



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

5275 Leesburg Pike, MS: IRTM
Falls Church, VA 22041



IN REPLY REFER TO:
FWS-2020-00127

January 6, 2020

Via email: tsanerib@biologicaldiversity.org

Tanya Sanerib
Center for Biological Diversity
2400 NW 80th Street, #146
Seattle, WA 98117

Dear Ms. Sanerib:

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) received Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request dated November 12, 2019, and assigned it FOIA tracking number FWS-2020-00127. Please reference this number on any correspondence concerning your request.

You requested the following:

“...records pertaining to leopards, African elephants, and African lions, or any combination of species from September 16, 2019 to whenever this request has been processed:

All non-detriment findings (positive or negative) or general advices made or received by USFWS for imports of sport hunted trophies or a trophy;

All enhancement findings (positive or negative) or advice for imports of sport hunted trophies or a trophy;

All permit applications submitted for ESA permits for sport hunted trophies or a trophy;

All permit applications submitted for CITES permits for sport hunted trophies or a trophy;

All FWS decisions (positive or negative) on ESA permit applications for sport hunted trophies or a trophy;

All FWS decisions (positive or negative) on CITES permit applications for sport hunted trophies or a trophy;

All FWS communications sent to applicants regarding ESA permit applications for sport hunted trophies or a trophy;

All FWS communications sent to applicants regarding CITES permit applications for sport hunted trophies or a trophy.”

RESPONSE

With coordination from the Division of Management Authority (DMA), we are writing to provide a final response to your request. We have enclosed four files consisting of two thousand two hundred fifty-nine (2,259) pages, which are being released but withheld in part under Exemption 6 of the FOIA as explained below.

Exemption 6 (withheld seven hundred fifty-five (755) pages in part)

Exemption 6 allows an agency to withhold “personnel and medical files and similar files the disclosure of which would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy.” [5 U.S.C. § 552\(b\)\(6\)](#). We are withholding 755 pages in part under Exemption 6.

The phrase “similar files” covers any agency records containing information about a particular individual that can be identified as applying to that individual. To determine whether releasing records containing information about a particular individual would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy, we are required to balance the privacy interest that would be affected by disclosure against any public interest in the information.

Under the FOIA, the only relevant public interest to consider under the exemption is the extent to which the information sought would shed light on an agency’s performance of its statutory duties or otherwise let citizens ‘know what their government is up to. The burden is on the requester to establish that disclosure would serve the public interest. When the privacy interest at stake and the public interest in disclosure have been determined, the two competing interests must be weighed against one another to determine which is the greater result of disclosure: the harm to personal privacy or the benefit to the public. The purposes for which the request for information is made do not impact this balancing test, as a release of information requested under the FOIA constitutes a release to the general public.

The information that has been withheld under Exemption 6 consists of personal information, such as individual names, addresses, phone numbers, email address, date of birth, social security number, passport information, and individual’s photographs. We have determined that the individuals to whom this information pertains have a substantial privacy interest in withholding it. Additionally, {you have not provided information that explains a relevant public interest under the FOIA in the disclosure of this personal information and} we have determined that the disclosure of this information would shed little or no light on the performance of the agency’s statutory duties. Because the harm to personal privacy is greater than whatever public interest may be served by disclosure, release of the information would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of the privacy of these individuals and we are withholding it under Exemption 6.

Exemption 7 (withheld two (2) pages in part)

Exemption 7 protects from disclosure “records or information compiled for law enforcement purposes” if the records fall within one or more of six specific bases for withholding set forth

in subparts (a) through (f). [5 U.S.C. § 552\(b\)\(7\)\(a\)-\(f\)](#). We are withholding 2 pages in part under Exemption 7 because they are protected under the following subpart:

Exemption 7(C) protects law enforcement records if their release could reasonably be expected to constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy. It is regularly applied to withhold references to individuals in law enforcement files. For the materials that have been withheld under 7(C), we have determined that releasing them would constitute an unwarranted invasion of privacy because they identify individuals referenced in law enforcement records and the release of this information would not shed light on an agency's performance of its statutory duties.

We reasonably foresee that disclosure would harm an interest protected by one or more of the nine exemptions to the FOIA's general rule of disclosure.

Cathy Willis, FWS FOIA Officer, is responsible for this partial denial. Larry Mellinger, Attorney-Advisor, in the Office of the Solicitor was consulted.

MEDIATION SERVICES

The 2007 FOIA amendments created the Office of Government Information Services (OGIS) to offer mediation services to resolve disputes between FOIA requesters and Federal agencies as a non-exclusive alternative to litigation. Using OGIS services does not affect your right to pursue litigation. You may contact OGIS in any of the following ways:

Office of Government Information Services
National Archives and Records Administration
8601 Adelphi Road - OGIS
College Park, MD 20740-6001
E-mail: ogis@nara.gov
Web: <https://ogis.archives.gov>
Telephone: 202-741-5770
Fax: 202-741-5769
Toll-free: 1-877-684-6448

Please note that using OGIS services does not affect the timing of filing an appeal with the Department's FOIA and Privacy Act Appeals Officer.

You may also seek dispute resolution services from our FOIA Liaison, Cathy Willis, at (702) 425-5173.

APPEAL RIGHTS

You may appeal this response to the Department's FOIA/Privacy Act Appeals Officer. If you choose to appeal, the FOIA/Privacy Act Appeals Officer must receive your FOIA appeal **no later than 90 workdays** from the date of this letter. Appeals arriving or delivered after 5 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday, will be deemed received on the next workday.

Your appeal must be made in writing. You may submit your appeal and accompanying materials to the FOIA/Privacy Act Appeals Officer by mail, courier service, fax, or email. All communications

concerning your appeal should be clearly marked with the words: "FREEDOM OF INFORMATION APPEAL." You must include an explanation of why you believe the FWS' response is in error. You must also include with your appeal copies of all correspondence between you and FWS concerning your FOIA request, including your original FOIA request and FWS' response. Failure to include with your appeal all correspondence between you and FWS will result in the Department's rejection of your appeal, unless the FOIA/Privacy Act Appeals Officer determines (in the FOIA/Privacy Act Appeals Officer's sole discretion) that good cause exists to accept the defective appeal.

Please include your name and daytime telephone number (or the name and telephone number of an appropriate contact), email address and fax number (if available) in case the FOIA/Privacy Act Appeals Officer needs additional information or clarification of your appeal.

DOI FOIA/Privacy Act Appeals Office Contact Information

Department of the Interior
Office of the Solicitor
1849 C Street, N.W.
MS-6556 MIB
Washington, DC 20240

Attn: FOIA/Privacy Act Appeals Office
Telephone: (202) 208-5339
Fax: (202) 208-6677
Email: FOIA.Appeals@sol.doi.gov

CONCLUSION

For your information, Congress excluded three discrete categories of law enforcement and national security records from the requirements of the FOIA. See 5 U.S.C. § 552(c). This response is limited to those records that are subject to the requirements of the FOIA. This is a standard notification that is given to all our requesters and should not be taken as an indication that excluded records do, or do not, exist.

If you have any questions, please contact Shaunta Nichols, Division of Information Resources and Technology Management, MS: IRTM, 5275 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church, Virginia 22041 (703-358-2374 or via e-mail at shaunta_nichols@fws.gov).

Sincerely,

For Cathy Willis
FWS FOIA Officer