



Armenia Tree Project

GREENING ARMENIA SINCE 1994

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May 25, 2005

His Excellency Mr. Robert Kocharyan
The President
Republic of Armenia

Your Excellency:

We are writing to request that you seek an alternative to the proposed route for the north-south highway through the Shikahogh forest reserve. We make this urgent appeal for Armenians in the homeland and in the Diaspora because this reserve is a national treasure which we all bear the responsibility for maintaining. The damage to its ecological integrity due to the proposed road will be permanent and irreversible.

The Shikahogh forest reserve provides unique habitats for many rare and endangered plants and animals whose survival depends upon the Government's responsible stewardship. We call on you to protect this reserve for the sake of future generations of Armenians and the world's eco-system.

The construction of the proposed road through the preserve will introduce pollution from passing vehicles into this almost pristine forest, destroy the habitat for rare wildlife and migratory paths, and attract illegal logging, depriving future generations of Armenians of an irreplaceable resource. The encroachment by illegal loggers has already destroyed much of Armenia's forests during the past decade.

In addition to the ecological devastation that will be visited upon the preserve, the reputation of the Armenian government will be harmed as well. The national and international communities will perceive the Armenian government as having no respect for its own environmental laws or the international conventions and treaties it has ratified. Moreover, if Armenia does not demonstrate responsible management of its natural and historical heritage, it weakens its ability to protect Armenia from the impact of destructive policies in neighboring countries.

Any gains that may be realized by building this road through the preserve will be far outweighed by the long-term environmental and political damage that Armenia will suffer. We most urgently ask you to consider an alternative route. We are prepared to work with you to find alternatives that will serve the nation and the environment better.

Sincerely,

Carolyn Mugar