



May 7, 2025

Via Federal Express and Email

The Honorable Doug Burgum
Secretary, Department of the Interior
1849 C Street N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240
exsec@ios.doi.gov

Re: Petition for Revisions to the Endangered Species Act Regulations

Dear Secretary Burgum,

Safari Club International (“SCI”) respectfully petitions for amendment of regulations pursuant to the Administrative Procedure Act, 5 U.S.C. § 553, and its implementing regulation at 43 C.F.R. § 14.2. This petition is ripe for action in light of the deregulatory purposes of President Trump’s Executive Orders “Unleashing Prosperity Through Deregulation”¹ and “Ensuring Lawful Governance and Implementing the President’s ‘Department of Government Efficiency’ Deregulatory Initiative.”² Specifically, SCI requests that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (“Service”) repeal 50 C.F.R. § 17.8(a) and rules at 50 C.F.R. § 17.40 that conflict with Section 9(c)(2) of the Endangered Species Act (“ESA”), 16 U.S.C. § 1538(c)(2). This currently includes rules at § 17.40(e) (African elephant), (j) (argali), and (r) (African lion). SCI’s proposed amendments to these regulations are included as an addendum to this petition.

These regulations should be repealed for three primary reasons. First, they are inconsistent with Congress’s intent and the language of the ESA’s deregulatory provision, as well as the requirement that any rule for threatened species be “necessary and advisable.” Second, they run afoul of the ESA directive to encourage foreign conservation programs. And last, they “implicate matters of social, political, or economic significance that are not authorized by clear statutory authority.” These regulations are opposed by the range states who conserve the world’s largest populations of elephant, lion, argali, and many other species. It is best for these species, as well as the United States, to remove these rules and advance Congress’s directive to facilitate the import of animals from well-managed conservation hunting programs.

Safari Club International

SCI is an I.R.C. § 501(c)(4) nonprofit organization headquartered in Washington, D.C. SCI has approximately 100,000 members and advocates worldwide and 152 chapters throughout the U.S. and around the world. SCI members hunt internationally and often seek to import mementoes of these hunts back to the U.S. These members contribute millions of U.S. dollars each year to the wildlife management budgets and Gross Domestic Products of the countries protecting and

¹ Executive Order 14192, 90 Fed. Reg. 9065 (Jan. 31, 2025).

² Executive Order 14219, 90 Fed. Reg. 10583 (Feb. 19, 2025).

managing the world’s largest populations of elephant, lion, argali, and many other species. Like the United States, these countries rely on hunting as part of their conservation and wildlife management programs.

SCI’s missions are to protect the freedom to hunt, educate the public about hunting and its role as a conservation tool, and promote wildlife conservation worldwide. Along with its sister organization SCI Foundation, SCI’s advocacy and conservation interests focus on the “sustainable use” of wildlife. SCI is a leader in educating courts, elected officials, and policymakers on the essential role of hunting in the science-based management of wildlife and habitat. SCI works closely with range states and community organizations to protect sustainable-use hunting and its significant benefits, through its own work and the work of SCI Foundation, which funds and participates in conservation and research projects around the world.

SCI regularly submits comments on proposed rules to list foreign species under the ESA. SCI has submitted two petitions to repeal the special rules for the import of sport-hunted African elephant and African lion.³ SCI is also an active participant in meetings of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (“CITES”), which currently governs the international trade in relevant species.

Need for the Petitioned Actions

1. The enhancement and permit requirements in the rules for threatened-listed species contradicts Section 9(c)(2) of the ESA and Congress’s goal of reducing regulation of trophy imports.

The regulations for argali, elephant, and lion—known as “special rules”— conflict with Congress’s intent to protect the flow of hunting benefits by excepting threatened species already protected under international law from further import restrictions.

The ESA implements CITES. 16 U.S.C. § 1531(b), § 1537a. CITES is an international agreement between party governments with the aim of ensuring that international trade does not threaten the survival of at-risk species. Parties may seek to list species on the CITES Appendices (I – III), according to the degree of protection they need. International trade in CITES-listed species is highly regulated. For species listed on Appendix I, all commercial trade is banned, limited non-commercial trade is permitted, including in hunting trophies, and the exporting and importing country must each find that the activity is “not detrimental to the survival of the species” and issue a CITES permit for export or import, respectively. For Appendix II species, commercial trade is not prohibited, and only the exporting country must find that the activity is not detrimental to the survival of the species and issue an export permit; the importing country is not required to issue any permits.⁴

³ SCI submitted a “Petition for repeal of the special rule for threatened-listed lions, *Panthera leo melanochaita*, as applied to sport-hunted trophies” on August 13, 2019, and a “Petition for repeal of the special rule for the import of sport-hunted African elephant trophies” on December 18, 2020. The Department and the Service have failed to respond to either petition.

⁴ The text of CITES is available at <https://cites.org/eng/disc/text.php>.

Section 9(c) of the ESA is titled “Violation of the Convention,” referring to CITES. This title is something of a misnomer, as Section 9(c)(2) is about compliance with CITES. Under this section, when a non-endangered (i.e., threatened) species is also listed on Appendix II of CITES, is imported for non-commercial purposes, and meets all the other CITES criteria, the ESA presumes the legality of such an import. 16 U.S.C. § 1538(c)(2).⁵ The Service has repeated this presumption of legality in regulation. 50 C.F.R. § 17.8. However, the Service has also overridden this presumption, unnecessarily, for African elephant, lion, and argali.

That administrative overreach is unacceptable. In Section 9(c)(2), Congress sought to reduce the regulatory burden on foreign species not in danger of extinction and otherwise protected and managed through the CITES processes. According to Representative John Dingell, the “architect” of the ESA, Congress intended to limit situations in which the Service could “look behind an export permit” of a non-endangered species:

H.R. 37 has been attacked by some as a [n] anti-hunter bill; it has been attacked by others as a prohunter bill. In reality, it is neither—it is a bill which has been carefully drafted to encourage State and foreign governments to develop healthy stocks of animals occurring naturally within their borders. If these animals are considered valuable as trophy animals, and are not endangered, they should be regarded as a potential source of revenue to the managing agency and they should be encouraged to develop to the maximum extent compatible with the ecosystem upon which they depend.

I have been informed by the Department of the Interior that they will carefully review the status of animal stocks in foreign countries and that *where nonendangered trophy animals are being managed in such a way as to assure their continued and healthy existence, no barriers will be placed upon the continued harvesting of those animals* by the government. This is as it should be, because it is only in the understanding that these animals have a real and measurable value that many of the less developed countries will agree to take steps to assure their continued existence.

There is language in the legislation which incorporates a presumption of validity as to export permits issued by governments of foreign countries for animals which are not on appendix I of the international endangered species convention. This will allow persons subject to U.S. jurisdiction to accept export permits from the

⁵ Section 9(c)(2) states that “[a]ny importation into the United States of fish and wildlife shall” be “presumed to be an importation not in violation of any provision of” the ESA or its implementing regulations, if:

- (A) such fish or wildlife is not an endangered species listed pursuant to section 1533 of [the ESA] but is listed in Appendix II to the Convention,
- (B) the taking and exportation of such fish or wildlife is not contrary to the provisions of [CITES] and all other applicable requirements of [CITES] have been satisfied,
- (C) the applicable requirements of subsections (d), (e), and (f) of this section have been satisfied, and
- (D) such importation is not made in the course of a commercial activity...

16 U.S.C. § 1538(c)(2).

countries for animals which have legitimately been taken as trophies without the fear that the U.S. Government will arbitrarily refuse to accept those permits as valid.

We are assured by representatives of the Government that this is what they would do in any case, but we felt it best to spell out just what could and should be done at this time, in order to avoid future misunderstandings.

House Consideration and Passage of H.R. 37 with Amendments, U.S. Congressional Record (Sept. 18, 1973), p. 195 (emphasis added). Simply put, Congress's express purpose was to avoid putting up barriers to hunting imports of healthy wildlife populations, such as African elephants in southern Africa and argali in Tajikistan. These special rules put up exactly the type of barrier that Congress worked to avoid—to the detriment of the species, as discussed below. SCI respectfully requests that the Department reinforce Congress's intent and repeal the enhancement finding and permit requirements in the special rules discussed here.

2. The negative impact of requiring a permit and an enhancement finding conflicts with the ESA's directive to encourage foreign conservation programs.

The enhancement and permit requirements for importing sport-hunted trophies violate the ESA's directive to encourage foreign conservation programs. These regulations *discourage* foreign countries' reliance on hunting as a conservation tool, despite its proven track record.⁶

Section 8(b) of the ESA directs the Service to “encourage foreign countries to provide for the conservation of fish or wildlife and plants including endangered species and threatened species.” 16 U.S.C. § 1537(b)(1). This directive is consistent with the practices of a number of foreign countries that rely on hunting to justify the protection of habitat, generate funding for anti-poaching, and create incentives for community-based conservation. These benefits result in larger and more secure populations of endangered and threatened species. That most of the world's elephant, lion, and argali (as well as many other species) inhabit countries where they are hunted is not a coincidence. It is the result of national management plans that give these species great value through their status as game.

For example, over 70% of the world's giraffe, 75% of the world's lions, 80% of the world's elephants, and 90% of the world's rhino and leopard inhabit the countries where they are hunted.⁷ These countries maintain far more habitat in hunting areas than in parks, and far more habitat than in countries without hunting.⁸ This is because of stakeholder buy-in. The benefits

⁶ According to Dr. Dilys Roe, chair of the international Union for Conservation of Nature (“IUCN”) Sustainable Use and Livelihoods Specialist Group, “from a conservation perspective the evidence is clear... [w]hen hunting is done properly, when it is well regulated, the overwhelming evidence is that it is good for conservation and it can result in recovery of key species such as lions, elephants and rhinos.” A. Woodyatt, [Zimbabwe Lifts Ban on Buffalo Bow Hunting to Boost Tourism](#), CNN (May 22, 2019).

⁷ According to data from the IUCN specialist groups and Red Book.

⁸ As an example, comparing non-hunting and hunting countries, Kenya is approximately two-thirds the size of Tanzania and banned hunting in the 1970s, but its elephant range is less than one-third the size of Tanzania's elephant range and its elephant population is less than half as large as Tanzania's. African

from hunting revenues⁹ and game meat distributions¹⁰ have incentivized the conservation of hundreds of thousands of square kilometers on communal lands¹¹ and private lands.¹²

The U.S. hunting market is the world's largest. Moreover, U.S. hunters place a premium on conservation hunting programs and are the most willing to invest in programs that include extra fees for wildlife conservation.¹³ The extraneous and unnecessary regulation from these rules obstruct the import of lawfully hunted animals and thereby reduces the benefits of hunting for foreign countries and their citizens. U.S. hunters are less willing to pay a conservation premium when they are unable to import the trophy mementoes of their hunts.

Range countries have repeatedly informed the Service that hunting benefits endangered and threatened species and restrictions on trophy imports, such as permit requirements, harm the species and interfere with national conservation programs.

For example, in a June 23, 2019 speech, the President of Zimbabwe confirmed that “Safari hunting is a vital cog in successful wildlife economies. Proceeds obtained from hunting are reinvested towards the provision of game water, fencing and law enforcement, among other conservation initiatives. We continue to call for the free trade in hunting products as these have a positive impact on the national and local economies of our countries.”¹⁴

Similarly, in response to the proposed ESA listing of lions, Tanzania's government explained that hunting generates conservation revenues and contributes to anti-poaching and habitat security.¹⁵ It warned that hunting operators would be unable to secure their concessions if adoption of the ESA listing reduced U.S. hunters' willingness to book 21-day lion safaris, and huge hunting areas would be at risk of conversion to agriculture or grazing by Tanzania's rapidly expanding human population. *Id.* Unfortunately, the Service's implementation of the enhancement

Elephant Specialist Group, [Elephant Database](#). “[W]ildlife numbers outside parks have declined in Kenya since it banned hunting.” R. Emslie et al., [Prince William Is Talking Sense—Trophy Hunting Is Crucial to Conservation](#), *The Independent* (Mar. 18, 2016).

⁹ E.g., P. Lindsey et al., [Economic and Conservation Significance of the Trophy Hunting Industry in Sub-Saharan Africa](#), 134 *Bio. Conservation* 455-469 (2007); R. Naidoo et al., [Complementary Benefits of Tourism and Hunting to Communal Conservancies in Namibia](#), 30 *Conservation Bio.* (Jan. 8, 2016), p. 632; I.R. Nkuwi, *Conservation Status and Related Impacts of Elephants and Lion Trophy Ban to Tanzania*, Presented to International Wildlife Conservation Council (Sept. 2018) [in Service records].

¹⁰ P.A. White & J.L. Belant, [Provisioning of Game Meat to Rural Communities as a Benefit of Sport Hunting in Zambia](#), *PLoS ONE* 10(2) (2015).

¹¹ E.g., N. Onishi, *A Hunting Ban Saps a Village's Livelihood*, *N.Y. Times* (Sept. 12, 2015); CAMPFIRE Ass'n, [The Role of Trophy Hunting of Elephant in Support of the Zimbabwe CAMPFIRE Program](#) (Dec. 2016); CAMPFIRE Ass'n, [Press Statement on Lifting of the Suspension of Elephant Trophy Imports into America](#) (Nov. 21, 2017); R. Cooney et al., [The Baby and the Bathwater: Trophy Hunting, Conservation and Rural Livelihoods](#), 68 *Unasylva* 249 (2017/1); [Namibian Association of CBNRM Support Organisations, State of Community Conservation in Namibia](#) (2023).

¹² This includes areas that are not “scenic” enough to draw photographic tourists, including because rural communities live on the same lands.

¹³ Southwick Assocs., [The Economic Contributions of Hunting-Related Tourism in Eastern and Southern Africa](#) (Nov. 2015).

¹⁴ Available at <https://bulawayo24.com/index-idnews-sc-press+release-byo-164833.html>.

¹⁵ Available through Docket FWS-R9-ES-2012-0025.

requirement has led to exactly this outcome, and tens of thousands of kilometers of hunting concessions were returned to the government because of the huge decline in U.S. clients.¹⁶ As another example, in an article against proposed restrictions on elephant and lion import permits, the Director of the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority argued that “ceasing the importation of big game animals from Zimbabwe will not contribute in any way to the conservation of ecosystems. In fact, it will have the exact opposite effect.” He explained that hunting is a critical part of Zimbabwe’s national elephant management plan and community-based conservation program.¹⁷

In its CITES non-detriment finding, the wildlife authority of Botswana noted that, “[h]unting is conducted in marginal areas where other land use activities such as photographic tourism or agriculture are not possible or viable. Hunting is beneficial to elephant and their habitats because of the tangible and intangible benefits it provides, such are revenues for Government and Communities, support to Government in monitoring illegal activities and infrastructure development.”¹⁸ Botswana’s wildlife authority added: “Safari hunting provides a net benefit to the species, it does not pose a threat to the species, and it is not a detriment to the survival of the species. Regulated and controlled safari hunting of elephant in Botswana enhances the survival of the species.” *Id.*

The same can be said for argali. Import bans and restrictions “jeopardize hunting tourism as the main source of revenue of the overall successful incentive-based conservation of Argali.”¹⁹ The National Resources Department of the Ministry of Nature and Environment of Mongolia has asserted that “fees paid by sport hunters are the primary source of fundings for its argali conservation program,” and if American hunters are barred from bringing home their argali mementoes, “some hunters [would] not travel to Mongolia to hunt the argali, and the revenues that support the conservation program [would] decline.”²⁰ Further, hunting represents a substantial source of revenue in Tajikistan, with funds going back to the conservation of the species in well-managed hunting concessions.²¹

¹⁶ United Republic of Tanzania, Comment on ESA Status Review of the African Leopard (*Panthera pardus*) in Tanzania (Nov. 30, 2016) (“Without operating or anti-poaching funds from the Safari Operators, the habitat is already disappearing and in short order, this land will be occupied by livestock, people, and snares. Tanzania’s ability to manage its wildlife is being impacted by the suspension of import of hunting trophies.”); United Republic of Tanzania, Report on Decision 17.114 (May 2018), [AC Doc. 15, Annex 4](#). This negative impact is especially problematic because Tanzania “holds the most important lion population in Africa.” Hunting revenues are the largest source of funding for the Tanzania Wildlife Authority.

¹⁷ F. Mangwanya, [CECIL Act Would Destroy Local Conservation Programs](#), Washington Examiner (Sept. 18, 2019).

¹⁸ Republic of Botswana, [Non-detriment findings for *Loxodonta africana* \(African Elephant\) Controlled Hunting in Botswana](#) (June 2021).

¹⁹ Convention on Migratory Species, [Implementation of the International Single Species Action Plan for the Conservation of the Argali \(*Ovis ammon*\)](#) (2014-2024) (Aug. 12, 2024).

²⁰ *Fund for Animals Inc. v. Norton*, 332 F.3d 728, 731-33 (D.D.C. 2003).

²¹ IUCN Red List, [Argali \(*Ovis ammon*\)](#).

The IUCN highlighted the importance of trophy hunting for argali and other species:

The incentives and revenue from trophy hunting programmes are not just important for conservation of hunted species, but through site protection exercise a “biodiversity umbrella” effect and may help conserve non-hunted species too ...In the Pamirs in Tajikistan, trophy hunting concessions for Argali and ibex are showing higher densities of the threatened Snow Leopard than nearby areas without trophy hunting, likely due to higher prey densities and reduced poaching (Kachel, 2014).²²

For all these reasons, hunting benefits conservation of these species. Restrictions on import do the opposite. Thus, the Department of the Interior should require repeal of these regulations imposing special rules and import burdens. These rules reduce the benefits of hunting—to the detriment of the species and the local people who live alongside the species.

3. The enhancement and permit requirements should be repealed in accord with EO 14219 because they are unnecessary, overly burdensome, and inconsistent with regulatory reform initiatives.

Executive Order 14192 and Executive Order 14219 make it the policy of the executive branch “to alleviate unnecessary regulatory burdens placed on the American people” and “[e]nd[] Federal overreach....” Executive Order 14219 directs each agency to identify regulations for possible repeal that “implicate matters of social, political, or economic significance that are not authorized by clear statutory authority.” 90 Fed. Reg. at 10583. The enhancement and permit requirements in the special rules check these boxes.

First, by taking these species outside the presumption of Section 9(c)(2), these special rules have increased the Service’s administrative burden. This is unnecessary given that Congress already approved these imports and legislated an *exemption* to the permit requirement to avoid *exactly* that burden. The Service will still have oversight over endangered- and Appendix I-listed species. But those who benefit from sustainable use should be permitted to do so, as Congress intended.

Second, the delay and uncertainty caused by administration of these special rules is overly burdensome. These special rules impose costs that reduce the benefits of hunting. They deter U.S. hunters from paying the highest prices or going on the most expensive, longest hunts. These losses threaten the habitat, anti-poaching efforts, and community incentives generated by hunting in range countries.

Third, the permitting process, which includes an enhancement finding, has significantly delayed imports.²³ Hunters are left on “pins and needles” while they wait for the Service to make a

²² IUCN, [Informing Decisions on Trophy Hunting](#) (Apr. 2016) (updated in 2023).

²³ Following the implementation of the lion special rule, the Service took almost two years to issue the first import permits for lion trophies. More recently, when updating the information for the enhancement findings for argali, the Service failed to issue an import permit for almost four years.

determination on their import permits. The Service can take months to respond to emails or process permits.²⁴

In sum, once these regulations are repealed, the Service can administer the ESA more efficiently. Range countries can focus on protecting and managing their species instead of diverting attention and resources to satisfy the Service's information requests. U.S. hunters can confidently support these range nations' programs, keep range nation and community revenues high, and fund operators' anti-poaching and habitat protection efforts. Most importantly, elephant, lion, and argali can continue to benefit, without interruption, from the enhancement that hunting provides. Repealing these special rules is consistent with the ESA and regulatory reform initiatives.

Conclusion

For the foregoing reasons, SCI requests the Service repeal 50 C.F.R. § 17.8(a) and rules at 50 C.F.R. § 17.40 that conflicts with ESA § 9(c)(2), as provided in the addendum. If you have any questions, please contact SCI's Legal Advocacy team at litigation@safariclub.org.

Sincerely,



W. Laird Hamberlin
CEO, Safari Club International

²⁴ Ironically, permit applicants are required to answer questions from the Service within 45 days while the Service is under no similar obligation. The Service recently contracted with an outside company to conduct a "[comprehensive needs analysis](#)" on the Service's permitting program "with the aim of identifying opportunities to innovate and optimize [the Service's] process to better serve [] permit applicants and maximize conservation outcomes." Adopting the changes requested in this petition would significantly reduce the Service's permitting workload and allow staff to focus on other tasks.

Addendum

Proposed Amendments to the Code of Federal Regulations

50 C.F.R. § 17.8 Import exemption for threatened, CITES Appendix-II wildlife.

- (a) ~~Except as provided in a species-specific rule in §§ 17.40 through 17.48 or in paragraph (b) of this section, all provisions of §§ 17.31 and 17.32 apply to any specimen of a threatened species of wildlife that is listed in Appendix II of the Convention.~~
- (b) ~~Except as provided in a species-specific rule in §§ 17.40 through 17.48,~~ Any live or dead specimen of a fish and wildlife species listed as threatened under this part may be imported without a threatened species permit under § 17.32 provided all of the following conditions are met:
- (1) The specimen was not acquired in foreign commerce or imported in the course of a commercial activity;
 - (2) The species is listed in Appendix II of the Convention.
 - (3) The specimen is imported and subsequently used in accordance with the requirements of part 23 of this subchapter, except as provided in paragraph (b)(4) of this section.
 - (4) Personal and household effects (see § 23.5) must be accompanied by a CITES document.
 - (5) At the time of import, the importer must provide to the FWS documentation that shows the specimen was not acquired in foreign commerce in the course of a commercial activity.
 - (6) All applicable requirements of part 14 of this subchapter are satisfied.

50 C.F.R. § 17.40 Species-specific rules—mammals.

...

- (e) African elephant (*Loxodonta africana*). This paragraph (e) applies to any specimen of the species *Loxodonta africana* whether live or dead, including any part or product thereof. The African Elephant Conservation Act (16 U.S.C. 4201 et. seq.), and any moratorium under that act, also applies. The provisions of Section 9(c)(2) of the Endangered Species Act (16. U.S.C. § 1538(c)(2)) and 50 CFR § 17.8 apply to any African elephant also listed on Appendix II of the Convention~~Except as provided in paragraphs (e)(2) through (11) of this section, all of the prohibitions and exceptions in §§ 17.31 and 17.32 apply to the African elephant. Persons seeking to benefit from the exceptions provided in this paragraph (e) must demonstrate that they meet the criteria to qualify for the exceptions.~~

...

(6) Sport-hunted trophies.

- (i) African elephant sport-hunted trophies may be imported into the United States without a threatened species permit provided all requirements of 50 C.F.R. § 17.8(b) are met.
- (ii) ~~(i)-~~African elephant sport-hunted trophies for which the species is listed on Appendix I of the Convention may be imported into the United States provided:
 - ~~(A)~~The trophy was legally taken in an African elephant range country that declared an ivory export quota to the CITES Secretariat for the year in which the trophy animal was killed; andThe requirements in 50 CFR part 23 are met.
 - ~~(B)~~A determination is made that the killing of the trophy animal will enhance the survival of the species and the trophy is accompanied by a threatened species permit issued under § 17.32;
 - ~~(C)~~(B) The trophy is legibly marked in accordance with 50 CFR part 23;
 - ~~(D)~~The requirements in 50 CFR parts 13, 14, and 23 and paragraph ~~€(11)~~ of this section have been met; and
 - ~~(E)~~No more than two African elephant sport-hunted trophies are imported by any hunter in a calendar year.
- ~~(ii)~~—For African elephant sport-hunted trophies taken on or after May 1, 2024, to make an enhancement determination under paragraph ~~(e)(6)(i)(B)~~ of this section and § 17.32, the Service must possess a properly documented and verifiable certification by the government of the range country dated no earlier than 1 year prior to the date the elephant is taken that:
 - ~~(A)~~African elephant populations in the range country are biologically sustainable, as well as sufficiently large to sustain sport hunting at the level authorized by the country.
 - ~~(B)~~Regulating authorities have the capacity to obtain sound data on these populations using scientifically based methods consistent with peer-reviewed literature.
 - ~~(C)~~Regulating authorities recognize these populations as a valuable resource and have the legal and practical capacity to manage them for their conservation.

~~(D) Regulating governments follow the rule of law concerning African elephant conservation and management.~~

~~(E) The current viable habitat of these populations is secure and is not decreasing or degrading.~~

~~(F) Regulating authorities can ensure that the involved trophies have in fact been legally taken from the specified populations.~~

~~(G) Funds derived from the involved sport hunting are applied significantly toward African elephant conservation, including funds used for:~~

~~(1) Managing protected habitat, securing additional habitat, or restoring habitat to secure long-term populations of elephants in their natural ecosystems and habitats, including corridors between protected areas;~~

~~(2) Improving the quality and carrying capacity of existing habitats;~~

~~(3) Helping range country governments to produce or strengthen regional and national elephant conservation strategies and laws;~~

~~(4) Developing capacity within the range country to survey, census, and monitor elephant populations;~~

~~(5) Conducting elephant population surveys;~~

~~(6) Supporting enforcement efforts to combat poaching of African elephants; and~~

~~(7) Supporting local communities to help conserve the species in the wild through protecting, expanding, or restoring habitat or other methods used to prevent or mitigate human-elephant conflict.~~

....

~~(11) CITES National Legislation Project and African elephants. On or after January 1, 2026, live African elephants, sport-hunted trophies, and parts or products other than ivory and sport-hunted trophies may not be imported into the United States under the exceptions for importation provided in § 17.32 or paragraphs (e)(2), (e)(6), or (e)(10) of this section except when:~~

~~(i) All trade in the specimen has been and is accompanied by a valid CITES document issued by the Management Authority of a Party with a CITES Category One designation under the CITES National Legislation Project (see § 23.7 of this chapter and <http://www.cites.org>); or~~

- (ii) ~~When importation under paragraph (e)(2) of this section is for law enforcement purposes and meets the requirements as set forth at paragraph (e)(7) of this section for the import of ivory or is for genuine scientific purposes and meets the requirements as set forth at paragraph (e)(8) of this section for the import of ivory.~~

...

~~(j) Argali (*Ovis ammon*) in Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, and Tajikistan.~~

- ~~(1) Except as noted in paragraph (j)(2) of this section, all prohibitions of § 17.31 of this part and exemptions of § 17.32 of this part shall apply to this species in Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, and Tajikistan~~

~~(Note. In all other parts of its range the argali is classified as endangered and covered by § 17.21).~~

- ~~(2) Upon receiving from the governments of Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, and Tajikistan properly documented and verifiable certification that~~

- ~~(i) argali populations in those countries are sufficiently large to sustain sport hunting,~~

- ~~(ii) regulating authorities have the capacity to obtain sound data on these populations,~~

- ~~(iii) regulating authorities recognize these populations as a valuable resource and have the legal and practical capacity to manage them as such,~~

- ~~(iv) the habitat of these populations is secure,~~

- ~~(v) regulating authorities can ensure that the involved trophies have in fact been legally taken from the specified populations, and~~

- ~~(vi) funds derived from the involved sport hunting are applied primarily to argali conservation, the Director may, consistent with the purposes of the Act, authorize by publication of a notice in the Federal Register the importation of personal sport hunted argali trophies, taken legally in Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, and Tajikistan after the date of such notice, without a Threatened Species permit pursuant to § 17.32 of this part, provided that the applicable provisions of 50 CFR part 23 have been met.~~

...

~~(r) Lion (*Panthera leo melanochaita*).~~

~~(1) General requirements. All prohibitions and provisions of §§ 17.31 and 17.32 apply to this subspecies.~~

~~(2) The import exemption found in § 17.8 for threatened wildlife listed in Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) does not apply to this subspecies. A threatened species import permit under § 17.32 is required for the importation of all specimens of Panthera leo melanochaita.~~

~~(3) All applicable provisions of 50 CFR parts 13, 14, 17, and 23 must be met.~~

...