

CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES
OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA

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Bangkok (Thailand), 2-14 October 2004

Interpretation and implementation of the Convention

Regular and special reports

Appendix-I species subject to export quotas

BLACK RHINOCEROS: EXPORT QUOTA FOR NAMIBIA

1. This document has been submitted by Namibia.

Proposal

2. In accordance with Resolution Conf. 9.21 on The interpretation and application of quotas for species included in Appendix I, paragraph a), the Management Authority of Namibia requests the Conference of the Parties to grant an export quota for five black rhinoceros (*Diceros bicornis*) hunting trophies.

Supporting statement

Background

3. During the past century, the black rhinoceros suffered a drastic decline in total numbers. Between 1970 and 1992, the population decreased by 96 per cent (from 65,000 to 2,300) owing to illegal killing (African Rhino Specialist Group). Since 1996, intense anti-poaching efforts, and innovative management have turned the trend, and numbers have been recovering, including in Namibia.
4. The black rhinoceros *Diceros bicornis* was including in Appendix I of CITES in 1977.
5. Four sub-species or ecotypes of black rhinoceros are currently recognized: the eastern group of northern Tanzania and Kenya (*D. b. michaeli*), the larger bushveld group occurring in South Africa and Zimbabwe (*D. b. minor*), the desert group of Namibia (*D. b. bicornis*) and the north-western group in Cameroon (*D. b. longipes*) (Rookmaker 1995, African Rhino Specialist Group).
6. The IUCN classifies the current status of the black rhinoceros subspecies *D. b. minor* (south-central), *D. b. michaeli* (eastern) and *D. b. longipes* (western) as 'critically endangered', but the subspecies found in Namibia (*D. b. bicornis*) is currently classified in a lower category of threat ('vulnerable').

Black rhinoceros in Namibia

7. Namibia is one of only a few countries in the world to make provision in its national constitution for the protection and sustainable use of its natural resources and biodiversity. Both black and white rhinoceroses are listed as specially protected under Ordinance 4 of 1975. Currently fines for possession of and trade in any rhinoceros products are NAD 200,000 and/or 20 years' imprisonment. The classification as specially protected wildlife does not preclude consumptive use, but this can only occur under the strict control of the State. All black rhinoceroses in Namibia are State-owned.
8. Historically, no permanent rhinoceros populations occurred west of the 100 mm isohyet, and this may be considered an ecological barrier. In Namibia, the black rhinoceros was distributed from the Kunene River in the north, down to the Orange River in the south, and extended westwards to the

edge of the Namib Desert (Shortridge 1934, Joubert 1969). Records from the 1700s indicate that rhinoceros was abundant at that time, but during the second half of the 19th century, the black rhinoceros was virtually exterminated by hunting in the southern parts of the country (Joubert 1969). Figure 1 (see Annex) provides the historic range for the two sub-species of black rhinoceros occurring in southern Africa.

9. By 1967, the distribution of black rhinoceros in Namibia was restricted to the north-western area, north of the Hoanib River, along the Huab and Ugab Rivers and in the Etosha National Park (Joubert, 1969). At that time, the national population was estimated at 90 black rhinoceros (25 in the north-western area north of the Hoanib River, 17 south of the Hoanib River, and 48 in the Etosha National Park).
10. Since then, concerted efforts have gone into protecting and managing the black rhinoceros population. This has included translocation of animals to more secure areas (Etosha National Park, Waterberg Plateau Park), temporary horn removal at times when illegal killing was a threat, close protection and monitoring of the existing populations, and the creation of several new populations.
11. Although all black rhinoceroses in Namibia belong to the State, the population occurs within different land tenure systems (protected areas, communal land and on private land as part of an innovative custodianship scheme).
12. The largest population occurs in the Etosha National Park, where management includes frequent surveillance and patrolling, maintaining secure access to water, controlled burning, habitat management to provide optimal conditions for black rhinoceros, monitoring of the population using full-moon waterhole counts and aerial block counts. Animals (particularly sub-adults and juveniles) are ear-notched to assist with identification, and a database is maintained with information on all individually known specimens (the majority of the population). Etosha National Park serves as the major donor population for translocations into other areas (custodians, conservancies and other protected areas). Indications are that in certain areas of the park, the population has reached densities that preclude maximum growth rate, and in some cases leads to losses through fighting and other intra-specific interactions. A high proportion of animals are individually known and are of known age.
13. In the arid north-western communal lands of Namibia in the Kunene region, the desert-dwelling black rhinoceros was virtually eliminated through illegal killing in the 1970s, but is now showing a recovery in numbers following the successful implementation of appropriate conservation measures. In the early 1980s, a community-based approach, supported by intensive field operations and strong law enforcement by both government and non-government organizations was established. Community involvement in the protection of the black rhinoceros was the precursor to Namibia's community-based natural resources management (CBNRM) programme, which has provided an innovative means for communities to be actively involved in and directly benefit from wildlife management through the formation of conservancies. A high proportion of animals in this population are individually known and are of known age.
14. In 1993, Namibia recognized the need to expand the range for black rhinoceros, as well as to spread risks by creating additional sub-populations. This was achieved by placing small groups of animals on qualifying private land, in a custodianship scheme. Under this scheme, although the animals remain State property, private landowners benefit through tourism, or simply through the prestige of having black rhinoceroses on the farm. In return, they become responsible for ensuring their safety and regularly monitoring them. There are currently 137 rhinoceros in 16 sub-populations under this scheme, and the growth rate in some has reached as high as 14 per cent per annum. The scheme has subsequently been expanded to include registered conservancies. The interest in the private sector and conservancies continues to be high, and new applications to become black rhinoceros custodians are received annually. Maintaining the scheme, however, requires extensive management, as the individual populations are small and care must be taken to avoid inbreeding or overstocking. The management objective of this scheme is to maintain populations below carrying capacity and ensure the highest possible rates of increase. Each individual in the scheme is individually known and is of known age.

15. The current Black Rhinoceros Conservation Strategy for Namibia has provided national goals and strategies to obtain maximum growth of the population, and progress has been closely monitored, also in collaboration with the SADC Rhino Management Group, a consultative body for conservation agencies responsible for rhinoceros population management in the SADC region, through annual status reporting and periodic assessment. This strategy concentrates on maximizing population growth rates through biological management.
16. The vision of the national management strategy for black rhinoceros in Namibia is that by 2030, the subspecies *D. b. bicornis* will be re-established in viable, healthy breeding populations throughout its former range, and will be sustainably utilized.
17. Namibia is committed to managing the black rhinoceros as a metapopulation, increasing by at least 5 per cent per year. Metapopulation management includes the management of several large populations as long-term viable populations and as sources for founder stock for other populations. Individuals are exchanged between the larger populations and the smaller ones, with the latter also providing individuals to start additional populations. Rapid growth rates are achieved by skewing founder populations towards females and young adults, and in general striving to provide optimal conditions for all populations. Namibia has on average established two new populations per year, and will continue to do so as long as suitable habitat can be found.
18. In the past two decades, the Namibian population has been steadily increasing in Namibia (see Figure 2 in the Annex). The current population estimate is 1,134 (see Table 1 in the Annex).
19. Namibia's black rhinoceros conservation programme has been successful in most respects. Namibia now holds more than a third of all the black rhinoceroses remaining in Africa, and is the stronghold of the south-western subspecies (*D. b. bicornis*). More than 95 per cent of the total population of this taxon is found in Namibia, and rhinoceros numbers continue to increase steadily (Figure 2) under a well-established conservation and management programme aimed at expanding the range within Namibia and at maintaining maximum growth rate.
20. Maximum growth rates, however, are achieved when populations are maintained below the ecological carrying capacity, in order to minimize the risk of density-dependent effects, and in a female-biased population, which is more productive. In some areas in Namibia the populations are showing signs of unfavourable sex ratios. For example, a census of the Kunene population, completed in 2003, showed 68 males to 60 females. Translocation options are very limited for males, and post-reproductive old males are not suited for translocation at all, as their introduction into existing populations often results in fighting and mortality, many times of females and calves. Management aimed at maintaining female-skewed population sex ratios, removal of specific males to improve population growth rates or to avoid inbreeding, and vagrant individuals that repeatedly leave or break out of a property or protected areas results in a situation of surplus males in populations, i.e. animals that can no longer contribute effectively to a viable breeding population, or whose presence adversely affects the breeding performance of populations. This problem will increase as additional populations are established.
21. Management of black rhinoceros, especially the intensive recovery management underway in Namibia, is extremely costly, requiring significant human resources for patrolling against the threat of illegal killing, costly capture and relocation, holding facilities, specialized equipment, and regular monitoring.
22. The incidence of illegal hunting of and trade in black rhinoceros in Namibia is low [see Namibia's report pursuant to Resolution Conf. 9.14 (Rev.)].

Annual hunting quotas

23. The controlled hunting of surplus males is one of the only options left to maintain rapid population growth in the Namibian population. Removing a small number of surplus black rhinoceros through trophy hunting will be both sustainable and contribute significantly to the success of the black rhinoceros conservation programme by placing a significant value on this species. Considerable funds can be raised through the trophy hunting of one animal, which can then be used to further enhance the conservation efforts for the species. As all black rhinoceroses in Namibia belong to the State, all

revenue from hunting will be re-invested in conservation programmes through the trust fund established pursuant to the Game Products Trust Fund Act, Act No. 7 of 1997.

24. No quotas have in the past few decades been granted for the export of black rhinoceros trophies within CITES. The export of trophies, however, is considered non-commercial, and hence permissible under an Appendix-I listing. Namibia has considered the option to declare voluntary export quotas but has experienced in similar cases that stricter domestic measures in key countries are likely to prohibit the export of even a few hunting trophies.
25. It is therefore requested that an annual quota of five black rhinoceros (<0.5 per cent of the population) be granted to Namibia. This is an arbitrary number, as there are no guidelines for sustainable hunting quotas for this species. Only surplus adult male animals will be considered for trophy hunting. Preference will be given to hunt post-reproductive males. However, occasionally other males could be targeted, where they have fought excessively, repeatedly broken out of certain areas, or disrupted the existing social structure (e.g. by killing or displacing other individuals). All hunting will be supervised by hunting guides registered with the Management Authority, and limited to males designated by the Management Authority.
26. Namibia will report on the use of this quota, if approved, along with the population status trends and other elements of its rhinoceros conservation management and trade controls, in the report required under Resolution Conf. 9.14 (Rev).

References

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- Hall-Martin, A.J. and Knight, M.H. 1994 Conservation and management of black rhinoceros in South African National Parks. In: *Proceedings of a Symposium on Rhinos as Game Ranch Animals*. Eds. B.L. Penzhorn and N.P.J. Kriek, Onderstepoort, 11-19.
- Joubert, E. 1969 An ecological study of the black rhinoceros *Diceros bicornis bicornis* Linn. 1758 in South West Africa. Pretoria: Univ of Pretoria, unpubl. MSc thesis.
- Rookmaker, L.C. 1995 Subspecies and ecotypes of the black rhinoceros. *Pachyderm*, 20, 39-40.

COMMENT FROM THE SECRETARIAT

The proponent explains that it is committed to increasing its black rhinoceros population by at least five per cent a year, under a well-established conservation and management programme aimed at expanding the range within Namibia and maintaining maximum population growth rates. These growth rates are highest in female-biased populations. Under this management programme some populations have surplus males; or animals that can no longer contribute to a viable breeding population or whose presence adversely affects the breeding performance of populations. The proponent explains why translocation of such males is not a suitable option. The proponent also explains that funds raised through trophy hunting would be reinvested in conservation programmes through a trust fund, that hunting would be limited to males designated by the Management Authority under its management programme, and that it would be conducted under the supervision of registered guides. The Secretariat believes this proposal is in the best interest of the conservation of the species, and supports the proposed quota.

Figure 1 The historical distribution of *Diceros bicornis bicornis* and *D. b. minor* in southern Africa adapted from Hall-Martin and Knight (1994)

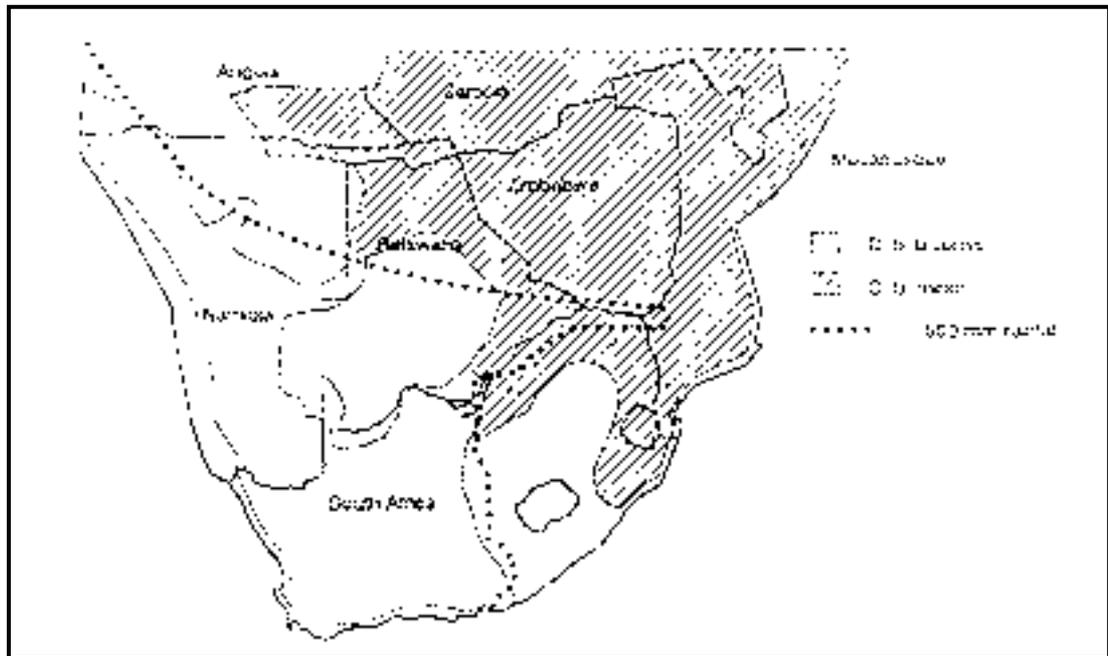


Figure 2 Graph showing the increase in the black rhinoceros population of Namibia since 1980

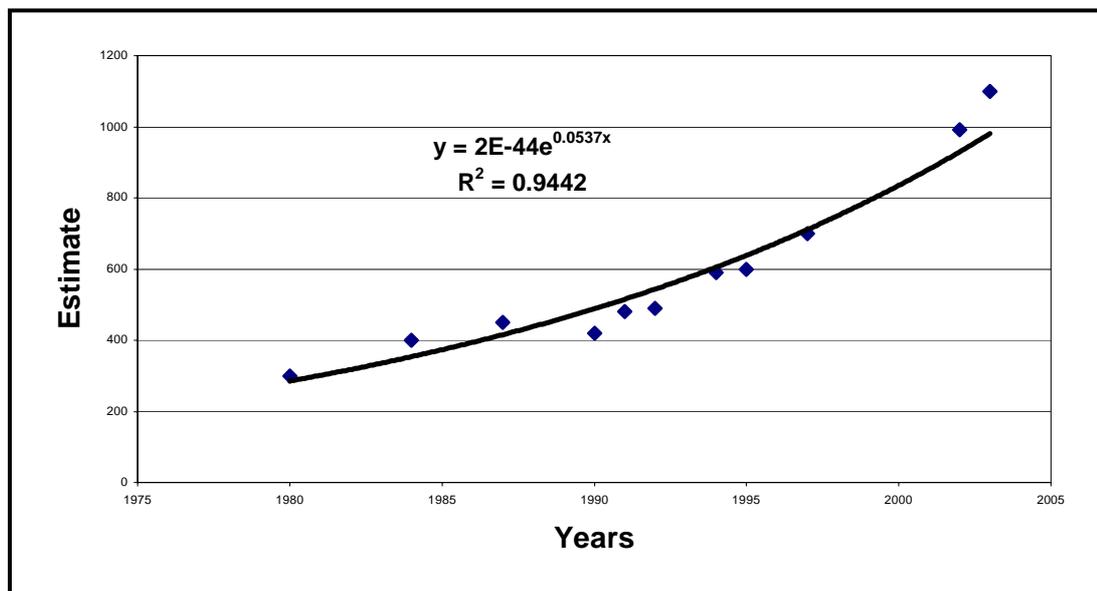


Table 1 Black rhinoceros (*Diceros bicornis bicornis*) estimates (2004) in Namibia

Population	Population total
Etosha National Park	816
Kunene Region	138
Custodian Programme	137
Waterberg Plateau Park	34
Hardap Game Park	9
Total	1,134