



Regional Northeast Asia Wildland Fire Network
Foundation and Follow-up Meetings 2004 -2005

Background and Objective for the Regional Northeast Asia Wildland Fire Network

The forests in the Northeast Asia region provide space for human occupation and a basis for economic activities. Agricultural activities are concentrated in river valleys and have formed community culture along the mountain borders.

Forest lands constitute a potential region for development to meet the demand for new land use due to an increase in population and industrial development.

Most wildfires in the Northeast Asian region occur due to human activities – mainly due to careless land-use. Agriculture, collection of medical and eatable plants, industrialization accompanied by recent economic growth, hiking, recreation, tourism such as hunting and fire at cemetery conformed to religious significance, and social customs mainly cause forest fires; children playing with fire is another significant cause of wildfires. Altogether the density of population is directly proportional to fire occurrence.



Especially in Northeast Region there will be more active development and use of forest in accordance with the demand for new land use caused by an increase in population and economic growth. The probability of forest fire occurrence will increase as well.

The currently observed trend of global warming involves a change of regional climate patterns. According to climate models and the recent weather records an increase of temperatures as well as an increasing occurrence of prolonged droughts has been observed in Central, Northern and North East Asia. Associated with the regional weather patterns it is already noted that wildland fires are becoming more frequent in the sub-arctic tundra and forests. As a consequence of climate change

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and fire effects the northern ecosystems, including discontinuous and continuous permafrost sites, will be extremely damaged. One of the consequences will be the release of additional greenhouse gases due to melting of permafrost.

Wildland fire not only burns forest but also destroys the living ground and industrial facilities in the wildland-urban interface, causing serious social and economic problems.

Despite these concerns the countries of the region so far have not yet not shared information and have not yet cooperated to jointly address these problems.

In this situation, on 6 March 2004, representative from countries in the North East Asia region countries – including South Korea, China, Japan, and Russia – assembled and reached an agreement that they should recognize the significance of the negative impacts of forest fire and other wildland fires and consider it as a regional issue. As a first step to diminish occurrence and negative impacts of wildland fires. The fire specialists from different government and non-government institutions agreed to build up the Regional Northeast Asia Wildland Fire Network for the purpose of exchanging and sharing information and resources and to establish the multilateral cooperation system in the future.

Breaking off the wall between severed countries, they hope to share the education for diminishing the occurrence and damages of wildland fires, prevention programs, fire suppression training programs, and incrementally exchange the physical and human extinction resources. This development will be closely connected with the efforts to diminish occurrence and negative impacts of forest fire by the Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC) under the auspices of the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN-ISDR).

Objectives and Modus Operandi of the Regional Northeast Asia Wildland Fire Network

In Northeast Asia Region forest fire management and the restoration of damaged area are very important issues in the social, cultural, and economic aspect as well as in the environment. The following activities of the Regional Northeast Asia Wildland Fire Network will be implemented to diminish occurrence and negative impacts of forest fires:

- reinforce the partnership among countries by exchanging and sharing information
- develop common studies and programmes for forest fire management
- establish mutual agreements for delivering mutual assistance in fire extinction and exchange of fire management resources
- interchange the technology and resources for the restoration of damaged area

Network Coordination

The Regional Northeast Asia Wildland Fire Network is coordinated by the Korean Forest Research Institute (KFRI), Seoul, South Korea. The network members are composed as follows

- Individuals or institutions related to wildland fire research and / or an education, training in each country
- To strive for an administrative development, it is able to consider an administrative official and/or an suppression official
- Advisors: responsible person in charge of the region in the FAO Forestry Department and the GFMC



Participants from China, Japan, South Korea, the Russian Federation, the ISDR and FAO attended the foundation meeting of the network in Seoul, South Korea, 6 March 2004

Northeast Asia Wildland Fire Network - Second Meeting
Tohoku University, Sendai, Japan, 18 January 2005

Introduction

At the 2nd meeting of the Regional Northeast Asia Wildland Fire Network the plan and activities after the first meeting (5-6 March 2004, at the Korea Forest Research Institute, Seoul, Korea) were discussed. The NEA Wildland Fire Network Situation assessment is a review of the proposed key issues decided at the foundation meeting of the network. The meeting was held at Tohoku Univ., Sendai, Japan, 18 January 2005, in conjunction with the International Symposium of Northeast Asia Forest Fire from Cosmos (17 January 2005).

Topics of discussion and planning included a review of key issues and annual plans as agreed at the foundation meeting:

Definition of the region

China and Russia belong only partially to the North East Asia region (both countries are also belonging to the Regional Central Asia Wildland Fire network, Russia also to the Baltic Network). It was suggested to define the provinces (*oblast*, *krai*, autonomous republics) that are actively participating in the NEA network.

Country reports

The standard form developed by the GFMC shall be used for country reports and provincial reports respectively. The final form was circulated after the meeting.

Database of human resources and equipment for fire suppression

In addition to the country reports a separate database containing human resources and equipment for fire suppression that can be used in border-crossing wildland fire emergencies or in any other transnational cooperation. A database format was circulated before and after the meeting.

Development of Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) or Letters of Agreement (LoA)

The development of agreements is recommended: Within countries: Connecting partners within countries: Securing contributions of and providing guidance to the different stakeholders (administrations / agencies, NGOs, academia etc.). Between countries: Suggest the development of bilateral or multilateral agreements i.a.w. the international experiences (see FAO database on international agreements)

Regional Wildland Fire Homepage and Newsletter (or Bulletin)

Several options of hard or soft information dissemination by a newsletter and a website were discussed. A joint effort with ECE/FAO International Forest Fire News (IFFN) and GFMC was recommended.

Funding of Network Activities

Fund rising difficulties were reported by several network members.

Regional joint research project or programme

Discussion about the objectives and finances for a joint research project / programme addressing the social, culture, and environment aspects of wildland fire in NEA.

Publication

The publication of a book "The Status and Future of the Wildland Fire Situation in the NE Asia Region" and a "Regional Wildland Fire Analysis for Policy Makers" is underway.

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