

5/18/2015

House Judiciary Committee

Oregon State Legislature

900 Court Street NE

Salem, OR 97301

RE: Support SB 913A – Prohibition on Sales of Ivory and Rhino Horn

Dear Chair Barker and member of the House Judiciary Committee:

My name is William Ripple, and for the last 30 years, I have been on the faculty at Oregon State University in Corvallis. I am a Distinguished Professor of Ecology in the Department of Forest Ecosystems and Society and much of my research is on large mammals. I am providing this statement on behalf of myself.

I support SB 913A. Over the last year, I lead an international team of wildlife ecologists in a comprehensive analysis of data on our world's largest herbivores, including endangerment status, key threats and ecological consequences of population decline. What we found is that the biggest threats facing the large herbivores are poaching and human encroachment. These large herbivores, which include elephant and rhinoceros, play a critical role in human societies and ecosystems. The rate at which these species are declining is rapid and parts of the world will soon lack many of the vital ecological services these animals provide, resulting in enormous ecological and social costs. The result will be "empty landscapes" and we need radical action to reverse this trend. Our article, which I am attaching to this testimony, was published on May 1, 2015 in Science Advances, the open-access online journal of Science Magazine.

Oregon may not be the native habitat for elephants and rhinoceros, but Oregon does play a role in the decimation of their populations and will bear the costs of their extinction. The loss of large herbivores, like elephants and rhinos, has far reaching consequences for many ecosystems – reduction in food for large carnivores, diminished seed dispersal for plants, more frequent and intense wildfires, changes in habitat for smaller animals, etc.

It is clear that we need to act to reduce the demand for wildlife products by closing down our market. I hope our published article and my testimony increases appreciation for the importance of large herbivores in these ecosystems. And, I

hope that the Oregon legislature takes action to conserve these species by passing SB 913A.

William J. Ripple, PhD

Distinguished Professor

Oregon State University