

Public Affairs Section

U.S. Embassy, Gaborone, Botswana

March 2, 2013

(#3/13)



Press Release

U.S. Embassy Conducts Wildlife Conservation and Anti-Poaching Campaign

The United States Embassy is pleased to announce a campaign to raise awareness in Botswana of the threat of wildlife trafficking and the devastation that illegal hunting and poaching can inflict on one of the country's most important natural resources – its wildlife.

Wildlife trafficking threatens security and the rule of law, undermines conservation efforts, robs local communities of their economic base and their heritage, and contributes to the emergence and spread of disease. Combating this illicit trade and the associated criminal networks that support it is only possible through coordinated global action, both to reduce demand and to improve the ability of nations – like Botswana – to protect their borders and their vital natural resources.

An effective legal framework and strong law enforcement capacity are critical to stopping wildlife trafficking activities. Equally important is the awareness and engagement of the broader public in working to protect Botswana's wildlife resources. The United States is proud to work closely alongside the Government of Botswana, including the Department of Wildlife and National Parks (DWNP), the Botswana Police Service and the Botswana Defence Force, in addressing this growing threat from the law enforcement perspective. In addition, the U.S. is deeply engaged at the community level in raising awareness and encouraging environmental protection, primarily through the USAID-funded Southern Africa Regional Environment Program.

To add greater value to these efforts, the Embassy will conduct a variety of outreach activities beginning with the March 3 commemoration of the 40th anniversary of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species through the annual celebration of Earth Day on April 22. During this March – April period, we will focus our outreach activities on youth and rural areas nearby to Botswana's most prominent wildlife areas. These activities include:

Expert Speaker Program: We have invited a wildlife conservation expert from the United States to conduct a series of outreach events in Gaborone, Kasane, and Maun, to raise awareness of the detrimental impact of illegal hunting and declining wildlife, and to encourage communities to consider a sustainable population of nearby wildlife as a long-term source of economic growth.

“Kids on Safari”: We are working with private sector tour operators and the Botswana Defence Force, which operates a wildlife training facility in Gaborone, to provide opportunities for Botswana children to experience firsthand the wildlife that is one their country's greatest

treasures. Partners so far include Wilderness Safaris, through the “Children in the Wilderness” program and Chobe Marina Lodge, along with other potential participants. We are working with youth groups and schools in Kasane, Maun, and Gaborone to identify youth to participate in the activities.

Community Speaker Series: The Embassy’s ongoing Community Speaker Series, in which we enlist Embassy staff members to conduct outreach in nearby schools and libraries, will focus during March and April on wildlife conservation topic areas. We are also working with the DWNP and Botswana Police Service to identify government and law enforcement officials to join us in sharing a message of conservation and anti-poaching to youth in the area.

The Embassy will conduct other activities still to be determined, but which will certainly include traditional and social media engagement.

For further details, please contact: Public Affairs Officer, John Warner (395-3982 ext. 2468), Laona Segatsho, Information Specialist (395-3982 ext. 2419, fax: 390-6129, SegatshoLJ@state.gov) or Angelinah Matenanga, Public Affairs Secretary, (395-3982 ext. 2415, fax: 390-6129, MatenangaAB@state.gov).