



OPERATIONAL BUDGET FOR REWILDING PROJECT FOR SOUTHERN ZAMBIA

Introduction:

The Lion Rescue Project received an application form a tourist operation in Southern Zambia that is involved with intensive rhino breeding. The request is for a pride of 6 lions comprising of 2 males and 4 females for their Zambian tourist and breeding operation in the Southern Region of Zambia near Kazangula. The original farm comprised of 5000 hectares and acted as a breeding farm for Rhino and non-consumptive tourism.

Recently the operation applied for 35000 hectares state land bordering their farm giving them a total of 40000 hectares. They perceived the lion to be an added attraction to their tourism operation and to act as a deterrent to possible poachers of their rhino population. With the recent change in government, the solidifying of the contract to secure the additional 35000 hectares was delayed. However, that has now just been rectified and the predator fencing of the 35000 is nearing completion.

During this time, a pre-release boma should be erected on the property at a location close to the centre of the game ranch. This entire rewild from beginning to end will be documented on film for future reference on the viability and success of rewilding one of Africa's Apex predators.

Selection of suitable lions during this time period gives the LRP ample time to select and carry out the necessary veterinarian checks as listed in our Implementation Plan. Members of the LRP will do an inspection of the proposed release site, after which a relocation feasibility assessment will be drafted. A short visit (circa 3 days) of the game ranch and surrounding areas will suffice to draft the document and get in touch with possible surrounding communities (even though the property will be fenced).

The next priority is to visit the facilities where lions, which have been made available for the project, by Mababligwe Game Ranch.

The team will look to find 4 suitable females between the ages of 24 – 36 months old that will form a stable coalition. The two males could be brothers or from different parents provided they are not adversaries, thus providing a good mix of genes. The males must already be part of, or form on their own, a stable coalition.

Once the suitable lions have been selected, our veterinarian will carry out a thorough inspection of the lions. Biological samples will be taken from all lions to ascertain that they are disease free, genetically sound and thus fit for export.

A DNA profile of each lion will be created for future reference and to empower the recipient/new care takers to properly manage the genetic diversity of their future lion population/s. Once the lionesses have been declared fit for translocation, they can be integrated with the two adult males.

This larger enclosure already contains potential prey species and is earmarked for the release of the males in the first phase of their rewilding process. Continuous monitoring of the lions in the larger enclosure is imperative, especially once the integration process is initiated.

The timing of the integration will be determined once a possible time frame for the final translocation to Zambia is known.

An integration period of at least 6 – 8 weeks prior to export is recommended during their time there.

Cost of permits, veterinarian cost, accommodation and fuel, reimbursement for any animals killed by the lions and filming.

COST R25000 (US\$1400)

TRANSLOCATION TO SOUTHERN ZAMBIA

It is LRP policy to ensure that neighbour relations are a priority and to educate those living on the borders of the release area as to the conservation of lions and the benefits to the local populations. This element will be thoroughly addressed in the feasibility assessment, once the scale of possible human-wildlife conflict has been determined.

Veterinarian is to do a thorough final check on the lions ensuring they are in excellent health and able to endure the translocation to Southern Zambia from the holding facility.

The satellite collars will be fitted to one male and one female at the time they are sedated for the translocation to Zambia. During the translocation, regular stops will be made to inspect each crate to ensure the lions are relaxed and that there is sufficient water to ensure that they can stay hydrated.

Our veterinarian will be following in our support vehicle and personally do all the necessary checks. LRP will contact all the relevant Wildlife Departments to arrange speedy transits through the Customs and Immigration departments at the border posts, so as to avoid any unnecessary delays.

Alternatively, the possibility of transporting the lions on a privately chartered airplane (accompanied by a veterinarian) should be explored.

The stress of transit will decrease dramatically and lower the risk of injury or death. On arrival at the rewilding site, the lions will be housed in a pre-release boma for a minimum of two weeks to validate that they are in good health and have no injuries caused during their translocation.

The lions will only be released onto the reserve once the veterinarian is 100% happy with their condition.

The monitoring / research phase must start the moment the pride is released into their new environment. It is thus imperative to have the relative camping gear for at least 6 persons including the camera man, if accommodation cannot be provided by the game ranch.

He is there to film the first and second kill and hopefully film a mating. The film crew member should plan to stay at least 3 weeks from the release of the lions. Thereafter the film crew will be informed as soon as the monitoring and or research team confirm that a female has left the pride to give birth. Daily monitoring

of the lions is essential for the first 8 weeks and a research/monitoring team should be available to remain there for the period.

A suitable vehicle must be available for them to travel around. The film crew should then return to attempt to capture the cubs being introduced into the pride. That will be the highlight of the documentary proving the rewilding of captive bred lions is a viable solution to the recovery of the species into vetted conservation areas throughout the former distribution rangers.

A detailed monitoring and recording document will be drafted by the LRP team to ensure that all relevant scientific data is accurately captured. Basic equipment required for the research/monitoring team:

- Drone with thermal imagery capability**
- Proper DSLR camera with zoom lenses for photographing the lions**
- Binoculars**
- Laptop**
- Measuring equipment for lions**
- Suitable vehicle**
- Allowance for diesel**
- Allowance for food and beverage**

Estimated time line and cost of relocation of 6 lions from captivity to a game ranch in Southern Zambia.

Description of actions, estimated time of completion, and estimated costs:

A. Site inspection Mid-September 2024

R 140 000 (US\$7823,)

B. Inspection of suitable lioness candidates End of September 2024

R 40 000 (us\$2,223)

C. Application for permits to relocate lions if necessary Start of September 202

R 500 (US\$28)

D. Feasibility assessment document End of September 2024

R 20 000 (US\$1,200)

E. Receive laboratory results of lion biopsy samples – testing for possible contractible diseases and DNA profiles of each lion End of September 2024

R 15 000 (US\$838)

F. Application for CITES permits Start end of October 2024

R 15 000 US\$838)

G. Loading of lions for translocation to Zambia Circa January 2025 (depending on permits and the completion of the fencing around the game reserve)

R 60 000 (US\$ 3,352)

NB: (R 150 000 if using air transport) (US\$8,378)

Commencement of monitoring of lions by research team/students End of January 2025

Total Budget R315.500 (US\$17.633)

NB. Should the lions be air transported an additional cost to the total of R90,000



LET US DWELL ON THE WISE WORDS OF THE FAMOUS NATURLIST KARL LENNAUES

“THE WILDLIFE OF TODAY IS NOT OURS TO DO WITH WHAT WE PLEASE, WE HOLD IT IN TRUST FOR THOSE WHO COME AFTER”



THANK YOU FOR ASSISTING US TO REWILD THESE APEX PREDATORS BACK INTO THE WILD WHERE THEY WERE BORN TO BE