

Wildlife authority gets new boss

By Gerald Tenywa
and Cecilia Okoth

The Minister of Tourism wildlife and Antiquities, Prof. Ephraim Kamuntu, has appointed Sam Mwandha as the executive director of Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA).

He replaces Dr Andrew Seguya, who has been at the helm of the top conservation body in the country for six years.

According to reliable sources, the appointment will take effect on March 1. Seguya's term ended in November last year and the extended period elapsed yesterday.

Mwandha emerged as the winner in the interviews that were conducted by Public Service Commission. He was followed by Achilles Byaruhanga, the executive director of Nature Uganda, a partner of BirdLife International, while Seguya emerged third, according to sources.

The results were released on Monday and the UWA board of trustees discussed the results on the same day. The board sent three names to the minister for consideration.

Who is Mwandha?

Mwandha has a 26-year conservation career and has served at continental and regional bodies.



Mwandha

He has been chief of party at the Africa Wildlife Foundation in Uganda before his appointment.

Mwandha has been championing a conservation model of conservancies on land outside protected areas, with the view of improving rural development as well as conservation.

He also served at the Greater Virunga Transboundary Collaboration Secretariat, which is a tri-partite body that manages gorilla conservation in Uganda, Rwanda and DR Congo.

Mwandha served as the director of conservation at UWA from 2005 to 2010 and as a planning and environment impact assessment co-ordinator between 2000 and 2005.

He was on the pioneer team of the oil and gas impact compliance monitoring for the oil industry in Uganda and

helped develop guidelines for environment management for UWA.

Mwandha holds a Master's degree in forest survey from the Institute of Aerospace Survey and Earth Sciences Enschede, Netherlands and a bachelor of science in forestry at Makerere University and many certificates in various fields.

Top conservation body

UWA was formed after the merger of Uganda National Parks and the Game Department in 1996.

UWA is the top conservation body managing about 10% of Uganda's landscape. It manages 10 national parks, wildlife reserves and 13 wildlife sanctuaries. It also has the mandate of managing wildlife outside protected areas.

Challenges

The challenges facing the management and conservation of wildlife and biodiversity in Uganda are many and they include poaching, competition in the regional tourism market, human-wildlife conflict and wildlife crimes, according to the official UWA statement.

The UWA executive director is a coveted powerful, but risky job.

Successive executive directors at UWA have been dogged by scandals.