



Centre for
Environmental Rights
Advancing Environmental Rights in South Africa

3 May 2017

Environmental organisations welcome Minister's announcement of a new regional court to help combat rhino poaching

The [Endangered Wildlife Trust](#) (EWT) and the [Centre for Environmental Rights](#) (CER) welcome the Minister of Environmental Affairs' announcement that a new regional magistrate's court has been established in Skukuza, in the Kruger National Park.

According to a [statement](#) issued by the Minister of Environmental Affairs on 24 April 2017, the opening of the new regional court is one of several measures being taken in terms of the Integrated Strategic Management approach to combat rhino poaching.

In a joint statement, the EWT and the CER described the new court as representing an important step in the fight against rhino poaching, and other biodiversity related crimes, as it will help to ensure the expedition of a larger number of prosecutions.

"A large number of rhino poaching incidents and rhino-related offences occur in the Kruger National Park. We welcome the move to establish a new court in Skukuza – not only because it places a court in close proximity, but also because a regional court has the jurisdiction to hear more serious matters originating from a larger geographical area than an ordinary magistrate's court. We are optimistic that the establishment of this court will increase capacity, and hopefully speed up the criminal prosecution of all rhino related offences, including the poaching of other wildlife specimens.

"The effect of faster – and hopefully more efficient and, therefore, more successful – prosecutions, and the imposition of heavy sentences, should serve as a powerful deterrent to poachers," the organisations said.

ENDS

About the Centre for Environmental Rights (CER)

The CER is a non-profit organisation of activist lawyers who help communities and civil society organisations in South Africa realise our Constitutional right to a healthy environment by advocating and litigating for environmental justice. More about the CER's work at: <http://cer.org.za/>

About the Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT)

The EWT is a leading, high-profile player in the conservation arena, committed to identifying the key factors threatening biodiversity and developing innovative methodologies and best practice guidelines to reduce these and promote harmonious co-existence and sustainable living for both people and wildlife. Read more about the EWT's work at: www.ewt.org.za

Contacts

Adam Pires
Wildlife in Trade Programme Manager
Endangered Wildlife Trust
Tel: +27 87 021 0398
adamp@ewt.org.za

Belinda Glenn
Communication and Brand Manager
Endangered Wildlife Trust
Tel: +27 87 021 0398
belindag@ewt.org.za

Aadila Agjee
Attorney
Centre for Environmental Rights
Tel: +27 84 673 4442
aagjee@cer.org.za

Annette Gibbs
Communications Manager
Centre for Environmental Rights
Tel: +27 02 467 1294
agibbs@cer.org.za