



WESSA (WILDLIFE & ENVIRONMENT SOCIETY OF SOUTH AFRICA)



RHINO INITIATIVE

BACKGROUND TO CURRENT ILLEGAL RHINO HUNTING IN SOUTH AFRICA



The recent illegal removal of a rhino's horn using a chainsaw after it was chemically immobilized in KZN.

Rhino poaching in South Africa continues to escalate. At least 125 rhinos have already been lost to poaching throughout the country this year (compared to 83 in 2008 and 122 in 2009). It is for this reason that WESSA calls on the entire country to contribute to restoring the safety and wellbeing of one of our most iconic species; the rhinoceros. Even though the current rate of rhino

deaths is below the populations replacement rate, WESSA believes that one rhino lost to criminal activity is one rhino too many. The major concern is the exponential increase over the last 4 years. However the last century of conservation has taught us that we cannot sit back on our laurels and think that we are 'in the clear'. We trust that authorities are doing everything they can and they must be applauded for the recent arrests of 42 people involved in rhino poaching. But more needs to be done in order to get these criminals into our courts where they will be handed appropriate sentences for brutalizing our natural heritage and stealing from our nation.

A CALL TO ACTION

WESSA proposes to raise funds and awareness to help curb the current illegal rhino hunting. We intend to raise funds by encouraging people to make a donation through our SMS line by SMSing “Rhino” to 40706 or by going onto our website (www.wessa.org.za) and making a donation to WESSA with the reference “Rhino”. WESSA’s mission is to have public participate in caring for the Earth. It is in line with this that WESSA believes that civil society is very concerned by the seriousness of the situation and thus would like to create the space for their involvement and a chance to make a difference.

Funds raised from the Rhino Initiative will be used in the following ways:

- Enabling conservation areas (including private reserves) to increase their overall security by :
 - I. Building and increasing capacity of existing anti-poaching staff
 - II. Employing additional trained personnel
 - III. Provision of anti-poaching resources and technologies
- Seeking alternative and innovative ways to prevent rhinos from being killed illegally
- Supporting investigative efforts that will lead to the apprehending and prosecution of illegal rhino hunters
- Support all other partners fighting for the same cause
- Support any other initiative that WESSA believes will lead to the decrease and/or prevention of illegal rhino killings

WESSA would facilitate the process of involving and supporting all custodians of rhinos, whilst acknowledging the work already being done by the conservation authorities.

ABOUT WESSA

WESSA (the Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa) is a national, environmental, membership-based, Non-government Organisation (NGO) that works to ensure environmental sustainability for current and future South African generations. We focus on the sustainable and equitable management of our natural resource base by building society’s environmental sensitivity and competence by calling to, and working with, communities and individuals to move from current to more sustainable action.

More specifically WESSA’s mission is to promote public participation in caring for the Earth. This is expressed in the diverse and dynamic collaborative partnerships that WESSA creates to enable its work. Working within the vital sectors of water, biodiversity, energy and waste, WESSA is a preferred project implementer nationally, regionally and internationally. In particular, WESSA proactively strives to shape policy, ensure compliance and affect social change. It does this through responsive conservation action, innovative educational intervention and human capacity development that empowers people to make sustainable lifestyle and environmental management choices.

With a track record of over 80 years WESSA is recognised for its strong membership base, professional staff, effective project management and high standards of corporate governance. WESSA has received both international and national recognition for its contributions to conservation and education as well as recognition for the quality of its management.

WESSA / PRESS / RADIO / TV PROPOSAL

On Friday night (23 July 2010), yet another rhino was poached; this time right on our doorstep. An eight year old white rhino bull was shot dead with an AK47 rifle at Karkloof Spa at Otto's Bluff near Pietermaritzburg.

The situation is getting out of hand. Although we trust that authorities are doing what they can, we feel that it is time for civil society to also step in to help take determined action. It is for this reason that we appeal to all press, journalists and media for help. We believe that this is an ideal platform to raise public awareness and mobilize action for this important cause. We ask that national press / radio and TV stations partner with WESSA in this initiative, and "put the word out there" so that the South African community can help to make a difference to this escalating problem.