

COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE
INTEROFFICE COMMUNICATION

DATE: September 18, 2019

TO: Supervisor Theodore Lipscomb, Sr., Chairman, County Board of Supervisors

FROM: Charles Wikenhauser, Director, Zoological Department

SUBJECT: A County Board Resolution in Support of a Ban on the Sale of Rhinoceros Horn and Elephant Ivory in Wisconsin

Request

The Milwaukee County Zoo (“Zoo”) Director requests the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors pass a resolution supporting a ban on the sale of rhinoceros horn and elephant ivory in Wisconsin.

Background

The Zoo’s Mission Statement begins:

The Milwaukee County Zoo will inspire public understanding, support, and participation in global conservation of animal species...

In service of this Mission, the Zoo’s collection includes species from seven continents, including African Elephants and Black Rhinoceros. The Zoo annually supports wildlife conservation organizations working to protect elephants and rhinoceros in their natural range.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service currently lists all species of elephant and rhinoceros as Threatened or Endangered. International trade in these species is restricted under the Convention in International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

Despite these protections, a threat to both elephants and rhinoceros is poaching for elephant tusk (ivory) and rhinoceros horn. Rhinoceros horn and elephant ivory are used for traditional medicines, jewelry, and ornamental objects; the markets for these items are lucrative and drive poaching activities in range countries.

Additionally, the international trade in poached rhinoceros horn and elephant ivory has been documented as funding militias and terrorist groups in Africa. Park guards have been killed by those hunting elephants and rhinoceros to illegally harvest ivory and rhinoceros horn.

In 2014, the United States released a National Strategy for Combating Wildlife Trafficking. One strategic priority of the strategy is: “reducing demand for illegally traded wildlife at home and abroad”; this can effectively be done by eliminating markets and profits for trafficked species.

To date, nine states (California, Hawaii, Illinois, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey,

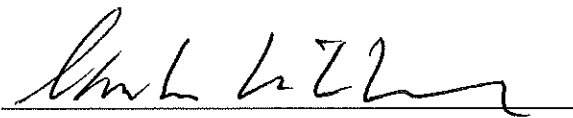
New York, Oregon, and Washington) have passed bans on the sale of rhinoceros horn and elephant ivory. A ban on the sale of rhinoceros horn and elephant ivory in Wisconsin could further reduce market forces driving poaching, and have an impact on threats faced by these animals.

As an institution continuously accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) for over 40 years, the Milwaukee County Zoo supports AZA efforts in partnership with the U.S. Wildlife Trafficking Alliance to reduce markets for rhinoceros horn and elephant ivory products.

The Zoo continues to educate the public on elephants and rhinoceros, and threats to their survival. In support of a ban on the sale of rhinoceros horn and elephant ivory in Wisconsin, the Milwaukee County Zoo has collected over 14,000 signatures to date.

Recommendation

The Zoo Director recommends the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors pass a resolution supporting a ban on the sale of rhinoceros horn and elephant ivory in Wisconsin.



Charles Wikenhauser, Director
Zoological Department

Attachments (2)

Fiscal Note
Resolution

cc: County Executive Chris Abele
Raisa Koltun, Chief of Staff, County Executive
Scott Manske, Comptroller
Supv. Jason Haas, Chair, Parks, Energy and Environmental Committee
Supv. Sheldon Wasserman, Vice-Chair, Parks, Energy and Environmental Comm.
Supv. James Schmitt, Chair, Finance and Audit Committee
Supv. Willie Johnson Jr., Vice-Chair, Finance and Audit Committee
Kelly Bablitch, Chief of Staff, County Board of Supervisors
Joseph Lamers, Director of Performance, Strategy & Budget, DAS
Steve Cady, Research and Policy Director, Comptroller's Office
Emily Petersen, Research Analyst, Comptroller's Office
Kelsey A. Evans, Parks, Energy and Environment Committee Coordinator
Shanin R. Brown, Finance and Audit Committee Coordinator
Mark Yatchak, Budget and Management Analyst, DAS
Vera Westphal, Deputy Zoo Director (Administration/Finance/Operations), Zoo
Gary Lunsford, Animal Health & Management Director, Zoo
Laura Pedriani, Marketing & Communications Director, Zoo
Kari Williams, Conservation, Research & Sustainability Coordinator, Zoo