- How is this going to support our relationships internally and externally?
- What help do we really need?
- What does success look like? (measures)

**Canadian Wildlife Directors Committee** (Christie Curley): The Canadian Wildlife Directors Committee (CWDC) is composed of the wildlife directors and agency leads representing the jurisdictions/agencies (13 Provinces and Territories and Environment and Climate Change Canada, Parks Canada Agency, and Fisheries and Oceans Canada) with responsibility for wildlife conservation in Canada. The CWDC continues to be involved in a governance transformation within the context of our working connection to the Ministers and Deputy Ministers Councils. Implementation of the governance changes, while endorsed, have been delayed due to emergence of other priorities (most notably, hosting of COP15 on Biodiversity in Montreal last December). CWDC, guided by the Ministers and Deputies, is currently developing the workplan to determine activities in 2023/2024. The workplan includes collaborative work to advance the Pan-Canadian Approach to Transforming Species at Risk Conservation in Canada - advance multi-species and ecosystem-based approaches to better coordinate conservation action planning and implementation for priority places and sectors (agriculture, urban, forestry), and advance initiatives towards collaborative conservation action planning for priority species. CWDC is also discussing ongoing and enhanced partnerships and collaboration as Canada launches into the development of a national biodiversity strategy to 2030 in response to the adoption of the Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework at COP15 and considering how to step down the targets for implementation at the provincial and territorial scale. One Health is a focus - they are looking at how they approach One Health within Canada but also with AFWA.

**CITES Technical Work Group Update** (Buddy Baker, Scott Buchanan, Carolyn Caldwell, Stewart Liley): Carolyn Caldwell presented on behalf of the CITES Technical Work Group (Team). The Team represented the state fish and wildlife agencies and where applicable the Provinces and Territories at the Conference of the Parties (CoP19). Ryan Brown was a member of the US Delegation to the CoP. It was the largest and most robust agenda of any CoP to date. It included 52 species listing proposals affecting 600 species. Changes to listings for US and Canadian species include the following. They approved the downlisting of the Aleutian cackling goose, the short-tailed albatross, and the Puerto Rican boa from Appendix I to Appendix II. Alligator and common snapping turtles, all map turtles, all mud turtles except for the two species already included in Appendix I, all musk turtles, all soft-shelled turtles (Apalone species), and desert horned lizard were listed in Appendix II. These listings came into effect on February 23rd. For more information about the new species listings and about the issues from the CoP in general, download the Technical Work Group [report](#). The Team is reaching out to the states to provide information about the listings including gathering state agency point of contacts. AFWA is hosting a webinar on March 28<sup>th</sup> on behalf of the USFWS. The USFWS will discuss the recent CITES reptile listings, their implementation, and what this means to the state fish and wildlife agencies. The webinar will also provide state fish and wildlife agencies an opportunity to ask questions of USFWS CITES staff. Additionally, the Team and the USFWS will meet in person on April 5<sup>th</sup>. The CITES Standing Committee is forming working groups on a variety of topics. The Team has put a name forward to sit

on the following working groups: Livelihoods, Labelling system for trade in caviar, Species at risk of extinction affected by international trade, Sharks and Rays, Role of CITES in reducing risk of future zoonotic disease emergence associated with international wildlife trade, and Rapid movement of wildlife diagnostic samples and of musical instruments. The next CITES meeting will be the Animals Committee meeting on June 19 to 24.

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, International Affairs Report** (Bridget Fahey): Bridget has been the Acting Director for International Affairs since January 1 following Bryan Arroyo's retirement at the end of the year. The job posting for the USFWS Assistant Director for International Affairs is posted on USAJobs through March 28th. COP19 resulted in success of 18 of the 20 US proposals which will result in a workload increase for CITES permitting to implement the new CITES species listings. Dr. Rosemarie Gnam is chairing the CITES Standing Committee through CITES COP20. The USFWS co-hosted a World Wildlife Day event with the CITES Secretariat on March 3<sup>rd</sup> to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of CITES in Washington DC. International Affairs staff are looking at how to implement the Big Cat Public Safety Act, which requires registration of big cats. They published a federal register notice on how to register cats -- we appreciate any assistance in getting the word out to big cat owners. The public comment on the African elephant 4(d) rule just closed. The multi-year plan on the FWS's planned workload for foreign species listings is posted [here](#).

**IPBES/CBD Sustainable Use Briefing Document** (Deb Hahn): The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) is an independent body established in 2012 to strengthen the science-policy interface for biodiversity and ecosystem services. The "Assessment Report on the Sustainable Use of Wild Species" and the "Summary for policymakers of the thematic assessment of the sustainable use of wild species" (report) were approved in July 2022. The Committee produced a briefing paper on how sustainable use is woven into the report and the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF). The report finds that about 50,000 wild species are used through fishing, gathering, logging and terrestrial animal harvesting globally. It states that the sustainable use of wild species is linked to well-being, income, culture, food, sustainable development, medicines and more. They recommend implementing policy instruments and tools that are "tailored to the social and ecological contexts of the use of wild species and support fairness, rights and equity." The report identifies seven key elements that could be used to "promote sustainable use and enhance the sustainability of the use of wild species in the future if they are scaled-up." Those include:

- inclusive and participatory decision-making;
- inclusion of multiple forms of knowledge and recognition of rights;
- equitable distribution of costs and benefits;
- policies tailored to local social and ecological context;
- monitoring of social and ecological conditions and practices;
- coordinated and aligned policies; and
- robust institutions, from customary to statutory.

Sustainable use is also integral to achieving the GBF. The Kunming- Montreal GBF was adopted in December 2022. It includes four goals and 23 targets for achievement by 2030. They are ambitious targets committing governments to address land conservation and protection, biodiversity loss, ecosystem connectivity, subsidies, sustainable use and more. Sustainable use is the basis for Goal B and Targets 5 and 9 and is indirectly incorporated into to other goals and targets (e.g., Targets 1, 10, 14, and 15). The briefing paper includes key messages from both the report and the GBF. These messages will be helpful in not only in the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the implementation of the GBF but also within CITES and IUCN. The Committee's strategy to help inform GBF implementation. That includes monitoring the process for and implementation of the GBF and

engage strategically; working with the CBD's Advisory Committee for Subnational Governments and engaging the US State department in areas they are informing GBF implementation through international instruments. In Canada, conversations about GBF implementation are underway. It is yet to be determined whether there is a role for the Committee in Canada.

**One Health** (Deb Hahn): AFWA finalized a [One Health White Paper](#). AFWA created a One Health Presidential Task Force to develop strategies to implement the white paper. One aspect they are considering is how to utilize the One Health Committee and International Relations Committee to identify and implement strategies for more effective and active engagement with the international community involved in One Health (e.g., those involved in the interplay of wildlife, public and ecosystem health). There are numerous international discussions and efforts around One Health, zoonotic diseases, and how they intersect with the work of CITES, CBD, IUCN etc. Some of those include the following.

- CITES: discussions about wildlife trade and reducing risk of zoonotic disease spillover.
- The GBF provides guidance on integrating biodiversity considerations into One Health approaches. The framework acknowledges the interlinkages between biodiversity and health and the three objectives of the Convention. One health and reducing the risk of zoonotic disease is incorporated into Target 5 on the use and trade of wild species.
- IUCN has a Wildlife Health Specialist Group and has produced several briefing documents on the topic. Within IUCN, a One Health approach will likely be considered sustainable use, trade, wildlife handling, conservation, protected lands management efforts. There is a current One Health IUCN motion (Promoting human, animal and environmental health, and preventing pandemics through the One Health approach and by addressing the drivers of biodiversity loss'). The motions calls on "governments to address the drivers (according to the latest science) causing significant risk of pathogen spillover, where relevant, including in: i) land-use change causing habitat fragmentation and degradation,..., and iv) unsafe wildlife trade and consumption;..."
- The US State department is involved in the negotiating an UN instrument to prevent the next pandemic.
- There is guidance from the World Organization for Animal health (WOAH), WHO, and other organizations.
- The International Alliance against Health Risks in Wildlife Trade is an inclusive and interdisciplinary platform aiming to reduce health risks from wildlife trade and consumption.

Some potential strategies that the Committee will discuss more include:

- being a conduit for information from CBD, CITES, IUCN etc. to the One Health Committee,
- facilitating engagement with the US State Department and One Health and International Relations leadership to discuss one health and our priorities.
- engage One Health experts when expertise is needed on actions and discussions in international conventions and initiatives.

### **Action Items / Resolutions / Motions**

- Participate in the upcoming CITES meetings.
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- Update the Charge to include DEI.
- Invite and welcome nontraditional voices at the September Committee meeting.

- Finalize power point guidance that ensures accessibility and inclusivity.

**OTHER ITEMS MENTIONED:** Glen Salmon works for Indiana University teaching international conservation courses. He raised concerns about increased poaching in Kruger National Park, South Africa. They have seen a large increase in poaching. This includes involvement of international crime syndicates and much more effective poaching and state of the art equipment. There is a need to find funding to support antipoaching actions. They are also supporting legalizing the sale of rhino horn stockpiles to fund antipoaching activities and conservation.

**NEW OPPORTUNITIES IDENTIFIED:**

Submitted by Ryan Brown and Christie Curley

Committee Member Attendees:

Christie Curley, Ontario Natural Resources and Forestry  
Ryan Brown, Virginia Department of Wildlife Conservation  
Carolyn Caldwell, MAFWA CITES Representative  
Bridget Fahey, USFWS  
Mike O'Brien, Fur Institute of Canada  
Mike Ielmini, U.S. Forest Service  
Will Dillman, South Carolina DNR  
Matt Eckert, Colorado Parks and Wildlife  
Jennifer Sheehan, Arkansas Game and Fish Commission  
Nicole Angeli, Virgin Islands Fish and Wildlife  
Paul Wagner, USGS-EMA

Non-Committee Members Attendees:

Beth Lebow, US Forest Service  
Mark Chase, USFWS  
Glen Salmon, Indiana University  
Rick Jacobson, USFWS  
George Braxton, Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources