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Logging, Construction in Nature Reserves Get Duma Approval

By The Moscow Times

December 19, 2013

The State Duma gave its final approval on Wednesday to a bill allowing nature reserves to be turned into areas where limited construction, logging and other activities might be allowed.

Currently, the country has 103 nature reserves — territories with unique ecosystems where most types of commercial activities are banned and logging is allowed only to prevent fires.

The bill would allow the conservation status of such areas to be lowered to that of national parks, where some zones remain under special protection, but others might be used for logging and construction of houses, roads and pipelines.

The Natural Resources and Environment Ministry said that about a dozen nature reserves, mostly those located near large cities, had already become popular areas for sports and recreation, and the bill would streamline their use.

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