

News Release

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Service Proposes Endangered Species Act Protection for the African Lion

Following a review of the best available scientific information, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today proposed listing the African lion as threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The agency's analysis found that lions are in danger of extinction in the foreseeable future.

“The African lion – a symbol of majesty, courage and strength – faces serious threats to its long-term survival. Listing it as a threatened species will bring the full protections of U.S. law to lion conservation, allowing us to strengthen enforcement and monitoring of imports and international trade,” said U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Dan Ashe. “It is up to all of us, not just the people of Africa, to ensure that healthy, wild populations continue to roam the savannah for generations to come.”

African lions are still found across a large range in Africa, but about 70 percent of the current African lion population exists in only 10 major strongholds.

The three main threats facing African lions at this time are habitat loss, loss of prey base, and increased human-lion conflict. Human settlements and agricultural and grazing activities have expanded into lion habitat and protected areas, putting more livestock in proximity to lions. The lion's native prey base is hunted by humans at unsustainable levels to meet a growing demand for food for an expanding human population. As a result, lions kill more livestock, which then leads to retaliatory killings by humans.

In addition to proposing ESA protections, the Service is also proposing a rule under section 4(d) of the ESA. The rule, if finalized, will establish a permitting mechanism for the importation of sport-hunted lion trophies, provided that the lions originate from countries with a scientifically sound management plan for African lions. Sport-hunting was not found to be a threat to the species at this time.

“By providing incentives through the permitting process to countries and individuals who are actively contributing to lion conservation, the Service will be able to leverage a greater level of conservation than may otherwise be available,” said Ashe.

The ESA provides numerous benefits to foreign species, primarily by prohibiting certain activities including import, export, commercial activity, interstate commerce and foreign commerce. By regulating these activities, the United States ensures that people under the jurisdiction of the United States do not contribute to the further decline of listed species. The ESA can also generate

conservation benefits such as increased awareness of listed species, research efforts to address conservation needs, or funding for in-situ conservation of the species in its range countries.

In addition, the ESA provides for limited financial assistance to develop and manage programs to conserve listed species in foreign countries, encourages conservation programs for such species, and allows for assistance for programs, such as personnel and training.

In 2011, a petition from a coalition of organizations requesting the Service to list the African lion as endangered prompted a formal review under the ESA. On November 27, 2012, the Service published a positive 90-day finding and initiated a status review of the subspecies. In this 12-month finding on the petition, the Service has determined that listing the African lion as threatened under the ESA throughout its entire range is warranted.

The Service is seeking comments from the public for 90 days regarding information pertaining to the African lion. Please go to www.regulations.gov Docket No. FWS-R9-ES-2012-0025 for additional information. The proposed rule will publish in the *Federal Register* on October 29, 2014, comments must be received by January 27, 2015.

For more information on the African lion and the Service's proposal, please visit http://www.fws.gov/endangered/what-we-do/african_lion.html.

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