Update on the UNEP-GEF Siberian Crane Wetland Project

11 December 2008

From 28 to 30 November 2008, the UNEP-GEF Siberian Crane Wetland Project (SCWP; http://www.scwp.info/) held its 7th Project Steering Committee Meeting in Rome, Italy, to review the progress of the project activities carried out in 2008, as well as project outputs and outcomes expected in the coming year.

The SCWP was launched in 2003 by the International Crane Foundation in collaboration with the governments of China, Iran, Kazakhstan and Russia. The project aimed to conserve an international network of wetlands of importance used by the endangered Siberian Crane in the Western/Central Asian, and East Asian flyways of the species, targeting key wetlands in the four project countries (Figure 1). The Siberian Crane was used as the ‘flagship’ for the project because of its popular appeal and cultural importance in the countries where the project was undertaken, but the project would benefit other migratory waterbirds and the wetlands that they depended on.

Overall, the SCWP has been very successful in using a threatened migratory bird species as its flagship to produce a wide range of result at improving the protection of important wetlands the site level, national level and regional level. At the site level, the SCWP has been working well to raise the awareness of hunters living around the project wetland sites, to persuade them to stop hunting by involving them in the management of the wetland and by provide alternative means of livelihood. At the national level, the lessons learnt and best practices from each of the project sites have been (or are planned to be) shared with other wetland sites in each of the participating countries. Then on the regional level, a ‘Western/Central Asian Site Network for Siberian Cranes and other waterbirds’ has been set up so that even when the SCWP ends in 2009, the sites and governments involved in this project can still continue their cooperation. So far, 10 sites from five countries have joined this network.
Participants at work during the Steering Committee meeting
Map showing the migratory route of the Siberia Crane and the project sites in Asia

-- Lew Young, Ramsar

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