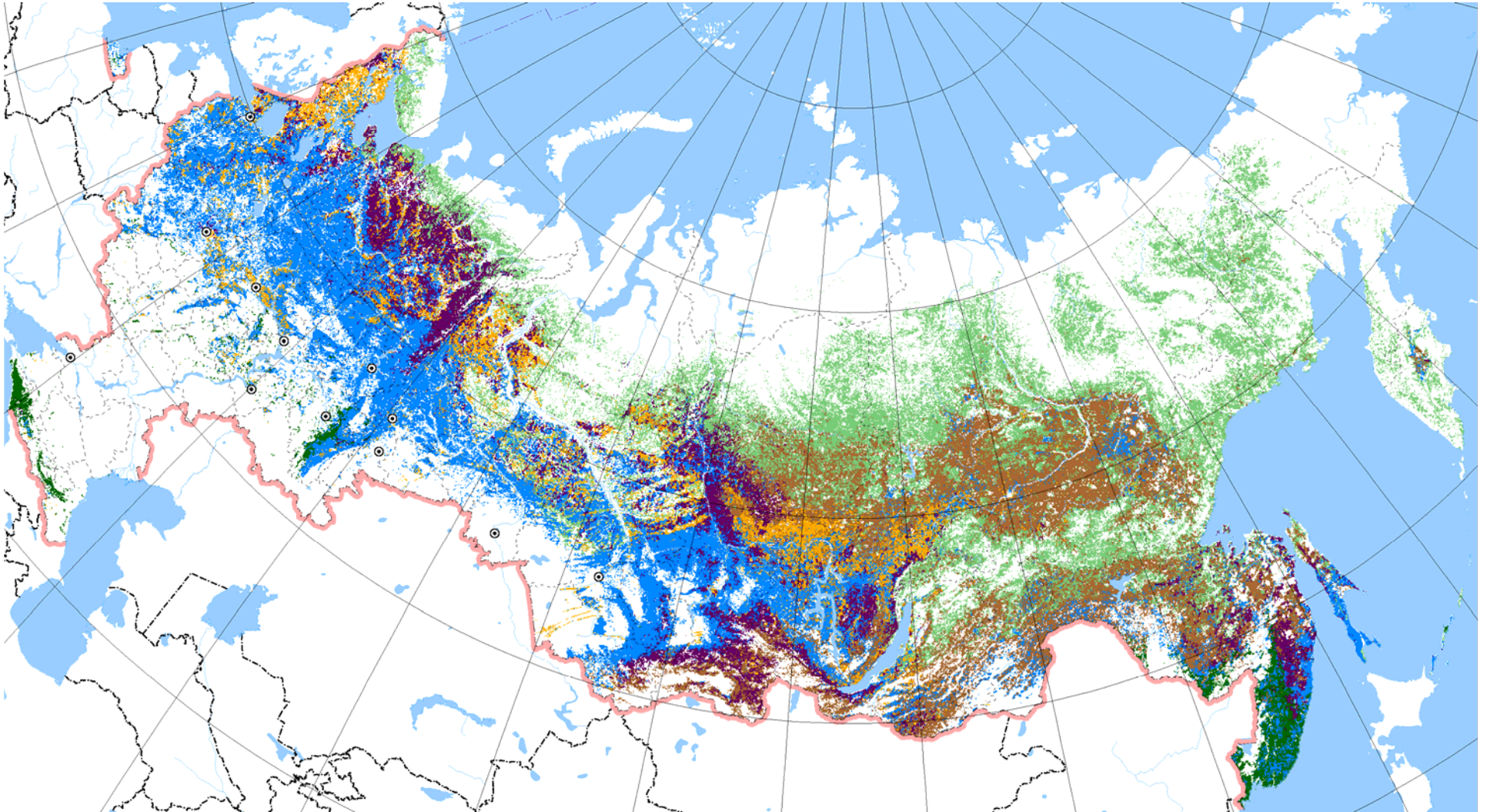


Main types and species groups in Russian forests



Northern and mountain woodlands, including dwarf pine and stone birch;
Spruce, fir and stone pines; **Temperate hardwood and hardwood mixes;**
Scots pine; **Larch species;** **Second-growth mixes with birch and aspen**

Russian forests seem to be endless, but...

- About 2/3 of Russian forests is represented by northern and mountain open woodlands, waterlogged unproductive forests, or forests outside reasonable limits of possible access;
- Big share of most productive and accessed forests of European Russia, Southern Siberia and Far East are already converted to second-growth mixes, dominated by birch and aspen, that recently are not really interesting for the industry;
- Existing model of forest use is rather “wood mining” than forestry, and this is the reason that even recent moderate wood harvest (comparing to increment) is not sustainable in long term perspective.

Creaming is the most typical way of forest management

- Country-level creaming (“frontier logging” at the edges of accessible area – expanding to the remaining productive patches of intact forest landscapes);
- Landscape-level creaming (cutting of best – most productive, most valuable, most healthy and most accessible stands);
- Stand-level creaming (cutting of best trees or patches, selection of some valuable species – especially typical for so called “thinnings” or “salvage”, or “sanitary”, logging).

Creaming, together with lack of management at the “developed” areas, leads to permanent decline of forest state, health and production capacity, and makes the forest use very unsustainable.

Forest related information is poor and unavailable

- Forest inventory data are poor and often obsolete; state has a monopoly for inventory and planning work and spends in average about \$0,5/ha (2006) for it – that gives no hope for the significant improvement of it in the nearest future;
- Most of forest-related information is well hidden from public – it is difficult to find, where are the borders of concessions, who is responsible for what in the forest, what is planned etc.
- Forest regulations are abundant, complicated and often unavailable for managers – so they often do not know exactly what is not legal and why.

Illegal logging: main reasons

Unemployment and poverty. In 1992-2004 Russian forestry and forest industries lost about 1 million jobs (about half). Most of these jobs were lost at villages and small cities with no alternative employment. If people have no jobs and no possibility to move, often illegal logging is the only way to survive.

Bribes and competition with the state. State forest administrations (leskhozoes) actively compete with the private business in a wood trade, and usually have serious “administrative” advantages in this competition. Together with a heavy “bribery load” it often does not leave to small and medium size forest business an opportunity to work legally.

Controversial and unclear laws and especially regulations force forest management to make a lot of unnecessary operations and significantly increase the costs of management; they also make the good base for the development of corruption.

The new Russian forest code

- Proposed in 2003; accepted by Duma in 1-st reading in April 2005; second reading was postponed many times, now preliminary scheduled to September 20, 2006.
- One of the most controversial projects of new Russian laws, heavily criticized by practically all stakeholders for expanding base for corruption, not clear division of responsibilities, lot of unclear demands, general low quality of the draft.
- The version that is officially proposed for the second reading ignores practically all comments from major stakeholders.

The main environmental and social threat of the new Forest code – no clear status of the 1-st group (= “protective”) forests. The chapter about these forests contains mainly empty declarations.

1-st group (“protective”) forests

Established in 1888 by “Forest protection law”

Now – about 25% of Russian forests

Not excluded from logging, but have some important limitations (special procedure for land category change; smaller area limits for cutblocks; more detailed forest inventory and planning; bigger staff of forest inspection, etc.)

Two key roles:

- environmental framework of the forest landscapes and regions;

- buffer zone between most of population and large-scale industrial forest use

Degraded status of 1-st group forests can lead to:

- Lost of many important high conservation value forests;
- Increased environmental and social forest-related conflicts, decreased acceptance of the forestry and forest industries by society;
- Increased amount of both legal and illegal forest land conversions for the construction and other purposes around big cities;
- Decreased availability of forests in most populated areas for recreation, NTFP use and other important public needs.

Main developments in Russian forest management

Transition of the responsibility for the forest management from federal to regional level (forest will be in federal ownership, the “forestry funding” will go through federal budget, but the management should be organized by regional administrations).

For 3,5% of Russian forests – former “agricultural forests” – it was done in beginning of 2005. For most of others this should be done since January 1, 2007, but preparatory work is now suspended.

Some forests (4-10%, should be decided by federal government) will be left under the federal responsibility, and some (about 0,1%) under municipalities.

Main developments in Russian forest management

Division of the federal state forest authority into “control body” (Rosprirodnadzor) and “management body” (Rosleskhoz). Started since beginning of 2005; now suspended.

At the moment Rosprirodnadzor has all responsibilities and rights for forest inspection and protection, but only 350 forest-related staff for all country. Rosleskhoz has 190 000 staff, including 70 000 staff of former forest inspection, but no legal rights of forest inspection. The decision about the transfer of staff is suspended in the government and it is not clear when the decision can be made.

As a result there is no forest guarding and inspection at all since January 2005.

Main developments in Russian forest management

Making concession holders responsible for the forest management (reforestation, thinning, pest management, forest protection, fire suppression).

Now the state bodies (leskhozes) are formally responsible for most of forest management, even inside the concessions. Leskhozes have the obligation for the reforestation, silvicultural works, pest management, fire suppression etc., and have very limited legal possibilities to push companies to do it.

The main idea of the new Forest code is to make concession holders responsible for it. The process of delegating responsibility for the forest management to concession holders is going even before the new Forest code (during last 2-3 years).

Even if governmental reforms of forest management will not be effective, the large changes in Russian forestry are inevitable

- Change from “extensive” to “intensive” forestry will be forced by forest decline and increased transportation and other costs;
- Further decrease of jobs in forestry and forest industries is needed to keep competitiveness (expected loss is about 500 000 jobs in 3-5 years);
- The role of state in forest management and protection will decrease, and the role of private business increase (state simply can not support the existing 260 thousand forest-related staff);
- The increased use of degraded or not very productive agricultural lands for forestry is expected (the potential for the forest growth at these lands is estimated in range from 30 to 200 million m³/year, depending on what can be converted);
- Increasing and obvious damage to forests of the most populated regions of Russia sooner or later will increase the public awareness about the situation in Russian forests and will make the existing model of forest use unacceptable for dominant part of Russian population.