

Although the 'picture postcard' appeal of mountain scenes has created a huge tourism industry, this obscures several environmental and social problems that are also typical of mountain environments. Harsh climates, fragile ecosystems and difficult communications make life hard for people who from circumstances or tradition live at high altitudes, while isolation hampers their ability to deal with rapid change or new problems like climate change. At the same time, many forest dwelling species and habitats are increasingly at risk.

The United Nations has proclaimed 2002 the International Year of Mountains, aiming at developing mountain areas to improve the well-being of local people and protect the environment; formulating and implementing national policies on sustainable mountain development; and promoting information tools to encourage public dialogue and awareness of mountains. The Bishkek Global Mountain Summit, taking place in Kazakhstan in October, will pool all recommendations generated during the year and develop practical actions for promoting sustainable mountain development.

news from around the world



Targeted advocacy can make a difference, particularly if enough publicity can be generated. A combination of small-scale illegal loggers and international corporations have been logging and rapidly degrading Tesso Nilo, one of Sumatra's single largest remaining blocks of lowland forest, for timber and pulp. In order to generate media pressure on both the companies involved in destroying Tesso Nilo and the Indonesian government, WWF organised a press trip with CNN and print journalists to expose the extent of the problem in this important forest. One outcome was a television news story that was widely screened around the world. As a result, April (Asia Pacific Resource Holdings Ltd), one of the main companies involved, asked to meet with WWF staff and committed to stop logging and converting pristine forests by the March 2002.

WWF also released a research report focusing particularly on the involvement and responsibilities of the G-8 countries and China with respect to illegal trade. In the run up to the G-8 summit in June, WWF called on G-8 countries to commit to purchasing timber only from legal sources originating from sustainably managed forests, and suggested a package of solutions including chain of custody certification, the development of Producers Groups and corporate involvement in the Global Forest and Trade Network. The response from the G-8 at the summit was poor as despite the Action Programme of Work on forests by the G-8 concluding there was no specific slot on the agenda to discuss progress. The G-8 in their statement on Africa however recognised the importance of tackling governance and corruption issues in respect to natural resource management.

Individually a few states are seeking action: the UK government is developing its plans to implement its timber procurement policy and has signed a bi-lateral Memorandum of Understanding on timber trade with the government of Indonesia. The governments of France and Germany made announcements at the last meeting of the Convention on Biological Diversity on establishing timber procurement policies that ensure their timber is from legal and well-managed forests. WWF will be launching a major campaign on illegal logging and forest crime in 2003.

Sources: [www.wwf.org.uk](#), [www.wwf.org.uk](#), [www.wwf.org.uk](#), Anatoly Kotlobay and Andrey Pitchnikov, WWF Russian Programme Office; [http://www.wwf.org.uk](#), [www.wwf.org.uk](#), [www.wwf.org.uk](#), Paul Toyne, Cliona O'Brien and Rod Nelson, WWF UK; Global Witness; [www.planetark.org](#); [www.earthroots.org](#); Greenpeace Brazil

EU against deforestation: The European Parliament has asked the Commission and Council not to finance projects that lead directly or indirectly to the destruction of tropical forests and to encourage certification for sustainable forest management. Parliament has also urged the Commission to develop a Biodiversity Action Plan for Forests. In a related move, the Commission has told EU states not to allow shipments of Amazonian mahogany into Europe without assurances that the timber was felled legally. The Commission highlighted Brazilian mahogany being shipped into the EU with export permits whose legality was 'a matter of dispute', and may have been issued in contravention of the Convention on the International Trade of Endangered Species (CITES).

Source:



Forest protection is to be increased by 3.2 million ha in the Russian Far East. Two commitments made as part of the WWF Gifts to the Earth initiative, and celebrated in the Netherlands and in the UK in June, will see the protected area network in the Primorsky region enlarged up to 17.8 per cent of the total area by 2005 and to 10 per cent in the Amur region. These commitments, made by the regions Governors, will also help support the traditional lifestyles of the local indigenous populations, the Evenki in Amur and the Udege in Primorsky.

Contact: Alexander Belokurov, abelokurov@wwfint.org, www.panda.org/gtte/forests

Alberta under fire: The June 2002 issue of the prestigious US magazine *Time* cites Alberta's forest management record as 'a prime example of (the) deleterious effects' of oil, gas and forestry developments'. In the 1960s, 96 per cent of the province's boreal forest was essentially wilderness, today, according to the article, less than 10 per cent of these forests exists in areas larger than a few square miles. The article draws upon a nine-year study by the University of Alberta on the effects of an estimated half-million miles of roads, pipelines and 15-foot corridors – used for seismic testing for oil and gas deposits – which found a 20 to 50 per cent decline in some migratory bird populations, drastic declines in the grizzly bear population and some woodland caribou herds on the verge of extinction.

Source: Jill Sturdy, Canadian Parks And Wilderness Society - Edmonton Chapter, jill-sturdy@cpaws-edmonton.org

Biopiracy pledge: China, Brazil, India, and nine other of the world's most biodiverse countries, which between them contain 70 per cent of the world's biodiversity, signed an alliance in February 2002 to fight biopiracy and press for rules protecting their people's rights to genetic resources found on their land.

Source: Associated Press, February 19, 2002

Cleaner pulp: Paper mills have long been notorious for their release of numerous toxins into the environment. However, research in the US and Finland is being carried out on producing paper without chlorine. The technology incorporates the use of transition metal substituted polyoxometalates cluster ions for bleaching pulp. The goal of the polyoxometalates research is to develop a highly selective, effluent-free, closed mill bleaching process that also produces high quality paper.

Source: USDA Forest Service International Programs

Cree agreement: The long running disputes over hydropower and forestry development between the government of Québec and the James Bay Crees have been resolved with the approval of an Agreement in Principle establishing a new relationship between the two parties. The Agreement ensures a joint Cree-Québec Forestry Board will review forestry regulations and forestry plans for Cree territory and provide recommendations to reconcile forestry activities with the Cree traditional uses of the territory and the protection of the natural environment.

Source: Environment News Service (ENS), February 5, 2002

PNG lifts ban: The moratorium on logging Papua New Guinea's (PNG) forest has been lifted. Prime Minister Sir Mekere Morauta imposed the moratorium in 1999, after admitting the failure of the forest industry in PNG, and stating measures should be taken to rectify the problems and promote more sustainable practises. Prior to the moratorium being lifted an independent review of 32 proposed logging concessions was conducted, recommendations from which were built into a timebound action plan that gained approval from National Executive Council. Implementation of many of the components of this plan have been delayed, and in the meantime there have been several instances of contravention's of the Forestry Act and Regulations, which the review sort to put to an end. While work is underway to incorporate a number of the reforms into the legislation that governs industrial scale forestry activities in PNG, these reforms are yet to have an effect in practice.

Source: Papua New Guinea Eco-Forestry Forum and Tim Dawson, Tim@wfvn.org.vn

Estonia forest crimes: Estonian NGOs have estimated that roughly 50 per cent of the timber exported from Estonia is illegal. The leading Estonian newspaper *Postimees* has revealed that the Finnish forest company Stora Enso acquired a growing forest from illegal owners related to organised crime of southern Estonia for 70,000 Euros.

Source: Rein Ahas, Estonian Green Movement, reina@ut.ee

Mining rule relaxed: In January, Indonesia issued new rules to reduce restrictions on mining in forests in a move aimed at boosting investment.

Source: Reuters News Service, January 28, 2002

Monarch threat: Escalating deforestation and forest fragmentation in Mexico is threatening monarch butterflies despite three presidential decrees to protect critical over-wintering sites. Ariel images taken over a 28-year period show that continuous forest cover in areas surrounding three important over-wintering reserves has declined from 80 per cent in 1971 to under 30 per cent in 1999. Furthermore, the average size of forest fragments has dropped from about 2,000 hectares to just 25.

Source: Environment News Service, April 3, 2002



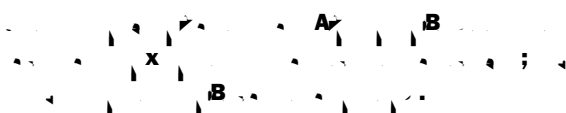
further timber sales in roadless areas until the Forest Service conducted a study of Tongass wilderness and the impacts of logging there. Disappointingly for those calling for protection of the Tongass, the study, released in May, did not call for new habitat protection in the roadless areas.

5

For some members of Congress, concern about the administration's direction and its failure to strongly defend the roadless rule, has led to affirmative action. On June 5, 177 Members of Congress introduced the National Roadless Area Conservation Act of 2002, which would codify the Roadless Area Conservation Rule. The US Agriculture Department has received more than two million letters and faxes supporting the road ban, the largest ever outpouring of comments on a federal environmental measure. In a separate development, the proposed Alaska Rainforest Conservation Act has the support of 117 members of Congress.

Source: Dominick DellaSala, dellasal@wwfks.org; forests.org, June 5 2002; Reuters News Service, May 20 2002; Laurie Cooper, Alaska Coalition, laurie@alaskacoalition.org, www.akrain.org

WWF-US and the Conservation Biology Institute have completed a comprehensive assessment of roadless areas to date, drawing primarily on peer-reviewed science and nearly a decade of satellite imagery and computer mapping assessments. The report can be downloaded from: www.worldwildlife.org/forests



In the last days of the Clinton administration in the US, a move was made to shift the Forest Service policy from resource extraction from national forests to managing lands for broader environmental and recreational benefits. Formalised as the Roadless Area Conservation Rule, (roadless rule), the policy barred new road building in the 23.7 million hectares of pristine national forest land, one-quarter of which is in Alaska. Under the rule, pristine forest lands could only be disturbed if natural disasters such as fires threaten area residents and wildlife. As well as the obvious conservation benefits of the rule, the policy was also a practical response to a management problem: The Forest Service has a US\$8 billion maintenance backlog on existing roads.

However for the past year the Bush administration has repeatedly delayed the date that the rule comes into effect. The administration has pledged to uphold the roadless rule, but plans to modify it to allow local input so decisions are made on a forest-by-forest basis. According to campaigners, interim directives have already undermined the rule and proposed timber contracts and oil and gas leases that could threaten roadless areas are under consideration in national forests over the whole of the USA.

The US Undersecretary of Agriculture, a former timber industry lobbyist, has stated that no timber sales have been completed that would not have been allowed under the Clinton rule, and that fears about future incursions into roadless areas are premature. However, in southeast Alaska's Tongass National Forest, the largest US national forest, the Forest Service is moving forward with 33 timber sales (out of a US total of 50 proposed sales) in roadless areas that would be protected by the policy. The Tongass holds about a quarter of the world's remaining coastal temperate rainforest. Earlier this year, a District Court Judge barred

French forest protection analysed: The first detailed national forest protection gap analysis, carried out by WWF-France, has revealed that only 1.09 per cent of the forest area of the French mainland is well protected (IUCN Protected Area Categories I to IV).

Contact: Daniel Vallauri, dvallauri@wwf.fr or download the report from: www.wwf.fr/pdf/forets_version_complete.pdf

Virunga danger: Virunga National Park in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Africa's oldest protected area, has seen increased settlement by displaced people in recent years. The report of the f33 sc-



2002 has so far been characterized by a proliferation of international forest meetings and the adoption of various decisions and programmes of work that look great on paper: they feature key issues and approaches, like restoration of forest ecosystems and effectiveness of protected areas – but in reality have less apparent intergovernmental political support for forest action than we have seen for 10 years.

This should have been a significant year for forests on the international stage. The 6th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP6) was slated to adopt a strong new work programme on forest biodiversity, including specific actions on protected areas, restoration, forest fires, illegal logging and certification. The 2nd session of the UN Forum on Forests (UNFF) was set to review progress and necessary next steps on protected areas and restoration. The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) was looming with heads of state presumably needing to say something positive on forests.

What has happened instead is that negotiations in all three arenas have given only cursory attention to substantive forest issues with greater attention being given to process matters. In the case of the CBD, a good work programme was adopted, but many hours were spent negotiating a preamble that could be read as undermining the status of the work programme. The UNFF gave only passing attention to protected areas and restoration in favour of lengthy debates on the establishment of expert groups. The final preparatory meeting for the WSSD largely rubber-stamped the UNFF outcomes in the face of negligible political interest in forests. The only intergovernmental arena in which dynamic discussions on forests are happening is under the auspices of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, but that is because of the prospect of money for plantations that may cause more environmental and social problems than they solve unless clear and enforceable safeguards are in place.

The main concern of the international environment and development community right now is combating poverty and promoting sustainable livelihoods. The case for the relevance of forests to these objectives has not been successfully made in political terms despite much talk around this issue.

The result is that forests – except as sinks for dollars – have rapidly been dropping off the international agenda, while energy, freshwater and marine issues are rising in prominence. Why does this matter? It is not hard to imagine that allocation

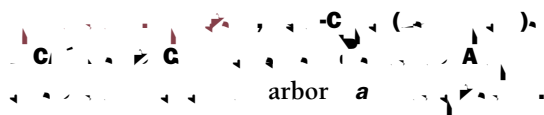
As **arbor** **a** goes to press, the debate on fire prevention is building in response to the fires that have burnt more than 1 million ha across the **USA**, illustrating all too clearly the prediction from the US National Interagency Fire Center of a record-setting fire season this summer. Thousands of people have been evacuated and many homes and businesses have been lost. The Bush administration blamed environmental groups for contributing to the forest fires. Their challenge stopped the U.S. Forest Service's attempts to thin out forests by letting timber companies move in and cut trees, which is to date the federal government's main effort to remove 'dangerous underbrush'. Earlier this year, fires across nearly 8,000 ha in forested land in the Andean foothills south of Santiago, **Chile**, forced the evacuation of tourists and villages nearby. The affected parks - the Malleco National Park, Tolguaca National Park and Conguillio National Park - are known for their araucaria and native hardwood forests. Meanwhile as fires swept through habitat of the Amur tiger and leopard in Siberia and **Russia's** Far East in May, the Ministry of Natural Resources estimated damage caused by forest fires in 2001 was more than 2.8 billion roubles (US\$88,000,000), the main causes of fire, besides hot and dry weather, were violation of fire safety rules and insufficient financing and technical equipment of anti-fire divisions. In April, half of the 8,500 ha of Melaleuca forest in U Minh Thuong National Park, **Vietnam** was affected by fire - only 63,000 ha of this type of peat swamp forest remain in Vietnam.

Source: Environmental News Service, June 10, 2002; Reuters News Service, February 8, June 13 and June 26, 2002; "The World's Worst Air Polluters," *Time*, # 2 (76), February 2002; "Whomable TNG's Father? pmentesox ny Wonme0vl.lace.Devu in pSa51jute

focus: mountain forests and conservation



Wale Adeleke



Why is 2002 the International Year for Mountains? Aren't these the immutable everlasting three-dimensional earth features of our planet? Yes, but technologically 'gifted' humans, with lowlanders' attitudes have wreaked grievous harm on them in the name of development. They do merit our concern for a number of reasons related to value, vulnerability and threats.

Lasting Values

Mountains speak to the inner core of our spirits. They have been or are significant to most of the world's religions. Reverence, pilgrimage and ceremonial values must not be impaired due to heedless development, including 'spectacle tourism'. Artists, writers and musical composers have been continually inspired by untrammelled mountains. They have challenged and deeply stirred alpinists and trekkers.

Due to difficult terrain and harsh climate mountains are often the last islands of untransformed nature midst a sea of altered lands. Consequently they are repositories of much of the world's biological diversity. Moreover, due to the altitudinal vegetation climatic/soils zones, and the varying compass aspects of these massifs, there is great heterogeneity in habitats. Endemism is particularly high due to their 'island' nature. What is more, as the last bastions of wild nature, they harbour many of the planet's rare species and communities. They also harbour the wild ancestors of many of our most important crops: barley, potato, maize, rice, wheat and coffee, for example.

Mountains, which receive the bulk of the global precipitation, are literally the water towers of the world. Watercourses emanating from them nourish people, agriculture, industry and commerce in the lowlands. Mountain forests are the guardians of water quality, and forest soils are the safest hydrologic condition for water storage. The accelerating scarcity of quality water shouts out for the care of our mountain watersheds.

Mountain Vulnerability

Mountains are dynamic places of powerful geologic and climatic processes: avalanches, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, landslides, torrents, glacial lake outbursts, rockfall and potentially great surface erosion. Mountain climates are as variable and extreme as is their topography and their thin soils are highly erosive due to precipitation and slope. Flora and fauna is under greater stress, more vulnerable to disturbance and slower to recover. Because of mountains' shape, the flora and fauna of the various altitudinal zones, have decreasing space as they are forced to shift upwards in response to global warming. Some relief is possible for poleward migration if habitats are connected in the great North-South ranges.

Unique Threats

As the highest points in the landscape, mountains are the greatest recipients of long distance air pollution. Decline of forests, aquatic organisms, soil fauna and birds have been experienced particularly in the industrialised countries. Height also means they receive the bulk of telecommunication hardware and the increase in cellular phone antennae is leading to skyline graffiti.

Mountains are 'outflow' areas where much of the physical mountain products leave the area in unprocessed state for value-added use in the lowlands. Timber, fuelwood, non-wood forest products, minerals, and increasingly, agricultural products. Mountains often are economically marginalized areas. Even precious topsoil under de-stabilised crop and grazing systems moves to the lowlands. They are also 'outflow' areas for young people and the skilled, leaving behind older people, and often the women (who have always done much of the land management, but have increasing burdens). This demography is a special challenge in development scenarios. This marginality of mountains extends also to health care, education and political power.

Finally, mountains are often areas of tension, conflict, banditry, illegal drug growing, poaching, forest trespass and open warfare. These are characteristic because of remoteness, difficult access, distance to capital cities, the independence of mountain people and the fact that mountains are often national borders. Sustainable use of mountains tends not to occur in areas under these conditions of risk and uncertainty.

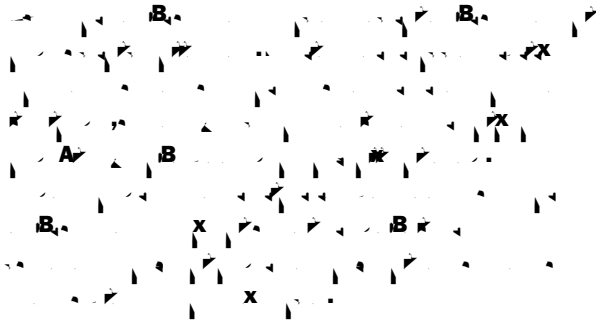
Mountain Celebration

These values and threats, and actions for conservation and sustainable use of mountain environments, are being highlighted this year by governments, NGOs and international organisations, in an attempt to increase among decision-makers and the general public an awareness of the need for changing our thinking about highland areas. This issue of **arbor a** is a contribution to this process. Elsewhere there are conferences, festivals, food fairs, pilgrimages, clean-up campaigns, school contests and other innovative events. **arbor a** readers are invited to join in these activities, plan their own, or simply to go out and enjoy and respect your favourite local mountain, massif or even hill!

Contact: Lawrence S. Hamilton, hamiltonx2@mindspring.com

focus: mountain forests and conservation

8



A combination of topography, climate and particular social impacts together create a range of problems and opportunities that are either unique to or especially acute in mountains. Several are of relevance to mountain forests:

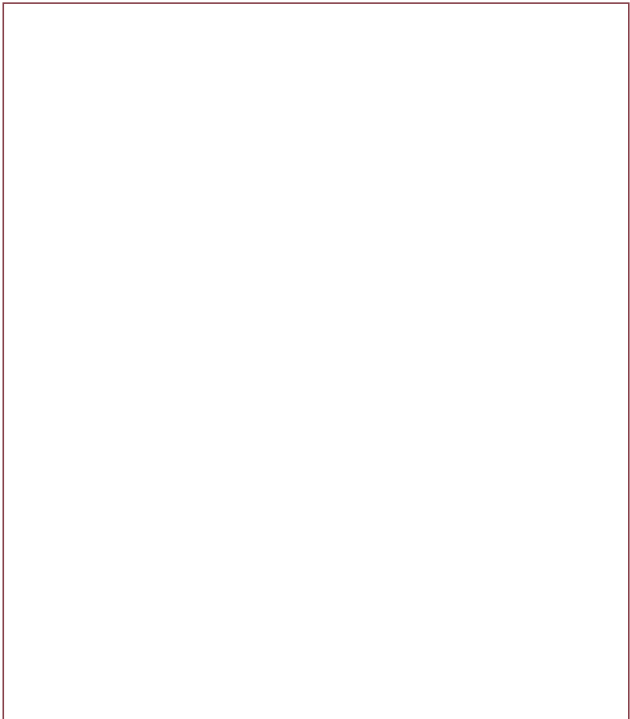
Unstable environments: climatic extremes, steep slopes and poor soils mean that forest loss or degradation in mountains is likely to have more immediate and acute impacts than in lowlands, and may also be more difficult to reverse. Forest loss can be followed by rapid erosion including avalanches and mudslides, which often carry immediate human costs. Rapid soil erosion has been linked to forest loss in mountains throughout the world, including recently in Thailand, China, the Andes and the Atlas Mountains of North Africa.

A

Earlier this year, Bhutan's Nature Conservation Division (NCD) undertook an assessment of the management effectiveness of its protected area system. This Himalayan kingdom has demonstrated an unparalleled commitment to environmental protection; over a quarter of the country is in well-designed, representative protected areas, and another 10 per cent in 'tiger corridors' connecting large blocks of habitat. The assessment was funded by the World Bank/WWF Alliance, and conducted in collaboration with staff from the World Bank and WWF-Bhutan.

According to Dr. Sangay Wangchuk, Joint Director of NCD, assessing the management effectiveness of the newly operational parks was the next logical step in park stewardship. 'Many park systems are like a restaurant – the food looks great, but you don't want to see the kitchen. With this assessment, we are opening the doors to the kitchen. We wanted to be fully transparent with our park management.' The assessment, which included a series of workshops, interviews and site visits between late 2001 and early 2002, identified a range of threats and management weaknesses. Threats included grazing, road widening and construction, poaching and the collection of non-timber forest products. Management weaknesses included staff shortages, inadequate ecological data





The Shinyanga region, south of Lake Victoria, has suffered from serious forest and woodland degradation due to the over-grazing, uncontrolled bush fires, unsustainable wood demand (in particular for fuel), and clearing of forest land to eradicate tsetse flies (1940-1965) and for agricultural expansion. However, a still strong memory of the traditional ngitili system has provided a good entry point for the forest restoration efforts of the local community.

'Ngitili' is an indigenous natural resource management system that involves conservation of fallow and range lands by encouraging vegetation (in particular for browse and fodder) regeneration. This revitalised system of ngitilis is being re-adopted on a wider and more individual scale, contributing to improved livelihood security and helping to restore wider woodlands goods and services to the people and the land. Due to local efforts, there are now over 15,000 individual ngitili covering approximately 25,000 ha, and 284 communal ngitilis covering about 46,000 ha.

In July, the Equator Initiative announced that the project had been chosen as one of twenty-five outstanding projects to be put forward at the WSSD. Edmund Barrow, from IUCN EARO, made the nomination on behalf of the local group, HASHI (Hifadhi Ardhi Shinyanga - Shinyanga Soil Conservation programme). He worked with HASHI in the late 1980's and early 1990's on project definition, capacity building and project evaluation, and more recently to develop up this interesting case on community-based (and government-facilitated) Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR). The project, which was presented at the FLR workshop in Costa Rica (see page 11), demonstrates that rural people and communities recognise the importance of natural trees and vegetation in their lives and have strong institutional mechanisms for their management.

The Equator Initiative has been set up by the UNDP, working with a range of groups including IUCN, to highlight successful initiatives undertaken by communities in the Equatorial belt, which promote poverty alleviation through the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

Contact: For IUCN's work on Forest Landscape Restoration, www.iucn.org/themes/fcp/activities/flr1.html; the Equator Initiative, www.equatorinitiative.org

Regulating trade in the Mekong: IUCN Asia Regional Forest and Environmental Law Programmes completed an overview and broad comparative analysis of timber trade regulation in the Lower Mekong Basin, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Vietnam, in December 2001. The report, *Regulating Timber Trade in the Lower Mekong Basin: Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Vietnam*, concludes that the task of developing and applying regulatory systems that maximise the contribution of timber and NTFP trades to national development whilst ensuring the long-term supply of these resources has not been met successfully. Adopting a unified approach to reform in the sub-region is recommended considering the linkages that exist between policy decisions of one country and exploitation of timber and NTFPs in the other states. The many regulatory constraints shared amongst the four countries of the sub-region also make such an approach imperative. It is argued that further support for a sub-regional approach lies in the economies of scale that would arise from adopting region-wide strategies and standards in response to common issues.

Contact: IUCN Regional Forest Programme, Asia, iucn@ait.ac.th

Strategy for CIS Mountain Forests: At the World Bank consultations in Finland in April 5, 2000, representatives of several CIS countries, among them: Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine supported the initiative of the IUCN Office for the CIS Countries to develop a Strategy for Conservation and Sustainable Use of Mountain Forests in CIS countries. Since then IUCN-CIS has developed the first draft of the Strategy's structure and created a working group of about 30 experts from different mountain regions in the CIS. IUCN-CIS hopes that this preparatory work can be the basis for the First International Conference on the Problems of Mountain Forests in CIS Countries, which would be an important input into the International Year of Mountains. Currently IUCN-CIS is implementing a CIDA-funded project on sustainable livelihoods for indigenous people in forested mountainous regions of the Kamchatka Peninsula. The lessons learned in this project are being used in the Strategy development. The initiative has been described as 'highly important and timely' by various NGOs, federal agencies and educational institutions in CIS countries. However, at present funds to fully develop the Strategy are not available.

Contact: Nikolay Shmatkov, IUCN-CIS Forest Conservation Programme, shmatkov@iucn-cis.org

The Wellbeing of Forests: an innovative e-tool for assessing environmental and social sustainability

In August 2002, IUCN's Forest Conservation Programme will be launching its Wellbeing of Forests Sustainability Assessment tool comprised of free downloadable software entitled "Wellbeing Scores" and a manual to apply the methodology. The Wellbeing of Forests brings together 27 indicators of human and ecosystem wellbeing using IUCN's pioneering Sustainability Assessment method. The Wellbeing of Forests tool will help facilitate dialogue about forests among the development and conservation communities. We encourage you to use this tool in your own work, and provide us with feedback that can help us to develop and improve it further.

Contact: The Software and Manual is available from IUCN's Forest Programme's website <http://www.iucn.org/themes/fcp/>

WF

