CASE STUDY: *HIPPOCAMPUS* SPP. PROJECT SEAHORSE

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The following recommendations on Non-detrimental Finding procedure (NDFs) for seahorses (Hippocampus spp.) are based on the findings of the "International Workshop on CITES Implementation for Seahorse Conservation and Trade", February 3-5, 2004, Mazatlan, Mexico (Bruckner et al. 2005).

There are, at present, two levels of NDF recommendations for seahorses: 1) immediate measures, which should be implementable based on existing information and understanding, and 2) measures that will be feasible once more information is available. By considering immediate measures now, and developing more accurate measures later, Parties will be managing their seahorse trade according to the principles of adaptive management (Rosser & Haywood 2002).

CITES Parties have recognised the challenges of setting quotas or undertaking many other management measures for seahorses given the dearth of information on individual seahorse populations, exploitation levels, trade, and the considerable similarity in physical appearance of many species. There are, however, possible ways Parties could overcome the immediate difficulties of making early NDFs as required by the Convention. **What follows is a summary of such NDF options for wild seahorses.** Note that Parties are at liberty to do what they want to make NDFs under CITES – the following are *recommendations* of interim measures where Parties lack other options/opportunities.

1. Minimum export size – a 10 cm minimum size limit for specimens of all *Hippocampus* species in trade is one component of an adaptive management plan, and a simple precautionary means of making initial non-detriment findings (CITES Decision 12.54).
Criteria: Whether the size of individual seahorses entering trade is at or above the recommended height for seahorse exports.
Information: Height of individual seahorses being exported.

2. Protect seahorse habitats – protecting seahorse habitats should help to protect seahorse populations, at least until more information is obtained and more accurate spatial management measures can be developed and implemented.
Criteria: The percentage of seahorse habitats, or preferably populations, which are found within a Parties marine protected areas (MPAs).
Information: The location of seahorse habitats, or preferably areas of seahorse occupancy, and location of MPAs in a Parties waters.

3. Enforce existing laws – seahorses sourced from trawlers fishing in areas closed to trawling violate CITES provisions for legal acquisition, and should not be traded.
Criteria: Knowledge that seahorses entering trade from non-selective fishing practices are being sourced legally.

Please refer to the complete case study for the types of information needed to identity potential alternative management tools which could supplement or replace the suggested interim measures. Even basic types of data are useful, as long as they are presented with a corresponding metric of effort.