



Taiga Rescue Network



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DESTRUCTIVE LOGGING IN SIBERIA – RUSSIAN FAR EAST FUELLED BY CHINESE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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CASE STUDY

A system of unsustainable and illegal logging and timber trade has prospered in Far Eastern Russia- Siberia, fuelled largely by Chinese companies operating in the region. The rampant deforestation in the area has been accompanied by both environmental violations and social disorder. This case study highlights that in order to effectively tackle illegal logging, it is necessary to address and resolve the many complex economic, social and political factors behind illegal and destructive forest practices, rather than targeting those affected- such as the rural poor, local communities and indigenous peoples.



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FACTORS FIRING THE RISE IN ILLEGAL LOGGING

The issue of illegal logging in the region was greatly exacerbated in the mid 1990s by a number of different factors:

- * Opening up of the Russian-Chinese border for off-visa travel;
- * Dismantling of Communist party control in Russia as the only governance system in place;
- * Liberalisation of the Russian Civil Code in favour of any sort of entrepreneurship, including illegal;
- * Extraordinary increase in taxes and customs fees on timber to feed the Russian federal budget, which was constantly being stolen by state officials;
- * Extraordinary poverty and unemployment in Russian forest towns, and low incomes of local officials responsible for the state forest management and control;
- * Chinese state strategy to economically “occupy” and exploit RFE and south Siberia;
- * 1998 Chinese logging ban in the backdrop of extreme economic growth and growing timber demand;
- * Shocking difference in the density of forests and population on the Russian-Chinese border.