

Thirteen recently arrested for rhino poaching

Anti-poaching units, supported by the SA Police Service, the Hawks and the SA National Defence Force, have recently arrested 13 people linked to poaching.

The arrest of nine alleged poachers in the Kruger National Park, three alleged couriers in Joburg and one alleged poacher in Limpopo recently brings the number of people arrested to 34. Four alleged poachers were fatally wounded in the Kruger National Park.

The successful arrests came as the number of rhino poached since January 1, 2013, rose to 96. Of the rhino poached, 66 rhino were killed in the Kruger National Park, 11 in North West, 10 in KwaZulu-Natal.

The total number of alleged poachers arrested in the Kruger National Park has risen to 23.

Kenyan proposal rejected

In a separate development, the Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs, Edna Molewa, has welcomed the recommendation by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species in Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)'s Secretariat that Kenya's proposal to the forthcoming 16th Conference of Parties (COP16) to halt the trade in rhino trophies and rhino products until COP18 be rejected.

"We welcome the CITES Secretariat's recommendation and its endorsement of South Africa's rhino management and conservation practices. We also welcome CITES' acknowledgement of the recent significant steps taken to improve the management of rhino hunting," said Minister Molewa.

The Department of Environmental Affairs implemented norms and standards for the marking of rhino horn, the collection of rhino data for a national database, and for the hunting of rhinos for trophies in 2012 as a tool to curb rhino poaching, publishing and implementing revised norms and standards for the marking of rhinoceros horn and for the hunting of rhinoceros for trophy hunting purposes. These norms and standards have put in place stricter controls for the issuing of rhino hunting permits, hunting of rhino and the transportation of the horn, which resulted in a significant reduction in the number of hunting applications received.

Zero export quota on hunting trophies requested

The proposal by Kenya to the CITES COP16, to be held in Bangkok, Thailand, in March 2013, requests that members amend the annotation for white rhino populations in South Africa and Swaziland by placing a zero export quota on hunting trophies until at least COP 18.

This would mean that hunting trophies from South Africa would be subjected to a "zero quota until at least COP18" and that trade in all other rhino specimens be strictly regulated.

In its response the CITES Secretariat has stated that the proposed amendment would result in a trade regime for hunting trophies from the Appendix-II listed white rhino (*Ceratotherium simum simum*) populations of South Africa and Swaziland that would be more restrictive than for other range states whose rhino are already listed under Appendix I.

The CITES Secretariat states: "It would prevent South Africa and Swaziland from using a management option that can be sustainable and beneficial for the conservation of the species; discourage the involvement of private landowners in the conservation of white rhinoceroses and undermine national and local rhino management strategies."

Trophy hunting not impacting

South Africa has recently taken significant steps to improve its management of rhino hunting and the supporting statement does not show that trophy hunting, as currently regulated and enforced in South Africa, is negatively impacting the populations of white rhino in the country, the Secretariat said.

South Africans are urged to report any information or tip offs that they may have in relation to rhino poaching to the anonymous tip-off lines +27 (0)800 205 005.

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