



# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

## news release

### FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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#### U.S. DEVELOPING POSITIONS ON CHANGES TO ENDANGERED SPECIES CONVENTION

Ninety-six member nations will convene in Canada in July to review the effectiveness of international regulation of world commerce in wildlife as the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) begins its sixth biennial conference.

The United States, which organized the global program to control the burgeoning trade in endangered wildlife and plants in 1974, has announced the process by which the public, conservation organizations, trade interests, and others may help develop the positions this country will take on issues to be discussed at the conference this year.

The Interior Department's U.S Fish and Wildlife Service, which enforces the CITES agreement within the United States, requests public comments on matters on the provisional agenda for the meeting by March 31, 1987. The provisional agenda was published in the January 13, 1987, Federal Register. The agency plans to announce tentative negotiating positions on these issues by April 7, 1987, and will hold a public meeting on those positions around April 23 in Washington, DC. Final U.S. positions will be announced on or about June 22, 1987.

The full meeting of CITES member nations will be held July 12-24, 1987, in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada.

"The process we now begin is the public's opportunity to have its say in how the United States will help regulate world trade in protected species for the next two years," Fish and Wildlife Service Director Frank Dunkle said.

"Nations from around the world will be represented in Ottawa seeking to improve the ways in which wildlife and plants are regulated in international trade. As the United States has shown by nearly 14 years of commitment to the CITES agreement, we take our responsibility to the world's wildlife seriously. We expect no less from the other CITES member countries," he added.

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora seeks to regulate the trade in hundreds of species of animals and plants by establishing management and scientific authorities in every member nation and requiring that documentation accompany international shipments of designated species or of products made from them. Such documents cannot be issued unless a scientific authority first determines that trade would not be detrimental to the survival of the species. The agreement complements U.S. laws, such as the Endangered Species Act and the Lacey Act, that also regulate trade in endangered species and other wildlife.

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CITES establishes three classifications of species it protects. Protected species are listed in appendices to the treaty: Appendix I contains animals and plants in greatest danger of extinction, such as the mountain gorilla, certain sea turtles, and the cheetah, whose trade is severely restricted; Appendix II identifies species not presently facing extinction, such as the African elephant and the osprey, but which could become so if trade is not carefully monitored and regulated; and Appendix III contains species that may not be threatened at all but for which certain nations have requested international assistance in controlling trade, such as Canada's walrus and Nepal's water buffalo.

Although specific changes in the CITES appendices have not yet been proposed for the Ottawa meeting, several issues have been identified and will be considered at the July session:

- A recommendation to continue a ban on all trade in CITES-controlled species with Bolivia and to impose a ban on trade with Paraguay because of the continuing problem of illegal trade in protected species from these South American nations;
- Consideration of changes in the control of trade in African elephant ivory and disposition of stockpiled illegal ivory in certain African countries;
- Discussion of the continuing illegal trade in rhinoceros horn from North Yemen despite a CITES-wide ban and assurances from other nations importing rhino horn that they will soon end their trade. Trade in this highly endangered species was the subject of recent U.S. Congressional hearings; and
- A review of the world trade in leopard skins allowed from seven African countries and sold as personal items under quota. Although the U.S. does not allow imports of such personal items, it does allow imports of sport-hunted leopard trophies from certain sub-Saharan nations when it finds that it enhances the survival of the species.

A complete summary of the provisional agenda for the sixth regular meeting of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora appears in the January 13, 1987, Federal Register. Comments should be received by March 31, 1987, at the Federal Wildlife Permit Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1000 North Glebe Road, Room 611, Arlington, Virginia 22201.