

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



Seventieth meeting of the Standing Committee  
Rosa Khutor, Sochi (Russian Federation), 1-5 October 2018

Species specific matters

Sturgeons and paddlefish (Acipenseriformes spp.)

IDENTIFICATION OF STURGEONS AND PADDLEFISH SPECIMENS IN TRADE:  
REPORT OF THE ANIMALS COMMITTEE

1. This document has been submitted by the Animals Committee.\*
2. At its 17th meeting (CoP17, Johannesburg, 2016), the Conference of the Parties extended a number of decisions on *Sturgeons and paddlefish (Acipenseriformes spp.)* that had originally been adopted at its 16th meeting (CoP16, Bangkok, 2013), as follows:

***Directed to the Secretariat***

**16.136 (Rev. CoP17)**

*The Secretariat shall:*

- a) *subject to external funding and in consultation with the Animals Committee, organize a study to:*
  - i) *provide an overview of molecular, DNA-based and other forensic methods that could assist in identifying the species and populations of Acipenseriformes specimens in trade, determining the origin or age of specimens, and differentiating wild from captive-bred or aquacultured specimens;*
  - ii) *review relevant developments in this area, including the availability and reliability of uniform identification systems;*
  - iii) *evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of the different methods (including practicality, costs, time-efficiency, reliability, technical requirements, etc.); and*
  - iv) *formulate relevant guidance for CITES Parties, enforcement agencies, the private sector and other stakeholders;*

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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.*

- b) *ensure consultation with Parties that authorize trade in specimens of sturgeons and paddlefish, appropriate experts, institutions and organizations, and the private sector in the conduct of the study;*
- c) *make the results of the study available to the Animals Committee for its consideration; and*
- d) *disseminate the recommendations formulated by the Standing Committee pursuant to Decision 16.138 (Rev.CoP17) in a Notification to the Parties.*

**Directed to the Animals Committee**

**16.137 (Rev. CoP17)**

*The Animals Committee shall assist the Secretariat in determining the specifications for the study referred to in Decision 16.136 (Rev.CoP17) and monitoring its conduct. It shall review the report of the study, and make recommendations as appropriate for consideration by the Standing Committee.*

**Directed to the Standing Committee**

**16.138 (Rev. CoP17)**

*The Standing Committee shall review the study undertaken in accordance with Decision 16.136 (Rev.CoP17) and the recommendations that the Animals Committee formulated in compliance with Decision 16.137 (Rev.CoP17), and make its own recommendations, as appropriate, for communication to Parties concerned or for consideration at the 18th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.*

3. The Secretariat reported to the Animals Committee at its 30th meeting (AC30, Geneva 2017) on the implementation of these decisions in document [AC30 Doc. 17.2](#). In summary, the Secretariat noted that no external funding for the implementation of Decision 16.136 had been obtained since CoP16. It had compiled a list of relevant publications that could form the basis of further work concerning molecular, DNA-based and other forensic methods that could assist in identifying the species and populations of Acipenseriformes specimens in trade, determining the origin or age of specimens, or differentiating wild from captive-bred or aquacultured specimens.
4. In its oral presentation at AC30, the Secretariat noted however that in preceding months, it had been approached by several Parties and organisations, stressing that this issue remained highly relevant, in particular in countries that are range States for sturgeons and that have established aquaculture operations, where mixing of caviar originating from captive bred and wild caught sturgeons can more easily occur.
5. Based on this information, the Animals Committee recommended that Decisions 16.136 (Rev. CoP17) to 16.138 (Rev. CoP17) be renewed by the Conference of the Parties. The Committee invited the Secretariat to consult with Parties trading in caviar to better identify their needs in order to propose revisions to Decisions 16.136 (Rev. CoP17) to 16.138 (Rev. CoP17).
6. The Animals Committee notes in this regard paragraph 7 of Resolution Conf. 12.7 (Rev. CoP17) on *Conservation of and trade in sturgeons and paddlefish* which calls upon *range States, importing countries and other experts and appropriate organizations, such as the IUCN/SSC Sturgeon Specialist Group, in consultation with the Secretariat and the Animals Committee, to continue to explore the development of a uniform DNA-based identification system for parts and derivatives and aquaculture stocks of Acipenseriformes species to assist in the subsequent identification of the origin of specimens in trade and the development and application of methods for differentiating wild from aquaculture origin caviar in cases where DNA-based methods are not useful.*

Recommendation

7. The Standing Committee is invited to take note of this document, and invite the Secretariat to submit renewed or, as necessary, revised decisions concerning *identification of products of Sturgeons and paddlefish (Acipenseriformes spp.) specimens in trade* for consideration at the 18th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.