

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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PROPOSAL WOULD GIVE PUBLIC VOICE IN INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION OF ENDANGERED SPECIES

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is proposing a framework to ensure public participation in the development of this country's negotiating positions on issues involving the international endangered species treaty, Lynn A. Greenwalt, Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced today. The Interior agency proposed formal procedures in the May 20, 1980, Federal Register.

"Public comments have always been helpful in the development of United States positions on these matters," Greenwalt said. "But heretofore such participation was done informally as a matter of policy. Now, if the proposal is adopted, the public will have a clearcut means of legally taking part in shaping U.S. policies with respect to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora." The Convention, commonly referred to as CITES, is an organization of 59 nations dedicated through mutual cooperation to preventing trade from contributing to the extinction of animals and plants. Delegates from the participating nations meet every 2 years at a "Conference of the Parties" to act on procedures for implementing and enforcing the treaty's provisions and to make changes in the lists of protected species.

The Interior agency seeks to formulate procedures by which citizens can have a say in the development of the U.S. stand on such matters as the CITES budget, the standardization of permit forms, and the control of African elephant ivory trade. Citizens also could suggest other items that should be placed on the conference agenda.

The proposal offers three opportunities for public participation in advance

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of the conference, along with a report afterwards on the outcome. The first opportunity would come with a notice in the Federal Register, announcing the proposed agenda, time, and place of the next Conference of the Parties and requesting public comment and suggestions on the positions the U.S. should take.

The suggestions would then be summarized in another Federal Register notice, along with proposed positions. The public would be invited to add further comments and information on the proposals. This Federal Register notice would also designate the time and place of one or more public meetings to allow participants to air or explain their suggestions further. Finally, a third notice would be published, setting forth a final summary of negotiating positions--along with their justifications--to be used at the international conference. After the conference, the report of the delegation would be available for public review.

Comments on the requests for additional information should be directed to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (WFO), Washington D.C. 20240; telephone 703/235-2418.

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Year of the Coast