

RECORD DONATION FOR STOP RHINO POACHING



The largest donation from a private game lodge was made this week to Stop Rhino Poaching by the MORE Collection. (l-r) Brothers Nicholas More (CEO Lion Sands) and Robert More (CEO More Collection) flank Elise Daffue, Founder of the Stop Rhino Poaching campaign. Photo by Lettie Ferreira

Award-winning Big Five game-lodge owners Nicholas and Robert More are allocating part of their annual tourism income to combat the scourge of ►

rhino poaching in Mpumalanga's Sabi Sand Game Reserve.

Owners of the luxury Lion Sands Private Game Reserve adjoining the Kruger Park, the More family has now teamed up with the national Stop Rhino Poaching campaign to increase funding of joint security operations in the surrounding 60 000 Ha Sabi Sand Game Reserve.

The first donation totals R114 665 – an unprecedented sponsorship based on the achieved room nights booked at all Lion Sands lodges. Its three properties – River Lodge, Ivory Lodge and 1933 – offer 20, 6 and 4 luxury rooms respectively. They were rated in the world's Top Ten Safari Destinations by Conde Nast Traveller's magazine last month. Despite the global slump in tourism, their annual occupancy rate remains at more than 80 percent.

"This donation will represent an ongoing annuity towards the Stop Rhino Poaching campaign because it is based on the flow of guests accommodated at our lodges in the Sabi Sand. The majority are international visitors," said Nicholas More, CEO of Lion Sands.

"We are giving a percentage of accommodation revenue from rooms which are occupied; therefore, as long as we're selling room nights, these cheques will continue. Our guests are delighted with this programme and, in some cases, supplement this initiative with their own donations to the same cause."

The national Stop Rhino Poaching campaign has raised R6.5 million to date. Founder Elise Daffue called the Lion Sands' contribution significant because it comes from a property which is involved daily in rhino conservation.

"This is the largest donation we've received to date from a private game lodge," she said. "We've had substantial corporate donations but this cheque is a strong commitment from a property which is directly involved in the extensive and costly operation to secure the future of the rhino in the Sabi Sand area." ►

The donation will be invested rand for rand in rhino conservation in the Sabi Sand Game Reserve, with zero administration fees, said Nicholas More. “It will go into funding the security of the game reserve, and the expensive anti-poaching exercises as managed by Sabi Sand CEO, Andrew Parker.”