



INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE

WHO we are

The International Relations Committee guides involvement in and/or engages on international conventions/treaties, initiatives, agreements, and policies that impact U.S. state and Canadian provincial and territorial fish and wildlife agencies. The Committee's core responsibilities revolve around shaping and implementing an international strategy to achieve effective, high-impact engagement, and providing a platform for wildlife agencies and NGOs to discuss international conservation issues that impact management and conservation in the U.S. and Canada.

WHAT we do

- Develop positions international matters of interest to AFWA members including agreements, conventions, regulations and initiatives.
- Further relations with countries across the globe
- Monitor and participate, as needed, in the relevant agreements, conventions, and initiatives.
- Serves as AFWA's source, sounding board and integrator of information and discussions about international issues.

WHY participate in IUCN?

The Association is a member of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). IUCN can be an important ally in promoting sustainable use principles and science-based conservation. Founded in 1948, IUCN's is focused on supporting the conservation of nature in an equitable and ecologically sustainable way. Today it has more than 1,400 members including the U.S. and Canadian governments and approximately 130 U.S. and Canadian NGOs. To have a voice in conversations around zoonotic diseases, wildlife trade, use, and consumption; otter and waterfowl conservation; the sustainable use of wildlife; and more membership and engagement is necessary.

HOW CITES impacts you?

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) can be a management tool but only with active participation in the Convention. To have the most effective and efficient engagement, the CITES Technical Work Group was created in 1992. It includes one member from each state regional associations and the AFWA International Relations Director. The Work Group engages partners; develops positions; participates in CITES meetings; and collaborates 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. and Canada. For example, state tagging programs for bobcats stem from federal restrictions resulting from CITES actions 40+ years ago. Some CITES turtle trade regulations can support state management. The Work Group was part of an informal partnership that help retain state and territorial management of polar bears when it was attempted to be listed in CITES Appendix I in 2013 and 2016. In 2022, over 25 reptiles under state management were listed in CITES. States are not having help implement those listings in collaboration with the USFWS.

WHAT does the Trilateral mean to you?

The Trilateral Committee for Wildlife and Ecosystem Conservation and Management (Trilateral) was created in 1995 by the federal wildlife agencies of the United States, Mexico, and Canada. This agreement formally brought together for the first time the three nations of North America. They meet annually. There are six active working tables: CITES, Ecosystem Conservation, Executive, Law Enforcement, Migratory Birds, and Species of Common Conservation Concern. The states and AFWA participate on almost all of them. The states also have a seat on the Executive Table, which Stewart Liley (NM) currently holds. Historically the states that participate the most in this committee are the border states. However, this Committee has worked on grasslands conservation, monarch conservation, and other issues that are a priority for many states and Provinces.

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ISSUES AND TOPICS:

Convention on Migratory Species: The 14th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS COP14) took place in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, from 12 to 17 February 2024. AFWA attended COP14 to engage with partners about the IPBES sustainable use assessment, resolutions about wildlife health and avian influenza, human wildlife conflict topics, the use of animal culture in wildlife conservation, and more. The opportunity allowed for relationship building with Parties; the US delegation representatives; NGOs; and leadership of IUCN, the Ramsar Convention, and the CMS Secretariat to advance our international work. The final documents are posted [here](#). We will be analyzing the outcomes, considering next steps, and determining how the outcomes connect to or could influence other conventions such as CITES.

CITES Furbearer and Alligator Tags: The CITES Technical Work Group collaborated with the USFWS to help streamline the tag ordering process.

The Committee produced a [briefing paper](#) on how sustainable use is woven into the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) "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) and the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF).

Wildlife Trade, Use, and Consumption; Zoonotic Diseases; and One Health: These discussions are front and center across the globe. There are proposals to ban wildlife trade, use and consumption in international fora and the U.S. Congress; develop new protocols under the UNCTOC; and broaden the mandate of CITES.

Turtle Conservation and Management: In 2021, the Committee [developed a case study](#) to support state agencies' conservation and management of turtle and tortoises as it relates to international trade to ensure populations are sustainable. In 2022 and 2023, work on turtles has continued through meetings with state agencies, efforts to find funding to analyze the turtle trade, and engaging on potential CITES turtle listing proposals.

The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) Sustainable Use Assessment: Submitting comments on IPBES assessments is an important role of the Committee. The [Sustainable Use Assessment Summary for Policymakers](#) was approved in July 2022 and has the potential to influence U.S. government policy and decisions at international conventions. You can read the media release that highlights some of the main messages [here](#). The summary provides recommendations and messages for sustainable use and wildlife conservation.

CITES 19th Conference of the Parties November 2022: Every three years the CITES Parties (signatory countries) meet to decide on resolutions and decisions and species listing proposals. Some [agenda items](#) of interest include CITES and zoonotic diseases, the CITES Strategic Vision and species listing proposals. The Committee worked with the states, Provinces and Territories to gather information and input on a [potential species listings](#) and develop state positions. Alligator and common snapping turtles, five species of broad-headed map turtles, all mud turtles except for the two species already included in Appendix I, all musk turtles, and all U.S. soft-shelled turtles (*Apalone* species) were listed in Appendix II of CITES. The horned lizards in North America were listed in Appendix II.

CITES non-detriment finding (NDF) for the exportation of species: The USFWS Division of Scientific Authority- International Affairs made a positive CITES NDF for the export of ginseng (*Panax quinquefolius*) taken in 19 states for the 2022 harvest season. The USFWS Division of Scientific Authority- International Affairs made a positive CITES NDF for the export of bobcat (*Lynx rufus*) taken in the contiguous 48 U.S. States. Currently, 41 States and 32 Tribes have approved multi-year CITES export programs for bobcat.

AFWA Sustainable Use Resolution: The [resolution](#) reaffirms AFWA's support for sustainable use and regulated trade in some species.



Canadian Co-Chair: Christie Curley (Ontario)
US Co-Chair: Ryan Brown (Virginia)
Staff: Deb Hahn (International Relations Director)

"Decisions are made in global forums that impact conservation in the U.S. and Canada. It is critical that we are at the table and have a voice in those discussions to help guide those decisions."
~Sara Parker Pauley, 2020-2021 AFWA President