

Minnesota Zoo's Adopt-A-Park Program

UJUNG KULON NATIONAL PARK PROGRAM

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The Adopt-A-Park program is an *in situ* conservation initiative of the Minnesota Zoo, located in Ujung Kulon National Park, that operates at the invitation of the Directorate general of Forest protection and nature conservation (PHPA). The goal of the program is to provide assistance directly to Ujung Kulon staff to enable them to be more effective in their role as primary stewards of the park.

The idea of a zoo conservation partnership with Indonesia originated at an IUCN Species Survival Commission meeting for Indonesian rhinos in 1989. An unpublished report on Javan rhinos in Ujung Kulon concluded that "the most critical conservation issue in the park [is] the lack of a communication and transportation system necessary for effective anti-poaching activities by park staff." This need formed the impetus for the Minnesota Zoo to develop its Adopt-A-Park initiative. The program was launched in September 1990 when the zoo entered into an agreement with PHPA to work together to protect the ecological stability of Ujung Kulon National park. Priorities for programs, equipment, and guard post improvements are set exclusively by the Chief of the Park and his staff, and all projects supported by the Adopt-A-Park program are approved and administered by them. After discussions of park needs with PHPA, this focused on providing them with improved transportation and communication links, better housing and equipment, and training in law enforcement.

In the first three years, Adopt-A-park funds were used for transportation and communication links for park staff by purchasing two diesel marine engines and ordering a boat to be built locally (christened *The Minnesota*) to ferry park staff and supplies to remote guard posts, canoes for patrolling inland rivers, field bikes for patrolling roads on the eastern side of the park (where the peninsula connects with the mainland) and elements of a field communication system (to-way radios, antennas, cables, batteries, and solar power generators) for several guard posts.

In the second and third years, in partnership with the New Zealand Department of Nature Conservation with some support from the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Indonesia Programme, the program focussed on the renovation or construction of more modern guard posts (including living quarters and office space for three or four guards, water well, water tower, toilet and bath, information signs, and solar-powered two-way radios). New conservation partnerships were begun in 1994 with the American Association of Zoo keepers (AAZK's) *Bowling for Rhinos* program and the Minnesota Conservation Officer's *Adopt-A-Warden* program. The program will continue until the rhinos are considered safe.

To date, the Adopt-A-park program has funded projects and donated equipment to Ujung Kulon valued at about US\$ 150,000. In the last two years, this has included: the construction of two guard posts, one of which serves a visitor information center at the edge of the park; the renovation of six other guard posts or wells; a new hull for the *Minnesota*, and a second larger PHPA boat (named the *Minnesota II*).

The participating conservation organizations besides the Minnesota Zoo and their contributions are listed below:

AAZK *Bowling for Rhinos*

- In 1995, the American Association of Zoo Keepers (AAZK) *Bowling for Rhinos* donated \$ 6,475 to Ujung Kulon National park to construct a well, pump, and water tower at the Karangrangjang guard post,

- In 1996, the AAZK *Bowling for Rhinos* donated another \$ 20,600 used for completion of a second PHPA boat.
- For 1997, the AAZK has donated \$ 49,250 to improve the radio communication system for park guards and other projects to be decided upon.

Minnesota Conservation Officers (MCOA)

- In 1994, the Minnesota Conservation Officers (MCOA) donated 14 reconditioned hand-held radios, complete with rechargeable batteries, chargers, speakers, and cords, and carrying case (valued at \$ 3,500 plus \$ 400 shipping by the Minnesota Zoo's Adopt-A-Park program).
- In 1995, the MCOA donated eight reconditioned mobile radio units to Ujung Kulon as part of their Adopt-A-Warden program (valued at \$ 4,000 plus \$ 800 shipping by the Minnesota Zoo's Adopt-A-Park program).
- In 1996, the MCOA provided law enforcement training for all park guards and rangers, and equipment donations of two mobile and four hand-held reconditioned radios and handcuffs were presented (valued at \$ 1,500 plus \$ 250 shipping by the Minnesota Zoo's Adopt-A-Park program). An additional donation of \$ 2,000 from the MCOA was also presented to Ujung Kulon park guards to purchase backpacks.

International Rhino Foundation (IRF)

- In 1995, the International Rhino Foundation (IRF) contributed \$ 3,750 (from the Chicago Zoological Society, the Los Angeles Zoo, and the Greater Baltimore Chapter of the American Association of Zoo Keepers) to Ujung Kulon National Park to complete construction of the PHPA boat.

Rhino Trust

- In 1996, the Rhino Trust transferred \$ 400 from the American Zoo Docents Association to the Adopt-A-park Project at Ujung Kulon National Park.
- In 1997, the Rhino Trust donated another \$ 1,500.