



**Testimony of
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Legislative Hearing on H.R. 4455

**before the Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife And Oceans
Committee on Natural Resources
U.S. House of Representatives**

June 24, 2008

Madam Chair, Mr. Ranking Member, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Thomas Dillon, and I am the Senior Vice President for Field Programs at the World Wildlife Fund (WWF). For more than 45 years, WWF has been protecting the future of nature. Today we are the largest multinational conservation organization in the world. WWF's unique way of working combines global reach with a foundation in science, involves action at every level from local to global, and ensures the delivery of innovative solutions that meet the needs of both people and nature. We currently sponsor conservation programs in more than 100 countries, thanks to the support of 1.2 million members in the United States and more than 5 million members worldwide.

I am pleased to be here today to discuss H.R. 4455, the bill being considered by the Subcommittee that would improve the Wildlife Without Borders Program of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) International Affairs Office, and to discuss international species conservation more broadly.

Let me begin by recognizing your leadership, Chairwoman Bordallo and Ranking Member Brown, in raising the profile of species conservation throughout the 110th Congress. With the series of hearings and legislation that this Subcommittee and the Committee as a whole have considered during this Congress, you have done a tremendous job in advancing U.S. efforts in international species conservation. This includes enactment into law of bills to reauthorize the Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Act and the African Elephant Conservation Act (H.R. 50), sponsored by Rep. Young, as well as to reauthorize the Asian Elephant Conservation Act (H.R. 465), introduced by Rep. Saxton. It also includes House passage of the Great Cats and Rare Canids Conservation Act (H.R. 1464), introduced by Rep. Tom Udall and the co-chairs of the International Conservation Caucus, as well as the Crane Conservation Act (H.R. 1771),

introduced by Rep. Baldwin, both of which have moved to the Senate for its consideration. This success would not be possible without the strong bipartisan support within the Congress that these programs enjoy, and the exemplary management of these programs by the FWS. I would also like to take a moment to commend the staff of the Subcommittee and Committee members for their dedicated work.

My testimony today will discuss: (1) the overall importance of H.R. 4455 and the Wildlife Without Borders Program; (2) WWF collaboration with the FWS as a partner in the WWB Program; (3) some specific comments on the legislation; and (4) lastly, our recommendation that the Subcommittee begin to consider a new paradigm in international species conservation, modeled on the existing multinational species conservation programs, and incorporating the elements of the WWB program, but on a scale that seeks to address the magnitude of the extinction crisis now taking place around the world.

The Wildlife Without Borders Program

The Wildlife Without Borders (WWB) Authorization Act, H.R. 4455, defines the purpose of the bill as:

“to provide capacity building, outreach, education, and training assistance in endangered species and strategic habitat conservation to other nations by providing international wildlife management and conservation programs through the Wildlife Without Borders Program”.

The WWB Program brings three elements of the FWS international programs together under a single title. It incorporates the Multinational Species Conservation Fund (MSCF), benefiting African elephants, rhinoceros and tigers, Asian elephants, great apes, marine turtles, and potentially soon great cats and rare canids, and cranes. These programs are referred to as the Species Programs. It also incorporates the Wildlife Without Borders regional program, which helps strengthen local wildlife management capabilities and provides flexibility to FWS in regions not covered by the species programs. These programs are referred to as the Regional Programs. A third category addresses the Service’s support for international conventions and treaties, and provides a vehicle for addressing cross-cutting issues that are not covered by the previous two programs. These activities are referred to as the Global Programs.

Species Programs. The five mammal and turtle programs of the Multinational Species Conservation Funds (MSCF) provide funding for grants to support law enforcement, mitigate human-animal conflicts, conserve habitat, conduct population surveys, and support public education programs. The first of these species programs was authorized in 1989 when Congress passed the African Elephant Conservation Act to help protect African elephants from rampant poaching for ivory. Subsequent programs were added as Congress saw the need to protect other keystone species that were threatened by poaching, habitat destruction, civil strife, or demand for bushmeat in impoverished areas.

Since 1990, Congress has authorized five programs at a total of \$30 million, while appropriations in Fiscal Year 2008 were \$7.9 million. These programs have an excellent record of leveraging additional funds from public and private partners. Total funding for the MSCF from FY1990 to FY 2007 totaled \$52 million, and was supplemented by \$128 million in matching contributions, a ratio of 2.5 to1. Partners have included other developed countries, such as Holland, Germany, France, UK, and the European Union, private corporations like Exxon-Mobil and Disney, non-government organizations, and host country agencies.

These funds provide critical assistance to struggling species. Tigers are seriously threatened in India, where populations have fallen from an estimated 3,600 animals in 2002 to 1,400 today, and in Sumatra, where poaching and open sale of tiger products continues unabated. In China, the government is considering lifting the ban on internal trade in tiger parts to accommodate tiger farmers, an action that would unleash another round of poaching pressure on these great cats in neighboring countries.

Asian elephants face ongoing difficulties in South and Southeast Asia, where reduced habitat and human-animal conflicts over cropland threaten remaining wild populations. FWS has worked with its partners to develop innovative solutions - such as the use of domesticated elephants to guard plantations in India and Indonesia and the use of chili peppers as a deterrent to elephant depredations around cultivated areas - which have succeeded in reducing deaths of both animals and humans. In South Sudan, crucial support from the African Elephant Conservation Fund allowed for aerial surveys of this war-torn region, revealing large herds of elephants and migrations of antelope that rival the Serengeti. The promise of future tourism will contribute to greater economic security for an area that has seen much civil strife.

This year, the Marine Turtle Conservation Fund (MTCF) is expected to receive almost 100 qualified proposals totaling more than \$5 million, far surpassing the available funding. These projects relieve pressure on turtles and their eggs on nesting beaches by guarding against poaching and supporting turtle-based tourism as an alternative source of local employment. The Great Apes Conservation Act has made critical contributions to the control of bushmeat hunting and the spread of wildlife diseases like ebola to humans.

Regional Programs. The Wildlife Without Borders Regional Programs have focused largely on capacity-building and training to augment conservation management capabilities in developing countries. The Regional Programs were initiated in 1995 and have largely benefited Mexico, Latin America and the Caribbean. Smaller programs in Russia, China and India have recently been joined by a regional program for Africa. These programs not only complement the species programs by providing capacity-building, they also provide added flexibility to the FWS when conservation needs arise outside the habitat of species covered by the MSCF. The WWB Regional Programs have enjoyed a corresponding record of leveraging additional funds from external partners, having awarded a total of \$18 million and generated more than \$54 million in partner contributions.

Global Programs. The third set of programs managed by the USFWS are the Global Programs, which currently include support for United States involvement in the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the RAMSAR Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, the Western Hemisphere Migratory Species Initiative, and other international treaties and conventions. Participation in these accords provides opportunities for the United States to exercise leadership in shaping international conservation policy.

Up until now “Wildlife Without Borders” has generally referred to the Regional Programs of FWS International Affairs. H.R. 4455 would expand the definition of “Wildlife Without Borders” to encompass all of the international programs of FWS – the Multinational Species Conservation Funds, the Wildlife Without Borders Regional Program, and several cross-cutting global initiatives.

Given these distinct responsibilities, we see H.R. 4455 as an effort to bring the three functions together under a single title, to supplement existing sources of funding for these activities, to codify the Regional Programs as a grant program distinct from the administrative functions of the International Affairs Division, and to set the stage for a broader global program that would provide greater flexibility for FWS to respond to conservation needs that are outside the realm of the species programs or the regional programs.

WWF Collaboration with FWS International Programs

Before commenting on specific aspects of the legislation under consideration, I’d like to speak for a moment about some of the partnerships between WWF and FWS through its international programs, in particular WWF’s experience working in collaboration with the individual species programs and the WWB regional programs.

The grants for individual species conservation come through a number of separately authorized funds, and while these grants can be modest in size, their focused nature and their proven ability to leverage private funding (on the order of 2.5 to 1) has made them highly effective programs for supporting targeted programs in priority areas. Through the Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Fund, WWF has partnered with FWS on a number of projects to protect tiger populations in Asia, including work to update information on populations and habitat in order to determine what areas will be able to support viable tiger populations in the future. Particular effort has been focused on the Indonesian province of Riau on the island of Sumatra, which supports one of the last remaining habitats for the critically endangered Sumatran tiger. There were once two other subspecies of tigers on the Indonesian islands of Bali and Java, but these populations were driven to extinction over the course of the 20th century. The last observation of a Javan tiger was recorded in 1976. Sumatra is now the last stronghold of tigers in Indonesia, and their future there is uncertain as well, with the Sumatran tiger now numbering fewer than 400 individuals in the wild.

The main drivers of species loss in this instance are rapid deforestation and rampant poaching. A recent survey found that tiger body parts – including teeth, claws, skin, whiskers and bones – were available for sale in 10 percent of the 326 retail outlets surveyed in 28 cities and towns across Sumatra. These body parts are sold for use in traditional Chinese medicines and as souvenirs and decorative pieces. The problem is largely one of law enforcement, with a need for much more vigorous anti-poaching efforts on the part of Indonesian authorities. WWF has partnered with FWS to provide accurate and up-to-date data on tiger distribution and ecology while building local capacity for tiger conservation. We have also been working to raise awareness among local communities about the need to protect the last populations of these great cats before they are gone for good.

Through the Asian Elephant Conservation Fund, WWF has also partnered with FWS to protect populations of Asian elephants in a number of priority regions. In Cambodia, WWF has engaged in protected area management and law enforcement patrols, as well as monitoring and research in areas containing important elephant populations. At the same time, WWF has worked to build local capacity for these elephant conservation efforts. In Nepal's Terai Arc region, WWF has used money provided by FWS to restore transboundary biological corridors between Nepal and India, helping to improve elephant habitats, address human and elephant conflicts in the corridor areas, and increase awareness in local communities – an important step to prevent such conflicts from arising. Also in Nepal, WWF has used funding from FWS to treat park patrol elephants for tuberculosis, which can appear in captive elephants and subsequently put wild populations at risk of transmission.

Through the Marine Turtle Conservation Fund, WWF has worked with FWS to study and protect vulnerable turtle populations in Mexico, the Caribbean and East Africa. The work undertaken through this Fund has helped to support community-based conservation projects that strengthen local capacity for marine conservation as well as local livelihoods. Some of this funding has also gone towards studying climate change impacts on marine turtles.

WWF has been a partner with Wildlife Without Borders Regional Programs on a number of initiatives. Through the WWB Program for Latin America and the Caribbean, WWF has received funding for a regional "Train-the-Trainer" workshop on protected area management in the Tropical Andes and Amazon region. The workshop, based in Ecuador's Podocarpus National Park, is helping to teach new skills, techniques, and methods to park rangers throughout the region. WWB has also helped to fund a guidebook on "Migratory Species of the Western Hemisphere" to support awareness of the Western Hemisphere Migratory Species Initiative (WHMSI). This document will act as an essential educational and promotional tool to raise the profile of WHMSI while communicating the importance of conserving migratory species.

WWF has received significant funding from FWS through the newest of the WWB regional programs, Wildlife Without Borders–Africa. FWS launched the Africa regional

program in 2007 by awarding a \$500,000 grant for the Mentoring for Environmental Training and Outreach in Resource Conservation (MENTOR) Fellowship Program. The grant, which is one of the largest ever given by FWS, is shared between the Africa Biodiversity Collaborative Group (ABCG) – a consortium of major U.S. conservation NGOs with field programs in Africa currently based at WWF – and the College of African Wildlife Management in Mweka, Tanzania, established 45 years ago by WWF's founder, former president and chairman emeritus, Russell E. Train. MENTOR is supporting capacity building, training and career development of emerging African conservation leaders in order to build a network of leading wildlife professionals in East Africa who can develop and implement solutions to reduce illegal and unsustainable bushmeat exploitation at local, national and regional levels.

Eight MENTOR Fellows were selected from four East African nations – Kenya, Southern Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda – and are currently pursuing academic studies at the College of African Wildlife Management. One-on-one mentorship is the foundation of the 18-month program. Four highly experienced African conservation professionals are working side-by-side with the Fellows to conduct bushmeat assessments, implement field projects, and draw up plans for interventions in their respective countries. Upon completion, the Fellows will have received substantial practical, solutions-based field training, in addition to a post-graduate diploma.

MENTOR Fellows are currently engaged in conducting bushmeat assessments and drawing up plans for interventions in their respective countries. Among the planned interventions that Fellows are working on are education and awareness campaigns targeted at both local and urban markets for bushmeat, and efforts to expand and enforce wildlife laws. In some formerly war-torn areas, such as Southern Sudan, there are programs underway to train unemployed ex-combatants to become paid park rangers, providing a double benefit by helping to achieve conservation goals through wildlife protection while at the same time helping to achieve security goals by reducing the potential for armed conflict and stabilizing East African communities. These programs will be greatly enhanced by Fellows who have trained in the MENTOR Program and who can return to their home countries to act as mentors themselves while at the same time having access to a network of East African wildlife professionals who are working to combat the bushmeat trade on a regional basis.

The MENTOR Program, which involves the collaboration of U.S. experts with environmental NGOs, African institutions, and wildlife professionals from throughout East Africa, provides a clear example of the strength of the regional approach employed by FWS through the Wildlife Without Borders Regional Programs. It was recently highlighted by Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne in his address at the Opening Ceremony of Sullivan Summit VIII, attended by thousands of people including many African heads of state, and broadcast live on national TV in Tanzania on 2 June 2008.

Projects currently pending include building the capacity of government agencies and NGOs in the Ruvuma Wilderness of Tanzania and other ecoregions in East Africa to use Geographic Information Systems (GIS) as a guide to their decisions regarding wildlife

and protected area management. Another would build and enhance the capacity of women currently working in protected area management and conservation in the Democratic Republic of Congo, in order to provide them with training focused on human/wildlife conflicts, illegal trade in bushmeat, wildlife/livestock diseases, and alternative sources of livelihoods for communities living around protected areas.

In WWF's experience, the species program has many decades of proven success, and the regional program has fulfilled a crucial need by providing flexible international conservation funding that is not targeted at any one species or habitat, but which can be used in a broader regional context. The regional program has been particularly successful in supporting capacity building, education and training on a regional and local scale – a critical component for bringing about a culture of conservation in those developing countries where WWB-funded projects are underway. It is only by creating a homegrown capacity for conservation in developing countries, by instilling an appreciation of the globally important biodiversity found in those countries and its value to local communities, and by ensuring the desire among local individuals to preserve their natural heritage that any conservation efforts can be confident of success over the long-term. Through its regionally focused Wildlife Without Borders Program, FWS has done much over the past twelve years to bring us closer to that goal.

WWF Comments on the Legislation

WWF reads H.R. 4455 to take the three programmatic areas of FWS responsibility for international conservation and place them under the one heading of the Wildlife Without Borders Programs. The bill would define the Wildlife Without Borders Program as an umbrella for the Species Programs, the Regional Programs and the Global Programs. As noted above, we see great value in tying the three programs together, in that it will foster greater synergy among the programs, and greater consolidation and coordination of efforts towards international species conservation within the FWS.

However, we are concerned that it may cause at least initial confusion among Congressional supporters of the Multinational Species Conservation Funds when they are renamed as the WWB Species Programs, and the erstwhile WWB Regional Programs lend their name to the new umbrella structure. We do not see renaming as an insurmountable problem, but are concerned that the MSCF might be compromised by shifting these well-established programs into a broader collective. This might be addressed by amending the bill language to clarify the relationship of these programs, and it certainly can be addressed through report language if the bill is approved by the Subcommittee and full Committee.

More to the point, while we do not read the bill as subsuming or superseding the independent authorized levels of the existing MSCF laws, we do not want there to be any confusion on this point. We understand that the resources provided by this bill would be additional to the resources already authorized for the MSCF, and are intended to provide

additional support for FWS international conservation efforts beyond what they get in MSCF line-item appropriations, and what they get in baseline funding. To this end, we recommend that the funding authority in this bill be increased to \$15 million.

We support the codification of the WWB Regional Program as a separate program outside the International Affairs administrative budget. A higher profile will inevitably draw more attention to the essential need for grants for local capacity building and emphasize the complementarities of these programs with the species programs. The Regional Programs provide greater flexibility to address a broader range of species and issues than are covered by the formal species programs. We recommend that the funding authorized in this bill be directed primarily to increasing the available resources for the Regional Program.

The Global Program proposed in this bill would expand the current range of International Affairs activities beyond the support of international treaties and conventions, and would provide a vehicle for addressing cross-cutting issues as a complement to activities under the Species and Regional Programs. This would provide useful flexibility to FWS in implementing conservation programs that are not currently covered by the Species Program or located in regions covered by the Regional Programs. However in its current form, the language in Section 4(b)(3) of the bill could benefit by greater elaboration on scope, description of activities, and priority-setting for potential funding. Education efforts and the use of tool-kits, and enforcement training efforts certainly have a global significance and might be improved and made more efficient if they were coordinated through a global program. A sense of other activities that might fall under the Global Program would be valuable. In addition, the language establishing the Global Program would need to address the global crises affecting species. There is none more profound than climate change, and we recommend that the Global Program specifically include activities addressing the impacts of climate change.

We consider this Global Program to be a useful addition to the current FWS suite of programs, but not an adequate response to the need for a new paradigm for international conservation. This Program can only be considered a placeholder for further Congressional direction and funding on addressing the current extinction crisis that is taking place across the planet.

Recommendations for a New Paradigm in International Species Conservation

H.R. 4455 takes the status quo and improves it in terms of the FWS programs currently in existence. However, a new paradigm for species conservation is needed, one that evolves from the current single-species programs and a focus on implementing terms for individual grants programs, towards one that embraces a strategic vision towards species conservation worldwide, with adequate resources to accomplish that vision.

Several efforts have been made to craft a bill that would take an omnibus approach to species conservation, including the Keystone Species Conservation Act of 1999 and the

Flagship Species Conservation Act of 2004. While to be praised for taking the initiative towards a broader approach, these initiatives did not offer adequate funding to address the need that they recognized, nor did they offer sufficient Congressional direction or oversight to effectively address that overwhelming need.

Scientists estimate that approximately 1/10 of the world's known biological diversity is currently in danger of extinction, including at least 1/4 of all mammals, 1/3 of all primates, 1/3 of all amphibians, and 1/8 of all birds. The initial stages of a major worldwide extinction event are occurring now and it is estimated that by the end of the 21st century as much as 2/3 of the world's plant and animal species could be in danger of extinction. It is also estimated that approximately 3/4 of the world's terrestrial plant and animal species reside in whole or in part in developing nations where in many cases poor management of natural resources has exacerbated the threat of extinction to many species and directly harmed local communities. Yet the conservation of species and habitats are vital to alleviating poverty for many communities in developing countries that depend on these resources for their livelihoods, food, medicinal compounds, housing material, and other necessities. In addition, there are significant risks to the global and U.S. economies from the loss of species and their habitats around the world and the valuable services they provide. Opportunities for conserving viable populations of species and their habitats rapidly diminish with each passing year. The U.S. has maintained the tradition of serving as a leader in international conservation efforts for over 100 years, and it has an opportunity to lead the world in confronting this challenge yet again.

WWF has long seen the need for a global conservation initiative that would encompass future species needing protection, and recently has worked with conservation partners and the FWS to identify a new paradigm for conservation funding. We recognize that such an approach would be in addition to, and have no bearing on, the current MSCF, which would be considered grandfathered into the law.

In brief, we recommend that this new paradigm should:

- Be broad-based and flexible, but subject to scientifically based criteria for eligibility (e.g. IUCN Red List)
- Focus primarily on international programs in developing countries.
- Include a clearly defined system for establishing priorities among species, while retaining administrative flexibility.
- Provide adequate funding commensurate with conservation objectives, including sufficient fees to enable USFWS to meet administrative costs.
- Encourage but not require grant recipients to obtain matching funds from public and private partners.
- Require host country approval and encourage local support for programs and projects.
- Provide for coordination among Federal agencies with overlapping jurisdictions.
- Allow for outside oversight and review of program implementation.

The attached White Paper and Statement of Principles elaborate these principles and may be considered a “work in progress”. Many questions remain to be addressed in both documents, and we look forward to further productive dialogue with your staff and with our partners in conservation organizations.

We believe that a broader approach is necessary and are prepared to work with Subcommittee and Committee staff on the best way to address this need in legislation. We would support a separate hearing on a global approach, with the goal of developing legislation consistent with the principles outlined above and in the attachments to this testimony.

Conclusion

I thank you again for the opportunity to testify before you today. WWF would like to endorse H.R. 4455 with the suggested changes mentioned earlier in my testimony. There is much to be gained in authorizing the international conservation programs of FWS, and creating one umbrella to promote synergies, efficiencies and coordination. We think it is an important step toward redefining the approach to international conservation programs. Because of the continued demand on these programs, the continual strained resources available to these programs, and their proven track record of success, we recommend an authorized annual appropriations level of \$15 million.

At the same time, we urge the Subcommittee to begin consideration of new legislation to address the overarching need of species conservation globally, and to craft legislation in which Congress provides direction, parameters and priorities for FWS efforts in this regard, balanced with flexibility for FWS to use its discretion and expertise when fulfilling the need.

Madame Chair, I cannot emphasize how important your work has been in protecting some of the world’s most endangered and iconic species, which find themselves on the brink of extinction. We look forward to working with you, other members of the Subcommittee, and your respective staff, on these most important efforts.