

# More than 1,000 rhinos poached last year

Environmental authorities say they made some progress in the fight against environmental crimes in the 2013/14 financial year.



Environmental Affairs Minister Edna Molewa says some progress has been made in prosecuting companies and individuals for environmental crimes including rhino poaching. Image: GQIS

The National Environmental Compliance and Enforcement Report released on Wednesday in Pretoria shows an increase in the number of criminal dockets registered rising from 1,488 in 2012/13 to 1,862 in 2013/14. said.

Environmental Affairs Minister Edna Molewa said the number of finalised criminal dockets handed to the National Prosecuting Authority rose from 268 in 2012/13 to 379 in 2013/14.

The report showed a slight increase in the number of convictions for environmental crimes, which rose from 70 last year to 78 this year.

The National Environmental Compliance and Enforcement Report provides a national overview of environmental compliance and enforcement activities undertaken by relevant institutions across the country between April last year and March this year.

The report shows the work of nine provincial environmental authorities and four provincial parks and includes information from the Department of Environmental Affairs, South African National Parks and the Isimangaliso Wetland Authority.

## 1,004 rhinos killed last year

Molewa said poachers slaughtered 1,004 rhino for their horns last year.

"We continue to work in an integrated manner with all our security forces and members of our criminal justice system," she said.

A total of 256 poachers were arrested in the Kruger National Park, KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga, Limpopo and the North West.

"Between April last year and March this year 70 rhino poaching court cases were finalised, with 85 of the accused convicted and 13 acquitted. A total of 50 poachers were sentenced to direct imprisonment without the option of a fine," Molewa said.

According to the report, nine people were convicted for the possession of rhino horn, seven for illegally dealing in rhino horn and 24 for the illegal hunting of rhino.

Thirty-two people were convicted for illegal possession of firearms and ammunition, while 44 were convicted for trespassing.

In three cases in the Western Cape and Gauteng, authorities confiscated 864kg of elephant ivory.

The report states that 2,018 facilities were inspected for compliance with environmental legislation which included pollution, waste and environmental impact assessments.

In the biodiversity or protected areas sub-sector, 830 facilities were inspected for compliance. A total of 1,539 non-compliances were recorded.



More than 1,000 rhinos were needlessly killed for their horns last year. Image: [Bush Warriors](#)

"As a result of follow up inspections and on-going enforcement in these sectors, there has been a noticeable improvement in environmental performance in both the cement and refinery sectors," said Molewa.

She referred to the United Nations Environment Programme-Global Environment Facility (UNEP-GEF) Rhino Project, aimed at strengthening law enforcement to combat wildlife crimes, specifically rhino and said: "The Rhino Project strengthens enforcement capabilities through improved forensics, data gathering and cooperation at an international level."

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