

THE FOURTH MEETING OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONTACT FORUM ON HABITAT CONSERVATION IN THE BARENTS REGION

On September 19-25, 2005 in Syktyvkar, the Komi Republic, Russia a meeting of the International Contact Forum (ICF) took place organized by the Government of the Komi Republic, Institute of Biology of the Komi Scientific Centre of the Ural Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences (IB Komi UB RAS), County Administration of Vasterbotten (Sweden), Finnish Environment Institute and Directorate for Nature Management (Norway).

ICF is a union for a cooperation on a nature protection in the Barents Euro-Arctic region (BEAR), attached sea areas included. In its work it pays a special attention to improving management, development and expansion of the protected natural territories of the region as well as contributes to other processes aimed to habitat conservation. ICF meetings take place once in two years. The first meeting was held in Trondheim (Norway) in 1999, the second in 2001 in Petrozavodsk (Russia), the third in 2003 in Kuhmo (Finland). The participation in the ICF meetings is opened for federal and regional authorities of the BEAR states, representatives of indigenous peoples and all interested parties, organizations and private persons. Materials, decisions and recommendations of the ICF meetings are sent to national and regional authorities responsible for habitat conservation within the Barents region, indigenous peoples organizations, Barents Euro-Arctic Council, Barents Regional Council, interested international institutes and intergovernmental organizations.

After the Republic of Komi joint the BEAR Council in 2001 the participants of the Third meeting decided on Russia to chair the ICF in 2001-2003 and Sweden to co-chair. The organization of the next fourth meeting was proposed to the Republic of Komi. In the Institute of Biology of Komi Science Centre the organizing committee of the ICF Fourth meeting took place which included:

Torlopov V. – the Head of the Republic of Komi, Russia (*chairman*)

Bergstrom M. – County Administration of Vasterbotten, Sweden (*vice-chairman*)

Borovinskih A. – Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment Protection of the Republic of Komi (*vice-chairman*)

Loskutova O. – IB Komi UB RAS (*secretary*)

Kabantseva L. – External Relations and Protocol, Government of the Republic of Komi, Russia

Markov V. – Consultative Committee of Finno-Ugric peoples, Russia

Popov A. – Russia Nature Inspection Administration in the Komi Republic, Russia

Taskayev A. – IB Komi UB RAS

Hemmi R. – Finnish Environmental Institute

J.-P. Hubert Hansen – Directorate for Nature Management, Norway.

The Organizing Committee received 159 applications for participation in the ICF meeting from Russia and West European countries. 112 persons participated in its work: 84 from Russia (among them 56 participants from Syktyvkar, 28 from other places), 13 from Finland, 9 from Norway, 2 from Sweden, 2 from Holland, 1 from Germany, 1 from Estonia.

The following foreign organizations were represented in the meeting: Finnmark Governor's Office, Environment Department, Vadso, Norway; Forest Growth Institute, University of Freiburg, Germany; Institute of Water Management RIZA, Lelstad, Holland; organization DHV CIS BV, Holland; Environment Department of Norland County, Bodo, Norway; Directorate for Nature Management, Trondheim, Norway; Ecological Center Svanhovd, Svanvik, Norway; Finnish Environment Institute, Helsinki, Finland; organization Metsahallitus, Vantaa, Finland; enterprise Silvicultura Ltd., Helsinki, Finland; Program for wood products marketing, Ahtari, Finland; Regional Environment Center of the Northern Karelia, Joensuu, Finland; Joensuu University, Finland; Ludvik Municipality, Sweden; Swedish Agency for Environmental Protection, Stockholm, Sweden; Ministry of Environment, Tallinn, Estonia.

Russia governmental and nongovernmental organizations, scientific and educational organizations of Arkhangelsk, Vologda, Murmansk, Nenets and Khanty-Mansy Autonomous Regions, Moscow, the Republic of Komi, the Republic of Karelia, Rostov-on-Don, Sankt-Petersburg, national parks and protected areas sent their specialists.

Prior to the meeting 119 thesis were published in Russian and English sent from 74 organizations of Russia and abroad. In accordance with the meeting agenda the problems of preserving and monitoring old growth forests, development of the existing and establishing of the protected natural areas in the Barents Region, preservation of unique and typical natural complexes and its biodiversity, questions of monitoring, evaluation and support of water quality on boreal and Arctic territories; indigenous peoples problems connected with the environmental changes were viewed.

Opening the ICF meeting there were welcomes from the Head of the Republic of Komi V.A.Torlopov, R.Hemmi (Finland), J.-P. Hubert-Hansen (Norway). During the meeting 47 reports were delivered (among them 9 reports on plenary sessions) and 38 posters were discussed. According to the scientific agenda of the meeting the work was organized within four sections:

- preservation of the old growth forests: monitoring, sustainable management;
- the Barents Region protected natural areas network: how to achieve its representativeness;
- monitoring and strategy to preserve land biodiversity (flora, fauna and habitat): how to decrease fragmentation;
- monitoring, evaluation, biodiversity of ground and sea waters;
- indigenous peoples and environment.

In the last day of the meeting five work groups functioned: 1) old growth forest chaired by Aimo Saano (Finland), 2) protected territories chaired by Sune Solberg (Sweden), 3) water quality chaired by Bjorn Franzen (Norway), 4) biodiversity chaired by Menobart van Eerden (Netherlands), 5) ethnographic group chaired by Valery Markov (Russia). The meeting participants discussed current issues on nature protection paying special attention to perspective plans and initiatives, underlined a special importance of development of ecology in the Barents Region and enlarging BEAR connected with the Republic of Komi joining it. In many reports the importance of the further work to protect nature within BEAR Council and other relevant programs of cooperation was stressed.

The meeting participants focused on the special importance of the ICF, particularly in exchanging knowledge and informing international society about national and jointly protected territories networks development and management of these areas and networks. A high value of creating a representative network of ground and marine nature protected zones in BEAR was underlined. The speakers marked the necessity to strengthen the efficiency of management of the protected territories and nature preservation in general and applied for a support to BEAR Council and other national and international interested parts and persons to introduce new initiatives and actions in their national programs on biodiversity. Also the ideas to increase the role of ecological and social, cultural aspects in the programs of the Barents Forest Group, the necessity to study the climate change influence on protected territories and marine habitat were supported. A special attention was paid to the necessity to expand support to the BEAR Indigenous People Working Group and establishment of International Scientific Advising Committee on the Pechora Sea and the Pechora river monitoring.

The main results of the meeting are represented in the resolution and at the enclosed working group proposals. The participants of the International Contact Forum agree that the Institute of Biology (Komi SC UB RAS) will publish the final report at the end of the 4th meeting. The report will be delivered to BEAR Council, to the executive bodies of the Arctic Council and to the corresponding Councils of Ministers of Northern countries. The report will be also located at the web-site of the Institute of Biology (<http://ib.komisc.ru/>).

It was agreed and the decision was taken that for the next two years Sweden will chair the Contact Forum. The co-chairmanship will be after Norway. At the same time the next 5th meeting is planned to be held in 2007 in Sweden. It will envisage the following topics:

- forest biodiversity protection
- further development of the protected areas network in Barents Region
- preservation and proper utilization of the waters
- protected areas management

The meeting participants expressed their gratitude to Russia and the Republic of Komi for organization and hosting the 4th meeting of the International Contact Forum. They also expressed their gratefulness for the cultural program that was crowned by the concert of the national song and dance group “Asya Kya” and also for several thematic excursions that were provided by the Steering Committee. Among them there was an excursion to Priluzsky district (Priluziye model forest), a trip to the forest biological station in Lyali village with a visit to some sites of interest in Ust-Vym and Seregovo. There were excursions to JSC Mondi Business Paper – Syktyvkar LPK and Severgazprom ecological control station in national reserve Yugyd-Va.

WORKING GROUPS PROPOSALS

the 4th Meeting International Contact Forum on Habitat Conservation

September 19-23, 2005, Syktyvkar, Russia

· specially protected natural territories ·

Chairman: S. Solberg

Secretary: S. Degteva

1. To support the establishment of BEAR trans-border nature reserves
2. To create Working Group on Barents Region specially protected natural territories inventory and sites researches
3. To create BEAR Red Book Working Group
4. To create Working Group on wet lands. The group would also work on Ramsar Convention
5. To address Ramsar Convention with the request of including Pasvik Natural Reserve, Russia, into the list of lands under Convention protection
6. To publish a book devoted to BEAR Specially Protected Natural Territories
7. To provide regular reports from specially protected natural territories (natural reserves and national parks) to the Working Group on specially protected natural territories
8. To support establishment of the International Ecological School for Youth working under BEAR Forum
9. To excises students and scientists exchange in order to establish Barents Region specially protected natural territories inventory
10. To carry on work on specially protected natural territories internet sites creation and summering up the existing web-sites information
11. To discuss the problem of specially protected natural territories eco-tourism development within BEAR

· water quality ·

Chairman: B. Franzen

Secretary: A. Lukin

Speaking about the existing problems, the Commission came to the conclusion that in future the mainstream in ecological problems solution will be not for the separate ad hoc projects, but for the large-scale programs that will result in the recommendations for the certain structures in

economical and managerial branches. Ad hoc tasks should be solved within the frameworks of major programs and constitute a general picture. The Commission defined three key problems:

1) water objects condition monitoring that are under oil pollution

a) the Pechora-river and its feeders monitoring (pipelines accidents still take place; the plans to develop and utilize new oil deposits exit)

b) water eco-systems evaluation and variability prediction, their vulnerability to the hydrocarbons transportation (gas, oil and oil products)

Oil traffic via Onega Lake and Belomor-Baltic Channel with the further outcome to the Onega Gulf in the White Sea: the White Sea state-of-the-art; environment impact assessment procedure of the pipelining via the White Sea neck

2) new species infestation in the Barents Region.

Recently due to the climatic changes channels, dams, bridges, roads, clearings construction, deliberate introductions, cargo transportations, natural habitation transformations, species re-exploitation during commercial and amateur fishing and other human activities, the biological infestation began to play the exceptional role in the existence of biosphere.

Considering the fact that alien species infestation researches provide information about the structure and functioning of eco-systems and also the adaptive abilities of immigrant species that change their morphology, life-history and genetic organization of population, the Working Group appeals to the state authorities, research establishments, public organizations to support their activities within their abilities, i.e.

- to formulate and coordinate regional and national strategies and action plans in order to correct the problem of invasive species

- to organize researches in invasive methods establishment and estimation of the influence of alien species in native species and eco-systems

- development and coordination of the native species information systems functioning

- developing the system of monitoring and preventive notification of the alien species infestation

- developing the efficient scientific information exchange on the problem of immigrant species

- development of the system of forecasting and alien species new invasions risks estimation

3) Water quality: hydro-chemical and biological assessments

Water quality is still one of the main water eco-systems condition indicators. Hydro-chemical analysis based on the modern methods provides quality results in macro- and microelements content. Still, the basis of the water systems functioning is the biota state. Nowadays the evaluation of water quality based on the studies of cenosis, populations and organisms are of great importance. It is necessary to create database on the researches of species inhabiting Barents Region and capable to reflect the present state of environment in the conditions of various anthropogenous charges. Salmon family (char) and cisco (vendance) are the species found in the Barents Region.

• biodiversity preservation •

Chairman: M. van Eerden

Secretary: O. Sutkaitis

- It is necessary to create a forum (a platform) where experts could have an access to certain information and gained experience, combine their efforts in implementation of certain projects and development certain approaches.

- It is necessary to organize work on defining the so-called “white spots” that includes the assessment of regional biodiversity and defines the species that need extra-studying and monitoring. We should be aware of what is important to preserve for the future generations.

- It is necessary to create the inventory list of species that are of great value for the Barents Region, but not for a certain region of country. This should be the species that are really critically endangered
- It is necessary to continue work on virgin forests revelation. Simultaneously the work for their preservation should be intensified. This work should be supported politically.
- It is necessary to organize work on other natural landscapes identification. These landscapes, i.e. free-flow river beds, should be less affected by the human activities.
- It is important to continue studying typical and unique natural communities of tundra.

• ethic and cultural problems •

Chairman: V. Markov
Secretary: N. Tcharkova

In connection with economics globalization and human interference in natural, cultural and historical sphere, we are greatly anxious about the matters of cultural and ethic development and also the participation of the local population and indigenous people in habitat conservation. In this respect the cultural heritage of indigenous peoples living on protected natural territories is of vital importance. It is also important that the peoples and local population themselves should be involved into the system of direct consultation and decision making process concerning protected natural territories. The positive aspect here is that the local population of the Russian Federation regions, entrepreneurs and scientists are already have started a practical dialogue that should become wider.

In virtue of above-mentioned it is important:

- To include an item connected with the local population into the program of the next contact forums
 - To develop a mechanism and procedures of a dialogue with the local population considering cultural and historical heritage preservation, solving social and economic problems using international experience
 - To support the development of modern sustainable methods of management based on the traditional nature management by indigenous population
 - To develop a long-term international ethnic and ecological project “Natural, cultural and historical heritage in the Barents Region, management on behalf of the future generations”
 - To begin work on classifying the historical sites of cultural and historical heritage of the peoples in the Barents Region
 - To strive for the support of youth identity, its sustainable attitude to nature, to attract youth to the problem-solving habitat preservation
 - To improve consulting on creation and transfer of positive expertise in habitat preservation
 - To submit proposals on ethno-ecological tourism formation considering the positions of the local population and assistance in local population employment
 - To integrate humanities experts in international expedition groups; to develop interdisciplinary contacts in researches within fundamental and applied sciences
 - To enlarge the number of contact forums participants involving museum staff, cultural and scientific institutions

• virgin forests •

Chairman: A. Saano
Secretary: S. Zagirova

Nowadays, vast areas of old growth and slightly touched forests are still preserved in the Northern parts of Europe, mostly in Russia. Virgin forests are of great importance for biosphere, preservation and reproduction of biodiversity and the support of genetic potential of species found in this area. Historically and economically Barents Region countries follow their own

principles and rules regulating management, forest utilization and protection. State authorities in the majority of European countries should take steps on virgin forests preservation. This is done under the pressure of society, nongovernmental organizations and public movements. It should also be taken into consideration that the old growth forests in Russia are estimated at millions of hectares and mainly located in the hardly accessible areas. It makes some troubles to manage and protect these areas.

Having discussed the problems connected with the Barents Region virgin forests preservation, the round table participants formulated the following opinions:

1. Discussing the problem of the Barents Region virgin forests preservation it is necessary to consider the history of forestry development in each country. It is impossible to use one and the same forest resources management plan and its application in the countries with a different economic development

2. It is necessary to pay attention to researches of biospheric role of virgin forests. Therefore the integrated long-term program of scientific researches in ecology, biodiversity, the Barents Region virgin forests monitoring are important

3. It is necessary to work out national and regional strategy for virgin forests preservation. It should define the system of sustainable forest use and management

4. To bring into practice a publishing of illustrated thematic brochures in order to disseminate the knowledge of virgin forests importance in biodiversity preservation.

RESOLUTION

The Fourth Meeting of the International Contact Forum on Habitat Conservation In The Barents Region

I

On September 19-25, 2005 in Syktyvkar, the Republic of Komi, Russia a meeting of specialists from Finland, Norway, Sweden, Germany, Netherlands, Estonia and Russia took place aimed to discuss the questions of cooperation within the International Contact Forum On Habitat Conservation In The Barents Euro-Arctic Region (BEAR), further – the Contact Forum.

II

The fourth meeting of the Contact Forum was held according to the recommendations of the first Contact Forum which took place in 1999 in Trondheim (Norway), the second meeting in 2001 in Petrozavodsk (The Republic of Karelia, Russia) and the third meeting in 2003 in Kuhmo (Finland). The fourth meeting was organized and hosted by the Republic of Komi. In 2003-2005 the Russian Federation chairs the Contact Forum.

The participants underlined the importance to develop an ecological activity in the Barents region and the expansion of the region after the Republic of Komi joint it.

The participants of the meeting, more than 130 delegates total, representing governmental environmental organizations, scientific and nongovernmental institutions discussed actual tasks of preserving nature, paying special attention to future plans and initiatives.

III

In the fourth meeting a special attention was paid to the following topics:

- Preservation and monitoring of the old growth boreal forests as well as a sustainable use of forest resources in general;
- The network of Barents region protected nature territories: how to achieve its representativeness;
- Monitoring and strategy of conservation: how to minimize habitat fragmentation and restore natural values;
- Quality control, biodiversity and monitoring of fresh and sea waters;

- Environment and indigenous and local population role.

An importance of the further work to develop nature protection within the frames of Barents Euro-Arctic Council and other relevant cooperation programs, including:

- The participants marked the importance of the Contact Forum, especially in the knowledge exchange and informing about national and international protected territories networks development and management of these areas and networks;
- The participants underlined the importance of creation a representative network of ground and marine nature protection zones in the Barents Euro-Arctic region;
- The participants underlined the necessity to strengthen the efficiency of management of the protected areas and nature preservation in general;
- The participants underlined the importance and applied for the support to BEAR Council and other national and international interested parties and persons to introduce the following initiatives and actions in their programs on biodiversity:
 - Support and development of forest protection;
 - Development of Fennoscandia green belt;
 - Development of trilateral and other transborder protected territories;
 - To continue activities in habitat restoration;
 - To support the process of GAP-analysis for specially protected nature territories.
- The participants stressed the importance of increasing the role of ecological and social, cultural aspects in the programs of the Barents Forest Group;
- The participants marked the climate change influence on protected territories;
- The participants underlined the importance of marine habitat conservation;
- The participants agree that the report referring the fourth meeting will be published. The Republic of Komi will in charge of publishing the report (Institute of Biology, Komi Science Center, UrB, RAS). The report will be submitted to BEAR Council, Arctic Council and corresponding Northern countries Councils of Ministers. The report will be located on the Institute of Biology web-site (www.ib.komisc.ru).
- The participants agreed to submit proposals prepared by the working groups of the fourth Contact Forum meeting (Appendix 1).
- The participants once again confirmed the Mandate of the Contact Forum (Appendix 2).
- The meeting participants pay attention to the necessity to expand the support to BEAR Indigenous Peoples Working Group.
- The participants supported the idea to create the International Scientific Consultative Council on the Pechora Sea and Pechora River Monitoring (Appendix 3).
- The participants made a decision that during a few coming two years the Contact Forum will be chaired by Sweden and Norway will co-chair.

The fifth meeting will be dedicated to the following topics:

- Forest biodiversity conservation;
- The further development of Barents region protected territories network;
- Protection and sustainable use of water resources;
- Management of protected territories.

The meeting participants expressed gratitude to Russia and the Komi Republic for organizing and hosting the fourth Contact Forum meeting.

The next Contact Forum meeting will take place in 2007 in Sweden.

Syktyvkar, the Komi Republic, 22 September 2005.

On behalf of Finland

Tapio LINDHOLM
HANSEN
Environment Center of Finland

On behalf of Sweden
Russia

Sune SOLBERG
Environment Protection Administration
Sweden
Komi Republic

On behalf of Norway

Jan-Petter HUBERT

Directorate for Nature Management

On behalf of the Republic of Komi,

Alexandre BOROVINSKI
Minister of Natural Resources and
Environment Protection, the