



SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

"Hunting provides the principal incentive and revenue for conservation.  
Hence it is a force for conservation."

## World Conservation Force Bulletin

www.conservationforce.org March 2016

# Zimbabwe Finalizes Its National Elephant Action Plan

**O**n January 21, 2016 the Director of Zimbabwe's Parks and Wildlife Management Authority (ZimParks) and the Minister of Environment, Water, and Climate signed the finished *Action Plan for Elephant Conservation and Management in Zimbabwe* that has been in preparation for nearly two action-packed years. The plan includes four regional action plans that have been completed one by one over the past 14 months following the December 2014 national participatory workshop in Hwange National Park. That initial workshop was sponsored by Shikar Safari Club International Foundation (Shikar), Conservation Force and ZimParks.

The Plan is the most up-to-date national action plan in the world as are the four regional action plans. In effect it is five action plans (one national and four standalone regional plans). Conservation Force and its consortium of partner organizations also sponsored two other sustainable use-related planning workshops during the same period. Dallas Safari Club and Conservation Force hosted a CAMPFIRE workshop before the national workshop to ensure sufficient community representation at the national level, and Conservation Force sponsored a two-day *Future*

DATELINE:  
**Zimbabwe**



John J. Jackson III

*of Hunting in Zimbabwe* planning workshop in Harare with hunting operators and Zimbabwe authorities (June 22-23, 2015). In addition, two other workshops/plans contributed to the Northwest Matabeleland regional plan: an anti-poaching strategy workshop for Hwange National Park held in the park in June 2015, together with the management plan for the Park itself.

Zimbabwe's ambitious elephant action planning calls for formation of five committees (four regional and one national). A national Elephant Coordinator has also been appointed with terms of reference to administer the Plan nationwide. Conservation Force has pledged to assist with the initial funding of that coordinator.

### Effect of Suspension

We hope and expect that the FWS will make a positive "enhancement" finding so that elephant trophies will again be importable into the USA. Yours truly hand-delivered a signed copy of the Plan to the FWS Chief of the Division of Management Authority (DMA) and the Chief of Permits, both in person, on Thursday, February 4, 2016.

Though import permits are not required for Zimbabwe elephant hunting trophies, the DMA has **self-**

**imposed** regulations that require it to make a positive "enhancement" finding as a regulatory condition of import just like for ESA endangered-listed species. It should be noted that the FWS has recently proposed requiring import permits for **all** elephants, even those on Appendix II of CITES (i.e., Zimbabwe, Namibia, South Africa, and Botswana, 80 Fed. Reg. 45154, July 29, 2015). Conservation Force has vigorously opposed this in formal comments. The reason for the CITES downlisting of elephants to Appendix II was to facilitate trophy trade. The proposed FWS permit requirement for Appendix II-listed elephant trophies conflicts with the purposeful Appendix II treatment of hunting trophies by the CITES Parties. The same FWS proposal includes a provision to limit elephant trophies to two per year.

The so-called FWS suspension of imports or "ban" in 2014 arose when the DMA determined it could no longer make a positive enhancement finding for Zimbabwe. It issued a notice of suspension and welcomed more information without prior warning or written inquiry. That surprise suspension, unnecessary name-calling in the publication and breach of diplomacy was an affront and subsequently has served as an obstacle in addressing the issues raised by the DMA. While the DMA did not have adequate positive information in its administrative file, there was a great deal of misinformation from animal rightist Johnny Rodrigues (the same writer that misrepresented so many "Cecil" facts). Early on, the need for a new plan was identified as a primary issue because Zimbabwe's then-in-effect national elephant plan was 17 years old, adopted 1997. That issue has now been addressed by the combined national and regional plans.

Another primary concern arose from a lack of information from the IUCN/SSC's African Elephant Specialist Group and misinterpretation of that

Mana Pools Workshop, March 30th - April 1, 2015.



## The Role of Sport Hunting in Elephant Conservation

(Excerpted from the Action Plan for Elephant Conservation and Management in Zimbabwe:)

Elephants are a charismatic species but can also be destructive when they destroy crops, threaten livestock and even human lives.

To have a future, elephants must have value. Value to the governing authorities and to the local people. The greater the value, the greater the tolerance of them is likely to be. The local people who live closest to them will determine the long-term survival of species like elephant.

Regulated sport hunting converts wildlife into assets for the benefit of local people and the country as a whole. Wildlife can be a most valuable asset and in turn empower local communities and provide basic necessities. When it is viewed as a valuable asset, wildlife becomes an economically competitive land use in Zimbabwe, which leads to habitat preservation instead of habitat destruction and conversion to agriculture or livestock production. Game animals have a survival advantage because of user-pay stewardship systems where use revenue generated from tourist hunters is paid through to wildlife authorities and local communities.

The presence of regulated hunting can also reduce illegal activities. Many hunting operators in Zimbabwe have specialised anti-poaching units. Private operators'

lease agreements are being reviewed to include anti-poaching as an obligation of the concessionaire. Regulated hunting is the opposite of poaching. One is a lawful activity designed by government wildlife authorities and experts to perpetuate resources and the other is prohibited thievery outside of and away from the system. The first is like making a bank deposit and the second is like a bank robbery, without sustainable limits.

Trophy hunting revenues are vital because there are not enough tourists to otherwise generate income to support all protected areas. Eco-tourism revenues are typically sufficient to cover the costs of only some of the parks and certainly not to justify wildlife as a land use outside of protected areas. Hunting is able to generate revenues under a wider range of scenarios than eco-tourism, including in remote areas lacking infra-structure, attractive scenery, or high densities of viewable wildlife.

Consequently, elephant and other wildlife populations will be negatively affected through reduced conservation efforts arising from low funding and reduced goodwill from the communities, when in reality the elephant has the economic potential to raise adequate funds to support itself and other species. For these reasons, Zimbabwe confirms its commitment to the sustainable use of elephant and other wildlife in this Action Plan.

group's Elephant Database by the FWS' staff. The African Elephant Specialist Group had neglected to add a number of recent population estimates from Zimbabwe to its database. Additionally, the FWS had misinterpreted the database as indicating a dramatic reduction in the number of elephants in Zimbabwe. The 2014 National Elephant Aerial Survey provided an up-to-date, science-based aerial estimate of nearly 83,000 elephants that has now put those mistakes to rest. The recent survey did confirm declines in two smaller regions, which Zimbabwe officials had been tracking and were well aware of. The first two participatory action planning workshops were intentionally organized in those two regions with elephant population declines. That immediately set into motion a host of aggressive anti-poaching actions that are controlling the poachers today. Conservation Force is even funding a reward program for

arrest and conviction of poachers in the Sebungwe Region.

### The 2014 National Elephant Aerial Survey: Four Regions of Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe shares the largest elephant population in the world with Botswana and holds the second largest elephant population. The 2014 National Elephant Aerial Survey provided an estimate of 82,000 elephants in Zimbabwe, but it excluded a probable thousand more in a number of small

Conservation Force's Sebungwe Regional Elephant Planning Workshop in May 2015.



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populations that were not surveyed, such as Malilangwe and Buby Valley Conservancies, Tuli Safari Area, etc. Those populations brought the total closer to 83,000.

In the 2014 survey, the *Sebungwe Region* reflected a decline, but that must be viewed in perspective. All the regional population densities except Sebungwe continue to exceed desired density limits established in the 1980s. Sebungwe is the only region with a plan to increase the population to a minimum viability threshold.

The elephant populations in the three districts of Sebungwe grew from 2,000 elephants in the 1920s up to a high of about 15,000 in 2006. Now it is down to 3,500. Viewed in perspective, the human population increased from 45,000 in 1950 to 700,000 in 2013, which is more than twice the threshold human density at which elephants disappear from settled areas. In that regional plan a tentative target of 5,000 elephants has been set in Sebungwe's 7,000 square kilometers of available habitat. That plan has been vigorously pursued since first drafted in June 2015. It must be noted that this is the smallest of the four regional populations (3,500



*Working group in South East Lowveld participatory workshop, September 2015.*

of the 83,000), while the countrywide population total has gone from 4,000 elephants in 1900 to nearly 83,000 today.

The second region with elephant decline is in the *Mid-Zambezi Valley*. That population reached a high of 19,000 elephants in 2001. It has since declined to 11,300 in 2014. Again this is above long intended "density limits" and is of concern because it remains excessive, not depleted.

The third regional plan covers the *South East Lowveld*, which includes Gonarezhou National Park, Savé Valley Conservancy and more. The population

is on the increase with a Gonarezhou National Park population of 11,000 elephants growing about 5% per annum over the last 20 years. Overall there are about 13,000 elephants in this range/area – the most elephants in more than a century. This is also where a number of 100-pound elephants have been taken in recent years. Nevertheless, after a full participatory workshop a new regional plan is in place.

The fourth plan is that in the *Northwest Matabeleland Region*, which includes Hwange National Park, the Matetsi complex, et al. The estimated elephant population is 53,991 (approximately 54,000). This is the densest elephant population of the four regions at 2.16 elephants per square kilometer and 3.02 elephant per square kilometer in Hwange National Park itself.

To quote the National Plan, "By any standards Zimbabwe has a proud history of successful elephant conservation." Indeed, it does have every reason to be proud. In the Foreword to the Plan, the Honorable Oppah Muchinguri-Kashiri (MP) states:

"The government is aware of the pressure in the current conservation

### **The Importance of Community Based Conservation to the Future of Elephant Management in Zimbabwe**

*(Excerpted from the Action Plan for Elephant Conservation and Management in Zimbabwe:)*

The Community Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE) of Zimbabwe has been widely regarded as one of Africa's most successful contemporary conservation initiatives. It permits the residents of communal lands – basically the poor rural communities – to share in the benefits generated by wildlife utilisation on those lands by granting Appropriate Authority to Rural District Councils (RDCs) to manage wildlife on communal lands and requiring a certain percentage of revenue to be paid to the wards and councils.

CAMPFIRE operates in about 50,000 km<sup>2</sup> (12.7%) of land in Zimbabwe. This is roughly equivalent landmass to the Parks and Wildlife Estate. CAMPFIRE encompasses about 777,000 households with an average family size of five, who face food insecurity and deep poverty (average income \$1 a day).

Between 1994 and 2012, CAMPFIRE generated \$39 million of which \$21.5 million

was allocated to communities and used for resource management (22%), household benefits (26%), and community projects (52%). About 90% of CAMPFIRE's revenue comes from hunting, with elephant hunting contributing more than 70% of annual revenue.

Based on the Constitution of the CAMPFIRE Association as amended in 2007, all major hunting RDCs use CAMPFIRE revenue-sharing guidelines. In these districts safari operators pay revenue directly into community-controlled bank accounts using the following breakdown: CAMPFIRE community share (55%), RDC fees (41%), CAMPFIRE Association levy (4%).

Despite its achievements CAMPFIRE still faces fundamental challenges. In particular, the development strategies of households in CAMPFIRE areas focus on land uses that are incompatible with wildlife such as human immigration to rural areas, the extension of basic agricultural schemes and increased livestock numbers. Other CAMPFIRE challenges include: (i) the downturn in Zimbabwe's economy and tourism sector

post-2000, (ii) great reliance on consumptive trophy hunting and less focus on other uses and non-consumptive uses of natural resources, (iii) increasing human populations averaging 16-20 people per km<sup>2</sup> in some key wildlife districts, and (iv) lack of re-investment in development, fixed assets, human capital, and management and protection of wildlife in CAMPFIRE areas.

Despite these challenges, CAMPFIRE stands very high in the agenda of Zimbabwe's Government, and a review dedicated to improving the programme, including greater devolution of ownership of wildlife to communities, is ongoing and should be finalized by the end of 2015. Zimbabwe's Government recognises that the survival of wild animals depends entirely on those among whom they live. Unless local people want to save them, wildlife will be poached to the point where just a few remain in fortified reserves. CAMPFIRE is meant to avoid this and the future of wildlife in communal areas rests on the success of this programme.

environment that perceives an approaching extinction of elephants in Africa and opposes sustainable use of the species. The Government perceives this pressure to be a factor that limits the resources available to conserve elephants and their habitats, and the range of plant and animal species that occur in these wildlife areas. Sustainable use of natural resources has been and remains a central pillar of successful conservation in this country. The Government has every intention of maintaining its policy in this regard."

Zimbabwe's incredible success demonstrates the resolve of Zimbabwe and all the participants. By all accounts, the communities dependent upon elephant safari hunting income have suffered a loss of one-half of their revenue and are facing far worse in 2016. To quote the Plan, recent work in Addo Elephant National Park Plan in South Africa shows that high elephant densities do not increase eco-tourism opportunities and their associated ecological costs are not a requirement

for eco-tourism financial sustainability (citing the 2014 article by Maciejewski, K. and Kerley, G.I.H., "Elevated elephant density does not improve tourism opportunities, suggesting convergence in social and ecological objectives," *Ecological Applications*, 24, 920-926). In our interpretation, Zimbabwe's elephants have diminishing general tourism value as they increase, but growing cost. As a conservation friend of Zimbabwe, its dear people and wildlife, Conservation Force has partnered with Zimbabwe from the inception of the suspension crisis. We

have also represented Zimbabwe's interest in Federal District Court when animal activists tried to stop its perfectly lawful trade in live elephants that the antis misrepresented to be "baby elephant" but later described as "sub-adults." That one sale generated \$1 million for elephant conservation, but it is not nearly enough. The estimated cost of the new national plan is \$11 million. It takes grit and habitat today to save wildlife, and Zimbabwe has it. We are so very proud to be a part of this effort with these wonderful people and their conservation success. ■

CAMPFIRE Elephant Planning Workshop November 2015.



## Ranks Close Against Hunting of Captive Bred Lion: Scientists Act

In the recent threatened listing of the Eastern and Southern African lion, the FWS explicitly found no conservation value from the hunting of captive bred lion in RSA and stated it was not likely to issue import permits for those lion for that reason. Of course, input from lion scientists is largely the basis of that finding. Also, in November 2015, PHASA returned to its long-standing position against hunting/shooting captive bred lions that was their prior position for more than 20 years.

The African Lion Working Group, ALWG, has just fortified their longstanding position with the following:

### ALWG Statement on Captive-Bred Lion Hunting and Associated Activities

It is the opinion of the African Lion Working Group (ALWG) that captive-bred lion hunting, which is defined by ALWG as the sport hunting of lions that are captive bred and reared expressly for sport hunting and/or sport hunting of lions that occur in fenced enclosures and are not self-sustaining does not provide any demonstrated positive benefit to wild lion conservation efforts and therefore cannot be claimed to be conservation.

In addition while more data are still needed, the international lion bone trade that is currently being supplied by the South African captive-bred lion industry may fuel an increased demand for wild lion bones elsewhere.

This could negatively impact wild lion populations and hinder conservation efforts. The recent dramatic increase in lion bone trade should be reason for concern.

The estimated 8,000 lions in South Africa currently being maintained and bred on game farms as part of this industry should not be included in any assessments of the current status of wild lions.

Captive breeding of lions for sport hunting, hunting of captive-bred lion and the associated cub petting industry are not conservation tools. In our opinion they are businesses and outside the remit of the African Lion Working Group and should be dealt with accordingly. ■

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