IMPLEMENTATION COMPLETION MEMORANDUM (ICM)

TF Name:	Protected Areas Network for Sikhote-Alin Mountain Forest Ecosystems Conservation in Khabarovsk Kray (Russian Far East) Medium-Size Project
TF Number:	GEF TF 029891
Report Date:	June 23, 2006
Program:	Biodiversity conservation GEF focal area, Operational Program No 3 - Forest Ecosystems
Net Grant Amount:	US$ 750,000
Donor(s):	Global Environment Facility
Approval Date[1]:	August 7, 2001
Closing Date:	December 31, 2005

A. GRANT OBJECTIVES

1. Original Statement of Grant Objectives The project was initiated to strengthen conservation of the highly endangered habitats in the Sikhote-Alin mountain forests in Khabarovsk Kray in the Russian Far East. The project objective was to finalize *the establishment in the South of the Khabarovsk Kray of an integrated system of protected areas combining areas with different types of protective regimes* to ensure that habitats of critical conservation importance are preserved and that biological resources of the region are used in a sustainable way. The project would also introduce in Khabarovsk Kray new types of protected areas: (i) ecological corridors, interconnecting parks and reserves to ensure better protection of larger blocks of habitats, and (ii) areas of limited economic use, intended to decrease land-use pressure on the vulnerable ecosystems.

2. Changes to Grant Objective The original objective was not changed.

3. Achievement of Grant Objective **Satisfactory**. The objective was achieved in full: an integrated regional system of protected areas is now established and operational. New types of protected areas (corridors and areas of limited use) were introduced successfully and now represent an important element of the overall system. Legal and institutional grounds for the further development of the protected area network are also established. The capacity of protected areas was strengthened through the improved

[1] Approval by the GEF CEO. The grant was approved by the World Bank's Country Director on September 13, 2001, and signed on October 1, 2001.

management planning, supplies of critical equipment, and the increased public awareness. Biodiversity monitoring demonstrates the increase in populations of the indicator species.

B. OUTPUTS

1. Achievement of deliverables

The project consisted of five components: (A) Establishment of new protected areas, (B) Improving the efficiency of the protected areas network, (C) Public awareness and environmental education, (D) Monitoring, and (E) Policy coordination and project management. Project activities were implemented in full. Outputs by components are summarized and rated below.

A. Establishment of new Protected Areas (PAs) - (GEF costs US$ 190,480).

The objective was to support establishment of new PAs, in particular: Vyazemsky and Khoso nature parks; Strelnikov, Nelma, and Khutu ecological corridors; 6 landscape nature monuments; and a number of territories of limited use. This would include (i) completion of the required data analysis and field investigations, (ii) delineation of boundaries for the proposed PAs, (iii) development of proposals in the required format for reserving lands for PAs, (iv) preparation of management plans for new PAs, (v) drafting the legal documentation for establishment of PAs, (vi) providing support to the required official expertise of this documentation by the organizations concerned and adoption of decisions establishing new PAs by the respective local (rayon) and regional (Kray) authorities. The project would also help to develop regulations in support of the regional Law on Protected Areas (including those, related to reservation of land, recreational use of land, establishment of areas of limited economic use, and etc.) and thus would assist in finalization of a workable legal framework to regulate establishment and operation of PAs in Khabarovsk Kray. This activity would include (i) drafting new legal acts and (ii) consultations to ensure the endorsement of new draft legal acts by regional authorities and general public, as well as their official expertise and adoption.

Outputs: **Satisfactory.**

1. New protected areas of different type and regime were established to interconnect the existing nature reserves and to improve protection of critical habitats. The established PAs include (i) tree *ecological corridors* - Khutu (77,480 ha), Strelnikov (8,100 ha), and Nelma (36,700 ha); (ii) seven *areas of limited economic use (reproduction areas for ungulates)* - Muly-Guado (14,700 ha), Dunchika (28,500 ha), Istok Khutu (4,000 ha), Sagzy (8,670 ha), Siniy (3,040 ha), Shkolniy (3,000 ha), and Anui (22,000 ha); and (iii) three *landscape nature monuments* - Tigrovy Dom (2,280 ha); Anui (310 ha), and Peschera Proschalnaya (765 ha). Designation of landscape nature monuments Topty (820 ha), Ioli (1,200 ha), and Srednekhorsky (485 ha) is now being finalised**.**

2. All planned grant-funded activities required for the establishment of the Khoso (123,100 ha) and Vyazemsky (33,000 ha) *nature parks* – field studies, legal analysis, public consultations and environmental assessments – were completed successfully. However, the establishment of these PAs was delayed as the governing federal legislation undergo significant changes as part of the overall administrative reform in the country. The Government of the Khabarovsk Kray has now confirmed its commitment to finalize the establishment of these parks. Until they are established, the Government of the Kray may decide to keep the subject territories reserved with the relevant protective regime.

3. Regional legal framework for the establishment and operation of PAs was strengthened. The regulation on the *Terrestrial and Aquatic Areas under Protection* was developed, agreed with stakeholders and in 2003 adopted by the Khabarovsk Kray Government. This regulation provided legal grounds for the establishment and operation of the ungulate reproduction areas under the project (see above). Four other regulations on (i) *tourism in PAs*, (ii) *allocation of land for PAs*, (iii) *procedures for establishing PAs*, and (iv) *areas of traditional land use* were also developed and adopted as elements of the new regional law "On Exercising Authority of the Khabarovsk Kray for the Protected Areas Establishment and Enforcement" (N 290 of July 26, 2005).

4. To ensure the sustainable operation of the protected areas network developed, the Government of the Kray has established a specialised *Service for the Protected Areas and the Protection of Wildlife of the Khabarovsk Kray*, which is now responsible for managing all kray-level protected areas - special nature reserves, nature parks, ecological corridors, reproduction areas, and nature monuments.

B. Improving the Efficiency of the Protected Areas Network (GEF costs US$ 205,750)

The objective was to strengthen operational capacities of PAs (including the newly established) in the region and would finance (i) development and adoption of PA management plans and (ii) delivery to PAs of equipment and services required to implement priority measures under those plans. Activities would target state nature reserves (zapovedniks), special nature reserves (zakazniks), nature monuments, ecological corridors, territories of limited use, and nature parks.

Outputs: **Satisfactory.**

1. The participatory management planning for PAs was competed. In particular, agreement was reached with the Kray authorities on the pilot management planning for the special nature reserves (zakazniks, plans for this type of PAs have never been prepared before) and management plans for six special reserves (Khekhtsirsky, Tumninsky, Mopau, Mataisky, Chukensky, and Birsky) were developed and adopted for implementation. The *Service for the Protected Areas and the Protection of Wildlife of the Khabarovsk Kray* established under the project is responsible for implementing the adopted management plans in all kray-level PAs: the listed special reserves, ecological corridors, landscape nature monuments, reproduction areas, and nature parks.

2. Equipment critical to strengthen the operational capacity of PAs in the region was delivered as planned and is now in service. Equipment procured for state nature reserves (Botchinsky, Bolshekhekhtsirsky and Komsomolsky), special reserves, and ecological corridors (total GEF cost US$ 163,250) includes: snowmobiles, chainsaws, inflatable boats and boat engines, 4WD vehicles, mobile and portable radio stations, power generators, computers, spare-parts, and etc.

C. Public awareness and environmental education - (GEF costs US$ 137,110)

The objective was to generate the increased public interest in preserving the biodiversity of the region and explain to the general public the importance of the PAs for the future long-term sustainability of natural ecosystems and the environment of the Kray. Support would be provided to (i) public environmental education and seminars for different social groups (foresters, biologists, teachers, timber harvesters, officials, etc.); (ii) publication of brochures and other printed materials covering operation of the PAs, monitoring of the Amur tiger, and the value of biodiversity of the Sikhote-Alin ecosystem; (iii) development and dissemination of a video-film showing the importance of the PAs network for biodiversity conservation in the region; (iv) development and delivery to the public of environmental training programs covering the role of PAs in biodiversity conservation; (v) surveys on the impact of the establishment of new PAs on various social groups; (vi) activities to ensure public participation in the assessment of project results and regular public discussions on key issues of biodiversity conservation.

Outputs: **Highly satisfactory.**
The project was implemented in a participatory manner; project information was regularly made available at the Internet site http://www.wf.ru. The planned educational activities (lectures, outreach programs, publications) were completed in full. The first and the final year's social survey programs were successfully completed to reveal the attitude of population to PAs, and the results were published (500 copies each). Three lectures on conservation and a cycle of lectures on forest fire prevention in PAs were developed. In all, 69 lectures were delivered to an audience totalling more than 3,000 people. Additional 25 lectures were circulated on CDs.

Other deliverables included preparation and publication of brochures "Our Protected Areas" (1000 copies), "The Amur Tiger Monitoring" (500 copies), "Humans and Tigers – Safety Precautions in Tiger Habitats" (1000 copies), and "Humans and Tigers – Peaceful Coexistence" (1000 copies); environmental awareness program for visitors of state nature reserves and national parks (500 copies); leaflets on conservation of rare and endangered species of flora and fauna (3000 copies). A reference book "Vegetation of Coniferous–Broad–Leaved Sikhote-Alin Forests" has also been published (500 copies). Eight seminars, organized to expand public knowledge on PAs, rare and endangered species, engaged 220 participants. Project results were presented in 10 articles in press. Seven press conferences were conducted. A competition on the best article, video film and radio program about PAs was carried out among journalists, which resulted in 17 articles published and 11 video- and one radio programs broadcasted by regional media. Awareness activities with good media coverage (press releases, radio broadcasts) were organized in the remote communities in Dolmy, Solontsovy, Sukpai, and Gvasyugy

areas. Two films (25 minutes each) about the project and its partners were produced and broadcasted by the regional DVTRK TV channel. The total number of people directly involved through the project in various activities amounted to 17,980.

D. Monitoring (GEF cost US$ 108,380)

The objective was to support ecosystem and species monitoring, including (i) monitoring of the population of Amur tiger as a top predator and a good indicator species for Sikhote-Alin mountain forests and (ii) monitoring in populations of species which are the tiger's main prey base. These assessments and analysis would help reveal major reasons underlying changes in the tiger population of the region and provide grounds for the optimal mitigation/recovery plan.

Output: **Highly satisfactory**
All planned monitoring activities were completed. Field data of 2001-2002, 2002-2003, 2003-2004, and 2004-2005 winter seasons on the *monitoring of the population of the Amur tiger* (five monitoring sites - 942,500 hectares in all) and on the *monitoring of ungulates* (wild boar, moose, roe deer and Manchurian deer; eighty monitoring routes - 2,076 km in all) was analysed and reported to authorities. Monitoring addressed number of animals, trends in population structure, mortality and reproduction patters, habitat conditions, and etc., and was carried out using standard methodologies to ensure wide compatibility of data. Overall, monitoring demonstrated gradual improvement in habitat conditions and increase in number for all indicator species in project areas (see *Annex 2*). An innovative *analysis of poaching pressure* involving extensive field investigations was also completed for 2002, 2003, 2004, and 2005 seasons (see *Annex 2*). In the project area the component also supported activities related to the overall inventory of Amur tigers.

E. Policy Coordination and Program Management (GEF cost US$ 108,280)

The objective of this component was to support management of the above activities and to coordinate the program with the other governmental and non-governmental conservation initiatives in the region.

Output: **Satisfactory.**
The agreed arrangements for project governance and for the administration of funds and activities were established and functioning well. Procurement and financial management capacity within the Khabarovsk Wildlife Foundation (the MSP Executing Agency) was adequate; key project staff undertook training offered by the World Bank Moscow Office. Arrangements to ensure involvement of stakeholders and public participation and information were in place.

2. Quality standards

The work carried out under the project and the outputs produced (PAs feasibility studies, management plans with implementation support, educational and public awareness

programs, biodiversity monitoring assessments, and etc.) fully met the quality standards of the target beneficiaries (PAs, local and kray authorities, local communities, partner NGOs and relevant professional groups – PA managers and staff, conservation practitioners, hunters, foresters and others).

C. OUTCOMES

1. Achievement of development results

Satisfactory. The expected project development results were achieved in full. Project outcomes are summarized below.

1. *Establishment of an integrated PA system for forest ecosystems conservation in the areas of the highest biodiversity in Khabarovsk Kray.*

(a) New protected areas were established. Thirteen new regional-level protected areas totalling 209,545 ha are now operational to ensure conservation of critical habitats and wildlife migratory routs. They include 3 ecological corridors (122,280 ha), 7 reproduction areas (83,910 ha), and 3 landscape nature monuments (3,355 ha). The establishment of the 5 other proposed new protected areas – 2 nature parks (156,100 ha) and 3 landscape nature monuments (2,505 ha) – is also expected to be finalised. These new PAs fill the gaps in the regional network of protected areas, which improves effectiveness of habitat conservation and contributes towards the increased sustainability of populations of the wide-ranging species like Amur tiger and its prey base. Ecosystem monitoring already demonstrates the resulting gradual increase in densities for indicator species (see *Annex 2*). The map showing the PAs network supported by the project is attached as *Annex 3*. That network also includes 4 ecological corridors – Matayskiy (26,000 ha), Khor-Mukhen (22,300 ha), Manominsky (34,300 ha), and Khorsky (20,700 ha) established under the associated and complementary program financed through the WWF Russia Program Office. The integrated network of regional PAs is managed by the established specialised Service for the Protected Areas and the Protection of Wildlife of the Khabarovsk Kray.

(b) The operational capacity of PAs was increased The project assisted PAs with the management planning and provided them with the critical equipment required to implement priority conservation measures.

(c) Regional PA regulations were strengthened. The legal framework was improved to provide the Government of the Kray with greater flexibility in designating regional protected areas of different regime. That would allow for the improved further adaptive development of the regional PA network and would help maintain its overall integrity. In that regard the experience with the *reproduction areas* was particularly successful.

2. *Increased public awareness in issues of biodiversity conservation and sustainable use of biological resources of the region.* The extensive public awareness

and environmental education program under the project delivered good results and the number of people participating in voluntary conservation activities throughout the implementation has increased significantly. That provided favourable environment for the establishment and operation of the new PAs. The completed social surveys demonstrated improvement in public understanding of PA roles and in public commitment to conservation of biodiversity and sustainable use of bio-resources.

The key quantifiable project outcome indicators are provided in *Annex 2*.

2. Relevance

High. Project objectives and outcomes are consistent with the governmental development priorities for the region. They are also consistent with the Bank's CAS for Russia, which determines a need for the Bank to support effective public sector management and mitigation of environmental risks (CAS Report No 19897-RU of December 1, 1999; CAS Report No 24127-RU of May 14, 2002; CAS Progress Report No. 31579-RU of February 15, 2005). The outcomes are also highly relevant under the Bank's sectoral operational strategies – the Natural Resource Management Strategy for the ECA Region (2000), the Environment Strategy for the World Bank (2001), and the Biodiversity Strategy for the ECA Region (2003).

In a broader conservation and operational context this MSP complemented the Russia Biodiversity Conservation Project (completed, GEF Grant TF028315) and the Russia Sustainable Forestry Pilot Project (under implementation, IBRD Loan No 4552-RU). It is also expected that the development impact of the MSP would be further maximized by the proposed GEF-financed Project of Fire Management in High Conservation Value Forests of the Amur-Sikhote-Alin Ecoregion.

3. Efficacy

Satisfactory. The stated grant objective was achieved in full.

4. Efficiency

Satisfactory. The project was managed adequately and the grant funds were used efficiently (through competitive procurement of services and goods). The implementation time was reasonable.

D. IMPACT

1. Capacity Building Impact

Substantial. The project has (i) helped the Government of the Khabarovsk Kray to finalize the establishment in the region of the integrated network of PAs; (ii) improved regional legal framework for biodiversity conservation and PAs management; (iii) strengthened individual PAs through the improved management planning and critical operational support; (iv) provided conservation practitioners with the up-to-date knowledge of dynamics in regional populations of the Amur tiger and its pray-base; (v) improved public understanding and support on issues of biodiversity conservation; and (vi) strengthened the regional government - NGO partnership and its ability to jointly implement large scale conservation programs.

2. Sustainability

Likely. The system of PAs established under the project and managed by the authorities of the Kray is likely to be sustainable in the long term. The Government of the Khabarovsk Kray has established a specialised *Service for the Protected Areas and the Protection of Wildlife of the Khabarovsk Kray* with a mandate to manage the regional PA system and undertake its further development. The Service is being funded properly and is operating successfully (allocations to the Service from governmental sources in 2006 will amount to US$ 300,000 equivalent).

3. Follow-up Activities and/or Investment

Investment:
__X__ Recipient/Other Investment (governmental budgetary and non-budgetary funds);
_____ Grant Project/Program;
_____ Bank Project;
_____ IFC Financial Project/Activity

Other Results:
__X__ Transferability of Know-How, Knowledge Base/Key Concepts;
__X__ Replicability, Modeling, Best Practices;
_____ New Sectors or Products;
_____ New Forms of Cooperation with Other Development Institutions/NGOs

E. PERFORMANCE

1. Bank

Satisfactory. The Bank provided extensive support to the Khabarovsk Regional Wildlife Foundation (grant Recipient and Executing Agency) to finalize the MSP

proposal. The project technical and institutional design and the implementation arrangements, including those for procurement and financial management, were appropriate. In the MSP Brief and the Letter-Agreement the respective project requirements were outlined in sufficient detail. The implementation progress was regularly reviewed and accurately reported through BTOs/Aide-Memoires and the PSS/GRM system. Implementation problems were identified and addressed timely and proactively. Advice to the Recipient and the follow-up on the agreed actions were adequate. Procurement and financial management supervision decentralized to the Russia Country Office was effective. The skill mix and staff continuity, the timing of the field supervision, and the support from the Bank Country and Sector management to the task team were adequate. The project complied with the applicable Bank's policies and procedures.

2. Recipient

Satisfactory. The Recipient (local NGO - Khabarovsk Regional Wildlife Foundation) maintained the commitment, capacity, and resources required to successfully complete the project and fully achieve its objectives. Project design was sound and participatory. The technical supervision and procurement / financial management controls at implementation were adequate. The maintained arrangements for stakeholder involvement and coordination were effective and had significant positive impact on the project outcomes.

F. LESSONS LEARNED / RECOMMENDATIONS

The key lessons learned are summarized below.

1. Value of the regional-level protected areas. *Regionally established and managed PAs of different regime proved to be an effective instrument for habitat conservation.* They allow regional authorities to timely address local conservation priorities (protecting the specific critical habitat or wildlife migratory rout) as well as build and maintain extensive and functional PA networks adaptive to the evolving economic demand for land use.

2. Importance of the local ownership and initiative. The strong ownership of the project activities by beneficiaries and the active commitment of all key governmental and non-governmental stakeholders were critical for the project to succeed. *It is important that the project proposals accepted for grant funding are driven by the demand "on the ground", demonstrate participatory design and incorporate workable arrangements for stakeholder involvement in implementation.*

3. Advantages of project's NGO execution (as opposed to execution by government) Although the entire range of actions required to designate and strengthen PAs goes beyond the authority of the grant recipient NGO, through the effective engagement of beneficiaries and governmental stakeholders the project objective was achieved. In context of the administrative reform in the country, repeated reorganizations of the PA

authorities, and prevailing uncertainties with the legal environment, the project NGO Executing Agency served as an "anchor" for the public commitment and the coordinated stakeholder effort towards successful project completion. *In a changing governmental institutional setting, the execution of projects through a competent and reputable local NGO, which is able to take the lead and constructively cooperate with all project stakeholders, including the government, helps insure the continuity of commitment and implementation processes. It introduces an extra positive element of civil society engagement and reduces project's vulnerability to the temporal lack of decisional capacity and authorizing environment within the reorganized governmental entities. That point is valid for the execution of small- and medium-size grant-financed projects of regional scope. However, it would also emphasize a need to appropriately transfer and integrate project deliverables in regular operation of the relevant governmental agencies.*

4. Need to consider alternative feasible approaches for achieving the outcome. The project envisaged to help establish 2 nature parks. Although all the planned supporting activities were completed successfully, the designation of parks is delayed because of the conflict between the regional and the federal governing legislation. The conflict emerged at mid-term of implementation and resulted in a need to several times re-consider approaches towards protecting these lands. In that regard, the adopted regulations on the new categories of regionally-managed PAs (corridors, reproduction areas, etc.) provide the Government of the Kray with a sufficient flexibility in selecting the means to achieve the stated environmental objective. *Small and medium-size projects supporting the designation of new PAs should consider and be ready to pursue feasible alternative approaches (in terms of PA category, regime, and designation procedure) for achieving their conservation objectives.*

G. PROCESSING

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Task Team Leader: Andrey Kushlin (ECSSD)
Date Submitted: June 23, 2006
Comment : The memorandum fully captures all essential aspects of this innovative project's outputs, outcomes, impacts and lessons for future MSP operations in Russia and other ECA countries.

Manager : Marjory-Anne Bromhead (ECSSD)
Date Approved: June 26, 2006
Comment: Approved without comments.

Annex 1

Strengthening of the Protected Areas Network for Sikhote-Alin Mountain Forest Ecosystems Conservation in Khabarovsk Kray (Russian Far East)
TF 29891
Expenditure Report (US$ thousand)

Code	COMPONENT / Subcomponent / Activity	**Total**	Goods	Services	Management
A.	Establishment of new Protected Areas (PAs)	190.48	0	190.48	0
A.1.	New Protected Areas (PAs)	167.87	0	167.87	0
A.1.1	Support to the Establishment of PA	121.14	0	121.14	0
A.1.2	Auto Transportation (drivers)	46.73	0	46.73	0
A.2.	Finalization of the legal framework for the establishment and operation of PAs	22.61	0	22.61	0
A.2.1	Legislation development	22.00	0	22.00	0
B.	Improving the efficiency of the PAs network	205.75	163.25	42.50	0
B.1.	Development of Management Plans	20.00	0	20.00	0
B.1.1	Development of MPs	18.00	0	18.00	0
B.1.2	Workshop	2.00	0	2.00	0
B.2.	Implementation of Management Plans	185.75	163.25	22.50	0
B.2.1	Procurement Consultant	22.50	0	22.50	0
B.2.1	Supply of equipment and materials to the PAs	163.25	163.25	0	0
C.	Public awareness and environmental education	137.11	13.42	123.69	0
C.1	Social Surveys	25.44	0	25.44	0
C.2	Printing services	2.42	2.42	0	0
C.3	Education consultants	82.59	0	82.59	0
C.4	Seminars	11.16	0	11.16	0
C.5	Printing services	5.19	5.19	0	0
C.6	Production of Videofilm	4.50	0	4.50	0
C.7	Office equipment	3.81	3.81	0	0
C.8	Computer accessories	2.00	2.00	0	0
D.	Monitoring	108.38	0	108.38	0
D.1 D.2	Monitoring of PAs	77.80	0	77.80	0
D.3	Project Audit	30.58	0	30.58	0
E.	Management Costs	108.28	0	0	108.28
	TOTAL AMMOUNT	**750.00**	**176.67**	**465.05**	**108.28**

Annex 2

Russia: GEF Medium-Size Project
"Strengthening Protected Areas Network for Sikhote-Alin Mountain Forest Ecosystems Conservation in Khabarovsk Kray"
(GEF TF 029891)

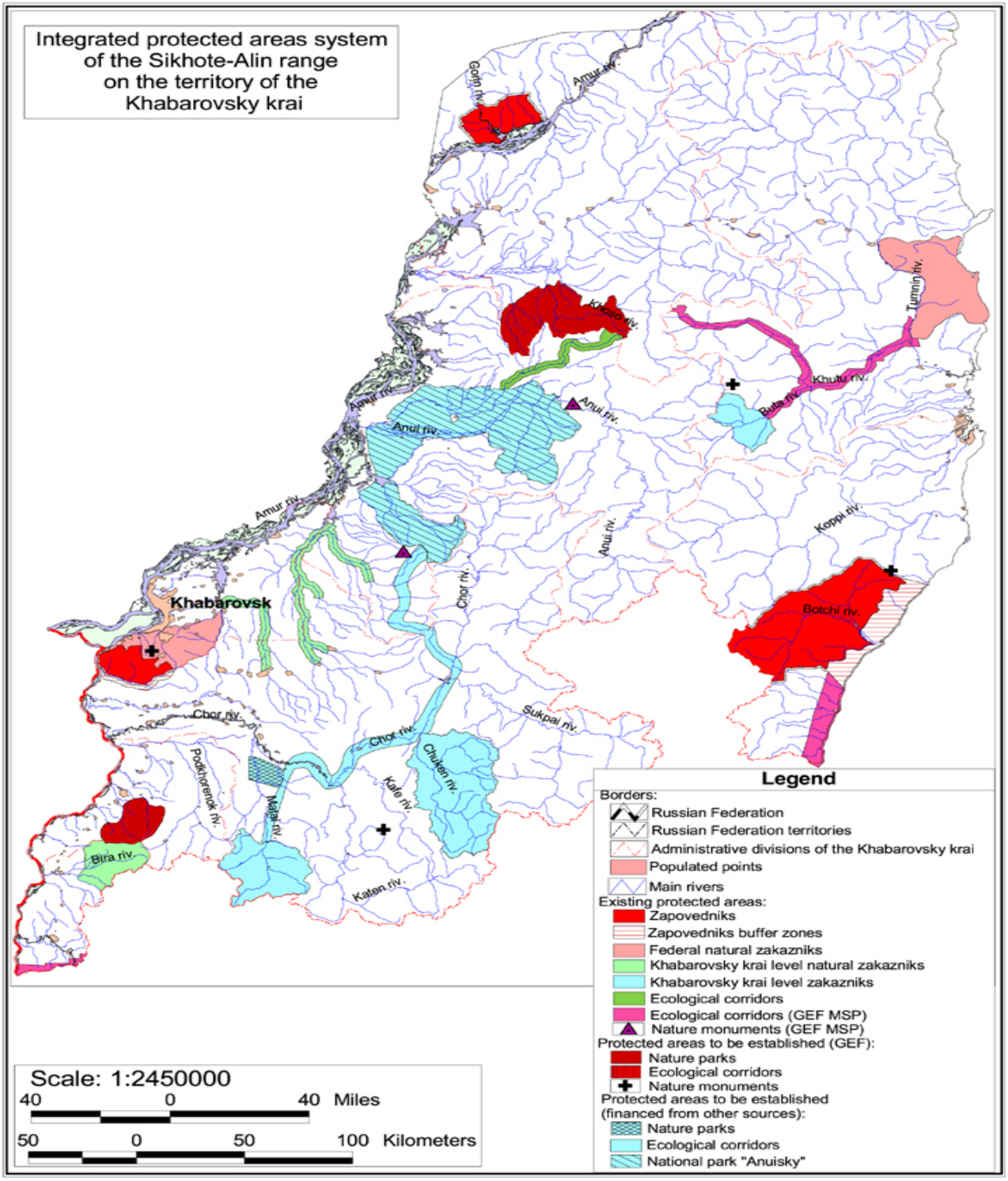
Project Outcome Indicators

Indicators	Baseline (at project start in 2001)	Actual (end of project)	Original target (end of project)
1. Legal basis for new types of Protected Areas established (# of new legal documents finalized)	0	2	2
2. New Protected Areas operational (area in hectares of new PA's established)	0	209,545 (368,150) *	279,900
3. Poaching reduced (# of infringer citations within / outside model protected areas / ratio of illegal shootings of ungulates per 1000 hectares)	213 / 200 / 0.125	85 / 314 / 0.109	85 / 314 / 0.090
4. Populations of Amur tiger** and other indicator species*** stabilized and/or increasing	Tiger – 20** Elk – 3.67*** Wild boar – 0.9*** Roe dear – 1.51***	31** 4.1*** 4.5*** 2.6***	23-25** 4.0*** 3.0*** 2.5***
5. Number of people participating in voluntary conservation activities increased (# of people involved through project activities)	0	17,980	16,480

* Pending decision of the Khabarovsk Kray Government, the status of 6 new protected areas covering 158,605 hectares will be officially secured. This will bring the total value of this indicator to 368,150 hectares.
** Number of tigers on 5 model areas with total area of 942,500 hectares
*** Number of animals on 80 monitoring routes with the total length of 2,076 km

Annex 3

Integrated Protected Area System of the Sikhote-Alin Mountain Range in Khabarovsk Kray



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