

Prop. 12.50 (Nicaragua) Include all neotropical populations of bigleaf mahogany (*Swietenia macrophylla*) in Appendix II, including logs, sawn wood and veneer sheets in accordance with Article II paragraph 2(a), of the Convention and Resolution Conf. 9.24, Annex 2a.

SSN VIEW: Support Adoption of Proposal

- *S. macrophylla* has declined dramatically and is commercially extinct throughout much of its former range.
- Species has suffered significant habitat loss due to extensive deforestation throughout its range.
- Deforestation rates within the “mahogany belt” exceed those outside areas where *S. macrophylla* occurs.
- Current harvest practices and harvest levels are incompatible with the long-term survival of this species.
- Unsustainable harvest levels are driven by high demand for mahogany in international trade.
- Current Appendix III listings do not afford adequate protection for this species.

Bigleaf mahogany (*Swietenia macrophylla*) meets the criteria for listing on CITES Appendix II. Primarily as a result of overexploitation for international trade, *S. macrophylla* has experienced substantial population declines and habitat loss over the last half century, and is now commercially extinct throughout much of its former range. The reproductive biology of this species makes it peculiarly vulnerable to this risk—mahogany trees are slow-growing and late maturing, and mahogany seeds remain viable for only a short time, and require conditions for regeneration that are not created by current selective logging practices. It is widely recognized that current harvest levels and practices are unsustainable, and have exceeded, over an extended period, the level that can be continued in perpetuity (a criterion for listing on Appendix II in Resolution Conf. 9.24, Annex 2 (B)(i)). Moreover, unless stringent controls are adopted to ensure the sustainability of this trade, *S. macrophylla* will meet the criteria for inclusion in Appendix I in the near future. Specifically, *S. macrophylla* warrants Appendix II listing under the following criteria: Annex 1(A)(i) (“an observed, inferred or projected decline in the number of individuals or the area and quality of habitat”); Annex 1 (B)(i) (restricted area of distribution along with “fragmentation or occurrence at very few locations”); Annex 1 (B)(iii) (“a high vulnerability due to the species’ biology or behavior”); and Annex 1 (B)(iv) (a), (d) and (e) (“an observed, inferred or projected decrease” in the “area of distribution,” “the area or quality of habitat,” and “reproductive potential”).

S. MACROPHYLLA WILL SOON MEET APPENDIX I CRITERIA IF TRADE IS NOT REGULATED

S. macrophylla regenerates slowly, in single age stands. This facilitates local over-exploitation, as loggers can easily remove all mature trees in a population. Due to the short life-span of mahogany seeds and selective logging practices, *S. macrophylla* tends not to regenerate after logging. Selective logging does not produce the gaps in the canopy necessary for mahogany regeneration; and with mature trees harvested, and no long-term seed-bank, mahogany populations can quickly become commercially extinct. This results in a cycle in which over-harvest is followed by local extirpation, which is followed by over-harvest in a new area.

Minimum cutting diameters have decreased, so that many trees are now harvested before they reach reproductive maturity. Transportation and logging technology has improved, making it easier for loggers to remove mahogany trees selectively. Researchers believe that 96.3% of commercially sized trees have already been removed.

There is evidence that the selective removal of the best specimens—known as “high-grading”—may lead to genetic decay, as the genes causing desirable traits such as hard wood and good color are systematically removed from the gene pool.

Illegal logging is rampant. Brazil, which exports 45% of mahogany entering international trade, estimates that 80% of Amazonian timber originates from illegal sources.

Seventy-five percent of the forests in Central America which originally contained mahogany have been lost, and a great deal of additional forest is threatened. Deforestation inside the mahogany belt is proceeding at a faster rate than deforestation outside mahogany’s range. Logging roads constructed to reach high-value stands of *S. macrophylla* effectively subsidize the exploitation of other lower-value species which could not be economically harvested without the pre-existing road. Following this secondary harvest, logging roads provide access for settlers, who convert the clear-cut and adjacent forests to agricultural or range land, preventing forest recovery and further accelerating forest fragmentation and loss.

TRADE OF S. MACROPHYLLA EXCEEDS LEVELS THAT CAN BE CONTINUED IN PERPETUITY

Researchers have concluded that the current level of exploitation is unsustainable. Areas within mahogany’s range are being rapidly deforested, and even in areas where the forest remains relatively intact, selective logging is leading to removal of virtually all the seed-producing mahogany trees.



When commenting on the COP10 proposal to list *S. macrophylla* in Appendix II, the World Conservation Union (IUCN) stated that “IUCN considers that *Swietenia macrophylla* presents a clear case of meeting the criteria for inclusion in Appendix II, and therefore supports this proposal.” The situation for *S. macrophylla* since that time has only worsened.

CURRENT APPENDIX III LISTINGS DO NOT ADEQUATELY PROTECT *S. MACROPHYLLA*

Several—though not all—Range States currently list *S. macrophylla* on CITES Appendix III. Although these Appendix III listings require exporting Parties to verify the legal origin of specimens prior to issuing export documents, they do not require that the harvest and export be sustainable. Because levels of legal protection for *S. macrophylla* vary dramatically between Range States, Appendix III does little to ensure the long-term sustainability of mahogany exports. By requiring Parties to issue export permits only on a finding that the export will not be detrimental to the survival of the species, Appendix II listing will improve the management of *S. macrophylla* in all Range States where it is commercially exploited, and remove existing competitive incentives to harvest the species unsustainably.