

Preparing for the 16th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES



What is CITES?

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) entered into force in 1975, and became the only treaty to ensure that international trade in plants and animals does not threaten their survival in the wild. Currently 175 countries (called Parties), including the United States, implement CITES, with new countries joining regularly.

CITES is administered through the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). A Secretariat, located in Geneva, Switzerland, oversees the treaty. The Secretariat:

1. Provides Parties with trade information and technical support
2. Acts as a liaison among Parties
3. Contracts trade studies
4. Informs governments and the public about CITES wildlife trade developments
5. Investigates possible CITES violations and trade threats to wildlife
6. Organizes meetings of the Conference of the Parties

The elephant-shaped CITES logo was first used at CoP3 in 1981. The original version, a simple black and white design, has since evolved to include species protected by CITES.

How are species protected by CITES?

Species protected by CITES are included in one of three appendices.

- Appendix I includes species threatened with extinction and provides the greatest level of protection, including restrictions on commercial trade. Examples of species currently listed in Appendix I include gorillas, sea turtles, most lady slipper orchids, and giant pandas.
- Appendix II includes species that, although currently not threatened with extinction, may become so without trade controls. Most CITES species are included in this appendix, including American ginseng, paddlefish, African lions, and many corals.
- Appendix III includes species protected by at least one country, which needs assistance from other Parties to regulate trade. Examples of species currently listed in Appendix III include map turtles, walrus, and Cape stag beetles.

Changes to Appendices I and II must be proposed at a Conference of the Parties (CoP) and agreed to by a two-thirds majority of the Parties present and voting at the CoP. Changes to Appendix III can be requested by individual Parties at any time.

What is the purpose of a CoP?

The Parties meet every two to three years at a CoP. During this 2-week meeting, they review and vote on:

1. Proposed resolutions and decisions to improve the effectiveness of CITES
2. Amendments to CITES Appendix I and Appendix II

They also work to resolve policy and implementation issues. Attendants include delegations from the Parties, representatives of the CITES Secretariat, and approved non-governmental and inter-governmental organizations (NGOs and IGOs), who attend as observers.

How is the United States preparing for CoP16?

The United States began to prepare for CoP16 almost immediately after CoP15 ended. The Department of the Interior and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (the Service) lead the U.S. delegation to each CoP. All preparations for CoP16 are coordinated through the Service, in close consultation with the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of State (DOS), U.S. Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), and other government agencies.

The Service examines trade and biological data for species that may warrant a change in their protection status under CITES. Through a series of Federal Register notices, website postings, and public meetings, the Service solicits public input, evaluates the public's recommendations, and prepares formal documents and negotiating positions for consideration at CoP16.



Frank Kohn/USFWS

Delegations from the Parties meet at CoP15

How does the public provide input for the United States to consider in drafting its submissions and negotiating positions for CoP16?
 The Service solicits public input through a series of announcements, including Federal Register notices, website postings, and public meetings. Details on how to submit public comments are contained in each Federal Register notice. A tentative timeline for CoP16 preparations is:

The Service published a Federal Register notice requesting recommendations for amendments to the CITES Appendices. A 60-day public comment period was opened.

June 14, 2011

The Service published a Federal Register notice requesting recommendations on resolutions, decisions, and agenda items that would provide clear guidance on the interpretation and effective implementation of CITES. A 60-day public comment period was opened.

November 7, 2011

The Service will publish a list of plants and animals for which the United States is considering submitting proposals (species proposals) to amend the CITES Appendices. In this notice, the Service will seek additional biological and trade information on potential species proposals. This notice takes into account all public comments received in response to the Federal Register notice dated on June 14, 2011. The public comment period will remain open for 60 days from the date of publication.

April 2012

Evaluation of gyrfalcon was initiated by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.



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May-June 2012

The Service will publish a list of proposed resolutions, decisions, and agenda items that it might submit for consideration and will seek additional information and comments. This notice takes into account all public comments received in response to the Federal Register notice dated on November 7, 2011. The public comment period will remain open for 60 days from the date of publication.

Illustration from hawaii.gov



The short-fin mako shark is among the species suggested by the public and it is being considered by the United States.

Native Hawaiian sandalwoods are a group of plants suggested by the public and they are being considered by the United States.



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The Service must submit all species proposals, resolutions, decisions, and agenda items to the CITES Secretariat 150 days prior to the start of CoP16. An announcement will be posted at www.fws.gov/international listing the species proposals, resolutions, decisions, and agenda items submitted by the U.S. for consideration at CoP16.

October 2012

The Service will publish a Federal Register notice announcing the tentative agenda for CoP16 and will seek comments on agenda items. A public meeting will also be announced. The public comment period will remain open for 60 days from the date of publication.

November 2012

A public meeting, location to be determined, will be held to discuss tentative agenda items for CoP16.

December 2012

The Service will publish a Federal Register notice announcing tentative U.S. negotiating positions on other Parties' CoP16 species proposals, resolutions, decisions, and agenda items.

March 2013

March 3rd- 15th, 2013

16th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties

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