

Thematic Session on Forest Health – March 13, 2007
Green Room, FAO Headquarters, Rome, Italy

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION ON FOREST DIE-BACK ISSUES

STATEMENT BY

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Esteemed Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Russian Federation is most interested in establishing international R&D cooperation and information-sharing arrangements to address the issue of forest-climate interaction related to the extremely high mortality of boreal forests.

The massive die-back of forests is highly prevalent throughout European Russia and in Siberia. Similar phenomena affect many forests in the Northern hemisphere. In our country these issues are being closely monitored by the Russian Center for Forest Health that has a nationwide network of 41 regional branches.

Biotic causes of this process have been detected on an evidence basis. However, there are questions which are yet to be answered:

- There are no estimates to predict further aggravation of the situation with the forest die-back or to assess its potential impact;
- There is no evidence-based data to establish linkages between this phenomenon and climate change, though this assumption remains to be the only explanation;
- We have not yet identified all the causes of high mortality in spruce forests.

Judging from preliminary estimates, our currently available treatment methods and resources are not sufficient to reverse this increasingly aggravating trend.

In a number of regions, this problem is acquiring extraordinarily acute features of an economic, social and environmental crisis. In Arkhangelsk Region alone (in Northwest Russia), the zone of active die-back has embraced high-value forest massifs with a total standing volume of 400 million m³ of softwood timber. A huge “gunpowder barrel” is being formed in the heart of one of the main forest regions of Northern Europe, which – under a combination of factors – could become a source of a major salvo emission of CO₂ into the global atmosphere.

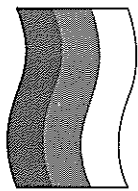
Urgent and comprehensive studies are needed to set basis for serious and potentially radical decisions. The above considerations are very sensitive for the economy and environment of the European community. It would be important to formulate a consolidated opinion on this issue.

It is obvious for us that not only Russia suffers from the mass mortality of forests. This problem is pan-Eurasian and pan-boreal in its scale. Therefore, international cooperation is highly needed in the research and assessment of its adverse impacts and in the coordination of efforts for their mitigation.

We call upon our principal bilateral partners and international organizations, including the FAO and the World Bank, to include these issues in the list of highest priority actions and cooperation programs.

Thank you for attention.

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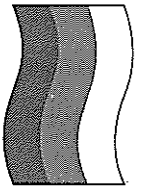
Status of forest die-back in Russia

The Federal Forestry Agency manages
over 733 million ha of forests

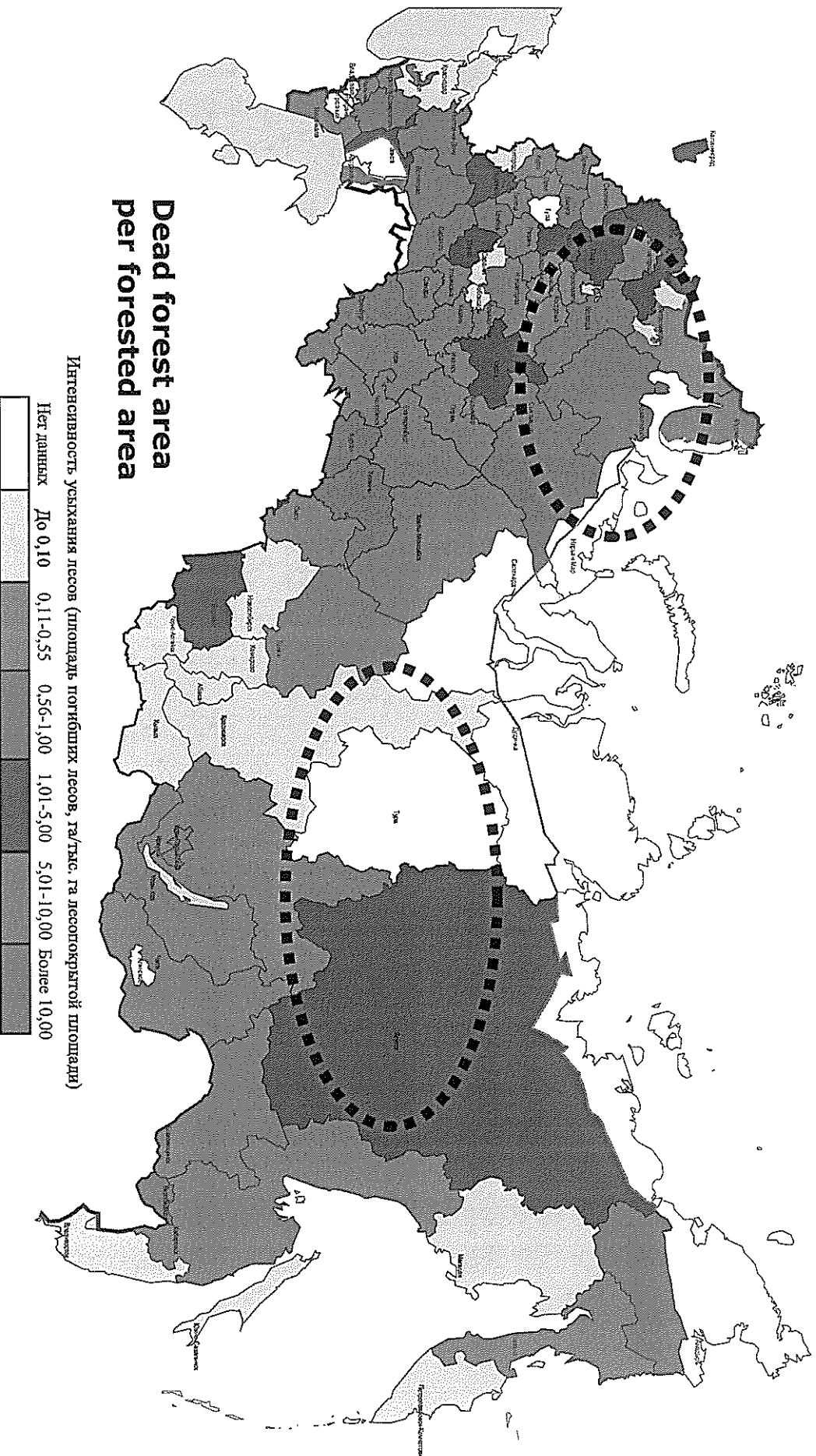
In 2005, forest die-back under the influence
of different negative factors occurred
on an area of 960,900 ha
(including 934,600 ha of boreal coniferous forests)

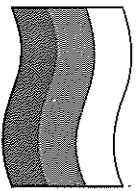


Total extent of forest die-back increased
in 2.4 times compared to 2004;
highest recorded level since the start
of regular monitoring in 1977.

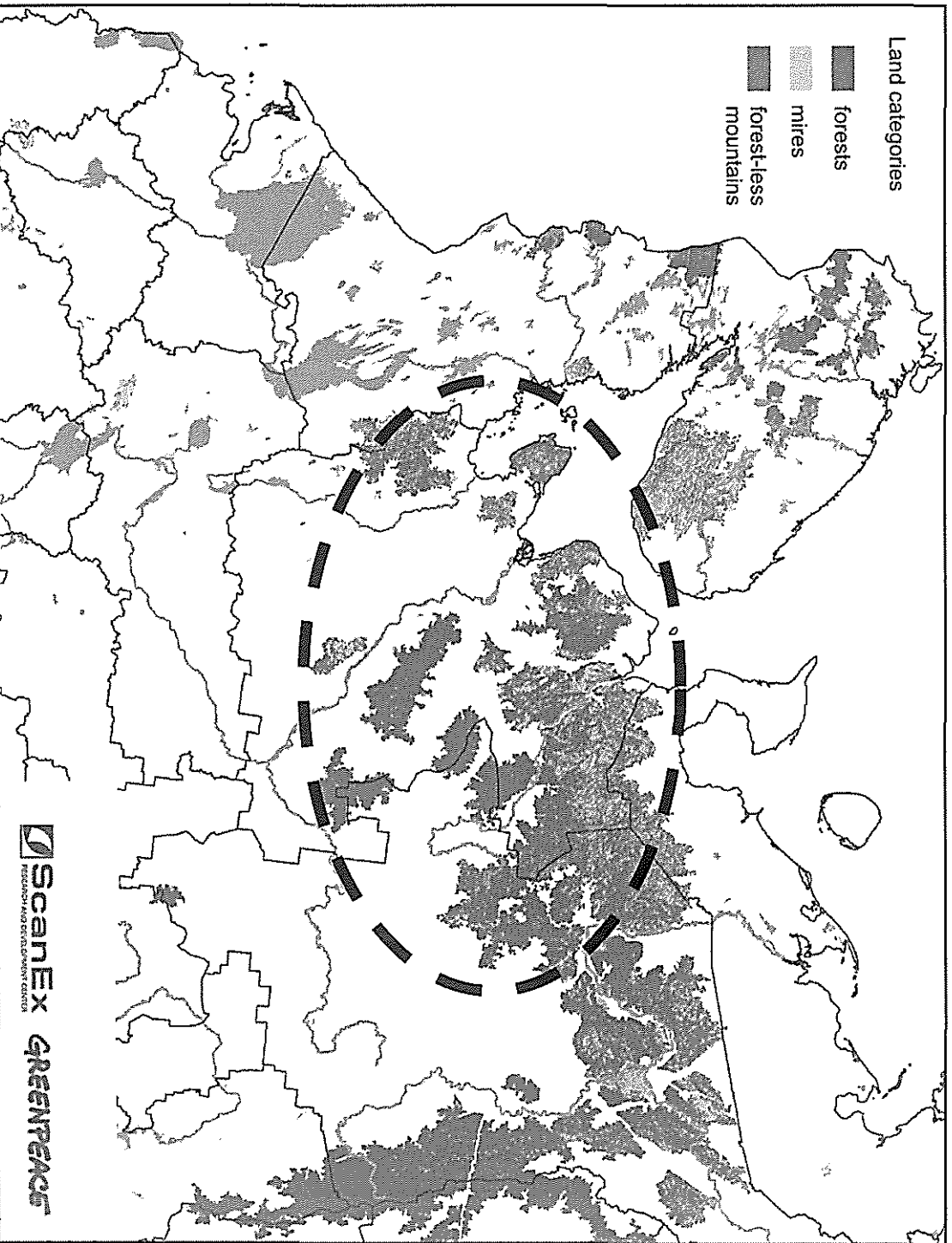
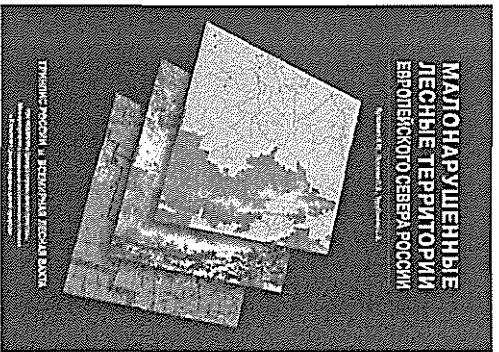


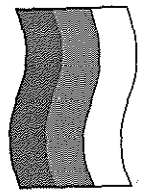
Forest die-back intensity in Russia





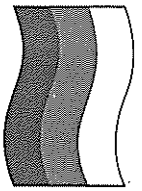
Co-location of intact forest landscapes and forest die-back areas in NW Russia





**Fire hazard and carbon emissions increase
dramatically in weakened boreal forests**



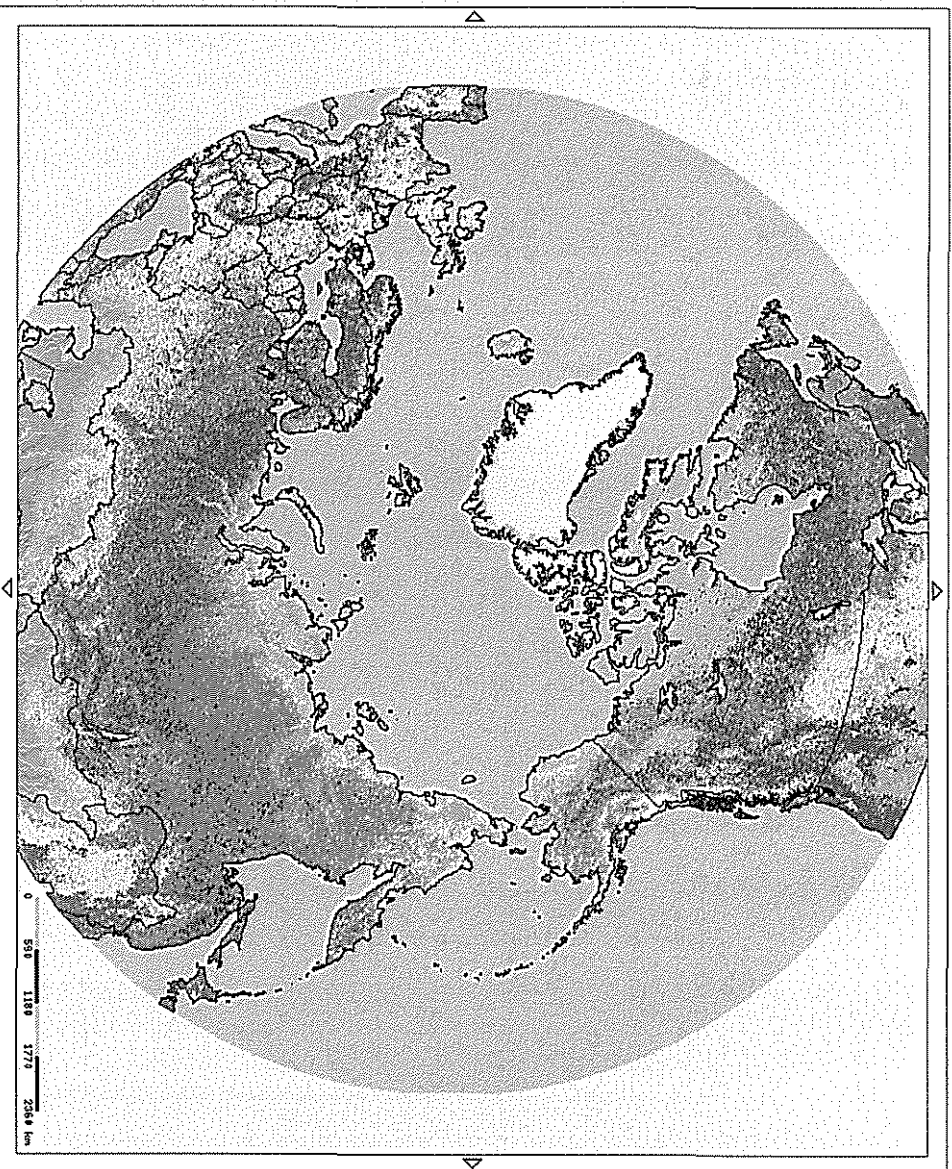


Proposed international training & development center for forest monitoring & assessment

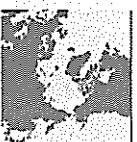
Terra Norte

the information system of the boreal ecosystems monitoring

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Preview



Map control



Legend

- State Boundaries
- Tree Cover, broadleaved, closed
- Tree Cover, broadleaved, open
- Tree Cover, needle-leaved, evergreen
- Tree Cover, needle-leaved, deciduous
- Tree Cover, mixed leaf type
- Mosaic, Tree Cover / Other natural vegetation
- Tree Cover, burnt
- Shrub Cover, closed-open, evergreen
- Shrub Cover, closed-open, deciduous
- Herbaceous Cover, closed-open
- Sparse herbaceous or sparse shrub cover
- Regularly flooded vegetation
- Cultivated and managed areas
- Mosaic, Cropland / Tree Cover / Other natural vegetation

<http://terrannorte.iki.rssi.ru/>