

Report on Project Session  
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### Protected Areas and Human Activity in the North

Nine participants from throughout the circumpolar north attended the Northern Research Forum Protected Areas and Human Activity in the North Session. The topics discussed included tourism, resource use, and external influence.

In Karelia, we are working to find ways to attract foreign tourism. We see this as a viable economic stimulus for this region that needs it so badly. Possibilities include natural springs, stone quarries and historical villages. Our churches and villages are especially valuable for tourist attractions.

Another area where tourism could help us is on the islands of the Northern Sea and throughout the Russian Arctic. Tourism is largely unrealized within the Russian Arctic and could be so much greater. Novaya Zemlya could provide for a particularly important tourism site. This island is a rookery for some of the world's most rare birds. Cruises from Scandinavia could provide tourism money to the Russian North. Archaeological resources abound on this island as well.

In the Wrangell Island region of Northeastern Siberia is particularly vulnerable to human impact. Local, federal, and international protection is largely ineffective for protection of this area. Another area of concern is the lack of financial resources to maintain the area. Our greatest success has been with foreign film and scientific expeditions into the region. Some notable examples would be the Russian/ Canadian expedition for polar bear tagging. National Geographic film crews have also provided income to this region. As it stands now however since transportation of personnel and supplies to this area are extra expensive we are in danger of not lasting through the winter.

The Yakutian Oblast had a goal of setting aside 20% of its land for natural reserves. We have been able to set aside 25%. This is good but again we need more financial resources to protect the area. International scientific expeditions to tag geese in this area have provided income but we need more.

Within the Nenets region, there have been two major areas of concern. We have lost and are losing most of our sacred sites. Oil and natural resource extraction companies have

destroyed many sacred sites and environmentally fragile areas. We have tried to protect these sites by keeping their locations a secret but this has actually aided in their loss in some ways. CAFF and other international organizations have been successful in protecting some of these areas but more needs to be done.

The problems of the Chanti people of central Russia mirror those of the Nenets. Oil spills are of primary concern. They have ruined many lakes and rivers. Rivers are vital to our survival since we are fishers of these waters. There are laws for traditional land use and environmental protection but the indigenous people of this area do not know the law and do not know their rights. Others can take advantage of them for this reason.

One final area discussed was Northern Scandinavia and the Kola Peninsula. The Saami in these areas have had to fight in the national courts to protect their traditional lands and resource rights. For the most part they have been successful but however even environmentalists from the South have not understood the importance of indigenous land rights.

In conclusion, the natural lands of the North are particularly vulnerable to external impacts. They can and must be protected for the betterment of the entire Arctic. Protection is possible from international and national protection. Also important is understanding of the laws and rights by indigenous peoples. External financial resources are especially important in these areas. Tourism and science are perhaps the most important income sources for the Arctic. They can provide for the reserves that exist now and ones in the future.