

March 20, 2023

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
C/o: Director Martha Williams
5275 Leesburg Pike
Falls Church, Virginia 22041

Re: Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants: Revision to the Section 4(d) Rule for the African Elephant

Director Williams:

The Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation (CSF) would like to express its opposition to the proposed revision to the rule for the African elephant under section 4(d) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, relative to the addition of 50 CFR 17.40(e)(6). The claimed purposes of this revision are to enhance the survival of both the elephants and the people living in the African nations where elephants reside, and to ensure that much-needed revenue is going back into elephant conservation. However, this proposal would significantly undermine the effective and proven conservation efforts and mechanisms that are already in place, which includes regulated and scientific-managed hunting. Therefore, CSF recommends that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) rejects the proposed revision.

By requiring "range countries that export sport-hunted trophies to the United States to provide the Service with information about the management and status of African elephants and the hunting programs in these countries" in order to obtain an annual certification, the FWS is proposing to explicitly undermine Resolution Conf. 6.7 of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). CITES Resolution Conf. 6.7 recommends the following:

"[E]ach Party intending to take stricter domestic measures pursuant to Article XIV, paragraph 1, of the Convention regarding trade in specimens of non-indigenous species included in the Appendices make every reasonable effort to notify the range States of the species concerned at as early a stage as possible prior to the adoption of such measures, and consult with those range States that express a wish to confer on the matter."¹

Collaboration is the key element towards the management and recovery of ESA species. While the stated intentions of this revision may be altruistic, the mechanisms proposed will have the effect of undermining hunting in Africa. Hunting is often the best avenue to enhance elephant habitat and mitigate poaching.

Revenue generated by licensed, regulated safari hunting is the single most important source of funding for conservation and anti-poaching efforts in Africa. In many Southern and Eastern African countries, revenues generated from legal hunting are the primary source of management, conservation, and anti-poaching funds for national wildlife authorities. These hunting programs have been designed through a scientific process by wildlife management experts to provide a limited and sustainable level of take, to generate funds for conservation, anti-poaching efforts, and community incentives. This system has helped recover or maintain the populations of numerous wildlife species in Southern and Eastern Africa.

¹ Resolution Conf. 6.7 – 1.

Efforts to prohibit the importation of legally sport-harvested trophies will not enhance conservation efforts in Africa but will only undermine the successful conservation practices currently in place.

Implementing additional hurdles that certain African nations must clear to receive an annual certification from the FWS is counter to the spirit of collaboration set forth by CITES Resolution Conf. 6.7, and it will have the unfortunate effect of thwarting much-needed, sport-hunting generated dollars away from elephant conservation. Additionally, this proposed rule fails to account for the input of African host countries and their ability to manage wildlife – a right that belongs solely to these countries and their governments. For these reasons, CSF opposes the proposed revision to the rule for the African elephant under section 4(d) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, relative to the addition of 50 CFR 17.40(e)(6). Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this crucial issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeff Crane". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jeff" and last name "Crane" clearly distinguishable.

Jeff Crane
President & CEO

Your Inside Connection to Outdoor Legislation

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