



May 14, 2004

Andrew W. Bruckner, Ph.D.
NOAA Fisheries
Office of Habitat Conservation
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Dr. Bruckner,

I am pleased to submit World Wildlife Fund's final report on the \$30,000 grant awarded by the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Grant Program (Award No. NA03NMF4630332) in support of our producing the Seahorse Identification Manual. Thanks to this generous funding, WWF has produced a high quality, indispensable guide for wildlife trade officers to use in identifying illegally traded seahorses around the world.

Through collaboration with our partner *Project Seahorse*, WWF worked with wildlife trade experts and artists alike to produce a detailed, user friendly guide that was both accurate and applicable. We have already shipped 200 copies of the guide to the Secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) for distribution to all 165 CITES parties. We also hope to use this guide as a way to boost public awareness about the seahorse trade and what can be done to prevent illegal collection of and trade in seahorses and have begun that effort by issuing a press release on May 12 highlighting the availability of the guide and the importance of seahorse conservation. Copies of the guide and press release are included with this report. We will submit our final financial report in early June, shortly after our monthly close.

Your support and commitment to fighting the illegal and unsustainable trade in seahorses is greatly appreciated. We look forward to working on this and other important conservation issues in the future. Please contact me with any questions about this project or other TRAFFIC initiatives at 202-822-3452 or craig.hoover@wwfus.org.

Sincerely,

Craig Hoover
Deputy Director
TRAFFIC North America

Enc: A Guide to the Identification of Seahorses
WWF Seahorse press release

World Wildlife Fund

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Seahorse Identification Manual

Final Report to the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Grant Program
Submitted by World Wildlife Fund
May 14 2004

Grantee: World Wildlife Fund
Project title: Seahorse Identification Manual
Grant amount: \$30,000 (Award No. NA03NMF4630332)
Awarded: September 24, 2003
Contact: Craig Hoover
202-822-3452 (phone)
craig.hoover@wwfus.org

I. INTRODUCTION

Thanks to the generous support of the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Grant Program, TRAFFIC North America, in close collaboration with our partner *Project Seahorse*, has completed, published and commenced distribution of the final version of our seahorse identification manual (two copies are enclosed). We have already sent 200 hard copies of the identification manual to the Secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) for distribution to all 165 CITES parties. We have also provided an electronic version to the CITES Secretariat which will form the basis for additional identification materials to be used by CITES nations.

II. PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS

In order to produce this high quality guide that will be indispensable for wildlife trade officers enforcing the new CITES ruling on seahorses, WWF worked to accomplish the following:

- Working with Project Seahorse, we produced background text on the status and conservation of seahorses, taxonomic information to differentiate the 33 known seahorse species, range maps for all species, and black and white photographs for all seahorse species found in trade.
- Working with an artist, we produced taxonomically accurate black and white line drawings and color plates for all species.
- Upon completion of a first draft, we engaged a number of experts and received extensive comment that greatly improved the final product.
- Working with designers and a printer, we ensured that we had both electronic and hard copy versions available in advance of all seahorses being regulated via CITES on May 15, 2004.

- WWF publicly launched the final product on May 12 via a press release (a copy is enclosed) distributed around the world as well as prominently featured on the websites of WWF and TRAFFIC, three days in advance of the CITES listing coming into effect.

We believe that the final product will greatly improve the implementation of CITES for seahorses by assisting regulatory authorities and wildlife managers in identifying seahorses to the species level and ensuring that trade is limited to seahorses that were legally and sustainably taken.

III. CHALLENGES

There have been several challenges in the process of producing this manual. Among those include the fact that the original manager of the project, Kimberly Davis, took another position within WWF and handed the project over to the current manager, Craig Hoover, the Deputy Director of TRAFFIC North America. This shift in responsibilities caused some delays on the front end of the project, but in the end, the identification guide will still be made available in advance of the seahorse listing coming into effect on May 15. Another significant challenge has been managing the involvement of a variety of people from different organizations and areas of expertise in working toward a final product. Among those involved have been wildlife trade experts, experts in seahorse biology and taxonomy, a seahorse artist, reviewers from different institutions and government agencies, all of which played a key role in producing the final product. Finally, because input came from such a variety of sources, the material going into the guide was also quite variable in terms of content, types of computer files, etc., which has created a number of design and printing challenges. However, we are extremely pleased with the final product, as it will very much meet the needs we intended at the project's outset.

IV. SUSTAINABILITY

The current level of funding allowed us to produce eight hundred copies of the manual as well as an electronic file that will be used by the CITES Secretariat for translation into additional identification materials in English, French and Spanish. Beyond this, we hope to have the capacity not only to produce further copies as needed, but also to produce the guide in other languages. Because one of the most significant demands for seahorses is as an ingredient in traditional Chinese medicine, a Chinese version of the manual could be invaluable for use in Asia. We are currently considering a number of funding options to ensure that we can make this guide available in Chinese and perhaps other languages.

V. PROJECT IMPACT

Among the most significant threats to seahorses is unsustainable collection to supply the demands of traditional Chinese medicine and the aquarium trade. Responding to that threat, the world's CITES nations decided to add all 33 species of seahorse on CITES Appendix II. In order to effectively regulate trade in Appendix II species, enforcement authorities and wildlife managers must be able to determine the species of seahorses

involved in individual shipments and ensure that these specimens match the documents that have been issued to allow such trade. Because seahorses are very difficult for the non-expert to identify, we recognized that the world's wildlife authorities were in need of an easy to use and readily accessible guide to seahorse identification. We believe that this guide meets that need, ensuring that seahorses are sustainably fished and more effectively managed and regulated in international trade. We greatly appreciate your critical support in making this valuable conservation tool available to those on the front lines of wildlife conservation.

Again, thank you very much for your generous support for this important project. Please feel free to contact me to discuss the content of this report or to discuss our additional plans to secure the long-term conservation of seahorses.



Press Release

World Wildlife Fund

1250 24th St. NW
Washington, DC 20037
www.worldwildlife.org

For Immediate Release
May 13, 2004

For further information: Jan Vertefeuille,
202/861-8362
Still photos available

Seahorses Gain International Protection on May 15

Vancouver – A monogamous lifestyle and male pregnancy aren't the only things that distinguish seahorses from other marine life. Starting May 15, international trade rules kick in for seahorses – making them one of the first commercially valuable marine species to be protected by the world's largest wildlife treaty.

A number of the world's species of seahorses are threatened because of overfishing and unsustainable trade, which has led to all 33 species being added to the wildlife covered by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES).

At least 77 countries are involved in the seahorse trade, so regulations on the international level are needed to ensure their protection. An estimated 24 million seahorses are taken from the wild every year, dried and sold for use in traditional Chinese medicine, to treat everything from asthma to sexual dysfunction. Hundreds of thousands more are sold live for the aquarium trade.

The CITES listing means more than 160 countries must now ensure that commercial trade of seahorses is not detrimental to wild populations.

“TRAFFIC has produced an ID manual to help ensure the seahorse regulations are successful in conserving these remarkable species,” said Ernie Cooper of TRAFFIC, the wildlife trade monitoring network of World Wildlife Fund and IUCN-The World Conservation Union. “It will be distributed to Customs agents and law enforcement officials in 165 countries to help them enforce the new rules through proper identification of the different species.”

The biology of seahorses may make them particularly vulnerable to overfishing. Because most species of seahorses are monogamous, for example, widowed animals don't reproduce until they find a new partner, and lost partners are not quickly replaced. Male pregnancy means that young depend on parental survival for far longer than in most fish. And small home ranges in many species may restrict recolonization of depleted areas.

Seahorses are traded internationally for use in aquariums, as curios and souvenirs, and in traditional Asian medicine. Trade in recent years appears to be increasing, with demand particularly high in China for use in traditional medicine. Survival rates for seahorses in captivity are low, meaning almost all seahorses in aquariums are wild-caught.

The CITES regulations for seahorses were approved in November 2002 but delayed for 18 months – until May 2004 – to allow countries time to put in place policies to enforce them.

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For more information about seahorses, go to www.worldwildlife.org. The seahorse ID manual was made possible thanks to generous funding support from the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Grant Program and the Curtis and Edith Munson Foundation.