

**African Wildlife Foundation • Animal Welfare Institute • Born Free USA
Defenders of Wildlife • Environmental Investigation Agency
Humane Society International • Humane Society of the United States
International Fund for Animal Welfare • The Jane Goodall Institute
Natural Resources Defense Council • Save The Elephants**

July 5, 2016

Director Dan Ashe
US Fish & Wildlife Service
1849 C St. NW, Room 3358
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Director Ashe,

On behalf of our millions of members and supporters in the United States and our millions more around the globe, we thank you for finalizing strong new restrictions on the U.S. domestic ivory trade. If combined with vigilant enforcement efforts, international diplomacy, and sustained public education, these regulations will significantly help to relieve the toll that poaching takes on African elephants.

We are particularly grateful to the many USFWS staff who have dedicated their time and resources to this complex project over the last three years. Throughout the process, the principles of transparency and inclusion were on full display, and we appreciate the lengths that these employees went to in reaching out to stakeholders inside and outside of the conservation and animal welfare communities.

U.S. leadership comes at a crucial time during preparations for the 17th Conference of the Parties of CITES. Especially considering the stated desire of several CITES parties to reopen the international ivory trade, the United States delegation must firmly advocate for a permanent closure to international trade and also for stronger domestic restrictions abroad. We are encouraged by the U.S. government's decision to raise this issue at the upcoming IUCN World Conservation Congress by leading a resolution to close domestic ivory markets. Only by concerted effort can the nations of the world solve this crisis once and for all. It is incumbent upon all of us—NGOs, governments, private citizens, and the corporate sector—to find ways to further protect this most indispensable of species, and the momentum generated by the new U.S. federal regulations and state laws can only help.

Again, our thanks to you and the entire Fish & Wildlife Service staff. We look forward to working with you to improve the outlooks for elephants—and for the thousands of other species imperiled by wildlife trafficking—in the years ahead.

Sincerely,

Azzedine Downes
President & CEO
International Fund for Animal Welfare

Patrick J. Bergin, Ph.D.
Chief Executive Officer
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