



State Fish and Wildlife Agencies of the United States: **WHY AND HOW WE ENGAGE IN CITES**

The fish and wildlife agencies in the 50 states of the United States (U.S.) and their supporting regional and national organizations (Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and the Associations of Midwest, Northeast, Southeastern, and Western Fish and Wildlife Agencies) have participated in CITES since its inception. State fish and wildlife agencies share wildlife management responsibility with the federal government including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) who implements CITES in the U.S.

There are abundant wildlife populations in the U.S. and the opportunity to freely hunt, fish or enjoy them is largely due to the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation (Model). It is one of the world's most successful system of policies and laws to sustain fish and wildlife and their habitats through sound science and active management. The Model through law decreed that wildlife belongs to the people, not government, corporations, or individuals. It further directs how this natural resource is to be used and managed under sustainable guidelines for the betterment of wildlife and people.

Wildlife is considered to be held and managed by a state for the benefit of its citizens. Each state fish and wildlife agency enacts and enforces laws relating to migratory wildlife while they are within the borders of the state and also manages resident non-migratory wildlife such as deer, bobcats, and local fish. In many instances, conservation of wildlife involves cooperation/collaboration between state and federal wildlife agencies and non-governmental organizations.

State fish and wildlife agencies have a long and proud history of wildlife conservation. They employ dedicated professional fish and wildlife biologists, researchers, land managers, law enforcement, and education personnel. State fish and wildlife agencies collectively manage thousands of native species and hundreds of millions of acres of land and waters as fish and wildlife habitat that provides wildlife-related recreational opportunities for their citizens.

WHY?

State fish and wildlife agencies weigh in on CITES implementation because it impacts species they are responsible for managing. They collaborate with USFWS to provide input on species status, management, and international trade to help ensure that actions taken through CITES support the conservation of wildlife in the U.S.

STATE FISH AND WILDLIFE AGENCIES

50,000 employees

11,000 biologists

8,400 law enforcement personnel

190,000 volunteers

\$5.6 Billion USD (aggregated budget)

Total acreage managed — 465 million acres (188 million hectares) of land and 168 million acres (68 thousand hectares) of water **(an area four times the size of Botswana or France.)**

STATE FISH AND WILDLIFE AGENCIES PARTICIPATE IN ALL ASPECTS OF CITES.

Rather than participating independently in CITES, state fish and wildlife agencies opted to be represented by a five person team. Each of the four regional associations have a representative. The International Relations Director of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies is the fifth representative. Although they represent state governments across the U.S., the five organization representatives participate in CITES meetings as national and international non-governmental organizations and, at times, as a member of the U.S. delegation to the Standing Committee and the Conference of the Parties. Both participation and representation at CITES forums and collaboration with the USFWS are critical roles for the state fish and wildlife agencies. International trade in U.S. native species and implementation of CITES for species listed in the Appendices can impact the state fish and wildlife agencies ability to manage and conserve species. Being on the front lines of conservation, the state fish and wildlife agencies need to ensure that as many management and policy tools are available to them as possible. CITES can be one of those tools.



CONSERVATION IMPLEMENTATION

NORTH AMERICAN WATERFOWL CONSERVATION

More than a quarter century ago, waterfowl populations in North America languished at historic lows. Signed in 1986 by the United States and Canada and in 1994 by Mexico, the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (Plan) was the foundational document to restore waterfowl populations. Although international in scope, its success depends on regional partnerships called migratory bird joint ventures, comprising federal, state, provincial, tribal, and local governments; businesses; conservation organizations; and individuals. The Plan Committee consists of members, from all three countries. Of the six U.S. members four are state fish and wildlife agency personnel. State fish and wildlife agencies also participate in the migratory bird joint ventures, implement habitat restoration, and help develop waterfowl harvest regulations. Accompanying the Plan is the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA). Financial support from NAWCA helps to restore and protect wetland habitat. Since 1986, state fish and wildlife agencies have contributed over \$73 million of non-federal matching monies to NAWCA projects in Canada.

RIVER OTTER (*LONTRA CANADENSIS*) CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT

River otter populations experienced severe declines by 1900. Today river otter populations in the U.S. are expanding throughout their range through a combination of improvements in regulated trapping, wetland restoration, and reintroduction by state fish and wildlife agencies. State fish and wildlife

agencies that allow harvest regulate it to ensure it is sustainable. Regulations vary but restrict harvest season length, restrict harvest method, establish harvest quotas, and require reporting. State fish and wildlife agencies also monitor river otter populations and adjust harvest programs to incorporate new science. State fish and wildlife agencies have successfully provided opportunities for harvest while ensuring the long-term sustainability of the species and improving wetlands and other aquatic habitats.

ENDANGERED SPECIES RESTORATION

Restoring viable, self-sustaining populations of endangered species is successfully being done by many state fish and wildlife agencies in collaboration with other partners. Since 2007, the state agency in Ohio has collaborated to relocate and ultimately delist the federal and state endangered Northern Riffleshell (*Epioblasma torulosa rangiana*). Within the last 30 years, the species had slowly declined in Ohio. Because the few remaining mussels were thriving they attempted a reintroduction of mussels from the state of Pennsylvania where the species is still abundant. The project involves the Ohio Division of Wildlife, Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, USFWS, The Ohio State University, Columbus Zoo and Aquarium, and Columbus and Franklin County Metropolitan Park District, among others. From 2008-2014, 15,000 mussels were collected by fisheries biologist from the Allegheny River in Pennsylvania and taken to the Big Darby Creek in central Ohio. To monitor the success of the translocation, 12,000 mussels were fitted with Passive Integrated Transponders. This is the largest relocation of an endangered species ever undertaken in Ohio.