



# Sharing with Neighbors: Cooperative Forestry and the Russian Far East

*Five years of cooperative assistance from the Forest Service, working with the US Agency for International Development, has helped promote sustainable forestry in the Russian Far East*

In 1993 and 1994, representatives of the Forest Service and officials from the Russian Far East visited each other's countries to talk about forest and land management issues. That cooperation led to a 5 year commitment to share knowledge and skills in fire management, reforestation, and forest policy and planning. Working with the US

Agency for International Development (USAID), the Forest Service visited Russia to see and understand the situation. Based on those visits we developed a series of training workshops, produced demonstration projects and provided technical advice on equipment

and supplies to purchase in support of their reforestation and fire management efforts. Most of the interchange was with the Federal Forest Service of Russia, the Aerial Fire Service of Russia, and Russian Nature Reserves. The Alaska Region and the Pacific Northwest Research Station, because they are neighbors to the Russian Far East, became the primary contact for both the Russian agencies and the many delegations of Russian foresters who travelled to the United States to become acquainted with forestry practices throughout the country.

The goal is to promote sustainable forestry in the Russian Far East, a biologically diverse area larger than Washington, Oregon and California combined. About 75% of the region is forested with larch, spruce, birch, aspen and some pine in the north, and mixed forests of pine, spruce, and hardwood species in the south. This particular cooperative venture involved two krajs (territories), Khabarovsk Krai and Primorski Krai. Natural resources are their main economic base.

### Reforestation

In 1998 wildfire burned more than 5 million acres of the Russian Far East. Because of immense fires like this, coupled with selective logging in the southern forests, regrowing the forests is a critical need. As part of this program, the Forest Service helped develop new greenhouses and seed handling facilities, provided specifications for new regeneration equipment, and assisted with training. Part of the training involved Russian nursery managers visiting U.S. nurseries. Seedling production (stock for replanting) in the Russian Far East has grown from 6,500 seedlings a year in 1995 to an estimated 2,000,000 in 2000.

### Science Exchange

The Forest Service helped plan and conduct a conference on the ecology and management of Korean pine (the most valuable tree species in the Russian Far East). More than 150 Russian foresters attended, hearing presentations from US scientists and forest regeneration specialists.



Regeneration of forests is one of the biggest needs in the Russian Far East. Forest Service assistance has helped increase and improve seedling production in the region which allows the replanting program to grow.

## Forest Fire Prevention and Management

Lightning-caused fires regularly burn large portions of the Russian Far East and human-caused fires are a problem in more populated areas. Resources to fight fire in the region are very limited.

A number of Forest Service teams have traveled to Russia to share what they know about fire prevention, planning and suppression. The teams have also given technical advice on firefighting equipment and technology and helped improve a lightning detection system operating in the region.

Fire managers from the Russian Far East also visited the U.S. on one month study tours to see and learn about U.S. firefighting strategy and tactics, equipment caches, interagency coordination and prescribed fires. U.S. firefighting training materials are also being translated into Russian and new training materials designed for the Russian Far East are being produced.

## Forest Policy and Planning

This includes environmental education, land management planning, geographic information systems (GIS), and economic analysis. Through study tours, seminars, student exchanges and hosting research scholars, scientists and land managers in the two countries have learned from each other and built new relationships.

## Funding and Benefits

The Forest Service's International Forestry Program provided initial funding and support for this program. Additional funds were provided mostly by USAID through its programs on International Development. Forest Service employee salaries were contributed by the Forest Service. The program and teams won



the 1999 Chiefs Honor Award for work in International Forestry. Along with the exchange of knowledge and skills, the program has also helped foster friendship and cultural understanding. This cooperative effort is continuing and is now growing and expanding into other parts of Russia.

## Partners in this Project

- Forest Service, Alaska Region, State and Private Forestry
- Bureau of Land Management
- Forest Service, Pacific Northwest Research Station
- Federal Forest Service of Russia
- USAID
- World Wildlife Fund
- Harvard Institute for International Development
- U.S. Peace Corps
- Alaska Division of Forestry

## To Find Out More

Wayne Bushnell  
Forest Service, Alaska Region  
907-271-2569

### FROM TOP:

Millions of acres have been burned by wildfire in the Russian Far East, creating a serious need for reforestation

The Forest Service helped design and construct (using local lumber) new, modern greenhouses for growing tree seedlings. Seedling production and quality is up dramatically.

Training was given in class and in the field, in both the U.S. and Russia. Instructing here is Wayne Bushnell of the Forest Service, Alaska Region, State and Private Forestry.

Fire prevention messages and techniques were part of the information sharing during the five year cooperative program.