

Newell, Josh (ed.). *The Russian Far East: A Reference Guide for Conservation and Development*. Daniel & Daniel, McKinleyville, CA, 2004. xx + 466 pp. Maps. Figures. Tables. Appendices. Notes. Index. \$99.95.

RESEARCHERS and analysts realize that the Russia Federation's future role in international affairs will be one of powerful, long-term consequence. Critics of 'Russian democracy' fault the diminished free press, the tight control of regional governments, a questionable human rights record, and a continued robber-baron mentality in industry. Economically, bureaucratic red tape continues to hamper efficiency, the middle class has yet to fully emerge and the environment is often sacrificed for economic gain. Despite the problems, Russia has extraordinary potential with a highly educated population and a wealth of natural resources including minerals, fossil fuels, ocean fisheries, forests and biodiversity.

In *The Russian Far East*, Josh Newell and ninety contributing authors have produced an essential reference book to understand how the Russian Far East (RFE) may develop. One motivation behind the book is a vision that future development will be accompanied by a healthy dose of conservation. Newell provides insight and offers cautious optimism on the political front. But that is not the intent of the book. The intention is to cover most, if not all, of the issues that will influence development and conservation in the RFE. And for this, they must be commended for a superb job. The text is clear, well organized and the authors represent a wide range of perspective and expertise. The facts and analysis simultaneously account for the historic influence of the Soviet era while providing up-to-date material on recent developments.

After a well-written overview, the structure of the book allows for quick reference to political subdivisions within the RFE (krais, oblasts, republics or okrugs), and then quick reference to topics within each region. Although the emphasis of these topics may vary from region to region, the pieces were written by Russian specialists in most cases and provide rare insight. Within the 'Overview' and then each chapter (i.e. region), there is a brief summary of basic facts, and then six topical sections address particular areas. Each chapter includes six sections. Section one is an ecology section that provides information on basic flora and fauna, the status of the protected area network (e.g. state forests, *zapovedniks*, national parks), followed by a summary of the 'biodiversity hotspots' that features resources of particular concern. The second section on the economy features industry and resources that create an economic foundation for the region. In addition to natural resource extraction, many areas have some industrial capability and the authors profile a region's potential as well as current activities. The third section titled 'Toward Sustainable Development' is the most optimistic section. Some authors point out the potential for sustainable development under ideal conditions, but nevertheless make a realistic assessment of current policies. Some regions lack any consideration of sustainable development, but the editor fulfils the intention of the book by both providing what does *not* exist, as well as hopeful future scenarios.

The fourth section, 'Indigenous Peoples', is atypical for this type of reference book. The RFE still hosts a wide cultural diversity along with the biological diversity associated with thinly populated regions. In several cases the

indigenous peoples have formed or joined NGOs and work through legal channels to affirm rights to land or resources. Because this information is rare, I wanted more and perhaps this section could have speculated as to how the indigenous peoples will influence regional politics. Legal issues comprise section five in each chapter and here the authors highlight some of the bigger issues to watch in local and regional politics. In several cases there are surprisingly candid statements of misbehaviour by government agencies or personnel. The final section, 'Perspective', branches off into particularly contentious topics such as the destruction of the protected natural areas system, energy development, and illegal logging practices.

*The Russian Far East* provides invaluable information to any institution, researcher, agency, NGO or individual concerned with the region. As the Russian Federation integrates into the global market place, the RFE will continue to provide raw resources to Eastern Asian countries. In the end, the RFE may irrevocably suffer from two related threats. First is an irresponsible rush to sell resources for Western currency and economic gain. While Russians may be struggling to make a living, East Asian businesses are unlikely to add any 'unnecessary' regulations. The second threat is chronic underfunding for state agencies. The agencies lack sheer numbers of personnel, equipment and/or training. Until the federal and regional authorities are able to fund agencies and enforce uniform environmental standards, development in the RFE will likely continue to be more extraction and less conservation.

*School of Forestry  
Northern Arizona University*

DAVID OSTERGREN