

Rhino issue manager's findings to be submitted to minister

The rhino issue manager (RIM) was appointed in May this year with the responsibility of conducting research and convening a series of stakeholder dialogues with all interested parties to facilitate wide-ranging and expert input into policy thinking.



In the course of the work of the RIM, a total of 12 stakeholder meetings have been held in Gauteng, Durban and Cape Town, with presentations being conducted in Bloemfontein and Cape Town.

Participants in the RIM dialogues included, among others, government departments, national and provincial, state agencies, safety and security agencies, parks authorities, economists, resource economists, and technology suppliers. Virtually all elements of civil society participated in the RIM dialogues including NGO's, interested individuals, farmers, hunters, local communities, private rhino owners, conservation bodies, scientific and academic communities and social media based organisations (international and local).

Over the past five months, the RIM has conducted some 400 one-on-one consultations with the entire spectrum of stakeholders, all of which will be considered and fed into the report of the RIM which is expected to be submitted on 31 October this year.

Considered at discretion of minister

The report will reflect and synthesise all expert input, research, interests, viewpoints and opinions expressed during the RIM process and will make a series of recommendations to the Minister with respect to issues ranging from rhino conservation, to security and trade. Once received, the RIM report will be presented to the Department of Environmental Affairs, before being considered by the Minister. The findings and recommendations of the RIM report will be considered entirely at the discretion of the Minister.

It is worth noting that the government has increased patrols by protected area authorities, involved the security cluster in the anti-poaching campaign, including deploying the SANDF in the Kruger National Park; the Hawks have implemented fast-track investigations of anti-rhino/endangered species crimes; the NPA has imposed stiffer sentences without the option of a

fine; and SARS is on constant lookout for smugglers of CITES-banned species. There has also been seizure of poachers and criminals assets by the Asset Forfeiture Unit.

The South African government is determined to win the war against rhino poaching and calls on all South Africans to do their part to assist. Any incidents of rhino poaching or tip-offs that can prevent illegal killings, or lead to arrests can be reported to 0800 205 005.

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