

**World Wildlife Fund
Technical, Educational and Policy Assistance
for Conservation in the Russian Far East Ecoregion**

**Quarterly Report
Third Quarter, FY00
(April–June 2000)**

This report describes the activities of World Wildlife Fund's project “Technical, Educational and Policy Assistance for Conservation in the Russian Far East Ecoregion” during the third quarter of fiscal year 2000 (April-June 2000), under Cooperative Agreement #118-A-00-95-00303-00 with USAID. The main objectives of this project are to increase the long-term sustainability of nature conservation in the Russian Far East by:

1. Establishing a Small Grant Program to support biodiversity conservation initiatives.
 2. Building ecotourism capacity in and around nature reserves to increase public support for conservation and generate income for nature protection activities.
 3. Providing assistance to improve fire response capability including:
 - 3.1. Increase public awareness on fire prevention – Design a National Strategy
 - 3.2. Improve interagency cooperation on fire identification and suppression
 - 3.3. Provide technical assistance on purchasing radio communication equipment and fire fighting equipment for mobile forest fire fighting teams
 4. Ensuring the sustainability of the USAID funded project results
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Highlights of Project Accomplishments During the Third Quarter FY00

1. *Establishing a Small Grant Program to support biodiversity conservation initiatives*

Major Implementation Accomplished This Quarter:

- Consultations on proposal writing were conducted;
- 164 proposals were received for the second round of the Small Grant Program;
- Experts competition for the second round was held;
- Comparative statistic analysis on first and second grant rounds was prepared;
- Second Meeting of Advisory Board was held in Khabarovsk;
- 30 proposals were approved for funding;
- Statistics on the second grant round were prepared and distributed;
- The second grant round results were announced through information letter;
- Congratulation letters were sent out.

Project Indicators:

Conducted 121 consultations (18 written)

Disseminated 38 RFA

Sent 39 information letters

2 publications in press

Issued 1 press releases

Received 164 proposals

Approved 30 proposals

Experts competition for the second round of the Small Grant Program was held

An independent expert competition was held in April. Three experts were selected for reviewing proposals of the second grant round.

The independent experts are: Gennadii Illarionov from Blagoveshensk, Amurskaya Oblast, who works at the Council of Public Deputy for Amurskaya Oblast (legislative body) as an advisor on natural resource use; Sergey Ganzei from Vladivostok, Primorskii krai, who is a Deputy Director of the Pacific Institute of Geography, Far Eastern Branch of the Russian Academy of Science, and Zoya Revyakina from Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk, Sakhalinskaya Oblast, who is a senior scientist and Head of the Resource Department of State Environmental Committee for Sakhalinskaya Oblast.

The Program administration took the following criteria for selecting the independent experts: Good knowledge of environmental issues of the region; ability to prioritize; high professional level, working experience in applied activities; authority among regional environmental

organizations; availability for expertise. Also the geographical factor was taken into consideration. For the two grant rounds three administrative districts were presented – Primorskii Krai, Amurskaya and Sakhalinskaya Oblasts. At the present, we are trying to find experts in Jewish Autonomous Oblast and Khabarovskii Krai. So, the experts will be rotated in the third grant round. Each expert signed Terms of References document.

Expertise of proposals

1. A new version of the project evaluation criteria form was developed based on the experience received from the first grant round, comments of independent experts and WWF staff (Attachment A).
2. 164 proposals for the second grant round were received, 8 proposals were rejected by the program administration, as they did not correspond to the minimum eligibility of the criteria.
3. Independent experts evaluated 152 proposals. Each proposal received three marks.
4. A separate competition was held for each grant level.
5. The grant pool for the second grant round was US\$244,700.

30 Proposals were approved for funding

In June, USAID officially approved grantees of the second grant round. Out of 31 projects recommended for funding by the Advisory Board, 30 were approved by USAID. One was rejected by USAID due to the project does not fall within the geographical scope of the Program. Congratulation letters were prepared and sent to 30 grantees. Regret letters explaining reasons for project rejection will be prepared and sent in August. Reasons for rejection will be written based on the analysis of the independent expert's comments.

Supervisors were assigned to each grantee. Supervisors were chosen from different WWF programs. They are Olga Kabalik, Coordinator for Environmental Education Program in the RFE (seven projects), Yurii Darman, Specialist in nature protected areas (nine projects), Andrei Kotlyar, Field Coordinator for the Ecotourism Development Project (one project), Pavel Fomenko, Coordinator for the Biodiversity Conservation Program (ten projects), Vladimir Karakin, Deputy Leader of Ecoregional Project (two projects), Elena Starostina, Press-Secretary (one project). They will supervise technical activities and approve project reports.

The second grant round results were announced

Results of the second grant round were announced through information letters (Attachment A) including the total project budget, name of organizations, project summary and area of project implementation. Information letters were distributed to all grantees of the second grant round, members of Advisory Board and independent experts. Statistics on the second grant round were included in the information letter.

Comparative statistic analysis on the first and second grant rounds was prepared

Comparative statistic analysis on the first and second grant rounds was conducted and presented at the second Advisory Board meeting. (Attachment A)

The following newspaper/magazine reported results of the first grant round and information on the second grant round:

- The "Vladivostok" newspaper on June 15, 2000;

- The "Call of the Taiga" magazine, ? 1, 2000

Consultations on proposal writing were conducted

121 consultations on proposal writing were made on a daily basis through personal interview, phone and response to written requests. Each consultation was registered by name of a visitor, type of organization, type of consultation (phone, e-mail, personal) and questions covered during consultation (e.g. information on the program, consultations on a specific project, consultation on a rejected project, consultation on an approved project) and consultation duration.

Travel/Meetings

Second Meeting of the Advisory Board was conducted in Khabarovsk on June 20, 2000. In June, Yuliya Fomenko met with Valentin Stobetsky, Deputy Coordinator of USAID's Regional Investment Initiative. Brief information on the Small Grant Program was presented.

Plans for the next quarter:

- Fill out CRDF's GAP application forms;
- Signing grant agreements with grantees;
- Send out regret letters to 134 applicants;
- Distribute information letters according to the mailing list;
- Issue and send out press release on the results of second grant round;
- Interview on local radio and TV and publications in press media;
- Input information on the second grant round into the program Web-site;
- Consultations on proposal writing;
- Receiving proposals and their registration in the database.

Attachments A:

- Information letter on the second grant round results;
- List of participants of the second Advisory Board Meeting;
- Agenda for the second Advisory Board Meeting;
- List of grantees of the second grant round;
- Comparative analysis of the first and second grant rounds;
- Publications in press (2);
- Project Evaluation Criteria Form.

2. Building ecotourism capacity in and around nature reserves to increase public support for conservation and generate income for nature protection activities

Major Implementation Accomplished This Quarter:

The USAID/WWF Ecotourism Development Program made important progress in the third quarter and met project milestones described in the workplan. The project initiated a regional review and decision-making process to select nine specific sites for tourist infrastructure development. In addition, the project conducted marketing and media activities to raise program visibility and to promote tourism in the southern Russian Far East. The WWF ecotourism office moved to a new office on 15 July and purchased necessary equipment and furniture. The third quarter financial summary shows that project expenditures correspond with the workplan budget; but some adjustments will be recommended for second year budget categories. This report reviews activities in six areas:

1. Infrastructure Development
2. Marketing and Media
3. Training and Education
4. Lessons Learned and Next Steps
5. Chronology
6. Budget

1. Infrastructure Development

To develop ecotourism infrastructure, the Program conducted an open and transparent competition to select best sites for development. WWF received 162 proposals by 30 March 2000 and selected 12 for funding by 15 May 2000. All recommended projects were reviewed by the Ecotourism Workgroup, USAID, WWF/US, and WWF/RPO. WWF/RFE staff addressed comments and concerns by all reviewers, negotiated contracts with partnership, and initiated infrastructure development projects that included five regional zapovedniks, one zakaznik, one nature monument, and two special protected areas. Specific infrastructure development sites include:

Primorsky krai:

- Lazovsky Zapovednik: Tiger coast
- Khankaisky Zapovednik: Lotus and cranes
- Gamov peninsula: Primorsky coast
- Primorye nature parks: Ginseng ecotour
- Samarga River: Agzu tribal village

Khabarovskiy krai:

- Bolshekhkhtsyrsky Zapovednik: Amur mountain range
- Sikhote-Alin Nature Park: Wild animal rehabilitation centre
- Chukensky Zapovednik: Udege revival.

Amursakya oblast:

- Khingansky Zapovednik: Lake of white birds

For more details, see *Ecotourism Development Portfolio*. (Attachment B).

Development strategy and infrastructure site selection criteria

In selecting these nine sites for initial infrastructure development, reviewers used ten specific criteria in a scored evaluation form. But in general, projects were chosen on the basis of three major criteria:

1. Bioconservation: All sites serve important bioconservation objectives and complement the mission of protected areas. They also support the regional Econet strategy being implemented by WWF/RFE ecoregion project. **2. Market-driven:** Selected projects have good potential to attract tourists and/or have proven experience of hosting tourists. The larger marketing strategy focuses on three geographic areas: 1) southern Primorye around Vladivostok; 2) Amur River basin around Khabarovsk; 3) central Sikhote-Alin. Each of these areas provides reasonable tourist access and offers unique attractions for ecologically-oriented tourists. Such attractions include: sport-fishing, rafting, bird-watching, tiger ecology, beaches and swimming, and indigenous peoples culture. **3. Good management:** Each project will be managed by experienced and competent staff who understands and supports WWF goals. Moreover, each project management team demonstrated successful previous grant management experience.

With these general criteria, managers can implement an effective ecotourism development strategy that co-ordinated with other WWF programs. By selecting nine sites for infrastructure development, the project achieved important milestones related to future program progress. The program can now focus on the most promising areas and integrate other activities related to marketing and training.

Some reviewers recommended putting all resources in a few sites: no more than three or four places. We did not do this, but rather spread our investments over nine sites. We believe this to be a better approach because no single site dominates the market and each site will develop differently as the market evolves. Some sites will do better than others, but this will be determined by tourists who visit the region. By distributing our investments, we lower our risk and provide more chances for success. In addition, we received many good proposals from a very large region. In selecting our ecotourism development portfolio, we sought to balance regional interests and market realities. Even so, the nine sites are located in three priority areas: 1) southern Primorye; 2) the Amur River basin; and 3) the Central Sikhote-Alin range.

Moreover, WWF staff selected these sites in an open, competitive, and transparent process that encouraged dialogue and consensus building among regional stakeholders. The process also generated tremendous media-exposure and regional governments recognized ecotourism as a critical component of sustainable economic development. Since we expect to complete these initial contracts in summer 2000, individual sites can begin construction activities before the winter.

Reviewer comments and actions taken

During the review process, USAID and WWF-US raised concerns about several projects. Staff worked to address these comments and make appropriate changes. Important comments and subsequent changes include:

Gamov Peninsula. (Infrastructure) Several reviewers questioned infrastructure development in Gamov Peninsula because it was not formally a protected area and the local administration would own the equipment and materials. Although we still believe this will be a good project, especially for environmental education, WWF/RFE will postpone an award to Gamov until: 1) we receive land use restrictions on beach areas; and 2) we consider establishing a public organization to receive funds rather than the local administration. We expect these issues to be resolved by mid-August. We support the project because it proposes an innovative beach maintenance partnership between citizens and the local administration. Also, it targets environmental education and recreation for Russian tourists.

Ginseng ecotour. (Infrastructure) USAID reviews raised concerns about the purchase of a bus for tourist activities. We removed the bus from the project budget and workplan. However, this is an important project because it provides support for mostly Russian tourists and targets promising areas around zapovedniks.

Wild Salmon Center in Botchi and Koppi Rivers. (Market development and demonstration tour). Reviewers asked for clarification on Wild Salmon activities to develop sport fishing on coastal Khabarovsk rivers. The project appeared to be more a scientific project than an ecotourism on and specific project outputs were vague. WSC Project Manager Xan Augerot responded to these comments in a letter dated 22 June 2000. She provided more details about WSC activities in Kamchatka and marketing information. Also, the project agreed to publish maps, fish species lists, and other information to promote sustainable fishing tourism.

2. Marketing and Media

Concurrent with infrastructure development, WWF initiated a marketing strategy to promote ecotourism in the southern Russian Far East. Marketing consultant Aaltje Van Zoelen produced advertising materials and marketing brochures, and conducted numerous travel seminars in the western United States. In addition, staff conducted two marketing trips to the United States first in December 1999 and again in April 2000. The second trip corresponded to Pavel Fomenko's "Hero of the Planet" award in San Francisco and we used the award to gain visibility in national press and television. During these trips we established working relationships with Russian Consulates in Seattle and San Francisco, tour operators, environmental NGOs, zoos, and federal and state governments working in the Russian Far East.

For the Russian market, staff prepared exhibit materials and set up WWF travel booths in Moscow, in March 2000, in Khabarovsk, on April 17, 2000, (Sustainable Development Conference) and in Vladivostok, in April 2000. (Daltour). In addition, staff held four press conferences co-ordinated by WWF/RFE public relations staff. In cooperation with WWF/US, Dan Cao and others contacted Korean tour operators in Seoul. Also WWF/RFE participated UNDP Tumen River project and discussed partnerships with Chinese, Korean, Japanese, and Mongolian governments and tour operators. Also, we established important contacts in Japan,

through the Dai Chi consumers group and our joint-project on the Samarga River. A group of Japanese television journalists visited the site during the last week of June.

As a result of these trips, we raised visibility to Russian Far East as a tourist destination and received several commitments from groups to visit the area. We expect several “demonstration tours” (or familiarization tours) to follow in summer 2000. Also, we hope to work with WWF/US to follow up on our many contacts to promote ecotourism and raise funds for biodiversity conservation. After the initial emphasis on the United States, future marketing efforts will focus more on China, South Korea, and Western Europe.

To support these activities, the Ecotourism Program produced:

- Two brochures: (The Primorsky Coast)
- Two magazine ads (International Travel News)
- One thirty minute video: Tiger Tracks, Cedar and Lotus
- Eight trade show posters
- PowerPoint Presentation
- Slide show
- Three press releases
- Three press conferences
- Stakeholder database
- Three trade shows

3. Training and Education:

To improve training for local tourism professionals, the Program contracted a training course for safe ecotourism. In partnership with the local NGO Phoenix Fund, we will provide training materials and a curriculum regarding safety issues in Russian Far East. These will be conducted in the fall and winter 2000. In addition, the Program will publish a series of “Sikhote-Alin Green Books” about regional flora, fauna, and sea life. These will be published in fall 2000. In general, however, first year training activities were minimal and the project will have a small surplus in this area. We plan to conduct additional training activities in the second year when we have a better idea of priorities and needs.

4. Lessons Learned and Next Steps

Role of private firms. Partnerships between commercial firms and protected areas will be necessary for profitable ecotourism. Although the project awarded no infrastructure grants to private companies, we hope to promote business partnerships with commercial firms through shared marketing activities and demonstration tours to protected areas. To provide information for tour operators, we will also ask zapovedniks to produce lists of tourist activities and price lists.

Roles of zapovedniks. Zapovednik directors described financial problems and difficulties with poachers. For these reasons, some were reluctant to develop ecotourism programs for their reserves. We hope to address these concerns with training programs for business planning and marketing.

Market potential. Although much of our initial marketing work focused on the United States, most foreign tourists in the region come from China, South Korea, and Japan. We should work more with Asian tour operators and design tourist routes for their clients. Also, we will focus more on other tourist markets in Western Europe and Australia.

Marketing and WWF fundraising. Marketing trips generated much interest in the Russian Far East, including ecotourism opportunities and WWF tiger conservation efforts. Some individuals and organizations offered cooperation and support, even though they did not want to visit the area as an ecotourist. For these reasons, we should coordinate ecotourism marketing with related WWF programs and objectives, especially fundraising. WWF offices in the United States, Great Britain, Germany, Holland, Japan, China, etc. should understand and support ecotourism marketing efforts.

5. Chronology:

15 – 22 April. US west coast marketing trip with Pavel Fomenko “Hero of the Planet” award. San Francisco, Portland, Seattle.

15 May. Ecotourism Workgroup to discuss and select proposals. Vladivostok.

17 – 18 May. Sustainable Development Conference. Khabarovsk.

20 May. IAITO marketing workshop. Vladivostok

21 May. UNDP Tumen River Development conference. Vladivostok.

25-26 May. DalTour trade show. Vladivostok.

26-27 June. Site visit Samarga Project with Japanese partners. Agzu village.

28 June. Site visit Udege Revival. Gvai Sugai village.

29 June. Site visit Sihote-Alin Wildlife Rehabilitation Center. Khabarovsk.

30 June. Press Conference. Khabarovsk

1 – 7 July. Amur River cruise and Oriental White Stork workshop. Komsomolsk.

8 July. Khankaiskii Zapovednik site visit. Spassk.

9 July. Gamov Peninsula site visit. Slavyanka.

11 July. Press conference. Vladivostok.

15 July. Move to new office. Vladivostok.

6. Budget

Overall, the ecotourism program expenses met budget expectations as described in the workplan. Expenses for staff, travel, office rent and supplies, equipment, advisory group meetings, and management costs matched workplan estimates. Also sub-contracts for marketing consultants and infrastructure development were reasonable and correspond to the workplan budget. In two areas, however, the program spent less than expected:

Training: \$15,000 first year. \$40,000 total. Most of this remains.

Media and publications: \$30,000 first year. \$60,000 total. Spent about \$5,000, committed another \$15,000.

Based on next year’s needs and program modifications, we recommend the following budget changes:

- **Training (\$15,000) to Demonstration Tours.** By adding money to demonstration tours, we increase our capacity to host visitors and tour operators to introduce them to ecotourism in the region.
- **Media (\$15,000) to Program Manager salary.** After serving on the WWF/RFE Ecoregion Project from 1 April 1999 to 31 March 2000, program manager Steve Nelson will move full-

time to the Ecotourism project. This meets the requests from USAID and WWF/RPO managers. The current budget estimates he works 50% on ecotourism and 50% on ecoregion project. The increase in budgeted salary will allow him to work full-time on the project until 31 March 2001. We should review options for staff salaries in winter 2001.

Plans for the next quarter:

With initial infrastructure grants in place, the project will work with each site to complete buildings and repairs and to conduct marketing activities. Specific upcoming tasks include:

- Conduct demonstration tours to selected project sites. (e. g. Wharton Business School to Lazovsky Zapovednik, Tumen River delegation to Primorsky Coast, Wild Salmon Center to Botchi River, American and Japanese fishing guides to Agzu on Samraga River).
- Complete all initial contracts and begin construction of tourist infrastructure.
- Publish Sikhote-Alin Green Books
- Conduct a regional workshop in fall to review progress at all sites.
- Issue a second “request for proposals” for new projects in November 2000.
- Design and publish marketing materials for selected infrastructure sites.

3. Providing assistance to improve fire response capability including:

3.1. Increase public awareness on fire prevention – Design a National Strategy

3.2. Improve interagency cooperation on fire identification and suppression

3.3. Provide technical assistance on purchasing radio communication equipment and fire fighting equipment for mobile forest fire fighting teams

Major Implementation Accomplished this Quarter (Task 3.1.):

- National Strategy on Public Education and Awareness in Forest Fire Prevention was prepared for presentation to the Scientific and Technical Board of Ministry of Natural Resources.
- WWF RFE together with USAID finalized a list of organizations and persons in RFE to participate in a US study-tour.
- Consultations were conducted with Wayne C. Bushnell, Forest Fire Specialist of the US Forest Service.

Preparation of National Strategy on Public Education and Awareness in Forest Fire Prevention is completed. Discussions on the draft Strategy took place in Moscow in April, May and June 2000. The draft Strategy was also discussed in Khabarovsk on June 14, 2000 with Wayne C. Bushnell, Forest Fire Specialist of the US Forest Service.

In July 2000, the draft Strategy was ready to be presented to the Scientific and Technical Board of Ministry of Natural Resources who is a successor of the Federal Forest Service, responsible for forest fire activities. However, due to the restructure of the Federal Forest Service, the Strategy will be presented to the Scientific and Technical Board of Ministry of Natural Resources in August 2000 and get a final approval from the Board afterwards.

Plans for the next quarter:

In September-October 2000, a US study tour will be organized with representatives from different NGOs, Russian nature reserves, educational sectors of the forest service and WWF staff to visit the US Forest Service training facilities, as well as to exchange experience on fire fighting, to learn the US “Smokey Bear” campaign.

Major Implementation Accomplished this Quarter (Task 3.2.):

A proposal to establish Monitoring and Interagency Cooperation Center in Khabarovsk territory was discussed and agreed.

Reorganization of Russia’s Federal Forest Service caused significant changes at the regional level in Primorsky and Khabarovsk. Several meetings were held to find a solution for improving interagency cooperation on fire identification and suppression. During a meeting at Khabarovsk Regional Forest Service, it was proposed to establish a monitoring and interagency cooperation center at “Sosnovka” Training Center, where all necessary equipment and facilities were available. It was agreed with Mr. V. Pominov, former Head of Khabarovsk Regional Forest Service, who recently resigned and became the Director of the Forest Museum, based in Sosnovka.

Plans for the next quarter:

The Monitoring and Interagency Cooperation Center will be finally established during July-September 2000. Afterwards, a workshop of interested parties (forest owners, tenants, etc) will be conducted. Also, activity plan will be developed.

Major Implementation Accomplished this Quarter (Task 3.3.):

- Seventy percent of radio equipment units were installed.
- Radio communication specialists from the US Forest Service together with staff of Khabarovsk Regional Forest Service developed a plan to install radio communication equipment in Khabarovsk territory.
- A ceremony of passing radio equipment to the Federal Forest Service in Khabarovsk was reported in mass media (see attachment C).

Mike Reagan and Bob Sutton, radio communication specialists from the US Forest Service and specialists from the Khabarovsk Federal Forest Service developed a plan to install radio communication equipment for it’s maximum efficiency.

Equipment units were dispatched to leskhozoes and installed in accordance to the plan. At the moment, 70% of radio equipment units are operational and being used, 30% radios are in the process of installation.

According to the information from leskhozoes, fire control efficiency by using the radios during late spring and summer forest fire seasons was considerably increased.

A ceremony of passing radio equipment to Khabarovsky Federal Forest Service was reported in mass media (newspapers, periodicals, TV and Radio) (See attachment C).

Plans for the next quarter:

The rest of thirty percent of radio communication units will be installed and be operational. Operational control and technical maintenance of installed radio equipment will be provided. When needed radio communication specialists from the US Forest Service will provide necessary assistance.

Major Implementation Accomplished This Quarter for Purchasing Fire-Fighting Equipment:

- Equipment lists and leskhozoes for basing Forest Fire Fighting Teams were finally agreed by the Primorsky and Khabarovsky Forest Services. Confirmation letters for passing the fire-fighting equipment were obtained from Primorsky and Khabarovsky Forest Services.
- Part of the equipment for mobile Forest Fire Fighting Teams has been distributed to leskhozoes;
- WWF RPO and Russian Federal Forest Service signed a five-year agreement on "Preservation of Amur tiger habitat by taking forest fire control activities".
- Due to price increase WWF RPO will purchase ten T-170 fire-fighting tractors instead of 12.

Plans for the next quarter:

All equipment units will be delivered in accordance to the distribution plan. Leskhozoes will guarantee safety and maintenance of all the equipment. WWF will provide funds for repair and petrol. WWF and Regional Forest Services will sign agreements, identify specific activities for the Mobile Fire Fighting Teams. WWF will collect information for preparing fire season, forest fire situation, analyze the Team's activities results. All equipment will have WWF logo. On July 24, 2000, a ceremony of passing formal documents to Primorsky Forest Service will be conducted. Afterwards, a press conference will be held. On July 29, 2000, Vladimir Dmitriev from WWF RPO Moscow will visit Oborsky leskhoz of Khabarovsk territory to inspect the first fire-fighting team's activities.

4. Ensuring the sustainability of the USAID funded project results

Major Implementation Accomplished this Quarter:

- A powerful conditioner was purchased and installed in the Nature Museum at the Lazo State Reserve.
- Equipment and supplies were purchased for making stuffed animals for the Nature Museum.
- 18 units of stuffed animals were prepared.

- Repair and redecoration of the Nature Museum is done.

Project Management

Project Personnel

Washington, DC

WWF-United States (WWF-US)

William M. Eichbaum, Vice President

Dan Cao, Project Coordinator

1250 24th Street, NW

Washington DC 20037

USA

Tel: +1 202-778-9716

Fax: +1 202-293-9211

Email: dan.cao@wwfus.org

Vladimir Dmitriev

Project Coordinator for Fire Prevention

Education and Interagency Cooperation

WWF Russia Program Office

19 Nikoloyamskaya Str. #3

Moscow 109240

Russia

Tel: 7095-727-0939

Fax: 7095-727-0938

Email: Vdmitriev@wwfnet.org

Contact Persons:

Steve Nelson

Project Manager for Ecotourism Project

WWF-Russia Programme Office RFE

Vladivostok, 690091

Pologaya St., Bld 68, Room 411

Russia

Tel:/fax: 7 4232 43 09 58

e-mail: wwfrfe@vld.global-one.ru

Yuliya Fomenko

Project Manager for Small Grant Program

and Target Projects

WWF Russia Programme Office RFE

Vladivostok, 690091

Pologaya St., Bld 68, Room 411

Russia

Tel:/fax: 7 4232 43 09 58

e-mail: wwfrfe@vld.global-one.ru