

# THE LAND OF BIRCH

**The Novgorod Oblast, situated in the Northwest of the Russian Federation, borders on the Leningrad, Pskov, Vologda and Tver regions and occupies 655.3 thousand square meters. The main value of this country is the forest that covers about 62% of its territory and amounts to 4101.7 thousand hectares, of which 4068 thousand ha are under the authority of the Russian Ministry of Natural Resources for the Novgorod Oblast, including 3468.3 thousand ha of lands covered by forest vegetation.**

The Novgorod forests have been exploited since the beginning of the 18th century, when the Russian Emperor Peter the Great ordered the logging of oak forests in the neighborhood of Staraya Russia for shipbuilding. At present, oak forests remain only in the north and south of the Novgorod Oblast and cover an area of 3.8 thousand ha. A prevailing tree species in the region is birch, which takes up 42% of the forest stock, while other species are distributed as follows: pine – 19%, spruce – 18%, aspen – 11% and alder – 9%.

The multiple uses of forest resources are recognized as the basis for the structural reorganization of the local economy. The total forest area in the oblast comes to 3.5 million ha. The annual allowable cut of recent years has been increasing: in 2002 it was 7.6 million cubic meters, in 200 – 8.8 million cubic meters, and could easily reach 12 million cubic meters per year, which is 4 times the size of the current volume of logging (3.3 million cubic meters). Lately there has been a stable growth in the logging volume of the Novgorod Oblast in connection with the construction of new wood-processing plants (sawing and board production) and new capacities of the existing enterprises.

Currently, 43% of the total cutting area in the Novgorod Oblast is on lease. In 2005, 234 of the 1453.7 thousand ha in concession areas

were taken on lease with 3757.4 thousand cubic meters of allowed volume of timber removal. Over 1620 thousand cubic meters of timber was removed under felling contracts. Timber removal does not exceed the yield calculation and is determined by the State Forestry Agency for the Novgorod Oblast by the results of forest auctions and according to the lease contracts.

Reforestation is a new responsibility of forest users. In 2005, the State Forestry Agency for the Novgorod Oblast stored 35 tons of forest seed raw material and extracted 352 kg of seeds to provide local sites with their own saplings. Forest planting with preliminary soil cultivation covered 5.3 thousand ha instead of 5 thousand ha as planned. Moreover, the care of forest plantations was fulfilled with 10 thousand ha. The plan for 2006 is to conduct reforestation works in the Novgorod Oblast in the area of 11 thousand ha, including the growing of forest crops in the area of 6 thousand ha, the transfer of young forest stands to the category of valuable stands in the area of 7 thousand ha, and the cleaning of 16 thousand ha. It is also planned to grow 29 million saplings at forest nurseries, which will enable the extension of the planting area up to 7 thousand ha in 2007.

Timber is traditionally considered to be one of the key shares in export from the Novgorod region. In the marketable export structure, timber takes second place, giving way to mineral