

A Pilot Program to Increase Tiger Conservation Awareness
In Traditional Chinese Medicine Communities in North America
Phase I: February 1998-July 1998

*Report to The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
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Program Overview

In April 1998, the Save the Tiger Fund of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation awarded World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and the American College of Traditional Chinese Medicine (ACTCM) an \$80,000 grant for support of Phase I of the collaborative and ongoing “Pilot Program to Increase Tiger Conservation Awareness in Traditional Chinese Medicine Communities in North America.” Combining conservation expertise with cultural sensitivity in the Chinese calendar’s “Year of the Tiger,” the WWF/ACTCM partnership has launched pilot outreach and education initiatives in the San Francisco Bay Area to build public support for tiger conservation and reduce reliance upon tiger products in North American traditional Chinese medicine communities. This interim report covers activities from February 1998 through July 1998 and programmatic lessons derived from each stage of the project.

To reach the two target audiences identified as essential stakeholders in this community-based tiger conservation project—the broad Chinese-American public and the more specialized community of TCM practitioners, retailers, educators, and consumers¹—WWF and ACTCM developed an outreach and education agenda that included the following activities:

- Disseminate conservation information in appropriate languages to traditional Chinese medicine specialists, practitioners, consumers, and traders nationwide, working through TCM practitioners’ associations, the more than 60 colleges of TCM in the United States, Chinese language schools, and other appropriate institutions and channels.
- Hold a one-day conference in San Francisco in June 1998 to bring conservationists together with TCM specialists from North America and East Asia, to publicize the plight of the tiger and discuss TCM and endangered species issues, with the aim of developing recommendations for reducing the use and trade of tiger and other endangered species medicines in North America.
- Develop the foundation for a pilot public awareness and education program in San Francisco, targeting TCM practitioners, retailers, schools, community and opinion leaders, and consumers as a model for similar programs in other key North American cities.

As a result of efforts to coordinate these activities, the past six months have been tremendously rewarding in terms of building relationships with dedicated members of the Chinese and TCM communities. With the early and overwhelming commitment of these communities, we have witnessed

¹ “Chinese community” refers to people of Chinese descent living in the San Francisco Bay Area, and “TCM community” refers to TCM practitioners, retailers, importers, and educators—some of whom are Chinese, some of whom are not.

the project's evolution from an ambitious concept into a new paradigm for promoting tiger conservation awareness at the grass roots level.

Guided by the understanding that we must enlist the support of Chinese and TCM communities to reduce the demand for tiger products, we designed activities to engage their representatives in an active dialogue. Because of the deep cultural significance of the tiger and the related demand for tiger medicines, these constituencies have a meaningful role to play in the conservation of the species. Furthermore, their willingness to assume this role resulted in the "fast-tracking" of our Phase I schedule, with a variety of community-based tiger awareness outreach activities taking place from the onset of the project. These outreach efforts between February and May set the stage for the highlight of Phase I—the one-day "Saving the Tiger" working conference, which brought together conservationists and members of the Chinese and TCM communities to strategize together for future tiger conservation action, including reducing demand for tiger bone medicines. The following section details the groundwork carried out in preparation for this significant event, as well as an overview of the conference itself and key follow-up activities.

PHASE I. ACTIVITIES

The Launch (*February 6, 1998*)

We launched the Tiger Conservation Awareness campaign at a joint WWF/ACTCM press event, conducted in Chinese, at which we introduced the newly formed Chinese Association for World Wildlife Conservation (CAWWC). Led by the President of the Northern California Herbal Business Association; the President of the American College of Traditional Chinese Medicine; a journalist with the World Journal (the largest overseas Chinese weekly news publication); and a prominent Chinese restaurateur with strong political ties in the Bay Area, CAWWC's members are the movers-and-shakers of the Bay Area's Chinese community. Representing 100 Chinese organizations and businesses, CAWWC's mission is to work with conservationists to promote tiger awareness and protection. Their commitment to the cause of tiger conservation set a shining example for the entire community. Lauding the campaign, the offices of the Governor, Mayor, and Board of Supervisors jointly declared February 6, 1998 to be Wildlife Conservation Day in San Francisco. Their endorsement raised the profile of the press conference, which was covered by the major local Chinese TV stations and newspapers.

With its staggering line-up of twelve distinguished speakers, this event reinforced to us the cultural importance of VIPs within the Chinese community and the credibility their endorsement could bring to our efforts. We were inspired by the degree of interest evident among attendees. On a weekday and in the midst of torrential downpours during one of El Nino's most violent assaults on the West Coast, nearly a hundred members of the San Francisco's Chinese community took time to join us and learn about the campaign. The decision to conduct the press conference in Chinese was integral to gaining credibility and trust within the Chinese community, demonstrating our resolve to work through their cultural and linguistic channels.

Preliminary Tiger Awareness-Building and Promoting the "Saving the Tiger" Conference (*February-May*)

In the four months leading up to the June "Saving the Tiger" conference, supported by the WWF/ACTCM partnership, the CAWWC did exhaustive legwork to publicize the plight of the tiger and

rally the Chinese community to participate in conservation awareness efforts. Its leaders collected 10,000 signatures on a petition to support local tiger conservation efforts and organized an essay and drawing contest through the Chinese language weekend schools, in which nearly 400 children expressed their feelings about saving tigers. Their drawings—many quite touching and provocative—were displayed at Tiger Awareness Day at the San Francisco Zoo (described below). CAWWC was also instrumental in a decision by the president of the northern California association of Chinese language schools to officially advise teachers to incorporate tiger conservation education into their curricula.

To further advance the project, CAWWC seized every opportunity to inject a tiger conservation awareness theme into community events, which included “Year of the Tiger” festivals and parades in San Francisco, Palo Alto and Cupertino, and a Bay Area a major TCM practitioners convention where tiger conservation materials were distributed in Chinese. Two CAWWC co-chairmen also appeared in 20-minute spots on local Chinese television to discuss the “Saving the Tiger” conference and threats to the tiger’s future. *The World Journal* and five other major Chinese periodicals chronicled these outreach efforts, bringing news of the campaign to thousands of readers in the Bay Area and nationwide.

CAWWC spent a great deal of effort promoting the “Saving the Tiger” conference and identifying appropriate participants—influential Chinese leaders who could represent key sectors (practitioners, retailers, etc.) and invigorate the community. The baseline level of awareness of these potential participants was gauged through a questionnaire, and an intensive briefing on tiger conservation issues, adapted from WWF materials, was provided. The questionnaire allowed prospective participants to spell out what they hoped to get out of the conference—questions they wanted answered, the kinds of roles they hoped to establish for themselves—and provided valuable information to refine the conference agenda.

Even during this early stage, CAWWC leaders were already tremendously devoted to the tiger awareness campaign. The fact that one of the most energetic CAWWC organizers was a respected journalist with strong media connections also helped accelerate the dissemination of tiger conservation messages. CAWWC proved to be an excellent conduit for penetrating a society that conservationists, as outsiders, would have found difficult to reach in the past. With CAWWC’s assistance, we conveyed to the Chinese community how much we valued their collaboration, and that to a large degree, they could take ownership of the effort. To maintain this momentum, we opted to leave much of the early tiger awareness work in the capable hands of CAWWC and nurtured their efforts financially, trusting them to apply the most culturally effective modes to communicate with target audiences.

Outreach to State and National TCM Associations (*May*)

In early May, WWF’s project coordinator, Karen Baragona, attended the annual meetings of several major TCM associations, including the American Association of Oriental Medicine, the California Association of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine, and the Council of Colleges of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (representing 30 TCM institutions nationwide). Delivering a joint presentation with the President of ACTCM on the Tiger Conservation Awareness campaign and the “Saving the Tiger” conference, she also served on a panel on endangered species used in TCM. This was an excellent opportunity to introduce our efforts to a broader TCM audience, with representatives from across the United States.

The American Association of Oriental Medicine, the California Association of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine and the Council of Colleges of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine are proud representatives of their profession and protective of its image. They have struggled to win acceptance for TCM within mainstream American society, and feel they have been damaged by accusations that hold TCM wholly responsible for the decline of endangered species. Many of these groups, however, are to be commended for having taken proactive measures to incorporate principles of conservation and sustainable use into their codes of ethics and conduct. As we continue to refine our message and build relationships with TCM professionals, we will attempt to clarify the connection between TCM and endangered species to the general public.

Tiger Awareness Day at the San Francisco Zoo (June 13, 1998)

Complementing this project's more specifically TCM-focused activities, we hosted a special "Tiger Awareness Day" at the San Francisco Zoo to celebrate the species' prominence in Chinese culture, teach children about tigers, showcase the artwork of Chinese-American children who participated in a tiger drawing contest, and motivate members of the Bay Area's Chinese-American community to play a more active role in tiger conservation. Educational material on tiger conservation and the role of endangered species in traditional Chinese medicine was distributed at the event to the approximately 1,000 Chinese-American children and parents who enjoyed tiger-related games and activities, as well as traditional Chinese dancing, music, and martial arts demonstrations. The event generated approximately 20 newspaper articles, in publications such as the San Francisco *Chronicle* and *Examiner* (which also wrote endorsing editorials) and the *Christian Science Monitor*, and was featured on 10 television stations, including local ABC and NBC affiliates.

Displayed at the event were over 400 drawings, mentioned earlier in our report, by Chinese-American children ages six to 16 depicting the plight of the tiger. San Francisco's Mayor, Willie Brown, gave a spirited address as part of the overall ceremony, and also in attendance were representatives from the Consulate of the People's Republic of China, the U.S. Education Commission, and the San Francisco and Merced County Board of Supervisors. Tiger Awareness Day was an ideal way to reach a broad Chinese-American audience with a strong tiger conservation message. The event generated good will and a spirit of common purpose between sponsoring organizations and the San Francisco Chinese-American community that will enhance future outreach efforts, build support for tiger conservation, and ultimately, reduce demand for tiger bone medicines.

Saving the Tiger, for Our Children, for Our Future: A Chinese-American and Wildlife Conservation Working Conference (June 14, 1998)

Fostering a sense of common purpose in our shared mission of tiger conservation, this conference brought together, for the first time in North America, international tiger experts, conservationists, wildlife trade specialists, TCM practitioners and retailers, educators and students, Chinese language school teachers, and Chinese American community leaders to formulate a collaborative strategy to conserve tigers and reduce demand for tiger medicines. Strategically, we were determined not to bombard participants with data and instructions. It was billed as a "working" conference in which each participant had a defined function. Above all else, this was to be their forum and chance to decide how to make a difference locally in global tiger conservation. Rejecting the conventional format of one-way information flow from speakers to an audience, the conference was

designed to create opportunities for interaction and relationship-building. Representatives from TCM and Chinese communities sat on the planning committee, and the conference agenda was evaluated by a cross-cultural consultant, who recommended culturally appropriate techniques to enhance participation. The entire event itself was conducted in Chinese with simultaneous interpretation.

The conference laid the groundwork for significant future grassroots tiger conservation action. The morning session, with presentations from conservation experts and Chinese community leaders, promoted insightful discussions of how wild tigers became endangered and efforts underway to stop the decline of their populations. A panel of leaders from the San Francisco Chinese community proudly recounted their tiger conservation efforts to date—including establishing the Chinese Association for World Wildlife Conservation and airing a 20-minute public service announcement on local Chinese television on the importance of saving tigers and of halting the use of tiger-based medicines.

The conference's afternoon session focused on the future, and how San Francisco's Chinese-American community can take a leadership role in local tiger conservation activities. Participants broke into small working groups composed of representatives from various interest areas to develop tiger conservation action plans. The groups developed concrete agendas for spreading the tiger conservation message—highlighting tigers in the Chinese language media, teaching about tiger conservation in the Chinese language schools, organizing TCM merchants to support the passage and enforcement of new tiger trade legislation, and liaising with other Asian communities to raise awareness about tiger conservation. A post-conference survey indicated that 73 percent of participants felt that the conference will have a high-to-huge impact on tiger conservation efforts by the Chinese-American community over the next year, and 80 percent felt that the conference was extremely helpful.

One hundred fifty people gave up the first sunny day in many months in San Francisco to participate in the “Saving the Tiger” conference—an effective gauge of the level of dedication within the TCM and Chinese communities to the cause of tiger conservation. Participants expressed a clear intent to play a leadership role in tiger conservation awareness efforts in the San Francisco area. The Chinese have abiding cultural ties to the tiger, and its struggle to survive strikes a profoundly personal chord. Conference attendees revealed a strong interest in conservation for its own sake, recognizing at the same time that their involvement in the Tiger Conservation Awareness campaign can potentially evoke greater understanding of their culture and TCM within mainstream American society.

PHASE II. ACTIVITIES

Reducing Demand for Tiger Bone Medicines

During the afternoon session of the “Saving the Tiger” conference, discussion groups developed strategies to keep tigers in the news through local Chinese media, increase tiger awareness among the Chinese, broaden outreach efforts to include other Asian communities in the San Francisco area, and feature tiger conservation more prominently in Chinese language schools. In Phase II of this project, we will work with members of these groups to turn these plans into action. Listed below are examples of activities that we expect to be spearheaded by conference participants:

- Broadcast tiger programs and public service announcements on Chinese television stations;
- Print tiger awareness messages on grocery and department store shopping bags;
- Conduct tiger conservation petition drive in Chinatown, YMCA, churches, etc.;

- Design a Chinese-language tiger awareness website;
- Produce holiday greeting cards with a tiger conservation theme;
- Use Chinese community events such as the October Moon Festival and the Oakland Summer Festival to promote tiger awareness;
- Through donations from Chinese community members, establish a tiger conservation trust fund to support tiger outreach activities;
- Conduct radio interviews with specialists for solid reports that we cannot lose tigers;
- Put together a traveling exhibition on tiger conservation; and
- Translate tiger educational information into Chinese for use in Chinese language weekend schools.

Through the “Saving the Tiger” conference and other Tiger Awareness Campaign activities, members of the Chinese and TCM communities shared with us their desire to educate children about tiger conservation. Many felt that children would not only eagerly absorb this information, but also transmit it to older family members who may not be inclined to learn it on their own. Furthermore, children who understand that demand for tiger bone is linked to the tiger’s decline are arguably less likely to grow up using tiger bone medicines and may discourage their elders from using them. This key insight will remain at the forefront of our consciousness as we formulate future activities.

From members of the Chinese and TCM communities, there was also a strong sentiment that other Asian communities needed to be engaged in the tiger conservation awareness campaign, particularly because many conference participants insist that a significant proportion of the demand for tiger products can be traced to non-Chinese Asian communities. As our Tiger Conservation Awareness campaign matures, we will be seeking ways to enlist other Asian communities in efforts to build support for conservation and reduce demand for endangered species medicines. In this sense, the campaign is not simply a “pilot project” that can be adapted for other target cities; it will also be a model for reaching a wider Asian pool of tiger conservation supporters.

To date, we have found willing allies in many local and national TCM practitioners and import/retail associations. Conference participants uniformly voiced support for the Rhino and Tiger Product Labeling Act, which would make it illegal to sell any medicine that so much as claims to contain the parts of these species. TCM importers and retailers have indicated that they want to see government agencies crack down on violators, because this minority taints the reputation of the whole TCM industry. With this in mind, nearly 50 TCM organizations and institutions are expected to support an outreach initiative in which they will pledge that they will not knowingly support or participate in any trade in or use of medicines containing the parts of rhinos, tigers, and other endangered species.

Our allies in the Northern California Herbal Business Association, in cooperation with the California State Department of Health Services and the American College of Traditional Chinese Medicine, have also begun designing a poster listing endangered species found in TCM, urging consumers to avoid these products, and declaring that the stores exhibiting the poster do not carry endangered species medicines. Many owners of TCM shops and import companies who belong to this association have close personal relationships with the TCM manufacturing industry and regulatory agencies in China. Their words and actions carry clout, and we expect that news of their tiger conservation efforts will spread rapidly.

New Challenges on the Horizon

Through our work in recent months, it has become evident that TCM retailers and practitioners supporting the Tiger Conservation Awareness campaign realize that the trade in tiger bone is directly linked to the broader issue of sustainable use of wild ingredients. These groups attest to the widespread availability of safe and effective alternatives to tiger bone and other endangered species medicines. Throughout the course of Phase II of this project, we will be using the tiger as an emblem for all endangered species, and as a vehicle to drive home these dual messages—that sustainable use of wild species must be a cornerstone of traditional Chinese medicine, and that endangered species medicines should be avoided in favor of non-endangered products.

As we prepare to launch Phase II initiatives, such as the outreach plans developed by the “Saving the Tiger” conference working groups scheduled for this fall, we will also convene a Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation-sponsored advisory group of esteemed TCM practitioners and TCM importers/retailers to help identify and promote alternative treatments for conditions traditionally treated with medicines containing endangered species. This advisory group will provide input on treatments that are already being used by practitioners and recommended by herbal retailers in lieu of tiger bone and other protected species products such as rhino horn, bear bile, and musk. It will also help us determine how best to get this information circulating among the appropriate audiences. Focus groups, survey results, and word-of-mouth indications from within the Chinese-American and TCM communities suggest that many people who use tiger bone and other patented medicines made from endangered species products are bypassing TCM practitioners and simply buying these products off the shelf. This suggests that another primary target for Phase II outreach may in fact be herbal shop customers, who may not even be aware that the medicines they are buying may contain endangered species products.

Also in *Phase II*, funded by our Dodge Foundation grant, we will conduct an attitudinal survey to gauge the impact of our campaign on the San Francisco Chinese-American community’s perceptions about tiger conservation. This survey will reassess the availability of tiger bone medicines in San Francisco to determine how the market has responded to our initial efforts. Once the results of our activities have been evaluated, we will explore the possibility of replicating this initiative in other cities, and also explore ways to strengthen ties between the TCM communities in the United States and Asia.

Conclusion

WWF and ACTCM are genuinely grateful for the support the Save the Tiger Fund of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation has provided to our “Pilot Program to Increase Tiger Conservation Awareness in Traditional Chinese Medicine Communities in North America..” This support has been instrumental in allowing us to make important advances in community-based efforts to secure a sustainable future for the tiger and reduce the Chinese and TCM communities’ reliance upon tiger-based products. The attached financial report details how grant funds for the project have been applied. We look forward to updating the Foundation on emerging results of Phase II activities in our December 1998 report.