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Management guidelines for different categories of HCVF

In all HCVF (with rare exceptions), the following activities could be permitted if they are legal:

- public access for recreational activities (without camping and fires);
- hunting and fishing; and
- collection of non-timber forest products (mushrooms, berries, medicinal plants and cones).

In all HCVF (with some exceptions), the following activities cannot be permitted:

- construction of long-lasting objects;
- installing of main communication lines;
- exploration and mining of mineral resources;
- alteration of the hydrological regime;
- activities implying high visitor pressure;
- use of chemical and biological control agents;
- use of fire (prescribed burning, burning of post-harvest residues etc.) with any goals; and
- introduction of exotic species.

The management regime should correspond to the HCV category. Thus, in order to ensure conservation of biodiversity and landscape (**HCV 1-3**) it is recommended to implement stricter management restrictions (including strict conservation). Protective functions can be maintained only by modifying management activities. In general, for all **HCV 1, 3** and **6** prohibition of all or majority of harvesting and other silvicultural activities can be recommended. For **HCV 4** and **5**, commercial harvesting and other clearcuts shall be prohibited, in combination with additional management constraints. For **HCV 2**, prohibition of harvesting operations or zoning of the area (each zone may have its own management regime, although strict conservation zones are obligatory) can be recommended.

The management regime can be the same for the whole HCVF or vary depending on its zoning in accordance to high conservation values present and functions.

Currently, the following main options for management in HCVF may be recommended:

- announcement of a voluntary moratorium on any harvesting operation in the area and further promotion establishment of a protected area or reserving the land for a candidate area;
- establishment of protective forests and OZU; and
- canceling any lease for HCVF.

Creation of a protected area (either federal or regional ones) can be recommended for **HCV 1** (sometimes), **2** and **6**. Creation of OZU can be recommended for **HCV 1** (in most cases), **3, 4** and **5**. During prolonging a lease agreement, it is advisable to exclude a large wilderness area from the lease (basically for **HCV 2**).

All HCVF, with some exceptions, require measures on fire prevention and fire management.

In the **international level HCV 1 (WWF Global 200 ecoregions).** In the specified ecoregions the following is recommended:

1. during any timber harvesting:
   a) trees, shrubs and lianas, whose harvesting is prohibited by the federal or regional legislation, should be completely preserved;
   b) trees, shrubs and lianas that are rare, threatened or endangered in a particular region (e.g. noble broadleaf trees, Siberian larch and Siberian pine in the taiga zone of European Russia) should be completely preserved;
   c) residual trees of non-target species; large cavity trees; trees with large bird nests, seed trees; and large wind resistant dying trees and snags located at the distance from roads, landings etc. as well as such trees left within clumps and groups should be preserved to the extent it is possible;
2. rare, threatened or endangered ecosystem (forest) types should be preserved;
3. in evenaged dark (spruce and fir) coniferous, mixed coniferous–broadleaf and broadleaf forests, whose development is featured by the absence of fires, the preference should be given to selection cuts. (Note that broadleaf trees here mean noble broadleaf species like oak, ash, maple, elm, linden and alike);
4. the use in such forest types (see point 3) of narrow clear-strip cuts and clear cuts is only possible when they correspond to peculiarities of the natural dynamics of a particular forest type and are aimed to minimize their impact (e.g. the width of strips, including technological parts of the harvest area, should be limited by a height of the dominant tree canopy or small-size clearcuts shall be used, thus providing preservation of groundcover and soils);
5. the use of clearcuts in other forest types should mimic the natural dynamics of a particular forest type and provide retention of seed trees, ecologically valuable trees (see point 1) as well as critical habitats (key biotopes) and, depending on a situation, of young growth and small-size trees; and
6. the use of fire with any purpose should be excluded.

When planning forestry operations, all available materials on identified HCVF, wetlands of conservation importance, important bird areas, protective forests and OZU as well as candidate areas for protected nature areas or ecological networks should be considered.

In addition, systematic efforts should be undertaken to ensure identification and conservation of rare, threatened and endangered species habitats on the basis of the Red-data Book of the Russian Federation or relevant regional red-data books or lists of such species.

National and regional level HCV 1. The management regime in **HCV 1.1 (protected nature areas)** should ensure management restrictions that are not less strict than those prescribed by the legal management regime of an existing or candidate protected area. When the management regime of a protected area in addition restricts other activities (visiting, hunting, fishing, collection of NTFPs and fires), the applicant should establish control over them.

The management regimes in **HCV 1.2–1.4** should be aimed at maintenance of characteristics of rare, threatened and endangered species habitats. The respective regimes should be developed on the basis of knowledge of biology of a particular species of high conservation value considering identified sites of conservation importance. For example, selection cuts (and even clearcuts) by themselves do not exert a threat to some wildlife species. However, the disturbance of animals, which accompanies harvesting activity, should be taken into account. In such cases, seasonal harvesting restriction shall be applied. Some species cannot be affected by harvesting (or winter harvesting) at all but require deadwood for their existence. For conservation of plants it will be sufficient to restrict management activities in buffer zones around their protected habitats.

When is not possible to prove that a particular type of harvesting does not threaten to species conservation, the precautionary approach shall be used that means than a strict conservation regime shall be established in the area.

To ensure preservation of **national level HCV 2** intact forest landscapes (IFL):

1. Wilderness areas inside IFL should be identified and completely protected from forestry activities and fragmentation by roads (strict conservation zones). The area of the strict conservation zone should be as large as possible under local social conditions. In case of an outstanding dispute of substantial magnitude, this area should be determined assessing all three components: ecological, social and economic. Economic and social values should also consider a potential value, e.g. perspectives for tourism development and significance of such development for local people to avoid missed profits.

2. In the rest of IFL (outside of strict conservation zones) the best available forestry technologies and practices with regard to conservation of biodiversity and forest ecosystem should be implemented[10]. The introduction of the best available forestry technologies and practices can be gradual depending on existent legislation and possibilities of a particular enterprise. However, the environmentally responsible enterprise should have an approved program for their introduction, which is being implemented. Such technologies and practices may include:

- the use of harvesting techniques that mimic the natural dynamics of the forest in each type of forest or condition;
- the priority use of selection and narrow clear-strip cuts in forest, whose natural dynamics does not include stand-replacing disturbances;
- retention of key stand elements (individual trees, clumps of trees and snags) to ensure preservation of diversity of forest and mosaic of habitats;
- the use of technologies aimed at natural forest regeneration;
- the use of machinery and technologies that minimize the impact on soils and young growth and pollution of soil and streams.

The long-term conservation of reference areas identified as IFL implies establishment of a protected area. As an intermediate solution, until a final decision on protected area borders will be made, a logging moratorium can be announced or this land can be reserved by relevant governmental agencies as a candidate protected area.

In the rest of the area the following is required[11]:

- key biotopes (critical habitats) shall be identified and protected; and
- inventories of species and ecosystems that are rare or threatened in a particular region shall be conducted; identified sites should be protected.

In order to exclude further significant fragmentation, IFL should be considered when planning road construction.

The similar approach applies to **regional level HCV 2**. Different variants of zoning can be used, ranging from complete protection of the area to its subdivision into areas with different values. However, they should have the following in common:

- area and all dimensions of reference areas, in which all or the majority of management activities and fragmentation by roads and other communications are prohibited, should be big; and
- further significant fragmentation of such areas (i.e. dissection by permanent roads and other communications) should be prevented.

During harvesting the best available forestry technologies and practices with regard to conservation of biodiversity and forest ecosystem should be used.

The management of **HCV 3** should ensure the preservation of high conservation values (tree and overall species composition, spatial structures and natural dynamics) of rare, threatened or endangered ecosystems. The management regime should be developed on the basis of knowledge of biology of high conservation value ecosystems considering their borders. In most cases preservation of high conservation values require prohibition of all types of harvesting.

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[10] According to the *Declaration of Russian Non-governmental Conservation Organizations on the Conservation Values of Intact Forest Landscapes in Northern European Russia* adopted at the meeting of Russian non-governmental conservation organizations in Arkhangelsk, December 12 2005.

[11] See previous footnote.

When it is not possible to prove that a particular harvesting technique does not threaten to conservation of rare, threatened and endangered ecosystems, the precautionary approach shall be used that means than a strict conservation regime or similar should be established.

The regulation of secondary forest use (collection of NTFPs and use for recreation) depends on the ecosystem type. Thus, a rare ecosystem of the Russian Far East spruce forest with Asian devil's club (*Oplopanax elatus*) shall be protected by prohibiting or restricting collection of the latter species (a federal-level red-listed species; the Red-data Book indicates that the species is threatened by collection for medicinal purposes and recommends to use it resources sustainably). In most rare ecosystems, visiting and collection of ornamental plants are permitted under condition that the use of fire is controlled.

It is advisable to include rare, threatened or endangered ecosystems in protected areas when necessary.

In general, the management regime in **HCV 4** corresponds to legal management restrictions of respective protective forests and OZU.

Sometimes there is a need to control thinning and other silvicultural operations performed by a forest management administration (lesnichestvo). Upon finding that commercial harvesting has occurred under the name of silvicultural operation, the relevant measures should be immediately applied.

The management regime in **HCV 5** and **6** should strongly depend on the needs of local communities. This requires wide scale consultations, whenever possible involving social technologies experts. The management regime in **HCV 5** often corresponds to legal management restrictions of respective protective forests and OZU, while that of **HCV 6** requires a stricter protection.

Other **categories of HCVFs** are understood as areas, whose high conservation value is undebatable, but which cannot be unambiguously referred to any existing HCVF category (or may simultaneously belong to several ones). The management regime for such areas should be developed on the basis of careful investigation of their high conservation values.

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In order to develop a management regime for HCVF, the enterprise should make the following steps:

- to identify and map HCVF;
- to collect information and describe attributes of high conservation values present in the area (e.g. local rare species, ecosystem functions and services, special significance for local communities);
- to develop a management regime (strict conservation, management restrictions or control over other activities);
- to choose a management type; and
- to consider HCVF location and regime in the forest management plan.

Monitoring of HCVF

Monitoring of HCVF is conducted to assess on a regular basis to what extent the maintenance of high conservation values is achieved. The condition of HCVF can be affected by the impact of either management activities (both of the enterprise itself and other organizations), or natural factors, such forest fires, pest outbreaks etc. The results of monitoring may require revision of the set of protection and/or management measures and correction of the forest management plan.

In areas for which strict conservation measures are proposed, monitoring of HCVF is the easiest, since it implies mainly keeping a track of records of changes in HCVF attributed to some dramatic natural events (massive windfalls, catastrophic fires etc.), long-term trends (e.g. changes in composition and condition of flora and fauna) and management activities of third parties (including illegal ones). The choice of monitoring method depends on the character of information being collected from foresters, hunters, fishermen etc. and enterprise's resources and can be based on:

- monitoring of forest condition using remote sensing materials;
- data on changes in forest land annually collected by district level forest management administration;
- field survey materials (zoological, botanical, forest pathology etc.); and
- continuous stationary scientific research.

In areas where management activities are restricted, monitoring of HCVF, besides aforementioned methods, presumes a wider array of monitoring methods and their greater thoroughness. Thus, it is necessary to assess how the implemented measures ensure the maintenance of high conservation values, both in short-term and long-term perspectives. For example, it should be learnt, whether harvesting leads to stronger windfall or mass die-off of trees, higher frequency of fires, noticeable changes in flora and fauna (e.g. looking at disappearance or appearance of certain indicator species) etc.

All information collected during monitoring of HCVF should be used to assess the efficiency of conservation measures with regard to the overall objective – to ensure maintenance of attributes of high conservation values as well as to assess the implemented management system with respect to biodiversity conservation in general.

Monitoring activities can be carried out by the enterprise itself, various governmental bodies (Federal Forestry Agency or environmental protection agency), research institutes and non-governmental conservation organizations in cooperation with enterprise. The forest manager shall consider the results of monitoring in the implementation of management activities for the current year, by correcting the set and parameters of activities, and to revise the forest management plan when necessary. Monitoring materials can be also used when developing a program on protection of HCVF, key biotopes etc. as well as in negotiations with NGOs and the forest management administration.