IFAW
International Fund for Animal Welfare

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March 12, 2019

Attn: Docket No. FWS-HQ-R-2019-N005
FXGO1664091HCC0-FF09D00000-189

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
MS: IA
5275 Leesburg Pike
Falls Church, VA 22041-3803

Re: International Wildlife Conservation Council; Public Meeting

Dear Members of the International Wildlife Conservation Council,

The International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) appreciates the invitation to present at the upcoming meeting of the International Wildlife Conservation Council (Council) on March 14-15, 2019, in Fort Worth, Texas. Regrettably, we are unable to attend the meeting due to staff scheduling conflicts. We would, however, like to share our perspectives on conserving wildlife and urge you to consider multiple viewpoints as you develop recommendations for conservation in geographic areas that are rich in ecological, political, and economic complexity.

With offices in 17 countries and projects in more than 40 countries, IFAW has been a global leader in innovative and hands-on assistance to animals and communities in need for 50 years. Our holistic conservation approach includes reducing the demand and exploitation of wildlife and working together with communities and enforcers to shut down poaching networks.

People and the places that they call home are inextricably linked with the animals and habitats that surround them. IFAW acknowledges this interconnectedness and considers the well-being of populations, as well as individuals—humans and animals. This is premised on the understanding that the sustainability of wildlife and improvement of the quality of human well-being is anchored on the promotion of interventions that work to enhance co-existence of people and wildlife.

Our complementary interventions to empower communities include support for, and provision of, resources to enhance community led law enforcement to curb poaching and trafficking, as well as enhanced access to clean water, improved education, and mitigation of human-wildlife conflict. IFAW helps people

develop sustainable and economically viable livelihoods that enable them to live in harmony with local wildlife, thereby improving their quality of life and the health of ecosystems.

IFAW aims to establish and restore structural and functional linkages between protected areas that can operate as a conservation network to provide for other societal needs. We envisage wildlife benefits accruing from the intrinsic value of living wildlife, which is grounded in the cultural and traditional connections between people and nature.

IFAW recommends that the Council focus its recommendations on the following priorities for wildlife conservation in Africa:

- Safeguarding communities, including mitigating human-wildlife conflict, securing livelihoods compatible with non-consumptive uses of wildlife, and promoting human well-being linked with coexistence of wildlife;
- Supporting and expanding community-based conservation;
- Conserving wildlife through efforts to combat wildlife poaching and trafficking, and to secure protected areas;
- Addressing climate adaptation to ensure sufficient food and water resources, provide alternative livelihoods, and secure community lands;
- Protecting and establishing sufficient habitat and corridor for migratory species.

One example of our approach to help animals and people thrive together is through our work with the government of Zimbabwe in the northwestern cluster of Protected Areas. In collaboration with a local partner, IFAW is leasing 85,215 acres in Panda Masuie Forest Reserve. Nestled between national parks and elephant migration paths, Panda Masuie Forest Reserve was originally a lush landscape brimming with biodiversity. After years as a hunting concession, the habitat in this reserve became fragmented, animals dispersed in search of alternative migration routes, and the forest ecosystem suffered. In 2016, the Zimbabwean government and Forestry Commission authorized the change in designation of the reserve from a hunting to a non-hunting concession on lease through our local partner, Wild is Life. Restoring this land to its former ecologically stable state would create immense opportunities for not only wildlife populations, but also local communities. Alongside Wild is Life, we stepped up to the challenge and launched the ZEN Project–an initiative to rescue, rehabilitate, and release elephants into Panda Masuie Forest Reserve. As a result, the project is poised to transform the reserve into a healthy and functional part of the larger protected landscape in northwestern Zimbabwe.

Our initiative begins at the Zimbabwe Elephant Nursery (ZEN) in Harare, the only facility in the country that rehabilitates and releases orphaned elephants for re-wilding. Here, orphaned elephants receive the specialized care needed to survive the loss of their mothers and their herds. Once strong and healthy, the elephants begin to bond with one another and gain independence from their human caretakers. This rehabilitation process transitions to a soft-release where the elephants gradually adjust to life in the wild. This takes place in a specialized "boma" in Panda Masuie Forest Reserve that now serves as the re-wilding facility. At this new location, the elephants are able to grow out of their comfort zones and acclimate to life outside of their boma. In less than 12 months, we have seen the elephants start interacting with the wild herds.

While the orphans are adjusting to their new situation, IFAW and partners will be working with Zimbabwe's wildlife and forest authorities, and with local communities, to ensure that these elephants are safe, the overall landscape secure, and that local people and animals are co-existing harmoniously.

The young elephants will be collared and monitored; local people will be trained as forest rangers; livelihood initiatives and community-empowerment centers will be established to ensure that local people benefit from conservation; poaching and human-wildlife conflicts will be addressed forcefully and sensibly; and thousands upon thousands of hectares of forest and field will be secured.

Other examples of IFAW's model of conservation in Africa include:

- Working in the Amboseli-Tsavo-Kilimanjaro landscape and leasing 16,000 acres of the critical Kitenden Corridor. The lease was completed upon signing a MOU with the Olgulului-Ololarashi group ranch (OOGR) in 2013. Work in this landscape includes identification of opportunities for eco-friendly and compatible tourism and enterprise projects with an aim of operationalizing the Kitenden Conservancy that will benefit both the community of OOGR and wildlife of Amboseli; facilitating sustainable community socio-economic needs, such as 66 education scholarships since 2014, and another 60 students starting in 2018; partnering with the Water Management Authority to provide drinking water to communities at northern OOGR; studying long-term, large-scale elephant population and spatial dynamics to inform land use planning; and training of OOGR community scouts at Kenya Wildlife Service's Law Enforcement Academy. To date, 40 community scouts have graduated from the academy and are deployed as community rangers at Kitenden, OOGR and Amboseli ecosystem in general.

- Partnering with Kenya Wildlife Service to develop tenBoma—a collaborative wildlife security platform that aims at identifying poaching and conflict hotspots, improving intelligence techniques including data collection and aggregation, training frontline enforcers on crime scene investigation to increase prosecutions, and assisting communities with HWC mitigation strategies. IFAW's tenBoma activities in the past year have focused on scaling up the landscape community work in Kitenden and Kimana, coordinating information data collection, aggregation, and sharing across the Amboseli-Tsavo-Kilimanjaro landscape.

In summary, IFAW's holistic approach integrates non-consumptive uses of wildlife to improve community engagement and well-being, while conserving landscapes and fostering coexistence with wildlife. People and wildlife have always been interdependent and will continue to be. Helping communities understand this interconnectedness is crucial for the wellbeing of people, individual animals, wildlife populations, and habitats.

Sincerely,

Beth Allgood

Beth Allgood
U.S. Country Director
International Fund for Animal Welfare