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Phoenix Fund

“Wildlife conservation in the Russian Far East in 2008”

Interim report
January – June 2008



Vladivostok, Russian Far East
2008

I. Project Overview

Primorye in the south of the Russian Far East represents the only area in the world where the Siberian tiger still exists in the wild. However, this magnificent species has become threatened in recent years. The insatiable demand for tiger parts is the major driving force behind this trend, but the erosion of habitats, increasing human-tiger conflicts and the illegal hunting of tiger prey are all having a terrible impact. Only an estimated 10% of the tiger population is living in protected areas, this is clearly not enough to sustain the population.

Since the year of its establishment in 1998, the Phoenix Fund has been carrying out nature conservation projects in the south of the Russian Far East, including anti-poaching, forest protection, ecological education and outreach projects. To struggle with poaching and strengthen protection activities in tiger habitat Phoenix supports anti-poaching activities of various state environmental law enforcement agencies, including the Western wildlife managers' team of Primorsky Hunting Management Department. The team operates in Krasnoarmeisky district, the North of Primorye, still rich in wildlife and cedar forests. Recently, the area has become a hotbed for setting up logging practices and trade due to its proximity to the Chinese border. Besides, the team conducts joint patrols with police officers and public volunteers along the borders of Verkhnebikinsky wildlife refuge. This project has been made possible in 2007 with the support of the KOLMÅRDEN FUND RAISING FOUNDATION, the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) and 21st Century Tiger.

The project is aimed at strengthening protection activities in tiger habitat by carrying out regular anti-poaching patrols and gaining in support from the local people.

We strongly believe that the continuous anti-poaching activities will help ensure sound protection for the tiger habitat and populations.

II. Project Implementation

Support for Western wildlife managers' team



© Phoenix Fund
Poached wildlife, guns and chainsaw
seized by the team

The Western wildlife managers' team was headed by Rosselkhoznadzor (Primorsky Department of Federal Service for Veterinarian and Vegetation Sanitary Supervision) and was responsible for revealing poaching and illegal logging. Unfortunately, since the 1st of January 2008, as a result of an administrative reform in Russia, Rosselkhoznadzor partly lost its law enforcement rights. The local Primorsky Krai (Province) government became responsible for protection of both forests and fauna within the province. And Rosselkhoznadzor is empowered to control the new department and check how inspectors protect forest and wildlife resources. So far the newly formed provincial department for the protection of fauna has only hired 12 inspectors to protect endangered and game species in Primorsky Krai outside protected areas. Alexander Samoilenko, the leader of the Western team, applied to be included as a staff member of the new fauna protection department. A response has not been received yet. The department now plans to increase the number of inspectors by the end of 2008 and we hope this time Alexander will be included in the department and thus receive law enforcement rights. Despite these obstacles the team has continued to operate in the field. This is possible as a result of co-operation with inspectors with law



enforcement rights from other agencies, namely police, border guards and protected area staff. Unfortunately, the team's results are likely to be badly affected by the reform.

In January – April 2008, the team conducted 9 patrols. In the course of them three reports were drawn on logging violations and two reports on hunting violations.



© Phoenix Fund
Checking hunters

As powers to protect and control use of game species were passed from the Federal center to the regional authorities, the team participated in establishing the work of the new structure in Dalnerechensky and Krasnoarmeisky districts. The off-road vehicle that the team used was no longer available, and the team leader had to use his own car. Due to that, it was impossible to penetrate deep into the forest.



© Phoenix Fund
A gun, cartridges, knife and hemp seized by the team

In January the team leader paid much time to preparation of reports, analysis of 2007 activities and control of execution of administrative and criminal cases based on the team's reports in 2007. In the result of this work, a violator was sentenced with a year and a half probation for illegal woodcutting and theft of trees in April 2007 in the hunting grounds of Dalnerechensky district. The team leader collected evidence on the poaching case of March 2007, when a group of poachers killed five roe deer when hunting by snowmobiles. The police started the case, then hampered it for some reason, and finally shut, returning the vehicles to their owner. The investigation officers might have been bribed. The team leader was indignant at the fact, and expressed his understanding of the story in the local newspaper.

In February – March 2008, according to the order of Rosselkhoznadzor (Primorsky Department of Federal Service for Veterinarian and Vegetation Sanitary Supervision) the team participated in annual census of wild animals and birds in the



© Phoenix Fund
Illegal logging site

hunting grounds.

On March 26, the team confiscated a Himalayan bear from a villager and handed over to the Primorsky Nature Protection Department.

In April the team went on patrol and involved the police, journalists from Russian television, newspapers and the public. On April 06, the officers discovered an illegal logging site. A criminal case was initiated.



On April 11, the team detained two persons for hunting on a salt lick during closed hunting period in the hunting grounds of Dalnerechensky district, 30 km far from Martinovo village. The rangers also revealed illegal cutting of 100 m³ of oak trees and confiscated two tractors of the site. They drew up a report and detained Mr. Silaev, resident of Dalnerechensk town, who is suspected of having committed this crime.

On April 24, the team found a storehouse of illegally cut timber, about 60 m³ of Korean pine. The police initiated the criminal proceedings on the report.

In May, the team revealed no violations. As the team has not provided a report on its activities in June, it will be included in our final report.

III. Measurable objectives delivered

For the reported period, the project has successfully delivered the following measurable objectives:

- Two tractors and 160 cubic metres of illegally cut timber were seized;
- Three criminal proceedings initiated;
- A Himalayan bear confiscated from a villager and handed over to the Primorsky Nature Protection Department;
- A violator was sentenced with a year and a half probation for illegal woodcutting.

Taking into account the decreased team's results the Phoenix Fund suggests that Kolmarden Fund Raising Foundation, the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) and 21st Century Tiger should consider the following two potential directions of further activities:

- If Alexander Samoilenko is included in the Primorsky Province department and thus receives law

enforcement rights, it will better to continue to support the team's activities;

- If Alexander Samoilenko is not included in the new department till August 2008, it will be better to redirect financial support to another anti-poaching team empowered to protect fauna and flora species. For example, Udege Legend National Park recently established in Primorye extremely needs funds to conduct anti-poaching patrols, develop eco-tourism and carry out environmental education and outreach activities.