

Caucasus Protected Areas Fund (CPAF) Delivers Borjomi Firefighting Trucks

May 12, 2009

The CPAF is pleased to report that at the end of April it delivered two fire-fighting trucks as promised to Borjomi-Kharaguali National Park (BKNP) in Georgia. The CPAF made the gift in response to fires that broke out in Borjomi gorge following Russian bombings of the area during the August war. For more background, see our press release from February 12, 2009.

The trucks were handed over at a ceremony that marked the cooperation of the international donor community in responding to the fire:

- The CPAF provided the two trucks;
- USAID provided uniforms and various other firefighting tools and, critically, a number of US National Park/Fish & Wildlife Service fire ecologists to train Georgia's rangers on use of the equipment and firefighting techniques;
- Germany's GTZ assisted with developing the training program and financed the participation of the rangers;
- Internationally recognized experts at the Global Firefighting Monitoring Center, which had been engaged by the OSCE to assess the fire damage last year, advised the CPAF on the purchase of the equipment.

From left to right, US Ambassador John Tefft, CPAF Executive Director David Morrison, Minister Giorgi Kchachidze and Ken Mabery of the US National Park Service are pictured at the ceremony below with BKNP's new trucks.

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Background on the Caucasus Protected Areas Fund:

The CPAF commenced operations in 2008 with initial sponsorship from the German government (through BMZ and KfW), WWF Germany, Conservation International and Critical Ecosystems Partnership Fund. The Caucasus is recognized by the WWF and Conservation International as the most biologically diverse region in a temperate zone in the world. The CPAF focuses on the core Caucasus countries of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, each of which obtained independence from the former Soviet Union in the early 1990s. In all three countries there is an abundance of pristine nature, and a developing system of national parks and reserves, but a severe shortage of funds for the day-to-day work of preserving it. Our mission is to meet this critical but unaddressed need: the funding of operating and maintenance costs for protected areas, such as salaries for rangers, park scientists and information officers, and costs for equipment, supplies and training.

In a region where political strife continues, this initiative represents a rare display of cooperation and dialogue among the three focus countries. In endorsing the establishment of the CPAF, each has agreed to submit proposals to increase funding for the preservation of their natural treasure . Critically, they have also agreed to provide at least 50% of the funding—assuring local “ownership”—of the programs. The CPAF will supply on an ongoing basis the balance. As a by-product, we hope to promote this nascent regional dialogue. Indeed the German government's contribution to the CPAF was made in the context of its Caucasus Initiative which encourages cross-border cooperation and contributes to conflict prevention.

The CPAF is actively seeking to broaden its donor base to enable to fulfill its promise in this vital region.

For more, visit our web-site at: www.caucasus-naturefund.org