

TRADE ISSUES

CITES

The rhino crisis was once again a major topic of the 9th CITES Conference of the Parties (C.O.P.). Two major issues were considered:

- (1) a general Resolution on rhinoceros conservation in Africa and Asia;
- (2) a Proposal from South Africa to downlist their population of southern white rhinoceros (*Ceratotherium simum simum*)

The adoption of both proposals reflects what appears a significant change of direction for rhino conservation toward more adaptive management and innovative approaches based on performance measurement and range-state self-reliance.

Resolution on Rhino Conservation in African and Asia

- The CITES Standing Committee had requested the IUCN African Rhino Specialist Group (AfRSG) to formulate this Resolution. The AfRSG did so at its meeting in Mombasa May 1994. Two members of the IUCN Asian Rhino Specialist Group (AsRSG) attended this meeting and participated in formulation of the Resolution. Subsequently, the Resolution was circulated to the Chairs, the 2 Deputy Chairs, and the 2 Program Officers of the Asian Rhino Specialist Group by whom input was provided.
- The basic premise of the Resolution is that for the most part current conservation measures, including some of the CITES provisions, have not succeeded in arresting or reversing the decline in rhino numbers.
- Drafters perceived that there were several major reasons for this lack of success:
 - A major problem has been inadequate funds for the level of protection and management required. This inadequacy pertains both to funds from range states and external donors.
 - Another major problem has been the lack of performance assessment of conservation measures being applied and lack of adaptive management based on such evaluation.
 - A third major problem has been the reluctance or failure to consider the full range of options that might be applied.

- This Resolution consequently contains provisions for:
 - Performance evaluation of all conservation measures;
 - Adaptive management based on the performance evaluation;
 - Consideration of the full range of options that might be applied and therefore preservation of opportunities to use those options;
 - Expansion of funding sources to respond to the substantial needs, with a particular emphasis on sustainability and self-reliance within the range states.
 - A shift in position on legal stockpiles of rhino horn from acquire and destroy to consolidate and control.
 - Hence, rescision of CITES Resolutions Conf. 3.11 and 6.10. to be replaced by this Resolution.

Discussion on this proposal from the floor reflected the dilemma caused by acknowledging that past approaches have not solved the problem but innovative ones have unknown risks and consequences. The rescision of CITES Res. Conf. 3.11 and 6.10 was a particular point of discussion. In the end the resolution was adopted by an overwhelming majority receiving support from all significant range states in Africa and Asia.

Downlisting of South African Population of Southern White Rhino to Appendix II

The recovery of the southern white rhino in South Africa is an exceptional conservation success story. Indeed, the population of this subspecies has recovered to the point where it would qualify for downlisting to Appendix II under CITES Berne criteria. From only about 100 at the turn of the century, the southern white rhino in South Africa now numbers more than 6,000. Moreover, the approximately 400 southern white rhino in the wild elsewhere in Africa and over 600 in captivity world-wide are also a direct result of translocations from South Africa.

The financial cost of this success has been great and has been almost entirely provided from internal sources within South Africa without support from external donors. It has been estimated that to successfully

conserve and manage rhinos in South African sanctuaries costs \$1,000 to \$1,200/km²/year.

However, it is anticipated that it will be increasingly difficult for South Africa to sustain these costs from previous sources and shortfalls are expected. To date, adequate levels of alternative support from external donors has not materialized to cover shortfalls in funds within range states. It seems unlikely such support will be available on a sustainable basis. Therefore, it seems critical that range states like South Africa develop innovative means for self-generation of additional income to cover current and future shortfalls.

A number of major points were considered for and against the proposal.

- On the positive side, the proposal South Africa clearly could provide financial benefits for conservation of the southern white rhino. There could also be biological benefits by further expanding the population in both distribution and number. Expansion of rhino populations to additional sanctuaries has proven to be one of the more successful conservation approaches for rhinos. Overall it was argued CITES should encourage efforts for self-reliance by range states like South Africa so the Treaty does adaptively and actively serve conservation of taxa like southern white rhino.
- On the negative side, major concerns were expressed about repercussions the downlisting might have on rhino populations in other range states. There was also concern about the fate of live rhinos dispersed to other countries where there might not be adequate security in the wild or inadequate conditions in captivity. However, it was also argued that these

risks need to be measured against the needs of and benefits to continued success in the conservation of southern white rhino in South Africa.

During the consideration process, South Africa amended their original proposal to apply to legitimate hunting trophies and live specimens only. Further, there was an intervention that provides for the downlisting to be approved only until the next Conference of the Parties when activities that have occurred under this downlisting will be reviewed. The amended proposal was adopted by an overwhelming majority, again with support of the significant African and Asian rhino range states. The CITES Secretariat will monitor activities under this downlisting and report to C.O.P. 10.

There seemed to be much agreement among those attending the Conference, that the intercessional work that has been occurring should continue to better delineate the benefits and risks of proposals like the one from South Africa. A number of major studies have been in progress, e.g.: a cost-effectiveness study of rhino conservation sponsored by WWF and WCS; a major study of the rhino horn trade sponsored by WWF and Save The Rhino International. This work should be expanded to include more interaction between the Asian and African range states and rhino conservation communities. IUCN will facilitate this collaboration by more interaction between its African and Asian Rhino Specialist Groups. There were two financial commitments toward support of this work: U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service to CITES inaugurating activities under the U.S. Rhino and Tiger Conservation Act; the Ministry of the Environment of the United Kingdom to TRAFFIC for study of rhino horn trade.

COMING EVENTS

This section is intended to announce events of interest and relevance to