



SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

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

# World Conservation Force Bulletin

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## Zimbabwe: An Example of Elephant Conservation Success

Zimbabwe is an elephant conservation success story. Both the EU Scientific Review Group and the Division of Management Authority of US Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) have scientifically determined that elephant hunting in Zimbabwe "enhances" the survival of those elephant. Import permit issuance in the US had been delayed for



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more than a year largely because the responsible FWS division prioritized other permitting. When the FWS enhancement finding was published the anti-hunters and media began a biased blitz against the import permitting.

In response, this December Conservation Force prepared a booklet of Talking Points supporting the long overdue enhancement determination. We then prepared the following Short Fact Sheet as a summary.

### SHORT FACT SHEET

#### ZIMBABWE ELEPHANT MANAGEMENT

- Zimbabwe's elephant population has grown from under 5,000 in 1900 to over 83,000 today. Zimbabwe's elephant population, alone, is larger than the estimated populations of West and Central Africa combined (without including guesses), and is almost the same size as the estimated population of all of Eastern Africa. Zimbabwe maintains the second-largest population in the world.
- Zimbabwe's elephant population is also almost 20% larger than when the

Region/Country	Estimated Elephant Population
West Africa	11,489
Central Africa	24,119
Southern Africa - Zimbabwe alone -	293,447 - 82,630 -
Eastern Africa	86,373

FWS made its last positive enhancement finding in 1997. Zimbabwe's elephant population is stable, despite rapid growth of the country's human population, which increased by 24.33% between 2000 and 2016.<sup>1</sup>

- Hunting offtakes are a fraction of a percent and have no impact on the overall elephant population. Average

annual offtakes between 2010-2013 were 0.276% of the total population. Moreover, hunters take older bull elephant that have already reproduced and spread their genes.<sup>2</sup>

- Zimbabwe's wildlife authority, the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority (ZPWMA), is a "parastatal." It is separate and largely funded separately from the Central government. ZPWMA was not affected by the recent Presidential transition which, in any event, proceeded smoothly. President Mnangagwa has confirmed the same Minister of Water, Climate, and Environment, Oppah Muchinguri-Kashiri, and the same Permanent Secretary. ZPWMA is proceeding with "business as usual."<sup>3</sup>
- Elephant habitat in Zimbabwe includes approximately 27,000 km<sup>2</sup> in National Parks, 18,900 km<sup>2</sup> in Safari Areas, over 50,000 km<sup>2</sup> in Communal (CAMPFIRE) Areas, and 7,000 km<sup>2</sup>

in private conservancies.<sup>4</sup> Hunting areas are over three times the size of the National Parks in Zimbabwe. Communal Areas (90%) and private conservancies are almost wholly funded by hunting revenues, which justify the dedication of this land to wildlife habitat in place of alternative uses like livestock and agriculture.

- Hunting fees make up a significant portion of ZPWMA's revenues. Trophy and concession fees generated almost \$5.1 million for ZPWMA in 2014. Over half of these fees were paid by US clients. Approximately 80% of ZPWMA's revenues are allocated for anti-poaching. Put simply, hunting revenues from US hunters pay for most of the anti-poaching across Zimbabwe's elephant range. And the FWS suspension of elephant trophy imports reduced ZPWMA's revenues by almost 14% in 2014 compared to 2013. The suspension has reduced the revenues available for ZPWMA (as well as CAMPFIRE communities and individual operators) to combat poaching.<sup>5</sup>
- Poaching in Zimbabwe has been controlled so as not to have a national effect. The penalty for poaching is a minimum nine-year prison sentence.
- Hunting operators support this successful anti-poaching by funding their own patrol teams, paying salaries

4 UNProtected Planet, <https://protectedplanet.net>; CAMPFIRE Association of Zimbabwe Press Statement (November 2017), <http://campfirezimbabwe.org/index.php/news-spotlight/26-press-statement...1>. Elephant habitat in Zimbabwe also includes over 10,000 km<sup>2</sup> in Forest Areas managed by the parastatal Forestry Commission.

1 Zimbabwe's population has grown from 12.22 million in 2000 to 16.15 million in 2016. World Bank, <https://data.worldbank.org/country/zimbabwe?view=chart>.

2 ZPWMA (April 2014, July 2015).

3 ZPWMA Website, <http://zimparcs.org/about-zimparcs/>; see also news reports of the transition in Zimbabwe, e.g., <http://www.thezimbabwemail.com/main/mnangagwa-swears-new-cabinet/>; <https://citizen.co.za/news/news-africa/1746240/mnangagwa-names-new-zimbabwean-cabinet/>.

5 Note that hunting and concession fees are considerably higher than this, but because of the grant of "appropriate authority," hunting fees accrue to the landholder on communal and private land, not to ZPWMA. "Appropriate authority" incentivizes landholders to maintain and increase wildlife populations because they retain the benefits of the sustainable use. ZPWMA (April 2014, July 2015).



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for community scouts, and assisting ZPWMA with equipment, rations, petrol, and other needs. Hunting operators are the first line of defense against poaching. For example, Charlton McCallum Safaris in the Dande and Mbire areas spends an average of \$85,000/year on anti-poaching. From 2010 to 2016, their efforts led to an 80% decline in elephant poaching in an important border region.<sup>6</sup>

- Regulated hunting also reduces poaching by incentivizing greater tolerance among the rural communities who live side-by-side with dangerous animals. Hunting provides most of the revenue in CAMPFIRE Areas and averaged \$2.2 million/year prior to the FWS suspension of elephant trophy imports. Elephant hunting alone generated approximately \$1.6 million per year. These funds are invested in game monitoring and community projects such as boreholes, classrooms and clinics, food purchases, and other livelihood improvements for Zimbabwe's rural poor. Approximately 200,000 families directly and another 600,000 indirectly benefit from CAMPFIRE revenues. Because of these benefits, poaching and problem animal control are low in CAMPFIRE Areas. This tolerance is despite the fact that elephant destroyed over 7,000 hectares of crops and claimed the lives of approximately 50 people in CAMPFIRE communities between 2010 and 2015.<sup>7</sup>
- There is no evidence that ivory poaching—in Zimbabwe or anywhere else—is directly tied to terrorism, and that claim has been debunked

by credible research, although it is often repeated in popular media.<sup>8</sup> If it were related, then regulated hunting reduces the poaching: in the Southern African countries that depend upon regulated hunting as a conservation tool (including Zimbabwe), poaching levels are the lowest in Africa. According to CITES' Monitoring the Illegal Killing of Elephants (MIKE) data, Southern African countries have the lowest Proportion of Illegally Killed Elephant (PIKE). PIKE is used to assess whether poaching levels are unsustainable. It has never risen above the sustainability threshold in Southern Africa, even in 2011, when the recent poaching crisis peaked and began declining. PIKE has declined in Zimbabwe's MIKE sites since 2011.<sup>9</sup>

- Zimbabwe's National Elephant Management Plan (2015-2020) is the most up-to-date plan in Africa. Responding to the FWS' concerns, this new plan identifies specific action items, outputs, and Key Performance Indicators to measure the success of plan implementation. The national plan is supplemented by four regional action plans with the same framework to address the unique challenges of each range. The regional plans are implemented by committees and it is all overseen by a National Elephant Coordinator.

Both the EU Scientific Review Group and the USFWS have made positive enhancement findings and authorized the import of elephant hunting trophies although there is a FWS delay in issuance of import permits to the US because of "false news" and the transition of the Zimbabwe presidency. ■

6 Dande Anti-Poaching Unit Website, <http://dapuzim.com/>.

7 CAMPFIRE Association Press Statement, <http://campfirezimbabwe.org/index.php/news-spotlight/26-press-stateme...1>; CAMPFIRE Association (April 2014).

8 This research is available at: [https://rusi.org/sites/default/files/201509\\_an\\_illusion\\_of\\_complicity\\_0.pdf](https://rusi.org/sites/default/files/201509_an_illusion_of_complicity_0.pdf); see also <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/30/opinion/the-ivory-funded-terrorism-myth.html>.

9 CITES/MIKE Website, [https://www.cites.org/eng/prog/mike/data\\_and\\_reports](https://www.cites.org/eng/prog/mike/data_and_reports).

## Brief Report from the 69th Meeting of the CITES Standing Committee

From November 27 to December 1, 2017, Conservation Force attended the 69th meeting of the CITES Standing Committee in Geneva, Switzerland. The meeting involved over 600 participants and a "packed" agenda. We attended to support

several initiatives, and also monitor proceedings to ensure no surprises could negatively impact regulated hunting. The Standing Committee established working groups to recommend actions to its next, 70th meeting. We joined at least six of



these groups, so that we can provide technical assistance to the range states that rely on regulated hunting as a conservation tool, and also protect the interests of US hunter-conservationists. These “intersessional” working groups range from rhino to elephant, lion and rural community livelihoods.

The meeting successfully completed or advanced three Conservation Force Initiatives. First and finally, the Standing Committee agreed to lift the trade restrictions on hippo trophies from Mozambique that have been in place since 2012. Mozambique submitted an extensive non-detriment finding with updated hippo surveys and indicated it would set a low, precautionary quota for hippo for 2018. With an additional survey we hope to increase the quota in the future.

Second, for the first time, the Standing Committee established a mechanism to bring the voices of rural communities into the discussion of CITES regulation of listed species. At the Seventeenth Conference of Parties in Johannesburg in October 2016, Conservation Force assisted Namibia, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe in submitting a proposal to form a Rural Communities Committee, to advise the Standing Committee just as the Animals and Plants Committees do now. The form of that proposal was not agreed to by the Parties. However, the Parties agreed to establish a working group to discuss how to get rural communities more involved in CITES

decision-making.

This working group was officially struck at the Standing Committee. It contains 26 Parties, and Namibia is the Chair. Namibia must now involve an equal number of rural community representatives based on input from Parties and groups that have expressed an interest in being part of the working group. The United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) agreed to fund the working group’s first meeting, which will take place in early 2018.

Establishment of this working group acknowledges that rural communities who may depend on the sustainable use of natural resources can be harmed by CITES restrictions on that use. There is no current mechanism to give rural communities an opportunity to object to CITES actions or listings, or have their concerns raised before the Parties. This working group is the first step to incorporating the concerns of those who live closest to the fauna and flora into the international decision-making.

Third, Zimbabwe submitted a document expressing concerns over how “the recent decisions of several airlines and maritime shipping companies to stop transporting/carrying legally acquired wildlife products and specimens are having undesirable and significant impact to the economy of Zimbabwe and other countries in southern Africa. Such decisions have also negatively affected

the already fragile economy of our rural communities that rely on the legitimate and sustainable use of their wildlife resources for their livelihoods and other subsistence needs.” Zimbabwe proposed that the Chair of the Standing Committee engage with airline and maritime shipping CEOs to note that such embargos are “against the spirit, intent and objectives of CITES” and will “NOT have any conservation benefits.” (Conservation Force is still pursuing a claim against the airlines before the FAA.)

Japan, China, Mozambique, Botswana, and other Southern African countries spoke in support of Zimbabwe’s proposal. South Africa spoke in favor of the proposal, but suggested that the CITES Secretary General be directed to engage with the transport CEOs. The Standing Committee ultimately determined to encourage the Secretariat to engage with the transport industry and with the International Air Transport Association to explain how CITES works and distinguish between illegal and legal trade. That is not a perfect outcome, but Zimbabwe’s raising of this issue highlights the fact that transport industry decisions may have real, negative effects on range states and their citizens.

Overall, the Standing Committee was a success—there were no debates over regulated hunting, and there were positive steps taken, especially for Mozambique and rural communities. ■

## New Suits Challenge the FWS’ Positive Enhancement Findings for Elephant and Lion Trophy Imports from Zimbabwe

**T**wo separate suits have been filed requesting that the positive FWS enhancement findings for trophy imports from Zimbabwe be vacated. Conservation Force is preparing to intervene and defend these challenges.

On November 20, 2017, the Center for Biological Diversity (CBD) and Natural Resources Defense Counsel (NRDC) jointly sued the FWS and Department of Interior over the positive enhancement findings for both elephant and lion trophy imports from Zimbabwe. Their complaint alleges that Zimbabwe has “failed to sustainably manage elephants,”

basically because Zimbabwe allows elephant hunting despite an asserted six percent decline in the elephant population since 2001. The complaint cites the negative enhancement findings made by the FWS in 2014 and 2015 and points to a number of prior negative FWS statements to show that the positive 2017 finding is arbitrary.

Similarly, this complaint alleges that Zimbabwe has “failed to sustainably manage lions,” largely because Zimbabwe’s lion management plan dates to 2006 and allegedly has not been implemented. The complaint alleges that

Zimbabwe’s lion population is “703” and cites the IUCN. To the contrary, the 2015 Red List assessed Zimbabwe as one of only four African countries where lion populations are increasing.

The complaint challenges both findings under the Administrative Procedure Act, and alleges that each finding is “arbitrary and capricious.” It asserts that these findings are “contrary to law,” without specifying which law is violated. The complaint requests that the court set aside the positive 2017 enhancement findings for imports of elephant and lion trophies and—of

course—award the plaintiffs their attorneys' fees.

Two days later, Friends of Animals (FoA) and the Zimbabwe Conservation Task Force (ZCTF) filed a similar suit seeking similar relief with respect to the import of elephant trophies from Zimbabwe. Their complaint focuses on elephants and does not challenge lion trophy imports. Like the CBD-NRDC complaint, FoA and ZCTF allege that the FWS's positive enhancement finding was "arbitrary and capricious." The plaintiffs request to have the enhancement finding authorizing elephant trophy imports from Zimbabwe set aside, and also request the recovery of their attorneys' fees.

Unlike the CBD-NRDC complaint, FoA and ZCTF claim that the FWS "changed their previous rule requiring notice of new findings be published in the Federal Register" when the FWS published notice of the positive 2017 enhancement finding. The plaintiffs ask the court to declare that the FWS should have provided notice and an opportunity for them to comment before making the positive finding.

Both suits are full of misstatements and false facts. Among other things, they misleadingly suggest Zimbabwe's elephant population is "continuing" to decline, citing reports that all rely on the same data but which were published in different years.

They also both accuse Zimbabwe of unspecified "corruption." The CBD-NRDC complaint cites Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) as support for this allegation. However, the CPI does not measure actual occurrences of corruption in a country, such as how often public officials are prosecuted. Rather, it measures *perceptions* of corruption in a country's public sector based on opinion

PHOTO OF THE MONTH



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surveys. Transparency International admits: "There is no meaningful way to assess absolute levels of corruption in countries or territories on the basis of hard empirical data," and "The CPI is an indicator of perceptions of public sector corruption ... It is not a verdict on the levels of corruption of entire nations or societies, or of their policies, or the activities of their private sector."<sup>1</sup> Basically, this index suggests a country is corrupt because people think it is corrupt. It is not "evidence," as the plaintiffs assert, of corruption.

Perhaps most egregious, the plaintiffs cherry-pick negative statements from the FWS' negative 2014 and 2015 enhancement findings to conclude that the 2017 finding approving elephant trophy imports must be wrong. Neither complaint acknowledges that those prior findings were basically asking to be reversed. They repeatedly state they will be reconsidered upon receipt of additional information from Zimbabwe.

Moreover, the 2017 positive finding approving elephant trophy imports contains a table at the end that *specifically* explains how the FWS' prior stated concerns have been

<sup>1</sup> See the "FAQ" section of Transparency International's webpage on the CPI, [http://files.transparency.org/content/download/2058/13244/file/CPI\\_2016\\_FAQs\\_EN.pdf](http://files.transparency.org/content/download/2058/13244/file/CPI_2016_FAQs_EN.pdf).

addressed and resolved. This table demonstrates that the positive finding is not arbitrary and capricious. It is based on a reasoned consideration of additional information and new information provided by Zimbabwe and others.

Conservation Force plans to intervene in these suits to defend the FWS' enhancement findings. These positive findings were based on the best available information that has been submitted to the FWS for over three years (for

elephant) and almost two years (for lion). Zimbabwe responded to at least seven FWS information requests (five for elephant and at least two for lion). Conservation Force submitted at least six substantive comments with thousands of pages of supporting information, followed by dozens of emails attaching real-time enhancement data. These attachments have included everything: the proceedings of Zimbabwe's numerous elephant management planning workshops, updated survey results, information from hunting operators on their anti-poaching efforts and community investment, reports from the CAMPFIRE Association and traditional leaders (Chiefs) describing the use of funds from hunting, and much more. There can be no doubt the FWS' positive conclusions that Zimbabwe's elephant and lion management is strong and that regulated hunting "enhances the survival" of these species are well-supported and these suits are baseless.

Conservation Force intervened in similar suits challenging permits to import black rhino trophies in 2015 and argali before that. One of those suits was brought by current plaintiffs FoA and ZCTF. In that case, the court dismissed the complaint because the plaintiffs did not have legal standing. We anticipate the same result in the CBD-NRDC and FoA-ZCTF cases. ■

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