

Project Update: February 2011

COORDINATING COUNCIL FOCUSED ON FORESTRY

About 1.5 years ago BROCC, together with some honorable scientific experts and NGOs of Primorye, initiated creation of Regional Coordinating Council on environmental issues. It was essential to consolidate all public efforts to protect human and community rights on the wealthy environment in the process of ongoing industrial development, mainly concerned to oil and gas pipelines and project of refinery. These issues were dominating in our agenda of Coordinating Council during all 1.5 years, but recently BROCC prepared and conducted first session devoted completely to the issues of forestry and forest communities. For that discussion we invited officials from the regional Forest Service, Environmental Protection Agency, operating customs, forestry department of regional police, officer from Federal Security Service, responsible for timber trade, scientists and Chief of Primorye Association of timber producers and exporters.

We first discussed our opportunities to anyhow regulate and limit logging of recently restricted Korean pine under any preparatory and auxiliary works like pipeline trails, roads and on-site timber yards, which are legally available but often used to get some commercial pine timber. As we clarified and agreed, we need some legislating initiative to be conducted on both national and regional level for that, mainly targeted to different take-off of some trees under auxiliary works, when resulting timber belongs to the state property fund, and just logging operation, when taken timber belongs to operator. The current code does not provide such difference, unfortunately. As an accompanying problem we reviewed existing mode of getting timber from such auxiliary takeoff for firewood use by communities, and decided it is essential to urgently simplify this process. Otherwise local people are enforced to continue taking state owned timber by themselves illegally.

Second serious question discussed by the session was continued so called maintenance logging on protected forests – category, separate from protected territories on the forest lands. By WWF, while this practice actually legalised commercial logging under the name of forest maintenance, it is a time to insert into practice sort of moratorium on some kinds of such operations, which are most available for getting commercial timber. Such proposal is already in the preparatory process in RFE Forestry Institute in Khabarovsk, and we decided to support it by the authority of our Coordinating Council.

The last issue we discussed was analysis of hard situation around national park “Udege Legend” in Krasnoarmeiski Municipality, where newly appointed director does not govern the park team properly; there are problems with identification of real borders of the park and with implementation of hunting rights for the local indigenous community. We decided to prepare specific appeal to the Ministry of nature resources, governing this park, asking to review their decision to replace initial director, who spent 15 years to create park, by the current outsider, completely dependent on the logging community.