

# SA to increase measures against rhino poaching

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PRETORIA: Environmental Affairs Minister Edna Molewa says South Africa will build on its robust measures to curb the incidence of rhino poaching within its borders.



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Addressing a media briefing on the outcomes of the 2013 rhino census conducted in the Kruger National Park (KNP), the Minister said SA would continue to push strategies to stabilise the rhino population.

"During the latest survey in 2013, conducted by SANParks, the rhino population survey showed that between 8,400 and 9,600 white rhinos are presently living in the Kruger National Park," said the minister.

SANParks conducts periodic population surveys. As of 2012, South Africa's rhino population was estimated at 21,000.

South Africa is home to 82% of Africa's rhino - both black and white - 93% of Africa's white rhino and 39% of Africa's black rhino.

Minister Molewa said government is cognisant of the fact that rhino poaching is a multibillion dollar worldwide illicit trade. This, she said, was the reason they would put in more emphasis on the Integrated Strategic Management approach to save rhinos from poachers.

"... That is why we will continue to strengthen holistic and integrated interventions and explore new innovative options to ensure the long-term survival of the species," Minister Molewa said.

The approach is aimed at reducing the threat to rhinos and their biological management. Minister Molewa said rhino population in the Kruger National Park has stabilised. The translocation of 1,450 rhino from the KNP between 1997 and 2013 has contributed to the rhino population growth in the country.

"Poaching, natural deaths and the translocation of rhino from the Kruger National park presently match that of rhino births," she said.

Minister Molewa said South Africa will continue to work with other countries to curb poaching.

She added that forensic technology, including DNA analysis, in the judicial process will be introduced to support the successful prosecution of alleged wildlife criminals.

National Police Commissioner Riah Phiyega said she has directed a team of detectives trained in wildlife crime investigations, forensics experts, the SA Police Service air wing, the flying squad and the dog unit to assist the SANParks Board with current investigations on poaching.

"This additional team will attend to all the outstanding and new crime scenes and continue to do proper crime scene investigation and management," said Phiyega.

She pleaded with communities living around game reserves to continue playing their role in helping police arrest the poachers.

She warned that poachers were becoming more sophisticated in their methods to poach rhinos.

"It is our ultimate objective to establish a long-term solution to drastically reduce the incidents of rhino poaching," she said.

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