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Non-detriment finding for Cuban crocodiles (*Crocodylus rhombifer*)

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Scientific name: *Crocodylus rhombifer* Cuvier, 1807.

Common name: Cuban crocodile.

Norwegian name: Kubakrokodille; rutekrokodille.

Type of permit: CITES Appendix I (Norwegian CITES Regulation Annex I, List A).

Country of re-export: Norway (NO)

Country of import: Denmark (DK)

Purpose and source: The proposal concerns the re-export from Norway (Opplev Tropisk AS) to Denmark (Krokodille Zoo) of three live Cuban crocodiles (purpose-of-transaction code Z; source code F). We note that source code C was used in the re-export application, but this is inconsistent with the documentation attached to the application which states that the specimens are of source code F.

For Appendix I species (Norwegian CITES Regulation Annex 1, list A) it is required to establish that exports will not be detrimental to the survival of that species, in compliance with CITES Article III. In the Norwegian CITES Regulation (Lovdata, 2018), the criteria for re-export from Norway are described in Chapter 2, Section 5, and it is required to establish that the re-export does not have a harmful effect on the conservation status of the species.

VKM has adopted the definition of detriment, cf. Conf. 16.7 (Rev. CoP17) suggested by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Division of Scientific Authority:

1. Harvest that is not sustainable.
2. Harvest that harms the status of the species in the wild.
3. Removal from the wild that results in habitat loss or destruction, or that interferes with recovery efforts for a species.

Conclusion: *Positive*

VKM concludes that the re-export from Norway to Denmark of three live Cuban crocodiles (*Crocodylus rhombifer*) born in captivity for the purpose of zoological exhibition will be non-detrimental to the survival of the species and will not adversely affect its conservation status, in accordance with Article IV of the Convention and Chapter 2, Section 5 of the Norwegian CITES Regulation.

The conclusion is based on the following factors:

- The individuals are born in captivity in Denmark (Krokodille Zoo), and the re-export will not have any detrimental effect on the conservation status of the species.
- Hybridization with American crocodiles (*Crocodylus acutus*) in the wild is a main threat to the Cuban crocodile, and keeping a pure captive-bred stock is therefore considered important for the future survival of the species.

1. Biological information

Distribution

Crocodylus rhombifer is endemic to Cuba (UNEP, 2026) where its distribution is restricted to a single location, the Zapata swamp, on the mainland (MacMahan et al., 2022). The species inhabits densely vegetated shallow water areas (McMahan et al., 2022).

Life history

The average clutch size has been estimated to be 25.4 eggs in captivity and 14.5 eggs in the wild (Ramos-Targarona, 2013 in McMahan et al., 2022). Generation length is estimated to be 25 years (McMahan et al., 2022). *Crocodylus rhombifer* interbreeds with *C. acutus* and hybrids outnumber pure bred offspring (Milian-Garcia et al., 2015).

Role in the ecosystem

Crocodylus rhombifer is a predator that feeds on fish, turtles, and small mammals (McMahan et al., 2022). It is a mound-nesting species (McMahan et al., 2022).

2. Population trend

According to the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species (McMahan et al., 2022; assessed in 2022), the population is decreasing with a continuing decline of mature individuals. The population size has been estimated to be 2,400 mature individuals, with all individuals restricted to a single location (McMahan et al., 2022).

3. Conservation status

Crocodylus rhombifer is classified as Critically Endangered under criteria A2cde in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species (McMahan et al., 2022). This listing reflects an estimated population decline of $\geq 80\%$ over the past three generations (~ 75 years). Quantitative analyses indicate a high probability of extinction, and the drivers of decline are ongoing or not fully reversible (McMahan et al., 2022; see Threats below). There is continuing decline in area, extent, and/or quality of habitat (McMahan et al., 2022).

4. Threats

The species faces severe threats due to its extremely restricted range; limited to a single, isolated locality undergoing habitat degradation, illegal hunting for meat, resource competition with *Crocodylus acutus* and *Caiman crocodilus fuscus*, and extensive genetic swamping through hybridization with *C. acutus*, leaving only few pure *C. rhombifer* individuals left in the wild. Moreover, climate-driven sea-level rise is expected to transform this final refuge into brackish or saltwater marshes, conditions that disproportionately favor *C. acutus* and further threaten the long-term survival of *C. rhombifer* (Milian-Garcia et al., 2015; McMahan et al., 2019; McMahan et al., 2022).

5. Conservation and Management measures:

International legislation

Crocodylus rhombifer is listed under Appendix I of CITES and there are no current quotas in place for this species. The species is listed under Annex I of the EU Wildlife Trade Regulations (UNEP, 2026).

National legislation

The species is found within The National Park Ciénaga de Zapata, a protected wetland area that is classified as a Category II IUCN Protected Area (National Park) and a Ramsar Site (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2024).

Conservation measures

A conservation action plan has been developed by the IUCN Crocodile Specialist Group, see McMahan et al. (2019) and McMahan et al. (2022).

Captive breeding is considered of high importance to avoid hybridization (Milian-Garcia et al., 2015) and a program to support in-situ and ex-situ efforts to preserve the species is ongoing (Association of Zoos and Aquariums and SAFE Saving Animals from Extinction, 2024).

There is one CITES-registered breeding operation in Cuba (A-CU-501; CITES, 2026).

6. Trade/use

Legal

The skin of *C. rhombifer* is considered less attractive than that of other crocodiles (McMahan et al., 2022).

No wild-caught individuals (source code W) were reported in international trade between 2016 and 2025. During the same period, 35 live individuals (trade term “Live”) were reported in international trade, all of which were documented as either captive-born (source code F) or captive-bred (source code C) (CITES Wildlife TradeView, 2026).

Illegal

Illegal hunting for meat occurs (McMahan et al., 2022).

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