



**CONVENTION ON
MIGRATORY
SPECIES**

Distribution: General

UNEP/CMS/ Concerted Action 12.1

Original: English

CONCERTED ACTION ON THE EUROPEAN EEL (*Anguilla anguilla*)

Adopted by the Conference of the Parties at its 12th Meeting (Manila, October 2017)

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>Proponent</p> | <p>The Government of the Principality of Monaco, in collaboration with the Sargasso Sea Commission (SSC) and the CMS Secretariat.</p> <p>Monaco proposed the listing of <i>Anguilla anguilla</i> on Appendix II of CMS in 2014. The SSC had commissioned the basic science study for the listing of <i>Anguilla anguilla</i> under Appendix II – which Monaco drew on in making its case for the listing at the Scientific Council and the COP in 2014. The SSC subsequently worked with the CMS Secretariat, Monaco, the IUCN Anguillid Eel Specialist Group (AESG) and the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) to bring European Eel Range States together at an initial workshop in Galway, Ireland in 2016.</p> |
| <p>Target species, lower taxon or population, or group of taxa with needs in common</p> | <p>Class: Actinopterygii Order: Anguilliformes Family: Anguillidae Genus: <i>Anguilla</i> Species: <i>Anguilla anguilla</i></p> <p>Listed in CMS Appendix II, 2014</p> |
| <p>Geographical range</p> | <p>The growth stage of the European Eel is found in aquatic habitats of varying salinity, such as freshwater bodies, estuaries and coastal waters (Moriarty and Dekker 1997; ICES, 2009). A proportion of the European Eel’s life is also spent in the open ocean, both in Range States’ Exclusive Economic Zones and the High Seas.</p> <p>Its range is described as the North Cape in Norway, southwards along the coast of Europe, all coasts of the Mediterranean and of North Africa, as well as Iceland (Schmidt, 1922; Dekker, 2003).</p> |
| <p>Activities and expected outcomes</p> | <p>1. Convene a second Policy Meeting of Range States to explore all options that might help to strengthen conservation efforts for the European eel. This meeting should focus on exploring synergies between existing instruments, to solidify the role of CMS, and associated mechanism of implementation, in on-going conservation efforts.</p> <p>A first meeting has already been held in Galway, Ireland, in October 2016. Representatives from some 11 Range States and scientists from more than 10 countries attended. The meeting, focussed on the gaps in scientific knowledge relating to the species and its conservation needs and discussed the case for developing a</p> |

| | |
|--|---|
| | <p>possible CMS instrument. As recorded in the Meeting Report, participants recommended a second meeting – with a broader participation from range states – including those outside the EU.</p> <p>It essential that all range States, and other significant stakeholders and relevant RFBs, which includes RFMOs, are invited and strongly encouraged to participate in the proposed meeting. CITES should be <i>engaged in light of their expertise in relation to both legal and illegal trade of the species</i>.</p> <p>The meeting would be planned for early 2018, convened by the CMS Secretariat with financial and material support from Monaco and the SSC.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Undertake a survey of Range States to identify gaps in conservation and management of the species <p>This would provide a basis to prepare discussions for the second meeting. No financial outlay would be required by Range States.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Identify actions that complement both the 2016 CITES COP17 decision and the IUCN World Conservation Council 2016 Resolution that relate to anguillid eels. 4. Encourage improved data flow/collection to ICES for annual reporting and AESG for Red List assessment in 2018. 5. Engage with non-Range State stakeholders e.g. relevant Regional Fisheries Bodies, especially the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM). <p>Stakeholders will identify relevant funding sources as necessary.</p> |
| Associated benefits | <p>Cooperation under the CMS for the European Eel across its range would provide an important template for the management of other anguillids. Other species in continental waters will likely benefit from initiatives that focus on improving habitat status and/or freshwater connectivity.</p> |
| Timeframe | <p>Second Range State Meeting to occur in the first half of 2018, if possible.</p> <p>Related activities will continue if necessary until COP 13.</p> |
| Relationship to other CMS actions | <p>By listing the species on Appendix II, CMS Parties have already agreed that the species would benefit from an international cooperation.</p> |
| Conservation priority | <p>As explained in the proposal to add the species to Appendix II, there is significant concern of the status of the species due to a decline in recruitment, population and escapement of the species over the past four decades, and it is presently listed as ‘Critically Endangered’ on the IUCN Red List and Appendix II of CITES, as well as Appendix II of CMS.</p> <p>The species was listed on Appendix II of CITES in 2007 due to concerns over the impact international trade was having on European Eel stocks, as an attempt to ensure that all trade in the species was sustainable. In December 2010, however, the European Union banned all imports and exports of live and processed European Eel to and from the EU, as it was not felt it could assure that trade would not be detrimental to the species (Crook, 2011). This species can however, still be traded outside the EU from non-EU range states, for example countries in North Africa.</p> |

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>Relevance</p> | <p>The species is currently listed on Appendix II of CMS. Many key Range States, such as from North Africa, have not yet been involved in meetings, yet collective action is required to ensure proper protection.</p> <p>As explained in the proposal to add the species to Appendix II, “The European eel has a life history best described as ‘facultatively catadromous’. True catadromy could be described as feeding and growing in freshwater, and breeding in the marine environment. However, European Eels’ growth phase is often described as ‘continental’ as they are found in fresh, brackish and coastal waters. As such ‘freshwater’ is not believed to be essential to the continuation of the species – hence facultative catadromy. Breeding and spawning of the European eel occurs in the marine environment and this element is believed to be essential for the completion of the life cycle.”</p> <p>“There are still no exact data about specific spawning sites, however, from, and building upon, work carried out by Johannes Schmidt in the early part of the 20th Century (Schmidt, 1922) it has been deduced that spawning takes place in an elliptic zone, about 2,000 km wide in the Sargasso Sea, in the West Central Atlantic (approximately centered around 26°N 60°W).”</p> <p>Anguillid eels are panmictic and semelparous, and escapement from one region does not translate directly into returning larval recruitment at the same locality. As such, these life history traits, as well as the suspected, lengthy migrations to and from the Sargasso Sea, mean that they are susceptible to a range of threats, both in the marine and freshwater environments, and are challenging to manage and conserve.</p> |
| <p>Absence of better remedies</p> | <p>This action is directly addressing the need for range-wide co-ordination and harmonization.</p> <p>The management of the species is addressed under the European Union Council Regulation (EC) No 1100/2007 and all member states which have potential eel habitat are required to have National Eel Management Plans. However, the range of the species extends beyond the EU Member States, in particular to North African countries, which are Parties to CMS.</p> |
| <p>Readiness and feasibility</p> | <p>Leadership by the Government of Monaco, CMS Secretariat and by the Sargasso Sea Commission Secretariat. Funding by Monaco, the Sargasso Sea Commission and other donors.</p> |
| <p>Likelihood of success</p> | <p>The feasibility of the actions is supported by engagement from Monaco, a Range State, and the Sargasso Sea Commission.</p> <p>Risk factors include lack of participation from Range States and lack of finance to support future workshops and meetings</p> |
| <p>Magnitude of likely impact</p> | <p>New initiatives, that complement existing plans for the management of the species, are developed and implemented.</p> <p>Improved management can provide a template for the conservation of other eel species.</p> |
| <p>Cost-effectiveness</p> | <p>This plan is the most efficient way to engage with Range States and determine the role of CMS in the conservation of the European Eel.</p> |

References

- Crook, V. (2011) Trade in European Eels: Recent Developments under CITES and the EU Wildlife Trade Regulations. *TRAFFIC Bulletin* 23(2): 71-74.
- Dekker, W. (2003) Did lack of spawners cause the collapse of the European Eel, *Anguilla anguilla*? *Fisheries Management and Ecology* 10: 365-376.
- ICES (2009) Report of the Study Group on Anguillid Eels in Saline Waters (SGAESAW).
- Moriarty, C. and Dekker, W. (1997) Management of the European eel. *Irish Fisheries Bulletin* 15: 1-110.
- Schmidt, J. (1922) The breeding places of the eel. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London Series B* 211: 179–208.
- UNEP/CMS (2014) Proposal for the Inclusion of the European Eel (*Anguilla Anguilla*) on CMS Appendix II. [UNEP/CMS/COP11/Doc.24.1.18. Rev. 1](#)