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2013 REPORT ON CMS ACTIVITIES IN NORTH AMERICA



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2013 REPORT ON CMS ACTIVITIES IN NORTH AMERICA

Summary

As requested at the 40th Meeting of the Standing Committee (Bonn, November 2012), the present report provides a summary of the activities and accomplishments undertaken by the 50% CMS Officer/North American Focal Point based at UNEP RONA in Washington, D.C. covering the period of January-July 2013.

These activities support raising awareness of CMS (Resolutions 10.7 and 10.21), mobilizing resources for CMS, promoting partnerships (Resolution 10.21), and managing the relationship between CMS, the CMS Family, and MEAs with the UNEP Regional Office North America (RONA), as called by the Future Shape document (Resolution 10.9, activities 2 and 8).

This document is organized in a manner consistent with the format of the 2012 Washington Accomplishments Report and includes a short Executive Summary.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Washington, D.C. is an epicentre for international conservation. The city attracts international institutions, foundations, and non-governmental and inter-governmental organizations from all over the world. Opportunities to promote CMS abound. The CMS Washington Officer frequently attends special events, seminars and Congressional briefings on migratory species representing CMS and providing CMS with access to important international audiences (e.g. Global Environment Facility, World Bank, US Government agencies, embassies, international NGOs, etc.). A network of over 400 new contacts has been established in less than two years.

2. In addition to raising awareness about CMS, and developing cooperation with relevant stakeholders the Washington Officer helps to facilitate the relationship between CMS, the CMS Family, other MEAs and the UNEP's Regional Office in North America. By working jointly for CMS and for UNEP, the Officer has direct access to staff and associated networks across both entities. Cost savings are realized by sharing travel and staff administration costs between both offices. The Officer is frequently able to represent both CMS and UNEP interests at meetings and in several projects including: the Spain-UNEP LifeWeb Marine Mammal Corridors Project, activities related to UNEP's new Campaign on Wildlife Crime, and the World Bank Global Partnership on Oceans.

3. In the 20 months that the Washington Officer post has been in place, evidence suggests that regional interest in and support for CMS activities has grown. This is reflected by increasing political and financial support for several important CMS MoUs and species. For example, despite a challenging fiscal scenario for international and environmental programmes in the U.S.:

- a) US\$130,500 was allocated by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and U.S. Department of State combined, in voluntary support to the Indian Ocean Sea Turtle Agreement (IOSEA) in 2013;
- b) US\$200,000 has been allocated by the U.S. State Department since 2011 to support activities under the CMS Shark MoU; and
- c) US\$75,000 was directed to support three grantees working on CMS marine species (sharks and dolphins) conservation in the Western Hemisphere via CMS's role as Steering Committee member of the Western Hemisphere Migratory Species Initiative (WHMSI);

4. In terms of political support to CMS, the U.S. has demonstrated its engagement as follows:

- a) **The Pacific Island Cetacean MoU** was signed by the U.S. in November 2012;
- b) **The Agreement for the Conservation of Albatross and Petrels (ACAP)** remains on the U.S. Priority Treaty Ratification list with growing interest in it expressed by the new U.S. Secretary of State and the NGO community;
- c) **The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)** renewed a Letter of Cooperation (LoC) with CMS in February 2013, extending the partnership through to 2018.

5. In addition to building financial and political support for CMS, the Washington Officer increases visibility of CMS in the region and provides technical support to CMS programmatic activities as needed with a special emphasis on marine topics (e.g. sharks, cetaceans, marine debris, underwater noise, high seas engagement and ecological networks). General support is provided to the CMS Secretariat for partnership development and engagement, communications and outreach, and strategic planning.

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Background & Summary

1. The CMS Washington post was created to raise awareness and visibility of CMS in North America and to help build political support for the Convention while also mobilizing resources for implementation of CMS and its instruments. This post is a half-time, P2 level post with costs and time shared equally with UNEP's Regional Office for North America (RONA), where the post is hosted. UNEP RONA's role includes the implementation of MEAs such as CMS and thus shares equally in the benefits of this unique arrangement. For UNEP, the officer works to support RONA's oceans and coastal ecosystems portfolio including the Spain-UNEP LifeWeb Marine Mammal Corridors project, an ocean outreach video series, and serves as RONA's Programme of Work Coordinator. In addition to raising awareness about CMS and building partnerships (as called for in CMS Resolutions 10.7 and 10.21, respectively), the Washington Officer also helps to manage the relationship between CMS, the CMS Family, other MEAs and the UNEP Regional Office in North America, as called for in CMS Resolution 10.9 (Activities 2 and 8) of the Future Shape document. As a Global Convention the long-term goal is to convince additional countries such as the U.S. and Canada to become Contracting Parties to CMS. In the short term, however, building political support for CMS has been concentrated on the U.S. with expansion into Canada and/or Mexico to be considered in future years.

2. With respect to the U.S, progress was made on all fronts as evidenced by increasing interest in CMS activities globally and growing political and financial support for several important CMS Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) and CMS species. With the signing of the Pacific Island Cetaceans MoU in September 2012, the U.S. is now a signatory to three CMS MoUs - the others being the Indian Ocean South-East Asian Marine Turtle MoU (IOSEA) and the MoU on the Conservation of Migratory Sharks. The Agreement for the Conservation of Albatross and Petrels (ACAP) remains on the U.S. Priority Treaty Ratification List with increasing interest from the NGO community, CMS is on the Steering Committee of the the Western Hemisphere Migratory Species Initiative (WHMSI) which provides the basis for the Washington Officer to liaise with the Chair (USFWS) and Vice Chair (OAS) of WHMSI regularly.. Through this excellent relationship CMS was able to direct US\$75,000 to support several CMS species activities through the WHMSI marine grants fund.

3. The relationship between UNEP and CMS has also been strengthened with the placement of this dual role post. In a letter to the CMS Executive Secretary (cc'd to UNEP's Executive Director), RONA's Regional Director stated "*... this collaboration has been highly successful, and is a model for cooperation between UNEP and MEAs such as CMS. I have seen first-hand how knowledge about CMS has grown since Ms. Thiele has been located here in the Region. Due to Ms. Thiele's efforts, support for CMS has also grown, with increased funding from the U.S. government as well as engagement and leadership on CMS priorities, such as the shark MoU*".

4. The CMS Washington Officer is pleased to submit the following update on activities covering the period of January-July 2013. The 2012 Report is available as Appendix I. This Year II (six-month report) uses the same format, addressing the Officer's priority activities as follows:

- I. Mobilizing Resources for CMS;
- II. Raising awareness and understanding about CMS;
- III. Building political support for CMS;
- IV. Engaging partners and exploring new partnership opportunities; and
- V. Providing general support to the CMS Secretariat.

I. Mobilizing Resources for CMS

5. Expanding on fundraising efforts begun in Year I, the Washington Officer continues to nurture relationships with U.S. Government Agencies, Foundations, NGOs, and private sector entities, in effort to catalyze support for CMS activities globally [refer to list provided in the 2012 Washington Officer Report-Appendix II]. Building the political interest and momentum necessary to garner support from leadership across Government Agencies and Congressional Offices is paramount to securing future appropriations to priority CMS topics. For example, following the November 2012 announcement by former Secretary Clinton, which acknowledged the need for a global commitment to fight wildlife crime, numerous hearings, seminars, roundtables, and Congressional luncheons were hosted around Washington on this topic. All of this momentum resulted in a Presidential Executive Order in June 2013 establishing an Advisory Council on Wildlife Crime, supported by a commitment of \$10 million. Similarly, building the same momentum in Washington about CMS migratory species issues and linking CMS activities to the growing interest in wildlife crime, may prove useful to building the political support necessary to catalyze high level action and mobilize financial resources.

6. Some accomplishments include:

- a) Web articles and notifications about 2013 grant opportunities, within the U.S. and beyond, including USFWS Multinational Species Conservation Funds and Critical Ecosystem Partnership Funds (CEPF) were sent around to assist stakeholders with accessing relevant grant programmes. Several CMS partner proposals to USFWS and other grants were supported by the Secretariat with letters of endorsement.
- b) The CMS Washington Officer played an active role to support the grant proposal submitted for instance by Wild Migration for the Western Africa Elephant to the USFWS Multinational Species Conservation Fund Grant. Unfortunately this application was not accepted but other proposals already submitted as well as future ones may be successful, particularly as the budget for USFWS is expected to grow by US \$ 76.4 million in fiscal year 2014, to total of US \$ 1.6 billion. The CMS Officer maintains regular contact with USFWS grant officers and Department of Interior programme staff and seeks to identify priorities and opportunities for future funding.
- c) CMS participated in a technical review of WHMSI marine grant proposal applications (January 2013). In total, a sum of US\$75,000 was awarded to support conservation of several CMS listed species. In total US\$50,000 was directed to support two shark conservation activities in Central America; 1) a shark identification workshop to be hosted by Defenders of Wildlife in Mexico and 2) a shark conservation project by MarViva Foundation in Panama. Both of these activities will contribute to the goals of the Sharks MoU while \$25,000 was awarded to support acoustic detection and environmental education for the Franciscana dolphin in Argentina.

7. The CMS Officer continues to explore other opportunities to raise funds for CMS priorities (NOAA, USFWS, USAID, CEPF etc.) and assists with drafting letters of support for grants applied to by other CMS partner organizations (e.g. Whale and Dolphin Conservation, AWF, HSI-US, IFAW, etc.).

II. Raising awareness and understanding about CMS

Outreach & Network Building

8. In addition to specific North American outreach activities, the Officer also provides communications support to CMS including circulation of CMS Bulletins and selected Press Releases to a North American audience via UNEP RONA's civil society electronic mailing list (1,000+) and website, in addition to sending specific outreach emails to targeted species conservation contacts developed over the last year (400+). These contacts are captured in a new CMS NA contacts database and associated electronic mailing list. In turn, the Officer also relays relevant news stories from North American media to CMS Secretariat and contributes regularly to CMS website updates and notifications on fundraising opportunities or other topics. The Officer has also been useful in exploring ways to elevate CMS's profile through engagement with celebrity figures to serve as "Ambassadors".

Representational & Liaison Role

9. As an epicentre for international conservation and development institutions, Washington, D.C. provides many opportunities for representing and promoting CMS worldwide. The CMS Officer frequently attends international seminars or NGO briefings on migratory species topics to build familiarity with relevant issues, but also to network with attendees and panel participants about the existence of CMS (e.g. GEF, AAAS, ICCF, World Bank, IUCN, IDB, French Embassy etc.). When relevant, these new contacts are in turn connected with CMS Secretariat staff for follow up or collaborative opportunities. A sample of the type of outreach and representational opportunities undertaken by the CMS Washington Officer include:

- a) **World Bank / Global Partnership on Oceans (GPO):** CMS Washington Officer facilitated the participation of CMS in this new ocean alliance of 100+ governments, international organizations, civil society groups and private sector. As a formal partner now, CMS will be invited to attend a high level Global Oceans Action Summit being hosted jointly by the Government of the Netherlands and the World Bank at The Hague in spring 2014.
- b) **Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) Annual Meeting:** As a result of increasing communications between AFWA International Programme Director and CMS Washington Officer, the relationship between these two organizations is strengthening. CMS was invited to provide CMS information materials to the annual AFWA members meeting (September 2013). As the collective voice of North America's state, provincial and territorial fish and wildlife agencies, AFWA plays a critical link to future accession of CMS in America.
- c) **USAID Strategic Plan for Global Biodiversity:** Following very positive meetings with USAID, the CMS Washington Officer collected and compiled CMS inputs to the new USAID strategic plan for biodiversity, which included considerations for migratory species and increased collaboration with existing biodiversity treaties like CMS, CBD and CITES.
- d) **International Whaling Commission & Marine Debris Workshop:** The CMS Washington Officer participated in an IWC Scientific Committee technical workshop on "Marine Debris and Cetacean Entanglement", hosted in conjunction with Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute in Massachusetts, USA (May 2013). The Officer made presentations on behalf of both CMS and UNEP. Outcomes included furthering objectives of CMS Resolution 10.4, strengthened CMS presence among marine debris experts, and a renewed working relationship with IWC, including a commitment by the IWC Chair to renew and extend the MOU between IWC and CMS.

III. Building political support for CMS

10. Although the U.S. is not a party to CMS, it has contributed significantly to the implementation of several MoUs to which it is signatory, including: the Indian Ocean South-East Asian Marine Turtle MoU (IOSEA), the MoU on the Conservation of Migratory Sharks (Sharks MoU), and most recently, the MoU on the Conservation of Cetaceans and their Habitats in the Pacific Island Region (PIC MoU). The U.S. continues to consider the ACAP Treaty among its priority treaties for ratification. Other priority issues include addressing marine threats (e.g., by-catch, overfishing, underwater noise and marine litter), promoting ecological networks, and identifying strategies for adaptation to climate change.

Signs of Growing Political Support

11. The Washington Officer helps to promote CMS engagement in various migratory species arenas. A sample of activities is presented below:

- a) **NOAA/CMS Partnership:** The Washington Officer coordinated renewal of the NOAA/CMS Letter of Cooperation (LoC) which was officially signed in February 2013 in London, extending the partnership through to 2018. The Officer regularly meets NOAA's focal point for CMS to exchange updates and implementation of the major activities stated in the LoC.
- b) **Sharks MoU:** The U.S. has been a leading proponent of the CMS Sharks MoU as demonstrated by its engagement with the Shark Conservation Plan Drafting Committee and its active role at the Sharks Meeting of Signatories in Bonn in September 2012. As noted in the previous report, the U.S. contributed an additional \$100,000 in 2012, above and beyond the \$100,000 originally allocated in 2011. The Washington Officer is working to secure another instalment of funds for sharks, but with the fiscal scenario at the moment, this request is currently on hold. Working closely with the CMS Sharks Focal Point, the Washington Officer continues to promote U.S. engagement in CMS shark conservation activities including education and outreach activities (e.g. secured shark finning cartoon for Sharks MoU website, exploring production of 2-Minute YouTube shark video, and possible webpage repository for Shark ID guides for government focal points.). Last but not least also to obtain financial support to implement the Sharks MoU.
- c) **ACAP Treaty Ratification:** The Washington Officer has helped to invigorate NGO and federal partner collaboration on ACAP topics and promotes ACAP whenever possible to U.S. Government Agencies, Congressional liaisons and funder prospects (e.g. Packard Foundation). For now, ACAP remains on the U.S. Priority Treaty Ratification List and stands a reasonable chance of review in 2013, due in part to the growing awareness and support for domestic legislation being promoted by civil society champions and federal partners such as USFWS, but also due to special interests of the new Secretary of State John Kerry.
- d) **Pacific Islands Cetacean MoU:** Following U.S. signature of the MoU in September 2012, the Washington Officer continues to promote exchanges between U.S. Government (e.g. NOAA) and the CMS Marine Focal Point and the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) to implement MoU conservation activities. Funding is being explored to support the PIC MoU, similar to the way the U.S. has been funding the Sharks MoU.

- e) **Sea Turtles/IOSEA MoU:** The U.S. remains very engaged in the CMS/IOSEA MoU as reflected by active meeting participation and annual monetary contributions-totalling US\$130,500 so far for 2013. Funding as follows: NOAA [US\$37,500], USFWS [US\$18,000 pending] and U.S. State Department [US\$75,000]. The Washington Officer stays up to date on sea turtle activities in order to promote supportive activities in the U.S. and has helped to relay queries from U.S. civil society about IOSEA and CMS legal framework to the Secretariat (e.g. Cayman Islands Turtle Farm query).
- f) **CMS & Engagement in the High Seas:** UN General Assembly Meeting on Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (UNGA/ABNJ) Meeting (New York): In June, the CMS Washington Officer coordinated an informal internal CMS Task Force meeting to explore CMS's interests in marine migratory species conservation activities in the high seas. This builds on ongoing global discussions regarding a potential new international treaty on the high seas and builds off a side event hosted by IUCN at CMS COP10 on Marine Biodiversity and the High Seas. With expertise in marine affairs, the Washington Officer is working with the Coordinator of the CMS Abu Dhabi Project Office to explore CMS engagement with the newly formed Global Oceans Commission. The Officer also assisted with preparatory materials for a senior CMS representative to attend the UNGA/ABNJ meeting held in NYC (August 2013).
- g) **Wildlife Crime & U.S. State Department Initiative:** As noted, the then U.S. Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton made an official announcement calling for an end to illicit wildlife trafficking and recognized it as a major foreign policy and global security issue. The CMS Officer continues to monitor and report on developments, including the recently announced (1 July) U.S. Executive Order which establishes a Presidential Task Force on Wildlife Trafficking and associated Advisory Council.

IV. Engaging Partners and Exploring New Partnership Opportunities

12. The Washington Officer continues to explore opportunities for in-kind support from governmental and non-governmental organizations around Washington. In just two years, almost 500 new contacts have been made within the Washington conservation community which may help to elevate the profile of CMS generally while also presenting opportunities for more specific engagement. Specifically, the Washington Officer helps to engage these formal or informal partners with CMS activities (e.g. inputs to CMS reports or vice versa, attending meetings or events etc.).

13. Conversations are ongoing with the following U.S. agencies: USFWS, U.S. Agency for International Development, U.S. Department of Interior and the U.S. Forest Service, along with non-governmental organizations including: National Geographic Society, Wildlife Conservation Society, World Wildlife Fund, TRAFFIC NA, the International Conservation Caucus Foundation, African Wildlife Foundation, World Society for the Protection of Animals, Humane Society US, Pew Environment Group, International Fund for Animal Welfare (US office), IUCN, National Geographic Society and associations like Association for Fish and Game Agencies. Other partnership explorations include inter-governmental institutions like the Climate Investment Forum, the GEF/STAP, Organization for American States and the World Bank. For example, CMS recently joined the World Bank's Global Partnership on Oceans, facilitated by the Washington Officer. Some other notable areas of partner engagement include:

- a) **Inputs to CMS Strategic Plan for Migratory Species (2015-2023):** The Washington Officer has been soliciting feedback from both the U.S. Government and NGOs on the Global Strategic Plan for Migratory Species 2015-2023 and is working with Acting Inter-Agency Liaison Officer on preparations for hosting a consultative forum at UNEP RONA in the autumn.

- b) **CBD Spain-UNEP LifeWeb Marine Mammal Project:** The Washington Officer continues to explore cross-cuts between the UNEP LifeWeb Project and CMS interests in expanding its presence in Latin America & the Caribbean. Building on ideas and contacts established at a UNEP hosted intergovernmental workshop in Panama (May 2012), the CMS Officer (in her UNEP capacity) is exploring the development of a regional network of marine mammal experts that would promote collaboration and information exchange across the North and South East Pacific. Benefits may include utilizing the CMS legal framework for establishment of this network, in concert with CMS Cetaceans Programme of Work, and promotion of CMS mission for cetacean conservation.
- c) **U.S. Marine Mammal Commission (MMC):** The Washington Officer recently attended a Congressional Hearing on the U.S. Marine Mammal Stranding Network and heard from experts from NOAA, MMC, and the scientific community. The Officer is exploring closer relationships between CMS and the MMC given obvious shared interests in by-catch impacts, ship strikes and ocean noise impacts on migratory marine mammals.
- d) **WILD Social Network:** This is an informal network of wildlife conservation professionals from Federal offices and other international institutions around Washington which meets monthly. Includes representatives from U.S. Treasury, USFWS, ICCF, DOI, U.S. State Department, AFWA etc.

V. Providing general support to the CMS Secretariat

14. In addition to specific fundraising and awareness building activities, the Officer provides regular inputs to CMS family documents and operational strategies (e.g. Fundraising initiatives, Global Migratory Species Strategic Plan, Website and CMS Database, CMS Handbook, Future Shape Document, etc.). Technical support is also provided as requested to implement various CMS Agreements and Resolutions (e.g. Ecological Networks, Climate Change, Marine Debris, Underwater Noise, PIC, Sharks MoU, ACAP and IOSEA) along with exploration of emerging issues (e.g. wildlife crime). The Officer also participated in the June 2013 CMS Secretariat retreat which was well received by colleagues and CMS leadership alike.

Looking Forward

15. As the U.S. economy recovers and the President's budget is negotiated for 2014, CMS stands ready to benefit from increasing political momentum on endangered species topics, wildlife crime issues, and new sources of funding for addressing biodiversity conservation globally. The more familiarity U.S. agencies and organizations have with CMS, the greater the likelihood is for CMS to be invited to participate in international events and fora and to be represented (e.g. International Conservation Caucus Foundation Gala, September 2013).

16. Major activities planned by the Washington Officer for the autumn include: hosting a consultative forum to collect inputs from the U.S. government and possibly NGOs on the CMS Strategic Plan for Migratory Species; organizing a Congressional Briefing along with relevant Hill visits for ACAP Executive Secretary; organizing a mission for CMS Executive Leadership to connect with senior leadership in Washington; continued inputs to CMS's activities in the High Seas/ABNJ; continued engagement with the World Bank Global Partnership on Oceans; ongoing meetings with relevant grant managers from USFWS, CEPF, and the GEF to pursue funding opportunities for CMS and partners; ongoing monitoring of U.S. Executive Order on Wildlife Crime and associated UNEP wildlife crime campaign; working with the CMS Marine Mammal officer on execution of the Marine Debris Terms of Reference with Eunomia Consultants and Final Report preparations; and monitoring outcomes from IWC Meeting on Marine Debris and preparations for Workshop II in 2014.