



WWF Project Final Report

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- **Introduction.**

In spite of the fact that population of Amur tiger keeps to be stable, the problem of rare cat conservation in Russia remains actual. There are some indirect threats to the population of Amur tiger, such as: decrease of prey tiger resources (wild ungulates), destruction of natural habitats, strengthening of disturbance factor and etc. Firstly, hunters influence both on direct killing tigers and decrease of tiger prey species. At present the number of officially registered hunters in Primorskii province is more than 35 000. These legal hunters have licenses for hunting, issued by the provincial Wildlife and Hunting Department, The Hunting Society of Primorskii province and the Hunting Society of the Pacific Fleet.

But even legal hunters, having membership cards and official police permission for firearm use, are the basic part of the poachers arrested. Dissociation of nature conservation agencies and variety of the formats of the membership cards for hunting allow nature violators to avoid adequate punishment. Besides, methods of moral influence on nature violators are not applied in general. Game wardens of the local hunting societies have no rights for control in the assigned hunting leases. As a result the number of poachers do not decrease even when state control is strengthened and sufficient funds from foreign donors are provided. During last 10 years the number of wild animals, tiger prey species has reduced almost twice and density of population of ungulate animals is at the level 5-6 times less than carrying capacity of habitats.

The present project suggested starting from some primary problems aimed to solve the long-term task of introduction the principles of sustainable use of wildlife resources in hunting enterprises. Firstly, to establish the mechanism of interagency coordination in the framework of the anti-poaching commission, this would consider cases on deprival persistent poachers of their rights for using firearms. Secondly, to ensure technical means for keeping track of persistent poachers by means of creation and regular development of the database on the violators of hunting rules. Thirdly, to resume the opportunity of moral influence on nature violators by re-establishment of activity of disciplinary public commissions of the hunting societies, having rights to exclude violators from the hunting membership, so to deprive them of their rights for legal hunting. All above-mentioned activities should be accompanied by propaganda actions: large-scale mass media campaign, leaflets and posters, visual media in each local hunting society.

Most of amateur hunters frankly love nature and are interested in conservation of hunting resources. Nevertheless, the activity on improvement of hunters' culture and their responsibility has not been conducted recently: examinations on hunting rules have not been taken; disciplinary public commissions have been abolished. In other words measures on moral influence on nature violators as far as expulsion from the membership of a hunting society have not been taken yet.

At the same time poachers have possibility to get hunting license in different organizations. Nobody controls if a hunter was arrested for poaching. More over, according to the new legislation nobody except judicial authorities has right to withdraw a poacher's firearm, even if a poacher broke a law repeatedly. The cases when a poacher is arrested 2-3 times per year are not rare. Such poacher uses the same firearm, which is given back to him after payment a

fine. Thus punishment is not adequate while number of poachers is not decreased. At the same time honest hunters have no incentive to follow hunting rules, protect and reproduce wild animals. Game wardens of hunting societies were prohibited to arrest poachers. As a result most hunting users digress from conservation activity. Hunters can protect their hunting grounds during patrolling only together with state rangers participated.

Thus, additionally to direct poaching with use of non-registered firearm there is another type of poaching concealed by legal hunting licenses and officially registered firearms. According to our assessment the permitted limits for the harvest of ungulate animals are exceeded more than 50 %. Total value of ungulate species harvested by hunters and predators constantly exceeds natural recruitment of the population. Decrease of tiger prey results in increase in number of conflicts between tiger and humans. At any time situation may be worse, if winter with heavy snow comes, it will result in mass death of ungulate animals and increasing conflict between human and tiger.

Establishment of interagency coordination even without additional funding will improve the situation. At the moment several organizations such as: Wildlife and Hunting Department of Primorskii province, the Special Inspection "Tiger", the Licensing Departments of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the rangers of federal nature reserves have nature conservation functions, having control over nature violations and breaking hunting rules. Statement of the case (paper version) is drawn up for each nature violator, and then all data on the poacher are registered into special log of nature violations. Each agency has its own log. But it is very hard to follow the recurrence of nature violations, and such data are not available for other nature conserving organizations and for police. Thus, there is no possibility to keep track of the repeated violations and impose severe punishment to the persistent violator. Establishment of the database on detained poachers and ensuring of technical possibility to use this database should assist to reveal all the repeaters and to deprive them of their rights to have firearms and their membership cards for hunting.

The other way to influence on the situation is organizing the activity aimed on creation special conditions for effective application of punishment to arrested poachers. According to the Russian legislation both fines (penalties, suits) and moral measures of influence are taken. Public censure, deprivation of the rights for hunting and possession of firearm and deprivation of liberty relate to moral type of punishment. Unfortunately, practically moral punishment is not applied in spite of the existing judicial mechanisms. Application of moral types of punishment in practice and the cases of adequate sentencing will become important psychological factor for other poachers and this fact will influence on decrease of poaching level on the whole.

To establish order in hunting leases only by means of strengthening of the state control is not possible as at the same time it is not possible to provide financial support for anti-poaching brigades at the expense of foreign donors. For long-term prospects it is necessary to deprive poachers of the social support, while conscious hunters should become our allies in sustainable use of wildlife resources. That is who can ensure the whole complex of actions aimed to increase prey capacity of the hunting leases of a hunting society and introduce the principles of sustainable use of wild ungulates. In this case, it will be possible to support balance in the system: tiger–ungulates–hunters, and to avoid conflicts between a predator and humans.

2. Objectives - as per the project contract

- To establish mechanism of interagency coordination between different nature conservation organizations for adequate application of punishment to the hunters illegally harvesting wild animals, tiger prey species.
- To create and develop united database on the persons, illegally harvesting wild animals, tiger prey species, and to ensure technical conditions for using the database by all interested organizations.
- To achieve success in deprivation the persistent poachers of their rights for keeping and using their firearms by the Interagency Anti-poaching Commission
- To ensure expulsion hunters-poachers from the hunting societies, this results in decrease of the repeated nature violations with the help of the Disciplinary Public Commissions.
- To prepare information in demonstrable forms (calendars, leaflets, press releases) for rising hunters' culture and application of moral factors of influence on poachers.
- To create an educational center for wildlife conservation and reproduction.

3. Project achievements.

The activity was conducted aimed on coordination between several structures in the field of information interchange on nature violators. For the reported period 7 workshops on the project were conducted, where the participants determined the procedure of the information interchange between interested parties; the organization accumulating the information on nature violators and agenda for the next workshops. The participants of the workshops were almost all the governmental and non-governmental nature conservation structures related to the control of hunting.

They are the following: The Society of Hunters and Fishers for Primorskii province, The Society of Hunters of the Pacific Fleet, the Wildlife and Hunting Department for Primorskii province, Inspection "Tiger" of the Ministry of Natural Resources of the Russian Federation and the Licensing Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs for Primorskii province, the non-governmental organizations "Fund of Far Eastern Nature Reserves of the Far Eastern Branch of Russian Academy of Sciences" and WWF. The above mentioned participants (apart from the Licensing Department of Ministry of Internal Affairs) had signed in February 2003 the agreement (attached) on interagency coordination in prevention of nature violations in Primorskii province and creation of the Disciplinary Public Commission, aimed on fighting against poaching as social phenomena and for protection of flora and fauna species. The parties agreed to coordinate their activity, aimed to improve tracking and enforcement of poaching incidents and prevent poaching in Primorskii province. According to the terms of the agreement other nature conserving organizations interested in the project also have free data access.

In cooperation with the participants of the project the united database on the persons illegally harvesting wild animals was created, presented and tested by some nature conservation governmental structures. When creating the database the recommendations from the all interested parties (governmental and non-governmental structures) were taken into consideration. On the basis of the negotiation with participated experts, new records were included into the database: place of employment of poachers and their vehicles numbers, information on a poacher's affiliation to a society of hunters and fishers, numbers of poachers' hunting license, his previous violations, the sum of penalty, place and specification of the violation in accordance with article of the Administrative Code of the Russian Federation.

Wildlife and Hunting department of Primorskii province is appointed at the end as the base state organization, which provides Interagency Antipoaching Commission with a specialist, supplies him place for work and communication facilities. This specialist is responsible for permanent database updating. The preliminary system of information exchange between the interested parties is being developed.

By the end of project, the information about 900 poachers was tapped to the data base and this work is continuing by the specialist of Wildlife and Hunting Department to include the data from previous years (total should be about 5000 cases). The official agreement between above mentioned organizations is completed to exchange poaching databases quarterly. Considering the databases they compose lists of cases to be tried during the meeting of Interagency Antipoaching Commission.

To ensure effective work of the database on poachers 3 computers were purchased and installed in the 3 organizations: the Licensing Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs for Primorskii province, the Wildlife and Hunting Department for Primorskii province and the Society of hunters and fishers for Primorskii province (see photos). The Inspection "Tiger" was supplied by computer within previous WWF's grants.

The special trained staff of Wildlife and Hunting Department has been checked through data base all hunters, who has been applied for license to purchase the firearms during 2003. For the 20 of them, the getting license was suspended as they were mentioned as violators of hunting rules in previous years. That is the first conservation results in real use of implemented data base.

To improve the prosecution of environmental legislation, the comments to the new Administrative Code of the Russian Federation in the field of wildlife protection (Gekht & Zaicev, 2002) were worked out, printed and disseminated amongst inspectors. The special seminar on the comments to the new Administrative Code was conducted for the inspectors and representatives of the structures, participating in the project.

To raise awareness of hunters in hunting rules special materials are published and disseminated among local hunting societies and regional hunting control services: leaflets on hunting rules, the calendar-poster with

promotion of wise use of wild ungulates and the calendar-poster with information on Inspection “Tiger” and how to manage conflict tigers.

Wildlife and Hunting Department for Primorskii province has provided the premises in its office (60 square meters). It was repaired with the help of STTF and officially launched as The Educational Center for Wildlife Conservation and Reproduction. The Wildlife and Hunting Department took the obligation to support this Center with budget money and to use it for special courses for challengers for hunting card. In 2003, it was already used for some exhibitions what is real legal sport hunting is and for promotion of trophy hunting as the specific advantage for conscious hunter.

3.1. Constraints and obstacles encountered

The adoption of the new Administrative Code of the Russian Federation led to delay of the project activities and request more time in preparation of Agreement and informational package. While developing the project, WWF found out that state organizations do not seem to be eager to solve the problem and it was very difficult to pull together different agencies.

The Licensing Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs for Primorskii province couldn't sign the Agreement with NGO due to official circumlocution of this governmental structure. At the moment the agreement is still in the process of juridical expert examination in Ministry of Internal Affairs. So, the Licensing Departments of the Ministry of Internal Affairs took part in the project without official agreement with WWF.

Being appointed as an interagency coordinator, the Inspection “Tiger” didn't work properly because of the low professional skills of the inspectors and lacking the control for giving proper punishment to persistent poachers.

3.2. Action(s) taken to overcome constraints and obstacles

To conserve the Amur tiger population WWF plans long-termed work to coordinate interagency activity. As it is impossible to impact manpower policy of inspection “Tiger”, the Wildlife and Hunting Department of Primorskii province is appointed as interagency coordinator now.

Collaboration with the Licensing Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Primorskii province will be supported at the cost of WWF projects.

3.3. Targets / objectives not achieved and why.

Due to absence of juridical expert examination the agreement has not been signed by the Licensing Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Primorskii province yet.

The Disciplinary Commissions of hunting societies are still not working actively due to the contradictions with Wildlife and Hunting Department and because of lack of the will of their members to work voluntary.

4. Methodology.

To coordinate activities of different law enforcement agencies, the Interagency Anti-poaching Commission should be organized based on voluntary agreements between Wildlife and Hunting Department of Primorskii province, Special Inspection “Tiger” of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Licensing Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The chairmen of Government and Disciplinary Public Commissions of the Hunting Society of Primorskii province and Hunting Society of the Pacific Fleet should be involved in the agreement as well as representatives of interested non-government nature conservation organizations.

Meetings of this Interagency Anti-poaching Commission propose to be held twice a year. During the meetings the members try cases of illegal hunters, who seriously damaged wild fauna. Taking into consideration violations

weight degree, Commission can decide whether it is necessary to confiscate license to carry weapon or solicit the bodies of the Ministry of Internal Affairs for hunting license confiscation with further arms realization.

The Interagency Anti-poaching Commission proposes to use the Independent Disciplinary Public Commissions, which are organized in the Hunting Society of Primorskii province and Hunting Society of the Pacific Fleet. They are formed from the most respected members, according to Regulations of these NGOs.

For training the specialists responsible for the database updating, a three-day seminar would be organized with further installation of the database in the participating organizations. The specialist, who worked out the program shell of the database, conducts individual consultations on the database operation.

A two-day seminar needs to be conducted for the specialists of the Licensing Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The seminar is aimed to introduce the computer system of monitoring for fire hunting arms and to organize the coordination between regional and local licensing departments of the Ministry of Internal Affairs to improve the control over hunting firearms usage and to provide deprivation the revealed poachers of their firearms.

On the basis of the Wildlife and Hunting Department of Primorskii province two one-day seminars will be conducted for the members of the Disciplinary Public Commissions. The aim of the seminars is elaboration of the policy of application of disciplinary punishments and information exchange among the commissions.

To raise awareness of hunters in hunting rules and poacher activity, it will be used the preparation and dissemination of information among local hunting societies and regional hunting control services. It will include a set of posters and leaflets containing information on poaching and its influence on the tiger population and wild ungulates; on the types of punishment for killing tigers and illegal hunting on ungulates; on the cases of punishment of the persistent poachers and their photos.

For wide spreading of the information and raising hunters' culture the special column is planned to introduce in the magazine "Zov taigi". The information plans to distribute among local and regional newspapers. Each meeting of the Interagency Anti-poaching Commission and Disciplinary Public Commission will be followed by a press conference.

5. Lessons learned from the project.

Organizing interagency coordination in the scope of increasing anti-poaching control is complicated and labor-intensive process. It is necessary to take peculiarity of each organization taking part in the project. Departmental concerns and long-existing traditions do not allow working efficiently. In the case only an independent authority NGO is able to unite organization for efficient work. Later on it is very important to initiate superior organizations for the work and keep track of information. In any case, the united efforts of all interesting NGOs is strongly needed, especially those of them who provide funds for anti-poaching projects.

Conclusions and recommendations.

In whole, the results of the project can be considered as positive. But the real conservation impact can be estimated only after long-termed period. The work like this has never been operated before in Russian Far East. Other regions have shown the interest in replicating the project. So, it is recommended to replicate in the whole Amur tiger habitats, including the south part of Khabarovskii province.

The main recommendations:

- ✓ Lobby the approval of Hunting Law by the Parliament of Russian Federation.
- ✓ Change the status of legal hunters in Russia and solve the problem with united hunting license.
- ✓ Obligate the Hunting Societies to keep their members clear from detained poachers.
- ✓ Create the options in the organizations responsible for hunter's licensing, to enforce the mechanism of tested period and special examinations for new members.
- ✓ Complete the created Education Center with facilities to teach hunters in hunting minimum and to use this premises for special courses and examination.
- ✓ Support the lawyer position in Wildlife and Hunting Department of Primorskii province to monitor the cases of persistent poachers and to bring into court the cases needed the weapon confiscation.
- ✓ Spread the system of control on weapon licensing to the Police Department at district level.
- ✓ Print additional poster for each district Police Department of weapon licensing.
- ✓ Print the new text-book "Hunting minimum" to use it for new members' preliminary education.

Outputs.

1. Agreement of interagency co-operation in the scope of suppression and preventing ecological violations in Primorskii province (signed by six interested organizations).
2. The united database on poachers with information on about 900 violators (installed in the Wildlife and Hunting Department of Primorskii province, the Special Inspection "Tiger", the Licensing Departments of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Hunting Society of Primorskii province).
3. Staff trained and 3 working places equipped to support the database daily operations.
4. Seven meetings of the Interagency Anti-poaching Commission have been held.
5. Four seminars for wildlife managers have been conducted.
6. Getting license for carrying weapons was suspended for 20 hunters in 2003 year.
7. Printed comments to new Administrative Code of Russian Federation: Gekht V.R., Zaicev Y.M. Administrative amenability for the violations of wildlife protection legislation. Vladivostok:WWF, 2002.76 pp. (500 issues).
8. Published 2 poster-calendars for hunters: "Calendar of a right hunter" (WWF, 500 issues), "A Poacher takes away the last one – hope to survive", (Inspection "Tiger", 2000 issues).
9. Created "The Educational Center for Wildlife Conservation and Reproduction" at the headquarter of the Wildlife and Hunting Department of Primorskii province.
10. Presented the poster on project's results at the International Conference on Amur Tiger Conservation

(Khabarovsk, September 25-27, 2003).

11. The project result press release is prepared and can be found in www.wwf.ru.

**8. Equipment status report
(Vehicles and items of capital equipment purchased with project funds)**

3 computers with software.

Acronyms used in the report.

NGO – non-government organization

RFE – Russian Far East

WWF RFE – World Wide Fund for Nature, Far Eastern Branch of Russian Representative

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