

CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES  
OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA



Nineteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties  
Panama City (Panama), 14-25 November 2022

SEAHORSES (*HIPPOCAMPUS SPP.*)

1. This document has been submitted by the United States of America\* in relation to agenda items Doc. 69.1 (Report of the Standing Committee) and Doc. 69.2 (Next steps towards the successful implementation of the Appendix-II listing for seahorses), to share with the Parties and the Secretariat our suggested edits with respect to Annex 1: Draft Decisions on Seahorses (*Hippocampus spp.*) of Doc. 69.1 and the draft Decisions in Doc. 69.2.
2. The United States [and its co-proponents] believe it is important that CITES maintain the momentum on seahorse issues during the next intersessional period between the 19<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES (CoP19) and the 20<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES (CoP20).
3. Although a global workshop on seahorses could not take place prior to CoP19, as called for in Decision 18.229 b) ii), the findings of studies on the trade in live and dried seahorses – which were completed and reported to the Standing Committee by the Secretariat in SC74 Doc. 70.1 – provide the basis for the draft Decisions in CoP19 Doc 69.2.
4. These draft Decisions are complementary to those supported by the Animals Committee and Standing Committee (presented in CoP19 Doc 69.1). Taken together, the two sets of Decisions will ensure CITES keeps moving toward sustainable and legal trade in seahorses.
5. We took note of the CITES Secretariat's suggestion that if the CITES Parties decide to adopt the decisions in CoP19 Doc. 69.2, the two sets of decisions should be merged, and reference to the global workshop in draft Decision 19.AA in CoP19 Doc. 69.1 would no longer be necessary.
6. In light of these comments, the United States [and its co-proponents] propose to merge the draft decisions in CoP19 Doc. 69.1 and CoP19 Doc. 69.2, and remove reference to the global workshop called for in draft decision 19.AA of CoP19 Doc. 69.1 in Annex 1 of this document.

Background

1. At the 18<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES, Decisions 18.228-18.233 were adopted to help CITES Parties address existing concerns with implementation of the CITES listing of seahorses.
2. Project Seahorse, based at the University of British Columbia (UBC) and Zoological Society of London (ZSL), undertook two studies (funded by the Principality of Monaco and U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, or NOAA). The first study evaluated the implementation of the CITES Appendix II listing and the Review of Significant Trade process for seahorses. The second study analyzed implementation of the CITES Appendix II listing in: (i) six jurisdictions that have long been net exporters of seahorses but have declared national bans or suspensions for such exports, and (ii) four jurisdictions

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\* *The geographical designations employed in this document do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the CITES Secretariat (or the United Nations Environment Programme) concerning the legal status of any country, territory, or area, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. The responsibility for the contents of the document rests exclusively with its author.*

that have long been key importers for dried seahorses. The Secretariat contributed summaries of the two studies to SC74 (see SC74 Doc. 70.1).

3. The results of these studies showed that the inclusion of seahorses in CITES Appendix II appears to have reduced pressure of international trade in live animals on some wild populations. However, the United States [and co-proponents of CoP19 Doc. 69.2] remain concerned about the large volumes of dried seahorses continually found illegally in international trade since the CITES listing.
4. Building upon the work that has been undertaken since CoP18 and the results of these studies, the following two key actions are needed: 1) Parties with ongoing illegal and/or unsustainable trade in dried seahorses should develop national or regional plans of action to ensure future trade complies with CITES provisions, and 2) the Standing Committee should address the large volumes of illegal trade in dried seahorses.

#### Discussion

1. Since the listing of seahorses in CITES, progress has been made to improve the monitoring of the international trade of seahorses.
2. However, the ongoing illegal and unsustainable international trade in dried seahorses undermines conservation efforts and sustainable management of seahorse populations, and poses a significant threat to the long-term survival of the species since the CITES listing.
3. The new draft decisions proposed in CoP19 Doc. 69.2 are crucial next steps in addressing the challenges that have hindered effective implementation of international trade in seahorses.
4. The United States appreciates the Secretariat's comments on CoP19 Doc. 69.2, and invites the CITES Parties and the Secretariat to consider the draft consolidated set of decisions from CoP19 Doc. 69.1 and CoP19 Doc. 69.2 found in Annex 1 of this document that seek to address the CITES Secretariat's recommendations.

## CONSOLIDATED DECISIONS FROM CoP19 Doc. 69.1 AND CoP19 Doc. 69.2

**Directed to the Secretariat**

19.AA The Secretariat shall:

a) subject to external funding, collaborate with Parties and species experts to prepare a report on the global illegal trade in seahorses, for consideration by the Standing Committee. The report should include an analysis of extracted data from the CITES illegal trade database, consultations with regional enforcement networks as applicable, analysis of illegal trade routes, modus operandi and seizures, and information contained in the studies prepared in response to Decision 18.229 paragraph c) i); and

b) report on implementation of paragraph a) of the current Decision 19.AA to the Standing Committee at its 77th and 78th meeting.

**Directed to the Parties**

19.BB To effectively implement the inclusion of seahorses in Appendix II of CITES, source, transit, and consumer Parties for which there is evidence of illegal and/or unsustainable international trade in dried seahorses are encouraged to:

a) collaborate with key stakeholders and species experts to develop national or regional plans of action to improve CITES implementation for seahorses and should include the following, inter alia:

i) encouraging collaboration and communication between key stakeholders at a national and regional level, including Environment, Fisheries and Enforcement agencies, with respect to CITES implementation and data gathering for the international trade in seahorses;

ii) improving monitoring, detection and law enforcement activities related to seahorses in coastal areas and at transaction points (e.g. in the marketplace, online, in maritime areas, and at air- and seaports);

iii) submitting comprehensive and accurate information on illegal international trade in seahorses in their annual illegal trade reports to the Secretariat, as required in compliance with Resolution Conf. 11.17 (Rev. CoP18) on National reports, and in support of Decision 19.AA a);

iv) addressing the main drivers of illegal and unsustainable trade by effectively regulating and constraining the operations of non-selective fishing gears, such as bottom trawls and gillnets, to reduce their impacts on seahorses, and combating illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing of seahorses by developing best practices for sustainable harvest; and

b) share progress in developing and implementing these national or regional plans of action with the Secretariat for its report to the 33rd meeting of the Animals Committee.

**Directed to Parties, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations**

19.CC Parties, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations are encouraged to provide financial and technical assistance to Parties to implement Decision 19.BB and any further recommendations made by the Standing Committee.

**Directed to the Animals Committee**

19.DD The Animals Committee shall:

a) in consultation with species experts, analyse and review the results of any activities under Decisions 19.AA and 19.BB, the report produced under Decision 18.229, paragraph c) i), and other relevant available information [*This paragraph incorporates draft Decision 19.BB a) of CoP19 Doc. 69.1, excluding the reference to a report of the global workshop called for in draft Decision 19.AA.*];

b) in consultation with species experts, develop recommendations to the Parties, the Secretariat, and relevant stakeholders, as appropriate, to ensure sustainable and legal international trade in seahorses [*This paragraph incorporates draft Decision 19.BB a) of CoP19 Doc. 69.1, excluding the reference to a report of the global workshop called for in draft Decision 19.AA.*];

c) consider recommending seahorses as a case study to the 2nd international expert workshop on non-detriment findings; and

d) report on the implementation of Decision 19.DD to the Standing Committee, as appropriate [*This paragraph incorporates draft Decision 19.BB c) of CoP19 Doc. 69.1*].

#### **Directed to the Standing Committee**

19.EE The Standing Committee shall:

a) in consultation with species experts, analyse and review the results of any activities under Decisions 19.AA and 19.BB, the report produced under Decision 18.229 paragraph c) i) and, as appropriate, the report of the Animals Committee produced in support of Decision 19.CC;

b) in consultation with species experts, develop recommendations to the Parties and the Secretariat, as appropriate, to strengthen CITES implementation and enforcement for international trade in seahorses [*This paragraph incorporates draft Decision 19.CC b) of CoP19 Doc. 69.1*]; and

c) report on the implementation of Decisions 19.AA to 19.EE to the Conference of the Parties at its 20th meeting [*This paragraph incorporates draft Decision 19.CC b) of CoP19 Doc. 69.1*].