

**FINAL REPORT TO
NATIONAL FISH AND WILDLIFE FOUNDATION
SAVE THE TIGER FUND**

FOR

**A PROTECTED AREAS NETWORK FOR
AMUR TIGER CONSERVATION
IN KHABAROVSKI KRAI, RUSSIAN FAR EAST**

Submitted by:

Wildlife Conservation Society
Hornocker Wildlife Institute

In cooperation with:

The Wildlife Foundation of Khabarovsk
The Khabarovsk Hunting Management Board
Khabarovsk Committee for Environmental Protection
Khabarovsk Krai Department of Natural Resources



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.

Executive Summary. In 1998, we naively applied to the Save-the-Tiger Fund (STF) for single year “stage one” support for creation of a protected areas network in Khabarovski Krai, Russia, which contains the northernmost tiger habitat in the world. Now, four years later, we are finally providing our final report. It has been a long wait for NFWF, STF, and Exxon, perhaps, but we think the results are worth it. Although the political process has been excruciatingly slow, the bureaucratic wheels have indeed turned, and The Khabarovsk Wildlife Fund is now in the early stages of implementing a \$750,000 Global Environment Fund project “Protected Areas Network for Sikhote-Alin Mountain Forest Ecosystems Conservation in Khabarovsk Krai, Russia.” Implementation of this project is a direct result of initial seed funding provided by STF to the Hornocker Wildlife Institute/Wildlife Conservation Society, as it proved to be a vital catalyst in the intellectual and political development of a protected areas network for tiger and biodiversity conservation in Khabarovski Krai. Key to this process was flexibility by the STF Council in allowing us to extend the timetable, providing opportunities for WCS and its associates in Russia to “run the political gauntlet” in acquisition of funds and political support for the protected areas system. STF funds, used sparingly but effectively over the previous 4 years, were introduced at key points in the process to engage in lobbying, planning, and direct support where necessary. STF funding allowed us to travel to Moscow to lobby for support, and spend time in Khabarovsk during the planning stages. At other times, when the political process was stymied, we used STF funds to invest directly in support of key protected areas, and in one instance, used STF funds for the creation of a new protected area (Mopay zakaznik). Finally, with acquisition of the GEF medium-sized grant in sight, we obligated remaining funds provided by STF to a co-financing mechanism, as required by GEF protocols, thus securing acquisition of the project. Funding by STF under other grants to the Amur Tiger Monitoring Program also turned out to be vital, as the GEF project required development of a system to monitor results, which, it turns out, we had already developed.

In short, STF funds provided under this and other grants to HWI/WCS:

1. Allowed development of the concept for a protected areas system;
2. Initiated lobbying to develop political support at the local level;
3. Provided for exchange and consulting to develop a plan for obtaining large-scale funding;
4. Acted as leverage and promoted competition (most constructive, but some very destructive) for non-governmental and aid organizations to “buy-in” to the protected areas network for Khabarovski Krai;
5. Acted as co-financing to secure a \$750,000 medium-sized GEF grant administered by the World Bank and implemented by the Khabarovsk Wildlife Fund;
6. Provided key financing for the creation of one zakazniks (wildlife refuge) and infrastructure support for three other zakazniks;
7. Provided for development of the Amur Tiger Monitoring Program (though separate grants to WCS) which proved to be a vital component of the GEF Program.

What we have discovered in this process is that making proposals for protected areas networks, such as Miquelle et al. did in 1995, may seem difficult, but actualizing those plans is more difficult by several orders of magnitude. The process of gazetting and protection continues today, but the effect we were seeking with support from Save-the-Tiger Fund has been realized – we were successful in leveraging substantial political and financial will into the creation of a network of protected areas that will secure a future for the northernmost population of tigers in the world.

INTRODUCTION

In 1998, we submitted a proposal to Save-the-Tiger Fund for creation of a network of protected areas in Khabarovski Krai that would act as core habitat for the northernmost population of tigers in the world. A recent survey (1996) had provided an estimate of 330-371 adult Amur, or Siberian tigers remaining in the Russian Far East. The majority of the Amur tiger population resided in Primorski Krai, but approximately 50 adults remained in Khabarovski Krai (Matyushkin et al. 1996) (Figure 1), which represents the northernmost habitat of tigers anywhere in the world. Yearly monitoring since then (largely funded by STF) suggests that this population has been fairly stable during the past 5 years, and that the distribution has also been fairly stable.

A habitat protection plan for Amur tigers (Miquelle et al. 1995 and then published in 1999) proposed to develop a network of protected areas and multiple use zones to provide a secure core of habitat extending the length of the 1000-km long band of habitat represented by the Sikhote-Alin Mountains, the largest contiguous block of tiger habitat remaining in the world (Figure 2). Although conceptually this plan was incorporated into a national strategy for tiger conservation by the Russian government, in reality, its chances of actually being created seemed dim. First, while the plan was conceptually included in the Federal plan, the details were not accepted, and in fact, there were no specific plans provided in the national program. And secondly, although there was a Federal “Target” Program for tigers which included a budget, in fact, no money was ever allocated to the federal tiger conservation program by the federal government. Focusing on political and economic problems, the federal government had little time, money, or interest to spare for “luxuries” such as endangered species protection. At the same time, it was clear that \$48,000, the amount requested from Save the Tiger Fund, was totally inadequate to actually “make real” these ambitious plans.

Despite major obstacles, in 1998 we felt there was a great opportunity to use the STF grant as seed money and as a leveraging mechanism for the creation of at least the beginning of this protected areas network. While there was a great need to pursue development of this plan in both Primorski and Khabarovski Krai, there were several persuasive arguments to initiate the project first in Khabarovsk Krai, including:

- since tigers occur only in the southern third of Khabarovsk Krai, tiger conservation does not require such a large percentage of the land base of the Krai;
- tiger habitat is limited to specific habitat types at its northern limits, so it is easier to define necessary conservation units for tigers;
- there was (and is today) a better political atmosphere for cooperative efforts for tiger conservation in Khabarovski Krai than Primorski Krai due to the good working relationships between various state organizations as well as NGO’s;
- there existed a willingness to attempt a legal definition of what constitutes an ecological corridor, a critical component of tiger conservation anywhere in the world (definition and delineation of corridors within protected areas network could set a precedent for other regions within tiger range, both within Russian and throughout the world);
- the number of new protected areas required in Khabarovsk would be relatively small, and there had already been concerted efforts to develop several of these protected areas, with support from local scientific institutes, local NGO’s, and/or governmental agencies in Khabarovski Krai.
- Finally, and probably most importantly, Yuri Dunishenko, from the All-Russia Institute for Wildlife Management, recognizing the value of the network concept, took the largely

speculative plans of Miquelle et al. (1999) and, with a understanding of the landscape based on his extensive

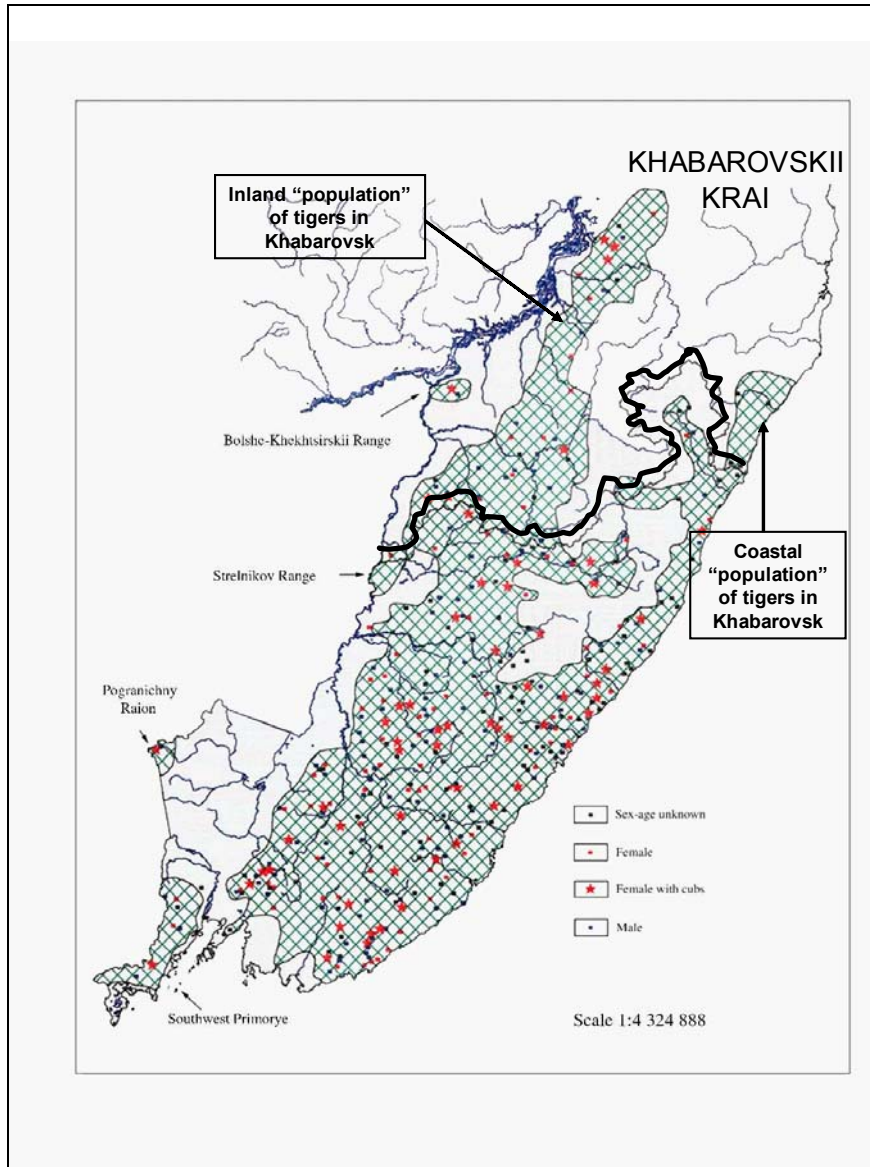


Figure 1. Distribution of Amur tigers in Russia, and identification of the two “fingers” of tiger habitat protruding in Khabarovski Krai, the northernmost tiger populations in the world.

work in the region, modified the plan to make it realistic biologically . With Dunishenko, a well respected biologist in the Krai, lobbying for such a plan, and support being generated from the fledgling NGO, The Khabarovsk Wildlife Foundation, led by Alexander Kulikov, the idea gained support from representatives in the Krai Department of Natural Resources.

While the political climate in Khabarovsk seemed positive, we also recognized that this “political” window of opportunity was likely to be relatively short. As economic stability increased in Russia, there would be greater pressure to exploit natural resources of the region, and to privatize lands, making forest lands a valuable asset of regional and federal governments (this prediction has

become truer, more quickly, than we could have imagined at the time). Already, tiger habitat was under greater exploitative pressures than many other regions within Russia because of the immediate access to the Sea of Japan and the Asian markets. Therefore, probability for success was largely dependent on working as quickly as possible.

Therefore, in 1998 we were bold enough, or perhaps naïve enough, to propose initiation of a \$1.2 million three-stage, incentive-driven program for creation and support of new and existing protected areas and ecological corridors in Khabarovski Krai. We knew the dollar sign would be attractive to krai representatives, and potentially act as an incentive to move the process forward. However, we had no idea where such a huge sum of money might come from. We proposed to develop a minimum-risk investment mechanism to attract potential sponsors based on staged outputs and successes, and a system of support to key governmental and non-governmental Russian agencies to keep them engaged in implementation of the program. We requested \$48,000 from the Save-the-Tiger Fund to provide what we called “Stage One Program Support” for project organization, implementation of first steps, and securing sponsorship from future investors. We realized that we were, in essence, gambling that we could use STF funds in a way that would allow us to first, lobby both in Khabarovsk and in Moscow, and secondly, somehow use the STF funds as a leverage point for other, potentially larger investors.

What we have learned in this process is that making proposals for protected areas networks, such as Miquelle et al. did in 1995, may have seemed difficult at the time, but actualizing those plans is more difficult by several orders of magnitude. We were perhaps most naïve in setting a grant period of one year. Now, as we finally provide a report on this grant, nearly 4 years after initiation, we have a better understanding of the difficulties of implementing large scale conservation plans, but recognize this grant from STP was instrumental in initiating a huge, million dollar project to create a protected areas network.

THE PROCESS FOR CREATING A PROTECTED AREAS SYSTEM

We envisioned the process of creating a protected areas system as consisting of four key steps

1) The Gazetting Process.

There are a variety of designations for protected lands within the Russian Federation, including zapovedniks (strict nature reserves where little human activity is allowed), zakazniks (wildlife refuges which are usually designated to protect a specific range of wildlife) national (federal) and nature (regional) parks (a new form of designation in Russia where tourism is one of the primary activities), and nature monuments (small, unique natural features). While all zapovedniks are created at the federal level, zakazniks can be designated in one of three categories: local, regional or federal. With each increase in status of zakazniks, there is a coincident increase in protection, but also an increase in the difficulty of successful gazetting. Thus, there exist a variety of mechanisms for achieving some form of protection, depending on the local political atmosphere. We seek a combination of regionally and federally protected lands.

As in most countries, the actual process of getting lands set aside for protection can be a long and tedious one. There are political, social, and economic questions associated with conversion of lands to a protected status. In Russia, the first step in gazetting is the development of an ecological-economic assessment. Then a specific proposal must be agreed upon by local and

regional administrations and interested parties (Forest Service, Committee for Environmental Protection, and others). If the proposal calls for federal level protection, signatures from Moscow will also be necessary. A protected area is created in law only after signatures are signed by all appropriate parties at all levels of government.

2) Infrastructure support.

One of the primary obstacles to creation of new protected areas is the realization by the agency that will have oversight responsibility of the lack of fiscal support. Thus not only are local governments unwilling to accept the potential lost revenues that might come with conversion of lands to protected status, but are also reluctant to take on the financial burden. One of the largest costs associated with newly protected areas is the initial cost of actually creating the reserve on the ground: employment of new personnel, creation of office, garages, field stations, guard houses and outpost buildings, purchase of vehicles, delineation of boundaries, purchase of uniforms, radio equipment, and supplies for maintenance. Thus a key to the first step (gazetting) will be the assurance that there will be additional funds for infrastructure development.

3) Long-term support.

Perhaps the most commonly used excuse for not creating protected areas in Russia presently is the insecure present economic status of the federal and regional governments, and the lack of insurance that things will get better in the immediate future. Thus, governments are unwilling to take on additional financial burdens when they cannot adequately fund existent protected areas. Thus, ideally, a long-term funding mechanism would be in place that would insure such support, not only to newly established protected areas in Khabarovsk, but to existent reserves as well. However, the financial mechanism to insure long-term (e.g. 20-50 year) support is beyond the scope of this program. Here, we hope to insure support for at least 5 years (including infrastructure support as first year start-up funds), that is designed as a phase-out process, with each year providing diminishing support. This window of support is considered sufficient to determine the viability of new protected areas, and to provide responsible agencies with a window of opportunity to secure the additional funds needed for newly acquired reserves, and to slowly “wean” the protected area off external support. This 5-year window also provides sufficient opportunity for other long-term funding mechanisms to be evaluated and developed (e.g., trust funds).

4) Ecological corridors.

A key component of a protected areas network is the creation of ecological corridors that would link newly proposed and existing areas to actually create the network. Establishment of ecological corridors is problematic on a number of levels. From an ecological perspective, corridors are largely species –specific; that is, the location, size and direction of corridors, as well as the entities they are connected to, will largely dictate what species can and cannot pass through ecological corridors. For example, ecological corridors for migrating waterfowl will of course look very different from corridors linking quality habitat for tigers. Therefore, design and location of corridors is a critical issue. Even more problematic, however, is the legislative aspect of creating

corridors. There are few, if any, countries in the world that have legislation that provides for creation of corridors, and Russia is not one of them. Therefore, to create a meaningful entity that would act as a corridor linking forest habitats within protected areas, a legal definition of a corridor would have to be established. Politically, the question is how to legislatively define and manage ecological corridors within the bureaucratic process of a federal or regional government.

In Khabarovski Krai there exists considerable interest within several government agencies and scientific institutions to develop such a legal framework for designating corridors. Defining the appropriate management regime on Forest Service lands that would be compatible with tiger conservation would be a key step in developing the capacity for ecological corridors to play a key role in maintaining connectivity of protected areas. Such a step would set a precedent in Russia and perhaps elsewhere in tiger range states.

Support for this process will be necessary to formulate a normative document, and to push the legislation forward. Definition of corridors, once a legislative process is established, should be a relatively inexpensive process.

THE PROPOSED PROTECTED AREAS NETWORK

Tiger distribution in Khabarovski Krai can be viewed as two fingers of habitat extending from Primorski Krai (Figure 1). These two fingers are separated by the crest of the Sikhote-Alin Mountains, which, at the northern limits of tiger distribution, are dominated by larch, spruce and fir forests, generally unsuitable habitats. The “shorter” finger of tiger distribution occurs along the coast, and the bulk of quality habitat is already protected in Botchinski Zapovednik (Reserve) (Figure 2). The inland finger of habitat is sandwiched between the Sikhote-Alin crest to the east, and the Amur River lowlands to the west, and is comprised primarily of the lower hills of the northern Sikhote-Alin Mountains. Here a combination of forest types occur, but a mixed coniferous-deciduous forest that includes Korean pine is the “signature” habitat type that defines the region. The majority of tigers in Khabarovski Krai reside within the inland finger of habitat. In total there are approximately 36,000 km² of tiger habitat in Khabarovsk.

To the advantage of those interested in tiger conservation, the Korean pine forest complex represents one of the biologically richest habitat types in Khabarovski Krai. The proposed network of protected areas outlined below is of interest to conservationists and governmental authorities not only because of their value to tiger conservation, but to overall biodiversity conservation. In fact, we argue strongly that protected areas created solely for tigers are unnecessary, and that tiger conservation can be linked to other conservation priorities. As we have noted in the past, (Miquelle et al. 1999, 4-yr report of the Amur Tiger Monitoring Program), the key parameter defining quality tiger habitat within its present distributional range is protection. Where there is adequate protection, ungulate numbers can increase and support higher densities, and more productive populations of tigers. As long as poaching of tigers, and their prey, is held in check, a large variety of habitats provide the necessary requirements for tigers and their prey. Therefore, the actual location of protected areas is, to a large extent, immaterial to tiger conservation. Given that protected areas exist in the lower elevation, Korean pine or deciduous forests within present tiger range, those areas can be developed into high quality tiger habitat simply by providing adequate protection. Therefore, we see tiger conservation as something that can be done in concert with overall biodiversity conservation – no special areas need be designated, and no special habitat

requirements must be met. Areas designated to achieve other goals can simultaneously provide quality tiger habitat. The key ingredient is simply good enforcement, and the rest will largely take care of itself.

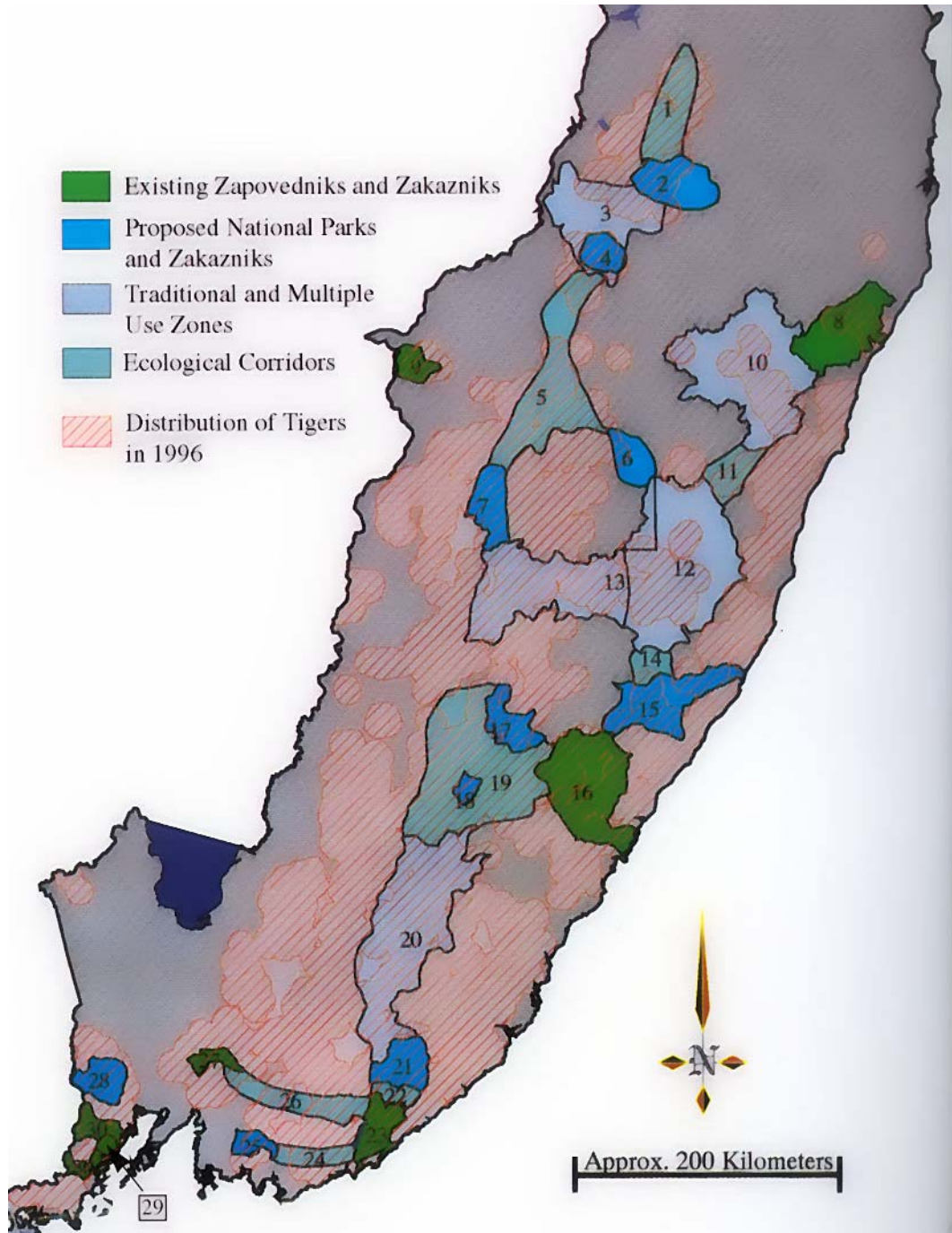


Figure 2. Proposed protected areas network by Miquelle et al. (1995 and 1999). Names for each numbered component are provided in text and Table 1.

Original Plan

Our plan, in 1998, was to insure linkages of these two fingers of habitat to adjacent habitat in Primorski Krai, and to insure integrity of the larger, inland block of habitat with linkages of a variety of protected areas (Figure 2). The newly created Botchinski Zapovednik (# 8 in Figure 2), already protected the core component of the coastal tiger habitat in Khabarovsk. On the inland side, there are a number of proposed and existing protected areas that either needed to be created, or needed support to be more effective. Bolshe-Khetkhsirski Zapovednik (#9 in Figure 2) is a small reserve (451 km²) just south of the city of Khabarovsk, isolated from the main body of habitat (Figure 1). Tigers episodically occur in this island of habitat, but its small size and isolation result in periodic extinction. At present, opportunities to restore habitat and “reconnect” Bolshe-Khetkhsirski Zapovednik via an ecological corridor to the main Sikhote-Alin Range appear unlikely.

The second protected area, Birski Zakaznik, is a small wildlife refuge that provides protection for tigers at the southern limits of Khabarovski Krai, and provides the starting point for a protected areas network. At present, quality habitat exists in the Bikin Basin in adjacent Primorski Krai, and can act as a corridor to the Matei Zakaznik (#7, Figure 2) which was created shortly after initiation of this grant based on an ecological-economic assessment and justification completed under the auspices of the USAID Environmental Policy and Technology Project. Another protected area along the Khabarovsk-Primorye border is the newly gazetted Chuken Zakaznik (#6, Figure 2), which protects habitat in the central portion of the Khor Basin. The Matei and Chuken Zakazniks would be connected by a long, bifurcated corridor (#5, Figure 2) that leads to the proposed “Tigrini Dom” Zakaznik (#4, Figure 2). The region known as Tigrini Dom (Tiger Home) represents some of the best habitat remaining in Khabarovski Krai, and was, in 1998, obtaining some level of temporary protection through private sponsorship by Russian and American business partners (this protection ended abruptly in 1999 when the Russian initiator was gunned down in a Mafia-style killing, ending an American businessman’s interest in tiger conservation). To date, this region remains problematic.

North of Tigrini Dom is the Gassinski Model Forest Project (#3, Figure 2), sponsored through a Canadian aid program. This forest, if properly managed, could act as a linkage to the Annui River (#2, Figure 2). In 1998 the Annui had been surveyed and recommended for inclusion as a protected area, although the exact type of protection (Zapovednik or National Park), and the exact location was still in debate (eventually, in 2000, the Annui would be gazetted as a national park). The best tiger habitat occurs along the lower reaches of the river. North of Annui, another corridor (#1, Figure 2) would link to a proposed region zakaznik Khoco, in Komsolmoski Raion, which represents the northern limits of tiger distribution.

In total, this network for tiger conservation would protect nearly 25,000 km², including 13,895 km² as core areas (zapovedniks and zakazniks) and nearly 11,000 km² as ecological corridors

Any attempt at creation of new protected areas in the Russian Federation presently will face at least 2 obstacles: a lack of political will, and an absence of financial support. These two forces are closely interrelated. In many situations, there is a sincere interest on the part of key agencies within the regional and federal government to create new protected areas, but a lack of financial support reduces their implementation capabilities. An absence of secure funding is the primary argument used to stifle efforts to increase the amount of protected areas: there is no money in regional or federal budgets to take on the added burden of maintaining new protected areas. It was

our hope to increase the political support for protected areas by increasing financial support to responsible organizations, to the gazetting process, and to infrastructure support, and provide a phased-out support of yearly running costs for newly created protected areas.

Revised Plan

The original plan proposed by Miquelle et al. sparked an interest in Khabarovski Krai. Shortly after presentation of this plan, a second initiative, a biodiversity assessment of the Sikhote-Alin ecosystem, was conducted by Primorski and Khabarovski Krai scientists, and officially adopted by the Primorski Krai government (Bogatov et al. 2000). This assessment developed a list of recommended changes and additions to the protected areas network for Khabarovski Krai, but notably was not adopted by the Khabarovski Krai government. At the same time, a host of other Khabarovsk scientists, most notably Yuri M. Dunishenko and Alexander Kulikov of the Khabarovsk Wildlife Foundation, worked with government representatives to reconcile differences in these two proposals and to create a system that would be more feasible. The revised plan, developed with local input called for creation of 16 new protected sites (Figure 3):

- 1 proposed National Park (Federal level protection);
- 3 newly proposed Nature Parks (Krai level protection);
- 6 ecological corridors to be created to link the network of protected areas; and,
- 6 nature monuments to be created.

These protected areas would be created to supplement the already existing protected areas, including:

- 3 Zapovedniks (highest level of federal protection possible);
- 2 Federal level zakazniks (the second highest level of protection possible); and,
- 5 regional (krai) level zakazniks.

A key component of this plan was the creation of ecological corridors that would link newly proposed areas to the following existing protected areas. Obviously, a legal definition of an ecological corridor would have to be established. Significantly, Alexander Kulikov of the Khabarovsk Wildlife Foundation understood the significance of this problem, and took a very active hand in trying to shape an appropriate mechanism to address the issue.

With the development of this conceptual framework of a protected areas plan, and a tentative endorsement from the krai government in hand, the power of this plan was already being felt. Donor agencies, recognizing the value of the plan, were already starting to invest. The EPT USAID Project provided funding for gazetting Matai Zakaznik. WWF managed to acquire an agreement from the governor of Khabarovsk Krai to provide a “Gift to a Living Planet” which included many of the proposed protected areas included in the network. WWF then initiated support to a few pieces of the pie. Interest arose from Canadian Aid to fund creation of the Annuiski National Park, adjacent to their model forest project in Gassinski (which was later funded by WWF). Hence, while the plan was generating interest, and a few pieces of the puzzle were falling into place, there was not, as yet, overarching support that would guarantee implementation of the entire network.

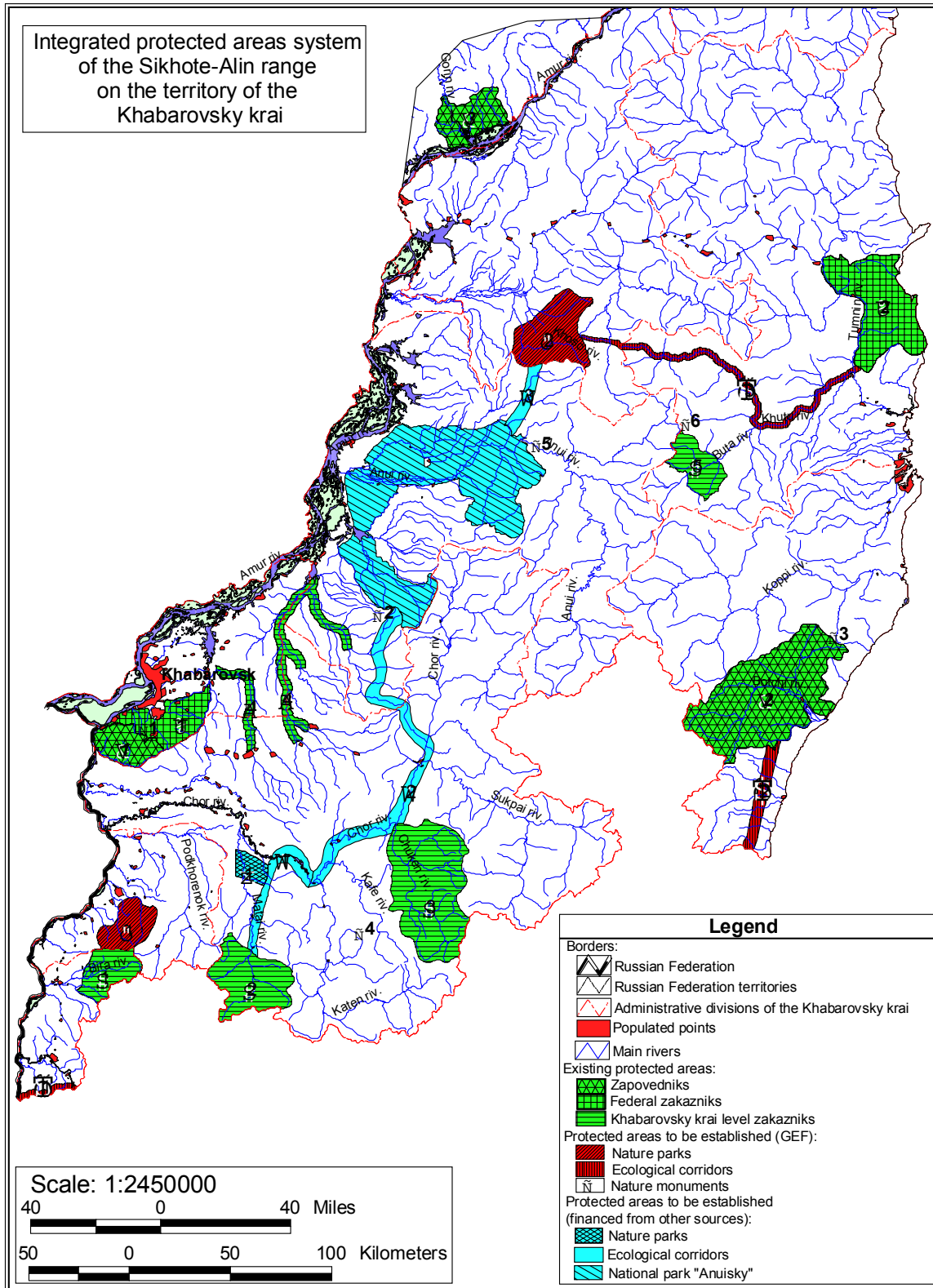
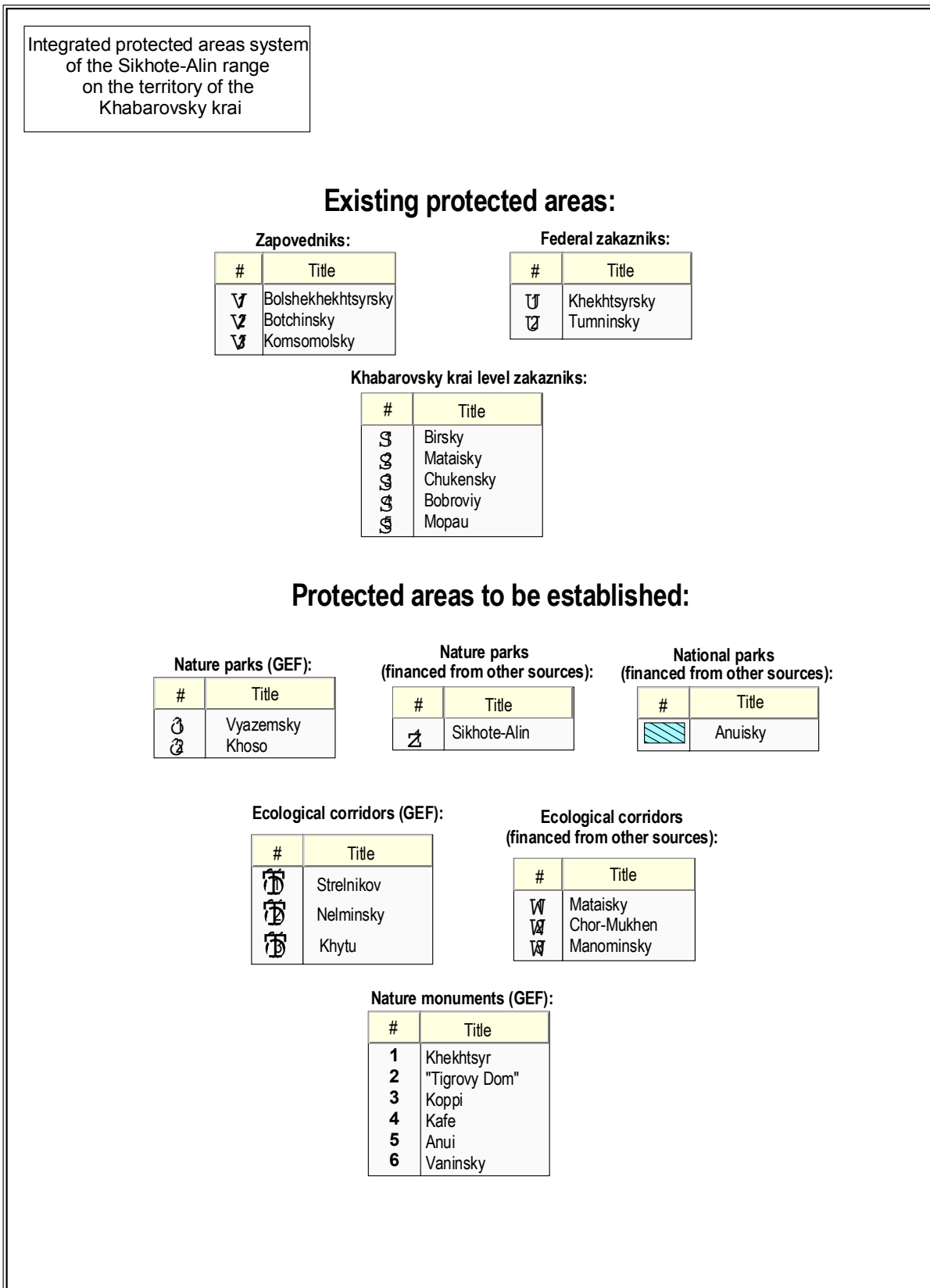


Figure 3. Protected network areas plan for southern Khabarovsk Krai, as submitted to GEF for funding of a medium-sized grant. Legend provided on following page (from Khabarovsk Wildlife Fund).

Legend for Figure 3.



Preparation Application and Initiation of GEF Medium-sized Grant

The idea of applying to the Global Environmental Fund for support of the Protected Areas Plan first arose during discussions with John Gervers, a D.C. lobbyist who had developed a keen interest in tiger conservation, during the February 1998 Dallas Tiger Conference, hosted by Exxon and the Save-the-Tiger Fund. Research and background checking into GEF requirements for their medium-sized grants (up to \$750,000) suggested that our proposed plans fit within categories as defined by GEF documentation. At this point, funding from STP became pivotal, as it provided us the opportunity to travel to meet necessary World Bank representatives, travel to Khabarovsk to meet with Krai representatives, with the Krai Biodiversity Committee (which decides most of the critical issues associated with nature conservation activities in Khabarovsk), and to travel to Moscow to lobby for the project. By summer, 1998, we had met with World Bank representatives, who gave encouraging comments and urged us to continue pursuit of GEF funding. By that time, we had also gotten complete support for the project from the Krai Biodiversity Committee, and consequently, the Krai Committee for Environmental Protection. By October 1998, close cooperative work between Dale Miquelle of WCS and Alexander Kulikov of the Khabarovsk Wildlife Fund, as well as considerable editorial support from John Gervers, resulted in the creation of a draft "Concept" paper for initial review by GEF World Bank representatives. At this point, key sticking points were letters of endorsement from the head of the Committee for Environmental Protection, Mr. A. M. Amirkhanov, and from the GEF Focal Point and Executive Director Alexander Averchenko, who was based in the Environmental Protection Committee in Moscow. Without those letters we could not submit our draft concept paper for review to the World Bank. Having had extensive discussions with committee representatives from Moscow, on October 12, 1998, we submitted a letter to Averchenko requesting a letter of support, naively assuming that one would shortly be forthcoming. However, in our first progress report to STF, in February, 1999, we had neither received a response from Amirkhanov nor Averchenko. It had become clear that the political ramifications of this project went beyond our initial understanding of the situation. While our proposal was created with the idea that the plan would act as an umbrella scheme for any number of organizations that wanted to assist in development of a protected areas network in Khabarovsk, such a plan was apparently seen as a source of competition by others, and there was apparently pressure exerted in Moscow to slow or halt the process.

With the GEF initiative tentatively stymied, we sought other ways to promote the protected areas network in Khabarovsk. The Matai Zakaznik was officially created in January 1999, and we used STF funds to provide needed infrastructure support to this new protected area. We also provided support for the creation of Mopay Zakaznik, which came into effect in November 1999 (see details below).

In April 1999, at a tiger conference held in Vladivostok, there was an opportunity to interact with a number of Committee members from Moscow. At this meeting, after extensive discussions, we finally received a letter of support from Amirkhanov, but still no letter from Averchenko. The slow-down provided time for the Khabarovsk working group to refine and better define the tasks to be achieved under the GEF, and better define how the budget would be allocated. It had been agreed that funding would flow through the local Russian NGO, the Wildlife Fund of Khabarovsk, but many of the details of the workplan were still lacking. In June 1999, Miquelle met again with the Khabarovsk Biodiversity Working Group to better define the workplan, define the political process, and make tentative plans for a trip to Moscow. In September 1999, Miquelle and V. G.

Krukov, from the Krai Administration, finally traveled to Moscow, and with representatives of WildAid (who were developing a parallel GEF proposal for Primorski Krai focused on anti-poaching), we met with GEF representative Averchenko, Committee Head Amirkhanov, World Bank representatives, as well as Igor Chestin of WWF. Finally, at this meeting, we achieved the support necessary from the GEF focal point, nearly one year after submitting a request for such a letter.

After receiving this letter of support, it still required several months of exchanges with World Bank representatives to edit our concept paper into an acceptable format for World Bank GEF procedures. This activity required making several trips to Khabarovsk to design a detailed budget and outline of activities. This process turned out to be very fruitful in that it required key organizations and individuals in Khabarovsk to clarify precisely what they could accomplish within the scope of this project, and how monies would be spent. After considerable efforts, we finally submitted a final draft of the concept paper to the World Bank in April 2000.

Approval of the concept paper was actually hindered due to the fact that it was being considered a joint application with the WildAid proposal for Primorye. It was the Bank's idea to link these two proposals and move them together as parallel components of a single program. Political infighting in Primorye slowed the process there even more so than in Khabarovsk, thereby putting the breaks on the Khabarovsk program once again, even though it appeared that we had finally resolved most of the political issues. Finally, the World Bank disassociated the two programs sometime in the first half of 2000, and the Khabarovsk concept paper was approved by the World Bank during the summer of 2000, clearing the way for development of a full proposal. However, the specifics of what would be required, and in fact approval to move forward on development of a full project, did not arrive until a September, 2000 trip by World Bank representatives. Much of the foundation for the full proposal was developed during the set of meetings, and work continued through the fall to insure a full proposal was ready for review before the end of the year. In December 2001, Sergie Milenin of the World Bank made a final visit to Khabarovsk to insure financial arrangements and purchasing processes could be conducted locally. Alexander Kulikov and the Khabarovsk Wildlife Fund shouldered the burden of work in creating this full document before the end of the 2000.

In its final form, the project includes 6 components:

1. Creation of new protected areas
2. Development of a legal basis for creation and management of protected areas in Khabarovski Krai
3. Creation of an effective network of protected areas: development of management plans for protected areas;
4. Effective management of protected areas (infrastructure support)
5. Environmental education
6. Monitoring

All signs from World Bank representatives were positive, but final approval was received only in July 2001. The project was officially initiated on October 1, 2001.

An important and problematic component of the GEF project was co-financing. The GEF program requires that the implementation be conducted not only with funding from GEF, but that other sources are brought forward during implementation. They are in essence looking for leveraging power from the GEF grant. The Khabarovsk implementing agency, the Wildlife Fund of Khabarovsk, did not have co-financing sources, and the krai government was unlikely to be a

primary source of co-financing, even though it is in their best interest in promoting biodiversity conservation. Funding from STF to WCS was one of the few sources that could be claimed as co-financing (even though in reality we think of the STF funds as leveraging the GEF project, World Bank representatives would of course prefer to see it the other way around, even if STF funding came prior to the GEF Project). Thus a third, concurrent activity (as listed below) was funding to support existing zakazniks, actually channeled through the Khabarovsk Wildlife Fund so that it could claim this support as co-financing.

Finally, it should be noted that the monitoring program as denoted under the GEF Project, is also really largely an incorporation of the Amur Tiger Monitoring Program, which is ongoing today thanks to the continuing support of STF.

Concurrent Activities.

1. Creation of Mopay Zakaznik. In November 1999, the Governor Ishaev of Khabarovsk Krai signed final documents securing the creation of the Zakaznik Mopay. Work to develop the documentation necessary for creation was sponsored by STF funds. This 54,000 ha wildlife refuge is at the very northern fringes of tiger habitat, and although there is no evidence in the recent past of resident reproducing females, this zakaznik provides a secure corridor linking the coastal population of tigers in Khabarovsk with the inland population (which is largely separated by the crest of the Sikhote-Alin). Tigers have been reported in the area now designated as a zakaznik. The need for this zakaznik arose with the creation of a new road through the area, which provided accessibility and a real threat to the prey species that winter in the area (moose and elk). With the continuing expansion of tigers on the coastal portion of Khabarovsk (for instance, the existence of a tigers in Botchinski Zapovednik), it is feasible that tigers may become more of a permanent fixture in Mopay. On a longer time span, if predictions of global warming for the region are correct, some time in the future, Mopay may become important habitat for resident, breeding females. In the broader picture, Mopay is an important link in conserving biodiversity of southern Khabarovsk Krai, and an important link in their system of protected areas.

2. Infrastructure Support to Matei Zakaznik. Matei Zakaznik was signed into law on January 5, 1999. Support for the process of creating this protected area was provided by the USAID EPT Project, and overseen by HWI personnel (D. G. Miquelle). We have had a long-term interest in securing this piece of land because it has the potential to function as a corridor linking the Bikin and the Khor river basins, two of the major river basins in north-central Sikhote-Alin, and simultaneously provide an important ecological corridor between the two provinces in the Russian Far East that contain tigers, Primorye and Khabarovsk. Despite our success in getting this piece of land protected, it has sat virtually unattended due to a lack of funds, thereby inviting inappropriate use by poachers, timber harvesting, and a host of other activities. Therefore, using funds provided by NFWF, we signed an agreement with N. M. Balaganski, head of the Hunting Department in Khabarovsk Krai (which is responsible for zakazniks), to provide \$10,000 support for the zakaznik.

The general working plan for the zakaznik is included in the legal document creating the zakaznik, "On the state complex biological (hunting) Krai-level zakaznik 'Matei'" signed into law January 5, 1999. Presently, two rangers (with salaries provided by the State Hunting Department) work for the zakaznik, under the direction of the Raion hunting inspector. However, they were without means of transportation, and are therefore completely dependent on the raion hunting

inspector, who has many other responsibilities as well. Transportation is a key component of patrolling the zakaznik, conducting raids, controlling poachers, establishing road closures and putting up signs, as well as implementing management programs (e.g. providing salt blocks or feed for ungulates during harsh winters).

Working documents from the Hunting Department suggest that an annual budget of 350,000 rubles (\$12,500) is required to effectively manage the zakaznik, which is presently operating on a budget of 50,000 rubles (\$1,800). The purpose of our agreement with the Hunting Department is to provide support to the zakaznik by purchasing one vehicle and two snowmobiles to begin effective protection, patrolling, and management of Matai Zakaznik.

3. Co-financing of GEF for Infrastructure Support of Protected Areas Network

As mentioned above, one of the stumbling blocks in acquiring the medium-sized GEF grant was the need to demonstrate co-financing. Although other organizations were and are engaged in conservation activities in the region, none of them appeared to be willing or able to structure support in a way that would meet GEF guidelines for co-financing. Therefore, with remaining funds remaining from the STF grant, we worked with Alexander Kulikov of the Khabarovsk Wildlife Fund to insure that a portion of the STF funds could be constructed as co-financing, but in a way that allowed us control over use and implementation. Working with Kulikov and Head of the Hunting Department N. Balaganski, we constructed a support program for 4 zakazniks – Khekhtsir, Tuminski, Chukenski, and Mopay (the last of which had been created with STF funding). This support would be for purchase of equipment necessary for effective patrolling and protection of these zakazniks. Equipment purchased included:

- 1 UAZ jeep for Tuminski Zakaznik;
- 2 Snowmobiles use by Khekhtsir and Mopay;
- Spare parts for snowmobiles for both zakazniks;
- 1 Generator for Khekhtsir; and,
- 2 Chainsaws for Matai and Chuken zakazniks.

These purchases could not be made until initiation of the GEF project, i.e., after October 2001. Therefore, in fall 2001 we signed agreements with The Khabarovsk Wildlife Fund, transferred funds, and insured completion of the process so that equipment would be available for the winter season. That work was completed by March 2002, when we received a final accounting by the Wildlife Fund.



Figure 4. Alexander Kulikov handing over documents for newly purchased UAZ Russian jeep to Nikolai Balaganski, Head of the Khabarovsk Hunting Department. The vehicle was purchased with funds from STF for infrastructure support (protection of Tuminski Zakaznik) of the Khabarovsk Protected Areas network.

The Situation today.

The process of creating a united protected areas system, as first proposed by Miquelle et al. in 1995, is still ongoing today. The catalyst for that process was largely the grant provided to Hornocker Wildlife Institute (later transferred to Wildlife Conservation Society) from the Save-the-Tiger Fund, which provided us with, firstly, the means to push the concept to become locally accepted by local scientists and government administrators, and secondly, provided the means to pursue the tangled political process of achieving large-scale funding for implementation of the concept. The road was not an easy one, and the initial grant period proposed by us to STF (one year), was of course grossly naïve. Creation of protected areas is difficult world-wide, because conflicts between interests in extractive processes and protection will almost always exist. Nonetheless, the STF grant provided seed money that acted as a catalyst in gaining momentum in development of a large-scale program, and provided the means to seek and acquire a large grant

from the Global Environmental Facility. Today, that GEF project, initiated in October of 2001, has already submitted its first 6-month report, and although it is a torturous process, progress is being made. That process is by no means over, but the work has begun. That, in and of itself, should be considered a huge success for STF.

In short, STF funds:

1. Allowed development of the concept for a protected areas system;
2. Initiated lobbying to develop political support at the local level;
3. Provided for exchange and consulting to develop a plan for obtaining large-scale funding;
4. Acted as leverage and promoted competition (most constructive, but some very destructive) for non-governmental and aid organizations to “buy-in” to the protected areas network for Khabarovski Krai;
5. Acted as co-financing to secure a \$750,000 medium-sized GEF grant administered by the World Bank and implemented by the Khabarovsk Wildlife Fund;
6. Provided key financing for the creation of one zakazniks (wildlife refuge) and infrastructure support for three other zakazniks;
7. Provided for development of the Amur Tiger Monitoring Program (though separate grants to WCS) which proved to be a vital component of the GEF Program.

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