



## NOTICE TO THE WILDLIFE IMPORT/EXPORT COMMUNITY



September 29, 2005

### **Subject: Trade in Beluga Sturgeon (*Huso huso*) Caviar and Meat Suspended from Caspian Sea Basin Countries**

**Background:** On April 21, 2004, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced the listing of beluga sturgeon (*Huso huso*) as threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). On March 4, 2005, the Service issued a special rule (Federal Register Vol. 70, No. 42 10493-10507) for beluga sturgeon that outlined requirements for the conservation of the species as provided for by section 4(d) of the ESA.

The special rule indicated that each Caspian Sea basin country wishing to export beluga caviar or beluga meat to the United States without a threatened species permit must submit basin-wide cooperative management plans and national legislation and regulations that implement these basin-wide management plans by September 6, 2005. The rule states that the Service will immediately suspend trade with all countries in a basin or with a given country if the countries fail to submit this required information.

The Service announced that it has suspended the import of, and foreign commerce in, beluga sturgeon (*Huso huso*) caviar or meat originating in the Caspian Sea basin countries of Azerbaijan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation, and Turkmenistan because the required information was not submitted. This suspension applies to shipments that have been exported directly from these countries, re-exported through an intermediary country, or transported as personal or household effects. It also prohibits foreign commerce.

The Service is currently reviewing information received from countries in the Black Sea basin.

**Action:** Effective September 30 th, the Service will refuse clearance on imports of beluga sturgeon caviar (including products containing caviar such as cosmetics) or meat originating from Azerbaijan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation, or Turkmenistan that were shipped on or after September 30 th without a threatened species import permit.

Affected imports include caviar or meat shipped directly from these countries, re-exported from an intermediary country, or transported as personal or household effects. Foreign commerce, including re-export, in beluga sturgeon caviar or meat originating from the Caspian Sea basin on or after September 30th is also prohibited.

Interstate commerce of beluga caviar or meat legally imported prior to the suspension will continue to be authorized under the special rule. Because of the perishable nature of sturgeon caviar and meat, interstate commerce must be completed within 18 months from the issuance date of the original CITES export permit.

In accordance with the special rule, trade may continue from the countries of the Black Sea basin that have declared 2005 export quotas for beluga sturgeon (Bulgaria, Romania, and Serbia and Montenegro), as required under CITES, while the Service reviews the submitted information.

**Contact:**

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**

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