Combating Illegal Logging in Russia:
Case study of Primorsky Region

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Primorsky region: 2000

Objectives:
• Push regional and federal authorities to take some steps and not only ‘be aware’ of illegal logging
• G8-related political work
Primorsky region: 2000

Initial information/knowledge of NGOs:
• amount of logging and wood export
• estimates of how much is illegal
• means of illegal export
• illegal logging ‘technology’
• problem areas and wood transportation routes
• general public and government awareness of the problem especially regarding high-value tree species
7 of July 2000
Head of Nature Resource Committee of the Primorsky regional Administration Mr. Stomatyuk:

“There are no problems with illegal logging in the region. Less then 1% of total amount is logged illegally…”

10 of July 2000
Primorsky nature protecting prosecutor’s office has finished special investigation on legality of logging operations in the region. As a result prosecutor’s office ordered Prymorsky regional forestry department to suspend about 80% of forest lease agreements and stop all logging permissions for these companies.

The Russian Far East
Results:

• direct request for information from the Ministry of Interior and the Federal Forest Service and the FSB (KGB)

• 4 governors of other regions stated that they will start investigations of illegal logging in their regions

• Primorsky region Prosecutor’s office decision

• Primorsky regional authorities speed up the creation of special body for licensing export operations

• changes in the Federal Crime Code
Scale of illegal logging and the position of Russian authorities

…A barbarian destruction of valuable tree species growing stock is what actually taking place in the region. While annual logging limit for the region remains at 260 thousand cubic meters, 930 thousand cubic meters of valuable species timber have already been licensed for export. ..

(From the letter signed by the Governor of the Prymorsky Kray to the head of Russian Government. Letter was dated 7 June 1999 #11-43/1704)

…On October 6 there was an ordinary session of the Inter-agency Committee for Concerted Action to Monitor Exports of Valuable Timber...

None of the submitted applications for export licenses for ash-tree and oak was approved. ..

In the six months of 2000 the Committee considered 55 applications for exports of 108,000 cubic meters of ash-tree and 104,000 cubic meters of oak, whereas authorization was given for the export of only 56,000 cubic meters of ash and 67,000 cubic meters of oak, which implies that almost half the timber was logged illegally.

(Extract of the article based on the official press release of the Inter-agency Committee. Published in the newspaper Zolotoy Rog, 10.10.2000, #78)