



NOTICE TO THE WILDLIFE IMPORT/EXPORT COMMUNITY



December 23, 2004

Subject: Designated Port Status for Houston, Texas

Background: By law, most wildlife imports and exports must enter or leave the United States through a designated port, where they are inspected and cleared by Service wildlife inspectors. The system of designated ports (which funnels wildlife shipments through a limited number of locations) and related declaration, inspection, and clearance requirements help the Service ensure that wildlife trade complies with U.S. laws and treaties that protect species worldwide. The Service has offered limited inspection services in Houston since the early 1980s, but businesses and individuals using this port were required to obtain special permits and pay additional fees.

Houston, Texas, will officially become a "designated port" for wildlife trade on January 5, 2005. Service wildlife inspectors will process all types of wildlife imports and exports at this location, bringing the number of ports nationwide that handle all types of wildlife trade to 17. Designation of this port will improve service and reduce costs for businesses and individuals shipping wildlife.

Action: On January 5, 2005, businesses or individuals may import or export wildlife and wildlife products through the port of Houston without the previously required port exception permit. Licensed importers and exporters will only pay a \$55 inspection fee and applicable overtime costs per shipment (declaration) as required for all designated ports. Importers and exporters who do not require a license will only pay applicable overtime costs. Importers and exporters of live or perishable shipments must provide notice of their shipments to the wildlife inspection office and receive confirmation at least 48 hours in advance to ensure inspection staff is available. Declaration requirements will not change with the new port status.

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