

Request For U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service To Rescind Sport Hunting Policy Until African Nations Are Consulted

Dear Colleague:

On April 4th, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) announced that all sport-hunted elephant importations from Tanzania and Zimbabwe would be suspended for calendar year 2014. It is unclear whether this decision was made using the best available science. In their announcement, the Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) even admits that the decision was influenced by “anecdotal evidence.” When the Service makes decisions that affect livelihoods and anti-poaching efforts, it is vital that the decisions are based on “the best available biological information derived from professionally accepted wildlife management practices,” not anecdotes.

The issue of sport-hunted elephant imports may seem like a very distant or unfamiliar issue. However, just like here in the U.S., hunters are the primary financial contributors to wildlife management and anti-poaching across many African countries. In Zimbabwe, hunter derived revenue contributes between 60-90% of funds for the Zimbabwean Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management. In Tanzania, nearly 70 million acres, or roughly 30% of the country is managed as hunting concessions. If elephants cannot be imported by U.S. hunters, then hunters will not travel to those countries. The financial burden for wildlife management and anti-poaching work will exponentially increase without U.S. hunters traveling to Zimbabwe and Tanzania. Even noted anti-hunting group LionAid reported, "In both countries, U.S. hunters outnumber hunters from any other nation, and the ban is likely to significantly affect the income of the trophy hunting operators".

International hunters are the first line of defense for conservation, management, and anti-poaching throughout Africa. When wildlife has no value, it will most certainly be slaughtered indiscriminately. For example, Tanzania has 157 hunting blocks that cover 30% of Tanzania's total land area representing 70 million acres that are managed by private hunting operations. Furthermore, sport hunting employs approximately 3,700 people and supports over 88,000 families in Tanzania. In Zimbabwe, this decision by the FWS will have devastating effects on local conservation programs such as the CAMPFIRE. The CAMPFIRE program uses hunting revenue to benefit local communities and build value in elephants to rural villages. The fact that the FWS would disrupt these important programs is even more egregious due to the fact that many reports out of Zimbabwe actually show that elephant populations still far exceed the carrying capacity of the land and the real problem is overpopulation. A U.S. policy decision that disproportionately impacts Tanzania and Zimbabwe's people and wildlife should not be taken without significant scientific basis and consultation with the range nation.

We are seeking your support in asking the U.S. FWS to rescind its policy until such time that they have consulted with the Wildlife Management Authorities of Zimbabwe and Tanzania and obtained better science from the affected countries. Please contact Allison Witt, with Congressman Latta, at Allison.Witt@mail.house.gov, or Erik Elam, with Congressman Young,

at Erik.Elam@mail.house.gov no later than May 30, 2014 if you would like to sign onto the letter.

Sincerely,

Robert E. Latta
Member of Congress

Don Young
Member of Congress

Adam Kinzinger
Member of Congress