

CONGRESSIONAL
SPORTSMEN'S
FOUNDATION

Attn: Senate Committee on Environmental Conservation
Re: S. 5014 – “Big Five African Trophies Act”
Date: February 25, 2025
Position: Oppose

Honorable Members of the Senate Committee on Environmental Conservation,

I write to you today on behalf of the Congressional Sportsmen’s Foundation (CSF) in opposition to Senate Bill 5014 (S. 5014) – legislation that would prohibit the import, sale, and possession of items from legally hunted African species. The economic impact of hunting provides the necessary funding to promote sustainable wildlife restoration efforts as well as fund anti-poaching programs in African countries. These conservation and anti-poaching efforts have a record of rebuilding vulnerable populations of African wildlife.

Founded in 1989, CSF is the informed authority across outdoor issues and serves as the primary conduit for influencing public policy. Working with the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus (CSC), the Governors Sportsmen's Caucus (GSC), and the National Assembly of Sportsmen's Caucuses (NASC), CSF gives a voice to hunters, anglers, recreational shooters, and trappers on Capitol Hill and throughout state capitols advocating on vital outdoor issues that are the backbone of our nation's conservation legacy.

Revenue generated by licensed, regulated safari hunting is the single most important source of funding for conservation and anti-poaching efforts in Africa. In many Southern and Eastern African countries, revenues generated from legal hunting are the primary source of management, conservation, and anti-poaching funds for national wildlife authorities. This funding has helped recover or maintain “Big 5” populations in Southern and Eastern Africa. For example, after the legalization of white rhinoceros hunting, the population increased in South Africa from 1,800 (in 1968) to around 20,000 (2015). In that same time period, only 0.34% of the total population was harvested through legal hunting. When accounting for all African rhinos, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) states there has been a 2.4% increase in rhino population from 2023 to 2024.

Preventing hunters from importing harvested animals is intended to discourage them from hunting in Africa, depriving African wildlife authorities and communities of essential income. Without the money generated by hunters, African authorities will lack the funds needed to hire and equip anti-poaching patrols. Furthermore, without the financial and game meat contributions from legal hunting, local communities have little incentive to protect dangerous game, which is otherwise viewed as a nuisance or threat. Laws banning the importation of “Big 5” species undermine species conservation, adversely affect sportsmen and women in the U.S., and eliminate benefits for many African people living in the poorest and more remote areas.

Bans on the importation of “Big 5” species from Africa are as misleading as they are ineffective. Although proponents claim these bans are meant to protect African game species, in practice they deprive African nations of the resources needed to mount effective anti-poaching and conservation efforts that are primarily funded by the harvest of a small number of animals. These bans also deprive rural communities of meat and necessary infrastructure development. African range state governments oppose these bans, as do leading conservation authorities such as the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF).

I strongly encourage the members of the Senate Committee on Environmental Conservation to oppose S. 5014. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this issue. Should you require additional information on this, or other sportsmen-related topics, please feel free to contact me at any time.

Sincerely,



Kaleigh E. Leager
Manager, Mid-Atlantic States | Congressional Sportsmen’s Foundation
110 North Carolina Ave, SE | Washington, DC 20003
kleager@congressionalsportsmen.org | 202-543-6850 X 20