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Guidelines for the Conservation of Biodiversity during the wood procurement in Volgograd region

Guidelines for the allocation and conservation of forests of a great social and cultural significance

Unified guidance to identify high conservation values. HCV Resource Network

Allowable annual cut as the main enemy of a forester (A. Yaroshenko, Greenpeace Russia)

Prospects for adoption of serious measures aimed at the development of forestry are largely dependent on how quickly the awareness of the fact that economically valuable forests in the country are exhausted to the limit, will be transferred to the federal government. The major obstacle to this is the phenomenon of allowable annual cut, which is the administrative value calculated by hardly modified old German formula that shows what amount of the forest that can be cut down within the forest area, region or country.

Now allowable annual cut across the Russian Federation is about 700 million m³. In 2013 the recorded volume of timber in the country amounted to 193 million m³. According to the forecast of development of the Russian forest sector until 2030 the volume of authorized logging will catch up with the allowable annual cut only in the third quarter of the XXI century. And this is one of the most indiscreet forecasts of the Russian forest sector ...

According to the order of the Federal Forestry Agency allowable annual cut determines the allowable annual removal of wood in the operational and protective forests, providing a multi-purpose, efficient, continuous and sustainable use of forests, based on biodiversity conservation, water protection and other useful properties of forests. This leads to a misinterpretation even on the level of state authorities.

Thus, the allowable annual cut is perceived by Russian officials as a reasonable rate of sustainable forest exploitation. Allowable annual cut across Russia is now about 700 million m³, which exceeds 3.5 times the volume of actual cutting and is greater than any anticipated need for wood for the next few decades. For most decision-makers, this means that there is plenty of forest to use in the county.

But in the reality allowable annual cut does not necessarily mean sustainable forest management - additional studies are required to confirm the sustainability. And beside the fact that the formulas for allowable annual cut calculation are obsolete now, they also were elaborated in Germany where wood of any quality was in demand and it was easily accessible. On the contrary, in Russia many relatively productive and economically valuable forests are difficult to access or are not available at all.

As we can see today allowable annual cut is purely an administrative value and is very far from reality. It does not reflect the possibilities of long-term timber harvesting in the most valuable forests, especially in the taiga zone. In fact, allowable annual cut performs now only a fiscal function, because it determines the initial amount of rent. Although this function is also performed poorly and in many cases the fee had to be additionally adjusted to the contract.

What do we know about ecological forest maturity? (N. Debkov, National Research Tomsk State University)

Recently the number of attempts to lower the age of felling for the most valuable trees increased significantly. The idea of organizing the so-called targeted farms, where it is planned to reduce the cutting age 80-100 to 40 years is not new anymore. The main idea is to cut the tree taking into account its diameter and not the age, which contradicts with common sense because the plantation has not yet reached a maximum gain of biomass. Overall this principle is at variance with the principle of sustainable forest management.

There are few ways to calculate forest maturity: technical maturity, quantitative maturity, economic maturity, ecological maturity, water protection maturity, etc. A group of scientists from Belorussia worked on the concept of ecological forest maturity. According to them environmental maturity occurs when maximizes environmental efficiency of a long-term forest management. To simplify the calculation they decided that the main function of the protection forests was the carbon sequestration, what contradicts with the principles of multipurpose forest management.

Ecological maturity is characterized by the maximum average productivity of forests, which is expressed in terms of maximum average growth. Therefore it is merely a quantitative maturity, which is defined for a certain forest section. In their study the authors took as the basis the theory of normal forests and calculated the optimal age structure. Overall the concept lacks innovation and it would be more reasonable to call it the maturity of a normal forest or a carbon sequestration maturity. Moreover the adaptation of this concept for Russian forests might lead to detrimental effects for the forest environment.

The results of the verification of WWF rating of state forest management in the regions of Russian Federation (R. Verin, Ltd “NEPcon”, N. Smatkov, Russian office of WWF)

Since 2010 Russian office of WWF, National Rating Agency and Federal Forestry Agency have been carrying out a rating of state forest management in the regions of Russian Federation. It takes into account a wide range of ecological, social and economic indicators and is based on 37 basic and 15 additional criteria. Information used for this rating was found in open sources such as internet sites of regional authorities responsible for forest management, also in this analysis were used the results of the survey among state authorities in Russian regions. The rating is not only aimed at assessing the activities of forest management. Another important goal is to inform the public about the problem of distortion and incomplete collection of information about forests. In this regard it was decided to conduct an independent verification of the data provided for this rating. Verification was conducted in the five regions of the North-West Federal District. The main task was to analyze the data provided by regional authorities especially in a sense of its compliance with publicly available information, expert opinions and the actual state of forestry in the regions.

The verification included the analysis of data on provided by Russian regions, the comparison of quantitative and qualitative information, consultations with the representatives of public authorities and with independent experts.

The verification proved that the status of the rating should be raised to ensure that surveys are completed at the level of state and regional authorities. It is also clear now that some indicators used in the rating should be changed, reformulated or even excluded, because some of them like the volume of illegal cutting for example don't show the real situation. It is recommended to develop and to publish the database for regional forest information, which will ensure better transparency of data for other interested parties. As well it is necessary that other parties concerned such as nongovernmental organizations, research centres and independent experts provided the information and participated in its assessment.

Assessment of the attitude and motivation of forest industry companies toward forest certification in northwest Russia (M. Trishkin, E. Lopatin, T. Karjalainen, University of Eastern Finland)

The study explores for the first time the attitudes and motivation associated with forest certification among forest industry companies in northwestern Russia. Interviews were carried out in the form of a structured questionnaire including 35 forest industry companies operating in northwestern Russia. Although development of certification in individual companies was initiated by general market demand, representatives of certified companies also emphasized the importance of internal corporate policy. Certified and noncertified groups of respondents identified market demand as a main driving force influencing development of forest certification. Ensuring the legality of wood origin, company's image and competitiveness of wood products were recognized as the most important benefits associated with forest certification. Absence of mandatory requirements from authorities and customers appeared to be the largest obstacle among both groups of respondents. Representatives of noncertified companies pointed out economic inaccessibility and low level of preparedness of management as of high importance, which is mainly associated with absence of quality management system. The results of the study indicated a general positive attitude on forest certification; it was noticed that respondents have gaps in understanding the principles and limited awareness with regards to forest certification, especially among noncertified forest industry companies.

(www.tanfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/02827581.2014.896938)

WWF manuals in Saratov State Vavilov Agrarian University (D. Eskov, S. Kabanov, N. Kitsaeva, Saratov State Vavilov Agrarian University)

Together with the reformation of forest industry there are great changes in forest education in Russia. A lot of highly qualified professionals with an understanding of sustainable forest management are needed. WWF on its part supports the development of education in this sphere in many different ways.

Apart from preparing the manual and the program for the discipline Sustainable forest management and the manual Forest certification, WWF organized workshops for students and teachers involved in the process of forest education, including the workshop about international experience of sustainable forest management in Finland.

Saratov State Vavilov Agrarian University is one of the universities that successfully introduce the discipline Sustainable forest management into their curriculum. To promote the principles of sustainable forestry it organizes competitions of different kind for university students and also collaborates very closely with schools and school forestry units. Students themselves organize workshops for school pupils, work on the projects of ecological paths and voluntarily participate in the groups that monitor forests for fire protection. With the support from WWF, Saratov State Vavilov Agrarian University will continue to prepare new ecologically conscious professionals for the forest industry.