

1.2 Conservation Strategy for the White Rhino (Draft)
DRAFT of 24 March 1999

A STRATEGY FOR THE CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE USE OF WILD
POPULATIONS OF SOUTHERN WHITE RHINO IN SOUTH AFRICA

This draft strategy was developed at a workshop held at Itala Game Reserve on 23 and 24 March 1999, under the auspices of the Rhino Management Group. Participants included the State and private sectors and non-governmental organisations directly involved in rhino conservation and closely related issues.

The workshop participants endorsed the submission of this draft to the relevant authorities for further consideration, consultation and adoption.

VISION

MINDFUL OF ITS CRITICAL INTERNATIONAL ROLE IN THE CONSERVATION OF THE SOUTHERN WHITE RHINO, SOUTH AFRICA'S VISION FOR THE SUB-SPECIES IS OF :

- VIABLE POPULATIONS IN NATURAL HABITAT THROUGHOUT THEIR FORMER RANGE.
- SHARED COMMITMENT BY THE STATE, COMMUNITIES AND PRIVATE LANDOWNERS TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EFFECTIVE CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PROGRAMMES.
- SIGNIFICANT FLOW OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC BENEFITS TO PEOPLE AT ALL LEVELS.
- CONTINUED NATIONAL SELF-SUFFICIENCY IN CONSERVING WHITE RHINO

KEY COMPONENTS OF THE STRATEGY

1: BIOLOGICAL MANAGEMENT

OBJECTIVE :

Achieve a medium term metapopulation growth rate of at least 5%, and to ensure

long term genetic and demographic viability in BOTH the state and private sector

& Aim to have at least 2 populations > 1000, 3 more state populations >100, another 10 state populations >50; AND at least 3 private populations >100, and another 5 private populations >50.

RATIONALE:

More rhinos in more populations under a full range of management models (i.e private, community, and state) will be strategically sound (from a security and genetic perspective) and increase the buffer against poaching of both white and black rhino. Management of populations for maximum growth also increases opportunities for rhinos to generate income that can be used to offset some of the high cost of their conservation (CITES Res Conf.9.14) as well as building up numbers of surplus animals that can be used to found additional populations.

MAIN ACTIONS:

- ⌘ Manage for maximum productivity (stock at 75% of eECC)
- ⌘ Estimate carrying capacities
- ⌘ Monitor rhinos to get accurate population estimates, measures of reproductive performance, condition, levels of disease, mortality levels etc.
(Preferably use ID based techniques in all but the very large populations >500)
- ⌘ Undertake applied research where necessary
- ⌘ Assess suitable areas for introduction
- ⌘ It is recommended that a regular system of status reporting and synthesis of reports is instituted for all *key* (>50) and *important* rhino populations (21-50) with a potential carrying capacity of >50 rhinos.
- ⌘ Aim to have a founder population of at least 20 animals

- ✘ Maintain pro-active crime prevention through the development and use of intelligence networks
- ✘ Undertake threat analyses of rhino areas
- ✘ Develop rhino protection action plans
- ✘ Use effective procedures for more successful prosecutions (e.g. use specialist investigators, expert witnesses to argue in aggravation of sentence in court, etc.)
- ✘ Adequate containment of animals within secure areas
- ✘ Maintain continuous monitoring of animals for security
- ✘ Encourage standardised micro-chipping animals when immobilised (using the Trovan system)
- ✘ Establish and maintain good community relations
- ✘ Implement a uniform horn registration system, with documented audit trails and subsequent safe storage and auditing of horn stockpiles.
- ✘ Maintain effective manpower density
- ✘ Ensure adequate staffing, training, equipment and deployment for anti-poaching activities
- ✘ Monitor the effectiveness of field personnel.
- ✘ Field management should strive for good leadership, active involvement and supervision.

- 8 Translocate surplus animals (following recommended procedures and guidelines) to found new populations in areas of secure and suitable habitats
- 8 Consider supplementary introductions to minimise loss of genetic diversity
- 8 Ensure rhinos that are translocated are free from any notifiable disease.
- 8 Accelerate the establishment of key populations on private land

INDICATORS

- 8 Metapopulation growth rate of at least 5%
- 8 Achieve desired number of key populations on State AND private land
- 8 Status reporting operational and routine use of better monitoring/population estimation techniques
- 8 The application of reliable tests for notifiable diseases such as TB
- 8 Number of populations of different sizes by management model

2. SECURITY, PROTECTION AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

OBJECTIVE :

Reduce losses due to poaching, and ensure successful conviction and sentencing of rhino poachers and illegal traders.

RATIONALE:

The major threat to rhino numbers is poaching and illegal trade. To sustain continued population growth and maintain the economic, tourist, social and community value/benefits of white rhino - poaching and the illegal trade must be minimised.

MAIN ACTIONS:

INDICATORS

- ⌘ Number of rhinos poached (corrected for effort)
- ⌘ Ratio of poached to natural deaths
- ⌘ Proportion of poaching cases with subsequent convictions
- ⌘ Court cases won vs. lost and sentences handed down.
- ⌘ Total number of illegal incidents (not restricted to rhinos) associated with a given rhino population.
- ⌘ Ratio of all illegal incidents to arrests.
- ⌘ Results of staff assessment (skill, readiness, equipment maintenance)
- ⌘ Corruption/morale of staff as indicated by staff turnover, number of disciplinary hearings and number of staff implicated in illegal activities.

3. SUSTAINABLE USE

OBJECTIVE:

Develop the socio-economic sustainability of white rhino conservation and the flow of benefits from sustainable use.

RATIONALE

The expansion of rhino populations and continued investment in costly conservation programmes requires conditions and incentives based on economic returns. CITES resolution 9.14 recommends that revenue derived from the uses of rhinoceros, consistent with the Convention, are reinvested in conservation programmes.

In the face of declining state contributions to nature conservation, economic returns from wildlife provide the basis for sustained conservation management programmes, and

for the investment by the state, communities and the private sector in further land and expanded populations .

- § Promote controlled ethical hunting, including the application of an appropriate procedure for issuing permits, the avoidance of inappropriate hunting methods, and the marking and registration of trophies.
- § Promote safe and responsible tourism experiences which do not negatively impact on wild rhinos or their habitats,
- § Facilitate investment in tourism facilities based on rhino conservation, which provide a positive return, increase participation, and the development of new employment opportunities.
- § Pursue a legal trade in rhino products in accordance with international conditions and conventions.
 - * promote a uniform national system for controlling a legal trade, including the identification, marking and registration of legal stocks
 - * promote the development and adoption of national legislation for CITES and a legal trade
 - * introduce a system for monitoring the impact of any reopening of a legal trade on rhino populations in South Africa
 - * Promote incentives for the reinvestment of revenues from trade into rhino conservation
- § Captive breeding or display of white rhino by reputable institutions should be supported

INDICATORS

- ⌘ No. of inappropriate practices/ contraventions
- ⌘ Horn stocks are registered
- ⌘ Success in achieving full downlisting of white rhino to Appendix II.
- ⌘ No. of tourists injured
- ⌘ No. of rhinos injured or destroyed in tourist-related incidents
- ⌘ Proportion of tourism revenues dependent on rhino conservation
- ⌘ Revenue derived from existing trade/ prices achieved for rhinos and products
- ⌘ No. of transactions

4. ANIMAL WELFARE

OBJECTIVE:

Ensure that nationally accepted standards of animal welfare are implemented in white rhino conservation

RATIONALE

It is essential that South Africa should maintain high animal welfare standards both for the sake of individual rhinos and for South Africa's standing internationally.

In addition, to ensure the survival of this rare species the final destination of traded white rhinos is species must favour the

ACTIONS

Apply national animal welfare standards during capture, translocation*, holding and live sales and their subsequent management.

* ensuring rhinos are exported only to acceptable destinations.

5 COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

OBJECTIVE:

Enable the participation and involvement of communities and stake-holders in the conservation and sustainable use of white rhinos.

RATIONALE:

The long-term conservation of white rhinos is dependent upon the support and participation of all sectors of the population.

ACTIONS:

8 Discuss white rhino issues at established liaison meetings.

- § Demonstrate and promote the benefits that can be derived from white rhinos.
- § Facilitate and promote the establishment of white rhino populations on communal lands through partnerships and other supportive mechanisms.
- § Create increased awareness of the value of wildlife, including the role of white rhino as a flag-ship species.

INDICATORS

- § Change in rhino numbers within different ownership categories (Private, State, Communal).
- § Economic benefits derived by local communities from white rhino use.

6. CO-ORDINATION

OBJECTIVE:

Ensure the effective co-ordination of the white rhino industry

RATIONALE

There is a need for improved management and controls to optimise the sustainable use of white rhinos to the mutual benefit of all parties.

ACTIONS

- § Establish a consultative forum (involving state nature conservation organisations, AROA, professional hunting & game ranchers associations, communities etc.) to develop ideas and mechanisms to promote the white rhino industry which include:
 - o The evaluation of current legislation and policy in terms of its relevance and uniformity.
 - o The recommendation of any further necessary control mechanisms that promote responsible management e.g. management plans.

- o The identification, acquisition and interpretation of relevant information to facilitate the co-ordination and promotion of the industry.
- 8 Build capacity within the wildlife industry for effective white rhino management including legislation, hunting, security etc.

INDICATORS

- 8 Extent of active involvement by rhino managers in fora.