PROJECT IDENTIFICATION FORM (PIF)
PROJECT TYPE: **FULL-SIZED PROJECT**
TYPE OF TRUST FUND: **GEF TRUST FUND**

PART I: PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Title:	Conservation of Big Cats in the Russian Federation		
Country:	Russian Federation	GEF Project ID:	5559
GEF Agency:	World Wildlife Fund, Inc.	GEF Agency Project ID:	TBD
Other Executing Partners:	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of Russia, WWF Russia	Submission Date:	30 August 2013
GEF Focal Area:	BD	Project Duration (Months)	60 Months
Name of parent program	N/A	Project Agency Fee ($):	$1,143,679

A. INDICATIVE FOCAL AREA STRATEGY FRAMEWORK:

Focal Area Objectives	Trust Fund	Indicative Grant Amount ($)	Indicative Co-financing ($)
BD-1 Improve Sustainability of Protected Area Systems	GEF TF	8,453,569	45,000,000
BD-2 Mainstream Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use into Production Landscapes, Seascapes, and Sectors	GEF TF	4,253,981	15,000,000
Total Project Cost		12,707,550	60,000,000

B. INDICATIVE PROJECT DESCRIPTION SUMMARY

Project Objective: Ensuring conservation of unique landscapes and ecosystems in the globally important ecoregions in Russia, while maintaining big cats as keystone species.

Project Component	Grant Type	Expected Outcomes	Expected Outputs	Trust Fund	Indicative Grant Amount ($)	Indicative Cofinancing ($)
1. Landscape level action and mainstreaming biodiversity conservation	TA	1.1: Strengthened national and regional institutional capacity and regulatory framework for mainstreaming biodiversity conservation at the landscape level	1.1.1: Improved: a) national regulatory framework for the effective implementation of national strategies and action plans for big cats conservation; b) regional legislative frameworks to facilitate the enforcement of national legislation 1.1.2: Improved law enforcement in the habitats of key big cat populations through increased funding, capacity and inter-agency cooperation of regional and federal enforcement agencies 1.1.3: Capacity building and increased knowledge of decision makers, other stakeholders, local population, better participation of local people in public	GEFTF	2,992,665	15,000,000

			monitoring of economic development projects in the habitats of big cats.			
			1.1.4. Improved national monitoring system for key big cat populations based on sound science, public participation and government funding.			
		1.2: Improved landscape planning and management supports the sustainable use of at least 5 million hectares of big cat habitat in the Russian Far East, the Altai-Sayan, and the North Caucasus	1.2.1. Regional land-use planning and economic development schemes of 7 administrative regions of Russia incorporate key habitats of big cat populations and their migration corridors as priority sites for biodiversity conservation			
			1.2.2. Increased areas of sustainable forest management (Forest Stewardship Council certification) in the habitats of the Amur tiger and the Far East Leopard.			
			1.2.3. Public and private sector projects (such as roads, pipelines planning and construction, and mining) with potentially adverse impacts on key habitats of big cats are developed and implemented in accordance with improved management tools, including GIS, obligatory strategic environmental assessments and environmental impact assessments with the full and timely stakeholder involvement. The key sectors to mainstream biodiversity into sectoral policies will be mining, logging and linear infrastructure development (with a focus on pipelines construction)			
		1.3: Increased public participation in conservation, monitoring and combating illegal wildlife trade monitoring	1.3.1 Increased public, involvement in conservation, monitoring and combating illegal wildlife trade monitoring through awareness campaigns to ensure positive attitude shift of local population towards big cats conservation in the ecoregions			

| 2.Improved management of protected areas and buffer zones with the involvement of the surrounding communities | TA | 2.1: Increased effectiveness of 5,000,000 ha of existing and newly established Protected Areas for conservation of key populations of big cats and their habitats | 2.1.1: Expansion of the protected area networks in the key habitats of the Amur tiger and Far Eastern Leopard (Sikhote-Alin Ridge - Primorsky and Khabarovsky krays), Snow leopard (Altai-Sayan mountains - Republics of Tyva, Gorny Altai and Khakassia) and Persian leopard (North-West and North-East Caucasus – Krasnodarsky Krai and Republic of Karachaevo-Cherkessia).

2.1.2: Increased management effectiveness of federal and regional protected areas in the habitats of big cats, specifically:

Far East: Sikhote-Alinsky, Lazovsky, Bolshekhekhtsirsky zapovedniks, Land of Leopard, Udegeiskaya Legend, Aniuiski National Parks and regional PAs.

Altai-Sayan: Sayano-Shushensky, Katunsky, Altaisky, Ubsunurskaya Kotlovina zapovedniks, Sailugemsky National Park and regional PAs.

Northern Caucasus: Kavkazsky and Teberdinsky zapovedniks, Sochi National park and regional PAs. | GEFTF | 7,192,253 | 30,350,000 |
| | | 2.2: Decreased human-wildlife conflict and improved local communities livelihoods for conservation of big cats | 2.2.1: Successful community-based conservation projects for the prevention and resolution of conflicts between local communities and big cats populations are replicated at scale, including: Financial compensation schemes implemented in cooperation with local governments for damages caused by big cats on local livelihoods. Improvement of livestock grazing practices; Protection of livestock pens and corrals from big cats and other instruments

2.2.2: Local and indigenous communities living in the habitats of | | | |

			big cats benefit economically from their support to conservation through alternative income generation sources, including: - Environmentally sustainable alternatives to poaching through income generation schemes (small business, including ecotourism, non-timber products, wool and milk processing, felt production); - Community-donor agreements for big cats conservation using fee-based system and payment for ecosystem services (PES) introduction; - Community-based game management; - Community-managed protected areas with focus on diverse participation.			
3. Transboundary cooperation among the countries within the identified ecoregions	TA	3.1: Increased coordination among the transboundary PAs and decreased illegal wildlife trade with neighboring countries (China, Mongolia, and Kazakhstan)	3.1.1 Bi-lateral intergovernmental commissions and expert groups between Russia, China, Mongolia, and Kazakhstan effectively coordinate, manage and facilitate transboundary cooperation on PAs and big cats conservation in selected 3.1.2 Transboundary conservation programmes for big cats and their habitats are developed, approved by bi-lateral intergovernmental commissions and implemented 3.1.3 Illegal wildlife trade in transboundary context significantly reduced due to improved capacities and cooperation of the customs and boarder services 3.1.4 Improved management effectiveness of over 500,000 hectares of transboundary protected areas in the habitats of big cats in neighbouring countries through . joint planning, monitoring, and trainings for transboundary and neighbouring countries' PAs staff.	GEFTF	1,387,253	9,100,000

4. Project Monitoring and Evaluation		4.1 Participatory M&E framework and an informative and proactive feedback mechanism integrated at all levels of project cycle management	4.1.1 Project monitoring system operating and systematically providing information on progress in meeting project output and outcome targets. 4.1.2 Timely submission of GEF BD Tracking Tool. 4.1.3 Mid-term and Final Evaluation carried out and reports disseminated in timely manner	GEFTF	500,000	1,000,000
Subtotal					12,072,171	55,450,000
Project Management Cost (PMC)				GEFTF	635,379	4,550,000
Total Project Cost					12,707,550	60,000,000

C. INDICATIVE CO-FINANCING FOR THE PROJECT BY SOURCE AND BY NAME IF AVAILABLE:

Sources of Cofinancing	Name of Cofinancier	Type of Cofinancing	Amount ($)
GEF Agency	WWF	Cash	10,000,000
National Government	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment	Cash	28,000,000
NGO	Russian Geographical Society	Cash	3,000,000
Local Government	Regional administrations of Altai, Tuva, and Buryatia Republics, and Krasnoyarsky, Khabarovsky, Primorsky and Krasnodarsky Kray	Cash	4,000,000
Private Sector	VTB Bank	Cash	3,000,000
NGO	Eurasian center of study, preservation and restoration of populations of the Amur leopard.	Cash	12,000,000
Total Cofinancing			60,000,000

D. INDICATIVE TRUST FUND RESOURCES ($) REQUESTED BY AGENCY, FOCAL AREA AND COUNTRY: NA

E. PROJECT PREPARATION GRANT (PPG)

	Amount Requested ($)	Agency Fee for PPG ($)
• (up to) $300k for projects above $10 million	$200,000	$18,000

PPG AMOUNT REQUESTED BY AGENCY, FOCAL AREA AND COUNTRY FOR MFA/MTF PROJECT ONLY: NA

PART II: PROJECT JUSTIFICATION

- A.1. Project Description

At over 17 million square kilometers, the Russia Federation is the largest country in the world and occupies an eighth of the world's land mass, including most of non-tropical Eurasia. Russia plays a vital role in the conservation of global biodiversity. It hosts 14 of 214 global priority eco-regions that sustain

the planet's biodiversity. The temperate forests of the Russian Far East as well as the mountain forests of the Altai-Sayan and North Caucasus are listed as priority biodiversity regions according to the WWF and are the principal habitats of the Amur tiger (*Panthera tigris altaica*), the Far Eastern leopard (*Panthera pardus orientalis*), the Snow leopard (*Panthera uncial*), and the Persian leopard (*Panthera pardus saxicolor*) – the big endangered cats of Northern Eurasia collectively referred to as "big cats".

The populations of these big cats dramatically decreased in the last century due to poaching and habitat reduction. Some big cat populations were completely destroyed. Despite population decline, Russia still has sustainable populations of Amur tiger, Far East leopard and Snow leopard and plays a critical role in the global conservation of these endangered species. Russia also has a large amount of viable habitat for restoration of Persian leopard in the North Caucasus.

The Amur Tiger (*Panthera tigris altaica*): The Amur tiger (Siberian tiger) is the world's northernmost subspecies of tiger. It is the largest cat species in Asia and, at one time was widely distributed throughout the continent. The Amur tiger is an endangered subspecies belonging to the VU A3c category in the Red Data Book of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). A complete ban on hunting the tiger in Russia was introduced in 1947. The Amur tiger was listed in the USSR Red Data Book back in 1978 and again in the Russian Red Data Book in 2001. Most of the other tiger subspecies are endangered, but as a result of measures taken during the second half of the 20th Century, particularly from 1993 to 2003, the Amur tiger is not threatened with imminent extinction. Nevertheless, continued habitat degradation caused by human activity, together with poaching and the illegal trade in tiger parts and derivatives, are grounds for serious concern for the destiny of the subspecies. Approximately 95% of the entire Amur tiger population lives within the Russian Far East, in particular in the Primorsky Region and the southern part of Khabarovsk Region. Russia, therefore, shoulders the main responsibility for conserving this large predator species.

The first Amur Tiger Conservation Strategy for Russia was approved by the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources more than 14 years ago on 24 June 1996. It was aimed at summarizing half-a-century's experience in protection and research, formulating key principles and outlining a comprehensive set of activities for the long-term conservation of the tiger. The implementation of the above-mentioned strategy from 1997 to 2008 resulted in the retention of the general trend in the Amur tiger population. This was similar to the mid-1990s when the number of animals was generally stable, but experiencing a gradual growth in number and expansion in the tiger's range. At present, the tiger occurs over a large part of the forested areas of Primorsky and southern Khabarovsk Regions. The peripheral areas of tiger habitat on the left bank of the Amur River, which includes the Lesser Hingan and the area of land to the north-north-west and upriver to the Zeya Reservoir, began to recover. Nowadays, two to three tigers are encountered each year in the Jewish Autonomous and Amur Regions. Since 2000, the range of the Amur tiger has begun to extend northwards and westwards. Evidence suggests that an independent population is currently establishing itself within the Jewish Autonomous Region. The population that established itself in the north-eastern part of Sikhote-Alin and in neighboring areas of the Botchinsky Nature Reserve is becoming increasingly stable. At present, the total size of the Amur tiger range in Russia approaches 180,000 km^2.The results of the censuses conducted in the 1980s and early-1990s confirmed a further growth in population numbers and the size of the tiger's range. The 2005 census indicated that during the beginning of the present century the population number stabilized somewhere between 428 and 502 individuals, including between 97 and 109 kittens (comprising 71 to 77 tigers in Khabarovsk Region and 357 to 425 individuals in Primorsky Region).

In recognition of Russia's key role in tiger and other big cats conservation, the Russian Prime Minister hosted in 2010 the International Forum for Tiger Conservation held in St. Petersburg. This project is a

direct response to pledges made by the Russian government at the Tiger Summit and towards achieving the goal of doubling the number of tigers in the wild by 2022.

The Far Eastern leopard (*Panthera pardus orientalis*): One of the top priorities in the protection of rare big cat species in Russia - along with the Amur tiger — belongs to the Far Eastern leopard, whose fate is even more precarious. The Far Eastern leopard is one the rarest and most beautiful of the cat family. The total area of the natural habitat of the leopard in Russia is now 370-400 thousand hectares, and the population is holding steady at only 45-50 individuals. These Leopards were included in the Red Data Book of the Russian Federation in 2001 as "endangered" (the top category according the Russian Red Data Book) species, hunting the leopard has been banned since 1956, and in 1966 a ban on trapping live animals was introduced. It is also included in the Red List of IUCN – The World Conservation Union – and in Appendix 1 of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

The Snow leopard (*Panthera uncial*): The Snow leopard is the only species of large cat capable of living in difficult mountain conditions. One of the rarest cat species, it has persisted thanks to its habitat in the remote mountains of Central Asia. As a species, the snow leopard is relatively poorly known and has remained a mystery to researchers for many years. Even now little is known of the biology and ecology of this rare predator, and the animal's population in its current range is only broadly estimated. Snow leopards are listed in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species and are classified as rare or endangered in all 12 of the countries within its current habitat range.

The snow leopard is at the top of the ecological pyramid in Central Asia's mountain ecosystem. For this reason, sustainable populations of snow leopard are directly connected to the conservation of mountain-steppe and mountain-tundra biomes, areas that have been inhabited by humans since ancient times and that are vital to the survival of Asian nomadic peoples. For many Asian peoples the snow leopard is a symbol of strength, nobility, and power. Its image can be seen on the coats of arms of a number of different Central Asian cities.

In Russia the snow leopard is at the northern edge of its modern range and has only a few sustainable groups of animals in optimal habitat areas – all in the mountains of the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion. Russia's population of snow leopards comprises just 1-2% of the total species population. Snow leopard survival in Russia depends to a significant degree on the preservation of spatial and genetic connections between Russian populations and the main population nucleus in western Mongolia and perhaps northwestern China. As in the other countries in its modern range, the main threats to snow leopards in Russia are deaths caused by poachers and herders, loss of prey base, and in some cases, loss of habitat related to the development of mining and transportation infrastructure. Snow leopard body parts are often used in traditional eastern medicine as a substitute for tiger parts, and the animal's fur is of great value for luxury seekers. The significant popularity of snow leopard products in illegal trade is a serious concern for the species' future. The preservation of this northernmost population of snow leopards living in Russia – animals that are well adapted to hostile environmental factors at the edge of the species' range – is an important component of efforts to protect this species and its genetic diversity in other range countries.

In 2002, the Ministry of Natural Resources of the Russian Federation approved the "Strategy for Snow Leopard Conservation in Russia". This document was based on relatively limited expertise in the protection and study of snow leopards in Russia, and it laid out general principles for the species' conservation in the country over the long term. That Strategy estimated the Russian snow leopard population at approximately 150-200 animals. However, further research conducted in snow leopard habitat between 2003-2011 has shown that the true population of the species in Russia is only half as large, possibly even smaller.

As a result of that Strategy's implementation over the course of 2002-2011, the distribution and population of key Russian populations of the species residing in Altai and Tuva Republics and southern Krasnoyarsk Kray were identified. A Snow Leopard Monitoring Program in Russia (2009) was developed with support from UNDP/GEF and WWF, and modern methods such as camera-trapping and DNA analysis began to be used in the study of key snow leopard populations. Anti-poaching activities aimed primarily at fighting illegal snare-trapping in snow leopard habitat were implemented.

A series of new protected areas in snow leopard habitat was established, including Sailyugem National Park, Ukok Quiet Zone Nature Park, and Ak-Cholushpa in Altai Republic, Shuysky Nature Park in Tuva Republic, and the federal Pozarym Nature Refuge in Khakasia Republic. A series of successful projects to reduce conflicts between snow leopards and herders in western Tuva have been carried out. Small business development is underway, focusing mainly on ecotourism and rural tourism to employ local residents living in snow leopard habitat as an alternative to poaching. Collaborative efforts between Russia and Mongolia were begun to study and protect transboundary populations of the species. As a result of these and other activities, key snow leopard populations in Russia have been kept at stable levels and even increased slightly in southwestern Tuva.

The Persian leopard (_Panthera pardus saxicolor_): The Persian leopard is included in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species with the status of "threatened" (the highest category EN C2A). It was also included in the Red Data Book of the Russian Federation in 2001 as "endangered" (the top category according the Russian Red Data Book) species. The leopard is also included in Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

The Persian leopard is one of the rarest and least studied large mammal carnivores present in Russia. Having a potentially large range, a sub-species has remained on only a small portion of it. The global population of the Persian leopard is estimated at 870-1300 animals. Today the leopards can be found in Iran (550-850), Afghanistan (200-300), Turkmenistan (90-110) and single animals live in Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia and Turkey. In Russia, small and uncertain numbers of the leopard have only remained in inaccessible parts of the North Caucasus. However, the remaining population is kept up mainly by migration of the animals from northern Iran.

Conservation of big cats faces many challenges. These species have huge home ranges and require wide areas of healthy habitat which is rich in ungulates and other prey species. Past conversation experience and science have shown that protected areas alone cannot offer a viable solution for the survival of healthy big cat populations. It is crucial to ensure ecological connectivity through effective landscape management so as to avoid the negative consequences of genetic isolation and to achieve optimal population densities of big cats and their prey species. Therefore it is paramount to support the efficient management of big cat habitats, not only inside protected areas, but also outside of them in the Russian Far East, Altai-Sayan and North Caucasus, in order to ensure the survival of tigers and leopards, their prey, and the unique biodiversity of these regions.

Building on many years of experience in conservation and engagement of key stakeholders, including local communities, NGOs, and government, at the local, national, and transboundary levels, this program will scale-up successful approaches to ensure the effective long-term viability of these charismatic species and their habitats.

Key threats to big cats

Past experience and conservation science has shown that the four main threats to big cat populations in Russia are: 1) habitat loss, fragmentation and degradation; 2) poaching and wildlife trade; 3) conflicts with humans; and 4) reduction of prey population.

1. <u>Habitat loss, fragmentation and degradation.</u> Deforestation, development of infrastructure and extractive industries in the habitat of big cats result in habitat loss, fragmentation and degradation. Extensive logging activities, both legal and illegal, are among the biggest threats for the Amur tiger and the Far Eastern leopard. The degradation of these habitats is further compounded by the expansion of road networks in forests and other important habitats. Several existing and planned large development projects (mining, new pipelines and road constructions) could adversely affect populations of the Far Eastern leopard and the Snow leopard in the next 5-7 years.

2. <u>Wildlife poaching, unsustainable hunting, and illegal trade in wildlife.</u> Since the early-1990s, poaching for economic benefit has increased. This is due to: reduced law enforcement; the opening of boarders; firearms becoming more accessible; increased illegal trade in animal parts with increasing foreign and domestic demand; and reduced income for local people. Local hunters and herders are attracted by the high prices for animal parts and skins. For example, illegal snaring is the primary threat for the Snow leopard population in Altai-Sayan.

3. <u>Human-wildlife conflict.</u> Big cats often prey on domestic animals and as a result they are pursued and killed by local people (herders and livestock owners). For example, an average of 30 head of livestock and domestic animals are killed each year by the Amur tiger and the Far Eastern leopard. The majority of these fatalities are dogs but some involve cattle. Similar conflicts occur more often in the Altai-Sayan where Snow leopards attack livestock both on open pastures and in corrals. The latter can result in the killing of up-to 60 sheep and goats at once, so if a Snow leopard is trapped in a corral it is killed by the herder. In the North Caucasus, human-wildlife conflicts are not currently a major problem but are likely to increase as the population of the Persian leopard grows.

4. <u>A decrease in the amount of available prey.</u> The population size of big cats is directly linked to the amount of available prey. There should be large numbers of ungulates to support a steady population of cats, but local hunters (legal and illegal) strongly compete with big cats. For example, populations of ungulates in the Altai-Sayan and the Far East are heavily disturbed by poaching. The situation is much better in the North Caucasus, where much of the current suitable leopard habitat is already in protected areas.

Barriers to the sustainable management of big cats

In addition to the above threats, there are significant barriers preventing effective and sustainable habitat management of big cat populations. These principal barriers and planned project responses are:

1) <u>Weak legal framework and poor law enforcement.</u> Although the Russian Federation has a relatively well developed federal legal framework in the field of wildlife conservation, there are still gaps in legislation for the control of poaching, illegal wildlife trade, and degradation of endangered species habitats due to development (e.g. inadequate penalties for illegal removal and trade of wildlife, illegal logging, unsustainable mining and linear infrastructure development (e.g. pipelines construction). The effectiveness of Russia's legal system is also hindered by poor enforcement due to lack of capacity and resources. This barrier will be addressed through review and improvement of legislation, staff training and institutional capacity building. There is also a lack of legislative frameworks at level of regions to ensure proper implementation of their responsibilities for conservation of species.

2) <u>Inadequate protected area coverage and lack of effectiveness of conservation.</u> Despite considerable areas of big cat potential habitat in Russia being covered by protected areas, the most important cat populations are often not protected at all. For example, while about 24% of potential Snow leopard habitats in Russia are protected, only 16% of the habitats of actual Snow leopard populations are covered by protected areas. This barrier will be addressed through expansion of protected areas systems, capacity building and providing new technologies to improve conservation effectiveness in Protected Area Network.

3) <u>Lack of cooperation between government institutions.</u> The different authorities responsible for the protection and control of the use of wildlife do not cooperate effectively to combat wildlife trade, poaching and smuggling. This barrier will be addressed by building institutional capacity and promoting institutional reform, e.g. improving and clarifying the distribution of responsibilities and promoting information exchange.

4) <u>Lack of engagement of local and indigenous communities.</u> Local people in big cat habitats are generally poor and more interested in improving their livelihoods than conservation objectives. In many cases they are involved in poaching and illegal wildlife trade. This barrier will be addressed through education, training, conservation partnerships, and the promotion of alternative income-generating activities such as tourism and sale of non-timber forest products based on successful pilots.

5) <u>Lack of sufficient international cooperation and awareness for combating wildlife trade and the conservation of transboundary big cats populations.</u> No international agreements and programs for big cat conservation in transboundary areas exist between Russia, China, Mongolia and Kazakhstan. This barrier will be addressed through establishing specific mechanisms and agreements for improving transboundary and international cooperation.

Building on experience from previous programs

The project will aim to build on knowledge, experiences and successes in big cat conservation in the three target regions from a variety of previous programs and initiatives. This section looks at some of those practices and experiences.

WWF and other NGOs have been working since the mid-1990s with the federal and regional governments to improve the PA system, establish ecological connectivity, creation and support of anti-poaching brigades, improvement of game management, establishment of transboundary protected areas and corridors, combating illegal wildlife trade, managing human-wildlife conflict and establishment of new models of supporting local community livelihoods. A fresh commitment to action was made by the Russian Government in 2010 at the St. Petersburg Tiger Summit. Based on past experience, there have been many lessons learned, strong partnerships established and successful pilots developed that can be replicated and built upon. Some examples of the projects, lessons and partners are described below.

<u>Russian Far East</u>

Activities in the Russian Far East have allowed for the stabilization of the existing tiger and leopard populations, but this work needs to be built on and expanded with additional resources in order to increase the big cat populations in suitable habitats. This will include activities to prevent the degradation of forest resources and improve the prey base for big cats.

There are many successful projects in the region to build up on.

For example:
- More than 15 anti-poaching brigades were created, which has led to a significant decrease in the level of poaching.
- Customs services performance significantly improved due to special training programmes for customs staff and provision of handbooks. This allowed a significant decrease in the illegal wildlife trade.
- More than 3,500,000 ha of new PAs were created. This ensured a protection regime of 20% of tiger habitats and 70% of Far-eastern leopard habitats.
- The first ecological corridors were established to ensure free migration of tigers between PAs in Russia, and between Russia and China.
- Successful public campaigns on tiger and leopard conservation allowed for improvements in the attitude of local people to big cats inhabiting the ecoregion and reduced conflicts.
- New financial mechanisms to support conservation of big cats have been recently established (national funds for conservation of tigers and leopards). These are focussed on support for existing PAs.
- The project "Conserving the Forests in the Bikin Region" (funded by the German Government, 2009-2012) aims to protect forests of the Bikin region (the Amur tiger habitats) against conventional logging in the long term in order to maintain the area's biodiversity and the natural carbon stock contained in the forest biomass. This is achieved through long-term forest rent for the purpose of collecting food resources and medical plants. On top of that, future forest protection methods will continue to evolve. The Bikin forests are the only remaining virgin mixed forest landscape of that size in the Northern hemisphere. This concession also guarantees a steady income for the small populations of local indigenous populations and protects their traditional use of the forests. The project is continuing in 2013-2014 aiming to protect Korean pine broadleaf forest in all of the Amur tiger range. This project offers the potential for replication in the Far East and other habitats.

Altai-Sayan

In the Altai-Sayan there are several lessons and examples drawn from successful practices for conservation of the Snow leopard:

- More than 900,000 ha of new protected areas have been established in potential Snow leopard habitats in Russia. Currently, an assortment of protected areas covers 23% of potential Snow leopard habitat in the Russian part of the species' range. However, just 16% of known sustainable Snow leopard populations habitat in Russia falls within a protected area. Establishing Protected Areas (especially Zapovedniks and national parks) is one of the most effective ways to protect the Snow leopard populations and habitats. Protected areas deal with a whole complex of direct and indirect threats to Snow leopards (greatly reduce poaching and prevent habitat destruction and degradation due to unsustainable economic development). At least 400,000 ha more of Protected Areas should be established in Russia to establish sustainable Snow leopard populations in the Altai, Tuva and Buryatia Republics, as well as southern part of Krasnoyarsky Kray.

- Three inter-agency anti-poaching brigades were established in Altai Republic, Tuva Republic and southern part of Krasnoyarsky Kray for regular patrolling of Snow leopard habitats. Due to regular patrolling, the number of poacher's snares in two key Snow leopard habitats

(Argut River Watershed and Sayano-Shushensky Biosphere Zapovednik) decreased 3.5 times. Anti-poaching brigades can effectively eliminate poaching (especially snaring) for Snow leopards and their prey species. This practice can be replicated in Buryatia Republic and Western Tuva.

- In 2007-2008, as part of the UNDP, GEF, and WWF program, more than 70 herders in Tuva Republic were trained in the simplest means of strengthening corrals with the use of metal mesh, and more than 40 corrals were protected from Snow leopard attack on Chikhachev Ridge, Mongun-Taiga Massif, Tsagan-Shibetu and Shapshalsky Ridges. Since then, there has not been a single case of a Snow leopard gaining access to a corral in Western Tuva (prior to this 56% of all livestock killed by Snow leopards in Western Tuva died in corrals). As a result of this project, the number of Snow leopards south-western Tuva increased from 10-12 to 15-20 individuals. Corral improvement can be replicated in the Argut River Watershed of the Altai Republic, as a measure to prevent Snow leopard attacks on livestock after successful restoration of the local Snow leopard population.

- More than 70 families of local people living in the Snow leopard habitats of Altai Republic were provided with micro-loans and grants and started to develop small businesses as alternatives to poaching (WWF and Citi Foundation project). As a result of the project, the level of poaching in the Snow leopard habitats in Altai has decreased by 10-15% since 2010. In combination with anti-poaching measures, such alternative livelihood development activities can effectively address poaching and can be successfully replicated in Western Tuva, Buryatia Republic and the southern part of Krasnoyarsky Kray.

North Caucasus

Conservation activities in the North Caucasus region over the previous 10 years were focused on analysis of the current status of biodiversity, identification of conservation priorities[1] and implementation of top-priority actions. This was implemented with support from international donors such as WWF, TACIS, the Critical Ecosystems Partnership Fund and the MAVA Foundation.

There are several examples drawn from successful conservation practices in the unique ecoregion:
- Gap-analysis of existing PAs was conducted and further development of an ecologically connected network of PAs was designed.
- More than 1,000,000 ha of PAs were ecologically connected in the North-West Caucasus to protect and restore critically important habitats of wild ungulates and large predators. This includes establishment of more than 150,000 ha of new PAs to protect and connect critically important habitats in the North Caucasus.
- Special measures were taken to increase the capacity of habitats for wild ungulates and large predators. This includes creation and support of anti-poaching brigades, optimization of forestry and game management, and biotechnological measures (salt grounds, feeding spots, etc.)
- Introducing voluntary forest certification to forest estates and logging companies in the Republic of Adygea as a first step to ensure sustainable forest management and conservation of HCVF in the ecoregion.

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[1] The latest report is available at
http://wwf.panda.org/what_we_do/where_we_work/black_sea_basin/caucasus/publications/?205437/Ecoregion-Conservation-Plan-for-the-Caucasus-revised

- The Program on Restoration of the Persian Leopard was developed by a group of international experts approved by the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment and the IUCN Cat Specialists Group, and was successfully initiated.
- Key ecosystems of ecoregional importance, such as Lunnaya Polyana, Grushevy Ridge and several others, being a part of the World Heritage site, have been safeguarded while developing Olympic Construction due to successful public campaigns on nature conservation in the North Caucasus.

Baseline program

The key baseline program that will serve as a foundation for the proposed GEF project is the relevant thematic areas under the new Russian State Program "Environment Protection" for the 2012-2020 period. Its component entitled "Biodiversity of Russia" includes several thematic areas that will provide a baseline for the GEF project (including wildlife management, and conservation of rare and endangered species). In addition, the baseline for this GEF project will be composed of the national and regional budgets/investments into the network of protected areas and landscape management.

The Russian State Program "Environment Protection" for the 2012-2020 period has total funding of over $289 million over the course of 9 years. The program is coordinated by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation and by its subordinate agency Rosprirodnadzor, which is responsible for natural resource management. The main goal of the program is to preserve biodiversity and restore rare and endangered species. The chief focal areas of the program are: 1) strengthening of the legal and regulatory framework and enhancing the scientific and methodological base for biodiversity conservation; 2) enabling improved enforcement and the protection of wildlife (excluding game species and aquatic biological resources); 3) the conservation of rare and endangered species of flora and fauna and their habitats, and 4) the conservation and expansion of protected areas. The Program also aims to give access to the general public to unique sites of nature, and to increase ecological awareness amongst Russians through the development of informative programs and promoting eco-tourism in special federal protected zones.

The Russian State program "Reproduction and Use of Nature Resources" for the 2012-2020 period includes components on management and conservation of game species, and is also coordinated by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation. One of the goals of this Program is to improve management of game species in the Russian Federation.

The goals, objectives and priorities for these rare species conservation are defined in the National Strategies and Action Plans on the conservation of the Amur tiger, Far Eastern leopard, Snow leopard and the Persian leopard. The Strategies and Action Plans are complete and comprehensive documents, which, if implemented, would guarantee long-term survival of those species. Annual budgets of federal PAs amount to US$2–4 million. At the same time, all responsibilities for conservation of rare species outside the federal PAs in the Russian Federation are delegated to the regional authorities. Funding of this work is ensured by federal subventions to the regional governments. Currently these funds account around US$10,000 per subject of the Russian Federation. Regional governments as well as international programmes contribute to the above mentioned conservation budgets. However, the funds available are not enough to effectively implement the above mentioned strategies, programmes and plans.

GEF-funded alternative

The GEF-funded alternative is aimed at restoring and maintaining populations of big cats and their biodiverse habitats. The initiative funded by GEF will aim at mitigating threats and overcoming barriers

which stand in the way of sustainable wildlife and ecosystem management with special emphasis to achieve global environmental benefits in three key eco-regions of Russia: the Russian Far East, the Altai-Sayan and the North Caucasus. The proposed project has three main components: 1) Landscape level action and mainstreaming biodiversity conservation; 2) Improved management of protected areas and buffer zones with the involvement of the surrounding communities, and 3) Transboundary cooperation among the countries within the identified ecoregions.

These baseline programs will be leveraged by GEF-funded activities through multiple activities at the national and regional levels. Specifically, the baseline program strives for the amelioration of National Strategies and Action Plans on the conservation of the Amur tiger, Far Eastern leopard, Snow leopard and the Persian leopard; the creation of new and expansion of existing protected areas in the range of big cats; setting up recovery centers for recovery of orphan cubs of the tigers and leopards, conducting of genetic studies on populations of tigers and leopards in Russia; improving census and monitoring techniques for big cats and their prey species (wild ungulates); setting up a central data base for big cats; radio-collars for conflict/released tigers and photo-based monitoring; measures in the area of hunting practices and population control aimed at the restoration of wild ungulate populations in big cats habitats; increase in the efficiency of protected areas; programs aimed at increasing awareness amongst the general public about the problems associated with the conservation of big cats, increased control over illegal trafficking and trade; and international cooperation aimed at the creation of trans-boundary reserves in the ranges of the big cats. Special focus will be made on the improvement of the subventions system to ensure the capacity and funds provision for implementation of the responsibilities delegated to the regions.

The GEF increment will leverage the existing country-driven initiatives with complimentary funds to overcome critical barriers and fill gaps. While the baseline programs aim to scale up protected areas within national boundaries, the GEF increment will ensure that proper capacities are in place to meet the increasing demand, whilst giving significant attention to the conservation needs of big cat populations. Further, GEF funding will provide critical support towards long-term sustainable management through improved monitoring and increased enforcement. GEF funds will also be used to leverage private sector and other partners to increase financing and awareness to endangered big cats populations in the region. Finally, GEF funding will be instrumental in scaling national and regional initiatives to neighboring countries by increasing capacities for joint management of big cat habitats and transboundary protected area network management.

All three project components will contribute to the incremental results, namely:

1. **Landscape level action and mainstreaming biodiversity conservation** is one clear additional element that the GEF-alternative will bring to big cats conservation efforts in the country. Landscape management that increases the connectivity between well managed ecosystems is seen as an important component of strategies aimed at the preservation of biodiversity. Adopting a landscape approach to biodiversity management involves working across landscapes and political borders, which may include production areas, developed areas, and natural areas, some of which may be protected. The GEF-funded alternative will support a range of activities to put effective landscape management in place, which is not integral to the baseline program.

The conservation of big cat populations is closely associated with increased biodiversity and ecosystem health for some of the largest forest habitats on the Earth. Successful implementation of this GEF project will ensure that not only these keystone species, but also the wider biodiversity of their habitats, are under sustainable management.

2. **Improved management of protected areas and buffer zones** with the involvement of the surrounding communities as a second component of the project will result in more effective and

interconnected work and management of Pas at different level (federal, regional, local). Communities involvement will be an additional guarantee of the success, as local people involved in pilot projects on non-timber products and ecotourism and home stay programmes will participate in the conservation measures implementation as well as get new source of income to withdraw their attention from unsustainable living natural resources use to conservation of biodiversity in full scale from big cats to their prey base.

3. **Transboundary cooperation among the countries within the identified ecoregions** as the third component of the project will ensure international connectivity over the borders as well as better cooperation, relationships, experience exchange and capacity building for PA staff, authorities, stakeholders in transboundary areas of the concerned ecoregions. This will be strengthened by awareness and public involvement campaign coordinated among the ecoregions and in transboundary scale. All the above will ensure more sustainable results as well as better connection to other efforts at international scale.

Lessons and experiences from this project will be invaluable for future conservation of specific keystone species and their habitats through the establishment and sound management of protected area networks. Thus, the project will not only conserve globally significant biodiversity, but also ensure the sustainable use of globally significant biodiversity habitats, to achieve global environmental benefits.

Under the GEF funded alternative, unique landscapes and ecosystems in globally important ecoregions of Russia will be conserved, as well as globally significant biodiversity that includes big cat keystone species which rely on these healthy ecosystems to survive. Successful implementation of this GEF project will ensure delivery of key global environmental benefits (GEBs) for biodiversity, including:

- Landscape-level protection of three key ecoregions in Russia will yield conservation of globally significant biodiversity of four keystone big cat species that are near extinction;
- Mainstreamed biodiversity conservation at national, regional, and local scales of government will provide a model for sustainable management of globally significant biodiversity in some of the largest forest habitats on Earth beyond the three key ecoregions in Russia for big cat conservation;
- Transboundary cooperation will create enabling conditions for replication of landscape-level conservation of big cat habitats and mainstreamed biodiversity in relevant government planning in neighboring countries of the Russia.

Project Innovation: The proposed project will make use of the latest scientific research, conservation experience, and lessons learned from project partners and others active in this field. This includes mainstreaming new conservation technologies, such as GIS-based monitoring of big cat habitats and safeguard policies into specific private sector activities in big cat habitats. The project will also be piloting market-based certifications (Forest Stewardship Council - FSC), alternative income generation schemes for local communities (non-timber products and ecotourism) for big cat habitat conservation, introduction of fee-based schemes and payment for ecosystem services (PES) while involving local communities in conservation.

Project sustainability: The sustainability of project results is instrumental to the project design and will be realized through a three-pronged approach. First, biodiversity mainstreaming and a holistic approach to landscape conservation of key ecoregions providing big cat habitats will yield government-enforced legal frameworks and policies at the national and regional levels that aim to have lasting effect well after the project is over. Second, the establishment of projected areas will ensure key biodiversity within the three target ecoregions is conserved, providing a balanced ecosystem for keystone big cat species to survive. Lastly, by working across Russia's borders with neighboring countries, biodiversity benefits in

adjacent protected areas and joint management schemes will promote overall ecosystem health in the larger transboundary landscape.

Additionally, results of the project will help yield alternative income generation schemes to local communities (non-timber products and ecotourism), which will ensure community-level stake in the management of big cat habitats, sustainable after the project ends. Increased attention to big cat conservation through the building of partnerships with the media and private sector will also ensure that conservation of biodiversity in Russia – including the big cats – remains a high priority into the future.

Potential for scaling up: Scaling up of approaches and results from the project is integral to the design. Landscape conservation of big cat habitats in the three targeted ecoregions was selected as an approach not only because of the critical status of big cats in those regions, but also because of the likelihood for success and replication of this approach to other areas, both within and outside Russia. This not only holds true at the regional level, but also at the local level, where community-managed landscapes will be enhanced by new management tools and sharing of experience, with the aim of replicating and up-scaling to other communities by the government in the future. Lastly, measures introduced by the project for improved management of big cat habitats in the larger landscapes will not stop at Russia's borders. The focus on media and private sector partnerships and transboundary project activities all aim to replicate the lessons to be learned and experiences from this project to a larger audience, with the hope to influence big cat conservation in other parts of the world.

A.2. Stakeholders. Identify key stakeholders (including civil society organizations, indigenous people, gender groups, and others as relevant) and how they will be engaged in project preparation:

The project will share and solicit information during project preparation and execution with all relevant stakeholders, listed in a preliminary manner in the table below – including indigenous peoples and coordinated efforts with other projects – prior to Steering Committee meetings and completion of project design in order to ensure strong input and overall consistency through active engagement. Gender issues will be identified during the social safeguard screening, and appropriate mitigation measures relating to all social dimensions – as needed – will be incorporated into the full project design.

Stakeholder	Engagement/ coordination with project
Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation; Russian Federal Supervisory Service for Nature Resource Management	The governmental institutions and key national partners responsible for the coordination of various state programs. These include programs on federal protected areas and endangered species; forest and wildlife management; law enforcement and the development of environmental policies, including those that target biodiversity conservation. The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment is responsible for development and implementation of the Federal Target Program "Environmental protection 2012-2020" which consolidates all national big cats conservation efforts. This program is also responsible for developing policies and regulations on environmental protection, rare species and protected areas management as well as the monitoring of biodiversity. The Ministry will be coordinated in project implementation as a proposed co-chair of the Project Steering Committee (PSC).
Federal Forestry Service (Rosleskhoz) /Ministry of Natural	The Federal Forestry Service is managed by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation. It is a federal governmental body that controls and supervises in forests and all forestry activity (excluding forests that are

Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation	on the territory of protected areas)
	The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation remains to be the federal body that develops the legal frameworks and politics for Russian forests and forestry. In this manner, both of the governmental bodies will participate in the realization of sustainable forest-use practices by providing the appropriate legal framework (the conservation and rational use of protective forests, control over the use of firewood, etc.) and the following task of controlling and supervising all forest-related activities.
The World Bank	The WB hosts the Global Tiger Initiative (GTI) and is currently developing a multilateral programme on snow leopard conservation. It will be involved in the project development to strengthen and support coordination of proposed activities with international programmes and initiatives in this area. Specific close cooperation will be developed with the World Bank as a major stakeholder agency during project preparation through engagement with the project executing team. It is also proposed that the World Bank be associated with the Steering Committee work, the details to be determined during project design.
Regional governments of Primorsky, Khabarovsky, Krasnoyarsk and Krasnodarsky Kray, Republics of Altai, Tuva Buryatia, Adygea, North Ossetia, Dagestan	In the framework of this GEF project, regional governments of tiger/leopard regions will be engaged in the development and coordination of provincial policies and regulations, the assurance of transboundary cooperation/working groups. The authorities will be responsible for the establishment and management of regional protected areas in key habitats, the ensuring of law enforcement and sustainable habitat management across tiger and leopard landscapes as well as coordination with local communities and any indigenous populations. Regional governments are proposed members of the Project Steering Committee.
Local Protected Areas Management Units	Federal and regional protected areas in the Altai-Sayan and Far East will be engaged in the monitoring of the health and distribution of big cats populations, their prey and their habitats within the protected landscapes. They will also be monitoring and controlling infringements and enforcing and anti-poaching measures.
Russian Academy of Sciences	Russian academic institutes will be engaged in the design and implementation of a number of outputs under components 1 and 2 focusing on science-based monitoring program for big cats, prey and habitats. They will be responsible for scientific landscape-level ecosystem assessments, research-based captive breeding stations and nurseries and the economic assessment of tiger/leopard landscapes. The following institutes will take part in the project: the Institute of Ecology and Evolution of the Russian Academy of Science, the Pacific Institute of Geography (Far Eastern Branch of Russian Academy of Science), and the Institute of Biology and Soils (Far Eastern Branch of Russian Academy of Science) and others.
WWF	WWF is an important player for big cats conservation efforts in Russia and globally. It has been implementing a series of targeted projects focused on the conservation of the Amur tiger, Far Eastern leopard, Snow leopard and Persian leopard. Therefore the role of WWF in this project is two-fold: 1) acting as GEF agency, and 2) co-funding and executing some project activities.
	Within WWF, the following division of responsibilities is envisaged: World Wildlife Fund, Inc. serves as GEF Project Agency to ensure all GEF policy and safeguards are respected during preparation and implementation of the project. WWF-Russia

	will be a main co-executing agency with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, hosting the Project Management Unit. WWF-Russia also will serve as Secretary to the Project Steering Committee chaired by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment. Further details of project execution arrangements will be developed during detailed project design.
Non-Governmental Organisations	NGOs working on conservation in the target ecoregions as well as at the national and global levels will be important partners and will be involved in the project implementation, especially at the regional level.
	For example, TRAFFIC (the Wildlife Trade Monitoring Network) will be an important partner for this project, as it works at the international and national levels to ensure that trade in wild plants and animals is not a threat to the conservation of nature. TRAFFIC projects in Russia and neighboring countries are targeted at monitoring of wildlife trade markets to stop illegal trade of animals and their parts over the boarders and domestically. It is anticipated that TRAFFIC experts will be involved in illegal trade and black market monitoring and capacity building for customs officers and border check point services in the Amur and Altai-Sayan ecoregions. Likewise, the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) is studying the impact of wildfires on big cat habitats and prey in the Russian Far East, and it is anticipated to be involved in the development of project activities on big cat habitat conservation in the Amur ecoregion.
	The Russian Geographic Society: Projects of the Russian Geographical Society (RGS) serve the purpose of attracting the public's attention to important geographical and ecological issues. The RGO will be involved with the Amur tiger, Far Eastern leopard and Snow leopard programs.
Indigenous and local communities of the Russian Far East, Altai-Sayan and North Caucasus	Indigenous Peoples (IP) populations in the three key ecoregions of this proposed GEF project play an integral part in local landscape management and protection of habitats of keystone big cat species. The project is anticipated to focus its work with IP populations within the regional government administrations of Altai and Tuva Republics, and Krasnoyarsky, Khabarovsky, Primorsky and Krasnodarsky Kray within the three key ecoregions. Specifically, telengits, tabalars, shors, tuvinians-todzh in the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion, The udege and nanayts in the Amur Ecoregion, and shapsugs in North Caucasus are listed as IPs by the Russian government within the Altai, Tuva, the Krasnoyarsky, Khabarovsky, Primorsky and Krasnodarsky Krays.
	WWF Russia has a strong record of closely interacting with and addressing the concerns of the identified IPs within the key ecoregions. Consultations with IPs will be integral to the preparation of the full project. IP considerations will also be addressed as part of the social safeguard assessment and subsequent social mitigation plans (if necessary). IP populations represent critical stakeholders that must be engaged in the planning and execution of project activities at the community level.

A.3 Risks

Risk	Level	Proposed Mitigation Measures
Low level support for program objectives by government	M	It is recognized that the project cannot be achieved without support at the federal level of the Government, as well as support from

authorities due to higher priority given to socio-economic development.		regional authorities.
		The federal government will be engaged at the highest levels in order to have sufficient engagement from all relevant ministries, and will also support the engagement of regional authorities. High interest and attention from the President and Government of the Russian Federation to the necessity and needs for big cats conservation, which will ensure that the project will have necessary and significant support during implementation. For example:
		• President Putin committed at the Global Forum on Tiger Conservation in St. Petersburg (2010) to ensure tiger conservation in Russia. Since then, all necessary political support has been provided at the highest levels, and big cats conservation is being implemented under the President's patronage. Funding from the Government is also assured. In 2013, the Special Fund to Support Conservation of the Amur Tiger was established under the President's patronage.
		• The Special Programme on Conservation of the Far Eastern Leopard also is being implemented under the patronage of the Head of the President's Administration. This also ensures strong political and other necessary support for these efforts.
		• Conservation of the Persian leopard is supported by a special compensation programme from the Sochi winter Olympics. Significant attention from the President and the Government is given to this work as well.
		WWF will ensure timely information on the project needs and results to all governmentally supported structures and participate in relevant meetings, commissions, etc. The above mentioned funds and other bodies will be involved in the project as stakeholders. Project priorities and objectives will be regularly brought to the attention of top level authorities.
		New and improved legislative frameworks and ensured and strengthened law enforcement supported by this project will also mitigate risks of weak government support (see outputs of Component 1)
Communities slow or unwilling to adopt new conservation frameworks and participate in tiger/leopard protection efforts	M	Community participation and capacity building is a key element of project design to ensure long-term bottom-up support of project goals. As a non-governmental organization, WWF will play a central role to facilitating community level capacity building where government aversion is high.
		WWF has a long history of engaging local communities and has worked with regional governments on engaging local communities in protected areas and conservation. WWF's successful engagement with local communities in conservation work can be illustrated by its implementation of the community-oriented conservation and development programme in Altai-Sayan, where local people ensure conservation of snow leopard while developing ecotourism and home stay projects, non-timber product businesses, as well as wool

		and milk processing to ensure there are alternatives to income through poaching. The Land of the Snow Leopard initiative is supported by the Government of Altay Republic, and was a part of the official programme for the Year of Nature Conservation in Russia (2013) with clear benefits to local communities. In the Russian Far East, a unique project on conservation of River Bikin forests (tiger and leopard habitats) is implemented by WWF and the Udege people "Tiger" community. This community was granted a lease for 49 years covering more than 460,000 ha of forests. This is the first example of such a "conservation lease', which is also registered and approved by UNCCC JISC as the first forest JI project. WWF's long standing strong working relationships with IP communities and organizations, the project's planned public awareness and participation activities as well as the anticipated full involvement of IP and local communities in project design and implementation will ensure mitigation of this type of risk.
		The project (under Component 2) will envisage special pilot projects with local communities in the concerned ecoregions to ensure clear economic benefits from conservation-friendly small business development in contrast to potential poaching and unsustainable nature use. The results and good practices of previously implemented programmes and projects will be used as a convincing argument to build better alliances with local peoples in the project areas. Local communities that are already involved in such projects will serve as ambassadors for future project development in new areas. Awareness raising under Component 1 will also contribute.
Lack of international and transboundary collaboration.	M	In the targeted project ecoregions, special bilateral commissions on transboundary cooperation exist, covering Nature Conservation for Russia-Kazakhstan, Nature Conservation for Russia-China, and Nature Conservation for Russia-Mongolia. WWF is officially involved in the Russia-China Commission, and has participated in the work of the others. These commissions have been slow to develop their work over the past decade, but they have become more active during the past several years. They will be used as an official mechanism to mitigate the risk of weak transboundary collaboration and further strengthened to assist timely and effective decision making and consensus building for big cats conservation. The Caucasus region has a unique body – Caucasus Ecoregional Council – with equal participation of governments, academia and NGOs. The work of the this Council is facilitated by WWF, and it can serve as model for effective transbounday dialogue and coordination. The project envisages training, exchanges, study visits and other forums to stimulate and support transboundary cooperation.
		WWF has worked extensively to promote transboundary cooperation between government and non-government stakeholders in the three ecoregions concerned. It has also engaged in many

| | | international initiatives on big cat conservation and to combat illegal wildlife trade. The WWF network also has offices in neighboring and other countries where collaboration will be important. |

A.4. Coordination. Outline the coordination with other relevant GEF financed and other initiatives:

The project will be coordinated with the following GEF financed and other initiatives through the interagency Steering Committee chaired by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation, including active coordination efforts of the Russian GEF Operational Focal Point. Information about progress and cooperation will be reported to the GEF through annual project implementation reviews. At the working level, the project execution team will be responsible for setting up effective coordination efforts with partner projects through thematic task teams and regional/provincial working groups. At the official level, the project will be integrated into the work of existing interagency bodies (ministerial commissions, GTI/GTRP, transboundary working groups).

The Global Tiger Initiative (GTI), led by the World Bank and the Global Tiger Recovery Program (GTRP), was presented in 2010 at the St. Petersburg Tiger Summit and underpins efforts to help wild tigers recover and double in population by 2022. The GTRP is intended to provide the common global platform for tiger conservation in the form of an overarching and comprehensive plan to take effect across the tiger range countries. It is backed by coherent and coordinated support from international partners. The program integrates national tiger recovery priorities developed by the 13 tiger range countries and several global support programs. The proposed GEF project in Russia will contribute to fulfillment of national obligations under GTRP, and its results will be reported in this context.

The World Bank Russia Forest Fire Response project is led by the Federal Forestry Agency, and its goal is to improve the forest management system, introduce innovative approaches to forestry reform implementation and reduce the damage from forest fires in the forest estate lands and protected areas. The project will invest in federal and regional forest policies and regulations, certification methods, an adaptive forest fire management strategy, early fire detection and control systems and modern forest regeneration practices. The project will be implemented at both federal and regional levels. The World Bank was consulted regarding cooperation with the GEF project in the Russian tiger range regions (Khabarovsk Kray), and no duplication of effort is foreseen.

The WWF-led project "Conserving the virgin forests in the Bikin region" (funded by the German Government, 2009-2012). The principal objective of the project is to protect the virgin forests of the Bikin region (the Amur tiger habitats) against conventional logging in the long term, done primarily to maintain the natural carbon stock contained in the forest biomass. This is achieved through long-term forest rent for the purpose of collecting food resources and medical plants, providing a steady income for the small populations of local indigenous populations and protects the traditional use of the forests of the region. On top of that, future forest protection methods will continue to evolve. The Bikin forests are the only remaining virgin mixed forest landscape of that size in the Northern hemisphere. WWF will ensure good coordination with the project.

Programs of the Russian Academy of Sciences and the Russian Geographic Society. Three special programs are supported by the Government under the direct supervision of the President of Russia – "The Amur tiger", "The Amur leopard" and "The Snow leopard". The implementation is led by the Russian Academy of Sciences and the Russian Geographic Society. The programs support targeted

research of the big cats populations, information and awareness programs, animal monitoring and improved protection measures.

B. DESCRIPTION OF THE CONSISTENCY OF THE PROJECT WITH:

B.1 National strategies and plans or reports and assessments under relevant conventions, if applicable, i.e. NAPAs, NAPs, NBSAPs, national communications, TNAs, NCSAs, NIPs, PRSPs, NPFE, Biennial Update Reports, etc.:

In recent years, the government of the Russian Federation has demonstrated a keen interest towards the conservation of rare species, especially that of big cats. In addition to hosting the International Forum on Tiger Conservation in 2010, new national programs that aim to conserve the Amur tiger, Far Eastern leopard, Snow leopard and Persian leopard have been and are being put in place. The federal programs "Environment protection" for the 2012-2020 period and its component entitled "Biodiversity of Russia" includes several thematic areas that will provide a baseline for the GEF project (including wildlife management and conservation of rare and endangered species). In addition, the baseline for this GEF project will be composed of the national and regional budgets/investments into the network of protected areas and landscape management.

As noted in Section A, the Russian State Programs "Environment protection" and "Reproduction and use of nature resources" for the 2012-2020 period both prioritize the conservation of big cats, bio-resource management and habitat conservation.

The project endorses national priorities for the conservation of biological diversity as formulated by the principles of the National policy in the area of ecological development until the year 2030, and is in compliance with the Federal Law on Environmental Protection, the Federal Law on Fauna, the Federal Law On Specially Protected Natural Areas, regulation on the Red Data Book, the Forest Code, international conventions (CBD, CITES), and agreements on environmental protection signed by the Russian Federation. Further to this point, conservation of globally important ecosystems, species of special concern and their habitats, high nature value forests has been declared as a national priority by the National Strategy for Biodiversity Conservation. The project will contribute to implementation of the NBSAP by ensuring relevant policy improvement (legal framework provision and enforcement), and improving practices on the ground, including better environmental performance and biodiversity consideration by the spectral actors operating in the priority ecoregions. It will also involve the private sector and other stakeholders in dialogue and action on ecosystems services provision and natural capital conservation.

Many project activities, such as improvement of legislation, creation of new and support for existing PAs, communication and public awareness, are listed as priorities in national strategies and relevant action plans on conservation of the Amur tiger (2010),[2] Amur leopard,[3] the Snow leopard,[4] and the Program on Restoration of the Persian Leopard in the North Caucasus (2006).

B.2. GEF focal area and/or fund(s) strategies, eligibility criteria and priorities:

The project corresponds with the GEF Biodiversity focal area by focusing on the conservation of big cats – keystone species within the region - and their habitats. Specifically, the project is well aligned with GEF-5 BD focal area Objective 1: *Improve sustainability of Protected Area Systems* and BD Focal

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[2] http://www.wwf.ru/resources/publ/book/eng/444

3 http://www.wwf.ru/resources/publ/book/eng/35

[4] http://www.wwf.ru/resources/publ/book/eng/7

Area Objective 2: *Mainstream biodiversity conservation and sustainable use into production landscapes, seascapes, and sectors.*

Under BD Objective 1, the project aims to create additional protected areas and to improve management of those already in place in the Russia Far East, the Altai-Sayan and the Northern Caucasus. The project will create jobs for local inhabitants as well as involvement of local communities through management of the PA's. Through implementation of the "avoid-minimize-mitigate-offset" principle, pilot projects in the Russian Far East, home to the Amur tiger and the Far Eastern leopard, are aiming to prevent habitat fragmentation. In the Altai-Sayan and the North Caucasus (home to the Snow leopard and The Persian leopard), the project brings promise of sustainable land management and resolution of conflicts which arise over differing land use practices. Additionally, protected areas and their management will be linked with protected areas in neighboring countries. These project activities fall under BD Expected Outcome 1.1: *Improved management effectiveness of existing and new protected* and components one and three of the project framework.

Under BD Objective 2, the project will facilitate the development of a legal framework pertaining to usage of bio-resources on both federal and regional levels. This framework will in turn allow for the effective completion of strategies and plans aimed at the conservation of big cats. The project will also build capacity and strengthen cooperation for the national and regional levels of government to ensure proper long-term sustainability of legal frameworks. Specifically, the project will build capacity for conservation monitoring as well as anti-poaching efforts nationally and internationally to ensure the proper sustainable management of big cats habitats. These project activities fall under BD Expected Outcome 2.1: *Increase in sustainably managed landscapes and seascapes that integrate biodiversity conservation* and project components two and three of the project framework.

The project will at the same time greatly contribute to on mainstreaming biodiversity in regional planning, land use mapping, and in key production sector policies. This will be done at three levels: 1) improving policy and considering provisions for biodiversity conservation and ecosystems services provision while developing sectoral and regional programmes; 2) taking practical action, and 3) supporting bottom-up initiatives. Biodiversity conservation priorities will be addressed in sectoral strategies for forestry, agriculture, mining and oil and gas infrastructure development. Regional development programmes and associated land-use plans (based on improved mapping) will consider needs for priority landscape conservation, in particular for newly planned and established protected areas and buffer zones. Biodiversity conservation priorities will be integrated into policies of the key sectors that present threats to big cat habitats, such as mining and infrastructure development.

The project will also help in meeting specific Aichi Targets under the Convention on Biological Diversity related to the mainstreaming of biodiversity. Specifically, the project will help Russia meet Target 1: "By 2020, at the latest, people are aware of the values of biodiversity and the steps they can take to conserve and use it sustainably"; as well as Target 2: "By 2020, at the latest, biodiversity values have been integrated into national and local development and poverty reduction strategies and planning processes and are being incorporated into national accounting, as appropriate, and reporting systems". This will be accomplished through increased capacity built by the project at national and regional levels of government as well as in local communities. The project will also advance progress towards the accomplishment of Target 12: "*By 2020 the extinction of known threatened species has been prevented and their conservation status, particularly of those most in decline, has been improved and sustained.*" – by addressing the threats and barriers for conservation of keystone big cat species that are near extinction. And the project will help towards meeting Target 19: "*By 2020, knowledge, the science base and technologies relating to biodiversity, its values, functioning, status and trends, and the*

consequences of its loss, are improved, widely shared and transferred, and applied". This will be done through the increased capacity of the Russian Government to monitor and better manage big cats and their habitats. The project will implement SMART indicators to track progress toward achieving these Aichi Targets, with full Tracking Tools and other indicators to be developed during project design.

B.3 The GEF Agency's comparative advantage for implementing this project:

The comparative advantage of World Wildlife Fund Inc. as GEF Project Agency rests in the extensive experience of over 50 years of field implementation of conservation programs throughout the WWF's Global Network: supported by over 5 million members worldwide, working in 80 offices across over 100 countries, supporting around 1,300 conservation and environmental projects led by 13 Global Initiatives and WWF's programmatic pillars of Species Conservation, Forest Conservation, Climate Change and Energy, and Freshwater, as well as crossing cutting issues, especially on Social Inclusion and Sustainable Livelihoods. As a major office of the WWF Network, WWF Russia has been leader in WWF's programmatic species conservation.

For the past 18 years, WWF Russia has been implementing conservation and development programs for the conservation of big cats habitats in the Russia Far East, the Altai-Sayan and the North Caucasus, as well as globally important biodiversity, targeting keystone species - the Amur tiger, the Far Eastern leopard, the Snow leopard, and the Persian leopard. WWF Russia played a key role in the development of strategies for the conservation of the Amur tiger (2010), the Far Eastern leopard (1999), the Snow leopard (2002) and the Program on the restoration of the Persian leopard in the North Caucasus. It also participated in the hosting of the 2010 St. Petersburg Tiger Summit. WWF Russia is the largest Russian environmental nonprofit organization, with about twenty years of experience in biodiversity conservation projects in the Russian Federation and neighboring countries.

PART III: APPROVAL/ENDORSEMENT BY GEF OPERATIONAL FOCAL POINT AND GEF AGENCY

A. ENDORSEMENT OF GEF OPERATIONAL FOCAL POINT ON BEHALF OF THE GOVERNMENT:

NAME	POSITION	MINISTRY	DATE *(MM/dd/yyyy)*
Mr. Rinat. R. Gizatulin	Deputy Minister	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation	08/19/2013

B. GEF AGENCY CERTIFICATION

This request has been prepared in accordance with GEF/LDCF/SCCF/NPIF policies and procedures and meets the GEF/LDCF/SCCF/NPIF criteria for project identification and preparation.					
Agency Coordinator, Agency name	Signature	DATE	Project Contact Person	Telephone	Email Address
Herve Lefeuvre, World Wildlife Fund, Inc.		08/30/2013	Herve Lefeuvre	+3227610426	herve.lefeuvre@wwfus.org