

WWF Claims Tiger Victory

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The  **Moscow Times**

A government-appointed working group is expected to recommend a halt to logging in the Bikin River Valley in Russia's Far East when it reports later this month, the World Wildlife Fund said.

Earlier this year it emerged that the valley's virgin forest, which conservationists call "Russia's Amazon" and is home to 10 percent of the world's remaining Siberian tigers, was being exploited for parquet flooring.

Deputy Prime Minister Viktor Zubkov ordered the working group to examine the issue after the WWF handed him a 28,000-signature petition in July, the organization said in an e-mail to supporters Friday.

A WWF spokesman told The Moscow Times that the recommendation was only a "partial" victory because it was expected to seek a halt to logging only in the Bikin Valley, while WWF has been seeking curbs in similar areas across the country.

The timber company Les Export regained long-term leases to exploit forests in the Bikin Valley after winning a court battle together with the Primorye region forestry department

in June.

The lease was contested by environmentalists and indigenous groups who hold rights for commercial nut harvesting in the forest.

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