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Logging Called Threat to Krasnodar Reserve

23 December 2008 [By Maria Antonova / Staff Writer](#) Krasnodar regional authorities are turning a blind eye to a

Activists' Efforts

Bolshoi Utrish is a zakaznik, a protected park where some recreational use, such as camping, is permitted. Under a 2001 government decree, the park is supposed to become a zapovednik by 2010, making it federally protected with strict regulations on any human activity.

And although the park remains protected on paper, the zakaznik administration was dispersed in the late 1990s because of a lack of funding. It is now managed by the regional branch of the Federal Forestry Agency, which ordered the road's construction.

According to federal law, any logging activity in a protected area has to undergo a state environmental assessment, which includes public hearings and a calculation of environmental damage, said Mikhail Kreindlin, an expert for Greenpeace in Russia. Another federal law prohibits the destruction of endangered species, and regional authorities themselves prohibited any road construction in this park in 1994, he said.

Official Response

Alexander Byuller, a deputy head of the Krasnodar region forestry agency, confirmed by phone that the 8-meter-wide road was being built for the agency's "internal use."

"The purpose of the clearings is building a fire safety road," Byuller said. He said the felling of endangered species of trees was not prohibited for such purpose, and he denied that the work was illegal because it was cleared by the regional department of emergency situations and state environmental control.

But when asked whether the road would be used solely for fire safety, Byuller said it would "also give access to the coast, where the forestry is already offering plots of land for recreational use."

Earlier this year, someone already won the right to rent 100 hectares on the coast in an auction, he said. "I don't know what will be there, nobody showed me the project," he said.

Although the park's status permits recreational use, clear cutting is prohibited and only temporary structures can be put up. Difficult access to the park's interior has so far ruled out mass tourism, although it attracts campers, some of whom live in the park year-round.

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"We are appalled that they are cutting trees in what we consider our second home," said Alyokhina, adding that rumors were circulating that the site would be completely closed to the public to crcs8670 TDI