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A Letter to You From Dr. Susie Ellis

Dear IRF Family,

After 13 years of productive and fulfilling work at IRF, I am retiring as IRF's Executive Director. I have been honored to work with our field teams, US staff, Board, partners, and donors, and have been blessed with a network of friends and colleagues all over the world.

IRF is extraordinary in many ways...the life's work of a small and dedicated group of people, and I have been proud to lead them.



In my tenure as Executive Director, I have been most proud of our ability to provide meaningful funding to like-minded partners across Africa and Asia. Through the generosity of our donors, we raised more than \$35 million dollars in the past 13 years, and continued to grow our programs. We have tremendously expanded our global reach, working with all five species of rhinoceros in Africa and Asia. IRF is the only source in the world with dedicated rhino research grants.



Some of IRF's accomplishments that I am most proud of:

- Yayasan Badak Indonesia (YABI), which translates to the Indonesian Rhino Foundation, was formed. YABI has been our long term on the ground partner in Indonesia, and I proudly serve on the board.

- IRF published its first annual report in 2008.
- As part of Indian Rhino Vision 2020 (IRV2020), the first rhinos were translocated to Manas National Park. From a population of 0, Manas now has 40 rhinos.
- The Lowveld Rhino Trust (LRT) was formed in Zimbabwe in response to a poaching crisis. The LRT is a trusted partner and a leader in rhino management strategy in Southern Africa.
- IRF launched a wildlife crime and trade monitoring program in India which now includes a successful training program. Poaching numbers have decreased dramatically over the last two years.
- We celebrated the first World Rhino Day in 2011. This event has grown year over year to provide education and support for rhino conservation programs across the globe.
- The Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary (SRS) had two births, Andatu and Delilah, which I was present to witness. The SRS completed an expansion last year.
- Working with partners, IRF has increased the protection and habitat recovery for the last remaining Javan rhino population in Ujong Kulong National Park. The population, once at 30 to 50, now is at 72. We funded camera traps to provide more definite numbers
- We launched OPERATION: Stop Poaching Now to support teams on the ground in South Africa.
- We created a universal brand – Team Rhino, to ensure that everyone could play a role in supporting rhino conservation. Celebrities like Dave Matthews, Jeff Corbin, Jane Goodall and Mark Hamill contributed to the effort along with many of you to make a greater impact on rhino conservation programs and policies.

- In 2018, IRF co-founded the Sumatran Rhino Rescue Alliance with other global partners to help further efforts to save this endangered species.
- Supporting scientific solutions, IRF has invested more than \$1 million in research grants to support rhino research and conservation.

I believe that I have helped develop and nurture an ethical and transparent culture that fosters trusting relationships with partners, staff, the public, and our Board. IRF partners with individuals and makes long-term tactical investments in key, like-minded partners to conserve rhinos. We've resourcefully applied our expertise and funds in a rapidly changing landscape for rhino conservation, and based our decisions on scientifically-sound interventions, solid strategic partnerships, targeted protection, and political realities.



I will still be engaged with special IRF projects as a strategic advisor. As I take my leave as Executive Director, I wish my successor, [Nina Fascione](#), and our remarkable staff all the best in taking our unique and committed organization to its next level of excellence.

Warmest regards,

Susie Ellis, Ph.D.



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