

**TESTIMONY for the HEARING before
THE ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE
of the
MERCHANT MARINE AND FISHERIES COMMITTEE
of the
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

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- I commend the efforts of this Subcommittee toward developing possible legislation to assist conservation of rhinoceros and express my appreciation for permitting me the opportunity to provide testimony.
- For over 20 years, I have been involved in research and conservation of rhinos both in captivity and in the field. Today, I am representing a number of organizations that are deeply involved with conservation of rhinoceros:
 - I serve as the Program Officer for the Asian Rhino Specialist Group of IUCN _ The World Conservation Union.
 - I am also a member of the IUCN African Rhino Specialist Group.
 - I am the Program Officer of the International Rhino Foundation which operates as a service organization providing technical, administrative, and financial help for rhino conservation programs *in situ* and *ex situ* is involved in rhino conservation projects in Zimbabwe, Zaire, Malaysia, and Indonesia.
 - I serve as Special Consultant to the SAVE African Endangered Wildlife Foundation which has for 13 years been a major supporter of rhino and wildlife conservation primarily in Zimbabwe and Namibia, with recent additional inputs into development of community management of natural resources. SAVE is also a founder member of the IRF.
 - Finally, I serve as the Facilitator/Coordinator for the IUCN Global Captive Action Plan for Rhino which represents the rhino conservation activities of over 200 zoos and other captive conservation centers around the world.
- Other speakers have poignantly described the crisis for rhinos. More than any other group of species, the rhinos are on the verge of becoming the extinction event of our time, an epoch loss whose psychological impact may rival the disappearance of the dinosaurs.
- I want to try to provide some strategic and hopefully pragmatic perspective on the crisis for and conservation of rhino.

- Of the 10-11,000 rhinos surviving in the wild, over half are of one subspecies. There are only about 5,000 rhinos of the other four species combined.
- What have been the two most secure species (White and India), both of them increasing in recent years, are almost certainly on the verge of significant declines.
- Only 8 countries have significant populations of the 5 species. Four are in Africa: South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Kenya. Four are in Asia: India, Nepal, Indonesia, Malaysia. Three other countries in Africa (Tanzania, Zaire, and Cameroon) contain some rhino; the two latter, very small numbers of unique subspecies. One other country in Asia (Vietnam) also has a very small but important population of the rarest species.
- Virtually all surviving rhinos are located in just 40 populations/protected areas.
- The most spectacular decline over the last several years has been for the Black Rhino in Africa.

There has been a spectacular domino effect as the rhino population has crashed in country after country. Zimbabwe is the latest case; Namibia and South Africa appear to be next. Many believe that Zimbabwe must be the line in the sand if rhino are to survive in Africa.

- However, all Asian species are rarer than either of the African species. There are perhaps 8,000 African rhinos in the wild; there are only 3,000 Asia rhinos in the wild.
- Relative to these reduced numbers, the rate of poaching is perhaps becoming as intense in many parts of Asia as it has been in Africa.
 - The second largest population (Manas) of Indian/Nepalese rhino in India has been decimated and the largest population (Kaziranga) is under serious and increasing assault.
 - Significant numbers of Sumatran rhino continue to be lost to poachers and their habitat is constantly contracting.
 - The single population of Javan rhino in Indonesia is stagnating and a conclusion is that poaching is the cause.
- Hence Asian range states need financial support just as much as African range states.
- In general, there needs to be a strategic approach to the problems of rhino conservation.
- To this end, all of the rhino range states individually and collectively through the IUCN Rhino Specialist Groups have developed detailed strategies and action plans for rhino conservation. These strategies and plans should be considered as any U.S. legislation is developed and implemented.
- It is unfortunate that no representatives from range states could participate in these Hearings. As the legislative process continues, it is essential they be involved.

- All the range state strategies and action plans recognize intensive protection and management as essential for rhino conservation both *in situ* and *ex situ*.
- Almost 10% of the world's surviving rhinos are in captivity; another 10-20% are under some kind of intensive management in the wild, most behind fences. This percentage is only going to increase as the wild for rhino becomes more and more a megazoo.
- The captive conservation community is a significant and essential component of the rhino conservation strategy:
 - as the sanctuary of last resort
 - as the development center for the intensive management technology that will be increasingly needed by the megazoos developing inexorably in natural habitats.
 - as increasing sources of financial and opinion support for *in situ* conservation efforts.
- Redeeming rhinos from the brink of extinction will require more resources. The Recent UNEP Conference on Rhinoceros Conservation estimates that \$55-60 Million will be needed over the next 3-5 years if the rhino are to be conserved. Achieving this level of funding will require contributions from both governmental and nongovernmental sources worldwide.
- In general, non-range states like the U.S. must provide the funds (estimated \$ 60 million) over the next 3-5 years if rhinos are to survive the crisis. As part of a global strategy, financial support at a level of \$ 5 Million/year for the next 5 years from the United States would represent a real difference for the rhinos.
- It is ironic that the survival of rhinos may depend in part on a current non-range state like the United States. In fact, rhinos were once the most abundant large mammal throughout most of the world, especially the United States. Before the bison, herds of rhino populated the plains of Nebraska at a time when there were no rhinos in Africa. Rhinos became extinct in North America about 4 million years ago while they migrated to and prospered in Africa. Now rhinos are going extinct in Africa and Asia. There is both the need and the opportunity for the United States to save them.
- Funds need to be applied in result and cost effective ways.
- Further it seems optimal that any funds from the U.S. be used to complement or leverage other funds, e.g. the \$ 2 Million GEF Project for S.E. Asian Rhinos; the \$ 7 Million Program of the IRF or the \$ 5 Million Rhino Action Plan of SAVE. In this way, it may be possible to achieve the \$ 60 Million needed.
- Help from non-range governments and non-governmental organizations is critical right now. But for the long-term, sustainability, self-sufficiency by the range states themselves is essential.
- Long-term, rhinos must have value to the local communities of humans who live where the rhinos do. Rhinos must be valued not devalued for these communities.

- The problem for rhinos is predominantly poaching now but it will be habitat loss in a major way very soon; the trend is already underway in Asia.
- Furthermore, it is important that rhino conservation efforts be innovative and adaptively managed. Obviously what we have been doing is not in general working well. There should be care not to adopt measures that foreclose options or disaffect partners.
- The world is, or should be, truly mobilized in a war to conserve the rhinos. That mobilization desperately requires coordinated as well as concerted action.
- In conclusion, the possibility of U.S. legislation to assist rhino conservation is an excellent initiative. The most important objective for such legislation should be to provide funds for the immediate crisis. The possibility that such legislation would also include regulatory aspects should be pursued cautiously and adaptively with an emphasis on exploring innovative, cost and result effective, sustainable, collegial solutions to the problem
- Again, further development of such legislation should include consultation of the U.S. Government with all range states and other major players in rhino conservation.
- To this end, I recommend any legislation consider establishment of an advisory council to assist with implementation, including representatives of the 10 major range states, The IUCN Rhino Specialist Groups, WWF, UNEP, IRF, SAVE, and representatives of the global captive community (the IUCN GCAP/GASP).
- Further information from the organizations I am representing is available on the press table or upon request:
 - The IUCN Rhino Specialist Groups are concerned with strategic action plans.
 - SAVE is emphasizing that solutions are possible only when local authorities and communities are involved and that no actions or measures should be discussed or implemented without them. SAVE is organizing a SAVE THE RHINO ACTION PLAN concentrating equipment, management, infrastructure, research, and monitoring for both Zimbabwe and Namibia. The cost of this Plan will be \$ 5 Million in addition to the substantial support already being provided by SAVE. The objective is to stabilize both the black and white rhino populations of those countries.
 - The IRF is developing intensive management programs that will cost \$ 7 Million over the next 3 years in an attempt to stabilize population nuclei until the larger and longer-term programs can become operational.

Thank you.