

**Progress Report, 2-year Action #17**  
**2015-2017 Bilateral and Multilateral Actions,**  
**Circumpolar Action Plan:**  
**Conservation Strategy for the Polar Bear**



<b>Title</b>	Operations, Protocols, and Procedures of the Range States
<b>Timeline</b>	2015-2017
<b>Description of Activity from 2017 Implementation Table</b>	Explore and develop options for making the operations of the Range States more standardized and/or formal. A working group will be created to develop options for consideration by the Range States in 2017. Options should include a full range from formally adopting rules of procedure and protocols to consideration of a Secretariat, and associated costs and funding options to implement the Circumpolar Action Plan (CAP)
<b>Baseline status</b>	Recommendations not developed
<b>Planned Outputs</b>	Establish an Operations, Protocols and Procedures Working Group (OPP WG) and present recommendations at the 2018 Range States Biennial Meeting of the Parties (MoP)
<b>Modifications</b>	None
<b>Progress Report Date</b>	November 24, 2017

**Progress Report on Activity**

An Operations, Protocols and Procedures Working Group (OPP WG) was created with representation from each of the Range States. The OPP WG worked through e-mail and conference calls to develop a paper which was distributed to the Heads of Delegation (HoD) and discussed at their January 24, 2017, conference call. That paper discussed the following:

1. Formalization of Protocols on the Role of Invited Experts, Observers and the Media
2. Development of a List of Approved Observers
3. Adoption of Terms of Reference for the Range States and Rules of Procedures for Range States Operations
4. Options for securing scientific advice
5. Mechanisms for obtaining Traditional Ecological Knowledge
6. Challenges associated with carrying out the work of the Range States and options for securing capacity for logistical and administrative support

During their January 24, 2017, phone call, the HoD considered the range of options presented by the OPP WG. The HoD tasked the OPP WG with continuing to explore: (1) possible models and associated costs; (2) possible agreements or ways to formalize the Range States; and (3) possible ways to secure funds to support the suggested approaches.

In response to the request from the HoD, the OPP WG prepared a phase 2 report, dated June 26, 2017. During the August 8, 2017, HoD call, the phase 2 report was discussed along with a paper submitted by the United States entitled *Future Range States' Direction*. The HoD acknowledged the connection between the work of the OPP WG and the *Future Direction* paper in that the Range States need to reach agreement on their scope of work moving forward and then determine the necessary capacity, structure and processes to successfully complete that work.

The HoD charged the OPP WG with investigating and reporting on the following prior to the September 12<sup>th</sup> HoD phone call:

1. Ask the Russian Federation if, in order for them to fully participate with the Range States, they need some formalization of the Range States agreement;
2. Explore options for sharing capacity with Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF) and Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), with preference for CAFF due to fact that only Norway is a member of CMS;
  - a. Is a partnership with the Range States possible?
  - b. Are there opportunities for financial arrangements with those entities that would facilitate pooling of funds from the Range States?
3. Add a section on timelines/implementation to consider the amount of lead time each Range State would need in order to seek and obtain funds to contribute to support a Secretariat;
4. Propose approaches for shared cost formulas;
5. Include the cost of website maintenance into the overall Secretariat agreement;
6. Consider adding development of Range States press releases (what would it look like, how would it be developed and approved, role of the Communications WG and a future Secretariat); and
7. Propose to the HoD alternatives for how to best work with the International Union for the Conservation of Nature/Species Survival Commission (IUCN/SSC) Polar Bear Specialist Group (PBSG), including consideration of a more formalized procedure for requesting scientific advice.<sup>1</sup>

The HoD stated they intend to review the progress of the OPP WG at their September 12, 2017 phone call with a goal of making a decision regarding a Secretariat at the October 10, 2017 phone call so that implementation details could be developed in preparation for the 2018 Biennial MoP.

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<sup>1</sup> The OPP WG will expand the discussion with the PBSG to discuss ways forward, including the option of a Memorandum of Understanding, Terms of Reference, and alternatives for hosting a Program Officer.

At their January 24, 2017 conference call, the HoD also tasked the OPP WG with drafting rules of procedure for Range States Operations and to make a draft available no later than 60 days before the 2018 Biennial MoP. Given the proposed timing of the MoP, the draft should be presented to the Heads of Delegation for discussion no later than their November phone call. The OPP WG will focus on this during the months of September and October.

The OPP WG was tasked with further exploring the concept of a Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) Advisory Committee for consideration by the HoD addressing the possible role, membership, and duration. The OPP WG wanted to ensure any recommendation it made regarding TEK was informed by the TEK Working Group. In January 2017, the HoD charged the TEK WG with compiling different TEK approaches, best management practices and guidelines used by different entities. The HoD indicated they would then review that inventory and determine if they were specific enough for polar bears or whether they should be accompanied or complimented by a document more polar bear-specific. Once the TEK WG has completed this task, the OPP WG can review the inventory and discuss what recommendation it wishes to make to the HoD regarding a possible TEK Advisory Committee.

### **Next Steps**

As noted above, the work of the OPP WG is continuing in response to requests from the HoD. The OPP WG continues to explore options for securing administrative and logistical support for the work of the Range States. The OPP WG has proposed that the Parties share the duties of facilitating the policy work of the Range States on a rotational Chairmanship basis. This could then be complimented by collaboration within an existing entity, such as the CAFF, to provide administrative and logistical support. Also as noted above, the OPP WG will present draft rules of procedure to the HoD for consideration as an agenda item for the 2018 Biennial MoP.