

FORESTRY

RSFSR Minister of Forestry N.M. Prilepo Delivers a
Broadside

(Guest article)

When we look at the overall condition of the Russian forests, at first sight they would not seem to give cause for concern. Over the past twenty years the forested area has expanded by 51 million ha, including 38 million ha of coniferous forest. Even in the European USSR and the Urals, the most developed zone, the coniferous forest has increased by 4.6 million ha.

Last year, about 1.8 million hectares were clear-cut, but reforestation was also carried out in an area of the same order.

At first glance, these figures appear to be satisfactory. However, forest use in many areas of Russia is unsatisfactory and the condition of the stands is giving rise to alarm among foresters and local Councils of People's Deputies.

In the late 19th century, the eminent scientist D.I. Mendeleev stressed the enormous role played by forests in the Urals and their importance in regulating the hydrological processes of the major river basins.

Eighty years later we are forced to admit that the forest resources of the Urals are on the verge of totally disappearing.

Concentrated clear-cut harvesting and felling in excess of the allowable cut have been especially damaging to the most valuable forests in this region in the last 40 years. All this has led to the loss of the forests' protective and water-retaining functions, and also to the drying up of small rivers and the disappearance of springs, both above-ground and submerged.