

# **Committee on Resources, Subcommittee on Fisheries Conservation, Wildlife & Oceans**

[fisheries](#) - - Rep. Wayne Gilchrest, Chairman

U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, D.C. 20515-6232 - - (202) 226-0200

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## **Witness Statement**

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**TESTIMONY SUBMITTED TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON FISHERIES CONSERVATION,  
WILDLIFE & OCEANS**

Regarding  
The African Elephant Conservation Reauthorization Act,  
The Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Reauthorization Act,  
And the Asian Elephant Conservation Reauthorization Act  
March 15, 2001

***Karen Steuer***  
***Director, Commercial Exploitation and Trade Program***  
***International Fund for Animal Welfare***

My name is Karen Steuer and I am the Director of the Commercial Exploitation and Trade Program for the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW). IFAW is a non-profit organization with over two million supporters around the world. Our global headquarters is in Massachusetts, and we have offices in Australia, China, Japan, Russia, Germany, France, The Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Canada, Belgium, Kenya, South Africa, Mexico, and in Washington.

IFAW's mission is to work to improve the welfare of wild and domestic animals throughout the world by reducing commercial exploitation of animals, protecting wildlife habitats, and assisting animals in distress. IFAW seeks to motivate the public to prevent cruelty to animals and to promote animal welfare and conservation policies that advance the well being of both animals and people.

I am pleased to be here today and to offer testimony on the reauthorization of the Asian Elephant Conservation Act; the African Elephant Conservation Act; and the Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Act. The Subcommittee's letter specifically requested our views on the impact of the conservation funds; the future viability of the species involved; whether the law has encouraged additional international conservation efforts; and whether the laws should be amended. Those are fair questions, without easy answers.

IFAW is a strong supporter of both the African and Asian Elephant Conservation Acts. I believe we are in a fair position to evaluate their effectiveness in that, rather than receive government funding for our own elephant conservation programs, we have traditionally assisted governments in their conservation needs. None of our funding has come from government sources. In addition, we have offices or partner organizations in the regions most affected by these statutes, all of which are staffed entirely by nationals of the region, including former park rangers and law enforcement specialists

Do we believe these two statutes contribute significantly to elephant conservation and encourage additional conservation efforts? Absolutely. IFAW has jointly funded several of the projects that were also assisted by the funds established under these laws. For example, the African Elephant Conservation Fund and IFAW are the two top sources of funding for the Cornell University Bioacoustics Research Program of acoustic monitoring of forest elephants in the Central African Republic.

In addition, we have supported or conducted programs that further the work or intent of these statutes. While the African Elephant Conservation Fund has supported post-war rehabilitation of the infrastructure of the Reserve de Faune d'Okapi in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, IFAW has supported ranger relief efforts for the war-torn Kahuzi-Biega Park, a World Heritage Site in the Congo which contains forest elephants, lowland gorillas, and one of the few remaining populations of bonobos on the planet.

In answer to the Subcommittee's question about the future viability of these species, IFAW is of the view that all of our efforts, including the excellent work done through the international species conservation funds, may not be enough to save many wild elephant populations from crossing over the brink into extinction if we cannot find more effective ways of supporting the basic communications and infrastructure needs of nations whose elephant populations continue to fall victim to poaching, habitat destruction, and conflicts with humans. If the acts could be improved in any way, in our view it would be to set top funding priorities for these most basic of needs, particularly in Western and Central Africa and Southeast Asia

Next year, in November of 2002, the 152 member nations of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) will meet at the 12th Conference of the Parties in Santiago, Chile. Among the hundreds of items on the agenda will be a decision on whether to allow further opening of the international trade in elephant ivory. Those supporting more trade will focus the debate on how many elephants there are in South Africa, Botswana, and Namibia, where elephants live primarily on protected fenced lands, and populations appear to be healthy and growing.

But the debate should also focus on how many elephants have managed to survive the ravages of civil war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where both rebel forces and government troops kill them for their meat and ivory. It should focus on the rangers throughout Africa and Asia who gave their lives in the ivory wars of the 1980s and the rangers who continue to lose their lives in gun battles with poachers today.

The debate should address the desperate need for additional research, anti-poaching and enforcement support in Central and Western Africa, where elusive forest elephants, living largely outside of protected areas in some of Africa's poorest nations, may be the most threatened victims of the illegal ivory trade. In countries like the Ivory Coast, Cameroon, and Chad, funds for wildlife conservation and enforcement are so limited that governments are unable to do more than guess at the number of elephants that live within their borders, let alone be able to accurately estimate how many of those animals may fall victim to illegal ivory trade each year.

Assisting these countries to communicate and to cooperate on conservation efforts is critical to ensuring the future of elephants in Africa. Through the Game Rangers Association of Africa, IFAW recently sponsored 34 delegates from 17 African nations to attend the International Ranger Federation Third World Congress held in South Africa. One of the most positive outcomes of the conference was an agreement among African rangers, the Game Rangers Association, and the International Ranger Federation to establish local ranger associations. IFAW will be assisting those associations in purchasing computers so they can communicate with each other and with the outside world.

Mr. Chairman, we believe the important take-home message should be that many of these countries do not have even the most basic computer equipment and radio transmitters for their field offices and ranger stations, yet we expect them to report poaching incidents to the CITES Secretariat on a timely basis. They do not have functional four-wheel drive vehicles much of the time, yet we expect them to find the carcasses of illegally killed elephants. They do not have sophisticated X-ray equipment in their airports, but we expect them to find ivory leaving the country illegally. These are the conditions under which these countries must operate.

Now add to these conditions the sheer volume of wildlife trade in a world where 350 million wild animals and plants are bought and sold each year. That represents a market worth more than \$20 billion. It has been estimated that approximately 25% of this trade is

illegal: a black market second only to the illegal drug trade in terms of dollar value. Without a doubt, this trade continues to have a devastating impact on the species we are discussing today.

For these reasons, IFAW urges the Members of the Resources Committee to work with the Appropriations Committee to ensure that each of these programs receives \$1 million in appropriated funds in the coming fiscal year. And I would suggest that when considering projects for funding support, the Fish and Wildlife Service should give top priority not to proposals that promote sustainable use, as the Act currently states, but to proposals that provide the greatest amount of immediate aid to those countries whose elephants are the most threatened, and to consider more projects that provide park rangers, CITES authorities, and customs officials with support. In the end, the survival of many elephant populations in Asia and Africa may depend entirely on successful law enforcement.

In that regard, IFAW would like to continue to work with the Fish and Wildlife Service to support worthy projects which the African and Asian Elephant Funds are unable to support; to partner with the Service to provide the additional funding or logistical support necessary to get projects off the ground; and to work with the Fish and Wildlife Service, the CITES Secretariat, and other governments to support law enforcement, ranger training, and customs training programs. We would also urge more support from the Asian Elephant Conservation Fund for programs in China, where IFAW is working with the Beijing Normal University and local communities surrounding the Cai Yang He Nature Reserve to resolve conflicts between human populations and the last remaining 200 wild elephants in China.

Regarding the Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Act, we would strongly urge that funding be provided not only for on-site conservation programs, but for desperately needed law enforcement and consumer education efforts regarding traditional medicine products. In our view, the steadily increasing demand for traditional medicines (TM) containing powdered rhino horn and tiger bone represents the number one threat to the survival of these species. In addition, the shortage of tiger bone for TM has led to a growing demand for powdered bone from other wild cats, representing a new threat to other endangered species such as the leopard.

According to the World Health Organization, more than 80% of the world's population relies on some form of traditional medicine for their primary method of health care. This steadily growing global market is largely unregulated and unmonitored, with sometimes disastrous results for the more than 80 species worldwide that are currently used in TM. Some conservationists are now calling traditional medicine a leading cause of endangerment, affecting species ranging from snakes and tortoises to deer, as well as tigers and rhinos.

There is currently no regulatory mechanism that requires TM products in international trade to be labeled according to species. In the case of tigers, products may be labeled as containing "*Felis*" without identifying whether that means tiger bone, leopard bone, or the bones of a common domestic cat. Conversely, products may be labeled as "Tiger bone" and contain no cat products whatsoever.

This is an issue of concern not only for rhinos and tigers but for many other species as well. For example, dried processed TM products may be labeled as containing "musk" without having to identify whether the musk is the natural product of the musk deer, or synthetic. Musk deer are currently listed on either Appendix I of CITES, which does not permit international trade, or on Appendix II, which allows limited trade. In recent years, the US and other nations have attempted to transfer those musk deer populations currently on Appendix II to Appendix I due to growing concerns about the impact of the musk trade on deer populations in Russia, Mongolia, and China. To date, those efforts have failed in part because we simply cannot account for the balance of natural versus synthetic musk in global trade. Accurate labeling would help us to achieve that.

While the 1998 revisions to the Rhino and Tiger Conservation Act addressed the problem of enforcement related to products labeled as tiger bone, regardless of their actual contents, it did not address the problem of products labeled in a more general manner, or not labeled with species identification in any way. At the most recent Conference of the CITES Parties in Nairobi last April, a document was presented by the CITES Secretariat expressing ongoing concerns, which IFAW shares, regarding the impact of TM on CITES-listed species. We would therefore strongly urge the Fish and Wildlife Service to support our efforts to have the CITES Parties require all traditional medicines in international trade to be labeled with contents by species, using standard scientific names. Not only would this benefit rhinos and tigers, but dozens of other species. We believe it would be the first major step forward in controlling and enforcing the use of CITES-listed species in traditional medicine.

To further these efforts, IFAW's China office is working with TM practitioners in China to find alternatives to the use of threatened wildlife species, and our U.K. office recently partnered with the British government to support a similar project in the U.K., where TM use has increased by 70% over the last five years. In the United States, TM use has grown by 280% in the past decade, making the U.S. the second largest user of traditional medicine products in the world. Here we have been working with TM suppliers in California to create vendor associations or use existing associations that would establish certification standards for their products. Those standards would include voluntarily submitting their products to the California Department of Health, working cooperatively with the inter-agency Herbal Task Force, to ensure their products contain no protected wildlife species.

As you know, the Rhino and Tiger Conservation Act contains a requirement that efforts be made to educate the public regarding alternatives for traditional medicine products. IFAW is currently in discussions with the Fish and Wildlife Service to jointly produce an educational point-of-sale brochure for consumers discouraging the use of wildlife products in traditional medicine. IFAW supports

these efforts by the Fish and Wildlife Service to work in cooperation with the TM communities, and would encourage the continuation of this outreach program.

I wish I could report optimistically on the future viability of rhino and tiger populations around the world. But poaching and illegal trade continue to take a huge toll on these species. All five species of rhinos are listed on Appendix I of CITES, and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature lists four of the five as "critically endangered." The black rhino (*Diceros bicornis*), estimated to number 14,785 animals in 1980, is now down to about 2800 animals in widely scattered populations. The southern white rhino (*Ceratotherium simum*) currently numbers over 8000, following strong conservation efforts by South Africa. The great Indian rhino (*Rhinoceros unicornis*) is holding at 2000 animals. The two southeast Asian species are in far worse shape, with the Sumatran rhino (*Dicerorhinus sumatrensis*) estimated at only 270 animals in 1995, and the Javan rhino (*Rhinoceros sondaicus*) now extinct in most of its former range, and estimated at 75 animals in 1995. We expect the Javan rhino to become extinct in the wild by the time my seven-year-old daughter is old enough to spell "rhinoceros".

All five remaining subspecies of tigers are also listed on CITES Appendix I. I want to emphasize the word "remaining", since three subspecies - the Caspian tiger, the Javan tiger, and the Bali tiger - have gone extinct in the last 60 years, and the South China tiger now numbers fewer than two dozen animals and is likely to become extinct within the next few years. The world's approximately 5000 remaining tigers are subject to poaching and illegal trade throughout their range every day.

As with the two elephant funds, we would like to see increases in support for basic infrastructure and law enforcement needs. Russian customs officials and park rangers have told us that the broad, largely unpatrolled expanse of the border between China and Russia has resulted in an ongoing illegal trade of Siberian tiger pelts and bone from Russia's Far East into China. We believe that Russia's CITES officials and park rangers are certainly willing to conduct better law enforcement operations along this border, but lack the necessary financial support, basic equipment, or even species identification manuals. Much of the support reaching those border guards is currently coming from non-governmental organizations, including IFAW. Assistance from the Fish and Wildlife Service, either through the Rhino and Tiger Conservation Fund, or through other training programs, would be extremely helpful in curbing this smuggling.

In closing, I would like to thank those members of the Committee, particularly Chairman Gilchrest and Congressman Saxton, who have been so supportive of these statutes over the decade since the African Elephant Conservation Fund was first enacted. Your dedication to these species and to the many others protected under the U.S. Endangered Species Act and its international programs has been a critical factor in providing assistance to important conservation efforts around the world. I would be happy to answer any questions you or the other Committee members may have.

**Karen L. Steuer**

**Director, Commercial Exploitation and Trade Program**

#### **International Fund for Animal Welfare**

Karen Steuer joined IFAW in 1999 to direct the organization's international efforts to reduce commercial exploitation of wildlife. In that capacity she works with IFAW's 13 offices around the world on campaigns ranging from commercial whaling to the commercial reptile trade. She has represented IFAW at international fora such as the International Whaling Commission, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species and its advisory Animals Committee, and in other programs involving governments and non-governmental organizations around the world.

Prior to joining IFAW, Steuer spent seven years in Washington, D.C., where she worked on domestic and international environmental issues and trade policy for the Democrats in the U.S. House of Representatives. From 1995-1998, she served as legislative aide to Congressman George Miller, the senior Democrat on the Committee on Resources. She began her career in Washington in 1991 as Deputy Staff Director for the Fisheries and Natural Resources Subcommittee in the House of Representatives.

During her years as a Congressional staffer, Karen was responsible for legislative action on a variety of domestic and international environmental and wildlife protection issues, including the Endangered Species Act, the 1992 International Dolphin Conservation Act, the 1994 reauthorization of the Marine Mammal Protection Act, and the African Elephant and Rhino-Tiger Conservation Acts. Following the enactment of the North American Free Trade Agreement, she coordinated efforts to reform international trade policy to include environmental concerns and worker rights provisions. Karen has been a member of U.S. delegations to the International Whaling Commission, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species.

Prior to her work in Washington, Karen was the Conservation Program Director for the Center for Coastal Studies in Provincetown, Massachusetts, where she participated in programs on ecotourism, whale research and sea turtle conservation in Massachusetts, the Dominican Republic, and Sri Lanka. She has served on the boards of a number of environmental and conservation groups and as an advisor to foreign governments on wildlife conservation programs

**Disclosure requirement and summary of testimony**

In response to the Committee's form:

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a. Please see attached biographical summary.

10. None.

B. 1-3. The International Fund for Animal Welfare has not received any federal grants or contracts.

Summary:

The International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) is fully supportive of the African Elephant Conservation Reauthorization Act, the Asian Elephant Conservation Reauthorization Act, and the Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Act. IFAW urges the members of the Committee to work with the Appropriations Committee to ensure \$1 million in appropriations for each of the conservation funds. IFAW would also encourage the funds to support more projects designed to improve basic infrastructure, law enforcement, and communications needs among those countries whose elephant, rhino, and tiger populations are the most seriously threatened by poaching and illegal trade. In addition, IFAW urges the Fish and Wildlife Service to support requirements for species identification labeling on traditional medicines in international trade.

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