



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

Fish and Wildlife Service

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LUJAN PRAISES NATIONAL FISH AND WILDLIFE FOUNDATION EFFORT TO HELP SAVE AFRICAN ELEPHANTS

Secretary of the Interior Manuel Lujan today praised the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation for its commitment to saving the threatened African elephant. The Foundation recently announced a grant of \$100,000 to the World Wildlife Fund's African Elephant Project on behalf of Tanzania's Department of Wildlife. The money will be used for radio equipment to link Tanzanian national parks and wildlife reserves and assist them in combatting illegal ivory poaching.

"I commend the Foundation for pitching in to help save African elephants," Lujan said. "It is through such partnership efforts that the United States is able to help the conservation cause become reality.

"Many African countries are very eager to put a stop to the commercial killing of elephants for ivory, but do not have the resources to combat poachers."

The poachers often are better equipped than the officers pursuing them. They are frequently highly trained and well-organized mercenaries equipped with semi-automatic rifles. Travelling in small, rapidly moving groups, the poachers can eliminate an entire herd of elephants in short order.

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On June 9, 1989, Lujan announced that the Department of the Interior would fully implement the President's decision to impose a total ban on commercial importation of African elephant ivory to the United States.

The Conference of the Parties of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) will consider a worldwide ban on commercial trade in ivory and other African elephant products. This seventh meeting of CITES will take place in Lausanne, Switzerland, October 9-20. The Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, Constance Harriman, will lead the U.S. delegation.

Elephant populations in Africa have fallen from an estimated 1.3 million in 1979 to a current estimate of approximately 625,000. It is believed that illegal poaching to supply the tremendous international demand for ivory is largely to blame for this dramatic decline.

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation is a non-profit, charitable corporation established by Congress in 1984 to assist the conservation programs of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. It also conducts such other activities as will further the conservation and management of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources of the United States. The Foundation is not an agency of the U.S. Government.