

Save the Tiger Fund
Final Programmatic and Financial Report

The First Period

Project Number: 2000-0182-012 Anti-Poaching for the Siberian Tiger Protection
Grant Recipient: Sikhote-Alin Biosphere Nature Reserve
Grant Dates: February 28, 2001- February 28, 2002
Grant Funds: \$ 27,000

The Final Programmatic Report covers April–December, 2001 and January–June, 2002. The Grant dates were extended till June 30, 2002 according to the agreement with the grantor. Twenty-eight to thirty people worked in Reserve state protection inspection within the reported period of time.

Sixteen permanent staff members have been working in the mobile groups (two to four inspectors and the outsiders), eight of them are the members of the special operative anti-poaching team.

To protect the Siberian tiger, a number of people were involved from the Militia, Federal Frontiers Service, Hunting Society. Two cars, four minibuses and two vehicles (Russian and Japanese used ones) were used for the anti-poaching patrols within the Reserve protected area and the buffer areas. Two motorboats were used to protect the marine area adjacent to the Reserve.

We made 655 patrols, 154 of them were conducted at intervals of every two or more days; 132 day and night patrols took place including in the Reserve Control-Admission Post facilities.

Patrols were made both on foot (60), by cars and motorboats. 756 vehicles, cars and trucks, 10 ships and 5 motor-boats were checked. 85 protocols were made up for the various Nature Protection Legislation violations in the Reserve buffer areas, including 21 violations revealed within the Reserve protected area. 8 rifles and 1 short gun were seized from the violators. Besides, there were 21 fishing nets, 157 different traps for the small animals mostly, gun bullets, also among the seized staff.

Six violators were brought to the court.

The patrols were made by the mobile inspector groups within the Reserve border perimeter, the buffer areas and in the Reserve core area. Special attention was paid to the forest-fire prevention activities in April – May 2001. Farmers traditionally burn grass in their fields after the snow melts in spring. Strong winds are typical for the springtime, and a fire spreads very quickly. Unfortunately, we were unable to stop one of such fires in the buffer area, so it spread inside the Reserve area: 4 hectares of oak-forests burnt. The drought in March – May 2002 was registered as a bigger one than that of the spring 2002. So, the Reserve administration undertook the extreme measures to protect the Reserve area from fires. Luckily, all the numerous fireplaces were stopped within the Reserve buffer areas (again, the farmers caused fires by burning grass in the fields).

There was a big drought in the fall, 2001 with lots of forest fires in Khabarovsk and Primorsky Krai. To resist the fires, lots of funds, time and strength was donated. Many temporary logging roads made for shipping logs in the winter time dried due to the drought and became accessible for vehicles which provided opportunities for the poachers to poach wildlife.

As far as there were not enough protection inspectors in the Reserve staff it caused a serious obstacle in conducting a required scope of activities. The inspectors had to work in a tensed schedule, often extra working hours a day and without weekends.

High ungulate density was recorded along the road crossing the Reserve area in October – December 2001 and in January – March 2002. At the same time, the ungulate number was very low outside the Reserve area. The poachers managed to poach 9 animals the first time and 6 animals the second time, practically at the road side. Although the whole process of poaching lasts 3-10 minutes (shot-loading an animal into a vehicle), the poachers were unable to escape with the killed animals. Often, when the poachers saw the approaching inspector's vehicle, they threw the illegal guns out of their vehicles. As for the registered guns (according to the legislation), they can be shipped in the cars all the year round.

Patrolling the Reserve roads and borders, checking vehicles in the Reserve Control – Admission Post, the local population environment education in the Siberian tiger conservation are the most important factors in preventing killing tigers by poachers. During the reported period of time, the poachers haven't managed to poach any tigers. But if there hadn't been the protection efforts undertaken, the situation would have been used by the poachers, who use the best up-to-date technical equipment in guns, optics, communication and field gear.

Tiger protection in the wild requires big moral and physical forces from the inspectors, improving technical equipment used by them to prevent poaching tigers and also to reveal and to discover tiger poachers. And the Save the Tiger Fund active and timely technical-financial support is of the greatest importance when there is lack of funding from the Federal Budget. And this support is another important factor, which we seldom report about in our reports. The STF funds permit not only to organize permanent and active adequate resistance to the tiger poachers but also to avoid the Reserve activity dependence from the local corrupted officials and mafia structures.

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