President Obama has named Dr. Pierre Comizzoli, a staff scientist at the Smithsonian’s National Zoological Park in Washington, as a recipient of the Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers. Dr. Comizzoli is one of 94 researchers receiving the award, the highest honor the United States government confers on science and engineering professionals in the early stages of their independent research careers.

According to the White House press release, the awards “embodies the high priority the Obama Administration places on producing outstanding scientists and engineers to advance the Nation’s goals, tackle grand challenges, and contribute to the American economy.” Awardees are selected from sixteen Federal departments and agencies based on their “pursuit of innovative research at the frontiers of science and technology and their commitment to community service as demonstrated through scientific leadership, public education, or community outreach.”

Dr. Comizzoli’s research for the Smithsonian at its National Zoological Park has been focused on fertility and assisted reproduction for rare and endangered species, including carnivores, ungulates, and amphibians. He is also coordinating a Smithsonian-wide initiative to improve how the institution manages and uses biomaterial repositories, and he oversees conservation projects on wild carnivores and ungulates in Northern Africa and South-East Asia.

Prior to this work, Dr. Comizzoli held a position at the National Museum of Natural History of Paris, where he helped implement assisted reproduction techniques and genome resource banking for various endangered deer species. He has worked as a veterinarian in Guyana and headed monitoring programs in the Sahelo-Saharan region. He received his Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (D.V.M) from the National Veterinary School of Maisons-Alfort, France, in 1994; his M.Sc. in Reproductive Physiology from the University of Paris VI in 1997; and his Ph.D. in Life Science from the University of Tours, France, in 2000.

To learn more and to see a full list of recipients, please consult the White House press release.