

Progress Report, Action #53
2018-2020 Bilateral and Multilateral Actions,
Circumpolar Action Plan:
Conservation Strategy for the Polar Bear



Action	Maintenance of Website Established for 2015 Range State Meeting and Maintenance of a permanent Range States website
Point(s) of contact or Lead country	Norway/Communications Working Group Andreas Schei, Lauren Schmuck, Bridget Crokus andreas.benjamin.schei@miljodir.no ; lauren.schmuck@canada.ca ; bridget_crokus@fws.gov
Partner countries	n/a
Timeline Description as per 2018-2020 implementation table	Carried over from 2015-2017; task may be carried into 2018-2020 2-year cycle and through 2025
Baseline status	Not developed.
2018 Status	Permanent Range States website established December 1, 2017
Planned Outputs	Range States website.
Modifications	
Progress Report Date	September 30, 2019

Progress Report on Activity

Under an existing agreement between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF), the U.S. provided funding (\$5,000 USD) to the CAFF for the development of a Range States website, www.polarbearagreement.org. The Range States website was launched and made available to the public on December 1, 2017. For the 2-year period from 2018 to 2020, Norway provided \$5,500 (\$2,750 per year) to CAFF to host and maintain the website.

The website design is a basic structure that can be built upon as necessary. The current primary functions of the website are to serve as the “digital platform” for the Circumpolar Action Plan (CAP) and to provide access to key documents. The list below shows the current menu items and key elements of the website:

- About—Provides details about and key documents regarding:
 - The history of the Range States, including the 1973 Agreement on the Conservation of Polar Bears and the 2013 Ministerial Declaration
 - The role of the IUCN PBSG as the Scientific Advisory Body to the Range States
 - Past and upcoming Meetings of Parties

- Contact information for each Range State
- Polar Bear Management--Information about national and bilateral actions/agreements for polar bear management, as presented in the CAP
- Circumpolar Action Plan – Information about the CAP and 2-year CAP Implementation Plans
- Polar Bear Biology – General information on polar bear biology, as presented in the CAP
- Working Groups – Brief descriptions of the working groups, key documents associated with each working group, and contact information for the chairs of the working group
- Resources
 - Public-facing page with links to all key documents on the website

Password-protected page available for working group members to share documents.

Next Steps

The Communications Working Group (Comms WG) will continue to develop and populate the Range States website as an ongoing action during the next two-year work period. Changes to the website will be facilitated through a Range States Website Editorial Board, which was approved on November 14, 2017, by the Heads of Delegation and consists of members from each Range State as well as individuals from the Comms WG.

Website hosting and maintenance is expected to cost approximately \$3,000 USD per year. These costs were included in the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) *between the Polar Bear Agreement and the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna, Administrative support arrangement for a Polar Bear Agreement Project Officer* presented to the Arctic Council in June 2019. In the event the MoU is not implemented, future funding of the website will be the responsibility of the Range States host country for each 2-year cycle. Canada will assume the role of host country in March 2020 after the biennial MoP in Norway; however, the funding agreement between the current host country (Norway) and CAFF is valid through December 31, 2019.

Considerations Going Forward:

Yes, this action should be retained as a priority action. Due to the limited capacity (in both staff time and web expertise) among the Range States, it is difficult to fully exploit the potential communications power of the website. Because website maintenance and support are included in the MoU, the Comms WG strongly recommends the HoD and CAFF consider web experience when selecting the position of project officer, as the project officer is more likely to be able to dedicate time to the maintenance of the Range States website than members of the Comms WG are able to.