

Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) Special virtual session for SBSTTA-24 Statement

The global COVID-19 pandemic has been devastating to people and economies. The Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (Association) founded in 1902, is the professional organization that serves as the collective voice of North America's fish and wildlife agencies. Our mission is to support and advocate for state, provincial and territorial responsibility for science-based fish and wildlife conservation. The Association believes that the development of domestic and international interventions (i.e., policies, regulations) to reduce the risk of future pandemics need to be targeted and specific; consider the economic, nutritional, and conservation benefits of sustainable harvest and use of wildlife that many local communities depend upon; improve national and international collaboration; increase our knowledge of wildlife diseases; and employ a One Health approach.

The Association believes that science-informed, targeted and proactive domestic and international interventions are needed to reduce risks of future pandemics while continuing to support people and wildlife. Policies need to be rooted in the fact that well-regulated and managed harvest, trade, and use (including tribal/indigenous rights) can successfully sustain fish, wildlife, and the habitats upon which they depend while supporting food security and livelihoods.

We recommend that the CBD should consider risks of future pandemics and lessons learned from the current pandemic in development of the global biodiversity framework. We recommend the GBF incorporate collaboration with subnational governments and wildlife agencies; encourage the funding and use of research and science to guide targeted interventions and reduce the risk of future pandemics; support targeted rather than broad wildlife trade and consumption bans; support improved safety, sanitary standards of wildlife markets (and in specific cases closure); help garner increased resources to help countries develop and enhance regulatory frameworks and policies for legal and sustainable use, trade, and consumption of wildlife including additional law enforcement capacity; and help enhance public outreach and education.

Our position paper is available on AFWA's website. www.fishwildlife.org.