Rwanda and African Parks, a non-profit conservation organization, have launched a 2 billion Rwandan franc ($1.6 million) project to protect and expand the country's rhino population, with Akagera National Park set to be one of the first beneficiaries.

The initiative will involve translocating up to 300 rhinos annually, the organization said, aiming to strengthen populations in secure habitats across Africa.

"Following discussions with the Government of South Africa, we agreed to fund the protection of 2,000 rhinos bred in captivity and relocate them to safe African parks," African Parks said in a statement on Tuesday.

Rhinos disappeared from Rwanda in 2007 when the last individual died. A decade later, 18 black rhinos — eight males and 10 females — were reintroduced to Akagera from South Africa through a partnership between the Rwanda Development Board (RDB) and the Howard G. Buffett Foundation.

In June 2025, Rwanda received 70 additional rhinos, including 28 males from South Africa, marking the largest single translocation of rhinos into one country.

The animals are under 24-hour protection due to high poaching risks, driven by demand for rhino horn in traditional Asian medicine markets.

Eugene Mutangana, RDB's head of conservation, said the partnership with African Parks goes beyond relocating rhinos. Plans are underway to establish a regional training center in Rwanda to build capacity for wildlife conservation across Africa.

"This project will help Rwanda become a hub for biodiversity conservation in the region," Mutangana said.

Tourism at Akagera continues to grow. Visitor numbers rose 3.8% in 2024 to 56,219 from 54,141 in 2023. Revenue increased slightly to $4.7 million, up from $4.6 million the previous year, with 10% of earnings distributed to local communities.

Established in 1934, Akagera spans 1,122 square kilometers and is home to Africa's "Big Five" — lions, leopards, elephants, rhinos, and buffalo.