

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



Thirty-first meeting of the Animals Committee
Geneva (Switzerland), 13-17 July 2020

Species specific matters

SEAHORSES (*HIPPOCAMPUS* SPP.)

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.
2. At its 18th meeting (CoP18, Geneva, 2019), the Conference of the Parties adopted Decisions 18.228 to 18.233 on *Seahorses* (*Hippocampus spp.*) as follows:

Directed to the Secretariat

18.228 *The Secretariat shall include available materials to support CITES implementation for seahorses (non-detriment findings guidance, identification materials, etc.) on the CITES website.*

18.229 *The Secretariat shall:*

- a) *issue a Notification to the Parties inviting them to inform the Secretariat of any national management measures that regulate or restrict international trade in seahorses, and on how they are implementing and enforcing such measures for seahorses;*
- b) *compile the responses received to the Notification issued as per paragraph a) of the present Decision and communicate them to CITES Authorities through a Notification to the Parties and through its website; and*
- c) *subject to external funding:*
 - i) *commission a study on trade in *Hippocampus spp.*, including applicable regulations, to understand shifts in international trade patterns since the inclusion of seahorses in Appendix II and the Review of Significant Trade of *Hippocampus spp.*, as well as the implementation challenges and possible solutions; and*
 - ii) *organize an expert workshop to discuss the implementation and enforcement of CITES for trade in *Hippocampus spp.*, including the recommendations and outcomes from the Review of Significant Trade process, and propose practical steps to address implementation and enforcement challenges; and*
- d) *report on the implementation of paragraphs a) through c) of the present Decision to the Animals and Standing Committee, as appropriate.*

Directed to Parties

18.230 *To support the effective implementation of Appendix II of CITES for seahorses, Parties are invited to:*

- a) *inform the Secretariat of any national management measures that regulate or restrict international trade in seahorses; and how they are implementing and enforcing such measures for seahorses;*
- b) *share copies of their non-detriment findings with the Secretariat for posting on the CITES website to assist other CITES Parties; and*
- c) *inform seahorse traders within their jurisdiction of any quotas, including any zero quotas, and any trade suspensions for seahorses to further facilitate compliance and enforcement by all participants in the trade.*

18.231 *Parties are encouraged to:*

- a) *use existing tools for effective CITES implementation and enforcement that are relevant to seahorses;*
- b) *where quotas, trade suspensions, or both are in place, develop monitoring programmes for seahorses in their national waters to understand effectiveness of these actions and any other relevant implementation and enforcement actions for seahorse conservation and management; and*
- c) *share the design and initial results of these programmes with the Secretariat to report to the 19th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.*

18.232 Directed to the Animals Committee

The Animals Committee shall analyse and review the results of any activities under Decision 18.229 and other relevant information available to the Animals Committee and develop recommendations as appropriate to ensure sustainable and legal trade in seahorses.

18.233 Directed to the Standing Committee

The Standing Committee shall analyse and review the results of any activities under Decision 18.229 and develop recommendations as appropriate to strengthen CITES implementation and enforcement for trade in seahorses.

Implementation of Decision 18.229, paragraphs a) and b)

3. Concerning paragraph a) of Decision 18.229, the Secretariat published a Notification to the Parties on 28 February 2020 ([Notification No. 2020/015](#)) requesting information on any national management measures for seahorses (*Hippocampus* spp.), and on how Parties are implementing and enforcing such measures. The Notification also invited Parties to share information on their non-detriment findings with the Secretariat for posting on the CITES website to assist other Parties.
4. At the time of writing, the Secretariat had received responses from 13 Parties: Australia, Cambodia, Colombia, Croatia, Italy, Japan, Malta, Mexico, Monaco, Peru, Thailand, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America. The responses have been collated and are presented in the Annex to the present document in the language and format in which they were received.
5. In fulfilment of Decision 18.229, paragraph b), the Secretariat's compilation of the responses received to the Notification will also be communicated to CITES Authorities through a Notification to the Parties and through its website.

Implementation of Decision 18.229, paragraph c)

6. As indicated in [Notification to the Parties No. 2020/032](#), it is estimated that implementation of Decision 18.229 would cost USD 70,000 for the study, and USD 100,000 for the expert workshop. Monaco has

informed the Secretariat that it will make a contribution towards implementing these Decisions between 2020 and 2022. The Secretariat is working to identify additional donors that might also be interested in contributing to the implementation of paragraph c) of Decision 18.229.

7. The Secretariat notes that Project Seahorse, based at the University of British Columbia (UBC), has secured funding from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to undertake a study on seahorse trade that could make a valuable contribution to the implementation of Decision 18.229, paragraph c). The Secretariat is consulting closely with Project Seahorse to see how the provisions in paragraph c) i) of Decision 18.229 could be incorporated into the study. While timeframes and scope may need adjustments, it is hoped that the results of this work may be available for consideration by the Animals Committee at its 32nd meeting.
8. In light of ongoing meeting and travel restrictions relating to the coronavirus outbreak, it is not clear if or when the expert workshop envisaged under Decision 18.229, paragraph c), ii) could take place if funding would become available to organize it. Alternatives, such as a full or partial online expert workshop, may need to be envisaged.
9. The Secretariat notes that, under Decision 18.231 paragraph c), Parties are encouraged to share designs and results of seahorse monitoring programmes with the Secretariat for its reporting to the Conference of the Parties at its 19th meeting (CoP19). None of the other Decisions concerning seahorses contain provisions to report on their implementation to CoP19.

Recommendations

10. The Animals Committee is invited to establish an intersessional working group on seahorses to:
 - a) review the results of activities under Decision 18.229, including the responses to Notification No. 2020/015 contained in the Annex to this document, other relevant information on seahorses available to the Animals Committee, the results of the study by Project Seahorse referred to in paragraph 7 above, and any outcomes of the proposed expert workshop if available; and
 - b) draft recommendations, as appropriate, to ensure sustainable and legal trade in seahorses, for consideration by the Animals Committee at its 32nd meeting.