

## The role of the new **APLRS Administrator**

In Kenya, the number of black rhinos had rapidly diminished from around 20,000 in 1970 to fewer than 280 individual animals by the 1980s. Such low numbers risked the survival of the species; scattered across wide geography and struggling to breed.

**Jamie Gaymer** | Chair, Association of Private Land Rhino Sanctuaries

**T**o tackle the looming threat of extinction, the Association of Private Land Rhino Sanctuaries (APLRS) was registered in 1990, with the aim of improving rhino management on private land, and collaboration with the government authorities; the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS). New, heavily guarded rhino sanctuaries were established, and the APLRS became a single body for dialogue between the private and government sector.

Fast forwarding to the early 2000s, the black rhino population had seen a recovery, but around the corner a new poaching crisis loomed. As escalating poaching took hold, the Kenyan government developed its *Conservation and Management Strategy for the Black Rhino in Kenya, 2012-16* (virtually all rhino range states have national five-year plans).

Despite some significant successes, many targets had not been met. Poaching continued apace. The key issue identified – and something many of us have experienced – was the difficulty in finding the resources and time to actually implement many of the great ideas included in the Strategy.

The challenges facing rhino conservation are many and diverse, but the APLRS hopes to be as dynamic as possible. Membership to the APLRS is mandatory by law for private rhino owners, yet representatives are all full-time employees from their respective conservancies working on the ground for long hours and in tough conditions. Taking forward joint actions can get stalled.

Sometimes the unsung heroes in conservation are those helping with office administration, report writing, and helping push through the paperwork and other less glamorous activities that keep organisations and projects ticking over. To help in this respect, we proposed that funds were sought to employ a secretariat or administrator to help with everyone's workload, and ensure that strategy recommendations become actions on the ground.

The KWS supported this idea and the proposed role began to take shape. Financial resources were sought and Save the Rhino and its partner Chester Zoo were able to grant funds to employ



Left: Lincoln Njiru is based in the KWS headquarters in Nairobi but makes frequent trips to the field

the position until the end of the Strategy term. This also included procurement of basic office equipment in order to facilitate the position and Lincoln Njiru was employed on 1 April 2016.

So far, Lincoln has already completed reviews of actions agreed in the Strategy and the most recent APLRS and Rhino Steering Committee meetings. Most importantly, this gives an illustration of actions, actors and timelines that have been accomplished and those pending. He has created a master document that tracks all of this work, and is already enabling each member to see where we are moving ahead, and where we are falling behind.

In the next few months, Lincoln will visit all areas covered by his work. We feel that it is important for him to be able to visualise these conservancies, and help him build relationships with our members so he can help get the best out of their work. Assuming its continued success, we hope to formalise the position in the next Strategy, which is due to commence from 1 January 2017.

We thank those supporters who have contributed towards establishing this position, and the KWS for allowing a civilian employee to sit in its national office. We look forward to bringing added rigour to our work, continuing collaboration in Kenya, and – most importantly – saving more rhinos.

### Grants

Our thanks to Chester Zoo for its grant of £5,387 towards the Administrator post, to which we added £6,374 from our own core funds.

