

Summary Report

Grantor: Save the Tiger Fund
Project #: 99-268-098
Project name: Operation Amba Wildlife Protection Efforts in 2000
Grantee: Phoenix Fund
Grant amount: \$58,000
Grant period: 01 November 1999-31 December 2000

Project Objectives and Scope

The objectives of this project were:

- To make Operation Amba Bikin and Kirovsky teams a stronger, better-equipped, highly mobile antipoaching wildlife protection unit;
- To help reduce the poaching pressure in the region through conducting effective antipoaching patrols;
- Ensure coordination with other government law enforcement agencies and environmental NGOs in terms of conservation of the wild Siberian tiger population in Primorsky Krai, Russian Far East, Russian Federation.

Background

Operation Amba – Inspection Tiger, administered by the Primorsky Krai State Committee on environmental protection and since January 15, 2001 – by the Primorsky Krai State Committee for Natural Recourses– consists of 8 different patrol teams. This particular project was aimed to support the investigative antipoaching work of only two of those teams – Bikin and Kirovsky. Therefore this summary report will mainly highlight the work and the outputs of those teams.

Although the rangers from both teams may be considered the most successful in their work, much of their success has been achieved due to conducting joint operations with other Inspection Tiger teams as well as due to proactive cooperation with other law-enforcement agencies in the region.

The inspection patrols of Kirovsky and Bikin teams cover the North–Western and the Central parts of Primorsky Krai, yet the teams constantly participate in joint operations with the other teams all over the Primorsky Krai area.

Achievements to Date

In the course of project implementation, both teams prevented an impressive number of ecological law violations; they issued 199 PROTOKOLS (Records of Evidence). Part of the

Protocols were issued in connection with polluting the environment with truck fuel, consumer wastes and rubbish from loggers' camps (most of the loggers are private businessmen). The wastes and rubbish were being thrown right down into springs and small rivers, which in the end led towards pollution and further destruction of the Siberian tiger habitat.

The following findings serve as one form of substantiation that the work conducted by both teams has proved to be a success:

	Bikin	Kirovsky
Protocols issued	119	80
Including:		
Hunting violations	55	4
Fishing	38	1
Logging	11	75
Violating specially protected area regulations	8	-
Environmental pollution	7	-
Rifles confiscated	43	4
Illegal poaching devices confiscated, total	86	56
including:		
Fishing nets	62	56
Traps	19	-
Snares	1	-
Motor boats	4	-
Wildlife products, including:		
Tiger skins	-	5
Leopard skins	-	1
Sea cucumber, pieces	525	-
Timber products	136,5 m3	703
Wild Ginseng	-	21,5 kg
Deer meat, kg	71	-
Crab, pieces	-	175

In cooperation with other Inspection Tiger teams, the Bikin and Kirovsky teams have done the following work:

- Investigated 11 human-tiger conflict tiger situations;
- Discovered a corpse of a tiger-cub, which was transferred to forensic lab for identifying the cause of death. The rangers examined the incident site and concluded that earlier the site used to be the bed of a tigress with 2 cubs. One of the cubs' footprints looked blood-

spotted, and the cub often lay to have a rest. When he died, the tigress had carried the body from one spot to another for a few times, and she did not leave the body of the cub for a certain time.

- In August 2000, Inspection Tiger Kirovsky antipoaching team in cooperation with the Primorsky Krai Customs Service worked out a plan the result of which was the seizure of 21,5 kg of wild ginseng. The rare plant was presumed to be illegally exported to China, where it is historically popular and known for its tremendous stimulating effect. Upon the fact of seizure, the Public Prosecutor's Office conducted case investigation. As the result, one of the violators was put on 3 year probation.
The increase in illegal ginseng trade usually falls upon July-October. Most of the operations were conducted in the city of Ussurisk as it is 'base' for illegal traders and other wildlife mafia. Specifically for the purpose of chasing illegal ginseng traders, a joint antipoaching team was formed within Inspection Tiger. The team consisted of rangers from Kirovsky, Ussurisky, Interregional and Khasan team. The joint team closely cooperated with the Police and Security Departments to ensure success of every action.
- Identified and broke an illegal trade channel involved in smuggling wildlife endangered flora and fauna species from Primorsky Krai to China. Several criminal groups were detected, one of which headed by a Chinese crime boss who had earlier been spotted in illegal trade with ginseng, bear paws, musk deer gland, and fur bearing animals. He managed to organise a smuggling point in the city of Ussurisk, and having won over a captain from the Ussurisk Police Interior Department, made the latter cover the activities of the ring and help smuggle wildlife products (including tiger skins) out to China. Right before the seizure, the ring was planning to export live tiger and bear cubs. Based on collected information, last April, the Russian Police in co-operation with Inspection Tiger, the Federal Security Service (former KGB), Russian Customs, and WildAid and Phoenix conducted an effective operation, which resulted in seizure of 4 tiger and 1 leopard skins. The corrupt police captain was dismissed from the Police Department. Unfortunately, a more perceptible penalty could not be applied to a corrupt officer under the current legislation of the Russian Federation.
- Last April the Ussurisk Court investigated a case of a Chinese citizen Ghao Gian. In November 1999, the man supposedly bought at the market from unknown Russian men 17,647 squirrel skins, 581 Siberian weasel skins, etc. On December 28, 1999, the Inspection Tiger rangers together with the police officers seized all the wildlife matter from the Chinese, on the grounds that he did not have permission for purchasing valuable animal fur. The Chairman of the Primorsky Krai State Committee on environmental protection set a maximum fine for the Chinese law-breaker at 840 rubles (about \$35). By the Court decision the skins were confiscated with further realisation (selling). Recovered funds were handed over to the Ecology Fund of Primorsky Krai.

In the course of analysing the hunting law violations the rangers spotted a tendency in increasing of illegal hunting from cars. For instance, in the morning of December 17, 1999, on the highway Krasny Yar-Verhny Pereval a car had been stopped and searched.

A carbine was found in the car so hunting was presumed to take place from the car. The poachers happened to be officers of the Pozharsky Police Department. The case had been investigated and the police officers punished.

Besides antipoaching work, both the Bikin and Kirovsky team rangers have regularly been conducting educational work in schools of the Northern part of Primorsky Krai. This work includes giving lectures and showing video and slide materials on Inspection Tiger's work. These lectures help children understand the importance of the issues of wildlife conservation and habitat preservation in their home country.

Public Relations and Education

Interviews given to local papers	11
Interviews given to radio stations	8
TV interviews	4
Participation in filming	1

In the course of project implementation, Phoenix had been highlighting the work of Inspection Tiger Bikin and Kirovsky teams in both local and international mass media. The rangers of both Bikin and Kirovsky teams actively participated in all educational events organised by Phoenix throughout the year 2000; one of which was the Tiger Day Celebration held in Vladivostok on October 15, 2000.

Problems Encountered

Unfortunately, the 4th quarter of the year 2000 proved to be tough for all the Inspection Tiger teams including Bikin and Kirovsky. All the teams were forced to stop their activities in the month of December 2000. The following reasons were the cause of this pause:

- Reorganisation of the government law-enforcement structure of the Russian Federation according to the order of the president as of May, 2000. The 4th quarter was when the Primorsky Krai State Committee on environmental protection, part of which Inspection Tiger used to be, was officially demolished and became part of the Ministry of Natural Recourses of the Russian Federation.
- Change in leadership within the Bikin team; since 1995 up to the 3rd quarter of the year 2000 the team was headed by Yiuri Trusch, a very experienced and motivated leader. His replacement, however, in our opinion lacks the decision-making ability and initiative, which altogether had negatively affected the team's results.

In the course of the 4th quarter, the leaders of both Bikin and Kirovsky teams did not dare take the responsibility to continue their antipoaching work under the circumstances, unlike some others (for instance, the Khasan team had even increased their results during that time). We were also experiencing difficulties getting timely technical and financial reports from the teams' leaders.

Due to the above-mentioned reasons, Phoenix as the project coordinator had decided not to pay salaries to the Bikin and Kirovka teams' rangers for the month of December, 2000.

However, Phoenix fulfilled its liabilities regarding equipment purchase and fuel supply for those teams.

Conclusions and Practical Application

After the completion of the financial report on this project, a balance remained of **\$7,993**. Based on the findings and results above, the following practical conclusions can be suggested regarding allocation of this amount:

Since Phoenix is going to continue working with Inspection Tiger in the future and has recently signed a new contract to this effect, we think it only reasonable to allocate the remaining amount towards projects aimed to conducting the antipoaching work in the region. This proposal is also based on the latest changes within InspectionTiger structure, when in January, 2001, Inspection Tiger's jurisdiction had been extended to cover Khabarovsky Krai and a number of antipoaching teams that work in that region.

Therefore, we request that Save the Tiger Fund grant a permission to use the remaining funds of \$7,993 on the same budget items as stipulated in the contract, i.e. salaries, fuel, and repairs & maintenance, for future support of Inspection Tiger. A separate financial and programmatic report will be submitted regarding the above--mentioned amount.

Acknowledgments

This work is the result of the united efforts of many people. Supplementary and essential project information and results were kindly presented by Sergei Zubtsov, the Inspection Tiger Commander, Andrei Kopaev, his Deputy; Alexander Savvin, the Chairman of the Primorsky Krai State Committee for Natural Resources, and the rangers of the Bikin and Kirovsky teams to who we owe our special thanks.

This successful project was supported by the Save the Tiger Fund (USA). We show our appreciation to Whitney Tilt, Director of Conservation Programmes, David Phemister, the former Assistant Dorector of Conservation Programmes, Tracy Walmer, his replacement, and Jordan Neas, Program Assistant, for all of your accurate work coordination, payment in time, and valuable assistance and advice.

Financial report

Grant Amount:

\$57,905*

Budget item	Approved budget, USD	Expenses to date, USD	Balance, USD
Salary for rangers	39,200	33,069	6,081
Fuel for vehicles, snow mobiles, etc	8,260	6,889	1,343
Repairs & maintenance	3,500	2,919	569
Phoenix administrative overhead:			
Partial salary for bookkeeper	1,800	1,800	
Corporate tax on bookkeeper's salary	693	693	
Travel expenses	947	947	
Office expenses & equipment	800	800	
Communication, Internet	800	795	
Audit expenses (partial)	500	500	
Vehicles (partial)	1,500	1,500	
Total:	58,000	49,912	7,993

* Phoenix received \$57,905 instead of \$58,000 stipulated in the contract; \$95 was bank commission.

We have attached the wire transfer schedule below for your convenience:

Date	Amount, USD
10 01 00	12,069
02 03 00	12,153
26 05 00	12,153
11 09 00	12,755
06 12 00	8,775

Total: 57,905

Irina Khitrova

Finance Manager