

Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Fund, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**Fred Bagley****Mission**

The Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Fund (RTCF) supports conservation programs of nations whose activities directly or indirectly affect rhinoceros and tiger populations.

Despite protection under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and the national laws of many countries whose activities affect tigers and rhinoceros, these species continue to decline throughout much of their range. Concern over dramatic reductions in their populations prompted increased support for their protection in the U.S. Congress throughout the 1980's and early 1990's. During this time period, the Congress utilized CITES as a mechanism to employ stricter controls on the sale and trade of rhinoceros and tiger products.

In 1994 the U.S. Congress passed the Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Act to provide financial resources, through the Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Fund (RTCF), for conservation programs of nations whose activities affect rhinoceros and tiger populations. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Office of International Affairs now works with other collaborators within and outside the Service to coordinate disbursement of RTCF funds through a small grants program.

The objective of the Service in this program is to increase conservation of rhinoceros and tigers through strengthening habitat/ecosystem management; surveys and monitoring; conservation education; wildlife inspection, law enforcement and forensic skills; protected area/reserve management; sustainable development in buffer zones surrounding tiger/rhinoceros habitat; management of human behavior and livestock to decrease conflicts with tigers/rhinoceros; and use of substitutes for tiger/rhinoceros products in oriental medicine. Grantees include natural resource agencies in Asia and Africa, and range country and international nongovernment organizations.

The funds financial resources are appropriated by the U.S. Congress annually. Approximately \$600,000 was available for the first funding cycle which is now nearing completion. The amount of funding available will vary from year to year according to the appropriations of Congress.

Utilizing approximately \$600,000 in fiscal year 1996/97 funding the RTCF has done the following:

- Supported the training and equipping of anti-poaching patrols at Indonesia's Way Kambas National Park to protect a newly discovered population of the Sumatran rhino;
- Provided equipment for use in law enforcement by forest guards at Way Kambas;
- Contributed to development of the infrastructure for the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary at Way Kambas;
- Supported a conservation education program for villagers living near Sumatran rhino habitats in Sabah, Malaysia;
- Provided equipment, through the Adopt-A-Warden program, to forest guards to strengthen their ability to thwart poaching of Javan rhino at Ujung Kulon National Park and supported planning efforts to identify critical conservation needs for the species;
- Strengthened Indian rhino conservation efforts in Assam by providing field equipment (sweaters, boots, backpacks, raincoats and walkie-talkie radios) to forest guards protecting rhinos;
- Supported conservation education programs in Assam to better inform villagers of the need to conserve rhinos and assist in the anti-poaching effort;
- Funded efforts to strengthen prosecution of rhino poaching cases in Assam;

- Contributed to strengthening black rhino conservation by supporting production of training materials to assist scouts in black rhino population monitoring in Africa;
- Funded training and equipment for community game guards in Kenya;
- Supported aerial monitoring of northern white rhino in Garamba National Park, Congo, for security purposes and information on population dynamics;
- Supported conservation education in India for villagers living in the vicinity of tiger habitats and investigations into poaching and illegal trade of wild tigers;
- Assisted with assembling tiger biologists from range countries in Nepal to discuss, and work toward, standardization of field survey techniques;
- Supported a conservation education program for villagers living in the vicinity of tiger habitat at Indonesia's Way Kambas National Park; and
- Funded a socio-economic study of the status and needs of Cambodian villagers living in tiger habitat.

The RTCF seeks well developed proposals for high priority rhinoceros and tiger conservation actions which will strengthen the host country's capacity to manage these species. Proposals must be in English, have government endorsement, and a commitment of local resources to be used along with grant funds.

For a current RTCF Request For Proposals contact the Chief, Office of International Affairs, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 4401 North Fairfax Drive, ARLSQ 860, Arlington, VA 22203-1622 USA (Telephone : 703-358-1754; Fax: 703-358-2849; e-mail: fred_bagley@mail.fws.gov).