

Far Eastern Biodiversity Conservation Fund ***by Garry Jewett***

I. History

In July 1995, officials of the Governments of Russia, Primorskii and Khabarovskii Krai, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and representatives of nongovernment organizations (NGOs) in the Russian Far East established an environmental trust fund to benefit endangered species and their habitat.

A 16-person Organizing Committee composed of government representatives, leading scientists, and NGO heads was formed. Guided by the WWF, USAID and a Vladivostok lawyer, the Organizing Committee discussed and approved a draft charter for the fund and its Grants Procedures in November 1996. These documents remain under review with formal registration of the Charter expected to take place in early 1997.

It is proposed that the fund would become a permanent financial entity and not an executor of projects.

II. Goals

The mission of the fund, as stated in its Charter, is to provide financial and technical support for research, environmental protection, natural resource conservation, and sustainable development to government and nongovernment organizations and communities for biodiversity conservation in the Russian Far East.

Also, the fund will have as a high priority, building capacity of environmental NGOs as well as increasing public awareness and participation in environmental decisionmaking which promotes the building of democratic society in Russia.

III. Legal Structure

The fund will be established under Russian law as a nonprofit charitable ecological organization. No special legislation is required.

IV. Governance/Administration

The highest managing body of the fund will be the Board of Trustees, which will include residents of Primorskii Krai and Khabarovskii Krai. The trustees will be elected by the founders who, in this case, are the members of the Organizing Committee.

It is anticipated that the trustees will include scientists, government officials, NGO representatives and a representative from WWF. Replacement Trustees will be named by the remaining trustees.

An Auditing Committee of the board shall check the economic and financial activity of the fund. Its accounting shall be checked by an independent auditor or auditing firm.

The fund will be administered by an Executive Director appointed by the Board of Trustees. The Executive Director will submit to the Board of Trustees recommendations for approval of financing of projects and programs. It is too early to predict exactly what additional staff members will be needed and what outside assistance will be required to review projects.

V. Funding

USAID is studying the possibility of providing approximately US\$1.2 million to the fund to be used, with the income therefrom, to finance grants and administrative costs over ten years.

VI. Fundraising

The sponsors and the Organizing Committee members anticipate that they will be able to raise additional funds from other sources such as governments, international financial institutions, foundations, and private corporations.

VII. Investment Policy

The anticipated contribution from USAID will be invested by WWF/US which will transfer amounts of principal and income periodically as needed for operations and administrative expenses. The principal will be invested in a balanced portfolio of equities and fixed income securities.

VIII. Relation to National Environmental Plans

The sponsors and the Organizing Committee have been working closely with the authorities of Primorskii and Khabarovskii Krai to ensure that the proposed activities of the fund form an integral part of environmental planning in the Russian Far East. This is enhanced by the presence on the Organizing Committee of key national and Krai officials.

IX. Criteria for Grants

The founders of the fund have approved a draft Grants Program Operations Manual which sets forth the following priorities to be financed within Primorskii and Khabarovskii Krai. This same list of priorities appears in the Charter.

- Financial and technical support of existing special protected natural areas;
- Support for the creation and infrastructure of new special protected natural areas;

- Conservation activities for endangered species or ecosystems;
- Filing and keeping a Red Book (Krasnaya Kniga);

Also, the fund may finance activities that lead to:

- Improvement of biodiversity conservation and recovery, protection of the environment and natural resources and development of scientific and technical projects in this area;
- Developing international cooperation in biodiversity conservation;
- Support for antipoaching activities and prevention of illegal taking of natural plants and animals;
- Encouragement of environmental education, including support of natural history museum exhibits;
- Support of land use planning processes that lead to sustainable use of natural resources and that provide significant contribution to biodiversity conservation;
- Expansion of public ecological expertise; and
- Support for research that leads to biodiversity conservation and recovery or whose results will be directly used in conservation projects.

The Board of Trustees and the Executive Director, when named, will establish detailed procedures for analysis and approval of grants.

X. Disbursements to Date

None. The fund has not been legally established.

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