



Developing a New Paradigm in International Species Conservation



The U.S. Government has been a leader in the conservation and protection of species and their habitats around the world. One of the important implementation tools has been the Multinational Species Conservation Funds. The six programs authorized by Congress since 1989 for African elephants, rhinoceros, tigers, Asian elephants, neotropical birds, great apes and marine turtles are true models for successful on-the-ground conservation through leveraging of limited resources. The Great Cats and Rare Canids Act and the Crane Conservation Act, currently under consideration by Congress, will be welcome additions to the current suite of programs. These programs also reflect the exemplary expertise, capacity and professionalism of the implementing agency, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service International Affairs Office.

Despite limited funding, the success of these programs only underscores the need for a much broader and comprehensive approach in shaping U.S. efforts towards species conservation worldwide. The number of threatened and endangered species is increasing across the globe, and the rate of extinction is unprecedented in the world's history. Yet the proven effectiveness of the current programs demonstrates unequivocally that these trends can be reversed when the challenges for particular species and in particular regions are confronted. We believe that a broader program can yield significantly greater successes. We recommend developing and advancing legislation that provides an incentive-based, non-regulatory approach to protecting global priority species modeled after existing programs, and more comprehensive in scale, with a more strategic design, and an order of magnitude larger increase in funding.

The existing programs of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service International Affairs Office have always enjoyed strong bipartisan support from Capitol Hill, implementing partners, the private sector, government partners and our colleagues in the conservation community. The Wildlife Conservation Society and the World Wildlife Fund look with pride to continuing in this same manner to craft a bill, the primary considerations of which include the following:

- *The strategic vision for the program and the scope of species and nations considered eligible should be based on scientific recommendations and defined so as to guide FWS at various scales of work allowing flexibility to address critical short-term and long-term needs as they arise, recognizing that species conservation priorities and threats vary from country to country and region to region, and change as conditions change.*
- *Cross-cutting threats to conservation should be addressed including but not limited to climate change, emerging wildlife-related diseases, wildlife trade and poaching, human-wildlife conflict, invasive species, contaminants and habitat loss.*
- *Guidance for funding priorities should be provided, in order to ensure that federal investments are spent wisely, and that FWS can balance between clearly defined parameters and administrative flexibility in implementing the program.*



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- *Coordination among Federal agencies with related authorities and activities should be mandated, in order to maximize efficient, effective efforts and leverage funds.*
 - *Oversight, review and monitoring of overall implementation and activities under the program should be provided, in order to continually improve the program and adapt to changing needs and circumstances.*
 - *Authorization of appropriations should be at a minimum level of \$100 million.*