



## USAID ANNOUNCES GRAND PRIZE WINNERS OF THE WILDLIFE CRIME TECH CHALLENGE

### For Immediate Release

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**WASHINGTON, D.C.** - The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) today announced the four **Grand Prize winners** of the **Wildlife Crime Tech Challenge**. With a combined award of more than \$900,000, these Grand Prize winners' groundbreaking innovations will impact illegal trafficking in marine and terrestrial wildlife and are a testament to the power of science and technology to combat wildlife crime.

The USAID-led Wildlife Crime Tech Challenge issued a worldwide call for innovative solutions to combat wildlife trafficking on Earth Day 2015, and more than 300 innovators from around the world responded. The four Grand Prize winners presented the most creative and impactful science and technology solutions to fight wildlife crime, one of the biggest conservation challenges facing the world today.

“In addition to threatening some of the world’s most treasured species, wildlife crime poses serious risks to people, economies, and global security,” said USAID Administrator Gayle Smith. “That’s why USAID is proud to support the four Grand Prize Winners of the Wildlife Crime Tech Challenge. By harnessing the power of science and technology to root out poaching and trafficking, these remarkable innovators will ultimately help make the world a safer and more prosperous place for all of us.”

Chosen for their science and technological innovations that fight wildlife crime around the world, these winning innovators include:

- **National Whistleblower Center** is designing a secure, transnational reporting system designed to fight corruption by incentivizing insiders to securely report wildlife crime.
- **New England Aquarium** is leveraging "smart invoice" technology to help port inspectors find illegal wildlife and wildlife products hidden in plain sight.
- **New York University** has developed a secure, web-based interface that leverages the power of machine learning to identify the online sale of illegal wildlife products.
- **University of Washington** is developing a genetic analysis tool that will reveal poaching hotspots for pangolins, some of the most trafficked mammals in the world.

Wildlife trafficking has emerged as one of USAID’s highest priorities, undermining conservation achievements, economic prospects, and security. **USAID works** directly with wildlife rangers, airline employees, customs agents, and others to address the illegal wildlife trade. The Agency has tripled its support to address this crisis, with more than \$67 million being invested in FY 2015 in the first line of defense against poachers and traffickers, bolstering community

conservation, reducing demand for wildlife products, and developing innovative solutions. Through the Wildlife Crime Tech Challenge, USAID is playing a key role in implementing the President's strategy by supporting the development of innovative technologies to aid enforcement efforts.

Initiated by a 2013 Executive Order, the **U.S. National Strategy to Combat Wildlife Trafficking** prioritizes strengthening domestic and global law enforcement, reducing demand for illegally traded wildlife, and expanding coordination and commitment. Through the Wildlife Crime Tech Challenge, led by USAID in partnership with the National Geographic Society, the Smithsonian Institution, and TRAFFIC, the wildlife trade monitoring network, USAID leads U.S. Government efforts to develop innovative approaches to combat wildlife trafficking.

Two Grand Prize Winners and four Prize Winners will be featured in numerous events during the World Conservation Union's (IUCN) World Conservation Congress from September 1-5 in Honolulu, Hawaii.

Reporters interested in attending or learning more should contact Mara Sloan at [msloan@usaid.gov](mailto:msloan@usaid.gov).

Follow the conversation on Twitter at #wildlifetech and #IUCNcongress. To learn more about the Wildlife Crime Tech Challenge Grand Prize Winners, please visit [www.wildlifecrimetech.org](http://www.wildlifecrimetech.org).

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