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Interior Announces Ban on Commercial Trade of Ivory as Part of Overall Effort to Combat Poaching, Wildlife Trafficking

Ban Addresses Serious and Urgent Conservation and Global Security Threat Posed by Illegal Trade in Wildlife, Including African Elephants and Rhinoceros

WASHINGTON, DC -- Following today's release of the Obama Administration's [National Strategy for Combating Wildlife Trafficking](#), Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell announced that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (The Service) will implement a U.S. ban on commercial trade of elephant ivory. This unprecedented action is in response to the escalating and highly organized wildlife trafficking crime that threatens the survival of the African elephant, rhinoceros and a host of other species around the world.

"We are seeing record high demand for wildlife products that is having a devastating impact, with species like elephants and rhinos facing the risk of significant decline or even extinction," said Sally Jewell. "A commercial ban is a critical element in the President's strategy to stop illegal wildlife trafficking and to shut down criminal markets that encourage poaching."

It is estimated that poachers, working with criminal syndicates, systematically killed as many as 35,000 elephants in 2012. Globally, illegal ivory trade activity has more than doubled since 2007. With revenues totaling many billions of dollars, wildlife trafficking is estimated to be fourth largest transnational crime in the world.

"The U.S. market is contributing to the crisis now threatening the African elephant," said U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Dan Ashe. "The largely unregulated domestic trade in elephant ivory has served as a loophole that gives cover for illegal trade. Through a series of administrative actions, we can establish a commercial ivory ban and provide the urgently needed protections for elephants and rhinos that will help counteract the unparalleled threats facing two of the world's most treasured species."

The ban will impose new restrictions on the import, export, and commercial sale of elephant ivory within the United States, with some limited exceptions. The limited exceptions include a narrow class of antiques that are exempt from regulation under the Endangered Species Act; and items imported for commercial purposes before international commercial trade in these species was prohibited under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). Anyone proposing to sell elephant ivory or rhino horn would be responsible to document that they are exempt. The Service expects this to be a small fraction of the current domestic trade. Anyone who currently owns legally obtained ivory may keep it.

The Service will:

- **Prohibit Commercial Import of African Elephant Ivory:** All commercial imports of African elephant ivory, including antiques, will be prohibited.
- **Prohibit Commercial Export of Elephant Ivory:** All commercial exports will be prohibited, except for bona fide antiques, certain noncommercial items, and in exceptional circumstances permitted under the Endangered Species Act.
- **Significantly Restrict Domestic Resale of Elephant Ivory:** We will finalize a proposed rule that will reaffirm and clarify that sales across state lines are prohibited, except for bona fide antiques, and will prohibit sales within a state unless the seller can demonstrate an item was lawfully imported prior to 1990 for African elephants and 1975 for Asian elephants, or under an exemption document.
- **Clarify the Definition of “Antique”:** To qualify as an antique, an item must be more than 100 years old and meet other requirements under the Endangered Species Act. The onus will now fall on the importer, exporter, or seller to demonstrate that an item meets these criteria.
- **Restore Endangered Species Act Protection for African Elephants:** We will revoke a previous Fish and Wildlife Service special rule that had relaxed Endangered Species Act restrictions on African elephant ivory trade.
- **Support Limited Sport-hunting of African Elephants:** We will limit the number of African elephant sport-hunted trophies that an individual can import to two per hunter per year.

More information on the threats facing elephants, rhinos and other species that are targeted for the illegal wildlife trade can be found [here](#). To view the White House Fact Sheet, click [here](#).

The National Strategy for Combating Wildlife Trafficking was developed by an interagency Presidential Task Force, representing agencies from across the federal government, and with significant input from an [Advisory Council on Wildlife Trafficking](#) that includes representation from the private sector, former government officials, non-governmental organizations and other experts on wildlife trade. The Task Force was formed following the President’s July 2013 [Executive Order](#) on Combating Wildlife Trafficking.