



Summary of Outcomes

Coral Reef Issues at the 12th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES



Cyade Bieman, Ocean Alliance
Basking shark



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Sea cucumber



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Whale shark



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Seahorse

Introduction

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) is an agreement to ensure that international trade in certain species of wildlife does not threaten their survival. Species regulated under CITES are listed on one of three appendices, each providing different levels of control and monitoring. There was unprecedented interest in marine species at the most recent Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES (COP12) in November 2002. The COP12 agenda included proposals to list toothfish, seahorses, humphead wrasse and certain sharks on the appendices. The CITES Parties also considered several marine mammal proposals, a discussion paper on sea cucumbers, and a paper promoting a memorandum of understanding between CITES and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) on matters related to commercial fisheries.

All Seahorses To Be Listed On CITES Appendix II

The United States submitted a proposal to list all 32 species of seahorses (genus *Hippocampus*) on Appendix II of CITES at COP12. Dialogue on the status of seahorses has been ongoing in CITES for several years. The United States and Australia submitted a discussion paper on the conservation status and trade in seahorses and other syngnathids at COP11 in April, 2000. Discussions at COP11 lead to a technical workshop to consider and review biological and trade information on syngnathids. Workshop participants endorsed the need for a CITES Appendix-II listing. Seahorses are vulnerable due to their low reproductive potential, complex reproductive cycles, and habitat degradation. The seahorse listing proposal was adopted at COP12, but does not go into effect until May 2004. The 18-month delay allows time to work with partners in state and foreign governments to ensure the continuation of a legal, sustainable

seahorse trade under the Appendix-II listing.

More Study For Sea Cucumbers

The United States submitted a discussion document on the conservation of and trade in sea cucumbers for COP12. Harvest pressure on these species has increased alarmingly in recent years due to growing international demand. The discussion document recommended a technical workshop to evaluate the status of sea cucumbers and to consider appropriate conservation measures, including regional management, domestic fisheries controls, and possible future CITES listing. Japan, supported by Cuba, China, and Malaysia, opposed any action by the CITES Parties, considering the topic to fall under the jurisdiction of FAO and other fisheries organizations. However, the majority of CITES Parties accepted the U.S. recommendation for a technical workshop and directed the CITES Animals Committee to prepare a discussion paper for COP13 on biological and trade status and conservation needs. Topics for discussion at the workshop include identification of dried specimens in trade, appropriate monitoring protocols, and effective fishery management approaches. The United States will be an active participant in this issue through final report submission at COP13.

Humphead Wrasse Listing Proposal Fails

With strong support from other countries, the United States introduced its proposal to list the humphead wrasse (*Cheilinus undulatus*) on CITES Appendix II. The humphead wrasse is one of the largest coral reef fishes, growing to more than 2 meters in length and living more than 30 years. It is heavily exploited for the live reef food fish trade, which supplies luxury restaurants in Hong Kong and other Asian markets. Declines or extirpations have been reported throughout the species' range from the Red Sea to the South

Pacific shortly after commercial fisheries have begun. Although the proposal failed to achieve a two-thirds majority, with 65 in favor, 42 against, and 5 abstentions, the majority approval shows there is broad interest. The United States plans to consult with other Pacific countries and pursue ways to keep the live reef food fish trade and humphead wrasse at the forefront of CITES discussions.

Whale & Basking Sharks Listed On CITES Appendix II

Concern over the conservation status of sharks has been evident in CITES for many years. Characteristics of the biology of these animals, particularly their late age at maturity and low productivity, make them vulnerable to over-exploitation. The United States submitted a discussion paper at COP9 (1994) that resulted in a resolution calling for collection and review of biological and trade data on sharks. A series of decisions taken at COP10 (1997) and COP11(2000) promoted sustainable management of sharks, including encouraging initiation of national

management plans for sharks and efforts to reduce by-catch mortality. At COP12, India, the Philippines, and Madagascar proposed an Appendix II-listing for the whale shark (*Rhincodon typus*). The United Kingdom, on behalf of the European Union, proposed the basking shark (*Cetorhinus maximus*) for Appendix II. When introduced in committee, both shark proposals lost by very narrow margins on secret ballots. However, they were re-introduced in the plenary session where they received the needed two-thirds majority and were adopted. In addition, a resolution was adopted at COP12 directing the CITES Animals Committee to continue monitoring the conservation status of sharks, as well as the progress by FAO and individual countries to implement Plans of Action for shark conservation. CITES Parties were urged to improve their shark management programs and their capacity for monitoring trade. The whale shark and basking shark listings will become effective in February 2003.

Increased Global Cooperation on Marine Species

A document submitted jointly by the United States and Japan at COP12 resulted in a decision directing the CITES Standing Committee to work with the FAO to draft a memorandum of understanding between the two organizations. The complementary mandates of CITES and FAO were recognized, as well as the value of facilitating exchange of information regarding commercially exploited aquatic species.

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Humphead wrasse