

## Fish and Wildlife Service Supports Landscape Approach to Cross River Gorilla Conservation

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The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today announced the development of an updated plan of action to conserve the Cross River gorilla in Cameroon and Nigeria. The Service, in collaboration with the Wildlife Conservation Society, convened a multi-stakeholder meeting on February 21-23, 2012, to develop the 5-year plan that will provide stakeholders with a unified, strategic landscape approach for ensuring the future survival of the subspecies.

Classified as critically endangered by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, fewer than 300 Cross River gorillas remain in 12 discrete mountain refuges across a landscape the size of Connecticut. Just ten years ago, the Cross River gorilla was largely believed to be extinct. Today, however, as a result of support through the Great Ape Conservation Fund administered by the Service's *Wildlife Without Borders (WWB)* program, conservationists in collaboration with local communities and park authorities are making tremendous strides in securing one of Africa's most endangered primates.

"The *Wildlife Without Borders* program works at the species, regional and global levels to leverage conservation actions designed to help restore at-risk species, enhance local people's capacity to conserve wildlife and collaborate with partners to identify critical conservation issues of mutual concern," said Fish and Wildlife Service Director Dan Ashe. "This program provides crucial assistance to government agencies and organizations in Cameroon and Nigeria in developing a coordinated approach among Cross River gorilla partners."

A cornerstone of the Service's efforts is a focus on giving direct assistance to local communities to conserve the species outside of protected areas through its Gorilla Guardian program. This program provides training and equipment to enable local villages to protect gorillas from illegal hunting, while also generating information on the status of remote populations. Other assistance includes support to wildlife law enforcement, environmental education, applied research, and protected area management.

"Given the importance of the Cross River gorilla and the unique biodiversity of the Lower Guinea Forest Ecosystem, we are seeking to increase the effectiveness of our conservation

activities through strategic partnerships,” said the Service’s Chief of International Conservation, Herb Raffaele. “With roughly two-thirds of the entire population now under some form of protection, we are optimistic that the Cross River gorilla’s population will not only be maintained but may increase over time.”

Since 1989 the WWB program has awarded more than 2,500 grants for international wildlife conservation, targeting key species and regions to ensure the protection of some of the world’s most endangered and charismatic animals.

The WWB program has supported action plans for all of Africa’s great apes. These can be found at: <http://www.primatesg.org/publications.html>. To learn more about the grants provided through the *Wildlife Without Borders* Great Ape Conservation Fund, go to: [http://www.fws.gov/international/dic/species/great\\_apes/great\\_apes.html](http://www.fws.gov/international/dic/species/great_apes/great_apes.html).

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