

1. INTRODUCTION

The Russian Far East (RFE) has long been regarded by the central government in Moscow as a timber resource base. As a result, forest resources have been exploited for timber, especially the most accessible locations with valuable resources (Newell & Wilson, 1996; Kakizawa, 1998a). After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the exploitation of timber resources accelerated, causing valuable forests—including mature coniferous and hardwood broad-leaved forests—to decrease both in area and volume (Kakizawa, 1998a; 1998b). Extensive harvesting of these valuable resources expanded the affected area to include remote forests; frequently occurring forest fires have worsened conditions even further in recent years (The World Bank, 1997; Kakizawa, 1998a).

These forests and resources are important globally, regionally and domestically. On the global and regional scales the forests of the RFE are very important for preserving biodiversity including endangered species, for stabilizing climate change and for providing a long-term supply of timber resources. Forests in the region have also played important roles in the regional economy, as a base of the region's social structure and environment, and as the basis of livelihood for indigenous people.