

Interpretation and Implementation of the Convention

GUIDELINES FOR EVALUATING MARINE TURTLE RANCHING PROPOSALS

At its eighth meeting (Kyoto, 1992), the Conference of the Parties asked the Animals Committee to continue the work initiated by IUCN to prepare guidelines for evaluating marine

turtle ranching proposals. The attached draft resolution has been prepared and submitted by the Animals Committee.

Doc. 9.42 Annex

DRAFT RESOLUTION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES

Guidelines for Evaluating Marine Turtle Ranching Proposals

RECOGNIZING that, as a general rule, use of sea turtles has not been conducted in a sustainable manner and has led to the decline of sea turtle populations;

RECOGNIZING also that other factors such as habitat loss, pollution and incidental catch are seriously impacting sea turtle populations;

RECALLING that Resolution Conf. 3.15, adopted at the third meeting of the Conference of the Parties (New Delhi, 1981), recommends that, for a proposal to transfer a species from Appendix I to Appendix II for the purpose of ranching, the operation "must be primarily beneficial to the conservation of the local population";

NOTING that the unique biology of sea turtles makes their sustainable use difficult and imposes special restraints on their exploitation that require the application of rigorous controls;

RECOGNIZING that the demand for marine turtle products in some States stimulates illegal trade both nationally and internationally;

NOTING that the conservation of marine turtles may depend on the co-operation of the range States of the population;

UNDERSTANDING that, because of the behaviour of marine turtles of returning to specific beaches to nest, range States have a special responsibility to protect marine-turtle

nesting habitat and nesting females during the breeding season;

RECOGNIZING that sustainable use has potential benefits for the conservation of marine turtles and their nesting habitat;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION

RECOMMENDS that

- a) any Party seeking to transfer a marine turtle population from Appendix I to Appendix II pursuant to Resolution Conf. 3.15 should provide information in accordance with the guidelines contained in the Annex to this Resolution; and
- b) any Party whose population of marine turtles is transferred to Appendix II pursuant to this Resolution and Resolution Conf. 3.15 should ensure that procedures for regular adequate reporting to the Secretariat exist and are implemented. Failure to satisfy this requirement and to demonstrate conservation benefit to the population or compliance with other requirement of Resolution Conf. 3.15 may result in the application of paragraph c) of Resolution Conf. 6.22 adopted at the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (Ottawa, 1987).

Annex

Guidelines for Evaluating Marine Turtle Ranching Proposals

1. National Management

A. Biological Information

The proposal should provide information on the biology and management of the population (or populations) that will be affected within the proponent's territory. The geographic extent of the broader regional population, of which the local (or national) population is a component, should also be identified and characterized. All populations (national and regional) should be described using sound scientific techniques. The use of genetic characteristics in defining the populations is encouraged.

The following characteristics of the national population of marine turtles that is the subject of the ranching proposal should be detailed:

- a) Population distribution. Describe the current (and, if possible, the historical) nesting grounds,

feeding areas and migratory range of the national population(s) under the direct jurisdiction of the proponent Party. Nesting areas from which eggs and/or hatchlings are to be taken should be described in detail.

- b) Population status and trend. Describe the population size and its trend using indices of abundance for the different life stages, with particular attention to the age structure of nesting females. If possible, the indices should be sufficiently sensitive to allow the determination of meaningful confidence limits.
- c) Population recruitment. Provide an estimate or calculation of the annual reproductive rate or size of the annual production (e.g. numbers of eggs and/or hatchlings).
- d) Population mortality. Provide an estimate of the mortality rates of the different life stages, including mortalities caused by human activities, predation, nesting-beach erosion, etc.

B. National Management Plan

A prerequisite for approval of a ranching proposal will be the presentation of a national management plan for marine turtles. The plan should include:

- a) Monitoring. A description of the annual programme to monitor population trends and mortality rates.
- b) Habitat protection. All important nesting beaches in the region should be protected from disruption including development, urbanization and pollution.
- c) Harvest regulation. Harvesting for ranches should normally be restricted to eggs and/or hatchlings. The annual numbers (and percentage) of eggs and/or hatchlings proposed for removal to the ranch must be specified. The proposed harvest rate should also be presented as a proportion of the natural production of the population being harvested for ranches.
- d) Protection of the population. Human induced mortality of marine turtles, such as uncontrolled harvests, incidental catch in fisheries and pollution of habitat should be identified and mechanisms be in place to control such mortalities.
- e) Rules for stopping harvests. Predetermined threshold values of population trends, changes in status, mortality or habitat should be proposed which would automatically trigger the suspension of harvests, and the initiation of additional conservation measures.

## 2. Trade Controls

Proponents must take every reasonable measure to ensure that the trade in products from approved ranches does not stimulate an increase in trade from other sources in a manner detrimental to the survival of the population or populations of other species of marine turtle, or serve as a cause for such trade. Therefore, the proponent Party should ensure that both it and any country to which the products of the ranching operation are destined have adequate legal frameworks and administrative measures for monitoring and reporting, and adequate local and national enforcement capabilities before international trade is authorized. In particular each proponent Party must:

- a) Agree that exports of marine turtle products derived from the population covered by its proposal will be restricted to those from the ranching operation, exported only to specified countries, in specified amounts (i.e. a quota may be set) that can be met by proposed ranch production.
- b) Document its domestic laws and enforcement mechanisms (including those in any territories and overseas political units) that regulate the taking of marine turtles from the wild and the possession, sale, purchase, transport, import and export of marine turtles, their parts and derivatives.
- c) Undertake registration of any existing stockpiles of marine turtle parts and derivatives held within its territorial jurisdiction and instigate marking and control systems to ensure that such items are readily distinguishable from similar items deriving from approved ranches.
- d) Describe marking and tracking procedures for all parts and derivatives from approved ranches that will allow the unambiguous identification of ranch products, including methods for marking products and packages, packaging types, transport methods, shipping routes, product documentation, secure

storage of products, inventory control up to the point of export and specification of the maximum quantities of products (quotas) to be exported annually.

- e) For any consumer country specified in accordance with paragraph 2. a), provide documentation of the domestic laws of that country to regulate the import, re-export, possession, sale, purchase and transport of marine turtles and their parts and derivatives, and the measures taken by these countries to control existing stockpiles of such specimens.
- f) In cases where a specified consumer country has native populations of marine turtle species listed in Appendix I, provide additional information on the domestic laws of that country to protect marine turtles and other measures taken to ensure that products derived from the ranching operation imported into the country can be distinguished from products of species obtained from other sources.

## 3. The Ranching Operation

To satisfy recommendation c) ii) of Resolution Conf. 3.15, the proponent should provide information on:

- a) Financial operation. Identity of the owners, legal basis of ownership and a business and financial plan taking account of market demand and production goals and objectives.
- b) Physical plant. In accordance with technical and professional standards, descriptions of:
  - i) site, including geographical location, layout, size and technical specifications;
  - ii) facilities for maintaining stock, food storage, quarantine, slaughter and processing, refrigeration and freezing;
  - iii) seawater source, including circulation, filtration, waste disposal and quality control systems; and
  - iv) staff, including numbers and qualifications of technical and management personnel and numbers of support staff.
- c) Operating procedures, taking account of:
  - i) stock collection, including location of source sites, methods used in collection and removal of specimens, age- and size-classes of specimens (e.g. eggs, hatchlings), collecting seasons, number of specimens to be collected each year and the proportion of natural annual production that the harvest represents, methods of handling and transport to the ranching operation, and injury levels and mortality during collection and transport;
  - ii) stocking rates, including the number or weight of turtles per 1,000 litres of sea water and square metres of surface area;
  - iii) production schedules, including production profiles by age- and size-class, growth rates, methods used to identify ranch stocks, culling procedures exclusive of harvesting, reports of non-harvest mortality, methods of disposal of carcasses from non-harvest mortality and number of specimens by age- and size-class that will be harvested each year;
  - iv) feeding, including sources of feed, nutritional composition, evaluation of additives and contaminants, and feeding regimen (amount, frequency and method of distribution);
  - v) health care, including monitoring methods, veterinary care and treatment procedures; and

vi) slaughter procedures, including specimen selection, methods used to collect and transport specimens to the processing site, humane slaughter technique, processing techniques, waste disposal.

d) Record keeping, indicating procedures followed in inspecting and monitoring records maintained by the ranching operation.

e) Benefits, indicating how local people would benefit from the operation.

#### 4. Summary Statement Describing Benefit to the Population

Summarize the legal and enforcement mechanisms that will prevent detrimental impact of the renewal of legal trade and summarize the benefits expected from the management actions implemented for the population to be harvested for ranches.

#### 5. Reporting

Proponents that achieve a transfer of their national population of marine turtles from Appendix I to Appendix II subject to this Resolution should provide, to the next meeting of the Conference of the Parties, updated information on: population status and trends; any change in the area of beaches that provide suitable nesting habitat; any change in enforcement effort; and amendments to co-operative agreements to preserve and manage the marine turtle resource.

#### 6. Regional Co-operation

Because of the migratory behaviour of many marine turtles, the population occurring within the jurisdiction of any one State can not be considered in isolation and therefore the impact of local management on the wider "regional" population should be determined.

a) A proposal to ranch marine turtles should determine the geographical distribution of the wider "regional"

population subject to ranching (this may entail genetic analysis of the "regional" population).

b) Activities undertaken by the proponent to develop co-operative regional management among the interested range States sharing the resource that is the subject of the ranching operation should be described. Regional management should entail co-operative mechanisms for:

i) assessment of the conservation status of the "regional" population and identification of key recruitment areas (e.g. breeding and nesting sites);

ii) regular monitoring of population trends involving an assessment of annual off-takes (i.e. subsistence harvesting, incidental by-catch and illegal use) including an assessment of the impact of the ranching operation;

iii) effective protection of important nesting beaches and other essential habitats (e.g. feeding areas);

iv) regulating harvests where necessary; and

v) effective trade controls.

c) A regional management agreement designed to enhance conservation of the marine turtles in the wild should also document existing conservation legislation and trade controls by range States and provide a forum through which more effective or complementary trade controls, enforcement activities and other conservation measures may be developed.

d) Any bilateral or multilateral agreement implemented or in the process of being negotiated to preserve and manage the marine turtle resource should be described.

**Interpretation and Implementation of the Convention**  
**Proposals to Register the First Commercial Captive–breeding Operation**  
**for an Appendix–I Animal Species**

*SCLEROPAGES FORMOSUS*

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Through Notification to the Parties No. 753 of 14 June 1994, the Secretariat, in accordance with Resolution Conf. 8.15, informed the Parties of the application submitted by the Management Authority of Malaysia for the registration of a captive–breeding operation for <i>Scleropages formosus</i>, a species for which no operation had been registered yet. No Party objected to the registration within the deadline provided by Resolution Conf. 8.15.</li> <li>2. However, before being in a position to register the operation, the Secretariat needed some additional information, in particular regarding the legal origin of the parental breeding stock. The Secretariat was especially concerned regarding one of the four varieties of the fish, the red variety, which does not occur in the wild in Malaysia.</li> <li>3. In the opinion of the Secretariat, the varieties of <i>Scleropages formosus</i> do not fall within the definition of "species" as provided in Article I of the Convention. They are not subspecies and although the red variety exists</li> </ol> | <p>only in Indonesia, it can not be considered as a geographically isolated population as other varieties exist in the same locations.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. In view of the above, the Secretariat agreed to register the Malaysian operation, except for the red variety, and indicated to the Management Authority of Malaysia that it would submit the issue of the registration of the red variety to the Conference of the Parties for its decision. The Management Authority of Malaysia agreed and the Secretariat registered the operation as indicated.</li> <li>5. Consequently, the Secretariat is asking the Conference of the Parties to decide whether captive–breeding operations for <i>Scleropages formosus</i> shall be registered on a variety basis or on the species basis. In the latter case, the operation of Malaysia would be allowed to trade also in specimens of the red variety, the most valuable one. It might be worthwhile to note that, whatever decision is made, it is not expected to have any detrimental effect on the conservation of the species in the wild.</li> </ol> |
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