

Saving Russia's Far Eastern Taiga:
Deforestation, Protected Areas, and Forests 'Hotspots'

Josh Newell
Siberia Hotspot Program
Friends of the Earth – Japan

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements
About the Contributors
Useful Terms

Introduction

Part I: Overview

- I. Forests of Russia
- II. Forests of the Russian Far East (RFE)
- III. Importance of Protecting RFE Forests
- IV. Major Causes of Deforestation
- V. Protected Area System of Russia
- VI. An Analysis of the Protected Area System of the RFE
- VII. Conserving Forests: The RFE Biodiversity Hotspot Study
- VIII. Recommendations
- IX. Concluding Remarks
- X. References/Bibliography

Part II: Region by Region Studies: Protected Areas and Forest Hotspots

- I. Introduction to the Regional Studies
- II. Primorskiy Region
- III. Khabarovsk Region
- IV. Sakhalin Island
- V. Amur Region
- VI. Jewish Autonomous Region
- VII. Kamchatka Region
- VIII. Koryakia Region
- IX. Republic of Sakha
- X. Magadan and Chukotka Regions

Appendixes

Endangered Species in the Russian Far East

Acknowledgements

The report represents the efforts of a great many people.

Thanks to the Russian scientists, NGO representatives, and government officials who prepared the regional sections on protected areas and forest hotspots. In total, more than 60 Russian specialists have written sections which appear in this report. Much of this research is fresh and until now has never been published in either English or Japanese. Some of the material on protected areas has still to be published in Russian.

Rick Fox traveled to the Republic of Sakha to gather information on the region's forests and primary causes of deforestation. He also translated a number of the 'forest hotspots sections' including the Primorye, Jewish Autonomous, Sakhalin, Kamchatka, and Amur regions. Emma Wilson gathered information on the state of Kamchatka's forests and major threats to their conservation, while I traveled through the Sakhalin, Khabarovsk, and Primorye regions.

Government officials from regional forest services, from committees of Ecology, from natural resource use divisions, and other government agencies devoted precious time to assist the project researchers (Josh Newell, Rick Fox, and Emma Wilson) in getting a much clearer picture of state of RFE forests, the protected area system, and future actions needed to conserve the forests and biodiversity of the region. A big thank you also goes out to the numerous academic and NGO colleagues who spent their time with us to increase our understanding of these issues.

This report also depended on a number of able translators who worked under tight deadlines to get the material ready. They include Serge Glushkov at the University of California at Berkeley, Misha Blinnikov at the University of Oregon, Rick Fox in Vladivostok, Pat Ormsby in Tokyo, and Oleg Svistunov at Friends of the Earth-Japan.

Finally, we express our appreciation to staff at the Global Environmental Forum and the working group on forests who provided valuable input to the report in its draft stages.

-Josh Newell

USEFUL TERMS

Siberia The term stems from the Tartar word *sibir* or sleeping land. To foreigners, the name usually refers to the vast stretch of Russia from the Ural Mountains in the west to the Pacific seacoast in the east. Russians, however, generally consider Siberia's eastern edge to be a series of mountain ranges stretching from western Chita Oblast northward through western Yakutia to the Arctic Ocean. Beyond that lies what Russians call *Dalniy vostok*, the Far East.

Russian Far East Geographers disagree on the exact boundaries of the Russian Far East. Some limit the region to areas affected by the monsoon climate and the Pacific Ocean, i.e., Primorskiy, Khabarovsk, Amur, Sakhalin, Magadan, Chukotka, and Kamchatka. Others, defining the RFE according to economic ties with the Pacific Rim, include the Republic of Yakutia and Chita Oblast. For this study, we have chosen to base our definition on areas that have strong economic ties to the Pacific Rim; therefore, we have included Yakutia, but not Chita Oblast.

Krai, Oblast, Republic, Okrug Administrative divisions of the Russian Federation, similar to states in the U.S.

A **republic** (such as the Republic of Yakutia) has, however, more autonomy from Moscow and greater leeway in paying taxes and fees to the capital. Republics are usually set up in regions that have a significant non-Russian indigenous population. All **krais** and **oblasts** technically have the same status with respect to the federal government, but, in practice, some regions have more autonomy from Moscow than do others. Primorskiy and Khabarovsk, for example, are strongly aligned with the Pacific Rim as a result of economic ties; these relationships, coupled with the two regions' great geographical distance from Moscow and the relatively maverick outlook of their governors, have at times caused them to behave completely independently of or even contrary to federal directives.

Okrugs are administrative subdivisions within *oblasts* which are set up specifically for indigenous peoples and generally fall under the jurisdiction of the *oblast*. However, some are relatively free from oblast administration. For example, Chukotka Autonomous Okrug, in part because of its remoteness from the region capital, is quickly developing economic ties with Alaska (importing fuel, food, and other essential supplies), and becoming less influenced by Magadan Oblast politically and economically.

Raion or Rayon Administrative subregion of a krai, oblast, republic, or okrug. Translated in this study as district, raion is also sometimes translated as county. There are about 25 raions in Primorskiy Krai, fewer in other regions.

Protected Areas

Zapovednik A strictly protected nature reserve protected on the federal level. All forms of commercial activity are prohibited. Human activity is restricted to scientific research and monitoring. Some *zapovedniks* have small recreation zones. *Zapovedniks* are established to protect representative areas of a particular landscape or bioregion.

Zakaznik An area set aside for the preservation of smaller ecosystems and/or individual species. Zakazniks may be protected on the federal or regional level. Restrictions on commercial activities are sometimes only in effect during certain seasons. Categories of Zakaznik include zoological, botanical, landscape, geological, and others. Many zakazniks have been established in order to regulate commercial hunting so that viable wildlife populations may be maintained.

National park (*natsionalniy park*) A federally protected territory in which small-scale educational, recreational, and cultural activity as well as scientific research are allowed; usually split into zones of varied status (strictly protected zones for scientific research, special protection zones, recreation zones, agricultural zones, etc.). Many national parks are adjacent to or near *zapovedniks*.

Natural monument (*pamyatnik prirody*) Protects a single, small landscape feature, e.g., caves, a forest, lake, waterfall, etc. Usually between 100 and 500 ha. Commercial activity is prohibited by law on the territory.

Territory of traditional nature use (TTPs, from the Russian *territoriya traditsional' nogo prirodopol' zovaniya*) Territories set aside for traditional subsistence activities of indigenous peoples.

Russian Red Book The Russian variant of the book by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) listing rare and endangered species of flora and fauna. There are both national and regional Red Data books in Russia, and the criteria are similar to those used for compiling the IUCN books. Unlike in the U.S., the listing of a species in the Red Data books guarantees it no legal protection; this listing can be influential, however, in determining where to create a protected area.

Government Agencies

Committee of Nature Protection and Natural Resource Use (formerly *Minpriroda*)

Regional Committee of Ecology (*Goskompriroda*), or Regional Committee of Nature Protection and Natural Resource Use; answerable to federal Committee of Nature Protection and Natural Resource Use in Moscow

Federal Forest Service (*Federalnaya sluzhba lesnogo khozyaistva*)

Regional Forest Service (*Upravlenie lesami*)

Leskhoz A district (*raion*)-level forest service; administered by the Regional Forest Service.

Lesnichestvo Forest service unit; a subdivision of a *leskhoz*.

Commercial entities

Gospromkhoz (GPX) Generic term for locally-based joint-stock corporations (formerly state-run companies) that process natural resources. There are various *gospromkhoz*y, including *lespromkhoz*y (timber), *mekhpromkhoz*y (fur), *zverpromkhoz*y (game), *rybpromkhoz*y (fish), and others.

Lespromkhoz (LPX) Local logging enterprise. Some have remain state-owned; others have privatized into joint-stock companies.

Roslesprom Nationwide conglomerate of *lespromkhoz*y that, although not a governmental agency, has become the de facto successor to *Minlesprom*.

Dallesprom A regional timber conglomerate in *Khabarovsk* and *Primorskiy Krai*s which, while much smaller than *Roslesprom*, is highly influential in regional politics as timber is one of the RFE's economic mainstays.

AO (*aktsionernaya obschestvo*) Joint-stock (publicly owned) corporation

JV (*sovmestnoe predpriyatie*) Joint venture (with international partners)

Measurements

The metric system has been used throughout this study.

1 hectare (ha.) = 2.5 acres

1 kilometer (km.) = .6 miles

1 square kilometer (sq. km.) = .4 square miles

1 cubic meter (cu. m.) = Approximately 200 board feet

Forestry Terms

Annual Allowable Cut (AAC) The amount of forest that can be cut in a region without overlogging; determined by each region's Forest Inventory Agency.

Bonitet A quality of forest productivity measured on a scale of I-V (I being the highest); *bonitet* is measured by the height trees reach after a specific number of years. It is only an estimate, and figures can easily be manipulated to suit bureaucratic needs or policy priorities.

Broadleaved Deciduous (in Russia, this includes birch, aspen, poplar, oak, ash, alder, willow, etc.)
Forest classification The Russian Forest Service classifies forests by ecological importance using three categories: Group I (highest); Group II; or Group III to indicate allowable land-use in these forests.

Lesistost' Percentage of a given territory covered by forest.