

# Fort Ross Dialogue

Dialogue is essential to all endeavors, and it is critically important during periods of uncertainty and adversity. Established by Fort Ross Conservancy in 2012, Fort Ross Dialogue is a one-day conference held each year in the California Bay Area with the goal of creating a “second track” for trans-Pacific relations. Each year we bring together young scholars, entrepreneurs, thought leaders, and rising regional leaders on both sides of the Pacific with the goal of helping to place US-Russian relations on a more positive footing.

We believe this much-needed initiative is critical in today’s environment. While governmental representatives are invited to participate, second track focuses on engagement of business, academics, NGOs, and others outside government. These conversations can generate new, creative ideas to be implemented by government and society. Additionally, they can reinforce the upswings and mitigate the downswings in the US-Russia relationship.

## *Why Fort Ross?*

The history between the U.S. and Russia has been long, complicated, and predominantly peaceful, and yet it’s a relationship that has profoundly shaped world events. Since the end of the Cold War, relations have been oriented primarily towards the geopolitics of the Atlantic. Fort Ross, however, is a reminder that the U.S. and Russia are both Pacific powers and that some of their earliest encounters were on the California coastline between traders and businessmen.

In 1812 Russian explorers settled at Fort Ross, just 80 miles north of San Francisco. They came to this beautiful stretch of the Sonoma coastline to hunt marine mammals, grow food for their Alaskan outposts, and to explore and document a new and exciting environment. For decades the



Russian colony lived in relative harmony with the native Kashia Pomo tribe, and a robust trade developed with the Spaniards and Mexicans in current day San Francisco.

In 2016, 204 years later, Fort Ross is still regarded by both Russia and the United States as a positive example of international cooperation. Today, Fort Ross is a national historic landmark, and an important piece of the shared history for Russians, Americans, and Russian Americans, as well as Alaska Natives and Kashia Pomo Indians. Through cultural events, archeological study, research, and preservation efforts, Fort Ross has become a hub for the Russian-American community and a destination for visitors from all over the world.

In recent years, both U.S. and Russian companies have collaborated to support Fort Ross State Historic Park, and our efforts have brought Fort Ross international attention as a symbol of cooperation. Fort Ross’s unique history and mutually positive symbolism demonstrate the significance of people-to-people interactions that take place at a distance from each country’s respective capital.

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## Fort Ross Dialogue Programming

### U.S.- Russia Shared Cultural Heritage

The United States has several historic and cultural sites that are important to Russians and Russian – American history, and many of these sites are located along the Pacific Rim. Fort Ross State Historic Park is a prime example, as is Fort Elizabeth on Kauai, Hawaii, and the Chkalov Museum in Fort Vancouver, Seattle, Washington. Fort Ross Dialogue panels explore how these cultural and historical sites can build common ground and foster opportunities for cultural, historical, and educational exchanges at these sites to promote productive interactions between Americans and Russians.

### Next-Generation U.S.-Russia Relations

In partnership with the Kennan Institute and the Stanford-US Russia Forum, we invite a diverse group of high-achieving Russian and American university students to participate in Fort Ross Dialogue and the events leading up to the Dialogue. Topics are chosen to reflect next-generation priorities facing Russian and American youth leaders, with questions such as:

- Are there shared US and Russian goals for the future of the Pacific region and the wider world?
- How do Americans and Russians perceive China's rise and the future of US-Russia-China relations?
- What are the major shared challenges for Russians and Americans in this region, and are we cooperating effectively to address them?
- How can individuals and organizations remain connected despite the current deep divide in political relations between Moscow and Washington?
- What does the unique history and legacy of Fort Ross mean to the rising generation of Russians and Americans?

To see a list of dignitaries, speakers, and topics covered in prior years, please see [www.fortross.org/dialogue.htm](http://www.fortross.org/dialogue.htm)



Flying in space over two hundred miles away from you

### Message from International Space Station

*“Flying in space over two hundred miles away from you we are sending our best regards to all participants of the Fort Ross Russia-US Dialogue and Conference taking place these days on the California’s northern coast. For as many as two hundred years Fort Ross reminds us of how vast US-Russia historic opportunities could be when we act in concert towards a common goal. The international space station is a stark case in point. We wish you a successful event.”*

## Fort Ross Dialogue Sponsors

Fort Ross Dialogue is supported by both US and Russian businesses – businesses that believe honest conversations about international cooperation lead to a more stable world. For the last five years, this initiative has been generously funded by Chevron, Transneft, and Sovcomflot. FRC is expanding its outreach to engage additional U.S. companies who support these goals. Please join us by sponsoring and participating in this important global conversation.

For more information please email Sarah Sweedler, Fort Ross Conservancy CEO, at [sarahs@fortross.org](mailto:sarahs@fortross.org).