

CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES
OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA



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INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOPS ON CORALLIIDAE SCIENCE, MANAGEMENT AND TRADE

This information document has been submitted by the United States of America.

The family Coralliidae, consisting of the genera *Corallium* and *Paracorallium* and commonly known as pink and red corals, contains the most valuable and rarest taxa of precious corals in commerce. Seven species in this family have been intensively fished for use in jewelry, amulets, art objects, and homeopathic medicines. There is a well-established pattern of discovery, exploitation, and rapid depletion of stocks, with fisheries moving on to new beds as old ones are depleted. Due to concerns over the sustainability of these fisheries used to supply the international market for precious coral jewelry and other products, the United States and Sweden (on behalf of the European Union) are proposing the Coralliidae family for listing in CITES Appendix II.

In response to issues raised at CoP14 in relation to the Appendix-II listing proposal, the United States provided partial funding for and participated in two workshops on the science, management, and trade in species in the family Coralliidae. The full workshop proceedings from Hong Kong and Naples are available to download in PDF format at <http://coris.noaa.gov>.

The First International Workshop on the Science, Management and Trade in *Corallium* was held March 16-20, 2009, in Hong Kong. This workshop, funded by the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Coral Reef Conservation Program, was convened to discuss implementation and enforcement of a potential CITES Appendix-II listing, and to assess available biological data to identify gaps and determine whether these taxa meet the criteria for listing under CITES. Speakers shared information on biological, fisheries, and trade data for Pacific Coralliidae species, as well as the Mediterranean *C. rubrum*. Participants included international experts from governments, academia, non-governmental organizations, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, industry, and the CITES Secretariat.

Recommendations: The group reached a general consensus that Coralliidae populations were overexploited, and participants stressed the need for improved conservation and management of Coralliidae populations.

- The Science Working Group compiled available data on the biology and population status of Coralliidae within Pacific range countries, including Japan, the island of Taiwan, and Hawaii. The group concluded that very limited information is available for Pacific populations, although new research efforts have been recently initiated in some areas. The group felt that population data should include measures of size and branching patterns, as these taxa exhibit a size-dependent increase in reproduction and persistence of large colonies may be required to ensure the long-term persistence of populations. There was also a need for more biological and genetic data to better understand reproductive potential, dispersal ability and connectivity of populations and likelihood of successful recruitment. Furthermore, knowledge of growth rates and better estimates of age are needed to determine sustainable harvest quotas.
- The CITES Working Group considered that listing the entire family (Coralliidae) and allowing identification of worked specimens at the family level would facilitate implementation of an Appendix-II listing. The working group also considered issues associated with stockpiles of 'pre-Convention' specimens, and non-detriment findings. The working group found that these issues are not unique to Coralliidae and are frequently dealt with for many CITES listings. The group also recommended consistent reporting of specimens in trade and a CITES personal effects exemption of up to a

maximum of seven specimens of finished items or one kilogram (2.2lbs), including any ancillary mounting, per person, whichever is the lesser.

- The Management Working Group summarized the current state of management in range countries. The group found certain minimum measures such as licensing, reporting, quotas, fishery dependent and fishery independent monitoring programs, and enforcement that would help countries to properly manage Coralliidae resources. There was general consensus that an effective CITES listing would require collaboration between CITES authorities and relevant fishery management bodies.

The second International Workshop on Red Coral Science, Management, and Trade: Lessons from the Mediterranean was convened September 23-26, 2009 in Naples, Italy. Hosted by the Italian Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Environment and the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the workshop provided an opportunity to discuss the best available science on the natural history of Mediterranean red coral (*Corallium rubrum* L.) and how it is managed throughout the region and utilized around the world. In addition to several days of presentations on the status, trade, and biology of *C. rubrum*, participants were also able to visit the red coral supply chain in Torre del Greco. Attendees included scientists, managers, representatives of the coral fishery and manufacturing industries, policy makers, environmental organizations from Europe, Africa, Asia, and North America, and the CITES Secretariat.

Recommendations: It was not possible for the workshop, when considering the report of the Trade Working Group, to reach any appropriate consensus on trade related issues as some participants objected to any reference to any CITES listings while others felt that discussion of the implications of a hypothetical CITES Appendix-II listing were essential. However, the Science and Management Working Group reached consensus on the following conclusions:

- A comprehensive Mediterranean approach to red coral management based on a common assessment of current management, monitoring and research measures across the region is needed. Management should be based on key scientific parameters such as population structure, density genetics, colony and population growth rates (reproduction and recruitment) and connectivity. Management regimes that are not adequately enforced fail to yield the anticipated conservation benefits.
- Shallow water populations are, or have been, over-exploited. The overall extent of decline in the Mediterranean is not known. Therefore, there is a clear need to determine the extent of decline and/or recovery. Shallow water (less than 70 meters) populations need to be fully protected from harvesting. Deep water populations (from 70-150 m) are a priority for research and fishery management because a) they are thought to contain abundant resources and fisheries are rapidly expanding into these areas because shallower areas no longer support commercial fisheries; and b) knowledge of population parameters and biology is limited. These populations should be managed by selective harvesting using appropriate size limits, but fisheries should not occur in these areas until population assessments have been completed and knowledge of biological parameters of *C. rubrum* from these depths is better understood. The deepest populations (>150m) are not believed to be currently harvested and should not be harvested as they could provide refugia for the species.
- The working group emphasized the need for further research to underpin the management and conservation of the species, and agreed that the absence of scientific information is not sufficient excuse not to manage populations on a precautionary basis.

Associated Activities

The United States is providing support to produce an identification manual for Coralliidae and other precious corals, which is currently in production. A presentation and sample of the manual will be discussed at a side event during the Conference of the Parties.