



**CONVENTION ON
MIGRATORY
SPECIES**

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FRESHWATER FISH INCLUDING THE EUROPEAN EEL

(Prepared by the Secretariat and the Scientific Council)

Summary:

This document reports on progress to implement Decisions 13.76-13.79 *European Eel* and on older mandates relating more generally to freshwater fish. It contains draft Decisions for adoption.

FRESHWATER FISH INCLUDING THE EUROPEAN EEL

Background

1. At its 13th meeting, the Conference of the Parties (COP13) adopted Decisions 13.76-13.79 *European Eel*, as follows:

13.76 Decision directed to Parties

Parties that are Range States to the European Eel are urged to: a) provide guidance to the Secretariat on the structure and scope of the proposed Action Plan for the European Eel (Anguilla anguilla) by 31 May 2020, so that a draft can be prepared, circulated and finalized in time for submission to the Standing Committee at its 52nd or 53rd meeting. b) provide funding for the development of the Plan, including the convening of a Range State Meeting to finalize it.

13.77 Directed to the Standing Committee

Request the Standing Committee to adopt the Action Plan, if provided to the Standing Committee, at its 52nd or 53rd meeting.

13.78 Directed to IGOs & NGOs

Intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations are urged to provide expertise and funding for the development of the Plan, including the convening of a Range State meeting to finalize the plan.

13.79 Directed to the Secretariat

The Secretariat shall, subject to the availability of resources: a) develop a draft Action Plan for the European Eel (Anguilla anguilla), following guidance provided by Range State Parties. b) hold consultations among the Range States and relevant IGOs and NGOs, on the draft Action Plan, by correspondence and if funding permits, by convening another meeting of Range States. c) submit the draft plan to the Standing Committee at its 52nd or 53rd meeting for adoption, or, if not finalized in time, to the 14th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

2. At the 5th meeting of the Sessional Committee of the Scientific Council (ScC-SC5) in 2021, the following activity was added to the Programme of Work:

ScC-SC5. Outcome 1.2 Programme of Work: Aquatic

Provide advice in response to the review of the conservation status of freshwater fish prepared by South America. Expected output: Recommendations for conservation action.

The European Eel

3. With the cooperation of the Sargasso Sea Commission and the Zoological Society of London, a first draft of a Single Species Action Plan for the European Eel (*Anguilla anguilla*) is under development. However, given the pandemic, and competing priorities, it has not been possible to finalize the draft and arrange a meeting of Range States in this intersessional period.
4. Discussions are under way with potential host countries for such a meeting to be held in 2024. Therefore, it is proposed to extend the relevant Decisions.

Other freshwater fish

5. There has not been a lot of work done in the context of CMS on freshwater fish species over the years. For example, it has been noted that the Giant Catfish (*Pangasianodon gigas*) was listed on CMS Appendix I in 1979, yet there has never been any CMS initiative on the species.

5-6. The request to ScC-SC5 can be best understood in the context of the previous work undertaken by the Scientific Council. The 15th Meeting of the Scientific Council (ScC15) in 2008 tasked the COP-appointed Councillor for Fish, Mr. Zeb Hogan, with preparing a report on the conservation status of CMS-listed freshwater fish. The resulting *Review of Freshwater Fish* was discussed at ScC16 in 2010, and made available to Parties as [UNEP/CMS/Inf.10.33](#). An executive summary was provided to COP10 in 2011 as [UNEP/CMS/Conf.10.31](#). The report reviewed available population assessments and provided guidance for including further freshwater fish in the CMS Appendices. Parties subsequently adopted [Resolution 10.12](#) *Freshwater Fish* at that meeting.

6-7. The review identified several species assemblages (groups of related migratory species) that would likely benefit from listing on CMS. These groups include sturgeon and salmon, sawfish (Pristiformes), freshwater stingrays (*Himantura* spp.), anguillid eels (Anguillidae), shad (Alosinae), and large, migratory pimelodids and characids of South America, pangasiid catfish of Southeast Asia (most notably the Mekong River), mahseer (*Tor* spp. and related species), Alestiidae of the Lake Chad basin, and cichlids of the East African Great Lakes. The report noted that this is not a comprehensive list of potential CMS candidates, but represented a starting point for discussions.

7-8. Of the species assemblages identified in the report as being likely to benefit from listing, all five species of sawfish (Pristiformes) and one anguillid eel (the European Eel, *Anguilla anguilla*) were added to CMS Appendix II in 2014. No other freshwater fish species have subsequently been proposed for listing.

8-9. The review also identified a number of individual species that would likely benefit from listing in CMS. These included eight South American freshwater fishes, of which three are Characiformes from La Plata basin and five are Siluriformes (three from La Plata basin and two from the Amazon basin). It should be noted that Brazil and Panama have submitted two proposals to COP14 for listing the Amazon catfish species, *Brachyplatystoma rousseauxii* and *Brachyplatystoma vaillantii*, in Appendix II.

9-10. At the 5th meeting of the Sessional Committee of the Scientific Council (ScC-SC5) in 2021, committee members raised the issue of freshwater fish, particularly in the South American context. The Council agreed to add to its Programme of Work the need to review the conservation status of freshwater fish and provide recommendations for conservation action, especially given the large number of Red List assessments of South American species completed in recent years. To this end, new draft Decisions are proposed in Annex 1.

Recommended actions

10-11. The Conference of the Parties is recommended to:

- a) adopt the draft Decisions contained in Annex 1 of this document;
- b) delete Decisions 13.76 – 13.79.

DRAFT DECISIONS

EUROPEAN EEL

Directed to Parties

- 14.AA (13.76(b)) Parties that are Range States to the European Eel are urged to provide support funding for the development of the Action Plan, including the convening of a Range State Meeting to finalize it.

Directed to intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations

- 14.BB (13.78) Intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations are urged to provide expertise and funding for the development of the Plan, including the convening of a Range State meeting to finalize the plan.

Directed to the Standing Committee

- 14.CC (13.77) ~~Request~~ The Standing Committee to shall adopt the Action Plan, if provided to the Standing Committee, at its ~~52nd or 53rd meeting~~ one of its meeting before CP15.

Directed to the Secretariat

- 14.DD (13.79) The Secretariat shall, subject to the availability of resources:
- a) ~~develop~~ finalize the draft Action Plan for the European Eel (*Anguilla anguilla*); ~~following guidance provided by Range State Parties.~~
 - b) hold consultations among the Range States and relevant IGOs and NGOs on the draft Action Plan, by correspondence and, if funding permits, by convening another meeting of Range States;
 - c) submit the draft plan to the Standing Committee at its ~~52nd or 53rd~~ a meeting before COP15 for adoption, or, if not finalized in time, to the ~~44th~~ 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

FRESHWATER FISH

Directed to Parties

- 14.EE Parties are urged to
- a) promote the collect and sharing of data on transboundary freshwater migratory fish species, including current abundance, fish ecology and habitat degradation, especially for those species identified on national, regional or global red listings;

~~b)~~ Take actions with respect to hydroelectric dams to mitigate the effects of barriers in rivers, such as the creation of conservation protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures in the upper and lower floodplains that are important for the feeding and spawning cycles of wild migratory fish populations;

~~b)c)~~ Consider developing a multispecies action plan based on minimizing the main threats to a group of species;

~~e)d)~~ work together with other Range States to propose the inclusion of additional threatened freshwater migratory fish species in the CMS Appendices.

Directed to non-governmental organizations

14.FF Non-governmental organizations are urged to

- a) work closely with Range States to provide expertise and funding for the collection and sharing of data on transboundary freshwater migratory fish species, including current abundance, fish ecology and habitat degradation, especially for those species identified on national, regional or global red listings;
- b) B. provide expertise and funds to Range States to support their research and data sharing.

Directed to the Scientific Council

14.GG The Scientific Council shall, subject to the availability of resources,

- a) develop a review of freshwater fish, updating that found in UNEP/CMS/Inf.10.33 and providing guidance for including further freshwater fish in the CMS Appendices;
- b) report to the Conference of Parties at its 15th meeting on the progress in implementing this decision.

Directed to the Secretariat

14.HH The Secretariat shall, subject to the availability of resources,

- a) support the Scientific Council in the development of the review outlined in Decision 14.GG;
- b) provide technical support to Parties for the implementation of activities outlined in Decision 14.EE;
- c) develop and disseminate relevant guidelines and management tools to Parties and other stakeholders.