

**Conservation of seahorses, pipefishes and seadragons (family Syngnathidae)**

DELIGHTED that seahorses, pipefishes and seadragons (more than 300 species in the family Syngnathidae) exhibit remarkable life histories, including paternal care through to full male pregnancies;

AWARE that syngnathids occur from tropical to subarctic regions in freshwater, transitional/estuarine waters and coastal seas;

MINDFUL that syngnathids are iconic flagship species, help structure communities, are ascribed medicinal and cultural value, and can be economically important for fishers and traders;

WORRIED that human activity and climate change are causing widespread degradation and destruction of syngnathids' freshwater, transitional and coastal habitats (e.g. estuaries, coral reefs, mangroves, seagrass beds);

CONSCIOUS that about 80 countries have exported tens of millions of syngnathids annually for traditional medicines, dried seafood, aquarium display and curiosities;

DISTURBED that syngnathids are extracted by bottom trawls and other non-selective gear at unsustainable levels, particularly during biomass fishing;

DISMAYED about large declines in catch per unit effort for syngnathids in industrial and small-scale fisheries;

NOTING that the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species includes 113 syngnathid species as Threatened, Near Threatened or Data Deficient, with special concerns for seahorses (*Hippocampus* spp.), freshwater pipefishes and estuarine species;

APPRECIATIVE that the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) listed seahorses on its Appendix II and approved Decisions at the 18th Meeting of the Conference of Parties (CITES COP18, Geneva, 2019) to strengthen support for this genus;

CONCERNED that many CITES Parties face difficulties in implementation, with vast illegal exports of dried seahorses;

NOTING that bans on capture and export of syngnathids must be accompanied by constraints on non-selective fishing gear;

TROUBLED that aquaculture ventures for syngnathids often add to pressures on their wild populations; and

CONCERNED that syngnathids are released from captive populations or translocated haphazardly, without plans or monitoring;

**The IUCN World Conservation Congress 2020, at its session in Marseille, France:**

1. ENCOURAGES IUCN to:

- a. use iconic syngnathids to promote action on broad ocean issues, including climate change; and
- b. contribute to public databases on syngnathids, particularly iNaturalist and iSeahorse;

2. CALLS ON all Members, especially State and Government Agency Members, to:

- a. take note that the Species Survival Commission (SSC) Seahorse, Pipefish and Seadragon Specialist Group can provide assistance on how to conserve syngnathids;
- b. by 2022, ensure the status of all syngnathids is assessed and included in national/regional Red Lists as warranted;
- c. support the work of the Seahorse, Pipefish and Seadragon Specialist Group in keeping the assessments of all syngnathids up to date;
- d. ensure that initiatives to combat Illegal Wildlife Trade (including e-commerce) include syngnathids, as appropriate;
- e. by 2021, for any release, apply SSC guidelines for reintroductions and translocations; and

f. protect and restore freshwater, transitional and coastal habitats that are important for syngnathid species, using best practices; and

3. URGES all IUCN State and Government Agency Members to:

a. enforce regulations on fisheries, area-based management, habitat protection, wildlife trade and other measures that affect syngnathids;

b. meet all CITES obligations for seahorses;

c. respecting Resolution 6.021 *Monitoring and management of unselective, unsustainable and unmonitored (UUU) fisheries* (Hawai'i, 2016), measurably reduce impacts of non-selective fisheries on syngnathids;

d. support implementation of Resolution 6.050 *Increasing marine protected area coverage for effective marine biodiversity conservation* (Hawai'i, 2016), to improve protection for syngnathid populations nationally;

e. ensure that fisheries programmes and subsidies do not threaten syngnathid populations; and

f. by 2021, restrict syngnathid culture to operations that have been subject to an appropriate/careful risk analysis prior to proceeding, and where results have concluded that it is reasonable/safe to continue.