

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



Nineteenth meeting of the Animals Committee  
Geneva (Switzerland), 18-21 August 2003

Conservation of seahorses and other members of the family syngnathidae (Decision 12.54)

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE APPENDIX-II LISTING FOR *HIPPOCAMPUS* SPP.

1. This document has been prepared by the United States of America.
2. At the 12th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP12), the Parties agreed to delay the effective date of the Appendix-II listing for seahorses (*Hippocampus* spp.) for 18 months until 15 May 2004 to allow adequate time for national planning, the preparation of domestic management programmes, monitoring procedures and trade controls.
3. Parties also adopted Decision 12.53, directed to the Parties, regarding the conservation of seahorses. CITES Management Authorities are requested in this Decision to strengthen their collaboration and cooperation regarding management of *Hippocampus* species with appropriate fisheries agencies.
4. Accordingly, the United States of America is planning a suite of workshops and other projects to make the seahorse listing under CITES work effectively for sustainable trade in these wide-ranging fishes. Attached is a short workplan that summarizes the United States' goals and current projects, all of which reflect a close collaboration between the United States State Department, the National Marine Fisheries Service, academia, the NGO community, and the United States CITES offices.
5. Parties, organizations and individuals are encouraged to contact the United States CITES Scientific Authority if they are interested in contributing to or participating in any of these initiatives.
6. The United States of America would also like to propose that the CITES Animals Committee consider continuing discussions, possibly in the form of a seahorse working group, on technical issues related to the listing and on means of promoting effective management of and sustainable trade in *Hippocampus*.



**United States capacity building and implementation workplan  
CITES Appendix-II listing of *Hippocampus* spp.**

**May 2003**

**Component one: technical workshop on seahorse conservation and management**

The United States submitted a successful proposal to list all 32 species of seahorses in Appendix II of CITES at CoP12, with an 18-month delayed implementation. This delay is intended to allow countries sufficient time to consider management approaches, monitoring programmes, identification materials, and size limits to ensure a legal and sustainable seahorse trade under CITES. Since seahorses may now be the most widely and voluminously traded CITES species, the listing requires significant work in source countries, the CITES Animals and Nomenclature Committees, the World Trade Organization, academia and the NGO community. Since most of the current seahorse exports are from developing countries, the United States is committed to strengthening its collaboration and cooperation with these nations in developing management plans that will help to ensure that this trade is sustainable.

Accordingly, the United States is proposing to convene a workshop, if possible in Mexico, in the winter of 2003/04. The workshop would involve 20-30 experts from the United States National Marine Fisheries Service, United States Fish and Wildlife Service, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, the CITES Secretariat, NGOs and relevant authorities from other countries significant in the seahorse trade. Invited countries should include Brazil, China, India, Mexico, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam. CITES Parties that import or transship large amounts of seahorses, including Indonesia, the European Community and others, should also benefit from the workshop proceedings. This workshop will be a forum to share information on management and monitoring strategies for seahorse fisheries, and other aspects of the recent inclusion in Appendix II of CITES.

Specific topics for such a workshop to address include:

1. National reports on seahorse fisheries, legislation and data collection programmes;
2. Critical information needs for:
  - a) Successful monitoring of seahorse fisheries and seahorse populations; and
  - b) Making required findings and issuing permits under CITES;
5. Management of seahorses taken as bycatch;
6. Permitting and licensing considerations for various types of fisheries (artisanal, bycatch, directed, aquaculture);
7. Identification of specimens in trade; and
8. Customs and law enforcement considerations.

The workshop proceedings or final report could be disseminated to source countries for guidance in developing domestic seahorse management measures. Mexico has been chosen as a possible venue, as it is one of the top five global exporters of seahorses and the United States has a strong history of bilateral work with Mexico on many other natural resource issues. Funding for this workshop has been tentatively identified within the United States State Department.

## **Component two: demonstration project for seahorse monitoring protocols and non-detriment findings**

Information on the status and trends of seahorse populations has been determined largely from interviews with fishermen, exporters, and importers and these data are insufficient to determine sustainable harvest levels for most species, populations, and locations with seahorse fisheries. In addition, fishery-dependent and fishery-independent data on seahorse population status, catch, and degree of effort are largely unavailable in most countries with seahorse fisheries. This project would test the feasibility of field monitoring of seahorse habitat, in particular in locations where significant harvest occurs, to obtain information on the distribution, abundance and size frequency of target seahorse species and to apply this towards a 'non-detriment' finding as required by the Convention for legal international trade. Possible methodology that could be used would be developed at the workshop described above, and field-tested by local scientists, with assistance from United States government fishery biologists. Funding for this project, which could be held in Southeast Asia, has been tentatively identified in the United States National Marine Fisheries Service with a target completion date of spring 2004.

## **Component three: update and dissemination of seahorse identification manual**

CITES Resolution Conf. 11.19 exhorts Parties to provide appropriate data for inclusion in the identification manual within one year after a taxon is included in the CITES Appendices. This is particularly critical for seahorses, with 33 species of similar appearance traded between dozens of countries in all parts of the world. Fortunately, outstanding material is already available in a 1999 identification guide produced by Project Seahorse (Lourie et al., 1999; *Seahorses: an identification guide to the world's species and their conservation*). The guide's authors have endorsed the request of the United States to submit this material as per the obligations under Resolution Conf. 11.19, with an understanding that certain geographical and pictorial contents will be updated for accuracy. The CITES Secretariat has already indicated they will accept this manual, and can make it widely available to all 162 CITES Parties. Funding has been identified to complete this work (including additional distributions to Customs and other law enforcement personnel) by early 2004, prior to the effective listing date of 15 May 2004. TRAFFIC-North America is coordinating this work, working closely with the authors in Project Seahorse (Vancouver, B.C., Canada) and with the financial support of the United States National Marine Fisheries Service.