

November 15, 2012

President Jacob Zuma
Private Bag X1000
Pretoria, South Africa 0001

Dear President Zuma:

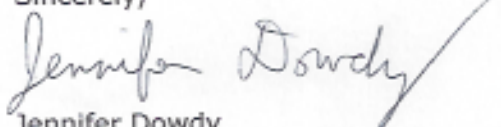
The rhinoceros is a well-known and well-respected animal by people the world over, and it is popular in advertisements and other media. Its tough skin and prominent horn(s) are excellent visuals; this picture of toughness is especially notable here in the United States in Zebco fishing rod advertisements and as a symbol for the Ecko clothing line. However, even the rhino's vast size, thick hide, and dangerous horn are no match for humans, who are heavily armed and kill the animal for its valuable horn.

One kilogram of rhino horn is more valuable than the same weight in gold, and the powdered form is used in traditional Asian medicine. Despite the supposed curative powers of this material, which is basically made of keratin, it has no real medicinal value. Unfortunately, many still believe the unproven effects; moreover, some wealthy people purchase rhino horn not so much for the mythical health benefit as it is a collector's item to showcase their money.

Over 500 rhinos have been killed this year by poachers. When one adds natural deaths to these killings, it is apparent that these beautiful animals will soon go extinct. They are vital in maintaining the grass and other plants of the savanna by consuming plants that, if overgrown, overcrowd and kill off other plants that other herbivores of the area eat. Without this as well as the rhinos' service as seed dispersers through their dung, a collapse of the savanna ecosystem is imminent.

No one wants to see the end of this magnificent landscape of grass, and the rhino is beloved by many people. I am asking that you stop the extinction of the rhino by acting in every way possible to fight off the poaching gangs and help save this iconic species. In particular, I ask that you increase financial penalties and prison time for those involved in poaching, that you use resources to increase conviction rates, that all trophy hunting is eliminated as it has been connected to illegal hunting, and that you assist anti-poaching guards financially and in other ways. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Dowdy
Paducah, Kentucky
United States