

Bangweulu Hunting Memo

Who: This brief document is for the public (to be placed on our website), key donors and partners who have a stake or vested interest in sustainable use of wildlife resources.

Background

Bangweulu Wetlands is a vast wetland ecosystem that is situated in north-eastern Zambia, covering an area of 6,000 km². Bangweulu is unique in that it is a Game Management Area (GMA) and a community-owned protected wetland, home to 50,000 people who retain the right to sustainably harvest its natural resources and who depend on the natural resources the park provides.

These wetlands and the adjoining lake Bangweulu are biologically significant. The area has been declared a RAMSAR site and contains diverse flora and fauna, including more than 433 bird species. The GMA encompasses most of the distribution of the endemic black lechwe antelope, as well as several other iconic species unique to the area, including the shoebill stork, and remnant elephant and buffalo populations. This landscape has been managed by the Bangweulu Wetlands Management Board (BWMB) since 2008. The Board is a partnership between conservation organisation African Parks, the Zambia Department of National Parks and Wildlife (DNPW), as well as six Community Resource Boards associated with each Chiefdom.

The mission of BWMB is to restore the functioning of the Bangweulu ecosystem, a critical wetland habitat of rich biodiversity that provides socio-economic benefits to the local communities. Prior to the partnership with African Parks, rampant poaching and unrestricted fishing had depleted the area's natural resources, including the black lechwe population. Through effective law enforcement, co-governance and community-driven conservation, including sustainable harvesting of resources, the ecology of Bangweulu is being restored, benefitting both the people and wildlife living in the area.

Given that Bangweulu is a GMA, sustainable hunting is permissible under the Zambian law. The BWMB is therefore committed to ensuring that hunting of game species within these wetlands is done in the most sustainable way, utilising sound science and management techniques to ensure that game populations continue to stabilise while delivering much-needed benefits for surrounding communities. Funds generated from this hunting initiative are injected back into the region, where they serve as one of the only revenue streams providing for an extremely rural and impoverished community, while also helping to support the overall conservation efforts and a comprehensive community development plan for the area. The long-term goal is to unlock the ecological, social and economic value of Bangweulu Wetlands to provide for a healthy future for people and wildlife.

Legal Hunting Status Within Bangweulu

The GMA is categorised as a protected area where sustainable utilisation of resources, including hunting, is permitted. The hunting policy in Zambia is set by the DNPW, which sets quotas and issues hunting licenses to successful applicants.

Sustainable Hunting within Bangweulu

After 11 years of managing Bangweulu Wetlands, poaching has been curbed, fish stocks are better managed and seasonal fishing bans are being adhered to, enabling fish stocks to recover. The black lechwe population has increased from 35,000 to just over 50,000 individuals, although the carrying

capacity within this landscape could be as high as 100,000 if managed sustainably. In 2018, after much research and several independent studies conducted over the years, and after providing a business case for the sustainable hunting of certain game species, the BWMB initiated two sustainable-use projects within the GMA: 1) Protein harvesting of black lechwe, and 2) Trophy hunting of select game species. Both projects plan to have the following outcomes:

- Help restore the population of the black lechwe to the GMA's carrying capacity
- Provide a source of protein to the communities within and surrounding the park
- Improve the livelihoods of surrounding communities by providing them with an income from the sale of game meat and the production of leather products from this venture
- Generate much-needed revenue to an extremely impoverished area from community-led sustainable use, as opposed to illegal poaching which only benefits a few
- Generate conservation awareness on the value of the GMA among the community

A portion of meat will be distributed by BWMB staff to the neediest members of the community, as a continuation of the current practices of the hunting camp. Lechwe meat will provide an alternative source of protein to fish. Some meat will also be sold to the local community at an affordable price. Meat sold through Zambeef at a higher commercial price will result in higher income. This revenue will be managed by the BWMB and thereby the cash flow is back to the project and the CRB portion can be distributed back into communities. This will result in effective and efficient impacts for the BWMB and the communities in the GMA.

African Parks and Hunting

African Parks rehabilitates and manages protected areas in Africa, which we do by way of formal mandate from our Government partners. In so-doing African Parks recognises the right of such Governments and their local constituencies to determine their own policies on the use of their natural resources within the international framework of IUCN and CITES to which sovereign states are signatories. To this effect, where legal hunting forms part of the national policy framework and impacts on parks managed by African Parks, we endeavor to ensure that it is managed according to best international practice and with benefits flowing back to conservation and to the local people living with wildlife.