

fact of the matter is that recently there has been a substantial drop in the overall volume of freight moved on Lake Baikal. Firstly, the flow of equipment and materials which used to be transported to the construction sites of the Baikal-Amur Railway has decreased. Secondly, the gravel and sand loads which used to be transported on the lake have been halted. And finally, after the above-mentioned resolution on Lake Baikal was published, logging was stopped in the lake's intake zone, therefore reducing the transportation of timber from these areas. This year the Goloustin and Turkin water-transport depots administered respectively by Irkutsklesprom and Zabaikalles ceased operations as a result of the transfer of the enterprises at these locations to forest management work. Several years ago transportation of loads of timber stood at more than a million tonnes, but this year only 636,000 tonnes are scheduled to be delivered to the Baikal timber loading site.

As a result, the Lake Baikal ports and their sub-divisions are in difficulty. Fifteen one-thousand ton barges are being used at only half-capacity. We are willing to make them available to geologists and scientists, or to transport local freight, coal, etc., but nonetheless boats often stand idle or make empty trips. At the same time, hundreds of thousands of tonnes of wood continue to be transported across the lake in floats. Does this make sense?

As of last year, Lake Baikal became unprofitable for us. Financial losses suffered by the shipping firms currently stand at roughly two million roubles. According to our calculations, neither does transporting loads of timber on barges make the lake "profitable". However, our losses would be reduced and, most importantly, it would benefit the lake itself.

Our proposals are well-known at Irkutsklesprom and Zabaikalles. We are ready today to transport 188,000 tonnes, i.e. about 250,000 cubic metres in barges. Moreover, as a result of the above mentioned resolution, construction of several large-volume barges to convey wood from the Barguzin timber combine is now underway at the Ulan-Ude shipyard.