

from the logging villages to cut timber, and so every cubic metre of wood is costly. Finally, the cut timber (hundreds of thousands of cubic metres) is moved by motor-ships and barges, over the course of an entire navigation season, on the Sukhona and Vologda rivers to the piers of the many urban industrial and construction organizations.

Here in Vologda, on the river of the same name, the timber - our principal northern resource - is unloaded in an extremely haphazard way: onto a low bank below the water line, sometimes directly into the water, in a heap and without any kind of containment. As a result of this kind of handling, each year when there is the slightest rise in water level, such as after rains or at high water in the spring or during fall flooding, the wood is of course carried away - into the ocean. There it can be fished out by anybody - no hard currency required.

This little river is no more than 50 to 100 metres wide. There have been no typhoons or storms along its course, but every resident or visitor to the city can tell you the Vologda River, from the wharfs to the mouth of the river, is choked with submerged logs, construction timber and firewood. The entire river bank is littered. The only people who regularly pick up this wood are the dacha dwellers - and they can have whatever quantity they wish. The timber is gathered to build homes and bathhouses. Excellent construction timber (which means hard currency) goes into the foundations of hothouses...

The situation with the handling of timber is similar in the pulp - and - paper city, Sokol.

I recall that several years ago I dealt with the editorial staff of the oblast newspaper "Krasnyi Sever" in connection with large losses of timber. A raid was organized, and the results of it were published. There were repercussions, concrete results. I remember questioning the director of a wood processing plant who later reported that, after the information was published, 217 cubic metres of timber were gathered up and tallied near the plant's dock. And this was a very small plant.

And then a predictable flood predictably carried away thousands of cubic metres of timber. Meanwhile, the records of all the organizations were silent on the subject. In any case, the owners of the wood that was washed away, submerged or that littered the banks of the river could not be found.

The water carrying away the timber represents a clear danger to shipping and human lives. And it seems that no one can be bothered about this. Serious economic damage results to the State, and a blow to the morale of the workers. The forests being cut down are clearly going to waste, the oblast and city environmental protection committee pretend that this is of no concern to them. The state prosecutor's office is likewise indifferent to the issue of preserving and utilizing wood. Carelessness has become the norm, the rule on the river.