

Timber Rafting: Senior Management Resists Change

In earlier times timber raftmen kept their rafts, which moved with the current, in the middle of the river by working nimbly with enormous oars or by throwing down metal weights attached to long ropes. In this way they prevented their raft from being driven to the riverbank by waves or by the wind.

The years went by and steam-boat tugs appeared. However, they didn't have the power to guide a long raft on their own. Therefore, following in their tradition, the same raftsmen would guide the raft from behind. It's true that they no longer use the old-time methods, but instead use motorships which the rivermen lease to the raftsmen.

But is it necessary? For we raftsmen have to pay for the whole tugging operation - the main tug, the auxiliary and the day-hire ones. On our waterway alone every year we pay out four hundred thousand roubles for this. And, nevertheless, we are confronted by more and more new demands and the rivermen are forcing us to increase the number of ships involved in an operation.

By way of substantiation I give this information: in May of last year, on the upper Vycheгда river, twenty six raft tugs and seventy three ships were used to accompany our rafts and to carry out daily service work. We have begun to increase the size of the rafts, but nevertheless our overall transport costs remain excessively high.

Probably no other form of transport operates in such a strange way. It is impossible to imagine a train, which is pulled by a Ministry of Railways