

MASSACRE



Report of Task Team
into Rhino poaching
in KwaZulu Natal

PART ONE

THE MAGNIFICENT BEAST



After the poachers...



RHINO POACHING REPORT

PART ONE

INTRODUCTION

Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife (EZEMVELO) an organisation whose predecessor, the Natal Parks Board, was acknowledged as a world leader in conservation, has become a shadow of its former self. The Natal Parks Board gained international recognition for its efforts under the leadership of the legendary Dr Ian Player in saving the white rhino from the brink of extinction in the 1960's. Ezemvelo in the recent past has been facing an unprecedented level of poaching of both the critically endangered black (*Diceros bicornis*) and the white (*Ceratotherium simum simum*) rhinos. Rhino poaching at its present levels could destroy the heritage for which the organisation is famous and the very species the organisation saved would again be under threat of extinction.

Rhinos are our Heritage

Our rhinos belong to every South African and to all future South Africans. Rhinos are a priceless and essential part of our national heritage symbolising our roots, history and way of life. South Africans have a joint responsibility of conserving our rhino, to ensure that this vital birth-right is passed safely to future generations of South Africans.

There can be no doubt that the surge in rhino poaching is driven by demand for rhino horn in countries like Vietnam and China where, as a result of growing economies and the resultant increase in wealth, rhino horn has become a sought after product. At the time of our research it was estimated that the value of the horn in these markets was as much as US \$60 000 a kilogram. This translates into more than R8 million for one mature horn in today's terms. A very tempting figure for any illegal operator. It is an

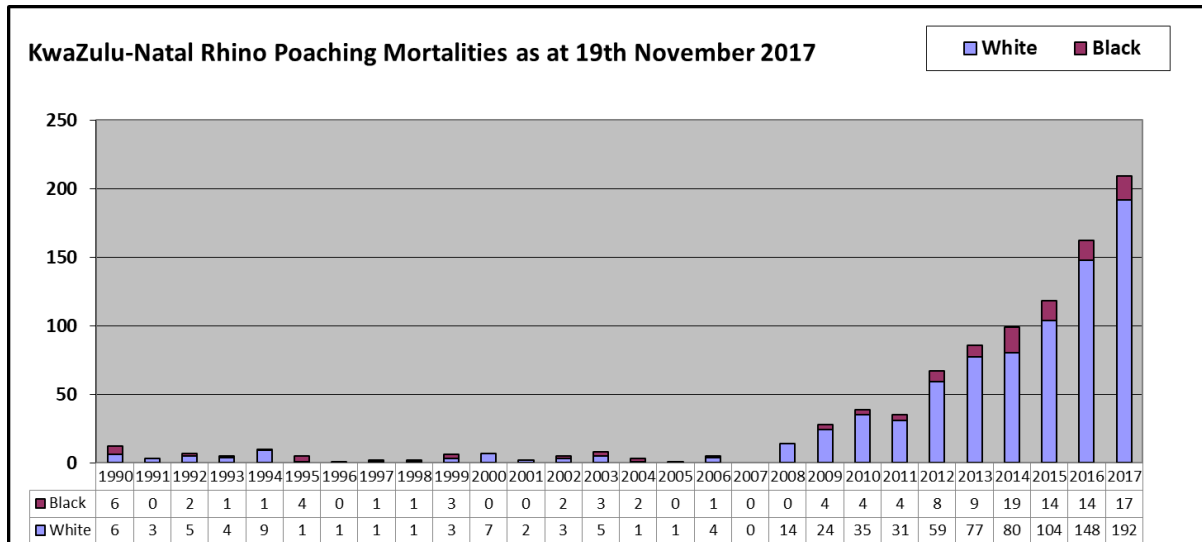
amount which can fund massive international poaching syndicates from top millionaire operators to poachers on the ground.

This demand has largely been fed by international crime syndicates whose operations in South Africa - and in KwaZulu Natal in particular - require every effort on the part of all law enforcement agencies if there is to be any hope of preventing the rhino population from being reduced to unsustainable levels. Therefore it is imperative that Ezemvelo becomes an efficient organisation whose resources are effectively used to thwart poaching operations. Also, the operations of all law enforcement agencies must be improved and co-ordinated significantly if there is to be any chance of properly countering this serious threat. It is also necessary that effective measures to counter corruption at all levels within the organisation and in the broader law enforcement community be deployed and the highest standard of ethics be required by all participants in the anti-poaching drive.

Poaching syndicates thrive in situations where the criminal justice system is compromised or not functioning at optimal levels; where wildlife management is weak and disorganized and where levels of corruption are high. In KwaZulu-Natal, our reserves are surrounded by impoverished underdeveloped communities, adding to the ease at which poachers can tempt community members residing near our parks to participate in their devious schemes.

The success of these syndicates relies on their ability to easily adapt to the changing circumstances quickly, it is therefore essential that all anti-poaching agencies are similarly flexible to meet these ever changing strategies and tactics.

Despite the efforts on the part of both the public and private sectors, rhino poaching continues to escalate with the epicentres oscillating in the main between the Kruger National Park and Kwa Zulu Natal, particularly the Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park (HIP).



The Provincial Executive Council resolved to appoint an Anti-Rhino Poaching Task Team in September 2016 comprising the following officials:

1. A representative from Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife;
2. A representative from the South African Police Services;
3. A representative from the Directorate of Public Prosecutions;
4. A representative from the Office of the Premier;
5. A representative from the State Security Services;
6. An international Policing Expert;
7. A legal expert from the Ian Player Foundation.

Unfortunately, for reasons unknown, little support was given by the South African Police Services and the State Security Services, whose representatives were withdrawn at an early stage. No support was received from the Directorate of Public Prosecutions. This contributed to a significant delay in the remaining members finalising this report as the workload had to be undertaken by fewer members.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

The following terms of reference were given to the Task Team:-

- a full assessment of the current measures and capacities of the anti-rhino poaching initiatives in the Province with reference to best practices in other provinces, particularly the Kruger National Park;
- an assessment of the criminal justice processes in relation to poaching incidents at all levels;
- an assessment of the sustainability of provincial human and logistical resources currently deployed.

After performing these assessments the Task Team was required to provide a report with recommendations.

Historic approach to conservation:

Summary of the Reserve structures

As far as law enforcement is concerned, the game reserves which fall under the control of Ezemvelo are still structured on roughly the same lines as they were more than 60 years ago.

A reserve will generally be managed by a Conservation Manager and, depending on its size, will be divided up into sections, each managed by a Section Ranger. Each section will have a certain number of pickets or guard camps of a permanent nature positioned at strategic points within the reserves. These camps will be occupied by Field Rangers under the command of a Corporal and Lance Corporal who will in turn report to the Section Ranger. A Staff Sergeant is in overall command of all Field Rangers in his reserve and is responsible for their wellbeing and discipline. He will report to the Conservation Manager.

The Section Ranger will task the Field Rangers with their duties, including the need to conduct patrols from the pickets.

The role of these patrols is twofold - to carry out much needed biodiversity monitoring in order that this important information can be made available to the ecologists so that they can plan accordingly, as well as to serve as a deterrent to poachers.

The boundary fence is patrolled by Fence Liners employed to check for broken fences and to fix them. They will also report on any signs of animals exiting the park as well as any incursions by humans

In addition to these patrols, law enforcement is also carried out by an Anti-Poaching Unit which generally consists of a Corporal and three members stationed in the Reserve whose primary role is law enforcement. This unit will be deployed in areas of the Reserve according to operational requirements.

A Wildlife Crime Investigation Unit, consisting of three members, is available to carry out intelligence gathering exercises to prevent and investigate wildlife crimes. These members are not stationed at any one reserve and are required to travel to where their services may be required.

Support functions such as Human Resources and Procurement are generally run from Head Office in Pietermaritzburg.

The boundaries of the Reserves are generally fenced with 2,4 metre game proof fencing designed to keep animals in the Reserve rather than to keep humans out. As such it is easily climbed over or crawled under.

These fences are interspersed with gates allowing access to park managers and outside communities or for allowing staff from outside adjoining communities to enter the reserve.

The recent surge in rhino poaching has led to fundamental shifts in priorities, particularly in the work of rangers and section heads in the reserves. As poachers are well armed and organised, rangers have had to adapt to meet this threat. In consequence their roles have had to become more militaristic. In many respects rhino poaching has forced management to adopt intelligence based counter-insurgency tactics to combat poaching

which has involved rangers performing duties akin to those of soldiers. The result is that less time is available for conservation based activities.

Recent and current adaptations to meet the poaching threat

During 2017 and 2018 adaptations were made to combat poaching which included the appointment of a Rhino Security manager and supporting staff in addition to the traditional structures. The Rhino Security Manager, while based in Durban, was appointed to manage and co-ordinate all rhino poaching matters. He travels extensively and liaises with all other agencies including the South African Police Services and various other bodies which contribute to the anti-poaching activities in the province. In particular he has been responsible for developing a close relationship with anti-poaching authorities in Kruger National Park (KNP), which has developed a more appropriate national strategy as opposed to analysing the problem from a restricted provincial perspective. This approach was regarded by the Task Team as a very positive development especially in countering poachers moving from one province to another. It has facilitated the sharing of intelligence and support between provincial structures in operations. In the main the Rhino Security Manager is supported by a very effective intelligence analyst who has co-ordinated a wide range of intelligence used as a basis for operations on the ground in this province and elsewhere. A Rhino Security Co-Ordinator based at Hluhluwe is also part of this team.

The Rhino Security Manager had no control or command over other resources deployed on the ground, and in particular had no authority over any staff in the Reserves. The Task Team felt that this appointment made significant improvements to rhino security and anti-poaching activities and in particular the co-ordination with other agencies. This resulted in poaching being viewed from a broader perspective and which led, for example, to far more appropriate operations in Kruger National Park and KZN reserves. The Task team supports this broader perspective and encourages the increase of co-operation between all provincial authorities involved in anti-poaching activities, particularly between SanParks and Ezemvelo.

The Rhino Security manager and his team were important to the creation and development of a Nerve Centre as detailed below.

Nerve Centre

A very important and major recent development has been that of the Nerve Centre which has become the focus of all anti-poaching activities in the organisation. Standard operating procedures are co-ordinated through the Nerve Centre which deals with intelligence, communications, reactions, planned movements, crime scene support emergency response and other necessary activities. The CMore communication software is particularly impressive for its capacity to log and co-ordinate all incidents and activities and particularly in regard to its linkages with other areas and provinces. The Nerve Centre provides an impressive example of the level of sophistication required to successfully deal with the poaching scourge.

Static Picket system.

Operationally the Reserves are manned by various pickets / guard camps situated at various strategic places on the periphery of the reserve. These were developed according to strategic plans developed during the 1960's to guard against incursions by wild meat poachers. The static nature of these pickets results in poachers being able to avoid the areas where static pickets are placed. One of our recommendations is that consideration be given to clandestine roving patrols to ensure poachers are not aware of the whereabouts of any particular patrol at any time.

With the current onslaught of rhino poaching by sophisticated gangs of poachers that rely on speed and stealth to get in and out of the reserve in minimal time, the use of these static pickets / guard camps can no longer be the only manner relied upon by rangers to combat poachers.

Internal Investigations

We were advised that Ezemvelo has its own internal Wildlife Crime Investigation Team, however Rangers that we interviewed reported that they had no interaction with this team, and as such could not express any opinion or sense of confidence in them. This lack of co-ordination appeared to us to be a major gap in anti-poaching efforts.

It would appear that although these members are supposed to be an investigation team no evidence was presented to us that they were involved in actual investigations. It would appear from our interviews that they fulfil more of an intelligence gathering role. Although this is clearly an important function, it is concerning that there does not appear to be any dedicated and experienced investigator.

Of particular concern is that the most qualified and experienced investigator was withdrawn from rhino crime investigations and is now based in the Ukhahlamba Region. In the light of the poaching crisis it would be common sense for the most experienced and competent investigator to be deployed where his skills would be of most benefit.

At Kruger, SAN Parks deploy a full time forensic investigator who has all the necessary forensic equipment in a mobile trailer specially adapted for purpose, and who is deployed at every poaching site to gather forensic evidence, so vital to the proper investigation and prosecution of poachers. This approach enables the investigator to develop a keen knowledge of the various scenes with the result that he is able to provide vital intelligence to the prosecution authorities with whom he relates closely and frequently.

Manpower shortages

There is still a chronic shortage of operational manpower, which severely impacts the efficacy of other efforts. Due to the shortage of manpower, reserves are unable to request and utilise staff from other reserves and unless there is a special operation, they must take steps to protect themselves. This has the added unfortunate effect that staff have little chance of exchanging ideas and benefitting from the experience of their colleagues who are operating in different reserves. Also reserve managers, tend to operate independently and there is very little co-ordination between them. This leads to a lack of consistency regarding rhino conservation within the organisation as a whole and in the various reserves. Furthermore it was reported to us that Park Managers are not being held sufficiently accountable for failures to implement policy and in particular the Ezemvelo Rhino Security Intervention Plan. This document clearly sets out the basic fundamentals of rhino security and the implementation of this plan would serve to enhance necessary consistency.

Recommendations for changes required in internal EZEMVELO structures to combat poaching.

In response to the surge in poaching, anti-poaching structures must be continually assessed and appraised for effectiveness. So too is it necessary to increase resources to meet the threat. The Task Team makes the following recommendations involving a restructuring and expansion of internal resources directed at combatting the poaching threat. We are alive to the fact that there are severe budgetary constraints facing the organisation, but believed it prudent to describe what we consider to be a minimum effective pool of resources to manage the poaching threat effectively in the province. Poachers' activities resemble low intensity warfare, and to counter this, anti-poaching structures must be bolstered with counter insurgency capabilities.

The Task Team also believes that should tourism facilities be upgraded and / or outsourced successfully, a significant funding stream could come on line which could be utilised for the extra resources needed in regard to financing our proposals. This would have the additional indirect effect of benefitting neighbouring communities by the fact that the tourism revenue generated can be utilised for poverty alleviation and job opportunities for communities, providing long term tangible benefits for communities.

Intelligence

It is necessary for Ezemvelo to expand its own investigative and intelligence capacity into all aspects of rhino poaching so that it is in a position to support police and prosecutors to the best extent possible. Due to the fact that rhino poachers are operating across the country attacking reserves in different provinces as and when the opportunity presents itself, they have been able to take advantage of the jurisdictional gap between SAN Parks and the various Provincial Conservation Bodies including and particularly EZEMVELO. In the circumstances it is essential that the co-operation

developed by the previous Rhino Security Manager and his counterparts at SAN Parks be increased and formalised. In particular intelligence must be shared and, where appropriate, joint operations must be conducted.

It is proposed that the co-operation be such that SAN Parks Protected Areas and Ezemvelo be regarded as one operational area for anti-poaching activities and that all intelligence, investigation and tactical operations be co-ordinated through a central Combined Operations Centre (COMOPS) that can co-ordinate information and activities nationwide to ensure better use of intelligence and resources. COMOPS would not only involve State entities but would include Private Rhino Owner bodies and private security contractors, with due regard to security and intelligence protections and clearances.

As Rhino poaching syndicates operate on an organised national level, it is necessary for anti-poaching activities to also be co-ordinated at a national level to adequately meet the threat.

Our investigations clearly indicate that the same poachers who operate at Kruger National Park also migrate to KZN and even as far as the Eastern Cape and private reserves (e.g. :“the Darting Gang”) when circumstances are favourable for them to do so, or when operations at KNP are such as to make it too difficult for them to operate there. It is thus necessary to have close co-operation between SAN Parks and Ezemvelo and other reserves nationally in regard to the operations of these poachers. For example as soon as intelligence is received that poachers are leaving the Kruger National Park this information is received by COMOPS which will cause units to be deployed appropriately in KZN or wherever intelligence dictates. We can comment in this regard that it was due to the intelligence received by Eastern Cape authorities from the EZEMVELO Rhino Security Management Team that led to the arrest and successful prosecution of poachers in the Eastern Cape.

Co-operation in this regard would enable a data base to be assembled that would benefit all parties involved in the protection of rhino including both State and Private sectors, provided strict security protocols are adhered to.

It would also be beneficial for SAN Parks and Ezemvelo to share resources deployed against poachers in actual operations and for training purposes. Where necessary members from either entity could be deployed within the jurisdiction of the other on a temporary basis when operational needs so require.

Law Enforcement

The Task Team was adamant that Security and Law Enforcement are very different disciplines and this should be reflected in structures directed at anti-poaching operations. We have proposed recommendations which reflect this divergence. Those responsible for Law Enforcement should have different and separate responsibilities from those who are responsible for security. The convergence of these responsibilities, in our view, should only be at the level of CEOs, in that the top senior managers responsible for Law Enforcement and those responsible for Security should report directly to the CEO. It is imperative, in our view, that these two disciplines remain separate.

It is proposed that Law Enforcement structures be based on two levels of operation firstly at a Regional Level and secondly at HIP.

We have recommended two distinct teams in order to ensure capacity to adequately react to simultaneous poaching incidents in different areas. It may be that one expanded Law Enforcement Team may prove sufficient, depending on the frequency of incidents. However this team would ideally deploy for at least 4 months at a time to ensure continuity. Our concern, however, remains that this is a very stressful occupation and personnel must not be subject to excessive periods performing such a dangerous role without adequate time off for rest and stress relief. Clearly this is not the case presently.

Law Enforcement at regional level will be directed at all operations outside of HIP to supplement anti-poaching activities in all parks. This will need a similarly dedicated component from the SAPS and the State Security Agency (SSA) to effectively supplement this activity. Failing which the Regional Law Enforcement Team will have to be supplemented by additional resources to combat poaching in this vast area. Law

Enforcement operations at HIP will have the objective of conducting anti-poaching activities within HIP and in the immediate vicinity of the boundaries of HIP. In times of necessity these could be supplemented by regional resources. A clear distinction of resources for each team has to be made. Failure will lead to confusion and make it difficult to plan operations as, for example, who will take priority and who gets to decide what a priority is. Given the frequency of incidents and the fact that it is not uncommon for simultaneous incursions to take place, in all likelihood there will be a simultaneous demand for the use of resources on a frequent basis.

In both instances it is imperative that the teams we recommend for these operations have clearly defined objectives and accountability as defined within the various Standard Operating Procedures and Intervention and Strategy Plans for dealing with law enforcement at Ezemvelo. So too must they be resourced adequately as set out below.

Our recommendations are made in regard to what we deem would be adequate human resources, which would ensure that there are sufficient members to allow for simultaneous deployments necessary for clandestine patrols, vehicle check points, search and seizure operations, disruptive operations, arresting suspects, reacting to incursions and follow up operations. The recommendations have taken into account our serious concern in regard to the wellbeing of members as we found that the demands made of current human resources deployed in anti-poaching activities are excessive. Too few people are deployed in dangerous situations for far too long with inadequate time off and too little rest. While we are not medical experts, it seemed to us that certain members were already showing signs of post-traumatic stress due to the excessive demands being made on them. This could result in adverse legal consequences if not addressed. Rest and recuperation periods cannot be compromised and consequently the human resources must be such that allow for operations to continue while certain members are resting or are absent on leave.

It is imperative that the Law Enforcement Teams be utilised exclusively for anti-poaching activities and not as a spare resource to supplement other staff inadequacies. It is important that the command and control structure be carefully considered and then

communicated effectively to all stakeholders such as SAPS, SSA, Private Reserves and the Private Security Sector involved in rhino operations. Our recommendations also take into account the different geographical situation in regard to Ezemvelo Parks and specifically how they differ from Kruger National Park. HIP, for example, is relatively small in comparison to Kruger, poachers therefore spend much less time in the Park - only hours as opposed to the days they spend in Kruger. It is therefore essential to deploy operatives with rapidity to have any chance of preventing a kill. With regard to the other reserves in KZN a tactical team would need to be deployed by air from a central area, but would also need to be deployed with speed. In KZN, in order to prevent kills, time is of the essence. Tactics must be developed where rangers are deployed in a much shorter period than currently is the case. It is essential that air support and deployment by helicopter is available at all times, day and night, given the short time poachers take to reach their prey.

The focus should be on preventative measures, as in most cases in KZN once an incursion is detected there is often too little time to prevent the poachers from killing the rhino. While the poacher may be caught later, the damage is already done. While every arrest and conviction is important, the prosecution of poachers after they have killed an animal creates a false sense of achievement in operational objectives.

In reality it is a failure, as the rhino is dead!

Poachers must be intercepted before they are able to kill the animal. It is therefore critical that intelligence based operations ensure poachers are arrested before they enter a reserve. There are a wide range of charges that may be appropriate on arrest even before a poacher has accomplished his mission. These range from the lesser crimes of trespass, through to more serious crimes for such as being in the unlawful possession of firearms and even possibly a range of crimes under the Prevention of Corruption Act. Here, the prosecutors attached to the units would be invaluable in regard to “throwing the book” at poachers caught in these circumstances.

It is recommended that these Law Enforcement Teams would be supported by an Investigation Team as detailed below.

It is also recommended that these teams would be supported by the Aerial and K9 units which, it is recommended, are required to be on standby and be part of both the Regional and HIP Law Enforcement Teams. The HIP team must be based in close proximity of the Nerve Centre to ensure rapid response. The Regional Team should be based, in our view, at Hluhluwe Airfield, to ensure fast deployment to reserves in northern KZN.

Recommended Regional Law Enforcement Team

- Regional Law Enforcement Manager (REM), i.e. person from a conservation background with significant long term experience in field operations and qualified as an Environmental Management Inspector (EMI).
- The REM would report to the CEO.
- The REM would manage a dedicated Law Enforcement Team of 16 members, 8 drawn from Ezemvelo, each of whom must be qualified EMI's and 8 drawn from the SAPS who must have tactical experience. It is recommended that the SAPS members should be placed on long term secondment, as opposed to the current short term posting.
- Administrative support including a logistics officer and a secretary. It would be an added bonus if this person could also assist in intelligence gathering and organisation in support of the other intelligence resources recommended.

The objective is to operate in all reserves as and when required and outside reserves in protected areas in Northern KwaZulu-Natal in order to carry anti-poaching and disruptive operations. Operations would be based on intelligence from received from various park managers by the Nerve Centre and / or the Intelligence Co-Ordinating Committee (ICC), an existing intelligence committee incorporating most intelligence agencies including police intelligence and State Security Services.

Initially this team could be based at the Nerve Centre at HIP and be ready to be deployed as a reaction force to react at short notice to any poaching incident in all areas outside HIP. (As indicated above, it would be ideal if eventually, this team could be

based at Hluhluwe Airfield.) It is recommended that portion of this team be deployed on standby 24 hours a day and 7 days a week to ensure very short reaction time to poaching incidents.

Should a Park Manager require deployment in his or her park he or she would make a request to the Nerve Centre who in turn would contact the REM who would decide on the deployment and authorise the regional team accordingly,. The REM would assume control of the operation.

All members of this team must be subjected to integrity testing every 3 months or as and when circumstances require.

Recommended Law Enforcement Team HIP

We recommend the following structure for HIP, because it holds the major gene pool of both Black and White Rhino in KZN.

- Law Enforcement Manager (LEM), i.e. person from a conservation background with significant long term experience in conservation, field operations and qualified as an Environmental Management Inspector (EMI).
- This LEM would report to the HIP Park Manager;
- The LEM would manage a dedicated Law Enforcement Team (LET) of 16 members, 8 drawn from Ezemvelo, each of whom must be qualified EMI's and 8 drawn from SAPS who must have tactical experience. It is recommended that the SAPS members should be placed on long term secondment, as opposed to the current short term posting.

The Law Enforcement Team is essentially a specialised ranger force to be used for anti-poaching activities and other law enforcement purposes within HIP and in the immediate adjacent areas to HIP. The LET will be deployed to assist any Section Ranger requiring operational assistance with anti-poaching activities, for example incursions by poachers and disruptive anti-poaching operations. This would be

requested by a Section Ranger to the Park Manager who would advise the Law Enforcement Manager accordingly and then assume control of the operation.

It is recommended that the Park Manager would give instructions to deploy the Law Enforcement Team through the Law Enforcement Manager as and when required and in addition be empowered to declare a portion of the park “frozen” in which event only persons specifically authorised by the Park Manager will be allowed to enter that area. All other persons including the Section Ranger for that area, will be required to withdraw. This will enable the Park Manager to deploy the Law Enforcement Team into that area on a clandestine basis. In such event the LEM will be in control of the operation.

Section Rangers will continue to report to their respective Conservation Manager who in turn will report to the Park Manager in all matters both in respect of biological duties and law enforcement.

The role of the current Conservation Managers would remain except in so far as they would provide support to the Law Enforcement Teams as and when necessary.

This team we recommend should also be based at or in close proximity to the Nerve Centre which allows for quick reaction to either Hluhluwe or iMfolozi sections of the reserve.

All members must be subjected to integrity testing every 3 months or as and when circumstances dictate.

In relation to both teams we recommend that the LET be broken up into sub units of 4 members each:-

- A reaction teams of 4 members to be on standby at the Nerve Centre during the day;
- a reaction team of 4 members to be on standby at the Nerve Centre during the night;

This would ensure immediate reaction to poaching incidents for 24 hours a day 7 days a week.

- 4 members would be used for tactical intelligence driven operations which would include, static patrols, vehicle searches, operations on the Corridor road, follow ups of intelligence outside parks, disruptive operations, executing warrants of arrest, search and seizure operations etc.;
- 4 members on rotational leave.

A policy needs to be devised that ensures that any person who fails integrity testing must immediately be withdrawn from all positions relating to law enforcement and to ensure that appropriate disciplinary steps are instituted.

Ideally the structure of these law enforcement teams, with appropriate adjustments, could be replicated in other reserves.

Investigation Team

It is proposed that an investigative unit be established and tasked with dealing with all rhino poaching cases from the initial stage, i.e. attending the crime scene right through to attending at court and closely co-operating with police investigations with a view to ensuring successful prosecutions. We recommend that included in this team are:-

- a forensic specialist with all necessary equipment to facilitate thorough crime scene data collection. This, we saw, constituted a very successful best practice at Kruger National Park where, according to a dedicated Prosecutor, the properly equipped specialist crime scene expert procured essential evidence which enhanced the chances of successful prosecutions immeasurably;
- 2 specialist wildlife crime investigators trained and competent to follow leads and intelligence and to take statements;
- a criminal law expert to direct investigations and to liaise with police and prosecutorial staff with a view to improving the prospects of successful

- prosecutions. This person could be seconded from the National Prosecuting Authority or be a legal practitioner with significant criminal trial experience;
- 2 Intelligence operatives;
 - 2 Information analysts. One of these would be the current Wildlife Crime Data Analyst who would be based at the Nerve Centre and be responsible for:
 - collecting and analysing all data relating to wildlife crime;
 - liaising with all role players and particularly the ICC;
 - analysing trends in relation to poaching;
 - compiling reports for circulation to management.

The main objective of this Specialist Team is to provide a supportive role to the Law Enforcement Teams in all anti-poaching activities with the intention of preventing and reducing levels of poaching through intelligence driven operations, providing specialist advice and assistance to investigations and increasing the prospects of successful prosecutions.

All members must be subject to integrity testing every three months.

This Team, we recommend, should report to the Regional law Enforcement Manager.

Senior Manager Security Services

We recommend the appointment of a Senior Manager Security Services, whose main function would be to co-ordinate security for all the reserves in the province. This incumbent should be employed on the basis of extensive experience in security and would not require conservation skills. It is important to note that security in this regard is only as set out below and does not include anything related to law enforcement relating to the reserves which traditionally has fallen under conservation management. It is envisaged that the incumbent would report directly to the CEO. This role must be kept separate from Law Enforcement.

This person would be responsible for the following :-

- Every aspect of access control to all parks in the province, including gate control traffic control, vehicle checks and vehicle check points, road blocks etc.;
- Integrity testing;
- Control of firearms which are brought into the various parks by any visitor or non-EZEMVELO employee;
- Security checks on the corridor road and areas adjacent to all parks;
- Investigations into staff suspected of involvement in poaching or any other illegal activity;
- Building relationships with other organisations including the SAPS, State Security Agency and other reserves including SAN Parks and private reserves regarding best practices around access control and security generally;
- Control of outside contractors workers or safari operators etc.;
- Enforcement of and/or investigation of failures of any protocols with reference to security related matters in all protected areas (excluding law enforcement matters falling within jurisdiction of LEM or REM.)

Helicopters and air support:

An integral part of anti-poaching operations is the use of helicopters which are used to deploy rangers in an attempt to prevent poachers from reaching their targets and also to deploy rangers to crime scenes. Helicopters are a vital resource necessary to deploy personnel as quickly as possible to remote areas. The helicopters are currently based at Mpila in iMfolozi and Hilltop camp in Hluhluwe.



In the event of an incursion in iMfolozi the helicopter has to fly from Mpila to uplift Field Rangers at the various guard camps and then drop them off to follow up in tracking the poachers. This, we were told, would take on average as long as 40 minutes before for

the field rangers were deployed on the ground to commence tracking the poachers. The helicopter then needs to return to Mpila to collect the dogs and their handlers. This means that before the dogs are dropped on the spoor to start tracking more than an hour has passed which is a major disadvantage to successfully capturing the poachers and, more importantly, from preventing poachers making their the kill.

Another major and important disadvantage which has only been rectified recently is that the helicopters did not have night flying capabilities. It is well known that most poaching activities happen at night, it is therefore essential that helicopters are equipped to operate at night. If not, their use will be largely limited to deploying rangers to a scene where the kill has already occurred.

It was also noted with concern that due to the change of companies procured for helicopter services, experienced pilots who had an intimate knowledge of the terrain were changed for new pilots who would have to gain the necessary experience. This intimate knowledge of the terrain is an advantage for anti-poaching activities, and it clearly serves to reduce deployment delays. Serious consideration should always be given to ensure that experience is not lost in anti-poaching operations.

The use of a fixed wing Bat Hawk for patrolling and aerial surveillance provided an additional crucial asset. This however was limited to one aircraft, a major disadvantage in circumstances where the vast areas required to be covered. More than one fixed wing aircraft would be an added advantage.

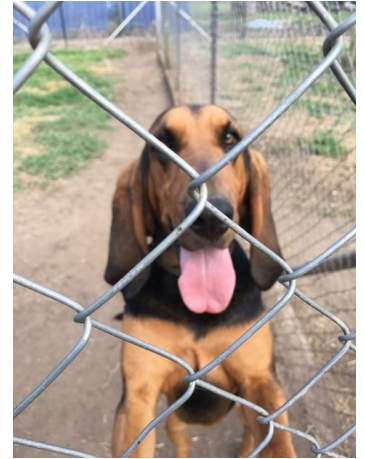
Recommendations:-

- The importance of air support is such that these operations should not be interrupted because of tender complications.
- An assessment on the number of aircraft required to facilitate immediate deployment is required.
- The aerial wing should be based at the Nerve Centre. This requires that the current helicopter hanger at Mpila must be relocated to an area adjacent to the Nerve Centre. This would facilitate fast deployment.

- Pilots with experience and knowledge of the operational areas should as far as possible be retained.

Canine Deployment:

At Kruger dogs were an essential tool which were constantly used in tracking poachers and preventing poachers from succeeding in their quest. They proved to be able to track poachers extremely quickly and enhanced any human efforts. So too were dogs utilised as “sniffers” at the various entry points to the reserves and were regarded as a very successful tool in the prevention of any contraband entering or leaving the reserve.



At the time of our investigations dogs were present in the reserve as a result of a generous benefactor’s intervention. However we were disappointed to find

that at this stage they were completely under-utilised. There was no evidence of sniffer dogs at any gates, the only dogs we saw were tracker dogs in their kennels at Mplia. The K9 Unit was in its infancy at that stage.



There are many uses for dogs in the anti-poaching field. They can be successfully used to patrol fence lines. If deployed quickly, tracker dogs can prevent a poacher from reaching his target. In any event by increasing the amount and visibility of dogs, both tracker and sniffer would serve as a deterrence factor.

Recommendations:-

- Sniffer dogs should be deployed at access points to assist in searching of all vehicles entering the parks.
- The current use of dogs in hot pursuit operations, and other anti-poaching activities should be expanded.
- K9 members with dogs should be available close to the Nerve Centre so as to facilitate fast deployment as and when required. They must be deployed with

reaction teams and be subject to the same management and control as reaction teams during operations.

Roving Ranger

It is recommended that a Roving Ranger be introduced to supplement static patrols and as such to be deployed on the instruction of the Park Manager based on intelligence. These resources could also be used as a backup for other section rangers when, for whatever reason, they are unable to perform their duties.

OTHER ORGANISATIONAL ISSUES WHICH ADVERESLY AFFECT ANTI-POACHING INITIATIVES:

Leadership:-

During the investigations of the Task Team it was evident that challenges in leadership and management had a direct impact on the efficacy of anti-rhino poaching activities. Poor management practices has led to a breakdown of morale in the organization, this being felt acutely by rangers on the ground who are the mainstay of anti-poaching activities within the boundaries of the various parks.

The Board and Senior Management:

The strategic leadership of Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife is vested in the Board which is appointed in terms of the KwaZulu Natal Nature Conservation Management Act, Act 9 of 1997. It is a requirement of section 4 (8) of the Act that Board members must have “an interest in nature conservation.” It was the feeling of the Task Team that not enough weight was given to this requirement when appointments were made to the Board. The

Chief Executive Officer reported to the Task Team that members of the Board lacked sufficient understanding of conservation matters. Obviously a Board that is vested in giving strategic direction to the organisation as a whole, should contain the necessary expertise in cutting edge international best practices so as to direct and guide the organisation appropriately. In the past, the Board has contained conservation activists - persons with a deep commitment to conservation, they served on the Board for this purpose and the remuneration they received was minimal and incidental. The statutory requirement of “interest in conservation” should be interpreted, in the view of the Task team, to ensure all appointees to the Board have a deep interest and a detailed knowledge and expertise of the complexities of conservation issues.

The CEO also indicated that the working relationship between him and the Board was poor, causing adverse consequences to the wellbeing of the organisation generally. One of the complaints of the CEO, echoed by various levels of management, was that certain Board members frequently meddled in operational activities, by becoming involved in the day to day management of the organisation and directly interfering with the work of the CEO and management. At the time of drafting this report we were advised that such meddling continues. Boards are there to give strategic direction and are clearly not mandated to become involved in operational matters.

A startling example of the Board exceeding its mandate was its involvement in a potential agreement between The Royal Rhino and Elephant Reserves of Southern Africa (Pty) Ltd. Effectively, this agreement would have outsourced nature conservation in the KZN reserves to the abovementioned corporation, the Board would have abdicated its statutory obligations to protect and manage protected areas within the province, to a private company with vested financial interests. This process got as far as agreements being signed, but fortunately it was stopped by the urgent intervention of the then responsible MEC after he considered a report on the matter received from the Ian Player Magqubu Ntombela Foundation. In current parlance this agreement would have led to “State Capture” in that the State’s responsibilities would have been ceded to a private organisation for financial gain.

Another Board over-reach reported to the Task Team included certain board members with vested interests in employment issues, apparently attempting to fill scarce ranger posts with military veterans, who had little or no conservation experience or qualifications. The impact of this endeavour reportedly delayed the filling of these critical posts for a significant period, delaying much needed “feet on the ground” personnel necessary to address the increasing poaching activities.

Another complaint from the then CEO was that the Board met too frequently and ran up excessive expenditure unnecessarily. He reported that in a period of six months the Board had 40 meetings. If correct, this appeared to the task Team as excessive particularly in the light of the need to reduce costs and the cost cutting measures taken by the province.

This unhealthy state of affairs, in our view, did not only weaken the organization, but it indirectly caused a breakdown in senior leadership morale thus adversely affecting all programmes including the anti-rhino poaching initiatives.

Other leadership challenges involved the concentration of senior staff at head office in Pietermaritzburg who would be responsible for all procurement and other major decisions. This, employees in the field reported, resulted in a lack of concern for the needs of staff stationed in the reserves. Nowhere did this issue become more apparent than in our interviews with rangers on the ground who are the mainstay in the fight against poachers, and whose needs, they reported, were largely ignored by head office. The needs of rangers on the ground for such basic items as uniforms were either not being processed for excessive periods or not at all by the units stationed at Head Office. It was startling for the team to receive reports that Head Office, failed to supply uniforms forcing rangers to approach other organisations to assist in this regard. There were reports from the ground that procurement processes were not open and transparent and neither did they conform to legislative prescripts. In our view these procurement processes in the organisation should be the subject of further scrutiny. This being beyond our mandate except to mention that they had and continue to have obvious negative consequences for rangers who felt unsupported and whose morale was adversely affected by a perceived lack of concern by management. In fact such issues

contributed directly to the lowering of morale in the organisation generally, this obviously having an undesirable impact on the anti-rhino poaching battle.

A further example was tardy processes undertaken to fill the approximately 60 rhino related vacant posts which were urgently required to be filled. These posts were not filled for unacceptably long periods, management seemingly oblivious to the urgency of these posts required to assist in the fight against poaching.

Recommendations

- Board members must not become involved in operational issues.
- The statutory requirement of “interest in conservation” must be demonstrated by any aspiring board member before appointment.

- Any conflict between the CEO and the Board must be identified and managed immediately.
- It is recommended that Board appointments are processed through a panel of



The Rhino Orphanage

experts in wildlife and related conservation issues who would make recommendations to the MEC for appointment.

The remuneration of Board members for meetings should be reassessed with a view to reducing costs. It being noted that previous board members served in an honorary capacity without any expectation of remuneration.

Severe Budget Cuts

The sudden mid-term cutting of the operational budget for all reserves, the flagship Hluhluwe iMfolozi included, by some 20% in one financial year had the effect of adversely affecting the anti-poaching initiatives in circumstances where the reserves were under unprecedented threat. This had disastrous consequences making it virtually impossible for staff to carry out their work in an effective manner. Budget concerns have also resulted in an extraordinary amount of critical posts remaining vacant. This has caused field staff, which patrol in dangerous conditions to double up on duties and reduce rest periods. A number of staff whom we interviewed appeared to be showing signs of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder directly as a result of the long hours they were obliged to work in extremely stressful situations.

While the Task Team fully understands that the Provincial Government was required to undertake severe cost cutting measures, it remains questionable as to why cuts were made at a time when a crisis in poaching was being experienced, and by all accounts more staff and funding was necessary.

The question was also asked as to why, in such circumstances, a consideration could not be given to deploying staff from Head Office in Pietermaritzburg to the various parks or reducing staff and costs at Head Office to assist in dealing with the crisis on the ground. It appears that serious consideration should be given to increasing staff deployment at reserves and reducing those currently stationed at Head Office. This would assist in alleviating staff shortages at reserves, particularly in circumstances where relocated staff could assist in taking over the administrative responsibilities of operational staff.

The cost cutting measures have resulted in the Premier having to authorise the filling of vacant posts, however it is clear additional posts for anti-rhino poaching operations need to be approved, particularly to address the shortage of rangers and other security personnel necessary to combat the poaching surge. It may be, as claimed by some, that these costs could be offset by less staff being deployed at Head Office. At the least a staff rationalisation assessment should be conducted with a view to staffing the organisation appropriately to face the current threat.

Recommendations:-

Ezemvelo Board and senior management need to be consulted on all budget cuts affecting the organisation prior to the budget cuts being effected.

Degradation of tourism facilities

It was apparent to the Task Team on its visits to the reserves that the standard of tourism facilities had dropped significantly. In the Hilltops Resort, maintenance issues on buildings were the subject of frequent complaints by international tourists. Clearly the chalets had been neglected and not satisfactorily maintained. So too, in the view of the Task Team, were the catering facilities not up to the standard required to attract international tourists. Even for locals the experience would be considered disappointing. Another startling fact was the difficulty one had when trying to phone the Head Office booking line to make a booking. There were long delays before calls were answered and, in some instances, calls were not answered at all. When this is compared to the high standards of private resorts one can only expect the number of tourists, both domestic and international, to decline. The wildlife experience in these reserves is a major international attraction. If tourist facilities were enhanced and upgraded the resulting revenue stream would be significantly improved resulting in less reliance on

the provincial fiscus for financial sustainability. This in turn could generate significant funds required for the anti-poaching initiatives.

Reports were made to the Task Team regarding plans to commercialise certain facilities. The Task Team supports these initiatives on the basis that such plans do not compromise control over and impact on conservation activities and on the basis of the dire need to improve tourist facilities in all reserves. Currently the tourist facilities are simply not good enough. On our visit to Kruger National Park, we noted that various food / restaurant franchises had been given permission to operate at Skukusa Camp. These appeared to be very successful and popular and importantly provided goods and services far superior to those available in KZN flagship reserves.

Recommendations

- Serious consideration should be given to outsourcing and/or the commercialisation of tourist facilities, both accommodation and catering.
- At the very least all these facilities need considerable upgrades. The standard of the newer facilities at iSimangaliso Wetland Park could serve as an aspirational standard.
- Neighbouring communities should be offered financial partnership interests in commercial ventures.

Recruitment and Staffing:

At the time of our investigations there was confusion over the organogram for the organisation and there was no approved staff establishment. Hence the accuracy in determining staff requirements was compromised.

According to information provided, the employee compensation budget is calculated on existing positions without making allowances for those positions vacated by death, retirement, dismissal or resignation. So too when posts were filled reports were provided to the Task Team that appointments were made without due consideration given to qualifications required for the specific post and in some instances as a result of the influence of Board members.

It was reported that the staff compensation budget was over 80% of the total budget. This is obviously an unhealthy position as there are insufficient funds available for operational issues.

We were also concerned that there may well be too many staff employed at Head Office in Pietermaritzburg doing administrative work while clearly there were too few people in the field involved in conservation matters.

There is no doubt that more staff needs to be recruited to meet the surge in poaching. A thorough assessment of staff requirements for anti-poaching activities should be undertaken and priority should be given to the recruitment of staff to meet this need. The costs for this could be offset by a rationalisation of employees not directly required for conservation issues. So too could the commercialisation of tourist facilities reduce the portion of the budget expended on staff compensation.

Recommendations

- A thorough reassessment of the staffing requirements of the organisation needs to be undertaken and this must take into consideration direct input from operational management with a view to ensuring that necessary anti-poaching operations are appropriately and adequately staffed. Such an assessment must also weigh staff deployment to ensure an appropriate balance of staff between Head Office and the reserves, giving priority to core functions particularly conservation as opposed administrative functions.
- Consideration should be given to outsourcing tourist facilities with a view to reducing staff employed in tourism functions and increasing conservation and operational field staff.
- It is recommended that all vacant rhino related positions need to be filled as soon as possible by persons appropriately qualified in conservation.
- A career path should be developed for Field Staff to ensure their expertise in the field is retained, in order that they can remain in the field with higher status and income. Currently the career path necessitates them going into administrative duties should they want to become more senior.

- New Field rangers must have completed an accredited course through a recognised institution, preferably that run by Ezemvelo or the South African Wildlife College.
- New recruits should be subject to a six month probationary period after which they are assessed with input from the relevant line manager whose recommendations must be considered before they are permanently employed.
- An assistant section ranger post needs to be created for each Section Ranger. This will provide the Section Ranger with relief from the current unbearable workloads in every sphere of his functions including field work and administrative and conservation duties.
- Neighbouring community members should be given preference when considering all staffing needs.

Park Management:

Until recently the Park Manager of Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Reserve did not reside in the reserve but in fact lived in Durban some 300 km away from his area of responsibility. This anomaly was allowed to continue even though this was contrary to policy which required that the Park Manager resided in the park.

The previous Conservation Manager for iMfolozi Reserve, although he did have a residence in the Reserve, reportedly was seldom found to be in the reserve and spent most of his time living outside the area.

The Conservation Manager for Hluhluwe was reported to be often absent from his post.

As a result of this vacuum in leadership some of the responsibilities of running the reserve fell upon the section rangers who are already stretched in their attempts to curb poaching. A further consequence of management not residing within the park, has been the adverse impact on morale. The Field Ranger corps cannot be expected to place their lives in danger when their managers are absent from the park at critical periods.

Furthermore there did not appear to be a co-ordination of deployment of resources with critical poaching times, some section rangers were given time off during critical times when the threat of rhino poaching is at its highest for example during the full moon period. We found that as a result, large sections of the reserve were left without leadership at the height of poaching activities.

Reports have indicated that that certain staff have been placed in critical positions despite the lack of required qualifications. As an example of this we were referred to the appointment of the then incumbent to the position of Section Ranger Masinda iMfolozi who, we were told, does not have the necessary qualifications for the post. Allegations were also made regarding previous poor performance where it was alleged that little or no consideration was given to the fact that certain staff had failed to have an impact on poaching in the areas where they were previously deployed, but were still redeployed regardless.

During the interview process it became apparent that staff felt demotivated, saying one of the main reasons was the fact that neither their managers nor the CEO had ever visited them in the field.

Another reason for the demotivation was that field staff felt when they had been involved in an incident and when such was reported in the media, they were not supported by senior management. It appears that there is no media strategy to assist rangers when incidents are reported in the press.

Recommendations

- Park managers must reside in the park they manage.
- Managers must take an active role in the activities of their subordinates and visit them in the field on a regular basis.
- Any operational staff leaving the reserve for any reason must only do so once his / her duties are formally handed over to a suitable replacement.
- Park managers must be contactable at all times.

- A media strategy which supports field staff needs to be developed and applied consistently, particularly in regard to poaching incidents which need to be carefully managed in the media.

Discipline and accountability:

Operations launched against poachers are essentially para-military in nature. It is thus important that strict discipline applies. The Task Team was concerned that the required levels of discipline were being compromised as opposed to the Kruger National Park which placed a strong emphasis on discipline and professionalism. It was reported that lines of reporting were blurred in that frequently junior staff contacted senior management directly to question decisions made by middle management. This, it was reported, had the effect of undermining middle management and created a climate where middle management became insecure and unable to exercise proper control over their subordinates.

Furthermore it was reported that there was a general lack of consequence management in that disciplinary hearings and processes were performed rarely and persons accused of disciplinary infractions were rarely charged. It was reported that disciplinary matters were sometimes reduced to racial spats, disguising the underlying infraction. In our diverse democracy it is important that racial tensions are properly managed and understood and interventions are put in place to build partnerships and trust within teams. Diversity management is needed to ensure discipline is not undermined.

Almost every member of field staff that we interviewed cited the lack of discipline as one of their major concerns

If urgent steps are not taken to reinstate discipline and accountability no amount of financial or other assistance will save the organisation from an inevitable demise, this will compromise all efforts to conserve the Rhino species.

The breakdown of morale and lack of proper diversity management, we were informed, has directly contributed to an exodus of experienced and skilled managers whose

experience is a great loss to the organisation and the anti-poaching drive. Former staff members with vast experience in KZN reserves now occupy senior conservation positions in reserves in other parts of Africa. We cannot afford the loss of this expertise.

Recommendations

- Discipline must be strictly applied at all levels.
- Staff must go through proper channels to lodge grievance and complaints
- Seniors need to be discouraged from attending to issues raised by junior staff that have not raised the issues with their immediate supervisors. Reporting lines must be adhered to.
- Diversity management programmes must be included in all staff training and development.
- Consequence management must be strictly applied to counter any disciplinary infraction.

Developed Strategies:

With its wealth of experience through its predecessor, EZEMVELO has built up and developed a number of important strategies and Standard Operating Procedures as well as various ways of assessing staff performance levels.

Furthermore there has been a very encouraging co-operative relationship between all those involved in anti-poaching activities within and outside the organisation which has led to a plethora of policies, protocols and co-operative agreements being put in place.

These include the following:

1. Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife Annual Performance Plan 2017/18
2. Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife Rhino Security Intervention Programme 2014-2017
3. Operation Rhino KZN Strategic Plan 01 January 2016 -31 December 2016
(1March 2017)
4. Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife Rhino Reserve Security Standard Operating Procedures

5. Rhino Operations KZN Disruption Operation- Standard Operating Procedures
6. Payment of Informer Fees Policy March 2010
7. Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife Reserve Security Assessment Template
8. Black Rhino Range Expansion Project (BREP) Sites Rhino Security Assessment
9. Zululand Law Enforcement Workshop
10. National Strategy for the Safety and Security of Rhinoceros Population in South Africa
11. National Integrated Strategy to Combat Wildlife Trafficking
12. Legal Aspects Pertaining to Rhino in South Africa
13. Standard Operating Procedure for Cooperation between Environmental Management Inspectorate and South African Police Services
14. NatJoints (Joint Operational and Intelligence Structure)
15. SAPS : Reporting and Investigation of Rhino and Elephant Poaching Cases
16. SAPS: Creating Capacity to Assist in Investigation of Endangered Species: Rhino Poaching: Kwa Zulu Natal

The policies are essential to the proper organisation and co-ordination of activities in the reserves. Management should ensure that all staff are constantly aware of policy and prescripts which they are required to adhere to. It was reported that the operating procedures are often ignored with the result that rhino protection is compromised simply due to established procedures and protocols not being observed.

Recommendations:

- Staff must be regularly appraised of all operating procedures and failure to adhere to these must result in consequence management.

Conservation knowledge and qualifications essential

During our investigations it became apparent that certain interest groups sought employment within Ezemvelo's anti-poaching initiatives. For example, it was mooted that military veterans be employed to assist as rangers doing patrols. In our view it is essential that in fulfilling its conservation mandate any person employed by EZEMVELO in the conservation or law enforcement field must either have a recognised conservation background or be trained in conservation, preferably in Ezemvelo's established training facilities.

Recommendations:

- New recruits for field staff and anti-poaching activities must only be employed if they possess appropriate recognised conservation qualifications.

Security vetting

Currently staff in reserves are not subject to security vetting on an ongoing basis or at all. It is essential that a policy be developed in terms of which security vetting for all staff becomes permissible within the confines of the employment relationship. This is particularly important in regard to staff employed within the reserves. There were reports given to the team that certain employees were involved in assisting poachers. Security vetting would constitute an important tool in countering this threat. It is the view of the task team that security vetting is essential to counter poaching and to ensure that any staff member who is in anyway suspected of colluding with poachers is subject to a lie-detector test immediately.

Employees may well object to this as being an intrusion of their privacy, or a material change to the terms of their employment. However, the surge in rhino poaching, in our view, would justify such changes. In any event it is recommended that all new contracts of employment in the organisation should have a clause where consent to such vetting is given by way of it becoming a condition of their employment.

Recommendations:

- All staff should have employment contracts amended to allow for integrity testing on a regular and adhoc basis.
- The State Security Services is the agency that should perform the vetting, as they are independent.
- Lifestyle Audits should be carried out in certain cases.

Inadequate and unmaintained tools of trade

Equipment

In many instances equipment is outdated and no longer serviceable. Replacements are out of the question due to the severe budget constraints and staff have been reduced to a relying on the goodwill and funding of NGO's and the Private sector to upgrade their equipment.

Firearms

Notwithstanding the fact that staff on the front line are facing an increasingly violent and ruthless armed onslaught, they are carrying firearms which are outdated and some of which are more than 60 years old, having been donated to the organisation by the then South African Defence Force. These weapons were even then well used and it could not have been envisaged that they would still be serviceable 60 years later. It was reported that in any event there was a shortage of rifles available for anti-poaching operations. This is obviously unacceptable.

Uniforms

Rangers reported that uniform suppliers have been changed and that new uniforms are of inferior quality and they do not meet the rigours of the purpose for which they are intended. This has resulted in some instances field staff being forced to wear uniforms that are faded in different shades and often torn. Rangers complained that there was insufficient attention to correct this situation - they are told that there is no budget to address the problem. Uniforms are an essential part of the equipment of all rangers and

a smart uniform clearly contributes to a improved morale. It is important that rangers are smartly dressed as they often interact with tourists who should be left with the impression that the rangers are professional; a scruffy faded uniform mitigates against this. During our investigations at Kruger park it was clear to the Task team that all rangers were very smartly turned out in a standardised uniform. This contributed to our impression of their professionalism and pride in their work.

Vehicles:

It is not uncommon, according to reports made to us, for a section ranger to have a vehicle inoperable for months on end. Inadequate support is obtained from management to resolve the problem with vehicles and to attend promptly to necessary repairs and maintenance. Too often appeals are made to NGO's and/or Private Donors to pay for repairs. There is also a shortage of suitable vehicles for the anti-poaching initiatives.

Recommendations:

- An assessment be done of all equipment necessary for operational staff to perform their roles by identifying immediate needs of field staff and with a view to securing the necessary budget to ensure these uniform and equipment needs are met.
- Budgets must be available for regular maintenance and repair of vehicles to ensure they are functional at all times.

Clearly special attention needs to be given to upgrading and modernising weapons to ensure staff facing poachers are adequately armed and protected. This should be done in consultation with field staff and the Firearm Control Manager.

Community participation:

All Ezmvlo Reserves are surrounded by traditional communities. It has become abundantly clear that the density of populations surrounding the parks is increasing at such a rate that unless creative and supportive measures are taken, the pressure on the land will be such that the reserves will no longer be sustainable.

Of major concern is the increasing and uncoordinated development of houses on the boundary of HIP. Annexed is a map reflecting the growth of human habitat around the reserve. Unless urgent and drastic steps are taken to curb and reverse this situation we fear that not only will it be difficult to prevent rhino poaching but the very existence of the reserve would be placed in jeopardy. There are already too many instances where, due to land pressure, communities are in conflict with the reserves resulting in the destruction of park fences in order to utilise park land for grazing and other agricultural purposes. The very survival of the parks and obviously rhino, depend on more creative and serious measures being taken to ensure that the park boundaries are respected and in fact guarded by the neighbouring communities.

Furthermore, poverty in these communities provides a fertile opportunity for poachers to induce members of communities to assist in poaching activities through financial incentives.

To counter this, it is imperative that members of the various communities be brought on the side of conservation. Communities must benefit directly and materially from conservation. If they don't, our reserves will not survive. The relationship between the parks and the communities must be constantly worked on and carefully managed. The members of these communities must see the existence of the reserves as an important heritage. Not nearly enough is being done in this regard.

The Rhino Ambassador programme was designed for this purpose, and Rhino Ambassadors were subsequently appointed from various neighbouring communities. The idea being that community members were to be employed and trained by EZEMVELO and would be used to educate communities regarding the benefits of rhino conservation. Unfortunately, it was reported to us that the poor management of these assets has resulted in the programme not yielding the results expected.

A very effective manner which is recognised as a main driver to enhance the relationship between the communities and the parks is to provide as much employment of members of neighbouring communities as possible. It was reported to us by the leaders of neighbouring communities that should Ezemvelo employ community members then the communities would experience real benefit as a consequence of their

proximity to the parks and consequently these communities would be supportive of conservation efforts. It must be recognised that Ezemvelo cannot alone satisfy all the needs of the neighbouring communities but we are of the view that much more can be done. Other State departments involved with poverty alleviation should be harnessed to play an important role in such a project.

There is also great potential in developing community land surrounding the parks. Camp sites could be developed and placed at various intervals around the reserve. Communities should be encouraged not to develop structures and residences close to the boundaries of parks but rather, in co-operation with Ezemvelo, utilise this land for conservation and tourist activities which directly benefit the community. This will not only ensure that there is minimal impact to the environment and in so doing allow the communities to continue to graze their cattle, but it will spread the benefit to all the communities surrounding the reserve. For example 50 camps of 10 sites each would allow 500 extra tourists to have access to the reserve and result in significant benefit to the adjacent community. This will no doubt also create an opportunity for home grown entrepreneurs. When this idea was mooted in our interviews with the local Amakhosi they expressed their support for researching this as an opportunity to create employment and for the community to benefit from conservation.

There is potential to increase the loyalty of communities to the conservation effort in a number of creative ways. Proving a financial benefit to adjoining communities by calculating a reward system based on the number of rhino maintained in a particular area adjoining that community is one model that could be considered.

Other examples and methods of securing community investment and commitment to reserves exist throughout the province.

Phinda Game Reserve has the "Where and Beyond" programme. Another example is The Kwa Zulu Natal Hunting Shooting and Conservation Association which has entered in to an agreement of cooperation with the Kunene Community at Wasbank near Dundee whereby the Association administers an area on behalf of the community and arranges for hunting on it. The Community is paid for this and employment opportunities are provided for community members.

The boundary fences need to be checked, preferably twice daily, and cleared on a regular basis in order that tracks of poachers can be detected. This can be done by the local community with a portion of the fence line being awarded to communities living adjacent to it. In this way all communities living adjacent to the park are able to benefit not only financially but also to ensure that communities are not threatened by the escape of wild animals as a result of broken fences.

The employment of community Field Rangers that are trained not only to protect against poachers but also to protect against stock thieves and to investigate initial reports of damage and injury caused by wild animals escaping from the reserve into neighbouring communities could be considered. It is envisaged that these community field rangers will operate outside the park in the areas adjoining the boundary of the park and will not only combat rhino poaching but illegal hunting and rustling on community lands. They will also be used as a form of rural security for the communities. A project of a similar nature has proved to be having been successfully applied with the community surrounding Phinda Game Reserve.

What is essential is that Ezemvelo explore these different methods and seriously consider implementing appropriate programmes with the aim of securing community commitment to conservation and at the same time ensuring a real benefit to community members.

We are of the view that not enough was done by Ezemvelo or for that matter the Provincial Government, in this regard. Programmes to assist communities were not prioritised and in the main those that were started had either been reduced considerably, such as the employment of fence liners, or were badly managed. The procurement of general labour from the community was insignificant, and when opportunities for this arose, these were not taken. For example the fencing project was given to an outside company who brought in their own labour, thus causing significant resentment among the various communities who felt that their members should have been employed for this purpose.

Bush meat has been given by Ezemvelo to local communities in order to encourage good relations between the parks and the traditional authorities neighbouring the parks.

So too are animals provided to his Majesty King Goodwill Zwelithini, at the behest of the Ingonyama Trust Board.

The Task Team supports all efforts to win over the hearts and minds of traditional communities, it is imperative that policies in this regard ensure the sustainability of the reserves through active participation and support of adjacent communities. Conservation must not be compromised but enhanced in this process. In the past it was reported that bush meat was provided after scientifically based culling operations. However it was reported that this is presently not the case, in that there is an ever increasing demand for bush meat from an ever increasing list of recipients, and such is provided without reference to any established policy or sustainability considerations.

Recommendations:

- The Provincial leadership should engage with His Majesty the King Goodwill Zwelithini and the Ingonyama Trust Board to discuss concerns relating to land usage directly adjacent to the reserves with a view to securing mutually beneficial agreements directed at creating conservation zones immediately adjacent to the parks which have direct financial benefit to communities.
- Ideally this would include an agreement in terms of which “a no development” buffer zone be established which would ensure no development, other than conservation based, took place within an particular distance from a boundary of every reserve. Mining and other developments in the immediate vicinity of the reserves are subject to strict conditions taking into account the requirements of conservation and the effect that such would have on the reserves.
- EZEMVELO must prioritise the employment of members of the neighbouring communities above all other applicants and inform communities on a regular basis of how many community members are employed.
- Financial incentives should be given to neighbouring communities to ensure that land immediately adjacent to the park is not developed for housing and other uses, rather EZEMVELO and the Province should assist the communities in projects where this land can be beneficially operated by communities for conservation and tourism activities. This must be directed at increasing the

employment levels of local communities in conservation activities and skilling them with expertise required, in both tourism and conservation guiding etc.

- Employing community members as fence liners to manage clear and inspect an area of fence falling within their community who can also check for tracks of poachers each morning .The cost of this could be met through the Expanded Public Works Programme.
- A serious consideration of all methods by which Ezemvelo could enter into partnership with the neighbouring communities for the mutual benefit needs to be undertaken urgently.
- Scholarship Programmes should be adopted for the youth of the neighbouring communities in order that they become qualified to be employed in reserves in various capacities

Co-operation with private reserves:

The task team found that there was very little co-operation between private reserves, game farms and Ezemvelo. In fact a lot of suspicion between the various conservation players was evidenced, especially in relation to rhino security.

Despite attempts to co-operate, for example, through the formation of “Project Rhino” and the “Wildlife Crime Working Group”, proper co-ordination of anti-poaching activities by all role players private and public has only been marginally successful.

Unfortunately this situation has now reached a stage where not only do Ezemvelo reserves act on their own, but very little interaction takes place with the private reserves due to a culture of mistrust that has developed as private reserves regard some Ezemvelo staff as being corrupt and contributing to rhino poaching. There is also suspicion relating to the security components of private reserves.

Despite the fact that a Rhino Security Coordinator has been appointed, financed by Wildlands Trust, whose duties are to coordinate activities between Ezemvelo, the private sector and SAPS, most of the members of the private sector we interviewed had not met the incumbent and as such have no working relationship with him.

In our view there is considerable potential benefit should all the players support each other and co-operate fully. There is a need to improve the relationship between the various role players, greater co-operation and trust could only benefit rhino conservation.

On our field trip to Kruger we found that the relationship between private and public reserves was very strong with the various players supporting each other with resources and intelligence. This was regarded as a very important factor in succeeding in the ongoing fight against poaching.

Recommendation: _

- A forum to encourage close co-operation between public and private reserves needs to be established.

Access Control and Corridor Road

The Task team was unanimous in its view that access control to all the Ezemvelo parks was not stringent enough. There were no sniffer dogs utilised at any access point, very rarely were searches of persons or vehicles on entry or exit conducted, and it seemed to the Task team that the monitoring of numbers of persons occupying vehicles entering and exiting was insufficient. A disturbing feature of our investigations showed that there are a number of completely unmanaged gates on the borders of the park through which persons can enter without being seen, recorded or monitored in any way. While these gates were originally established for the convenience of staff that could enter from their homes in the adjacent area, the level of poaching is such that this whole system needs to be revisited. People should only be allowed to enter the reserves through manned and gates where security measures are applied.

So too are the perimeter fences inadequate, they having been designed more for keeping animals in the reserve than keeping poachers out. A contract to upgrade the HIP fence has not been completed, which has resulted in easy access at a number of different locations, particularly at river crossings.

A very disconcerting issue which remains a difficult problem concerns the boundary fences at Ndumo. These have been under threat from adjacent community members for years. Although we did not manage to visit the reserve we understand that Opathe Game Reserve lost all their rhino which numbered in the region of 48 as a consequence of inadequate perimeter monitoring and control. Fences have been removed and land has portions of the reserve have been appropriated by the community for their own use. While the issue of land for communities is obviously a major concern, it is inappropriate to allow communities to take the law into their own hands and threaten the integrity of any reserve. It creates a bad precedent and effectively renders the park ungovernable. This lawlessness adversely affects tourism as visitors need to feel safe and secure in our reserves, failing which they will go elsewhere.

HIP has a complicating factor as a tarred public road linking the N2 at Mtubatuba with Nongoma intercepts the Hluhluwe and iMfolozi sections of the reserve. The road has a relatively high traffic volume day and night and the only form of control is a cattle grid on the exit and entrance. In order to not restrict game movement there is no fence on either side of this road.

Unfortunately the area that it passes through is a sought after area for wildlife and rhino can often be seen grazing right next to the road thus making easy prey for the poaching gangs. A large number of rhino have unfortunately been lost to poachers along the corridor road.

The Task Team was fortunate to have a bird's eye view of this road during a helicopter flight. It was clearly evident how this road would serve as a huge advantage to any poacher wishing to enter and leave the reserve with speed and without hindrance. To our surprise there are no controlled access points along the road with vehicular traffic being completely unrestricted, apart from an occasional speed hump. While certain observation towers have been set up along the road in the main, it was reported, these were not often manned. At certain times this road was apparently patrolled, but the considered view of the Task Team was that this road was a major risk area, the security along which needs to be improved dramatically.

Recommendations:

Corridor Road:-

- Ideally, at the point where there are currently cattle grids, i.e. at each entrance to the reserve along the corridor road a security boom should be established which should be manned preferable 24/7, failing which at the very least during the hours of darkness.
- Vehicles should be stopped and searched at regular intervals to create a deterrence factor.
- During times of threat vehicle patrols should be performed along this road.
- Number plate and license recognition camera systems must be installed where the corridor road enters and exits the reserve, at various intervals along the road as well as on the roads entering the reserve Memorial and Cengeni gates. These must be monitored 24/7 at the Nerve Centre.
- Sporadic vehicle check points within the reserves and in HIP on the Corridor Road should to be conducted by Security Officers, these related to intelligence and increased during high risk periods.

Access Control:

- All access is to be strictly controlled by Security Officers that have passed the accredited security officers course at the South African Wildlife College or the Ezemvelo training programme and must be qualified Environmental Management Inspectors, thus having powers of arrest.
- These Security Officers must be employed by Ezevelo and be a sub unit reporting to the Senior Security Manger.
- No person may enter or exit any reserve without a necessary permit.
- All persons and vehicles entering the reserve must be searched including making use of sniffer dogs.

- The necessary legislation must be amended to allow for vehicle check points to be held at the exit and entrance to the corridor road at HIP.
- Serious consideration needs to be given to all access points to determine whether or not they are necessary in the current climate. It is our view that the ideal would be that all persons, including staff, enter through the main gates which are strictly controlled and other gates is permanently closed. This best practice in Kruger National Park was regarded as a successful tactic increasing the difficulties for the poacher enormously.
- In any event all gates must be strictly controlled; there must be no access through unmanned gates.
- All boundary fences are to be patrolled on a daily basis by community members employed as fence liners.
- Outside contractors are subject to random integrity testing as and when circumstances dictate.
- All persons entering the reserve must be checked for the possession of firearms. No Person may enter a reserve with a firearm unless authorised to do so. In the event that a visitor entering a reserve is in possession of a firearm the license must be inspected the details recorded in the firearms register and it must be sealed and the seal inspected on exiting the reserve.
- Strict control over the number of persons entering and exiting a reserve must be exercised. No person may leave a reserve with less or more people in the vehicle than what they had when entering the reserve without adequate explanation.

Fences:

- An appropriate standard of fence must be established taking into account the surge in poaching and a strategy devised to ensure such fences are erected around the perimeters of all reserves.
- The boundary fence surrounding HIP must be completed and a forensic audit conducted into the failed completion of this project and if necessary the matter be referred to the National Prosecuting Authority.

- The issues surrounding community disputes with Ndumo and Opatha boundaries must be resolved forthwith with a view to securing the boundaries of the reserve.

Smart fencing and camera trap deployment should be encouraged based on intelligence and threat analysis.

Procurement

Without fail almost every person we interviewed was scathing in their criticism of procurement processes. The general impression we got from those we interviewed on the ground was that those responsible for procurement at Head Office are alienated from the needs of those employees deployed in operations on the ground.

Reports were given of procuring at excessive prices, in circumstances where strict cost cutting measures were applied to field operations, this is causing great resentment.

The management of the procurement of helicopter services provided evidence of the rift between Head Office officials and the needs of those in anti-rhino poaching operations. The air contract award was severely delayed with the result that field staff were left without vital air support, this only being rectified by the direct intervention of the MEC for Finance at the time.

Despite this, procurement of air services was delayed due to processes and appeals after a contract expired in November 2017, as a result no helicopters were available for a significant period.

Of further concern is that neither the Rhino Security Manager nor any other manager involved in field operations that make use of the helicopter were ever consulted or asked to be involved in assessing the ability of companies tendering for the supply of helicopters.

Another procurement failing which has a continuing adverse effect on Rhino security concerns the perimeter fence. In 2015 a contract was awarded to a commercial company to erect a new perimeter fence around HIP for a contract price of about R35

million. Work started in June 2016 but the project remains incomplete. According to internal reports handed to the Task team, only 45 kms of the fence has been completed to specification the rest is at various stages of incompleteness. At the time the report was handed to the Task Team, work had come to a standstill. The seriousness of this situation can be appreciated when one considers the fact that the perimeter of the park is around 162 kms in length.

Reports were received that previous Board members had on occasion interfered with procurement processes this obviously being outside of any Board member's mandate and against good management practices.

Recommendations:

- Immediate steps must be taken to fill vacant posts in the tender department.
- Input from field staff must be taken into account in the development of specifications for equipment, vehicles and firearms and all other items and services required for operational purposes.
- Policies must be put in place to ensure that current contracts do not expire during the tender process and the related appeals as it is necessary to ensure no interruption of essential supplies.
- Consideration should be given to increasing Section Ranger's budget limit to an appropriate amount for urgent and necessary supplies without having to go through centralised procurement. This would ensure that work can continue on a daily basis. Conservation Managers and Park Managers procurement budgets must be increased proportionately.

Dehorning:

Our consultations with private reserves indicated clearly that dehorning was very successful in preventing poaching. Once a reserve had the reputation of having all its rhino dehorned, there was a significant drop in the incidents of rhino poaching in that

reserve. A complicating feature of any dehorning programme is that a dehorned animal is less able to protect itself against other rhino particularly in the competitive mating processes. Dehorning is also a very expensive procedure, which needs to be repeated every few years due to the regrowth of the horn.

It may be that those rhino whose habitual areas are in close proximity to the fence be dehorned as a first stage in a broader process. This would be to counter the repeat of incidents where rhino in the proximity of the fence have been shot from the fence. These rhino are clearly the most vulnerable.

It was also reported that dehorned Rhino were killed by poachers to get the stub of the horn and in order to prevent that rhino from the futile process of being tracked again.

It is recommended that a dehorning process be considered and implemented in Ezemvelo parks, with due deference to expert input and opinion.

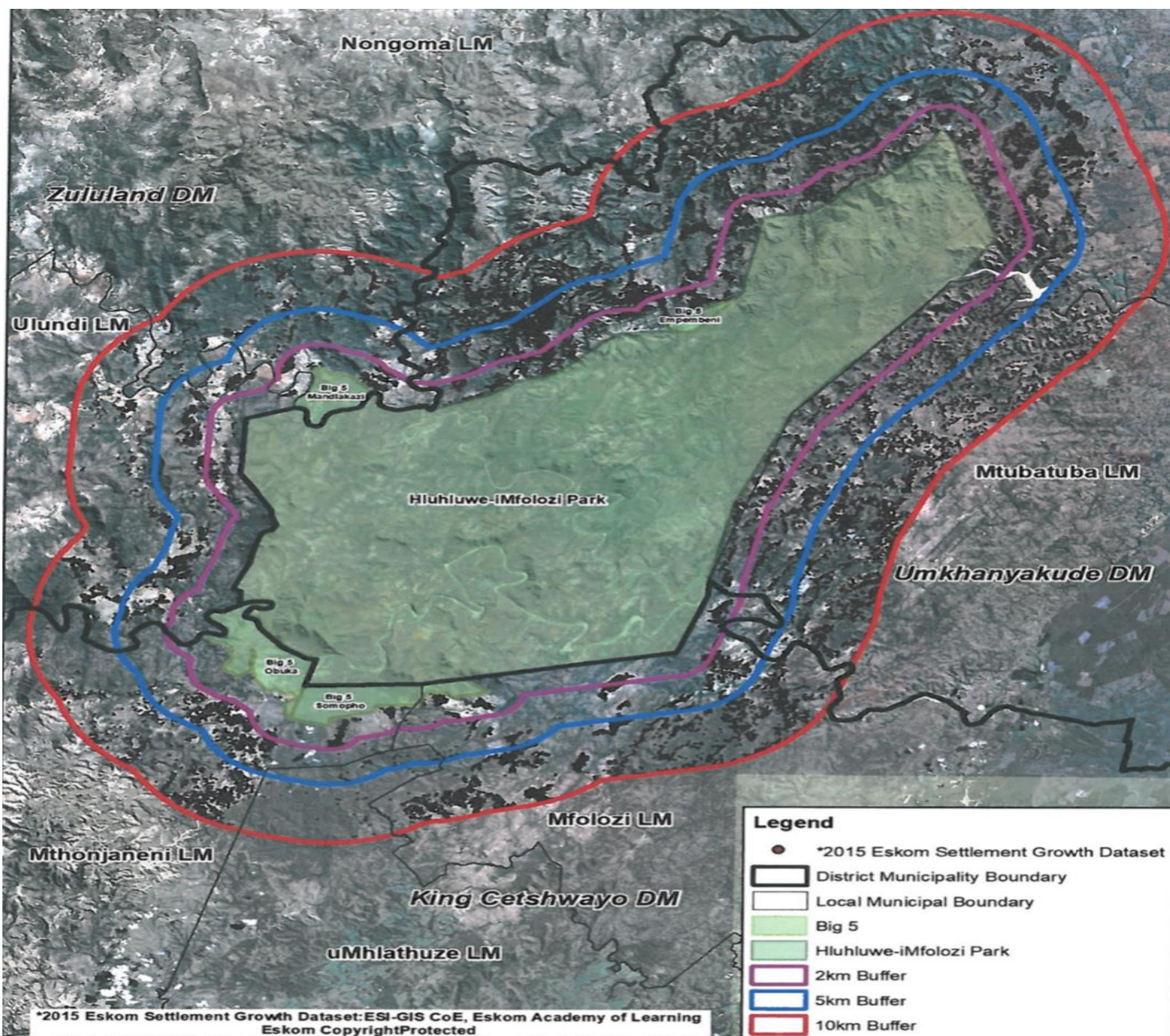
Anti-poaching Hotline:

Currently there is no adequate protection for whistle blowers in the organisation, nor is there a formal secure and confidential method by which people with knowledge of illicit poaching activities can share information with management. In our discussions with numerous staff, suspicions were raised that certain other staff were assisting poachers.

This information is vital for successful preventative operations.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that a hot line be established and advertised widely both within and outside the organisation encouraging staff and others to report any information they have on a secure and confidential basis.



Map Produced by
 Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife
 Scientific Services
 Biodiversity Spatial
 Planning & Information

Contact Details
 data@kznwildlife.com
 033 845 1999
Date of Production
 18/09/2019

