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SAVE THE RHINOS: A poached rhino carcass recently discovered in the Etosha National Park. Photo: CONTRIBUTED

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MORE RESOURCES NEEDED AGAINST POACHING

Cameras will help police Etosha

The country's amended overarching plan against wildlife crimes seeks to ensure a uniform approach to effective law enforcement.

Ellanie Smit

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More money is needed for operating expenses, equipment and other resources to fight wildlife crime, recommends amendments to the national strategy for this.

Mr. Colgar Sikopo, Deputy Executive Director for Natural Resources Management in the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism, gave an overview of existing shortcomings during a recent policy conference.

According to Sikopo, a uniform approach is needed to ensure that legislation is enforced effectively.

The anti-wildlife crime plan consists of 11 strategic programs that spell out five key steps to be taken. It is also used to monitor compliance with goals. According to Sikopo, more manpower is needed.

The Wildlife Conservation Unit must conduct patrols to curb poaching and enforce other wildlife crime laws. The unit consists of 85 staff members, ten of whom form an intelligence and investigation unit.

According to Sikopo, 36 people completed a basic wildlife conservation course this year. However, more custodians with better skills are needed, according to Sikopo.

DOG UNITS

Etosha's dog unit currently consists of nine dogs and 11 handlers, while dogs are currently being trained for deployment in Bwabwata National Park.

A third dog unit should be established for the central and southern parts of the country. Dogs are also needed at border posts and airports.

According to Sikopo, the term of the Blue Rhino task force has been extended to 2025. The task force is funded with foreign donor money.

"The task force has significantly improved the national ability to investigate and prosecute cases, based on gathered intelligence and evidence," Sikopo said.

SROPERY

Sikopo said a separate plan for the protection of rhinos in protected areas is currently being finalized for approval. Talks are also underway to dehorn rhinos.

According to Sikopo, a specific plan in this regard is also needed for conservation areas.

A camera system has been installed in the Waterberg Plateau Park and the same is planned for Etosha and the Mangetti National Park.

Regarding the conservation of elephants, scientific research has been proposed on the establishment of an ivory DNA database.

There are also plans to purchase an aircraft to patrol parks in the northeast of the country.

According to Sikopo, a lot of work is still needed on plans to protect the ietermagô.

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