

## **New Approaches to Forest Protection and Fire Management at an Ecoregional Level in the Far East of the Russian Federation**

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### **Extended Abstract**

In the course of the implementation of the World Bank-supported Sustainable Forestry Pilot Project and the dialogue on assistance in the forest policy development and reform, the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) of the Russian Federation and World Bank have agreed to carry out a number of joint activities. In particular, during the All-Russian Foresters Congress in February 2003 the first international workshop was held focusing on institutional changes in forest management in the countries with transition economies. This workshop reiterated the need for a more extended discussion of a number of key aspects of forest reforms. The second workshop was held in early June 2003 in Pushkino focusing on the problems and perspectives of developing concession-based forest use in Russia. The workshop elaborated practical recommendations for improvement of forest lease and concession mechanisms with reference to international experience.

The third workshop in this series of joint events of the MNR and the World Bank has a more specific thematic and geographical focus. The workshop is held in a combined format with the regular MNR meeting that would take preliminary stock of the 2003 results of forest protection and regeneration in the Far-Eastern Federal District. The objective of the workshop is to share knowledge and information and develop detailed recommendations for design, planning and implementation of an ecoregional framework for comprehensive forest fire management in the south of the Russian Far East. The workshop recommendations would be implemented in the framework of the Sustainable Forestry Pilot Project and the associated Global Environment Facility (GEF) project on fire management in high biodiversity value forests of the Amur-Sikhote-Alin Ecoregion. New techniques of fire management experimentally tested in this ecoregion would be subsequently replicated in other fire-prone regions of Russia.

In addition to Russian specialists, a role in the workshop preparation and execution is also played by experts from the US and Canadian Forest Services, US Agency for International Development, Global Fire Monitoring Center, World Wide Fund for Nature, other international organizations. The preliminary results of the workshop are expected to be presented at the World Forestry Congress in Canada (September 2003) and the Global Wildland Fire Summit in Australia (October 2003) and would therefore influence formulation of Russia's priority plans for bilateral and multilateral international cooperation in this area.

The workshop program includes an introductory plenary session for overview and analytical presentations, four parallel working groups for an in-depth review of key topics:

**Forest Fire Management Options** – Discussion of sustainable forest management practices in fire adapted ecosystems. Specific topics may include eco-regional and landscape level planning; fuels management (including perverse incentives for "sanitary cuts", arson, illegal logging); silvicultural regimes; prevention infrastructure in production vs. protected forests; ground vs. aerial suppression; communications and equipment options (heavy mechanization vs. light mobile units, light aircraft).

**Forest Fire Information and Data Services** – Discussion of ground, aerial, and satellite tools for detecting, monitoring and mapping forest fires and forest cover. Specific topics may include choice of platforms; data validation; storage, processing, transfer, and compatibility issues; value-added information products and services; user needs (global science, forecasting, management planning, decision support and emergency response systems, public awareness); and information regimes (mandatory disclosure, paid access, free dissemination).

**Institutional Arrangements** – Discussion of institutional arrangements for effective fire management. Specific topics include federal, regional, and municipal mandates; fire statistics, planning, budgeting and financing; interagency coordination and regional coordination centers; fire insurance; regulations for direct public management vs. management by private concessions / leases; provisions for community participation (including indigenous peoples); staff training programs; public awareness; and independent access of civil society and NGOs to data and information.

**Related topics:** Fundamentals of fire ecology; role of fire in global and regional climate; fire history in the Russian Far East and adjacent regions; socio-economics of forest fire; typology of national fire management systems; global forest monitoring and fire datasets; limits and opportunities in fire modelling and prediction; and international cooperation and emergency response systems.

A final plenary session will review cross-cutting themes and discuss recommendations for inclusion in the GEF project and international cooperation programs.

The workshop will be attended by about 100 Russian and international specialists, including experts in fire ecology and behaviour, forest monitoring and mapping, forest management practitioners, representatives of the MNR, Ministry of Emergencies, Hydrometeorological Service, Russian Academy of Sciences, regional and local governments of the Far-Eastern Federal District, representatives of nongovernmental and international organizations.

The Workshop will take place in Khabarovsk on 9-12 September 2003 at a time when the proceedings of the 3<sup>rd</sup> International Wildland Fire Conference are already being printed. Thus, the findings and recommendations of the workshop will be presented at the conferences and transmitted to the participants of the International Wildland Fire Summit.