

CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES  
OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORATwenty-seventh meeting of the Plants Committee  
Geneva (Switzerland), 8 – 13 July 2024Regional mattersRegional reports

## NORTH AMERICA

1. This report, covering the period from May 2023 to April 2024 was prepared by Ruben Boles, Regional Representative for North America, in collaboration with the CITES authorities of Canada, Mexico, and the United States of America.\*
2. Overview of major developments
  - a) Review of Significant Trade
    - nothing to report in this period.
  - b) Periodic Review of the Appendices
    - nothing to report in this period.
  - c) Registration of nurseries that artificially propagate specimens of Appendix-I plant species for export purposes;
    - nothing to report in this period.
  - d) Non-detriment findings (NDFs);

**Canada**

In Canada, NDFs are determined on a permit-by-permit basis. For heavily traded species, standing NDF reports are prepared to support the issuance of export permits. Canada's species-specific standing NDF reports are developed in collaboration with federal, provincial and territorial agencies, as well as participation and review by species experts and Indigenous peoples. Canada has standing NDF reports that cover the majority of Canada's trade and for plant species, includes American ginseng (*Panax quinquefolius*) and Goldenseal (*Hydrastis canadensis*). Standing NDF reports are reviewed regularly and, as necessary, updated with the most recent information. They are available on the Environment and Climate Change Canada's [website](#).

*Rhodiola rosea*, which was added to Appendix II at CoP19 is commercially exported from Canada only from artificially propagated sources. Canada has met with two *Rhodiola rosea* grower's organizations to ensure that the requirements for export permits are understood. Since the listing came into effect,

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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.

Canada has issued permits for specimens of source codes O and A. Canada will be developing a standing NDF report for this species while continuing to make NDFs on a permit-by-permit basis.

## **Mexico**

The CITES Scientific Authority of Mexico, formulated 140 NDFs for 11 plant species included in Appendix II: *Euphorbia antisyphilitica*, *Echinocereus cineranses*, *Ferocactus echidnae*, *F. latispinus*, *Guaiaacum sanctum*, *Mammillaria uncinata*, *Myrtillocactus cochal*, *M. geometrizans*, *Stenocereus dumorteri*, *S. queretaroensis*, and *Swietenia macrophylla*.

## **United States of America**

On December 4-8, 2023, three representatives of the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS, FWS, or Service) Division of Scientific Authority attended the CITES [International Expert Workshop on CITES Non-Detriment Findings](#) (NDFs) in Nairobi, Kenya. The workshop convened over 150 experts and delegates from 42 Parties and 25 organizations to review and refine twelve draft taxon- and issue-specific modules under development as non-binding guidance for NDF determinations. The United States played an active role in the 35-member [NDF Workshop Technical Advisory Group](#) (TAG), providing guidance and contributing to the development of the modules. The U.S. Scientific Authority actively engaged in workshop sessions to refine several modules, including *Incorporation of local and traditional knowledge in making NDFs*, *NDFs for Appendix I imports*, *NDFs for birds*, and *NDFs for timber-producing trees*. U.S. priorities included ensuring clarity of purpose for the guidance, maintaining its non-binding nature, and facilitating mechanisms for additional input from CITES Committees and parties. The modules and case studies discussed during the workshop are available on the workshop website (above), and we anticipate that the revised draft guidance materials will be presented for further input at Animals and Plants Committee meetings.

### e) Capacity building

**Canada:** Nothing to report for this period

## **Mexico**

The law enforcement focal point (PROFEPA) participated in the following activities:

- International Conservation Chiefs Academy (ICCA), organized by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), from October 16<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup>, 2023, in West Virginia, USA, to receive training on international wildlife trafficking, illegal logging and illegal fishing.
- From February 20<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup>, 2024, the United States Forest Service (USFS) provided training to 13 forest inspectors on the identification of tropical wood species, in Chetumal, Quintana Roo, who received tools to support their inspection and surveillance activities. Also in the framework of collaboration with the USFS, 3 guidelines for forest inspection and surveillance are being developed, focused on: i) identification of wood, ii) measurement and cubing of wood and, iii) forestry crimes. On April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2024, the USFS and PROFEPA jointly organized a workshop on the measurement and cubing guideline, as well as the wood identification guideline, which included the participation of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (SEMARNAT) and the National Research Institute on Forestry, Agriculture and Livestock (INIFAP).

## **United States of America**

The Department of Interior- International Technical Assistance Program (DOI-ITAP) will host in Rabat, Morocco, a regional workshop on CITES implementation and Combatting Wildlife Trafficking with U.S. Free Trade Agreement (FTA) countries from the Middle East North Africa (MENA) region such as Bahrain, Jordan, Morocco, and Oman. The workshop will aim to strengthen the capacity of the FTA countries to implement CITES, increase a regional awareness of CITES and wildlife trafficking issues, and support a regional network of wildlife specialists to strengthen national capacity to counter wildlife trafficking.

The Scientific and Management Authorities presented a webinar for approved States and an Indigenous Tribe in the U.S. CITES Export Program for Appendix-II American ginseng (*Panax*

*quinquefolius*). Information included the making of NDFs and LAFs for the export of American ginseng, and population and harvest information reported by the States and Tribe (April 8, 2024).

The Department of State's Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, Office of Conservation and Water (OES/ECW), supports capacity building initiatives with CITES parties across Asia, Africa, and Latin America to combat the illegal trade of CITES-listed timber species. OES/ECW capacity-building encompasses training programs for CITES authorities and other law enforcement, alongside the development of tools, technologies, and datasets to aid governments, law enforcement, private sector, and civil society in preventing, identifying, and interdicting illegal timber shipments.

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) had CITES regularly workshops for Plant Protection & Quarantine - U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Customs and Border Protection – Department of Homeland Security personnel in April at San Juan, Puerto Rico and July at Seattle & Blaine, Washington.

In partnership with the U.S. State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL), the Department of the Interior's International Technical Assistance Program (DOI-ITAP) facilitated job-shadowing exchanges between U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) and overseas law enforcement personnel. OLE Wildlife Inspectors and their foreign counterparts (Belize, Brazil, and the Dominican Republic) attended conservation law enforcement leadership training and later paired for an exchange program to share law enforcement techniques and build capacity in wildlife forensics, wildlife investigations, and evidence collection and preservation.

In Partnership with the DOI-ITAP and the US Department of State, FWS-OLE Inspectors delivered seminars on wildlife identification and CITES implementation and enforcement to government officials in Central America. The goal of each mission was to strengthen each country's ability to apply CITES as a tool to combat flora and fauna trafficking in the region. In 2024, these training missions will be delivered to the countries of Honduras, Belize, El Salvador, Panama, and Costa Rica.

Wildlife Trafficking Investigators Program (WTIP) is an 80-hour course taught by FWS-OLE that focuses on endangered species law; CITES implementation and trafficking interdiction; wildlife identification; case initiation and management; digital evidence; forensics and crime scene processing; surveillance; undercover operations; money laundering; interviewing; ethics and corruptions; raid planning; report writing and court preparation. During 2023 and 2024, these WTIP training courses were attended by a variety of African, Asian, and Latin American countries.

Wildlife Border Inspection Training Program is a 40-hour curriculum taught by FWS-OLE Inspectors and United States Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Officers that concentrates on smuggling interdiction at various types of international ports of entry, CITES implementation and enforcement; wildlife trade data; wildlife identification; case initiation and management; interviewing; border interdiction; evidence processing; ethics and corruption; and court preparation. During 2023 and 2024, these WBITP training courses were attended by many African and Asian countries.

In partnership with the Department of State's INL, FWS-OLE Inspectors produced the Wildlife Seizure Training Program, which is a three (3) day curriculum focused on an overview of CITES enforcement and implementation; wildlife identification; seizure authority; inspection techniques and evidence handling at port of entry environments. During 2023, the WSTP training program was conducted for the countries of Nigeria, Ghana, and Zambia. In 2024 it will be conducted for the countries Nigeria, Liberia, Ghana, Sri Lanka, and Botswana.

In partnership with the Department of State's INL, and the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC), FWS-OLE Criminal Investigators produced the Wildlife Crime Scene Investigation Program, which is a five-day course focused on how to manage and document a crime scene. Additionally, the curriculum includes in-depth training on crime scene photography, wildlife poisoning, and the processing of firearms evidence. In 2023, the course was offered in Bangladesh, Tanzania, Kenya, Ecuador, Namibia, Angola, Malaysia, and Indonesia. In 2024, the course will be conducted in Nigeria, Costa Rica, Mozambique, Indonesia, Botswana, and Kenya.

In partnership with the Department of State's INL, FWS-OLE Criminal Investigators produced the Wildlife Trafficking Cybercrime Program, which is a five-day course focused on digital evidence,

cybercrime investigative techniques, online covert operation considerations, and e-mail, social media, and online marketplace investigations. Students learn to extract data from computers and cell phones for analysis. In 2023, the course was offered in Indonesia, Liberia, Uganda, Botswana, and Kenya. In 2024, courses will be conducted in Suriname, Colombia, and Ecuador.

In partnership with the Department of State's INL, FWS-OLE Criminal Investigators and Wildlife Inspectors produced the International Conservation Chiefs Academy (ICCA), which is two-week academy that brings together 40 leaders of conservation law enforcement agencies from around the world to build collaborative capacity between international conservation law enforcement agencies. It provides a unique forum for representatives of the FWS, other government agencies, state conservation agencies, and NGOs to interact with colleagues and counterparts from various regions around the world. The training is based on the Adaptive Leadership curriculum from the Harvard Kennedy School. In 2023, the ICCA was delivered to countries in East Africa, Southeast Asia, and Central and South America. In 2024, the Global ICCA will be delivered to twenty countries from Africa, Asia, and Central and South America.

f) Other

- nothing to report in this period.

3. Activities of regional representatives

Ruben Boles, the Plants Committee member for the North American Region undertook the following activities:

- Co-chaired the Joint AC/PC Intersessional Working Group on *Identifying information on species at risk of extinction affected by international trade*.
- Consulted with North American colleagues regarding draft determinations of implementation of species/country combinations for plants for reporting at the 77<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Standing Committee and provided comments to the Secretariat and the Plants Committee – September 2023.
- Discussed with North American colleagues draft terms of reference for the study exploring the feasibility and requirements for developing an information system for trade in specimens of CITES-listed tree species and provided feedback to the Secretariat and Plants Committee – October 2023.
- Provided a review of *Pterocarpus erinaceus* NDFs for Ghana and Sierra Leone to the CITES Secretariat in consultation with North American Region colleagues – March, April 2024
- Discussed suggestions for an upcoming *Pterocarpus erinaceus* workshop with North American colleagues and provided them to the CITES Secretariat – May 2024

4. Regional cooperation and priorities

**Regular North American Region communications**

The members of the North America Region communicate regularly as part of our ongoing commitment to meet and discuss regional CITES issues including CITES implementation, preparations for CITES meetings, and other CITES issues of interest to our region. Canada chaired a virtual meeting on June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023 to prepare and discuss priorities for PC26. The United States of American chaired a virtual meeting 30-31 October, 2023 to prepare and discuss priorities for SC77.

**Canada/Mexico/U.S. Trilateral Committee for Wildlife and Ecosystem Conservation and Management**

The annual meetings of the Canada/Mexico/U.S. Trilateral Committee for Wildlife and Ecosystem Conservation and Management help align the three countries and provide a forum to exchange information and best practices and strengthen collaboration in safeguarding North American wildlife and ecosystems. Working tables at the meetings focus on CITES, Ecosystem Conservation, Law Enforcement, Migratory Birds, and Species of Common Conservation Concern. Current priorities under the Trilateral Committee are climate change, diversity and inclusion, human dimensions, technology innovation for conservation, and zoonotic disease.

Mexico hosted the 27<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Trilateral Committee 27-30 June, 2023. The meeting was conducted virtually. The topic of the plenary was “Justice, Equity, and Defense of Ecosystems from the Perspective of Indigenous Peoples”. There was no CITES working table during that meeting given the timing of the June 2023 CITES scientific committee meetings (AC32 and PC26) that had just taken place. During the Working Table on Law Enforcement, it was agreed that Mexican law enforcement officers would receive training by their counterparts on priority issues.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service hosted the 28<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Trilateral Committee April 29 to May 2 in San Diego, California with virtual participation also possible. The topic of the plenary was “Safeguarding biodiversity: Indigenous peoples and local communities’ (IPLC) wisdom, environmental justice and ecosystem defense.” The CITES Table discussed 17 agenda items pertaining to the Convention. Several of these helped facilitate preparation for the upcoming Animals and Plants Committee Meetings in Geneva in July, 2024. The Working Table on Law Enforcement addressed the following topics: i) illegal wildlife trade on the internet, ii) controlled deliveries of wildlife by packaging and, iii) logging and illegal trade of wood in Mexico.

### **North American Forest Commission (NAFC) Ad Hoc Illegal Working Group**

In September 2023, the United States, as Chair of the NAFC Working Group, presented the progress report at the Commission Meeting, organized by Canada, where it informed on the consolidation of the Statutes and the group's work program.

The first in-person meeting of the group took place in Mexico City, Mexico, on January 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup>, 2024. This event was attended by representatives of the USFS, the Canadian Forest Service (CFS), PROFEPA, SEMARNAT, the National Forestry Commission (CONAFOR) and the Institute of Biology (IB-UNAM). The meeting was chaired by the United States and hosted by Mexico at the National Institute of Ecology and Climate Change and at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) Institute of Biology. The working group, which had been established by NAFC at the 31<sup>st</sup> Session of the Commission (2021) is tasked with identifying and addressing challenges relating to illegal logging, wood identification and traceability in the North American region, by developing a comprehensive action plan to promote transboundary cooperation, effective tools for information sharing, and preventive and corrective measures to protect and conserve forest resources.

The working group agreed to further develop its work plan, by agreeing (*inter alia*) to seek opportunities to fund collection of new samples to build up the DART MS reference database, to evaluate existing baseline or minimum-requirement standards for collection of wood samples, and to seek opportunities to fund wood sample collection and species identification training.

### **Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC)**

Mexico, the United States and Canada concluded their participation in the project "Strengthening the Implementation and Effective Enforcement of CITES for Timber in North America", which ended in November 2023. As part of Activity 3 of that project, a collaboration was established between laboratories from the three countries in 2023, with the aim of strengthening forensic and research capacity for wood identification. Members held a total of 7 meetings in which they shared data and agreed on the exchange of reference samples of wood from Mexico to the United States and Canada, coordinated by the CEC and the USFS-Mexico Program. Complementary to this, PROFEPA continues to participate in the Steering Committee of the “Grasslands Conservation and Migratory Birds” project, within the framework of the CEC. Two trilateral workshops have been organized on monitoring changes in grasslands, held in May 2023, and in April 2024.

### **Improving governance and traceability of forest products, and international trade**

The donation of DART-ToFMS by the United States government to the National Institute of Ecology and Climate Change (INECC) was completed to strengthen Mexico's capacities for the taxonomic identification of timber species. On January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2024, the delivery ceremony for said equipment was held at the INECC laboratory facilities. Currently, PROFEPA, INECC and USFS are working on the development of a protocol to carry out wood sampling with this equipment and guarantee the chain of custody.

## Law enforcement training

During the 27th meeting of the Trilateral Committee (virtual, June 2023), on the Working Table on Law Enforcement, it was agreed that Mexican law enforcement officers would receive training by their counterparts on priority issues. During the 28th annual meeting (April 2024), the Working Table on Law Enforcement, addressed the following topics: i) illegal wildlife trade on the internet, ii) controlled deliveries of wildlife by packaging and, iii) logging and illegal trade of wood in Mexico.

### 5. Meetings and workshops

#### a) Within the region

**Canada:** Nothing to report for this period

#### **Mexico**

As part of Activity 5 “Develop guidance on CITES source code Y implementation and conducting Non-Detriment Findings for tree species” of project “Strengthening the Implementation and Effective Enforcement of CITES for Timber in North America” from the Operational Plan 2021-2023 of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC), the “Workshop on the implementation and issuance of NDFs for CITES source code Y” was held in Oaxaca, Mexico (July 25th–27th, 2023). Representatives of the CEC, of the CITES Secretariat, along with National Authorities and experts in forestry, biodiversity and trade, participated in order to: a) analyse the management of forest species regulated by CITES and the dynamics of their trade and b) review elements to develop a guide to implement source code Y and conduct NDFs for timber species managed under assisted production. The guide is in the editing and consulting process with the United States and Canada for its subsequent publication.

**United States of America:** Nothing to report for this period

#### b) Other Meetings and Workshops (outside the Region)

**Canada:** Nothing to report for this period

#### **Mexico**

During the 2nd International expert workshop on Non-Detriment Findings (NDFs), held in Nairobi, Kenya, from December 4th-8th, 2023, Mexico presented the preliminary results of the guide to implement source code Y and conduct NDFs for timber species managed under assisted production (CEC project, see point 5 a)). Some countries expressed their interest in the results and in conducting similar exercises to analyse, discuss and agree on the implementation on source code Y. Likewise, various elements presented by Mexico were incorporated into the orientations derived from the Working group on Perennial Plants that will be reviewed at the 27th Meeting of the Plants Committee (Geneva, July 8th-12th, 2024).

#### **United States of America**

The U.S. Forest Service, through funding from the Department of State, Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, organized a workshop on “Anatomical Identification of Woods and Use and Management of the XyloTron” at the National University of Costa Rica (UNA), Institute of Research and Forest Services (INISEFOR). A wood identification and customs enforcement specialist from the Environment and Climate Canada in the Wildlife Enforcement Directorate, Wood ID Project provided technical capacity and shared best practices. The workshop focused on various wood species identification methodologies, both theoretical and practical, including macroscopic, microscopic, ethanol, and fluorescence techniques as well as the use of the XyloTron which involves machine vision learning. The final day of the workshop included a field trip to the Breña Mora Estate, property of UNA, where the instructors set up a mock timber inspection that included the verification of travel documentation (wood transfer guide) by using different identification techniques learned during the workshop. These efforts in wood species identification in Costa Rica have been focused on the *Dalbergia*, *Cedrela*, and *Dipteryx* genera. Participating countries include Costa Rica and Panama.

In partnership with the DOI-ITAP and the U.S. Department of State, FWS-OLE Wildlife Inspectors attended the 12<sup>th</sup> annual Central American and Dominican Republic Wildlife Enforcement Network (CAWEN, or ROAVIS in Spanish [CAWEN/ROAVIS](#)) meeting. [DOI-ITAP Combating Wildlife Trafficking Worldwide Factsheet](#)

## 5. Other regional information

### **Canada**

The Strategic Intelligence & Risk Assessment division (SIRA) of the Enforcement Branch in Environment and Climate Change Canada has developed a targeting system to identify commercial import shipments containing CITES-listed wood species. A risk-based process is applied to real-time commercial trade data to identify incoming wood shipments that represent the highest risk of non-compliance. The system assists Enforcement Branch to filter numerous import declarations into a more manageable size, identify shipments containing CITES and non-CITES lookalike wood species, and enable proactive enforcement operations. In addition, SIRA is currently developing a project focused on the trade of CITES-listed species used in the indoor plant trade, with an emphasis on the Cactaceae family. This initiative involves the development of a scoping analysis report, aimed at providing insights on species background, the Canadian market, past enforcement efforts, and recommendations for future targeted enforcement activities, as well as the development of a second real-time targeting system specifically for cacti.

### **Mexico**

In line with the General Wildlife Law and the General Sustainable Forestry Development Law, during the review of the Official Mexican Standard NOM-152-SEMARNAT-2023 (which establishes the criteria and specifications of the content of the Sustainable Forest Management Programs -PMFS- for the use of timber resources in forests, jungles and vegetation in arid areas), coordinated by the General Direction of Forest Management, Soils and Ecological Planning (DGGFSGE), guidelines were incorporated for the forestry technicians who are responsible for preparing the PMFS, to strengthen the record of the scientific and common name of species of commercial interest that are included in CITES.

For the reported period, the Law Enforcement Focal Point (PROFEPA):

- Carried out 5,092 verifications on shipments with regulated wild species, out of which 507 corresponded to wild flora species. This guaranteed compliance with the Non-Tariff Regulations and Restrictions (RRNAs) related to the cross-border movement of these species. In order to guarantee compliance with the obligations subsequent to the use of the verified and validated CITES Permits, 25 verification and inspection acts were carried out, with the respective notification being made to the CITES Management Authority in Mexico, if warranted.
- In 2023, it implemented 2 operations for the prevention and detection of international illegal trafficking of wildlife species at international airports and land crossings for priority species, considering the seasons of fairs and exhibitions in Europe, Asia and North America.

As part of these operations, random checks were carried out at Otay Mesa commercial customs office, in conjunction with the customs authority, between June-December, with no irregularities detected.

From September-December, random checks were implemented on cars, in conjunction with the customs authority and National Guard, at Otay Mesa light vehicle crossing, from 5am-8am, with no irregularities detected. In 2024, these operations are in progress.

- Participated in various regional and global operations, coordinated by the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) and the World Customs Organization (WCO), with the purpose of preventing, detecting and addressing international trafficking in wildlife and forest resources. namely: "Operation Thunder 2023" and "Operativo Madre Tierra V".

### **United States of America**

*National Seed Strategy Updates:* At the June 2023 and May 2024 Trilateral Committee meetings, the United States presented on progress to implement the National Seed Strategy for Restoration and

Rehabilitation (Seed Strategy) to the Ecosystem Conservation subgroup. Presentations highlighted native plants' role as nature-based solutions vital for resilient ecosystems, healthy watersheds, and fostering a restoration economy. In February 2024, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service participated in the *online* National Native Seed Conference, during which the Secretary of the Department of Interior Secretary, The Honorable Deb Haaland, announced the Department's National Seed Strategy Keystone Initiative which will advance implementation of the National Seed Strategy by creating a centralized Interagency Seed and Restoration Center. A botanist from the Scientific Authority provides strategic leadership implementing the Seed Strategy within the FWS and as Federal Chair to the Plant Conservation Alliance fosters collaboration with seventeen federal agencies and hundreds of nonfederal partners. This science-based effort is crucial for increasing the supply of genetically diverse plant species needed for ecological restoration, benefiting many of the 1,700+ animal and plant species included in the CITES Appendices that are native to or naturalized in the United States, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Northern Mariana Islands.