Government Gazette
Staatskoerant

REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA
REPUBLIEK VAN SUID AFRIKA

Vol. 730 14 April / April 2026 No. 54506

ISSN 1682-5845

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GOVERNMENT NOTICES • GOEWERMENTSKENNISGEWINGS

DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY, FIDSHERIES AND ENVIRONMENT

NO. 7369 **14 April 2026**

NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT: BIODIVERSITY ACT, 2004 (ACT NO. 10 OF 2004)

BIODIVERSITY MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR BLACK RHINOCEROS (*Diceros bicornis*) AND WHITE RHINOCEROS (*Ceratotherium simum*) IN SOUTH AFRICA 2025 – 2035

I, Willem Abraham Stephanus Aucamp, Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, hereby in terms of section 43(3)(a) of the National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act, 2004 (Act No. 10 of 2004), publish the Biodiversity Management Plan for both Black (*Diceros bicornis*) and White Rhinoceros (*Ceratotherium simum*) in South Africa for implementation, as set out in the Schedule hereto.

In terms of section 43(2) of the National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act, 2004 (Act No. 10 of 2004), I hereby identify the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment as the responsible *interim* lead implementing agent, for the Biodiversity Management Plan, until such time that the National Rhino Conservation Coordination Committee has been established. I, accordingly, in terms of section 43(3)(c) of the National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act, 2004 (Act No. 10 of 2004), assign the responsibility for implementation of this Biodiversity Management Plan to the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment and, upon establishment thereof, to the National Rhino Conservation Coordination Committee, under the chairmanship of the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment.

This Notice repeals the Biodiversity Management Plans for Black and White Rhinos that were published in Government Notice R.49 in Government *Gazette* No. 36096 on 25 January 2013, and Government Notice R. 1191 in Government *Gazette* No. 39469 of 2 December 2015, respectively.

WILLEM ABRAHAM STEPHANUS AUCAMP

MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT

forestry, fisheries & the environment
Department:
Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

SCHEDULE

BIODIVERSITY MANAGEMENT PLAN
for
BLACK RHINOCEROS (*Diceros bicornis*)
and
WHITE RHINOCEROS (*Ceratotherium simum*)
in SOUTH AFRICA
2025 – 2035

This document was drafted by a team comprising representatives from the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environmental Affairs (DFFE); South African National Parks (SANParks) and the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI).

Implementation of this BMP will be facilitated and coordinated by the DFFE as an interim implementing agent till the establishment of the implementing agent is finalised.

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ACRONYMS

AfRSG	African Rhino Specialist Group (of the IUCN SSC)
BMP	Biodiversity Management Plan
BRREP	Black Rhino Range Expansion Programme (a project of WWF-SA)
CBD	United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity
CHASA	Confederation of Hunting Associations of South Africa
CITES	United Nations Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
CoP	Conference of Parties
CPHC	Custodians of Professional Hunting and Conservation South Africa
DFFE	Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment
ECC	Ecological Carrying Capacity.
ECWG	Environmental Crime Working Group of Interpol
EWT	Endangered Wildlife Trust
HSI	Humane Society International
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
KNP	Kruger National Park
NATJOINTS	National Joint Operational and Intelligence Structure
NEMA	National Environmental Management Act, 1998 (Act No. 107 of 1998)
NEM: BA	National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act, 2004 (Act No. 10 of 2004)
NEM: PAA	National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act, 2003 (Act No. 57 of 2003)
NISCWT	National Integrated Strategy to Combat Wildlife Trafficking
NRRS	National Rhino Research Strategy
NSPCA	National Council of Societies for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
NSSSRPSA	National Strategy for the Safety and Security of Rhinoceros Populations in South Africa
PARCs	Private Association of Rhino Conservation Reserves
PHASA	Professional Hunters Association of South Africa
PROA	Private Rhino Owners Association
SADC	Southern African Development Community
RMG	Rhino Management Group
SAHGCA	South African Hunters and Game Conservation Association (SA Hunters)
SANParks	South African National Parks
SAVA	South African Veterinary Association
SSC	Species Survival Commission (of the IUCN)
TOPS Regulations	Regulations pertaining to threatened or protected species made in terms of NEM: BA
WRSA	Wildlife Ranching South Africa
WWF-SA	World Wide Fund for Nature – South Africa

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

In this BMP, unless the context indicates otherwise, a word or expression defined in the National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act (Act 10 of 2004) (NEM: BA) or the National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act (Act 57 of 2004) (NEM: PAA) or the White Paper on Conservation and Sustainable Use of South Africa's Biodiversity has the same meaning. In the case where a word in NEM: BA or NEM: PAA has a different meaning to a word in the White Paper on Conservation and Sustainable Use of South Africa's Biodiversity, the meaning in NEM: BA or NEM: PAA applies. Further:-

Biodiversity Management Agreement – the Minister may enter into a Biodiversity Management Agreement with a person, organisation, or organ of state regarding the implementation of a Biodiversity Management Plan.

Biodiversity Management Plan – a Biodiversity Management Plan must be aimed at ensuring the long-term survival in nature of the species or ecosystem to which the plan relates. Any person, organisation or organ of state may submit to the Minister, for his or her approval, a draft Biodiversity Management Plan for a species.

Captive breeding operation/facility - has the same meaning as in the TOPS Regulations.

Controlled environment - has the same meaning as in the TOPS Regulations.

Extensive wildlife system - has the same meaning as in the TOPS Regulations.

Illicit value chain - The illicit value chain in this context encompasses the domestic and global set of activities (in source, transit and market arenas), in which criminal syndicates or enterprises (including systems of functional or business specialities and roles) operate to traffic illicit commodities. The illicit value chain includes all activities related to the criminal enterprise, comprising supply, logistics, distribution, marketing and the sale of illicit or contraband products in and illicit market.

IUCN Red List of Threatened Species – is an inventory of the global conservation status of plant and animal species which have been assessed using the IUCN Red List Categories and Criteria. The system is designed to determine the relative risk of extinction of the taxon under consideration.

Metapopulation – in the context of rhino management is a population of populations of the same species that are spatially isolated, but which are linked through human translocation of individual rhinos or groups of rhinos for management purposes, including for genetic or ecological reasons.

National herd – is all rhinos of the same species that are found within the country at a point in time.

Population – with respect to rhino, population refers to all rhinos at a site where rhinos are managed.

Rewilding – is the process of introducing rhinos bred through captive or intensive breeding approaches into wild free-ranging conditions and managing/mitigating the risks they encounter in an adaptive manner.

Viable – viable in this plan is not defined in a strict technical sense but rather by acknowledging, with all existing constraints that likely will take decades to address, that populations with natural breeding systems (mate selection) and greater genetic heterozygosity with more adult breeding individuals are more viable than populations with limited breeding choice, lower levels of heterozygosity and fewer numbers.

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White Paper – the White Paper on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of South Africa's Biodiversity published in Government Gazette No. 48785, under Government Notice No. 3537, of 14 June 2023.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Individuals from the following groups are acknowledged for their contributions to this revision of the BMP for Black and White Rhino.

The core revision team with representatives from:

- DFFE
- SANBI
- SANParks

Groups and individuals participating in the consultations, including representatives from the:

- National and provincial houses of traditional leaders
- Traditional health practitioners
- National committee of People and Parks
- Rhino owners (members of the Private Rhino Owners Association (PROA), Private Association of Rhino Conservation Reserves (PARCs) and other non-affiliated rhino owners)
- Rhino specialists and academics
- Conservation NGOs which have interests in rhino and animal welfare
- Officials from national and provincial State departments and entities with conservation mandates
- Provincial People and Parks committees representing communities living adjacent to:
  - Marakele National Park
  - Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park
  - uMkhuze Game Reserve (a section of the Isimangaliso Wetland Park)
  - Kruger National Park (3 nodes of consultation; Barberton, Hazyview and Pafuri)
  - Great Fish River Nature Reserve
  - Addo Elephant National Park
  - Pilanesberg Provincial Nature Reserve

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FOREWORD

Rhinos are keystone species, as well as a source of national pride and can play a role in fostering social cohesion. This assertion is supported by the feedback received from the over 700 individuals consulted in the preparation of this Biodiversity Management Plan (BMP). In addition to this contemporary understanding, these roots run deep in South African society as reflected in the existence of the Mapungubwe Golden Rhino from approximately 1,000 years ago and the archaeological interpretation of it being a symbol of global trade in the area.

Contemporary history places South Africa at the centre of international rhino conservation, with the country having earned the status of being among the most consequential range States when it comes to rhino conservation. South Africa has a proud track record of successful rhino conservation, having brought the southern white rhino back from the brink of extinction (fewer than 50 individuals remaining; all near the confluence of the two iMfolozi Rivers in South Africa around 1900) to over 20,000 in the second decade of the 21st Century. The pattern is different but still very encouraging with black rhinos. Seventy years ago, South Africa stewarded less than 10% of African black rhino, but following the poaching induced continental crash in black rhino numbers in the 1970s and 1980s, the country now stewards around 32% of the continental total.

South Africa's successes have placed the country in a premier position as a source of rhino for range States to the north which previously lost all their rhino and are attempting to reestablish populations. Globally all southern white rhino originate from South Africa and the country has contributed black rhino to Zambia, Mozambique, Malawi, Rwanda and other countries.

Despite the intense pressure from poaching and the more than five-fold increase in security costs since 2008, various successful breakthroughs in rhino poaching investigation by law enforcement agencies as well as increased and better coordinated anti-poaching efforts means that South Africa still has viable populations of both species. A key element of this plan is a focus on managing the national populations of both species under different ownership / land tenure arrangements (state, private and community owned), in a more coordinated manner.

Increased demand for rhino horn, which is the driver behind the increased rhino poaching, remains a concern. Illegal trade in rhino horn is understood to be driven by crime syndicates operating nationally and internationally, to supply horn for traditional medicine and craft markets in consumers countries mostly in Asia. Most of the losses of rhinos to poaching have been experienced in large state managed protected areas such as Kruger National Park and Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park, but all areas with rhinos have faced increased poaching pressure since the early years of the 21st Century.

Efforts within South Africa to develop the biodiversity economy, and to ensure that an increased number of South African citizens value rhino, are seen as important in combatting the pressure of poaching on rhinos. This BMP includes activities to achieve these objectives. Coordinated and structured efforts by government, the private sector and communities are urgently needed to address the rhino poaching challenge. The current BMP therefore aims to introduce an approach to rhino ownership and participation in the upstream and downstream economies such that a rhino is more valuable alive than dead.

This revision of the BMP, which addresses the needs of both black and white rhino aims to provide a strategic approach and detailed action plan to conserving rhino in South Africa and for engaging with range States to the north. It consolidates previous policy and planning work on rhino management into a single integrated tool in order to usher in a whole-of-society approach in the interest of both the rhinos and the people of South Africa.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Both black (*Diceros bicornis*) and white (*Ceratotherium simum*) rhinoceros (rhinos) are indigenous to Africa. Two subspecies of black rhino (*D. b. bicornis* and *D. b. minor*) and one subspecies of white rhino (*C. s. simum)* are indigenous to South Africa, and unless otherwise stated these are the subspecies referred to in this Biodiversity Management Plan (BMP). In addition, there is a single privately owned ex-situ population of approximately 100 *Diceros b. michaeli* in the country. Both species of rhino have been through global bottlenecks when their numbers were very low. In the case of black rhino, numbers dropped from over 50,000 in the 1960s to around 2,350 in 1995. They subsequently increased to around 6,500 by the end of 2023. In the case of the southern white rhino, following a population low point in which fewer than 50 individuals are believed to have survived in around 1900, the continental population grew to approximately 3,300 in the 1970s and to 21,300 in 2014. South Africa stewarded approximately 67% of the continental rhino population (both species) at the end of 2023 and is thus a very important country for rhino conservation. Within South Africa, both species are included in the list of Threatened or Protected Species (TOPS) published in terms of the National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act, 2004 (Act No. 10 of 2004) (NEMBA). The primary threat to the conservation of both species remains illegal killing of individuals to supply the illegal market with their horns. Population fragmentation, the small size of many populations and habitat loss are increasingly important considerations for national and continental rhino conservation. At the end of 2022, 32% of black rhino and 61% of white rhino in South Africa were privately or community owned with a trend of increasing private and community ownership over the past two decades.

In contrast to two separate plans previously published, one for each species of rhino in South Africa, this is a single consolidated plan for both species to reduce repetition due to the significant overlap in content. Prior to BMPs, earlier plans to manage rhino species existed under older legislation. The first BMP was developed under the NEM: BA and was for black rhino (2013) followed by the publication of a BMP for white rhino (2015). This BMP was developed in accordance with Section 43 (1)(b) and (c) and section 46 of the NEMBA and follows the guidance provided by the Norms and Standards for Biodiversity Management Plans for species (2009) and is cognisant of the concurrent competencies between national and provincial spheres of government as it relates to environmental and nature conservation matters. It is additionally structured to give effect to the White Paper on Conservation and Sustainable Use of South Africa's Biodiversity[1] (the White Paper) and the Policy Position on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Elephant, Lion, Leopard and Rhinoceros with specific reference to black and white rhinos. In so doing welfare considerations for rhinos are implicitly addressed by this BMP. This BMP integrates many lessons and insights gained from national initiatives that took place in relation to rhino conservation since 2010. These include:

1. The Rhino Issue Management (RIM) consultation which resulted in a report in 2013 to facilitate the development of a common understanding of key issues concerning the protection and sustainable conservation of the South African rhino population.
2. The Committee of Inquiry (COI), established by the Minister of Environmental Affairs, to advise on the possibility or not, of proposing legal international trade in rhino horn in preparation for the 17th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) relating to southern white rhino. The report of the COI, which included various options and the implications of different trade models was adopted by Cabinet in 2015.
3. The Rhino Conservation Operation Phakisa (Rhino Lab) was established as one of the workstreams under the Biodiversity Economy Lab, a multi-stakeholder process undertaken in 2016, to develop comprehensive plans to operationalise the recommendations of the COI.
4. Guidelines for captive breeding of white rhinoceros were developed in 2017.
5. The High-Level Panel (HLP) was established to advise the Minister on the review of policies, legislation and practices on matters relating to Elephant, Lion, Leopard, and Rhinoceros. The HLP commenced its work in

[1] White Paper on Conservation and Sustainable use of South Africa's Biodiversity (GN 3537 – 14 June 2023).

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2019 and submitted its report in 2020 which was adopted by Cabinet in 2021. Two workshops were subsequently held with rhino stakeholders in 2021 in an attempt to operationalise the HLP recommendations on rhino.

6. A report on review of the implementation of the biodiversity management plans for black rhinos (2013-2020) and white rhinos (2015-2020) completed by the Rhino Management Group (RMG). The Review Report was completed in 2022.
7. The National Integrated Strategy to Combat Wildlife Trafficking (NISCWT) was adopted in May 2023. This strategy seeks to a) Enhance law enforcement efforts, and mobilise society, towards effective investigation, prosecution and adjudication of wildlife trafficking, as a form of transnational organised crime; b) Increase Government's commitment, and potential to implement policy solutions that detect, prevent and combat wildlife trafficking in South Africa and beyond; and c) Increase national, regional and international law enforcement collaboration and cooperation in combating wildlife trafficking.
8. The Policy Position on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Elephant, Lion, Leopard and Rhinoceros was published for public participation on 20 September 2023, with extensive in-person and virtual consultation sessions. The Policy Position includes three goals, and their associated actions for implementation that are pertinent to rhino.

While the previous BMPs were essentially expert driven, an important aspect of this BMP is that it took a whole of society approach in its revision, through initial engagements with over 700 representatives and members of key stakeholder groups including communities (National People and Parks as well as site-based visits), traditional health practitioners, traditional leaders, rhino owners and managers, NGOs, rhino specialists and academics, and members of national and provincial spheres of government concerned with rhinos. This BMP therefore takes an integrated approach that aligns to the five pillars of the COI report and seeks to progressively meet the requirements thereof.

The **Vision** for rhino conservation and sustainable use in South Africa is:

Thriving national herds of wild black and white rhino are valued, promote conservation, and people benefit from their inclusive sustainable use.

This BMP seeks to advance the Vision by focussing on how South Africa can progressively advance the requirements relating to the five pillars for rhino conservation as per the COI namely biological management, security considerations, community empowerment, rhino horn demand management, and responsive legislation.

The **Goal** for this biodiversity management plan is:

To cooperatively manage a viable and secure national metapopulation of both species of indigenous rhino in order to contribute to national biodiversity objectives, meet a range of societal values, and advance transformation through inclusive ownership, meaningful participation and broad beneficiation.

In support of the Goal, there are five Objectives and three Enabling Objectives, each of which contribute to the Goals of the White Paper i.e., (1) Enhanced Biodiversity Conservation, 2) Sustainable Use, 3) Equitable Access and Benefit Sharing, and 4) Transformation), and address priority issues raised in subsequent policy development and public consultation processes.

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In this regard, the Primary Objectives and the Enabling Conditions are:

Objective 1: To ensure effective biological management of both species of rhinos.
Objective 2: To strengthen enforcement and security.
Objective 3: To advance transformation and community empowerment.
Objective 4: To effectively manage legal demand and reduce illegal demand for rhino derivatives.
Objective 5: To enhance legislative implementation and develop responsive legislation and policy.

Enabler 1: Sustainable financing.
Enabler 2: Effective communication.
Enabler 3: Technology, innovation and capacity.

The Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE), responding to one of the actions of this BMP, will establish a National Rhino Coordination Committee that will guide national level rhino conservation decision-making, contribute to building trust among all stakeholders, and facilitate the implementation and annual reporting of this BMP.

This BMP serves as a species recovery plan for both rhino species in South Africa and in so doing it recognises the conservation value of rewilding certain rhinos (e.g., the approximately 2,000 white rhinos present in 2024 on the farm in North West Province that has been bought by African Parks). In order to avoid a proliferation of plans, species recovery of this nature will not fall under a separate plan, instead it will be included as part of the relevant metapopulation plan for each rhino species in South Africa which will address issues of poaching, metapopulation management, the potential value of breeding of rhinoceros in controlled environments for conservation purposes, amongst other government priorities such as advancing transformation and community empowerment.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Two of the five remaining rhino species globally are indigenous to Africa; they are the black (*Diceros bicornis*) and white (*Ceratotherium simum*) rhino. As of the end of 2023, Africa stewarded at least 23,995 of the global rhino population of African rhinos. At the end of 2023, South Africa stewarded 32% (2,092) of the 6,448 continental black rhinos and 79% (14,074) of the 17,729 continental white rhinos[2,3]. There were 4,100 Asian rhinos[4] and a further 1,626 rhinos in ex-situ (zoos) collections worldwide comprising 364 black and 1,262 white rhinos[5]. An increasing proportion of the white rhino population in South Africa (53% at the end of 2021; 61% at the end of 2023) is privately or communally owned and there has been a concomitant trend towards density and management intensification with an estimated one-third of white rhinos living in intensive or semi-wild ranging conditions. Most black rhinos (>95%) live in free ranging conditions. Populations of rhinos under private or mixed management models have generally performed better (encountered fewer losses to poaching) over the past few decades although some state reserves have performed well. Between 2008 and the end of 2023 over 10,000 rhinos were poached in South Africa. Absolute numbers of rhino poached annually peaked in 2014, but poaching remains a threat to both species, with over 300 rhinos continue to be poached annually[6].

1.1 Purpose of this Biodiversity Management Plan

Section 43 of NEMBA requires that an organ of state or any organisation that wants to contribute to biodiversity management may develop a biodiversity management plan for an ecosystem, an indigenous species or a migratory species. A Biodiversity Management Plan for Species (BMP-S) is a tool to guide the management of indigenous species (and any sub-specific taxa) and groupings of indigenous species that are adversely affected by similar threats and enables the evaluation of progress with regard to such management. It establishes measures to ensure the protection, conservation and sustainable management of indigenous species. It forms part of a dynamic and continuing management planning process and allows for review and monitoring of actions to accommodate changing priorities and emerging issues.

This BMP has been developed to ensure the long-term survival of national populations of black and white rhinos in the wild and consolidates and integrates all prior national initiatives, strategic imperatives and plans into a single national plan for rhinos in South Africa[7]. existing national biodiversity and welfare legislation aim to address welfare concerns for rhinos in South Africa.

Specifically, this BMP articulates a Vision, Goal and Strategic Objectives, for the national herds of black and white rhino in alignment with the White Paper. The persons, organisations or organs of state responsible for implementing the interventions including monitoring and reporting of progress thereof are identified. The development of this BMP was guided by the prescripts of the Norms and Standards for Biodiversity Management Plans for Species. The BMP serves as a tool to guide the management of black and white rhinos in the country taking into account the concurrent responsibilities of National and Provincial spheres of Government as it relates to environmental and nature conservation matters.

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[2] Ferreira, S.M., Ellis, S., Burgess, G., Baruch-Mordo, S., Talukdar, B., Knight, M.H. 2022. African and Asian Rhinoceroses – Status, Conservation and Trade. Report from the IUCN Species Survival Commission (IUCN SSC) African and Asian Rhino Specialist Groups and TRAFFIC to the Secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) pursuant to Resolution Conf. 9.14 (Rev. CoP17).

[3] Clements, H.S., Balfour, D. and Di Minin, E. 2023. Importance of private and communal lands to sustainable conservation of Africa's rhinoceroses. Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment https://doi:10.1002/fee.2593.

[4] https://iucn.org/press-release/202409/world-rhino-day-2024-mixed-story-worlds-five-species-rhinos

[5] Ferreira et al 2024.

[6] Ferreira et al 2022.

[7] Section 45 of NEMBA

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This BMP was drafted by a team comprising officials of the DFFE, South African National Parks (SANParks) and the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI). Importantly, this revision of the BMPs took a whole of society approach, through initial engagements with over 700 representatives and members of key stakeholder groups including communities (national People and Parks (as well as local site-based visits adjacent to important rhino protected areas), traditional health practitioners, traditional leaders, rhino owners and managers, rhino conservation and welfare NGOs, rhino specialists and academics, and members of national and provincial government concerned with rhinos.

Strategic imperatives and plans that have been considered in this revision of the BMPs for black and white rhinos include the Rhino Issue Management process (2012), the Cabinet-approved strategic interventions (2014), and the recommendations of the Committee of Inquiry (2015). The BMP also takes into account review of the implementation of the Black Rhino BMP 2013 and White Rhino BMP 2015 and furthermore integrates elements of the Rhino Lab (2016) and the report of the High-Level Panel of experts for the review of policies, legislation and practices on matters of elephant, lion, leopard and rhinoceros management, breeding, hunting, trade and handling (2020). This BMP takes an integrated approach to progressively meeting the requirements of the CoI report.

In this respect, this BMP serves as a species recovery plan for both rhino species in South Africa that addresses issues of poaching, metapopulation management, the potential need for breeding of rhinoceros in controlled environments for conservation purposes, amongst other priorities such as advancing transformation and community empowerment. Once the BMP is published for implementation, provinces and SANParks will be expected to revise or develop and implement their institutional plans for black and white rhinos which are aligned to this BMP. In addition to the above, this BMP recognises the need for the rewilding of certain rhinos (e.g., the 2,000 odd white rhinos present in 2024 on the farm in North West that has been bought by African Parks).

2. BACKGROUND AND SPECIES DETAILS

2.1 Summary of the conservation status and taxonomic information about the species

2.1.1 Black rhino in the South African context

Taxonomy

Kingdom:	Animalia
Phylum:	Chordata
Class:	Mammalia
Order:	Perissodactyla
Family:	Rhinocerotidae
Genus:	*Diceros bicornis*
Subspecies:	extant (living)
	D. b. bicornis - southwestern black rhino
	D. b. michaeli - eastern black rhino
	D. b. minor - south central black rhino

In the second half of the 20th century black rhino saw one of the most significant declines of a large African mammal in recorded history. The continental population dropped from 65,000 in 1970 to an estimated 2,347 in 1995. Conservation interventions were able to prevent the extinction of the species at the time and the continental population at the end of 2023 stood at 6,448 individuals with an increasing trend. However, considerable effort remains necessary to secure the future of black rhinos. Indeed, in the 21st century one of four subspecies of black rhino, the West African black rhino (*D. b. longipes*) was declared extinct leaving three subspecies of black rhino.

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There are two recognized subspecies of black rhino indigenous to South Africa (*D.b.minor* and *D.b.bicornis*) and populations of both subspecies are conserved on State and private land. There is a single ex-situ privately owned population of *D.b.michaeli* in the country. In the early and mid-20th century, South Africa's role in black rhino conservation was relatively minor (stewarding approximately 10% of the continental total) but with the dramatic declines in black rhino that occurred in countries to the north, in the second half of the 20th century, this has shifted substantially and in the early 21st century South Africa conserved 2,092 black rhino, estimated to be approximately 32% of the continental black rhino[8]. These figures include all black rhino in the country.

Despite the continental trends in black rhino numbers in the second half of the 20th century, black rhino trends in South Africa have steadily increased since the 1970s (Figure 1) including through the period of increased poaching since 2008. This steady increase has contributed to the increasing importance of South Africa for the conservation of black rhino continentally.

South Africa conserves four IUCN SSC African Rhino Specialist Group (AfRSG) rated Key1 (> 100 individuals) black rhino populations, highlighting the level of importance of the country in continental black rhino conservation. The distribution of black rhino is not even within the country and is largely determined by the availability of suitable habitat.

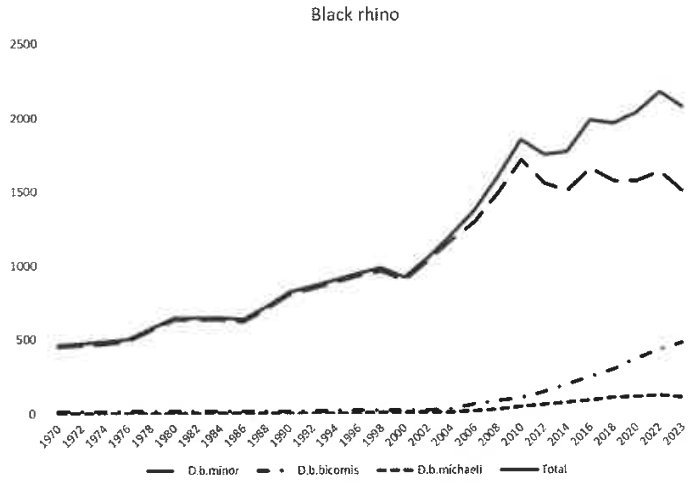


Figure 1. Trends in the number of black rhino (including each subspecies) in South Africa (1970 to 2023).

Black rhino is listed on Appendix I of CITES and is classified as Critically Endangered in the IUCN Red List[9]. Within South Africa the species is listed in terms of NEMBA as an Endangered Species. Through conservation interventions the numbers in Africa have subsequently increased, reaching 6,487 by the end of 2021[10]. The primary threat to the conservation of the species is population decline due to illegal killing of individuals for their horn (Figure 2). Habitat loss, fragmentation of suitable habitat and the small size of many populations are increasingly important considerations.

[8] Clements et al 2023.

[9] https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/6557/152728945.

[10] Rhinoceroses (CoP19 Doc. 75) 2022. Report to the nineteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties of CITES.

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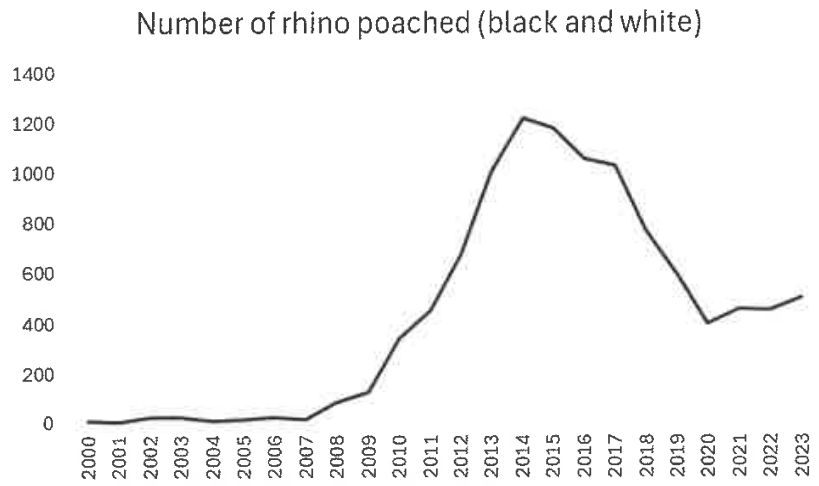


Figure 2. Trends in numbers of rhino (black and white) lost to poaching in South Africa (2000 to 2023).

The geographical separation of the two subspecies of black rhino in South Africa historically is not precisely known and was likely a broad transition zone rather than a hard line. However, for management purposes, the line depicted in Figure 3 below, defines the functional (for management purposes) separation of the two subspecies. There are existing exceptions to this pattern such as the Great Fish River Nature Reserve (GFRNR) which should contain *D.b.bicornis* but has *D.b.minor* and the population is too large to cost effectively change the situation.

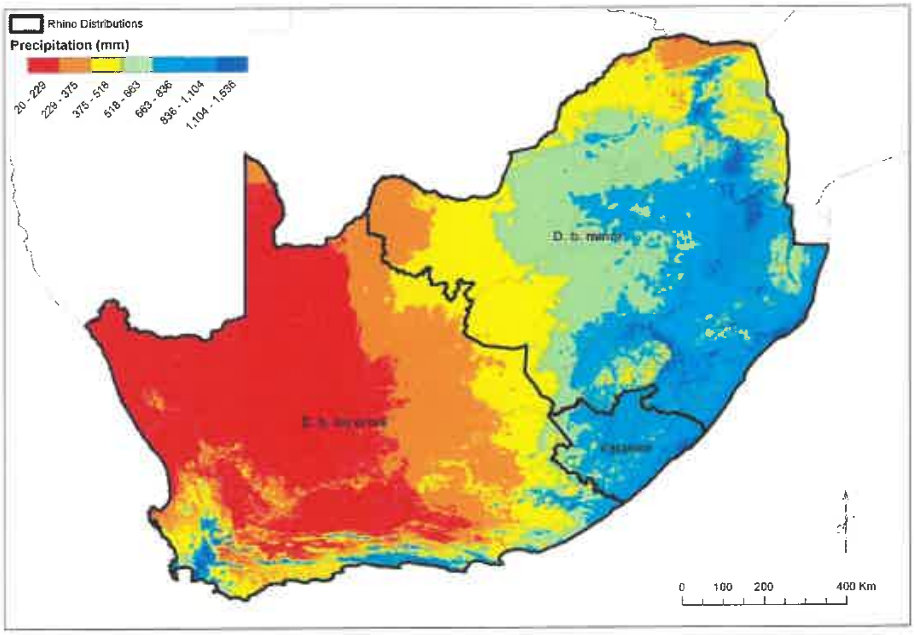


Figure 3. Geographic distribution of black rhino subspecies. The line separating the two subspecies ranges for management purposes. This is overlain by the national rainfall pattern. The area south of Lesotho labelled "Vacuum" is known as an area where black rhinos were historically absent (a vacuum).

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The breakdown of state managed and non-State owned (including private and community owned) black rhino numbers per province (and SANParks) in December 2023 are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Black rhino disaggregated per province (and SANParks) and ownership as of 31 December 2023 in South Africa. The total number of black rhinos at the end of 2023 was 2,092.

	State owned		Non-State owned			
Entity	**South-central black rhino** *D. b. minor*	**South-western black rhino** *D. b. bicornis*	**South-central black rhino** *D. b. minor*	**South-western black rhino** *D. b. bicornis*	**Eastern black rhino** *D. b. michaeli*	**Total per Province/ entity**
Eastern Cape	255	25	83	0	0	**363**
Free State	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
Gauteng	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
KZN	519	0	65	0	0	**584**
Limpopo	0	0	109	0	100	**209**
Mpumalanga	1	0	29	0	0	**30**
Northern Cape	0	0	0	85	0	**85**
North West	144	0	23	0	0	**167**
Western Cape	0	0	0	12	0	**12**
SANParks	294	348	0	0	0	**642**
TOTAL	**1,213**	**373**	**309**	**97**	**100**	
NATIONAL TOTAL						**2,092**

Following a roughly decade long hiatus in continental poaching of rhino for their horns, the pressure began to increase regionally again in 2003 and numerically peaked in 2014 (Figure 2). South Africa stewards approximately 67% of the continental herds of both black and white rhino combined. During2023, poaching of rhinos in South Africa represented approximately 85% of the continental total meaning that a disproportionate level of poaching takes place in South Africa. The figures represented in Figure 2 do not separate between black rhino and white rhino.

Since the increase in poaching in South Africa in 2008, the policy changes that have taken place in recent years, and the lessons learnt from the past BMPs for the three black rhino subspecies, there are a number of important considerations for this BMP, including:

- The percentage of black rhino under non-State ownership has increased to 24% (506). Private and communal black rhino owners are thus important players in black rhino conservation and incentives are required to increase conservation friendly management and limit management activities that diminish the conservation status of the national herd. Many owners of rhino (both black and white) advocate legalising trade in rhino horn, but there are constraints on this that must first be addressed before that is further considered as a possible national approach (see report from the COI; 2014).

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- Increased costs of security (estimated to be fivefold between 2012 and 2018[11]; and limited capacity to recoup the costs by owners has resulted in some private rhino owners disinvesting in rhino although the total number of properties with black rhino on them has only declined slightly.
- Rhino losses have not been evenly spread. Large state-run protected areas, notably KNP and Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park, have experienced the bulk of the poaching and this has been on white rhino.
- A once thriving domestic trade in live rhinos has substantially diminished with prices per black rhino being approx. R500,000 in 2011 and approx. R150,000 in 2023. The relationship to poaching pressure is not clear and the thriving trade may have been largely due to a unique set of circumstances.

2.1.2 White rhino in the South African context

Taxonomy

Kingdom:	Animalia
Phylum:	Chordata
Class:	Mammalia
Order:	Perissodactyla
Family:	Rhinocerotidae
Genus:	*Ceratotherium simum*
Subspecies:	*Ceratotherium simum simum* is indigenous to South Africa
	Ceratotherium simum cottoni is extinct in the wild

The white rhinoceros (*Ceratotherium simum*), commonly known as white rhino, is one of five remaining rhino species globally. The white rhino is indigenous to Africa and is not found naturally outside of the continent. The species survived a global population bottleneck of less than 50 individuals at the turn of the 20th century and, through conservation action, grew to a continental population of over 20,000 in the second decade of the 21st century: with over half of the national herd under private ownership. However considerable ongoing effort is necessary to continue to secure the national herd due to poaching pressure (Figure 2).

White rhinos are continentally listed on Appendix I of CITES (except for Namibia, South Africa and eSwatini where it is listed on Appendix II) and are classified as *Near Threatened* in the IUCN Red List[12]. Within South Africa the species is listed as a Protected Species in terms of NEMBA. The primary threats to the conservation of the species are population decline due to illegal killing of individuals for their horns. Population fragmentation, the small size of many subpopulations, genetic erosion and habitat loss are increasingly important considerations.

The northern white rhino is functionally extinct and there is only the indigenous subspecies/ecotype of white rhino, *i.e.* the southern white rhino, in South Africa (*C. s. simum*). In the early and mid-20th century, South Africa has played a dominant role in white rhino conservation generally since the 1980s and in southern white rhino conservation since the early 20th century. At the end of 2023 South Africa stewarded approximately 79% of continental white rhino[13]. At the end of 2022, more than half (59%) of white rhino in South Africa were privately owned with rapidly changing ownership and management models developing in the light of the poaching intensity[14]. The distribution of white rhino is not even within the continent and is largely determined by the availability of suitable habitat and management objectives (Table 2). The breakdown of state managed and privately owned (including community owned) white rhino numbers per province (and SANParks) in December 2023 are presented in Table 3.

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[11]. Clements, H.S., Knight, M., Jones, P. & Balfour, D. 2020. Private rhino conservation: Diverse strategies adopted in response to the poaching crisis. Conservation Letters. 2020;e12741. https://doi.org/10.1111/conl.12741.

[12] https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/6557/152728945.

[13] Clements et al 2023; Table 1

[14] Clements et al. 2020

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Table 2. Regional estimates of southern white rhino in Africa at the end of 2023.

Range State	*C.s. simum*		Range State	*C.s. simum*
Angola	0		Namibia	1430
Botswana	293		Rwanda	34
Chad	0		Senegal	3
Côte d'Ivoire	1		South Africa	14,074
DRC	31		Tanzania	0
Eswatini	91		Uganda	43
Kenya	973		Zambia	41
Malawi	0		Zimbabwe	493
Mozambique	40			

Table 3. White rhino disaggregated per province (and SANParks) and ownership as of 31 December 2023 in South Africa. The total number of white rhinos at the end of 2023 was 14,074 of which 61% were privately owned.

White rhino			
Entity	**State owned**	**Privately owned**	**Total per Province**
Eastern Cape	0	308	308
Free State	77	300	377
Gauteng	14	26	40
KZN	2,375	783	3,158
Limpopo	0	2,092	2,092
Mpumalanga	88	724	812
Northern Cape	0	1,298	1,298
North West	654	2,918	3,572
Western Cape	0	172	172
SANParks	2,245	0	2,245
TOTAL	**5,453**	**8,621**	
NATIONAL TOTAL			**14,074**

Off a low base in 1970, the trend in white rhino numbers was one of consistent increase until 2012 when the impact of the recent poaching pressure caused the trend to decline for a decade when again in 2021 the trend was reversed, and the national total began to increase again (Figure 4).

The poaching pressure increased in 2008 with a numerical peak in 2014 and 2015 (Figure 2), also substantially impacted on white rhinos with a disproportionate level of poaching taking place in South Africa. The figures represented in Figure 2 do not separate between black rhino and white rhino.

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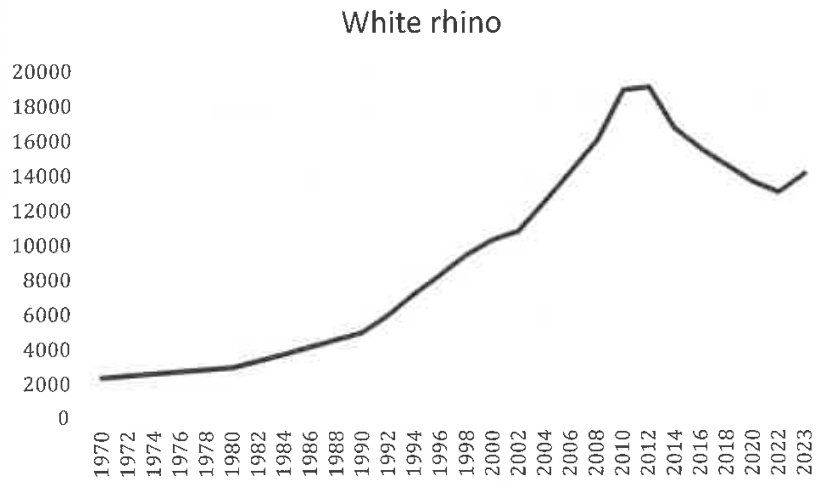


Figure 4. Trends in the number of white rhino (in South Africa (1970 to 2023).

With the policy changes that have taken place since the increase in poaching in 2008, as well as the interventions that have been initiated and the lessons learnt from the past BMPs for both rhino species, a number of important considerations for this BMP include:

- The percentage of white rhino under private and communal ownership has increased to 61% (8,621). Private and communal white rhino owners are thus important players in white rhino conservation and incentives are required to increase conservation friendly management and to limit management activities that diminish the conservation status of the national herd. Many advocate legalising trade in rhino horn, but there are constraints on this that need to first be addressed before that is a possible solution (see report from the COI; 2014).
- Increased costs of security (estimated to be fivefold between 2012 and 2018[15]) and limited capacity to recoup the costs by owners (commonly attributed to an inability of private owners to trade their horn internationally) has resulted in many private rhino owners disinvesting in rhino and the total number of properties with rhino on them declining by approximately 50% (from approx. 300 to approx. 150)[16].
- Rhino losses have not been evenly spread. Large state managed protected areas, notably KNP and Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park, have experienced the bulk of the poaching.
- A once thriving domestic trade in rhinos has substantially diminished with prices per white rhino being approx. R350,000 in 2011 and approx. R150,000 in 2023. The relationship to poaching pressure is not clear and the thriving trade may have been largely due to a unique set of circumstances.
- An increased number of rhinos are managed under conditions requiring regular supplementary feeding at times of the year.

2.1.3 Horns, dehorning, and horn stockpiles of both black and white rhino

At the end of 2023 there were 16,166 rhinos (black and white) in South Africa. Through natural mortality, translocations, and dehorning (often implemented for security purposes), there is a steady growth in the number of

[15] Clements, H.S., Knight, M., Jones, P. & Balfour, D. 2020. Private rhino conservation: Diverse strategies adopted in response to the poaching crisis. Conservation Letters. 2020;e12741. https://doi.org/10.1111/conl.12741.
[16] The vast majority of these properties had white rhino at the end of 2014.

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rhino horns in stockpiles nationally. This has been the case even through the period in which white rhino numbers declined due to poaching and will be the case over the next decade. The security of all rhino horn stockpiles, together with the need for them to be audited and the information databased is important – for this there is a need for policy development which details guidelines for stockpile management.

2.1.4. Trophy hunting

Trophy hunting enables rhino owners in South Africa to generate revenue and to offset some of the costs of rhino management. South African legislation makes provision for trophy hunting of both black and white rhino and the activity is well regulated through an individual hunting permit and other legislative requirements. The number of black rhino that can be hunted each year is subject to an annual hunting quota that is determined through a "non-detrimental finding" process by the Scientific Authority in accordance with CITES Resolution Conf. 13.5 (Rev. CoP18).

3 LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY CONTEXT

3.1 Global Context

South Africa is a party to a number of international Conventions and other intergovernmental policy frameworks that provide a platform for the collaboration and coordination in relation to global biodiversity. This section outlines international obligations that are binding to South Africa.

3.1.1 The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

South Africa is a signatory to the CBD, and this imposes an international responsibility on the country to conserve its black and white rhino herd. The objectives of the CBD are the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources. The programmes of work developed under the CBD encourage Parties to take a wide range of actions to biodiversity conservation and sustainable use.

The National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) is a requirement of contracting parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)l. An NBSAP sets out an integrated, coherent national strategy for the conservation, management and sustainable use of biodiversity and specifically, outlines how contracting parties will fulfil the objectives of the Convention. The NBSAP also provides a framework for the integration of biodiversity considerations into other sectoral plans and strategies, and as such, is an important mainstreaming tool. The strategic objective of the NBSAP (2015 – 2025), is for biodiversity priorities to be mainstreamed into domestic policies, strategies and practices. This is to take place in a range of sectors., This enables the development of biodiversity management plans for species of special concern.

Global Biodiversity Framework:
The Global Biodiversity Framework emanated from the CBD Conference of Parties held in 2022. The outcome of the COP resulted in the generation of 23 targets aimed at addressing critical issues affecting biodiversity conservation. Parties to the CBD are obligated to adapt these targets to their country's needs in order to enable optimal implementation. There are several targets that will play an indirect role for this BMP, in its implementation, specifically Target 4 which is to "*Ensure urgent management actions to halt human induced extinction of known threatened species and for the recovery and conservation of species, in particular threatened species, to significantly reduce extinction risk, as well as to maintain and restore the genetic diversity within and between populations of native, wild and domesticated species to maintain their adaptive potential, including through in situ and ex situ conservation and sustainable management practices, and effectively manage human-wildlife interactions to minimize human-wildlife conflict for coexistence*".

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3.1.2 The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)

South Africa is a Party to CITES which governs and controls international trade in endangered species. The black and white rhino is listed in Appendix I of CITES which imposes the highest levels of control. The white rhino populations of Namibia, South Africa and eSwatini are however exempted from this status, as those populations of white rhino are listed on Appendix II. Under CITES all commercial international trade in both the black and white rhino derivatives such as horn is prohibited except in the circumstances provided by CITES. Permits may be issued for the export of live animals to appropriate and acceptable destinations and hunting trophies in the case of eSwatini and South Africa. For Namibia this is for the exclusive purpose of allowing international trade in live animals for in-situ conservation, and only within the natural and historical range of both black and white rhino in Africa (provided that the export is not detrimental to the survival of the species in the wild and the individual has been obtained legally). It is generally recommended that prior to export or import of any white rhinos, clarification on legalities is sought from the CITES Management Authorities of the countries of export and import. For the translocation of a black and white rhino listed in Appendix I to another country, the importing country's CITES Management Authority has to issue a CITES import permit before the exporting country's CITES Management Authority will issue a corresponding export permit. With regards to white rhino criteria for the export of live white rhino to appropriate and acceptable destinations in captive facilities was published in February 2018. For white rhino, South Africa's population is included in Appendix II through an annotation, the horn remains in Appendix I and therefore under a commercial trade prohibition.

In addition to the above, South Africa has an export quota for black rhino hunting trophies as approved in Resolution Conf. 13.5 (Rev. CoP 14), to "a number of adult male black rhinoceros not exceeding 0.5% of the total black rhinoceros' population in South Africa in the year of export". The percentage will be equally applied across all three subspecies, i.e. 0.5% of the total population of each of the three subspecies. This cautious or conservative adjustment in the export quota aims to improve the ability of South Africa: 1) to continue expanding the species' range in South Africa through incentivizing the keeping and protection of viable populations of black rhinoceroses; 2) to increase or maintain productive population growth rates of black rhinoceros through the effective management of surplus males; and 3) to promote sustainability and resilience in the national metapopulation of black rhinoceros. In addition, given that the current system is in a state of flux as a result of ongoing poaching, adjusting the trophy hunting quota to 0.5% of the total black rhinoceros population allows for flexibility and an adaptive management approach.

3.2 NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

3.2.1 The South African Constitution

Conservation in South Africa is premised on Section 24 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 which provides the following:

Everyone has the right: -

a) To an environment that is not harmful to their health or wellbeing, and
b) To have the environment protected for the benefit of present and future generations, through reasonable legislation and other measures that:
    i. prevent pollution and ecological degradation;
    ii. Promote conservation, and
    iii. Secure ecologically sustainable development and use of natural resources while promoting justifiable economic and social development.

3.2.2 National Environmental Management Act (Act No. 107 of 1998) (NEMA)

NEMA creates the fundamental legal framework that gives effect to the environmental right guaranteed in section 24 of the Constitution. The Act provides for cooperative governance in relation to environmental matters by

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establishing the necessary government institutions that will ensure proper implementation of environmental protection and management. NEMA provides a framework in which development or resource use projects are established in a sustainable manner, considering their possible negative impact on the environment. Within this framework, development or resource use in South Africa are now considered economically, socially, and environmentally integrated processes.

NEMA provides general principles of environmental management that are to be applied in all decision making undertaken by the state where the environment may be affected (Section 2). The primary purpose of these principles is to ensure the achievement of the 'environmental right' held in the Bill of Rights in the country's constitution (Republic of South Africa 1996).

3.2.3 National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act, 2004 (Act No. 10 of 2004) (NEM: BA)

NEMBA is a specific environmental management Act which gives effect to the constitutional requirement to protect the environment through preventing ecological degradation, promoting conservation and securing ecologically sustainable use. Chapter 3 of NEMBA provides for the planning and monitoring of biodiversity, and Section 43 (1)(b) and (c) of NEMBA provide for any person, organisation or organ of state, desiring to contribute to biodiversity management, to submit to the Minister for approval a draft BMP for an indigenous or migratory species warranting special conservation attention.

Section 44 of NEMBA makes provision for the Minister to enter into a Biodiversity Management Agreement (BMA) with the person, organisation or organ of state identified in terms of section 43(2), or any other suitable person, organisation or organ of state, regarding the implementation of a BMP for a Species (BMP-S) or an Ecosystem (BMP-E), or any aspect of it.

NEMBA requires a permit to be issued in order for a person to carry out a restricted activity concerning the black and white rhino. A restricted activity, as defined in section 1 of NEMBA, includes, but is not limited to, possessing (exercising physical control over) any black and white rhino, translocating, moving, hunting, breeding, capturing, killing, removing parts, importing or exporting into or from South Africa, selling, donating or accepting any black and white rhino or any of its derivatives as a gift. The wellbeing of both species of rhino is provided for.

Supporting regulatory provisions that inform conservation and sustainable use of rhino include:

1. General notice published in the Government Gazette, No. 37736, of 13 June 2014 on Coordination of permits for rhinos - all applications for permits for international trade in any rhino specimens, which include live rhinos and rhino horn, to be submitted to DFFE for recommendation.
2. Written agreement in terms of section 87A(3) for the Minister (instead of the MEC) to be the issuing authority for selling/ buying of rhino horn issued on 15 February 2016.
4. Norms and Standards for the Marking of Rhinoceros and Rhinoceros Horn and the Hunting of Rhinoceros for Trophy Hunting Purposes (2018) (Rhino Norms and Standards); reporting of death of rhino or theft of rhino horn within 5 working days; procedures for collection of DNA samples; safe keeping of rhino horn and disposal of rhino horn.
5. Regulations have been published (2020) in terms of Section 97 of NEMBA to provide for trade in rhinoceros horn and associated activities including their export and re-export but they are currently not in force.

3.2.4 Threatened or Protected Species (TOPS) Regulations

The TOPS regulations developed in terms of Section 97 of NEMBA came into force on 01 June 2007 (GN R.150 as published in Gazette No. 29657 of 23 February 2007). The TOPS Regulations, among others, provide for the protection of wild populations of listed TOPS, regulate the permit system in respect of listed TOPS, provide for the registration of specific facilities and persons, *e.g.*, captive breeding facilities and wildlife translocators, regulate

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hunting as a specific restricted activity, and prohibit the manner in which specific restricted activities are carried out. Black and white rhino may not be transported to a protected area that falls outside the natural distribution range of the species. This prohibition is not applicable to extensive wildlife systems that have not been declared as protected areas.

3.2.5 CITES Regulations

It is a requirement of CITES that Parties must regulate international trade through national legislation, hence the promulgation of the CITES Regulations in 2010 under NEMBA, to give effect to the provisions of CITES.

3.2.6 Norms and Standards for Biodiversity Management Plans for Species

NEMBA makes provision for the development of Biodiversity Management Plans for Species (BMP-S). To effect this, the Department developed Norms and Standards (N & S) for BMP-S which were gazetted in March 2009 for implementation. The purpose of these N & S is to provide a national approach and minimum standards for the development of a BMP-S. A BMP-S can be developed by any person, or organ of state desiring to contribute to the management of biodiversity in South Africa and achievement of the objectives of the NEMBA. Additionally, a BMP-S can be developed for any indigenous or migratory species. The BMP aims to provide for the long-term survival of a species in the wild and provides the platform for an implementing organisation or responsible entity as appointed by the Minister to monitor and report on the progress regarding the implementation of the BMP.

3.2.7 National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act, 2003 (Act No. 57 of 2003) (NEMPAA)

NEMPAA provides for the protection and conservation of ecologically viable areas representative of South Africa's biodiversity and natural landscapes and seascapes in protected areas. Protected areas in South Africa offer a viable tool for the protection and maintenance of ecologically viable numbers of the white rhino and their associated habitat.

3.2.8 The Game Theft Act, 1991 (Act No. 105 of 1991)

The intent of the Game Theft Act is to enable private ownership of wildlife under certain conditions which otherwise would be considered to have a *res nullius* status. The conditions are that a person who keeps, asserts ownership and/or holds game on land that is sufficiently enclosed or in or on a vehicle, shall not lose ownership if the game escapes from such enclosed land or vehicle. In addition, any person who enters another person's land with intent to steal game thereon shall be guilty of an offence. This Act has enabled private ownership rights and led to a period in which there was an active market in rhinos in South Africa.

3.2.9 Other relevant South African legislation, policies and strategies

Apart from the overarching National Environmental Management Act, 1997 (Act No. 107 of 1998) (NEMA) and its related specific environmental management Acts, the conservation acts/ordinances of the nine provinces are important regulatory instruments for the regulation of wild plant and animal species in South Africa. Supporting decision making instruments include national norms and standards (i.e., the Rhino Norms and Standards) and provincial policies. In extreme cases prohibition of activities involving wildlife may be instituted either at national or provincial level. Other Acts such as the Animals Protection Act which aims to prevent animal cruelty in South Africa is also applicable to wildlife. The Animal Health Act, Animals Diseases Act, the Medicines and Related Substances

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Act and the Animal Improvement Act (providing for the breeding of "genetically superior" animal) may also be relevant to rhino conservation.

3.2.10 Draft National Biodiversity Economy Strategy

The draft National Biodiversity Economy Strategy (NBES) responds to the White Paper on Conservation and Sustainable Use of South Africa's Biodiversity and enhances opportunities to contribute to a range of elements of the National Development Plan. The NBES is founded on the key pillars of conservation, sustainable use and beneficiation of biodiversity business value chains, and transformation, which will promote sustainable and inclusive socio-economic development. This requires growing and sustaining conservation land and seascapes while promoting and facilitating inclusive biodiversity-based businesses that drive transformation of the biodiversity sector. The NBES is underpinned by two cross-cutting imperatives: Cross-cutting Imperative 1: Leverage the Biodiversity Economy to promote conservation and species and ecosystem management, thereby ensuring a positive feedback loop; and Cross-cutting Imperative 2: Promote growth and transformation of the Biodiversity Economy.

The NBES sets out to achieve four Strategic Goals, two of which are directly pertinent to this plan: Goal 1: Leveraging biodiversity-based features to scale inclusive ecotourism industry growth in seascapes and in sustainable conservation land-use; and Goal 2: Consumptive use of Game from extensive wildlife systems at scale that drive transformation and expanded sustainable conservation compatible land-use.

3.2.11 Draft National Strategy for Safety and Security of Rhinoceros Populations in South Africa (NSSSRPSA)

Since the increase in poaching pressure in 2008 South Africa has been through a process of policy reform and development in order to respond adaptively to the increased risks to the viability of the country's rhino populations. In 2010, the National Strategy for the Safety and Security of Rhinoceros Populations in South Africa (NSSSRPSA) was developed to provide guiding principles to inform decision-making processes, strategic planning and operations aimed at reducing the effects of poaching on rhino species, The Strategy was drafted at a time when it was not clear how long the increased poaching would last for and how serious it would become. This strategy remained in place until it was superseded by processes related to the "Rhino Lab" and the development of the National Integrated Strategy to Combat Wildlife Trafficking (NISCWT), which was approved by Cabinet in May 2023.

3.2.12 National Integrated Strategy to Combat Wildlife Trafficking (NISCWT)

The NISCWT is aimed at reducing the threat that wildlife trafficking poses to national security, by establishing an integrated strategic framework for an intelligence-led, well-resourced, multidisciplinary and consolidated law enforcement approach to focus and direct law enforcement's ability, supported by the whole of government and society. To achieve this, three main strategic objectives are set out in the NISCWT:

- Improving law enforcement, supported by the whole of government and society approach, to effectively investigate, prosecute and adjudicate wildlife trafficking, as a form of transnational organised crime.
- Increasing the government's ability to detect, prevent and combat wildlife trafficking in South Africa and beyond.
- Increasing national, regional and international law enforcement collaboration and cooperation on the combating of wildlife trafficking.

Achieving the above-mentioned objectives will significantly increase the South African government's ability to not only detect and counter wildlife trafficking, but also prevent this form of serious transnational organised crime.

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3.2.13 Rhino Issue Management (2012-2013)

In 2012 the Rhino Issues Management (RIM) process was undertaken to facilitate the development of a common understanding of key issues concerning the protection and sustainable conservation of the South African rhino population. Sixteen workshops were held with broadly defined stakeholders. At the time, early in the process, the agreement was that the focus of discussions should be premised primarily on measures that must be taken in the short and long term to save the rhino. In this regard conservation, trade and aesthetic proposals/ considerations would only have relevance if they fulfilled the objective of securing the safety and long-term survival of the rhino. The outcome of this process was a series of recommendations covering funding, safety and security, conservation, and commerce and trade.

3.2.14 Committee of Inquiry (2014-2015)

In 2014, in response to the ongoing increase in rhino poaching, and in preparation for the 17th Conference of the Parties to CITES, the Minister of Environmental Affairs appointed a COI to advise on the southern white rhino and African elephant proposals for trade to CITES at the time. The scope of the advice sought included consideration of the implications of potential international trade in rhino horn as assessed through different trade models. Through a process of stakeholder consultation, scenario planning, case study analysis, decision-tree and a SWOT analysis processes, the COI identified five key areas that require interventions that not only address poaching of rhino in their natural habitat, but also are needed to address wildlife crime in general and to realise benefits associated with successful conservation.

At the time, the COI was strongly of the view that interventions in specific areas are essential for an effective response to rhino poaching in South Africa, irrespective of any stance on international trade in rhino horn. These interventions are required to address governance and other challenges in the following areas:

a. Security (enforcement, wildlife crime, and disruption of organized crime).
b. Community empowerment (socio-economic impact of poaching on communities and the development of reciprocal partnerships between protected area management authorities and communities).
c. Demand management.
d. Biological management (to meet the requirements for minimum viable populations, including range expansion); and
e. Responsive legislative provisions that are effectively implemented and enforced.

In addition to the five governance challenges, the COI additionally addressed the issues of:

i) how to deal with the demand from consumer countries, and
ii) how to provide sustainable funding for ongoing efforts to reduce poaching and illegal wildlife trade.

The COI identified four possible options based on different solutions to challenges of managing the demand for rhino horn, which were:

- Option 1: No trade in rhino, backed by a policy change that bans international trade in key affected species and strongly supports demand reduction.
- Option 2: Application of current policy, no consideration of commercial trade, investment in demand reduction.
- Option 3: Application of current policy, with no immediate intention to trade in rhino horn, but maintaining the option to re-consider regulated legal international trade in rhino horn when requirements are met; and
- Option 4: Promote regulated, legal international trade as soon as the governance conditions are met.

Cabinet adopted Option 3, above, which recognises that commercial international trade in rhino horn is not allowed under the CITES provisions at the time and that submitting a trade proposal to CITES should only be reconsidered once certain minimum requirements are met.

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The COI also considered a number of possible trade mechanisms for future consideration of a trade proposal. These were subjected to a SWOT analysis, although it was acknowledged that it would not be possible to finalise the institutional design of trade mechanisms without engaging with and obtaining agreement from potential trade partners and an agreement from government and various stakeholders on the roles in the management and control of any trade mechanisms. A decade has passed since Cabinet adopted Option 3 of the COI report and there has been subsequent policy and legislative development since then.

3.2.15 The Rhino Conservation Lab (2016)

In the context of the wider Biodiversity Economy Operation Phakisa (Lab), the Rhino Conservation Lab in 2016 worked for 2.5 weeks to identify challenges and developed detailed action plans and budgets to operationalise the COI recommendations. The Rhino Lab was an unprecedented process, bringing together more than 70 experts from more than 20 organisations from Private Sector, Academia, NGOs and Public Sector, creating collaboration across departments, including the security cluster, and committing to budgeted plans with a high level of accountability. The Rhino Lab built on the five key interventions identified by the COI namely a) security, b) community empowerment, c) demand management/reduction, d) biological management and e) responsive legislation. Implementation was coordinated by the Branch Biodiversity and Conservation and reporting was done through the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation. Implementation of the action plan has been variable, with some notable achievements in some areas and limited progress in others. This is largely due to a lack of a monitoring mechanism.

a) Security

The Security (enforcement, wildlife crime, and disruption of organized crime) pillar seeks to significantly enhance the country's law enforcement capacity to counter transnational organised crime (including wildlife trafficking). This intent has been advanced through Cabinet's approval of the NISCWT (2023) and the first year of addressing the Implementation Plan is being overseen by the NatJoints Priority Committee on Wildlife Trafficking. The structure of the Implementation Plan for NISCWT is such that it includes all the COI strategic interventions on security and these interventions are thus being addressed under the oversight of the NatJoints and are in various stages of implementation.

b) Community empowerment

The Community Empowerment (socio-economic impact of poaching on communities and the development of reciprocal partnerships between protected area management authorities and communities) pillar seeks to improve both socio-economic conditions of rural communities neighbouring protected areas and their relationships with agencies managing protected areas, to develop a conducive environment for strong mutual partnerships around natural resource management and beneficiation. This intent has been advanced through a range of interventions that are ongoing. These include Departmental staff working with stakeholders around protected areas (including the People and Parks Programme being implemented at provincial and national levels and the Wildlife Forum being regularly convened), rhino champions being appointed, awareness programs being conducted at identified "hotspots" and through other means (*e.g.*, radio), and the inclusion of community members onto the Boards of key conservation agencies.

c) Biological Management

The Biological Management (to meet the requirements for minimum viable populations, including range expansion) pillar seeks to put conditions in place that will enable rhino populations to persist in their natural habitat and with unmanipulated vital rates. This will enable South Africa to serve as a source of rhino that can be used to repopulate the original rhino range in other rhino Range States. This intent has been advanced through a range of interventions including the publication of BMPs for both indigenous rhino species, which was completed for black rhino (2013) and white rhino (2015), and for which this BMP is a revision. South Africa has

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also contributed to the ongoing drafting of a continental rhino conservation framework, and ongoing bilateral engagements with SADC countries.

d) Demand Management / Reduction

The Demand Management/ Reduction pillar established a set of thresholds that need to be met before trade in rhino horn can be proposed by South Africa. Although some groundwork had commenced this pillar has made the least implementation progress.

e) Responsive Legislation

The Responsive Legislative Provisions pillar seeks to ensure that the government proactively identifies gaps in legislation and policy and to implement amendments that are required to address the gaps. The effective implementation of provisions, compliance monitoring and enforcement must also be strengthened to ensure the use of the legislative tools is optimized. Progress that has been made includes the amendment of the Rhino Norms & Standards (2018) to provide stricter measures for marking of horns *etc.*, and draft regulations and prohibitions relating to trade in rhino horn were developed and published for implementation (2020), but they have not yet commenced. The TOPS list was amended to include Eastern black rhino as a protected species (to address laundering of indigenous rhino horns as a non-indigenous specimen), a draft Biodiversity Bill provides for listing of priority species for which stricter penalties will be applicable, and tax incentives for rhino conservation have been developed and implemented as part of the Biodiversity Management Agreements. Additionally, electronic permit systems for TOPS and for CITES have been developed. The TOPS Regulations have been revised to require compulsory reporting on restricted activities carried out in terms of permits issued and government and private rhino horn stockpiles are audited annually by the DFFE.

3.2.16 High-Level Panel

In October 2019, the Minister of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries appointed an Advisory Committee (High-Level Panel or HLP) to review policies, legislation and practices on matters related to the management, breeding, hunting, trade and handling of elephants, lions, leopards, and black and white rhino. The HLP report covers the deliberations of the HLP, which resulted in recommendations regarding 18 goals.

Importantly with respect to this BMP, the HLP:

a. Recommended the development of a National Policy on Biodiversity and Sustainable Use (this has been achieved).
b. Highlighted the importance of transformation in the sector, including empowerment and capacitation of communities living with wildlife, and recognition of their traditions and culture.
c. Noted the importance of thriving populations of the five iconic species as catalysts for a vibrant, responsible, inclusive, transformed, and sustainable wildlife sector.
d. Recognised the need to focus attention on capacity building, education, training, and empowerment of human capital across the wildlife sector.
e. Highlighted the need for standards and practices within the wildlife sector to meet the minimum acceptable standards for animal welfare and well-being.
f. Recognised the need for legislative reform and improved implementation practice in the sector.
g. Asserted the need for an improved and rational contribution of protected areas to support conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and to underpin rural economies.
h. Noted South Africa's international standing as a conservation leader, and the need to take actions to mitigate risks to the country's reputation including strategic communication.
i. Emphasised the need for responsible, adaptive, transparent, and accountable management of wildlife and associated habitats.
j. Asserted that live export of the five iconic species should promote in situ conservation of species.

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k. Encouraged that South Africa takes a leadership position in promoting range state consensus in relation to international commercial trade in rhino horn, including options for future stockpile use.
l. Where consensus was not achieved (i.e., a majority and minority view were expressed), the majority view became the recommendation as follows:
    a. Recommended reversing the trend towards increasing intensive management of rhinos through phasing out captive rhino breeding (including registration of facilities) over time and allowing for a sustainable conservation outcome; and
    b. Encouraged that clarity is provided that trade in captive rhino horn would not be supported or approved prior to the Rhino Committee of Inquiry recommendations being met.

In 2021 the DFFE coordinated two workshops with rhino stakeholders to forge an improved relationship between government and role players, towards operationalisation of HLP recommendations on rhino. The main aim was to provide an opportunity to reflect on the journey travelled thus far and importantly to formulate an integrated approach amongst government, industry and other key stakeholders that would secure and sustain the rhino population in South Africa. Information was shared on progress made thus far on the implementation of the Rhino Lab outcomes, HLP recommendations and discussions on how these could best be integrated into the Rhino Lab action plan, remaining challenges and proposed solutions for fast-tracked implementation in particular relating to the five pillars (biological management, security/law enforcement, community empowerment, demand management/reduction, responsive legislation). Different stakeholder groupings made several commitments including on how they would hold themselves and others accountable in pursuing their shared commitment, 'Save the Rhino'. The recommended revision of the BMP was viewed as a critical step towards broad based engagement of stakeholders.

3.2.17 White Paper on Conservation and Sustainable Use of South Africa's Biodiversity

The White Paper was Gazetted on 14 June 2023 for implementation. The White Paper reviews, updates and builds on the 1997 Draft White Paper on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of South Africa's Biodiversity. The White Paper was developed to promote the conservation of the rich biodiversity and ecological infrastructure that supports ecosystem functioning for livelihoods and the well-being of people and nature, and identified the following challenges that require policy intervention:

a. Fragmented conservation responsibilities, duplication of efforts and underfunded conservation mandates that hamper the effective conservation and sustainable use of South Africa's biodiversity.
b. Inadequate transformation in the sector, where most of the population are disadvantaged disenfranchised from contributing to conservation and sustainable use.
c. Inadequate efforts in addressing the global challenges of biodiversity loss, land degradation and climate change in the context of sustainable development.
d. Proliferation of biodiversity and conservation legislation, uneven governance, limited capacity and declining allocation of resources in the management of biodiversity and inadequate revenue generation efforts.
e. Practices within the sector that have brought the country into disrepute.

In addressing these challenges, the White Paper emphasises the importance of the biodiversity sector to South Africa's economy, underpinned by strengthened conservation, sustainable use and access, and fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilisation within a duty of care of biodiversity and its components. Using the vision: *An inclusive, transformed society living in harmony with nature, where biodiversity conservation and sustainable use ensure healthy ecosystems, with improved benefits that are fairly and equitably shared for present and future generations.*

The four goals and two enabling conditions identified in the White Paper are as follows:

Goal 1: Enhanced Biodiversity: All biological diversity and its components conserved.

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Goal 2: Sustainable Use: The sustainable use of biodiversity enhances thriving living land and seascapes and ecosystems, livelihoods, and human well-being, while a duty of care avoids, minimises, or remedies adverse impacts on biodiversity.

Goal 3: Equitable Access and Benefit Sharing: Benefits are derived and shared from the use and development of South Africa's genetic and biological resources, without compromising the national interests.

Goal 4: Transformed Conservation and Sustainable Use: Effect is given to the environmental right as contained in Section 24 of the Constitution which facilitates redress and promotes transformation.

Enabler 1: Integrated, Mainstreamed and Effective Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use: Integrated policy and practice across government and effective implementation of Multilateral Environmental Agreements.

Enabler 2: Enhanced Means of Implementation: Expanded and developed ability to effectively conserve biodiversity, to manage its use and benefits, while addressing factors threatening biodiversity.

In seeking to give effect to the White Paper it explicitly recognizes that the responsibility rests with a range of stakeholders, including, but not limited to, the state, traditional leaders, traditional health practitioners, communities, private landowners, industry, academia, non-government organisations and civil society. Building partnerships, particularly community – private partnerships, between these constituencies will be important.

3.2.18 Policy Position on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Elephant, Lion, Leopard and Rhinoceros.

The Policy Position on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Elephant, Lion, Leopard and Rhinoceros (Policy Position) was published for public comment on 19 September 2023 and was based on the Rhino COI, the HLP Report, and the White Paper. The Policy Position was published for implementation on 24 April 2024. The Policy Position contains three objectives pertinent to rhino – largely white rhino – which fall under two policy objectives. Each policy objective has associated Actions for Implementation some of which are relevant to this BMP. The draft policy objectives are:

Policy objective 2: *To phase out the intensive management and captive breeding operations of rhinoceros for commercial purposes and enhance wild populations.*

Actions for Implementation

1) The rewilding of rhinos for conservation purposes.
2) Process for engagement and consultation with all stakeholders on the strategy for conservation rhinos.
3) Intensive management practices that compromise the conservation of rhinoceros reversed, with sensible solutions, considering the poaching risks, for safe re-introduction to the wild in South Africa and regionally.
4) Clarification to the industry that any registrations of CITES Captive Breeding Operations (CBOs), any forms of production or any certification as captive specimens, in terms of the CITES Regulations for international trade, as well as commercial international trade in horns from rhino CBOs, will not be officially supported/and or approved until the recommendations of Option 3 of the COI and the Rhino Action Plan are fully addressed.
5) Collectively crafted and implemented transition plan to continue strong protection of rhinoceros with incentivises for rhino owners to introduce and re-introduce white rhinoceros to extensive wildlife systems.
6) Mechanisms to enhance partnerships for expanding state, privately owned and community extensive wildlife areas for rhinoceros' conservation and sustainable use.

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Implementing the above identified actions will result in enhanced conservation outcomes for captive and intensively managed white rhinoceros, with associated sustainable benefit flows.

Policy objective 4: *To promote live export of the specimens the five species (including rhinoceros) to range states or any appropriate and acceptable destinations with suitable habitats on the African continent.*

Actions for Implementation

1) Develop enabling regulatory tools to prevent the introduction of wild specimens of the five species into captivity, to prevent the export of specimens of the five specimens, except to range states or any other appropriate and acceptable destinations with suitable habitat on the African continent, for re-introduction into the wild; and
2) At the time of export, ensure commitment from the Management Authority of the importing country to prevent both (i) export to third countries other than appropriate and acceptable destinations with suitable habitats on the African continent; and (ii) international commercial trade of parts and derivatives.

Implementing the above actions will promote in-situ conservation and sustainable use of the five species across Africa.

Policy objective 5: *South Africa will work with range states and potential destination countries to support a proposal for international commercial trade in rhinoceros' horn from protected wild rhinoceros, for conservation purposes, when conditions become favourable.* (These conditions to be met are indicators of the five pillars; namely security (law enforcement); community empowerment; biological management; responsive legislative provisions and effective implementation, and demand management / reduction, and these remain the core of this BMP together with new contributions identified in the consultation process.)

Actions for Implementation

1) A formalised position that South Africa will not submit a proposal to CITES for an amendment to the appendices to enable commercial international trade in South African rhinoceros' specimens, until there is sufficient progress on the implementation of key requirements of the COI Option 3 (in terms of security/law enforcement, community empowerment, biological management, responsive legislation provisions and effective implementation and demand management/reduction) to justify such a proposal.
2) Benefit streams alternative to international rhinoceros horn trade, including a strategy that identifies private rhinoceros owners' key challenges, and how solutions to these can be supported, developed. Unique circumstances under which private rhino owners were able to profitably generate revenue from rhinos as existed in the 1990s (such as the initiation of private property rights for wildlife, opportunities for trophy hunting, loosely regulated and enforced sales of horn, low prices of white rhinos due to abundant availability out of state managed reservoirs, increased expectation (if unrealistic) of the potential opening of legal international trade in rhino horn) resulted in a surge in investment in live rhinos, particularly white rhinos and this led to increased sale prices. These circumstances have changed and the markets have responded. The increased levels of poaching are overlain on this backdrop. Future expectations of private rhino owners need to be tailored to circumstances at the
3) Key requirements of the COI Option 3 in terms of international commercial trade in rhinoceros horn urgently implemented.
4) Comprehensive updated rhinoceros population report based on updated censuses.
5) Ensure that horn stockpiles are always adequately accounted for and secured.

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6) Consensus with private rhinoceros' owners and rhinoceros range states on global conservation of rhinoceros, and consensus with rhinoceros range states and potential destination countries on whether and under what conditions international commercial trade in rhinoceros' horn for conservation purposes would be acceptable, bearing in mind the COI option 3 conditions for trade.

Implementing the above identified actions will enhance conservation and sustainable use of protected wild rhinoceros under private, community, and state ownership.

4. SUMMARY OF PLANNING METHODOLOGY

4.1 Summary of main findings of reviews of BMPs for black and white rhino

As a process to initiate the revision process, the implementation of the two BMPs were assessed and below is the summary of the main findings of the implementation review process. The findings of this process informed the revision of the two BMPs:

- The structure of the two BMPs differs, which negatively affects implementation and reporting on common issues e.g., security.
- The implementation section of both plans (with Objectives and Activities) has no baselines and does not adhere to SMART principles. This has important consequences for monitoring, evaluation, and reporting.
- Monitoring data, *i.e.*, data that are necessary for reporting need to be agreed, together with the methodologies and responsibilities for collecting, consolidating and curating them. This applies equally to State, private, and communal sites. Some data may be collected by outside parties e.g., arrests and prosecutions.
- Insufficient attention was given to drafting plans that can be incorporated into the Departmental Annual Performance Plan, detailing the responsible persons, budgets, targets, *etc.*
- The absence of a national database for key rhino metrics (sites, population numbers, poaching losses, translocations, sales prices, hunting, horn stockpiles *etc.*), and supporting the BMPs significantly impedes monitoring, evaluation, and reporting efforts.
- Transformation (increasing ownership and decision-making regarding rhino) is an important agenda in South Africa and the plans need to clearly detail how this will be achieved.
- National and international coordination and cooperation are important; South Africa can play a leading role in this.
- The nature of the Rhino Management Group has changed over time, and it has become more clearly embedded in policy development.
- Effective communication between DFFE and other stakeholders is essential, especially with more than half the rhino in the world belonging to the private sector in South Africa and there are a range of management objectives that owners have.
- The National consultation sessions clearly indicated that people seek increased knowledge, awareness, and access to experiencing rhino for a range of reasons including spirituality.

NB. Many of the activities included in the two plans are site level interventions as opposed to being framed at the national strategic level.

4.2 Stakeholder consultation process

A stakeholder mapping process was conducted to identify key stakeholders that would be important in the consultation process for the development of the revised BMPs. This process resulted in the identification of the stakeholders below.

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Table 1: Organisations that are involved in developing and implementing various aspects of the black and white Rhino BMP

National Governments and their Entities	• Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (Biodiversity and Conservation; Regulatory Compliance and Enforcement) • Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD) • Department of International Relations and Cooperation • Department of Sports, Arts and Culture • Department of Tourism • South African National Biodiversity Institute • South African National Parks • iSimangaliso Wetland Park • South African National Police Services
Provincial Government and their Entities	• Eastern Cape Province: Department of Economic Development, Environmental Affairs and Tourism • Free State: Department of Economic, Small Business Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs • Gauteng Province: Department of Agriculture and Rural Development • Limpopo Province: Department of Economic Development, Environment and Tourism • Northern Cape Province: Department of Environment and Nature Conservation • North West: Department of Economic Development, Environment, Conservation and Tourism • CapeNature • Eastern Cape Parks and Tourism Agency • Ezemvelo KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife • Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency • North West Parks and Tourism Board
Community Organisations and Programmes	• People and Parks Forum • Traditional Health Practitioners and Healers Organisations • Traditional Leaders
Academic Institutions	• University of Pretoria • University of Venda
Non-Government Organisations; Industry; Research & Wildlife Sector	• African Parks • EWT • CHASA • CPHC • HSI • NSPCA • PARC • PHASA • PROA • Project Rhino KZN • Rhino Owners and Reserve Managers • Rhino Recovery Fund • SAHGCA • SAVA • TRAFFIC • Wildlife ACT

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	• Wildlife Forum • WRSA • Wilderness Foundation • WWF-SA

This revision of the BMPs for black and white rhinos in South Africa sought to increase the level of public participation and ownership relative to the primarily expert-driven approach taken in the first editions of the BMPs for the two species. Consultation workshops for this BMP took place in two phases during the second half of 2023. The first phase (August 2023) consulted national leadership of the following stakeholder groups: Traditional Leaders, Traditional Health Practitioners, and the People and Parks programme as well as rhino owners and managers, rhino specialists and academics, conservation NGOs, and officials from national entities with conservation mandates.

The second phase of consultation took place in late October, November, and mid-December 2023. During this phase, 10 sites adjacent to important rhino reserves including Pilanesberg (1 session), Addo Elephant National Park (1), Great Fish River Nature Reserve (1), Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park (1), Isimangaliso Wetland Park (1), Kruger National Park (KNP) (4) and Marakele National Park (1) were selected, and community representatives and members were invited to participate in a consultation workshop. Due to logistic considerations, consultations were only held at three sites adjacent to KNP. Following the in-person sessions, two days were allocated to virtual consultation sessions with State conservation entities, Intergovernmental structures, Rhino owners and managers and Specialists, NGOs and Academics.

All consultation sessions followed the same format, *i.e.*, the number of participants ranged from 30 to 50 individuals, each session was scheduled for three hours, and the sessions included consideration of both black and white rhino. In each session participants were provided with a brief overview of rhino in South Africa, and this was followed by a 90–120-minute workshop session in which participants, in breakaway groups averaging 10 individuals, were asked to answer three questions:

1. What values do rhino have for you?
2. What are the constraints to you realising those values?
3. What can be done to remove those constraints?

The contributions from each group were recorded in writing and reported back on in plenary where the contents were confirmed and questions for clarity could be asked. The written records were collated by the BMP review team and the contents processed to inform the revision of the BMPs. This included the development of the revised Vision, Goal, Objectives and priority Actions. Based on a distillation and aggregation of the sentiments and values expressed during the consultation processes by the consultation team, the following factors were identified as important to consider in this BMP and have been taken into consideration when drafting the objectives and actions:

- Rhinos have existence value for many and contribute to a national sense of pride and social cohesion.
- Rhinos are important for many economic activities including ecotourism and are associated with "job creation" and other economic activities.
- Rhino conservation, and their contribution to ecosystem functioning and outcomes for other species, was identified as important and was supported by South Africans, but limited access to rhino conservation sites (state and private) renders the whole issue theoretical for many people. Access needs to be increased for all age groups and sectors of society.
- Ownership and participation by "communities" (historically excluded South Africans) in rhino conservation needs to be increased and supported by the state.

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- There are opportunities to expand the value chain associated with rhino and their derivatives and these need to be explored and implemented, including local beneficiation (indigenous and other crafts), as well as medicinal, cultural and spiritual value chains.
- Most respondents identified rhino security as an ongoing national priority.
- Many respondents highlighted the need to find ways to sustainably finance (incentivise) rhino conservation. This is applicable to all land tenure types, State, private and communal.

*Some of the issues identified by stakeholders have been included in the objectives and actions.

5. VISION, GOAL, OBJECTIVES AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

If successfully implemented, this BMP will have the following anticipated outcomes:

a) A genetically viable, increasing, and managed national metapopulation of both species of rhino with expanded range, including internationally.
b) Poaching of rhino and illegal trafficking in horn are reduced to below the sustainable threshold level.
c) Increased participation in, and benefit from, rhino ownership, conservation management and sustainable-use decision-making by communities and previously disadvantaged individuals.
d) Collaboration and partnership with respect to black and white rhino conservation and their sustainable use are strengthened nationally and internationally.
e) Illegal demand for rhino horn is significantly mitigated.
f) Stockpiles of rhino horn are secure and effectively managed.
g) Conditions are met for legal international trade in rhino horn from protected wild rhinoceros, to be promoted.
h) Rhino conservation and sustainable use is sustainably funded.
i) Rhino conservation decision-making, practice and sustainable use is evidence based.

5.1 Vision

Based on the context above, the Vision and the Objectives of the BMP seek to integrate the relevant aspects and progressively advance previous initiatives, in particular those of the COI which was operationalised through the Rhino Lab. Whilst the number of rhinos poached has declined, new hotspots are developing, and this poses a risk to the viability of rhino populations and fragmentation in management practices. Furthermore, in the context of transforming the biodiversity sector, many of the citizens in South Africa have been and continue to be excluded from participating in rhino conservation and sustainable use.

In this regard, the BMP advances a vision that have elements that are aligned with the impact statement of the White Paper on Conservation and Sustainable Use which is "*thriving people and nature*". For the purpose of the BMP thriving implies that the rhinos are secure and there is less poaching; from a sustainable use, access and benefit sharing and transformation outcome, rhinos are valued by all; and evidence-based biological management practices lead to viable positive conservation outcomes with growing rhino populations in the long term.

In this regard the Vision for both species of rhino in South Africa for the period 2025 to 2035 is:

Thriving national herds of wild black and white rhino are valued, promote conservation, and people benefit from their inclusive sustainable use.

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5.2 Goal

The BMP recognizes the need for a whole-of-society approach to the management of rhinos taking into account diverse values that rhinos have for different sectors of society in order to further advance transformation in the management of rhinos.

In this regard, the Goal is:

To cooperatively manage a viable and secure national metapopulation of both species of indigenous rhino in order to contribute to national biodiversity objectives, meet a range of societal values, and advance transformation through inclusive ownership, meaningful participation and broad beneficiation.

5.3 Objectives and Activities

This BMP seeks to advance the Vision and Goal by focussing on five Objectives that are aligned to the four goals of the White Paper on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of South Africa's Biodiversity as well as key crosscutting enabling interventions which are expanded on in the plan. As this BMP is integrated to capture elements that affect rhino conservation, the five Objectives and enablers are therefore closely aligned to the five pillars of the COI, particularly in relation to Option 3 specifying prerequisites for trade in rhino horn, and recent policy development processes, as well as the consultation processes undertaken as part of the revision. These objectives are operationalised through several actions that also build on some of the actions of the COI.

The five Objectives for this BMP are:

Objective 1: To ensure effective biological management of both species of rhinos. This Objective is aligned to Goal 1 and 2 of the White Paper and seeks to advance conservation management of rhinos in collaboration with provincial, private and community rhino owners and managers by:

a) Developing and implementing a national metapopulation plan for both black and white rhinos that identifies priority actions (including species recovery requirements, consideration of poaching pressure, need for breeding of rhinoceros in controlled environments, and rewilding) and areas and that effectively integrates state, private, and community populations to enhance the conservation of both species; and
b) Taking steps to reverse intensive management practices and reintroduce captive and intensively managed rhino into extensive wildlife systems in South Africa and to appropriate and acceptable destinations in Africa; and
c) Maintaining an effective and comprehensive database.

Impact statement

Genetically viable and increasing rhino populations favouring extensive areas and expanded range including internationally.

Objective 2: To strengthen enforcement and security. This Objective is aligned to Goal 1 and 2 of the White Paper and seeks to advance sustainable use of rhinos as well as breaking the illicit value chain of wildlife trafficking, in South Africa and beyond as it pertains to rhino derivatives (largely horn) by:

a) Implementing the National Integrated Strategy to Combat Wildlife Trafficking (NISCWT) in collaboration with the National Joint Operational and Intelligence Structure (NatJoints) Priority Committee on Wildlife Trafficking.

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b) Integrating and coordinating the security and antipoaching efforts of national, provincial and private/community owned and managed rhinos in identified priority areas in the country through the implementation of the Integrated Wildlife Zones approach.

Impact statement
Substantially reduced poaching and trafficking of rhino horn, with secure stockpiles.

Objective 3: To advance transformation and community empowerment. This Objective is aligned to Goal 2, 3 and 4 of the White Paper and seeks to increase community access to and benefit associated with rhino conservation by:

a) Increasing community access to and benefit sharing from inclusive and participatory conservation and sustainable use of rhinos through innovative ownership, co-management, and business partnerships through which rhino contribute to the national biodiversity economy.

Impact statement

Communities participate more fully and benefit meaningfully from the conservation and sustainable use of rhinos.

Objective 4: To effectively manage legal demand and reduce illegal demand for rhino derivatives. This Objective is aligned to Goal 2 of the White Paper and seeks to:

a) Enhance international partnerships to reduce illegal international trade in rhinos and their derivatives;
b) Enhance legal trade through managed local beneficiation and establishing ground conditions for future international commercial trade in rhino and its derivatives as per the CoI Option 3; and.
c) Maintain reliable information and monitoring data (including for horn stockpiles).

Impact statement

Confidence that illegal demand for rhino horn can be mitigated sufficiently to allow promotion of legal international commercial trade of the horn.

Objective 5: To enhance legislative implementation and develop responsive legislation and policy. This Objective is aligned with all four Goals of the White Paper and seeks to:

a) Ensure progressive review and updating of legislation, policy, Norms and Standards, Guidelines, Standard Operating Procedures *etc.* to meet needs and adapt to changing realities.

Impact statement

Legislative and policy tools are enabling, responsive and supportive of the White Paper, a changing environment and new opportunities for rhino conservation and sustainable use in South Africa.

5.4 Enabling Conditions and Activities

In order to achieve the five Objectives, certain enabling conditions need to be in place. Primary among these is:

Enabler 1: Sustainable financing. Conserving and protecting rhinos is expensive, and sustainable funding models are needed, including novel approaches such as Biodiversity Management Agreements, Conservation Bonds, access to revenue through sustainable use of rhinos whilst also enhancing existing funding sources and models,

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etc. These requirements span the resource needs across the concurrent competencies between National and Provincial spheres of Government as it relates to environmental matters.

Enabler 2: Effective communication. Communication is critical for building consensus and trust between spheres of government and private and community rhino owners, effective communication is needed in order to achieve the goals of this BMP.

Enabler 3: Technology, Innovation and Capacity. Increasingly the value of technological advancement and having capacitated individuals in decision making positions is being recognized. This is true for the many complex aspects of rhino conservation and the associated activities that are outlined in this BMP.

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5.5 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Table 5: Implementation plan for the black and white rhino biodiversity management plan (including targets, indicators and champions of the plan) [17]

ACTIONS	TARGET	INDICATOR	BASELINE	TIMELINE	LEAD AGENT	COLLABORATORS
BIOLOGICAL MANAGEMENT						
Objective 1: To ensure effective biological management of both species of rhinos						
Develop and implement a national metapopulation management plan, inclusive of species recovery requirements, for black rhino.	Plan completed and implemented	Plan approved and annual reports.	2013 Black Rhino BMP and 2015 White Rhino BMP CoI Report HLP Report Policy position	June 2026	DFFE	Rhino owners & managers, Provincial authorities, SANBI, SANParks, Scientists
Develop and implement a national metapopulation management plan, inclusive of species recovery requirements, for white rhino.	Plan completed and implemented.	Plan approved and annual reports.	2013 Black Rhino BMP and 2015 White Rhino BMP	June 2026	DFFE	Rhino owners & managers, Provincial authorities, SANBI, SANParks, Scientists

	ACTIONS	TARGET	INDICATOR	BASELINE	TIMELINE	LEAD AGENT	COLLABORATORS
				CoI Report HLP Report Policy position			
		Short-term plan for rewilding of rhino from intensive husbandry developed	Approved subset of the metapopulation plan for white rhino.	Management Authorities Operational Plans	December 2026	DFFE	Rhino owners & managers, Provincial authorities, SANBI, SANParks, Scientists
	Develop and implement a national /international range expansion plan for black and white rhino in alignment with the GBF 30X30 apex priority target.	Plan completed and implemented	Plan approved and annual reports	National Protected Areas Expansion Strategy White Paper Kunming-Montreal GBF	December 2026	DFFE	DIRCO SANBI, SANParks; Provinces, Scientists and experts, Range States

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ACTIONS	TARGET	INDICATOR	BASELINE	TIMELINE	LEAD AGENT	COLLABORATORS
Adopt and promote regionally the African Rhino Conservation Framework currently being developed by the IUCN African Rhino Specialist Group	Framework adopted	Ministerial sign-off	CBO guidelines IUCN Translocation guidelines	December 2025	DFFE	SANBI, SANParks; Provinces; Private owners and managers, experts
Establish coordination and collaboration mechanisms with key African rhino range states relating to rhino conservation.	Engagement mechanism established and implemented.	Bilateral agreements aimed at effective regional conservation developed and reviewed as relevant	SADC Protocols and MoUs (Botswana, Chad and Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Namibia)	December 2027	DFFE	SANBI, SANParks; Provinces; Private owners and managers, experts, Range States
Report rhino conservation status to CITES Secretariat.	Reports submitted in agreed format and timelines to IUCN AfRSG.	Report submitted	2022 CITES report	Each triennium starting 2025	DFFE	RMG, IUCN/SSC AfRSG

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ACTIONS	TARGET	INDICATOR	BASELINE	TIMELINE	LEAD AGENT	COLLABORATORS
Develop and implement guidelines for the progressive rewilding of rhinos under intensive management.	Each opportunity for rewilding is guided by approved guidelines.	Guidelines approved and implemented.	CBO guidelines IUCN Translocation guidelines	December 2026	SANBI	Rhino owners & managers, SANParks, Scientists, Provincial authorities, NGOs
Establish a National Rhino Conservation Coordination Committee to guide rhino conservation decision-making and to contribute towards building trust with all stakeholders	National Rhino Conservation Coordination Committee	Terms of Reference developed and approved	RMG	December 2025	DFFE	SANBI, SANParks; Provinces; Private owners and managers
Develop and effectively manage a rhino population database to enhance conservation, monitoring and reporting	Annual population estimates	Functional database	South African Wildlife Population System (SAWPS)	June 2026	SANBI	RMG
ENFORCEMENT AND SECURITY						
Objective 2: To strengthen enforcement and security						

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ACTIONS	TARGET	INDICATOR	BASELINE	TIMELINE	LEAD AGENT	COLLABORATORS
Implement NISCWT	As per NISCWT Implementation plan annual targets	% of NISCWT annual implementation plan executed	As per NISCWT	Annual implementation plan	DFFE	All stakeholders listed under NISCWT
Implement the Integrated Wildlife Zones Initiative	% of national black and white rhino numbers poached annually kept below the sustainability thresholds calculated to 3.5% for both species.	% of national rhino population poached annually	Annual published rhino poaching statistics A Study on the dehorning of African rhinoceroses as a tool to reduce the risk of poaching	Annually	DFFE	DFFE, SANParks, Provincial conservation authorities and private stakeholders
Secure and audit rhino horn stockpiles annually	Annual targets in the DFFE/RCSM APP for private and state stockpiles	Annual audit report	None	Annually	DFFE	SANParks and Provincial conservation authorities

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ACTIONS	TARGET	INDICATOR	BASELINE	TIMELINE	LEAD AGENT	COLLABORATORS
TRANSFORMATION AND COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT						
Objective 3: To advance transformation and community empowerment						
Governance Arrangements						
Support the co-development and implementation of robust governance structures within existing and potential communities participating in rhino conservation.	Informed local stakeholder engagement platforms participating in decision-making.	Evaluation report on existing structures, functioning engagement platforms, and annual reports.	People and Parks Programme and Structures	Ongoing	DFFE	People and Parks Wildlife Industry Traditional Leaders Traditional Health Practitioners, SANBI, SANParks, Conservation Agencies, private rhino owners, NGOs
Co-develop and implement mechanisms and tools with traditional authorities, traditional health practitioners, integrating indigenous knowledge systems, cultural practices and controls in conservation land-use management	Implemented MoUs with Traditional Authorities and Traditional Health Practitioners integrating cultural values in	MoUs established, and annual reports.	MoU between DFFE and NHTL	Ongoing	DFFE	Traditional Leaders, SANBI, SANParks, Conservation Agencies, private rhino owners, NGOs

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ACTIONS	TARGET	INDICATOR	BASELINE	TIMELINE	LEAD AGENT	COLLABORATORS
and sustainable biodiversity-based enterprises linked to rhinos.	rhino conservation.					
Co-develop and implement fair and equitable benefit-sharing agreements with communities supporting effective ecosystem management and conservation of community land already and potentially contributing to rhino conservation.	Implementation of co-management agreements.	Co-management agreements, and annual reports.	National Co-management Framework	Ongoing	DFFE	Communities, SANBI, SANParks, Provinces Conservation agencies, private rhino owners, NGOs
Conducive Conditions						
Support the co-development and implementation of livelihoods interventions with rural communities abutting protected areas with rhinos	Improved livelihoods facilitated by targeted socio-economic development in and around protected areas with rhinos.	Livelihood interventions implemented.	EP Programme	Ongoing	DFFE	EP Branch People and Parks, SANBI, SANParks, Provinces Conservation agencies

ACTIONS	TARGET	INDICATOR	BASELINE	TIMELINE	LEAD AGENT	COLLABORATORS
			Empowerment			
Empower communities and PDIs to participate constructively in rhino conservation and management through skills development and capacity building (including women, youth and people with disabilities)	Sector specific trainings for communities and PDIs around protected areas with rhinos.	Training interventions implemented	NBES	Ongoing	DFFE	Communities, SANBI, SANParks, Provinces, Conservation agencies, private rhino owners, NGOs
			Transformation			
Identify and co-create equitable access and fair opportunities for local communities to realize diverse values and benefits across the full value-chain associated with rhinos.	Access and opportunities to participate realize values of rhinos to local communities.	Social, cultural and economic interventions implemented.	Rhino Lab Outcomes report NBES Integrated Rhino Management Strategy Draft Transformation Framework and the implementation Plan	Ongoing	DFFE	People and Parks Wildlife Industry Traditional Leaders Traditional Health SANBI, SANParks, Practitioners Provinces Conservation agencies, private rhino owners, NGOs

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ACTIONS	TARGET	INDICATOR	BASELINE	TIMELINE	LEAD AGENT	COLLABORATORS
Improve and diversify rhino related benefit flow for communities that live close to rhino populations to unlock economies, promote ecotourism, trophy hunting and other businesses relating to rhinos, inclusive of cultural practices.	Facilitated community enterprises enhance benefit flow in and around reserves with rhinos.	Enterprise developments facilitated.	NBES HLP Report Small Business Development MoU	Ongoing	DFFE	Communities SANBI, SANParks, Provinces Conservation agencies, private rhino owners, NGOs
Establish Community Public Private Partnerships for rhino conservation, management, ownership of rhinos as well as access to and use of rhino derivatives.	Facilitated Community Public Private Partnerships for rhino conservation and management.	Community Public Private Partnerships, Rhinos owned by Communities and PDIs, Derivates accessed.	None	Ongoing	DFFE	Traditional Leaders Traditional Health Practitioners Communities SANBI, SANParks, Provinces Conservation agencies, private rhino owners, NGOs
DEMAND MANAGEMENT/REDUCTION						
Objective 4: To effectively manage legal demand and reduce illegal demand for rhino derivatives.						
Develop and implement a Demand Management Strategy which has	Strategy developed	Strategy approved	None	June 2026	DFFE	SANBI, SANParks, NGOs

ACTIONS	TARGET	INDICATOR	BASELINE	TIMELINE	LEAD AGENT	COLLABORATORS
mechanisms to overcome potential tensions between illegal demand reduction & legal trade promotion.						
Develop and review MoUs with rhino horn transit and user states.	Existing MoUs reviewed and finalised	MoUs signed	Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, China, MoUs	December 2026	DFFE	Branch: Regulatory Compliance and Sector Monitoring DIRCO CITES Management Authorities of Vietnam and China
	New MOUs developed	MOUs signed	Existing MoU (Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, China)	December 2026	DFFE	Branch: Regulatory Compliance and Sector Monitoring DIRCO CITES Management Authorities of Vietnam and China

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ACTIONS	TARGET	INDICATOR	BASELINE	TIMELINE	LEAD AGENT	COLLABORATORS
In collaboration with TRAFFIC, undertake or commission studies in consumer markets to better understand consumer patterns, attitudes and behaviours	One study covering consumer patterns, attitudes and behaviours each three years	Research report	None	December 2026	DFFE	RCSM, SANBI, SANParks and TRAFFIC
In collaboration with TRAFFIC, implement a monitoring system to gather information relating to prices paid to poachers and the quantity of horn traded.	Monitoring system in place and operational	Annual reports	None	December 2026	DFFE	RCSM and TRAFFIC
Set criteria, monitor, and report on progress towards targets that will give effect to the Rhino COI Option 3 requirements to be met for potential commercial international trade in rhino horn to take place.	Criteria and monitoring program approved	Annual reports	COI report	December 2026	DFFE	Public Entities, Private Rhino Owners, Communities; Conservation Authorities
Develop proposal for legal international trade in rhino horn from protected wild rhinoceros for conservation purposes for Cabinet	Proposal submitted to Cabinet	Approval from Cabinet to submit proposal to CITES COP	Policy Position on the conservation and	Proposal submitted for approval by Dec 2030	DFFE	BMSS and BMP SANBI, SANParks, Conservation

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ACTIONS	TARGET	INDICATOR	BASELINE	TIMELINE	LEAD AGENT	COLLABORATORS
approval once conditions stipulated by the COI are met			sustainable use of elephant, lion, leopard and rhinoceros			Authorities, Private Rhino Owners, Communities DIRCO, DTI, Range States and potential destination countries
Develop and implement a strategy for regulated domestic trade in rhino parts and derivatives	Strategy developed and implemented	Approved Strategy	NBES DTIC Policy Statement on Localisation for Jobs and Industrial Growth TOPS and CITES Regulations	December 2027	DFFE	CD BMP, SANBI, SANParks, Conservation Authorities, Private Rhino Owners, Communities, DTI, DSB
LEGISLATIVE IMPLEMENTATION AND RESPONSIVE LEGISLATION AND POLICY						
Objective 5: To enhance legislative implementation and develop responsive legislation and policy						
Analysis of existing legislation to identify gaps in conservation and sustainable use of rhinos including in	Existing legislation	Report on the gap analysis and recommendations	NEM: BA TOPS Regulations	December 2026	DFFE	SANBI SANParks i'Simangaliso

ACTIONS	TARGET	INDICATOR	BASELINE	TIMELINE	LEAD AGENT	COLLABORATORS
addressing illegal activities and stumbling blocks to develop domestic markets.	analysed and gaps identified National and provincial legislation aligned/rationalised/harmonised					Provincial conservation authorities Private rhino owners
Develop norms and standards for the management of rhinos	Norms and Standards developed as part of the N&S for the 4 iconic species	Gazette notice	Rhino Norms and Standards, 2018	March 2026	DFFE	SANBI SANParks i'Simangaliso Provincial conservation authorities
Develop a policy/legislation for the management of rhino horn stockpiles.	Rhino horn stockpile management policy/legislation developed	Approved policy	Rhino Horn Stockpile Management: Minimum standards and best practices from east and	December 2026	DFFE	DFFE SANParks Provincial conservation authorities SANBI

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ACTIONS	TARGET	INDICATOR	BASELINE	TIMELINE	LEAD AGENT	COLLABORATORS
			southern Africa			
Review legislation underpinning the integrated permitting system	Legislation on the integrated permit system reviewed and implemented	Reviewed legislation of the integrated permit system gazetted	None	December 2026	DFFE	National Public Entities and Provincial Conservation Authorities
Revise the CITES regulations in order to align to the Policy Position on rhinos	CITES regulations amended	Gazette notice	CITES regulations, 2010 and Policy Position	December 2028	DFFE	DFFE SANParks Scientific Authority Provincial conservation authorities
ENABLING CONDITIONS AND ACTIVITIES						
ENABLER 1: Sustainable financing						
Explore and implement opportunities for new funding streams for the conservation of the South African rhino population in	New funding streams explored and established	New funding streams implemented	Draft Resource Mobilisation Framework	December 2026	DFFE	CD BMSS Funding Institutions

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ACTIONS	TARGET	INDICATOR	BASELINE	TIMELINE	LEAD AGENT	COLLABORATORS
addition to enhancing existing models						
Develop and implement the Biodiversity Management Agreements for tax incentives for safeguarding rhinos.	12 Signed BMAs	Number of signed BMAs	6 BMAs	December 2030	DFFE	National Treasury
Establish the feasibility of expanding the Rhino Bond (Wildlife Conservation Bond) to additional protected rhino populations.	Feasibility study	Final report	World Bank Pilot project on Wildlife Conservation Bond in South Africa	December 2026	DFFE	SANBI
Identify and implement benefit streams alternative to international rhinoceros horn trade, including a strategy that identifies private rhinoceros owners' key challenges and costs, and how solutions to these can be supported.	Feasibility study	Final Report	None	December 2026	DFFE	CDL BESU, SANBI, Rhino owners, Management Authorities

ACTIONS	TARGET	INDICATOR	BASELINE	TIMELINE	LEAD AGENT	COLLABORATORS
Identify grant and donor funding opportunities that can be leveraged to support transformation initiatives as provided under Objective 3 as well as covering some of the key costs of rhino conservation.	Feasibility study	Final report	Draft Resource Mobilisation Framework	June 2026 ongoing	DFFE	CD: BESU, SANBI Donor agencies
ENABLER 2: Effective communication						
Develop and implement a Rhino Communication and Engagement strategy	Community and Engagement strategy developed and implemented thereafter	Approved strategy and Annual reports	None	December 2026	DFFE	CD: BMC, CD: BESU, CDL BIMS, SANParks, Conservation Management Authorities, Wildlife Forum, People and Parks
Co-learn and improve knowledge with communities, enhancing awareness and understanding of	Appropriate communication about rhinos integrated with	Community Rhino Communication Plan, Community Rangers Programme, and	Community Rhino Awareness Programme	Ongoing	DFFE	Traditional Leaders Traditional Health Practitioners Communities

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ACTIONS	TARGET	INDICATOR	BASELINE	TIMELINE	LEAD AGENT	COLLABORATORS
rhino conservation and associated Indigenous Knowledge Systems	local rangers raising awareness while learning together with communities living next to protected areas with rhino.	Annual reports.	Community Rangers Concept.			Provinces Conservation agencies
ENABLER 3: Technology, innovation and capacity						
Develop and implement a national rhino capacity development plan to address knowledge, skills and capacity building in line with the Biodiversity Human Capital Development Strategy.	Plan developed and implemented.	Plan approved	None	December 2026	DFFE	CD:HRD SANBI
Enhance cost-effective technology that support rhino conservation through developing and implementing guidelines across the value chain of rhinos.	Developed and implemented cost effective technologies	Effectiveness of Technology Assessment Report, Technology Guidelines, and Annual Reports	None	Ongoing	DFFE	SANParks, SANBI, Provinces

ACTIONS	TARGET	INDICATOR	BASELINE	TIMELINE	LEAD AGENT	COLLABORATORS
Effectively implement the National Rhino Research Strategy.	As per NRRS	Annual reports	Strategy developed	Annually	DFFE	SANBI SANParks iSimangaliso Academic and research institutions
Improve national systems for rhino genetic management and forensic purposes.	Robust national systems rhino genetic samples and information informing management and forensics.	Funded and functional national systems for rhino genetic samples and information.	Disaggregated laboratories	December 2027	DFFE	SANBI (NZG) University of Pretoria Other Academic and research institutions

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6. IMPLEMENTATION, REVISION, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The DFFE seeks to establish a National Rhino Coordination Committee to guide rhino conservation decision-making and to contribute towards building back trust and fostering inclusivity with all stakeholders. The Committee will develop a Monitoring and Evaluation System to facilitate the implementation and annual progress reporting of the BMP.

Annual progress reports on implementation of the BMP will be submitted to the Minister. Two internal revisions on the Implementation Plan, which accommodate progress in implementation will be done. The first revision will be conducted 4 years after the gazetting of the BMP for implementation (i.e., in 2029) and the second after a further 3 years (i.e., in 2032). The entire plan will be fully revised after ten years of implementation (i.e., in 2035).

Each revision will entail a detailed evaluation of the outputs and outcomes of the Implementation Plan; evaluate progress towards the Impact Statements for each objective as well as assess and address the gaps in implementation.

Implementation will require strong partnerships, collaboration, and engagement and participation with stakeholders. Critical will be inclusion of the private rhino owners, as well as communities and previously disadvantaged individuals that can be brought into ownership, and conservation and sustainable use of rhino. The importance of this cannot be underemphasised. Key elements to achieve this are included in the Implementation Plan. Transparent reporting, and participation of key stakeholders in revision and evaluation will promote inclusion and participation, and their ongoing contribution to achieving the vision, goal, and objectives of the BMP.

Management authorities (both national and provincial) are expected to utilise this BMP as the basis of the development and revision, as applicable, of their own plans for black and white rhino.

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Printed by and obtainable from the Government Printer, Bosman Street, Private Bag X85, Pretoria, 0001
Contact Centre Tel: 012-748 6200. eMail: info.egazette@gpw.gov.za
Publications: Tel: (012) 748 6053, 748 6061, 748 6065

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