

THE CITY OF BIROBIDZHAN RUSSIA

Birobidzhan is located in the southern portion of the Russian Far East. It is 200 km. west of Khabarovsk, Portland's sister city. One fourth of the region is mountainous, with an incredibly diverse wild life, including Northern Jungle terrain that is home to bears, boars and the Siberian tiger. Similarities are the existence of light industry, including clothing, shoes, furniture, agricultural packaging, lumber, marble and brucite, and an aluminum ore. There are plans for developing high technology and tourism industries in the future. Population is 80,000. Birobidzhan is the capital of the Jewish Autonomous Region. Birobidzhan, Russia was signed as the fourth Sister City of Beaverton in 1990.⁶



Railway Station in Birobidzhan

BIROBIDZHAN AND SUSTAINABILITY

How has your city officially defined “sustainability” or created a resolution to protect the environment, economy and society?

Sustainable development is a very relevant and important focus for Birobidzhan city managers.

Developing strategies for conserving the environment is important to all citizens as it is it contributes to the population's health, establishment of environmental and recreational attractions, and influences the unique image of the territory. We try to do everything possible to preserve the environment and maintain ecological balance in our city .

The city of Birobidzhan has preserved much of the natural sites (forests, grasslands, marshes) and has supplemented with artificial greenery and stagnant water. The city is surrounded by a unique forest, meadow and wetland of ecological systems and is in close proximity to reserve "Bastak, located on the territory of the Jewish Autonomous Region.

How does your city take care of recycling, garbage collection, water provision or parks?

The city has established mechanisms for collecting, removal and disposal of garbage, the city provides water and maintenance of park areas, disposing of waste paper.

⁶ Information and photos from the Beaverton Sister Cities' Website: www.beavertonoregon.gov/departments/sistercities/cities/Birobidzhan and Birobidzhan City's Website: eao.ru

The City of Birobidzhan preserved much of the local natural area (forests, grasslands, marshes), supplemented with artificial greenery and managed water. In addition, the city is surrounded by a unique forest, meadow and wetland ecological systems and is in close proximity to the reserve "Bastak", located on the territory of the Jewish Autonomous Region.



Many factors that affect air and water pollution, urban soil and vegetation have influenced the city's environment. Air quality analysis conducted on the local

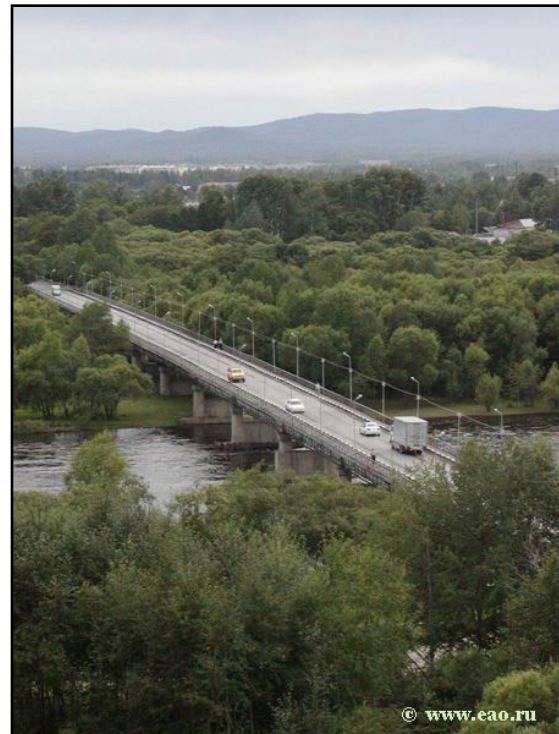
stationary post Gidrometeobyuro found concentrations of basic and specific contaminants, but the annual total of approximately 5000 samples, were consistent with safe levels. A number of regulatory systems serve to support Birobidzhan's greenery, which increases the standard of living and ecological conditions of the urban environment.

The city of Birobidzhan has preserved much of the natural forests, grasslands and marshes. The city is surrounded by a unique forest, meadow and wetland of ecological systems.

Birobidzhan is a city with ample green areas, with two and a half times more green space than average cities of its size.

The green framework of the city consists of parks, gardens, green areas of residential and industrial areas, embankments, squares and protective zones.

The arboretum park is a special feature of the preserved areas where there are large volumes of natural stands and about 50 species of rare plants. The city is aware of uneven greening of the city in the regeneration of old and new plantings, and is currently working in collaboration with scientists on a series of effective measures for the restoration of these urban forests.



What are your city's goals supporting the notion of sustainability?

- Fire Prevention—Forest and peat fires cause the greatest damage to vegetation. The fire season begins in early spring and ends in late autumn. Therefore, timely assessment of fire risk, prevention and elimination of fire is one of the

Forest and peat fires are one of the city's biggest challenges.

most significant environmental challenges for the city of Birobidzhan and the region as a whole, which we have to solve.

- Water Preservation—The Bira and Ikura Rivers are water bodies of the city. Water protection zones preserve water quality and floodplain vegetation on river.
- Prevention of Summer Floods— Greater environmental and economic problem for the city are summer floods, which during the long rains lead to flooding and inundation of floodplain and pripoymennyyh river sections. Birobidzhan built a dike and outlet channel to prevent this threat to the Bireh and Ikure rivers.
- In the future the city plans to renovate the green areas, to solve the problem of recycling and improve the urban forest. After these activities we hope to bring the quality of water, air and soil to environmental higher standards, multiply the forest plantations and improve the ecological safety of the inhabitants of Birobidzhan.

What activities are in place?

The Jewish Autonomous Regional government established an Interministerial Environmental Council, which consists of representatives from various environmental organizations. The main activities of the Council is to analyze the environmental and natural resource management, development of concerted action aimed at improving the effectiveness of ongoing environmental activities, and to implement environmental control.

Birobidzhan has held regional conferences and meetings focusing on environmental education on topics such as poaching and illegal felling of timber, etc.

Birobidzhan city administration partners with scientific research institutes, secondary and tertiary educational institutions, public and environmental organizations to help solve environmental issues. Thus, ecological studies at the Institute of Complex Analysis of Regional Problems (IKARP) FED RAS were conducted to determine the status of urban soils and vegetation and the stability of the city watercourses to anthropogenic stress, and cultivate new species dendroflora; Science teams have created maps of atmospheric pollution, developed criteria and programs for integrated environmental assessment of the territory, and its fire hazards.

What challenges have you faced?

The greatest damage to vegetation is caused by forest and peat fires. The fire season begins in early spring and ends in late autumn. Therefore, timely assessment of fire risk, prevention and elimination of fire is one of the most significant environmental challenges for the city of Birobidzhan and the region as a whole.

Which businesses and organizations are promoting sustainability within your city?

An environmentally-oriented business in the city district is aimed at reducing the impact on the environment and promoting measures to improve the ecological situation in the city. A number of Birobidzhan entrepreneurs are also working on the collection and transportation of

disposal of mercury-containing wastes and the development of environmental regulations for businesses, organizations and individual entrepreneurs.

Non-governmental organizations (neighborhood councils, street and yard committees, the regional branch of the party "United Russia" youth organization "Young Guard") aimed at improving the ecological condition of the city actively participate in a variety of activities, such as the "Clean City" Project, clearing the river banks, greening vacant lots and parks, the elimination of landfills and landscaping.

The Reserve Bastak "squad" Golden Eagle ", an environmental organization, has been actively involved in environmental education in school environmental competitions and projects to create environmental trails and environmental landings, clearing municipal waste from the city, and develop and implement environmental projects. For example, an inter-regional environmental actions currently being implemented is "Year of the Tiger - 2010", aimed at preserving the Amur tiger and its habitat, "Days of Amur", aimed at sensitizing the general public to environmental problems of the Amur River and its watershed); and the annual action "Parks and Reserves March," aimed at supporting the protected areas. ⁷

⁷ For a list of businesses and organizations that support sustainability in Birobidzhan, see Appendix 1.2