

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Statement on Ethiopia's Destruction of Illegal Ivory

March 23, 2015

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) commends the government of Ethiopia for its destruction of more than six tons of ivory. This action demonstrates Ethiopia's commitment to the growing fight against global wildlife trafficking that now threatens the future of African elephants and other treasured species. Ethiopia serves as a trafficking hub, having been identified among the countries that are heavily implicated in the illegal trade in ivory by the member countries of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). Today's action sends a clear and powerful message to poachers, traffickers and consumers that wildlife crime will not be tolerated. Ethiopia joins Kenya, Gabon, the Philippines, the United States, China, Chad, France, Belgium and Hong Kong in the community of governments that have destroyed their illegal ivory.

The Service has supported elephant conservation in Ethiopia since 2001. This support has included efforts to implement an effective protected-area system and improve security of elephant populations in six areas across the country. We are currently supporting an effort by the Born Free Foundation to secure Omo National Park, near the border with South Sudan, as a recognized protected area while strengthening elephant protection and building community relations. The Omo landscape has one of Ethiopia's largest elephant populations, estimated at 600 to 700 animals.

Time is growing short for the world to act. Unless the illegal and inhumane slaughter of elephants, rhinos and other irreplaceable species is halted, we will likely see them disappear from the wild in the next several decades. To prevent the loss of our natural heritage, we must expand and deepen our efforts as an international community to protect and restore surviving populations, crack down on criminal poaching and trafficking rings, reduce demand in consumer countries, and foster and manage legal and sustainable wildlife trade. We all have a stake in ensuring the survival of wild animal and plant species, and the Ethiopian government's action today serves as yet another catalyst for further action. We look forward to working with our counterparts in Ethiopia and across the world to continue our recent progress.