

Crocodile Specialist Group Steering Committee Meeting

(Santa Fe, Argentina; 17 May 2005)

Members: Alejandro Larriera, Alvaro Velasco, Tom Dacey, Giovanni Ulloa, Manuel Muñiz, Roberto Soberón, Luciano Verdade, Bernardo Ortiz, Eric Silberstein, Don Ashley, Phil Wilkinson

Observers: Carlos Piña, Pablo Siroski, Luis Bassetti, Gisela Poletta, Josefina Iungman, Jaime Ramírez, Melina Simoncini, Virginia Parachú, Germán Chávez, Gianmarco Rojas, Jerónimo Domínguez Laso, Luis Sigler, Libby Bernardin, Pam Ashley.

General Business:

1. Steering Committee Appointments. A list of appointments confirmed by the CSG Chairman to date was circulated. Tom Dacey advised members on progress with appointments to the various Regional and Thematic Groups, and outstanding appointments.

2. CSG General Membership. The seven (7) Regional Chairs have been requested to review their respective regional CSG membership, in liaison with Regional Vice Chairs, and to provide recommendations to the Chairman. The criterion for determining who should be recommended was “What can they do for the CSG, not what the CSG can do for them”. Alvaro Velasco reported that a number of current Latin American and Caribbean region members, particularly in central Latin America, Brazil and the Caribbean, had not responded to e-mail requests. It was suggested to proceed with the agreed nominations and any additional recommendations could be added progressively, as contact and confirmations are received.

3. Progress Report on Recent Activities. Tom Dacey provided briefings on the following matters, as reported in the recent CSG Newsletter [Vol. 24(1)]:

- a. Terms of Reference for Specialist Groups;
- b. Draft CSG Operating Guidelines;
- c. Cambodia Review;
- d. Report of the 2004 CSG-Tomistoma Task Force survey in Kalamintan, Indonesia;
- e. Establishment of the CSG Commercial Live Trade Task Force under the direction of Perran Ross;
- f. Possible development of a peer-reviewed electronic journal, devoted to crocodylian biology and conservation, as suggested by Frank Seebacher;
- g. Proposed development of mechanisms to identify “Farmed vs Wild Skins”. (Alejandro Larriera made a presentation on a possible method at the Regional Meeting the following day);
- h. Proposed CSG review of Paraguay, Ecuador, Bolivia and Peru;
- i. Recent visit by CSG Executive Officer to Cuba and Mexico; and,
- j. Need for CSG action and resources in Africa.

4. Proposed establishment of a CSG Latin American Office in Caracas, Venezuela. Alvaro Velasco and Tom Dacey briefed members on this proposal, which was favorably received. Bernardo Ortiz raised some points on the proposed operation of this innovative scheme within the group, and asked whether it would be extended to other regions. Tom Dacey responded that similar arrangements were under consideration for Africa, but it was dependant upon finalisation of Regional Steering Committee appointments.

5. Proposed update and enhancement of the CSG website is to be undertaken by linking the current Florida and Darwin websites, with the intention of encouraging its use as the prime communication

linkage between CSG members, Steering Committee and the Executive Officer, and the general dissemination of information.

6. Mexico's *Crocodylus morletii* Downlisting Proposal and the US Endangered Species Act. Manuel Muñiz advised that the data/information provided in the Mexican draft proposal was considered to be very good and the research program should be continued. Mexico has sought CSG support for the proposal. Steering Committee members were requested to provide comments on the document and suggest any areas where the document could be improved. There was some discussion on the need to address the enforcement aspects, particularly in regard to neighboring countries such as Belize and Guatemala.

7. Argentina's *Caiman latirostris* Downlisting Proposal and the US Endangered Species Act. Alejandro Larriera provided an overview of the history of this proposal and indicated that Argentina would be seeking CSG support in seeking resolution of this long outstanding issue.

8. Proposed meeting of Brazilian CSG members. Luciano Verdade provided a briefing on the current situation with CSG membership in Brazil, and the lack of coordination of between those involved in conservation, management and sustainable use of crocodylians in Brazil. The suggestion of a local meeting of Brazilian specialists, coordinated by the CSG Regional Chairman, was supported. It was proposed that a meeting take place in October/November 2005. The purpose of the meeting is to update available information on the various crocodylian species, population statistics in each of the Brazilian States, and to propose possible changes to Brazilian laws, with a view to improving the conservation of crocodylians in Brazil. Luciano will submit a proposal to San Paulo's Science Foundation (FAPESP) seeking funding for the meeting.

9. Farmed vs Wild Skins. Alejandro Larriera provided an overview of the paper he was to present on this issue during the Regional Meeting. The paper suggests that scarring caused from scute-clipping of farm-bred juveniles could be a possible means of identification of skins from wild animals.

10. CSG Newsletter Subscriptions. Tom Dacey briefed members on the cost to produce and mail out the quarterly CSG Newsletter, and drew attention to the "Subscription Renewal" form in the latest newsletter.

11. Trade Industry Issues. Don Ashley reported that the CSG Industry Committee met in Bologna, Italy, on 28 April, and discussed priority issues including Personal Effects, Enforcement, Live Trade, ESA downlistings, need for an updated Skin Identification Manual, advance planning for 2006 CSG meeting in France, and other issues.

The Industry Committee will try to initially meet every 6 months to timely address important trade topics. The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for October 2005, again in Bologna, during the Lineapelli Leather Fair that many members attend.

The Personal Effects Resolution was recognized by the Industry Committee as the most important CITES deregulation to date and deserved careful consideration to establish standards for listing additional Appendix-II species to the list. The CITES Standing Committee will discuss Personal Effects in June during the Geneva meeting, and recommend CSG input should be to include criteria for the listing process to ensure trade is legal, sustainable and verifiable. A timeframe to submit listing or delisting proposals will also be recommended (90-120 days prior to COP was discussed) to ensure reasonable time for affected Parties to review and comment. The criteria and regular review (monitoring) of species listed under the Personal Effects Resolution could be a first step

toward a trade certification program within CITES that could endorse sustainable trade of crocodilians and verify conservation value.

Enforcement and compliance are currently important CITES concerns, and follow-up meetings by the Industry Committee Chair in Cambridge with WCMC, TRAFFIC and the IUCN Sustainable Use Group Chair (Jon Hutton) will focus on improving the process for collecting, analysing and acting upon information concerning infractions or illegal trade. The consensus was that a much better process was needed, involving CITES, CSG, WCMC, TRAFFIC and others in a clearinghouse approach that identified "hotspots" and initiated appropriate action. Consensus of the CSG Steering Committee in Santa Fe was these ideas should be pursued with the CITES Secretariat in cooperation with WCMC and TRAFFIC (probably concurrent with the June CITES Standing Committee in Geneva).

Some concern was expressed about alleged illegal traffic of crocodilian skins through Mexico, from other Latin American countries.

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