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# PRESS RELEASE

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UNITED STATES **ESSA** ENDANGERED SPECIES SCIENTIFIC AUTHORITY  
EIGHTEENTH & C STREETS, N W □ WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

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ENDANGERED SPECIES SCIENTIFIC AUTHORITY (ESSA)  
SCHEDULES HEARING TO DISCUSS THE DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL IMPACTS OF  
EXPORT APPROVAL FOR THE AMERICAN ALLIGATOR

The Endangered Species Scientific Authority (ESSA) announced today that it will hold an informal public hearing on July 10, 1979, to discuss information needed to satisfy the ESSA that export will not be detrimental to the survival of American alligator or to the survival of other species of crocodilians included in the appendices of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

Largely as a result of uncontrolled hide hunting, alligators had declined to low levels in the southeastern states by the 1950s and 60s. More effective laws at both federal and state levels, improved law enforcement efforts, and other local, state and federal conservation efforts were begun in the '60s and early '70s. These included listing under the U.S. Endangered Species Act and inclusion in Appendix I of the CITES, prohibiting commercial international trade in the species. As a result of these combined efforts, the species' status has improved markedly, especially in Florida and southern Louisiana. These increases have produced changes in management practice by these states, changes in the species' status under the Endangered Species Act, and changes in its international trade status under CITES. In March, the American alligator was transferred to Appendix II of the CITES, which will permit carefully regulated commercial export of the species under review and approval by the ESSA and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The public session will consider both the potential impact that international trade in American alligators may have on the survival of that species and on other species of crocodilians currently protected by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). The change in status marked by the official move from CITES Appendix I to Appendix II on June, 28, 1979, will not end concerns about alligators and conservation. Because crocodilian species are difficult to distinguish from each other, endangered "look-alike" species could enter world trade as American alligators unless positive identification can be made of authentic American alligator (Alligator mississippiensis) and its parts and products. Furthermore, international trade in American alligators could stimulate trade in similar protected species which would be detrimental to those species. For these reasons, the ESSA has proposed three conditions on alligator export to facilitate

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law enforcement (see "ESSA -- American alligator; Proposed Export Findings for the 1979 Harvest Season," published in the May 31, 1979, Federal Register, 44 FR 31584).

The three conditions designed to assure that trade in American alligators will not harm other crocodylians are as follows: (1) Foreign buyers, tanners, and fabricators must be subject to U.S. licensing requirements similar to those currently in force within the United States; (2) Exports must be allowed only to licensed buyers, tanners, or fabricators located in countries which have ratified CITES and which have not taken reservations against CITES controls on trade in endangered species of crocodylians; and (3) Prior to export, all hides must be indelibly marked over their entire reverse surface with identifying symbols.

The ESSA published proposed findings on May 31, 1979, (44 FR 31584), with a comment period open until July 30, 1979. The hearing is one of several steps being taken by the ESSA to insure maximum public input for its determinations.

The hearing will be held from 10 a.m. until 6 p.m. on Tuesday, July 10, 1979, at the following address:

Room 8070 (Penthouse), Main Interior Building, 18th and C Streets, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20240.

Prospective participants are asked to make appointments with the Office of the Executive Secretary, Endangered Species Scientific Authority, 18th and C Streets, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20240 (202/653-5948).

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