



WWF® for a living planet®

Protected Areas for a Living Planet

delivering on CBD commitments

Altai-Sayan Ecoregion Project



© WWF-Canon / Hartmut JUNGIUS

Changan Lake and Altai Mountains, Katon-Karagay National Park, Kazakhstan.

The Altai-Sayan ecoregion is one of the last-remaining untouched areas of the world. Almost one-third of the ecoregion, 270,000km², is covered by forest. Several major mountain ranges are found here with large areas of alpine tundra and alpine meadows. The region is home to the snow leopard and the world's largest wild sheep, the Altai mountain sheep or argali, as well as a wide diversity of other animal and plant species. More than 200 rare plants species are found in the ecoregion and 12% of plants are endemic. Often referred to as a "cradle of civilization", the Altai-Sayan is rich in archaeological sites including cave paintings and burial mounds, some dating back 35,000 years. The current population is about 5 million people, comprising a majority of Russians and a mix of other ethnic groups, including several groups of indigenous peoples. The global importance of the Altai-Sayan has been recognised by UNESCO, which has designated two World Natural Heritage Sites in the ecoregion: the Altai Golden Mountains in Russia and the Uvs Lake Basin straddling the Russian-Mongolian border.

Work to date

WWF has been active in the ecoregion since 1996 in Mongolia and since 1998 in Russia and Kazakhstan. WWF developed the Altai-Sayan Millennium Initiative, a declaration signed by regional governors from Kazakhstan, Mongolia, and Russia in 1998, which committed them to preserving the natural processes of the ecoregion. Some of the principles of the Initiative were adopted at the 5th Conference of the Parties of Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) in Nairobi in May, 2000.

Building on the Altai-Sayan Millennium Initiative, an Ecoregion Action Plan was developed by a multi-stakeholder consultation

process between 1998 and 2002. It serves as the roadmap for conservation activities not only for WWF, but also for other NGOs, regional governments, and international donor agencies, and has led to several conservation achievements by WWF and partners. The Ecological Network of Protected Areas (Econet) has been officially endorsed by Russia and Mongolia, under which WWF has supported the establishment of several protected areas covering 15,600km² in Russia, 6,400km² in Kazakhstan, and 18,400km² in Mongolia. We helped develop a Snow Leopard Conservation Strategy, which has been officially approved by the governments of the ecoregion, and an Argali Conservation Strategy has been submitted for government approval. WWF's snow leopard work



Map of the Altai-Sayan ecoregion. The ecoregion runs through the Russian Federation, Mongolia, Kazakhstan, and China, covering an area of 1,065,000km².

has successfully halted the depletion of the population of this Endangered species in Russia.

Altai-Sayan Ecoregion Project

WWF's *Protected Areas for a Living Planet* programme initiated the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion Project in 2006 in consultation with stakeholders. The project began in January 2007 and will run until the end of 2011.

Stakeholder consultation

The programme organized a workshop in March 2006 which brought together 30 organizations from Russian, Mongolia, and Kazakhstan. The organizations included national and regional governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academia, and protected areas as well as indigenous and local community organizations.

Developing an Action Plan for the ecoregion

WWF presented the CBD Programme of Work on Protected Areas (PoWPA) and participants worked through its goals, targets, and activities to identify the status of implementation in the ecoregion. This exercise looked at the activities of both government and non-governmental organizations and allowed participants to identify gaps in the implementation of the PoWPA. Based on this assessment, priority activities were identified and elaborated into an Action Plan. The Action Plan highlighted the relevant stakeholders that should be involved in each activity and estimated the financial and human capacity needs. The Action Plan formed the basis for the Ecoregion Project activities outlined below.

Altai-Sayan Ecoregion Project Goal

Parties to the CBD from the Altai-Sayan ecoregion are enabled to achieve the 2012/2012 targets of the Programme of Work on Protected Areas, in particular the establishment of scientifically based and representative regional network of well-managed protected areas that are sustainably financed, ensure effective participation of local communities, and provide social and economic benefits.

Protected Areas Implementation Council

The workshop also recommended the establishment of a transboundary council to facilitate implementation of the project and act as a forum for the exchange of information and experience on protected areas. Membership will be open to all potential stakeholders (conservation, development, government, and NGO institutions) that are ready to commit capacity and resources to the implementation of the PoWPA.

Altai-Sayan Ecoregion Project activities

1. Altai-Sayan Protected Areas Implementation Council: A Council will be set up in 2007 to facilitate implementation of the PoWPA from 2007 to 2011. It will meet annually to review the status of PoWPA implementation in the ecoregion and establish priorities and workplans for the Ecoregion Project.

2. Communications: A web portal will be established for the exchange of information, tools, and experience on PoWPA implementation. The project will also publish communications

materials such as an Annual Altai-Sayan PoWPA Report which will review implementation.

3. Capacity building: The project will work towards putting in place adequate human resources, staff capacity and knowledge for effective management of the protected areas network. Training workshops for protected area staff will be organized in each country each year as well as at a transboundary level. Protected area management courses will be developed and promoted for colleges and higher institutions with a view to their inclusion in the curricula of at least five leading institutions.

4. Sustainable finance: The capacity, resources, and sustainability of the protected areas network in the ecoregion will be improved, resulting in a steady (10–20% per year) increase in protected area self-generated funding. A Protected Area Network Funding Strategy for the Altai-Sayan ecoregion will be developed and implemented. The project will also develop partnership schemes between protected areas and business with the aim of increasing funding for protected areas by 10–30% each year.

5. Income generation: The project will focus on mechanisms for partnerships between protected areas and local communities that promote income generation, such as the introduction of payments for ecosystem services. Best practice models for such partnerships will be developed and disseminated via reports and the internet, with a view to promoting their replication in other ecoregions. Legislation concerning protected areas and local communities in each country will also be reviewed and improvements identified and promoted with decision-makers. An award for the best protected area–local community project will be launched with private sector funding.



Girl from the Altai-Sayan ecoregion.

© WWF-Russia / Evgeny Butushiev

For more information

Chaizu Kyrgys

Russian Coordinator, Altai-Sayan Ecoregion
Email: ckyrgys@wwf.ru
Tel: +7 3912 278199

Batnasan Nyamsuren

Mongolian Coordinator, Altai-Sayan Ecoregion
Email: batnasan@wwf.mn
Tel: +976 11 311659

www.panda.org/pa4lp
www.altai-sayan.ru