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U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources
Washington, DC 20515

Opening Statement of
Chairman John Fleming
Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife, Oceans and Insular Affairs
on Tuesday, June 24th, 2014

1324 Longworth House Office Building
Oversight Hearing on: *The Fish and Wildlife Service's "Virtual Ban" On the*
Commercial Sale of Elephant Ivory

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PENNY DODGE
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Good afternoon, Today, the Subcommittee will examine the Fish and Wildlife Service's (Service) decision to establish a ban on the sale of elephant ivory, to suspend sport hunted trophies from two African countries and to arbitrarily limit the number of sport hunted trophies that Americans can legally import into the United States.

It is clear that the rate of illegal killing that African elephants have experienced is tragic. So, I was pleased to read the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) June 13th press release that the number of elephants poached in 2013 decreased from the previous two years. According to the CITES Secretary-General "We are seeing better law enforcement and demand-reduction efforts across multiple countries".

In order to stop this killing, the world community must work together to stop the flow of illegal ivory and to provide ivory producing nations with the resources they need to effectively arrest, imprison or kill the heavily armed and organized poachers.

Based on report to INTERPOL by Dr. Samuel Wasser of the University of Washington, who performs the DNA testing on seized ivory, we now know that poachers are killing over 75 percent of all elephants in about three locations in Africa. According to Dr. Wasser, "The same locations keep recurring over and over again as the places of origin of major ivory seizures, suggesting that the number of major hotspots may be far more limited than previously thought". The international law enforcement community must target those hotspots.

During the past six months, the Service has issued Director's Order 210, a revision to that order, and a promise to issue proposed final rules which will establish in the words of the Director a "virtual ban" on the commercial sale of elephant ivory. Before establishing such a policy, it is usually important to understand the extent of the problem you are trying to fix. Regrettably, in this case, the Service has indicated that they do not know how much elephant ivory is in the United States or even more importantly how much of it is illegal.

It is apparently difficult and expensive to determine the origin and age of ivory and, therefore, the Service believes the easiest thing for them is to simply declare that virtually everything as contraband. And for good measure, the burden will be on the individual and not the federal government to prove that the ivory items qualify for these limited exceptions.

Today, we will hear from some of the industries who may be adversely affected by the upcoming proposed final rules. Hopefully, their suggestions and comments will be given serious consideration.

Finally, I am interested in hearing whether the Service is prepared to allow Americans to again import elephant trophies from Tanzania and Zimbabwe. I also want to know why the Service would even consider establishing a limitation on American sport hunters when the African Elephant Conservation Act of 1988 clearly implies that no such limitations should be placed and when even the Service admits that sport hunting is beneficial to elephant conservation. The simple truth is that if wildlife has no economic value, then there is little, if any, incentive for the people who live in that habitat to conserve or save them. Some of the proceeds from legal elephant hunting are used to finance clinics, hospitals, roads, schools and other necessities of life in some of the poorest villages throughout Southern Africa.