



Written Testimony of Will Gartshore
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Before the House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
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Chairman Calvert, Ranking Member Moran, Vice Chairman Simpson, and Members of the Subcommittee, I submit this testimony on behalf of World Wildlife Fund (WWF) to request your support for a number of important conservation programs within the Department of the Interior and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). WWF is the largest private conservation organization working internationally to conserve wildlife and nature. WWF currently sponsors conservation programs in more than 100 countries with the support of 1.2 million members in the United States and more than 5 million members worldwide. We respectfully request that the Subcommittee fund the following programs at the following levels in FY15:

- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Office of Law Enforcement at the Administration's request of \$66.7 million, including additional funding to support implementation of the National Strategy on Wildlife Trafficking and at least \$4.2 million for Lacey Act enforcement
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Office of International Affairs at the Administration's request of \$14.6 million, including additional funding to support implementation of the National Strategy on Wildlife Trafficking
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Multinational Species Conservation Funds at \$10 million, \$900,000 above the Administration's request

One of my organization's top priorities, and the one I would like to focus on in my testimony, is supporting efforts to combat wildlife trafficking and the current global poaching crisis. The illegal trade in wildlife, including timber and fish, is worth \$10-20 billion annually and is ranked among the top five most lucrative criminal activities worldwide. Wildlife trafficking is strongly linked to transnational organized crime organizations and other criminal activities, such as arms and drug trafficking. Large-scale illegal trade in wildlife, driving largely by soaring demand in Asia for wildlife products, has sparked a poaching crisis that is pushing some of our most iconic species towards extinction, including elephants, tigers and rhinos. This crisis is also having a devastating impact on local communities and undermining regional security and economic growth in the developing world, including in countries of strategic importance to the United States. According to an assessment released by federal intelligence agencies in September 2013, there is also significant evidence that wildlife trafficking is helping to finance armed insurgencies and groups with ties to terrorism, including the Lord's Resistance Army, the Janjaweed, and al-Shabaab. Last year alone, an estimated 30,000-35,000 elephants were killed illegally throughout Africa. In the past ten years, the number of forest elephants in Central Africa has dropped by two-thirds, putting them on the path to extinction within the next ten years. East Africa is also being hit hard: in January, the Tanzanian government released numbers showing that the population of elephants in that country's Selous Game Reserve had fallen 66% in just four years – a shocking decline for a reserve that until recently was home to Africa's second largest concentration of elephants. In South Africa, the number of rhinos lost to poaching has jumped 7000% between 2007 and 2013. A record 1004 South African rhinos were illegally killed for their horns in 2013 – up 50% from the year before and a stunning increase from only 13 poaching incidents in 2007. As few as 3200 tigers remain in the wild in all of Asia, due in large part to poachers killing the animals for their skins, bones and other body parts. Several of the agencies and programs that this subcommittee helps to fund play essential roles in combating this crisis, which is robbing developing countries of natural resources and economic opportunities, harming American businesses by flooding global markets with cheap illegal forest and fish products,

and threatening U.S. security interests. Recognizing the seriousness of the situation, the President issued an Executive Order on July 2013 and mandated a National Strategy for Combatting Wildlife Trafficking, released in February 2014, which calls on all relevant agencies to work together as part of a whole of government response to the crisis. The Department of Interior and the Fish and Wildlife Service will carry a large part of the responsibility for implementing the Strategy, and we believe they should provided the necessary resources to be successful.

USFWS Office of Law Enforcement

The USFWS Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) investigates wildlife crimes, enforces regulation of wildlife trade, helps citizens comply with the law, and works with other international and U.S. government entities to carry out its mission. Its agents and investigators also have a central role in implementing the new National Strategy on Wildlife Trafficking and enforcing new domestic regulations on elephant ivory. OLE wildlife inspectors are on the front lines in the fight against wildlife trafficking, working in nearly 40 designated and non-designated ports of entry around the country. In FY11, they processed 179,000 declared shipments of wildlife and wildlife products worth more than \$2.8 billion. OLE's special agents are expert investigators that break up smuggling rings, stop commercial exploitation of protected U.S. species, and work with states to protect U.S. game species from poaching. "Operation Crash" is an ongoing nationwide criminal investigation led by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that is addressing all aspects of U.S. involvement in the black market rhino horn trade. The first phase of this probe, focused on unlawful purchase and outbound smuggling of rhino horn from the U.S., has resulted in 15 arrests and nine convictions to date, involving charged include conspiracy, smuggling, money laundering, tax evasion, bribery, and making false documents, as well as violations of the Endangered Species Act and Lacey Act, the primary domestic against wildlife trafficking. Eight arrests were made in February 2012 as part of a nationwide "takedown" that involved more than 140 law enforcement officers executing search warrants in 13 States; 2013 has seen the arrests and indictments of several other individuals (including Chinese and U.S. antiques dealers) who were operating a second large-scale rhino horn and elephant ivory smuggling network. In spite of successes such as this one, OLE is severely underfunded to meet the rapidly growing challenges it faces, including the need to place agents at key posts around the world to assist in shutting down global wildlife smuggling rings. OLE's budget has suffered a 17.8 percent reduction in real dollars since FY 2010, limiting its ability to investigate and prosecute wildlife crimes and help citizens to comply with the law. Budget cuts through FY13 have caused cancellation of plans to hire 24 more special agents, and prevented vacancies from being filled for fourteen front line inspectors as well as three forensics experts for the Clark R. Bavin National Fish and Wildlife Forensics Laboratory in Ashland, Oregon – the only laboratory in the world dedicated to solving wildlife crimes and a unique asset in efforts to crack down on ivory and rhino horn smuggling. USFWS OLE is also responsible for enforcing of the Lacey Act and its expansion to cover plants and plant products, additional funding is needed to carry out enforcement activities against those actors that choose to trade in illegal timber and timber products. The illegal timber trade is estimated to cost U.S. industry \$1 billion annually. With public enforcement cases, FWS sends a message that illegal activities will not be tolerate. Due to pressing needs and enhanced responsibilities under the National Strategy on Wildlife Trafficking, WWF recommends at least \$66.7 million for the USFWS Office of Law Enforcement, consistent with the Administration's FY15 budget request, including at least \$4.2 million for Lacey Act enforcement.

USFWS Office of International Affairs

The USFWS **International Affairs (IA)** program supports efforts to conserve our planet's wildlife and biodiversity by protecting habitat, combating illegal wildlife trade and building capacity for landscape-level wildlife conservation around the world. The program's three divisions—the Division of International Conservation, the Division of Management Authority and the Division of Scientific Authority—manage various components of international wildlife conservation. The **Division of Management Authority** and the **Division of Scientific Authority** run the **International Wildlife Trade (IWT)** program, which provides oversight of domestic laws and international treaties that promote the long-term conservation of plant and animal species by ensuring that international trade and other activities do not threaten their survival in the wild. IWT works to prevent illegal trade in wildlife and wildlife products, which threatens vulnerable wildlife populations, undermines U.S. foreign policy and security objectives by financing criminality and corruption, and transmits diseases and invasive species, which negatively impact public health and economic productivity in the U.S. — one of the largest importers and exporters of wildlife products. IWT ensures trade is legal and does not harm species in the wild while implementing scientific and management requirements of laws and treaties for traded species and issuing 15,000-20,000 permits per year. Working with governments, industry and experts around the world, IWT also strives to establish conservation programs that include sustainable use, supporting economic opportunity while also conserving species. IWT also leads the US government's active engagement on the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora (CITES), which is one of the most important tools for combating the global illegal wildlife trade. The Division of International Conservation provides critical support to on-the-ground species conservation through its Wildlife Without Borders (WWB) programs and signature initiatives. The WWB Regional program supports species and habitat conservation in priority regions, including Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean and Mexico, through capacity building, outreach, education and training. This includes training African wildlife professionals to combat the bushmeat trade and working to bolster wildlife laws and increase enforcement capacity in African countries. The WWB Global program targets crosscutting, global threats to wildlife, supports signature initiatives to maximize long-term impact, and address declines of critically endangered species, such as amphibians. From 2007 to 2013, the WWB Regional and Global Programs supported more than 940 conservation projects, awarded over \$31 million in grants and leveraged an additional \$46 million in matching funds on-the-ground wildlife conservation programs, education, training and outreach. We recommend \$14.6 million for the Office of International Affairs, consistent with the Administration's FY15 budget request.

USFWS Multinational Species Conservation Funds

Through the **Multinational Species Conservation Funds (MSCF)**, the United States supplements the efforts of developing countries struggling to balance the needs of their human populations and endemic wildlife. These modest federal programs, administered by the USFWS, make targeted investments in conservation of several global priority species. In 1989, Congress passed the African Elephant Conservation Act authorizing a dedicated fund in response to the threat posed to that species by rampant ivory poaching. Four more Funds have since been authorized to support the conservation of Asian elephants, great apes, marine turtles, and tigers and rhinos. Each of the funds is authorized at \$5 million, with the exception of the Rhino-Tiger Conservation Fund, which was intended as a double fund to address both sets of species, and is therefore authorized at \$10 million. Appropriated funds for the programs have consistently remained roughly 30% or less of the authorized level. MSCF programs have played a critical role in saving wild populations of these species by controlling poaching, reducing human-wildlife conflict and protecting essential habitat. In

light of the resurgence of a severe poaching crisis in Africa, these funds are just as important and relevant now as they were when Congress passed them.

Support from the **Rhino-Tiger Conservation Fund (RTCF)** and the **Asian Elephant Conservation Fund (AsECF)** to World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and its local partners has contributed to incredible successes in protecting endangered wildlife in Nepal. The funds have supported anti-poaching, habitat restoration and species monitoring that, combined with community-level engagement and strong government support, helped to ensure that no rhinos, tigers or elephants were poached in Nepal between February 2012 and February 2013. This is the second time Nepal has celebrated a year of zero-poaching (the first was in 2011) in spite of rising demand for rhino horn and ivory on Asian black markets and a sharp increase in the number of rhinos and elephants killed in Africa over the same period. In addition, RTCF funding has supported efforts that have led to a 63% increase in Nepal's tiger population from 2009 to 2013 and is supporting the creation and expansion of tiger reserves and protected areas in Malaysia, India and Thailand as well as anti-poaching and enforcement efforts on the Indonesian island of Sumatra. Also on Sumatra, AsECF support to World Wildlife Fund has helped to establish "Flying Squads" – teams of rangers equipped with noise and light-making devices and trained elephants that drive wild elephants back into the forest whenever they threaten to enter villages. The Squads have reduced losses suffered by local communities and prevented retaliatory killings. In 2009, they helped reduce elephant mortality in the Riau region by 27 percent in 2009 compared to the previous four years. The **African Elephant Conservation Fund (AfECF)** is supporting improved protected area enforcement in several African countries, including hiring and training of local "ecoguards" to protect populations of elephants and other threatened wildlife. In Cameroon's Campo Ma'an National Park, the AfECF supported a large-scale anti-poaching operation involving village and forest patrols, soldiers and game guards that flushed out four suspected poachers, including two notorious elephant poachers, and resulted in the seizure of 450 lbs. of bushmeat. Since 2008, the **Great Ape Conservation Fund (GACF)** has been supporting conservation efforts in Virunga National Park – Africa's oldest national park (established in 1925), which contains some of the richest biodiversity of any protected area on the continent and one of the largest populations of endangered mountain gorilla. GACF funding has helped to improve law enforcement and training for park rangers, develop alternative fuel sources to reduce the destructive practice of charcoal creation from the park's forests, increase aerial surveillance capacity, and grow the park's tourist revenue through a chimpanzee habituation and tourism project that generated nearly \$1 million in 2011 alone. In the Solomon Islands of the Pacific, the **Marine Turtle Conservation Fund (MTCF)** has supported WWF conservation activities on important nesting beaches for endangered sea turtles, including turtle tagging, DNA sampling, nesting beach cleanups, hatchery construction, workshops on community-based monitoring, and active monitoring of nests during the turtles' nesting seasons. Hatchling success has grown each year since the program began.

These programs have proven remarkably successful, generating enormous constituent interest and strong bipartisan support in Congress. Since 1989, they have awarded over 2,300 grants and actively engaged with nearly 600 domestic and foreign partners, working in over 54 foreign countries. From 2007 to 2013, MSCF programs provided \$77 million in grant funding for on-the-ground conservation, leveraging nearly \$117 million in additional matching funds. WWF recommends \$10 million for the Multinational Species Conservation Funds, an increase of \$900,000 over the Administration's FY15 budget request.

On behalf of World Wildlife Fund, thank you for considering these requests.