

Crocodile Specialist Group Steering Committee Meeting
Universidad Nacional del Litoral, Santa Fe, Argentina
(6 May 2018)

Legal Affairs

1. Global transition in Alligator Farming

As reported previously to the CSG Steering Committee in 2016, a meeting of Florida alligator farmers was hosted by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) in Ocala, Florida, USA, in April 2016. The purpose of that meeting was to initiate a review process and address two key issues: whether the current alligator farm program in Florida was working; and, farmers' access to *A. mississippiensis* eggs collected on public waters. Subsequent to that meeting, additional meetings were held. One was chaired by Dr. Perran Ross, who sought to assist the parties in improving alligator farming regulations in Florida. With significant input from industry, FWC has tentatively agreed to increase the number of permits allowing egg collection on public waters by five (5). This is expected to be presented to the Commissioners (political appointees who oversee FWC) for approval later this year. The new permits would be issued under a set of criteria developed by FWC and industry. In addition, FWC proposes to consider the possibility of adding additional permits allowing the collection of *A. mississippiensis* eggs from public waters in Florida every 5 years.

Since 1986 when alligator farming was initiated in Louisiana, and 1988 when alligator farming was initiated in Florida, there has been a transition with regard to the role of farms, associated industries, and end users. In 1988, Florida issued 30 permits to independent alligator farmers. Today, those original 30 permits are held by a dozen or so families (or farms). And there has been a vertical integration in the industry, whereby the end users, such as those serving the high fashion industry, are involved in every step of the farming process - from purchasing eggs to preparation of hides. This change is likely to further strengthen the demand for high-quality *A. mississippiensis* products and may offer opportunities for increased CSG financial support.

The CSG should continue to monitor this issue, offer assistance when appropriate, and seek support from industry.

2. Science-based humane guidelines for crocodylians

The first humane guidelines for crocodylians were written in the early 1990s by the CSG; these were primarily focused on humane dispatch for industry use. In recent years, due to increased pressure by animal rights activists, the concept of humane considerations for any work with live animals has become a significant issue for industry, zoos, scientists, and regulatory agencies. In 2016, Grahame Webb and Charlie Manolis drafted the comprehensive *Best Management Practices for Crocodylian Farming*, which included animal welfare considerations based on objective, clinical evidence founded in science. In the interest of proactively ensuring that humane guidelines for crocodylians in captivity and work with crocodylians in the field are based in science and not conjecture, the CSG should expand animal welfare guidelines for crocodylians outside of the farming industry.

3. Role of external fundraising for *in-situ* crocodylian conservation and research

In recent years, the role of external fundraising for *in-situ* crocodylian conservation and research projects has evolved and is making an impact. Fundraisers such as CrocFest and Croctoberfest have provided a new model for fundraising and are reaching new donors with great success. Since 2010, CrocFest has generated in excess of \$US315,000 for a dozen *in-situ* projects, most of which have been managed by CSG members. The CrocFest "recipe" has been replicated elsewhere, including Canada and the UK, and by other special interest groups with great success as well (ie IguanaFest in 2017 raised \$US60,000). Funds are generated from the private sector, industry, zoos and academia. These types of fundraisers could be expanded internationally in many places.

4. Miscellaneous Filings

In April 2018, the corporate Annual Report for IACS-USA, Inc., was filed with the Secretary of State as required by Florida Law.

5. Bull alligator captured on video, goes viral, creates stir in central Florida

In January 2017, a bull alligator nearly 4 m in length was videotaped crossing a walking trail at a local park in central Florida called Circle B Bar Reserve (see photo below). The animal is well-known to locals, but the video was posted online and went viral. For weeks thereafter, the local park was inundated with 10-20 times the normal number of visitors, all hoping to see the large gator. The local county government became concerned about the

liability associated with having the alligator on its property, and considered euthanizing him. Fortunately, upon speaking with experts, including CSG members, the county concluded there was little risk associated with the animal, and the decision was ultimately made to leave him alone.

Prepared by: Curt Harbsmeier, Vice Chair Legal Affairs
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