



NEWS



FROM THE U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

February 4, 1998

Patricia Fisher 202-208-5634

U.S. SUPPORTS RHINO, TIGER CONSERVATION AT HOME AND ABROAD

The Administration is throwing its support behind a new act proposed by Congress to make it illegal to sell products labeled as containing rhino or tiger parts in the United States, Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt announced today.

"The United States will do its utmost to ensure that the next commemoration of the Year of the Tiger is a celebration and not a wake," said Babbitt. "This legislation will have the full support of the Administration and, if enacted, will add to other efforts to assist our international partners in rhino and tiger conservation. This country will use every tool it has to help save the world's wild rhino and tiger populations from extinction due to illegal trade and habitat loss." This new measure (H.R. 2807, the Rhino and Tiger Product Labeling Act) closes a gap in the existing Rhino and Tiger Conservation Act by prohibiting importation and sale of products claiming to contain rhinoceros horn or tiger products. If adopted, it would allow law enforcement officers to seize the illegal substances at U.S. ports of entry.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Federal agency charged with implementing the Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Act, is assisting rhino and tiger range states with expanded on-the-ground conservation efforts. Domestically, the Service has been working in partnership with local Asian communities to develop educational materials to address the thriving illegal trade in traditional oriental medicines purported to contain tiger or rhino parts and its impact on wild populations.

"In this Year of the Tiger, I am encouraged to report that, thanks to appropriations provided by the U.S. Congress for the Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Fund, range countries in Africa and Asia are reporting progress in their efforts to combat the forces responsible for the absolutely desperate state of these species due to habitat degradation and the illegal trade," Babbitt said.



At latest count, there were no more than 5,000 to 7,000 tigers left in the wild. The total population of all three Asian rhino species is less than half the number of tigers and the African black

rhino has suffered a 90-percent reduction since the 1960s. All populations of both species are protected under the U.S. Endangered Species Act and by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), an international conservation agreement; nevertheless, the lucrative illegal trade in their parts and products continues.

Although range country governments were trying to reverse the reasons for this dire situation, they were without sufficient funds, training, personnel, enforcement capability or equipment to ensure success against the well-organized poachers. Recognizing that the United States could offer much-needed financial and moral support to the conservation programs of nations whose activities impact rhinos and tigers, Congress passed the Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Act in 1994. The Act provides money to fund projects that will enhance sustainable development programs to provide effective long-term rhino and tiger conservation. Congress authorized funding for the Act through the year 2000. In FY 1996, Congress appropriated \$200,000 for these grants, \$400,000 in FY 1997, and another \$400,000 in FY 1998, and the same amount is requested in the President's 1999 budget proposal.

To date, 30 projects in 10 range countries have been awarded some \$582,000 under the Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Fund. This money has been tripled by matching funds, provided in most cases by the grant recipients, bringing the total to almost \$1.9 million. Half the money has gone to support law enforcement programs. In addition, nine grants were awarded to range country governments with an equal number going to range country non-governmental organizations. A total of 12 grants went to international non-governmental organizations.

"The distribution of these small grants indicates that everyone is trying to work together to halt the drastic decline of these species," said Babbitt. "I am encouraged to report that grant money is getting right into the hands of individuals who are working in local communities close to the problem. These are often out-of-the way places rich in wildlife, vulnerable to poachers, and very difficult to protect. The simple act of providing boots, raincoats, and basic training can make an enormous difference in the ability of rangers to undertake effective anti-poaching measures."

Some examples of current projects and how they benefit rhino and tiger range countries are:

- o In Assam, India, the Fund provides support for various conservation efforts at Kaziranga National Park and Pobitor, Orang, and Laokhowa wildlife sanctuaries. Kaziranga National Park provides habitat for the largest remaining

Indian rhino population, 55 percent of the total wild population of the species. The \$30,000 provided by the Fund will be used by park forest guards to build 10 shelters for their use while on security patrols, permitting them to remain longer in areas where poachers access the park.

- o A grant of \$16,840 was awarded to The Wildlife Protection Society of India to support six workshops to educate local law enforcement officials on such topics as wildlife laws, species identification, law enforcement techniques, and interagency coordination.
- o The Fund awarded a \$19,730 grant to the Project Committee of the Conservation of One-Horned Rhinoceros in Assam, India, to strengthen the implementation of the Indian Wildlife Protection Act as it relates to the conservation of rhinos in Assam. These funds allow the grantee to gather much-needed information on rhinoceros poaching and the trade in rhino parts, identify poaching strongholds, inventory seized products, and build a database. The grant is also helping fund an enhanced law enforcement capability as well as workshops on rhino conservation needs and laws protecting these animals.
- o The black rhino population in Tanzania has been reduced to fewer than 100 individuals because of extensive poaching. The Fund has provided \$30,480 to the World Wildlife Fund in Tanzania to support surveillance and monitoring training for field staff of the Selous Game Reserve, one of the largest protected areas in Africa.
- o The Minnesota Conservation Officers Association has received a grant of \$40,000 for its Adopt-A-Warden program in Indonesia. This program is giving Indonesian national park wardens training, equipment, and technical assistance from Minnesota game wardens.
- o Huai Kha Khaeng National Park in Thailand, that country's largest continuous naturally forested area, is considered to be one of Thailand's most biologically important areas and contains its largest tiger population. A \$9,637 grant to the Royal Forest Department will allow conservation outreach and education within the local communities and afford the chance to foster mutual trust between villagers and wildlife conservation officers through a series of meetings.
- o Vietnam's wild animals and plants are being exploited in the international marketplace. Through the Fund, the Institute of Ecology and Biological Resources will use a \$12,790 grant to provide 30 Customs officers who work along Vietnam's border with China with basic training covering the

principles of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species and their implementation.

- o The Javan rhino is the most imperiled of all rhinos. A grant of \$19,680 to Vietnam's Institute of Ecology and Biological Resources supports information-gathering efforts on the status of the Javan rhino population in Catloc Nature Reserve including the number of rhinos and their distribution. These studies will provide data necessary for formulating enhanced rhino conservation programs for law enforcement officers and for local communities.

"These grants, though small, really make a difference," said Babbitt. "In addition to giving range countries funds for law enforcement and conservation efforts, the Fund's most important contribution is intangible. This program tells local people that we in the United States care about what they are doing."

A list of Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Fund grants awarded to date is attached.

The Service is not only providing conservation assistance and law enforcement education abroad, but is working with this country's local Asian communities to stop consumer demand for traditional medicines purported to contain rhino or tiger parts.

"In order to break the cycle of poaching and illegal trade which has so devastated these irreplaceable animals, we must also work to break supply lines and remove rhino and tiger products from the marketplace," said Babbitt.

The thriving trade in traditional Oriental medicines in cities all around the world having large Asian populations has fueled poaching activities in range countries. In 1994, the Service began a pilot program in Los Angeles, which has one of this country's largest Asian communities, involving an extensive outreach and conservation education program in conjunction with local schools and community-based activities. In addition, in Los Angeles, an interagency wildlife law enforcement task force has made concentrated efforts to interdict shipments of wildlife products including rhino and tiger medicines.

"Thanks to this partnership with the Asian community, Los Angeles now has the lowest incidence of rhino and tiger products in traditional medicine shops," said Babbitt.

Despite this success in Los Angeles, Service wildlife inspectors all over the country routinely find shipments containing wildlife products labeled as containing protected species parts, especially rhino and tiger. Once these mass-produced products reach the United States, even when labeled as containing rhino or tiger parts, the legal burden of proof falls on the Service to

demonstrate scientifically whether the products actually contain what the labels say. According to the Service's forensics experts, it is a very time-consuming and costly process to develop a DNA analysis test to identify any particular group of wildlife, such as all rhinos or all tigers.

Given this situation, seized items must often be returned to the importer because it is not possible to show any violation of any existing U.S. law such as the Endangered Species Act or the Lacey Act. In addition, because enforcement is so difficult, these products are easily found for sale.

"These products, whether or not they actually contain rhino or tiger parts, stimulate demand and feed the market that makes these critically endangered animals more valuable dead than alive," said Babbitt.



FACTS

from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

RHINOCEROS AND TIGER CONSERVATION FUND

Administered By The

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Projects Funded By Program Area

Fiscal Years 1996 and 1997 (Total Funds: \$582,000)

Surveys and Monitoring

Training Programme For Game Scouts Involved In Rhino Population Monitoring (South Africa), IUCN SSC African Rhino Specialist Group, \$5,105: Revision and production of a new edition of a proven training program.

Aerial Monitoring Of The Northern White Rhinoceros In Garamba National Park, Zaire, World Wide Fund for Nature - WWF, \$19,680: Aerial monitoring of rhinos for population data and security purposes (Democratic Republic of Congo)

Workshop On Tiger Field Assessment (Nepal), University of Minnesota, \$5,000: Workshop on development of a tiger field assessment manual.

Study for Enhancing Rhino Conservation in Cat Loc Nature Reserve, Vietnam, Institute of Ecology and Biological Resources, \$25,740: Survey Javan rhino numbers, distribution and age structure at Cat Loc Nature Reserve.

Technical Assistance Mission to Vietnam on Census Techniques for Javan Rhinoceros in Cat Loc Nature Reserve, International Rhino Foundation and IUCN Asian Rhino Specialist Group, \$11,600: Participation of Indonesian and Dutch rhinoceros specialists in Javan rhino survey.

Staff Training and the Survey of Four Black Rhino Populations in the Selous Game Reserve, Tanzania, WWF-Tanzania, \$30,480: Staff training and survey of four black rhino populations in the Selous Game Reserve.

To Assess the Distribution and Status of Tigers at Phuoc Son/Tra My, Quang Nam Province, Vietnam (a joint project with the University of Minnesota), Forest Protection Department of Vietnam, \$21,100: Data will be used to determine the factors that limit tiger population size and identify management needed to alleviate conflicts between human land use practices and tiger conservation.

To Assess the Distribution and Status of Tigers at Phuoc Son/Tra My, Quang Nam Province, Vietnam (a joint project with the Forest Protection Department of Vietnam), University of Minnesota, \$12,740: Participation of U.S. and Nepali tiger specialists in Vietnam's Phuoc Son/Tra My tiger survey.

Indo-US Training Workshop on Sampling Based Methods for Monitoring Tiger and Prey Populations in Indian Reserves, Center for Wildlife Studies, \$11,500: Workshop on sampling based methods for monitoring tiger and prey populations for Indian Forestry Department officers.

Conservation Education

Conservation Education And Awareness Training Programme For The Protection And Preservation Of The Tiger And Rhinoceros (India), The Green's Movement, \$14,420: Public awareness program and conservation education on rhinoceros and tiger for villagers, forest guards and general public in Assam.

Naikarra/Laleta Community Rhino Scout Program For Survival Of The Black Rhino Population (Kenya), Friends of Conservation, \$5,690: Community rhino scout program to guard black rhinos, collect ecological data, increase awareness of need for wildlife conservation among local people at Naikarra and Laleta.

Tiger Community Education Program At Way Kambas National Park, Sumatra, Indonesia, Minnesota Zoo Foundation, \$21,900: Tiger conservation education program in villages surrounding Way Kambas National Park.

Community Outreach Program, International Rhino Foundation to receive funds for the Wildlife Department Sabah, (Malaysia) \$26,680: Rhinoceros conservation education for villagers, school children, plantation managers and workers in Sabah.

Conservation Awareness Project for Rural Communities in Huai Kha Khaeng Buffer Zone, Thailand, Wildlife Research Division, Royal Forest Department-Thailand, \$9,637: Tiger conservation awareness project for rural communities in Huai Kha Khaeng National Park buffer zone.

Support Network for Grass-Root NGOs for Better Protection of Wild Tigers in India, Wildlife Protection Society of India, \$18,900: Program to strengthen smaller non-government organizations local to Indian tiger habitats so that they can effectively help protect the tiger in the field.

Law Enforcement (on protected areas)

Establishment Of Sumatran Rhino Protection Units For Way Kambas National Park, Sumatra (Indonesia), International Rhino Foundation, \$32,400.

Adopt-A-Warden, Minnesota Conservation Officers Association, \$40,600: Equipment and training for park personnel to strengthen protection of the Javan rhino at Ujung Kulon National Park and the Sumatran rhino and tiger at Way Kambas National Park.

Conservation of the Great Indian One-Horned Rhinoceros in North East India, Rhino Foundation for Nature in North East India, \$34,060: Raincoats, warm jerseys, hunting boots, and haversacks for Assam's forest guards protecting rhinos and tigers.

Conservation Of The Great Indian One-Horned Rhinoceros In North East India - Wireless Systems, The Rhino Foundation for Nature in North East India, \$21,407: Communications equipment for Assam's forest guards protecting rhinos and tigers.

Rhino Security Appeal (Kenya), Lewa Wildlife Conservancy, \$20,960: Training and equipment for game guards of Il Ngwesi and Namunyak Wildlife Conservation Trust lands to strengthen anti-poaching protection for black rhinoceros.

Establishment of Rhino Protection Units in Ujung Kulon National Park, Java, Indonesia, International Rhino Foundation and IUCN Asian Rhino Specialist Group, \$28,917: Establishment of Javan Rhino Protection Units in Ujung Kulon National Park.

Conservation Of Rhino In Kaziranga National Park (India), Wildlife Area Development and Welfare Trust, \$30,000: Construction of 10 permanent camps on the periphery of Assam's Kaziranga National Park for security patrols protecting Indian rhinos and tigers.

Law Enforcement (off protected areas)

Investigation Into Poaching And Illegal Trade Of Wild Tigers In India, Wildlife Protection Society of India, \$30,900: Documenting and monitoring the extent of tiger poaching and illegal trade in tiger parts to assist Indian government enforcement agencies and raise public awareness.

Conservation Of One-Horned Rhinoceros In Assam: Strengthening Of Enforcement And Legal Proceedings In Illegal Trade And Other Offences (India), Office for Conservation of the One-horned Rhinoceros in Assam, Forest Department of Assam, \$19,730: Gathering information on Indian rhinoceros poaching and trade in rhinoceros parts in Assam and organizing legal experts and project personnel to promptly prosecute pending cases.

Training of Law Enforcement Personnel in Combating Illegal Wildlife Trade and Identification of Wildlife Products (India), Wildlife Protection Society of India, \$16,840: Workshops for law enforcement authorities of six Indian states to advance detection and prevention of illegal wildlife trade activities, particularly in tigers and rhinoceros.

Training Workshop on CITES Implementation for Vietnamese Boundary Customs Officers, Institute of Ecology and Biological Resources, \$12,790: CITES training workshop for Customs Officers working along Vietnam's China border to develop skills for inspection, identification of CITES listed species (with emphasis on rhinoceros and tigers) and confiscation and prosecution of appropriate cases.

Protected Area/Reserve Management

Establishment Of Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary In Way Kambas National Park, Sumatra, Indonesia, International Rhino Foundation, \$24,044: Electrical components for the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary, Way Kambas National Park, a managed breeding center in natural habitat.

Colloquium On Conservation Action And Coordination For Javan Rhino In Ujung Kulon National Park, Java, Indonesia, International Rhino Foundation, \$5,900: Colloquium on conservation action and coordination for Javan rhinoceros in Ujung Kulon National Park (addressed Vietnam's Javan rhinoceros population to a limited extent).

Participative Review of the Protected Area Management Planning and Implementation at Ujung Kulon National Park, Java, Indonesia, Fauna and Flora International, \$5,100: Review of protected area management planning and implementation at Ujung Kulon National Park to advance Javan rhinoceros conservation.

Sustainable Development in Buffer Zones Surrounding Tiger/Rhinoceros Habitat

Community-Based Javan Rhino Conservation Program (Indonesia), Lembaga Alam Tropica Indonesia, \$18,180: Public awareness and economic development training to develop support for Javan rhinoceros conservation and strengthen buffer zone community relationships with Ujung Kulon National Park personnel.