

## **NGO Appeal: Save Karelia's old-growth forests!**

**To Mr. Andrei V. Nelidov, head of the Republic of Karelia**

**Dear Mr. Nelidov,**

The previous land use plan was approved in 2007, and included protection for 60 areas covering more than 1.8 million hectares within 18 years. The government now proposes that only 20 areas should be protected until 2030, canceling future protection for 1.3 million hectares of intact forests and natural ecosystems. Withdrawing from previous agreement will threaten these ancient ecosystems, the environment, the climate and the possibilities to develop ecotourism. It would put the biodiversity of Karelia at great risk.

The Finnish-Russian cooperation **GAP Analysis Project in North-West Russia** has provided maps of the most biologically valuable areas requiring protection. These maps are the result of a four year project by public authorities, scientific institutions and non-government organizations in north-west Russia and Finland. This scientific analysis has identified more than 10 percent of the total land coverage of Karelia as high conservation value areas, which need to be preserved to maintain biodiversity. This level of protection is not high.

According to leading scientists, in average at least 20 percent of the productive forests need to be set aside for nature conservation in order to preserve naturally occurring species in viable populations. This corresponds with the goal of the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) and the treaty on biodiversity signed in 2010 by 193 nations during the UN-summit in Nagoya. The Nagoya treaty states that at least 17 percent of ecologically representative land-based ecosystems shall be given long-term and functional protection until the year 2020.

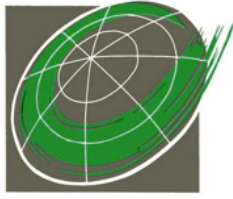
Proposed cuts in the forest protection plan would mean that only about 5 percent of Karelia's forests will be strictly protected until 2030, leaving large intact forest areas to be exploited by forest companies. If these plans become reality, credibility for Russian conservation efforts will be undermined. The new proposal will inevitably give Karelian forest products a bad reputation on the global timber market, threatening export possibilities, tax revenues and employment possibilities. Further, Russia will not be able to honor its commitment to international agreements, such as the Convention of Biodiversity (CBD) and the Nagoya treaty.

Biodiversity is essential to life on Earth, since the natural ecosystems provide us with a multitude of services necessary for our survival, such as food, freshwater, air quality regulation, climate regulation and water purification. The importance of intact forests for maintaining biodiversity and mitigating climate change cannot be stressed strong enough. The depletion of the intact forest ecosystems and degradation of the forest biodiversity threatens fundamental processes causing severe negative impacts on human beings and the future health of our planet.

As the Head of the Republic of Karelia, we urge you to take responsibility to secure the preservation of biodiversity in Karelia. We urge the government of Karelia to:

- **reject the proposed changes** in the land use plan and **respects its previous agreement**, ensuring future protection of 1.8 million hectares (**ALL** 60 areas)
- **expand the amount of planned protected areas** to include all HCV-areas identified by the **GAP analysis** and
- honor the **CBD and Nagoya treaties** by protecting **at least 17 percent** of Karelia until the year 2020

Sincerely,



## Taiga Rescue Network

### Taiga Rescue Network

Contact:

Katy Harris: [katy@lookeast.org.uk](mailto:katy@lookeast.org.uk)

Adress - 2 Pound Place, Aberystwyth, SY231LX, UK

Viktor Säfve: [viktor.safve@skyddaskogen.se](mailto:viktor.safve@skyddaskogen.se)

Adress - Haddebo Skola, 697 93 Hjortkvarn, Sweden

+46(0)76-1148811 [www.taigarescue.org](http://www.taigarescue.org)

Taiga Rescue Network, a global network of more than 100 organizations working with forest conservation issues and indigenous rights in the northern boreal forests.

Viktor Säfve, Chairperson Taiga Rescue Network



### SPOK - Karelia

Gorkogo str, 21v, Petrozavodsk, 185000  
Russia

+7 (8142) 76-91-15  
[spok\\_office@onego.ru](mailto:spok_office@onego.ru)

[www.spok-karelia.ru](http://www.spok-karelia.ru)

The Karelia Regional Nature Conservancy (SPOK), is a NGO that promotes preservation of valuable forests and supports ecologically responsible use of forests in Karelia. SPOK also work to raise public awareness about biodiversity preservation.

Alexander Markovsky, head of SPOK - Karelia



### **Protect the Forest - Sweden**

Daniel Rutschman:  
[daniel.rutschman@skyddaskogen.se](mailto:daniel.rutschman@skyddaskogen.se)

Adress - Haddebo Skola, 697 93  
Hjortkvarn, Sweden

+46(0)76-1128826

[www.protecttheforest.se](http://www.protecttheforest.se)

Protect the Forest is a Swedish NGO working for conservation of old-growth forests and a reformation of the forestry to nature-oriented and sustainable forestry.

Daniel Rutschman, Secretary, Protect the Forest, Sweden



### **Friends of the Earth Sweden**

Adress: Box 7048, 402 31 Göteborg

+46 (0)31-12 18 08, Fax: +46 (0)31-12 18 17

Chairperson: Ida Nilsson  
[ida.nilsson@jordensvanner.se](mailto:ida.nilsson@jordensvanner.se)  
+46(0)73-642 53 37

Chairperson: Pia Bergenholtz  
[pia.bergenholtz@jordensvanner.se](mailto:pia.bergenholtz@jordensvanner.se)  
+46(0)70-650 65 78

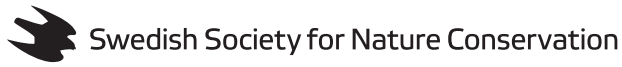
[www.jordensvanner.se](http://www.jordensvanner.se)

A non-religious, politically independent non-profit organization working for environment and solidarity. Friends of the Earth works with a number of important issues, including climate, forests, privatization and the power over food.

Friends of the Earth Sweden belongs to Friends of the Earth International, which has more than 1 million members around the world.

Ida Nilsson, chairperson,  
Friends of the Earth, Sweden

Pia Bergenholtz, chairperson, Friends of the Earth, Sweden



Swedish Society for Nature Conservation

## SSNC

Box 4625, Asogatan 115, 2 tr 116 91  
Stockholm SWEDEN

+46(0) 8-702 65 00 Fax: +46 (0) 8-702 08 55

Karin Åström:  
karin.astrom@miljoinformation.se

[www.naturskyddsforeningen.se](http://www.naturskyddsforeningen.se)

The Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (SSNC) is an environmental organization with power to bring about change. Swedish Society for Nature Conservation is a non-profit and politically independent environmental organization. The association has 190,000 members and is available in local clubs and county associations across the country.

We spread knowledge, map environmental threats, create solutions, and influence politicians and public authorities, at both national and international levels. Moreover, we are behind one of the world's most challenging ecolabellings, "Bra Miljöval" (Good Environmental Choice). Climate, the oceans, forests, environmental toxins, and agriculture are our main areas of involvement.

Karin Åström, vice president,  
Swedish Society for Nature Conservation



## Friends of the Siberian Forests

Krasnoyarsk, Russia  
Po Box 26779  
660036 Krasnoyarsk KRASNOYARSKY  
Russia

Andrey Laletin: laletin3@gmail.com

**Friends of the Siberian Forests is an organization which works with issues concerning** Russian Boreal Forest, Restoration and conservation, Forest ecology, Climate change, Financial institutions, National legislation, International policy, Certification, Consumption, Indigenous people, MUCB forest management, Timber trade.

Andrey Laletin, Chairman,  
Friends of the Siberian Forests



### **Look East Wild Earth**

Katy Harris  
2 Pound Place, Aberystwyth, SY23 1LX, UK  
+44 (0)1970 610104  
+44 (0)7714 335145 (m)  
katy@lookeast.org.uk

**[www.lookeast.org.uk](http://www.lookeast.org.uk)**

Look East Wild Earth is a UK-based charity forging links between environmental initiatives in the UK and in Russia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Katy Harris'.

Katy Harris, Look East Wild Earth



### **ROBIN WOOD**

Dr. Rudolf Fenner

Head of Forest Department  
Tel: 040-380 89 2-11 Fax: 040-380 89 2-14  
wald@robinwood.de  
Langemarckstr. 210, 28199 Bremen  
Germany

**[www.robinwood.de](http://www.robinwood.de)**

ROBIN WOOD - Nonviolent Action Community for Nature and Environment, is a German environmental and nature conservation organization.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Rudolf Fenner'.

Dr. Rudolf Fenner, Head of Forest Department, ROBIN WOOD



## **Luonto-Liitto**

Leo Stranius  
Secretary General  
[leo.stranius@luontoliitto.fi](mailto:leo.stranius@luontoliitto.fi)  
Contacts of the organization:  
Annankatu 26 A  
00100 Helsinki  
Finland

[www.luontoliitto.fi](http://www.luontoliitto.fi)

Luonto-Liitto was Founded in 1943, and is a Finnish youth organization that works with environmental, recreational and nature conservation issues. Our goal is a society that values the diversity of nature and its intrinsic value.

Leo Stranius, Secretary General, Luonto-Liitto

**Зеленый Академ.ORG**

## **Initiative Group Let's protect a city-wood Academgorodok**

Leader of Initiative Group Tatyana Kunina:  
[tatjana@ngs.ru](mailto:tatjana@ngs.ru)  
Russia

[www.greenacadem.org](http://www.greenacadem.org)

Tatyana Kunina, Leader of Initiative Group

**SIBERIAN ENVIROMENTAL CENTER**

**Siberian Environmental  
Center** Alexander Dubynin,  
Chairman of Board

Novosibirsk, Russia,  
+7 960 796 61 50  
skype alexander.dubynin  
[adubynin@yandex.ru](mailto:adubynin@yandex.ru)

**[www.sibecocenter.ru](http://www.sibecocenter.ru)**

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temperate rainforest los  
network bosques templados**

**World Temperate Rainforest  
Network**

Pat Rasmussen  
Coordinator  
World Temperate Rainforest Network  
PO Box 13273  
Olympia, WA 98508  
509-669-1549  
[patr@crcwnet.com](mailto:patr@crcwnet.com)

**[www.temperaterainforest.org](http://www.temperaterainforest.org)**

The World Temperate Rainforest Network is made up of organizations, scientists, First Nations and individuals who care about the future of temperate rainforests and those who live within them.

## Europe's last expanses of old-growth are threatened



Karelia is home to some of Europe's most valuable intact forests and old-growth forest tracts. Now Karelia's forests are at risk of facing the same destiny as the forests of Fennoscandia, where almost no natural old-growth forests remain. Industrial logging in north-west Russia is a big threat to biodiversity in the European taiga. Every year large areas of old-growth forests are logged, and remaining areas are shrinking

because of this large-scale fragmentation. Many of the most valuable intact landscapes of old-growth forests still lack protection, and the pace of creating new protected areas in the region is very slow. At the same time, there are rising commercial interests in the forests of north-west Russia, and international investors are expanding their operations to remote and previously untouched areas.

Preserving these intact areas is of outmost importance if we are to save biodiversity and functioning forest ecosystems in northern Europe. Failing to do so will mean that Europe's last expanses of old-growth forests are lost forever.

### Importance of old-growth forests

Old-growth forest is a habitat for a wide variety of demanding species. Species that do not survive in managed forests.

Preserving intact old-growth forests is crucial in many senses, since functioning ecosystems are the foundation of life on our planet. Ecosystem services include, among other things, food, freshwater, air quality regulation, climate regulation, water regulation, erosion regulation, water purification, waste treatment, disease regulation, pharmaceuticals, pollination and natural hazard regulation. In other words, the forest ecosystem is central to life.

The global economy is annually losing more money from the loss of biodiversity than through the current banking crisis, according to the study *The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity* (TEEB), initiated by the German Federal Ministry

for the Environment and the European Commission. The study puts the annual cost of forest loss at between \$2 trillion and \$5 trillion. The figures come from adding the value of the various services that forests perform, such as providing clean water and absorbing carbon dioxide.

### Biodiversity is essential to life on Earth

Conservation of biodiversity can be described in four different levels of ambition; i) the presence of species, ii) viable populations, iii) ecological integrity, iv) resilience (the ecosystems ability to recover and function after disturbances). To reach the international targets of protected biodiversity, Russian Karelia needs to ensure a long-term result on all four levels. To do so, all remaining intact forests and tracts of old-growth forests need protection from forestry and other forms of exploitation.

Our demand for protection of at least 20 % of all forests in Karelia follows the level that scientists argue is necessary to reach the second ambition level of biodiversity conservation, i.e. viable populations of species. To be certain of reaching an adequate level of ecological integrity and resilience, further conservation efforts are probably also necessary.

The depletion of the forest ecosystems and degradation of the forest biodiversity threatens fundamental processes causing severe negative impacts on human beings and the future health of our planet.

Preserving biodiversity is not only to preserve species and the structures which they are dependent on, but as much in preserving the processes which occur in, and create the natural forests. If the intact massifs and tracts that remain in Karelia are protected now, there are greater opportunities to preserve and maintain the components belonging to the natural forest of north-west Europe. Intact forest areas are important to preserve nature's ability to adapt, and to preserve biodiversity in all levels. They are also important reference areas, important carbon sinks, important for species which need large areas to move in.

