



REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY AND CIVIL SOCIETY

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PRIORITIES IN THE WORK OF THE RUSSIAN PUBLIC CHAMBER'S COMMISSION ON ENVIRONMENTAL SAFETY AND PROTECTION AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT

Priorities in the work of the Russian Public Chamber's Commission on Environmental Safety and Protection are the country's environmental policy. For many years, we spoke about the necessity of public expert councils at all government levels. In fact, the Public Chamber is the highest public council. A normally functioning civil society is a system of effective and influential public councils at all levels. We would also like to see this in the regions, which are now establishing their regional public chambers.

In general, we may speak about the organization of work at three levels. First, it is the country's general policy (environmental in this case); second, it is certain priorities or industrial areas; and, third, it is specific hot spots.

Probably, the Public Chamber's mission is the country's general policy. So far, we have been unable to change the situation in the right direction; therefore, the topicality of this priority is doubtless. What were we able to do? We were able to hold the Public Chamber's Plenary Meeting «On Russia's Environmentally Sustainable Development». It turned out that many people do not know what sustainable development is, or they still think that sustainable development is an exclusively economic notion. Against the backdrop of the politically understated role of ecology, representatives of very different areas – from religion to business – understand the importance of the problem very well. Nobody now says that it is impossible. Now we just have to decide when and how we are going to deal with these problems. In terms of economics, it is better to start now, but we are still unable to start.

Requests, based on the results of the plenary meeting, were sent to legislative and executive bodies. The meeting of the Russian Public Chamber's representatives with Russian President V.V. Putin in Novo-Ogarevo adopted this topic without reservation, stressing the importance of ecology for national projects.

Experience shows that the consideration of environmental aspects is a binding condition for solving any problems, including the framework of any national project. There are two aspects without which the implementation of any national projects is impossible; they are ecology and culture.

Environmental priorities are also obvious for the new composition of the State Duma of the Legislative Assembly of the Russian Federation. Last year, the Public Chamber was hardly able to respond to the codes discussed: the Water Code, the Forestry Code... Something was heard. This year, the commission has examined no draft laws, because the Duma has considered not a single environmentally important draft law from among those announced previously. Five draft environmental laws, noted by the Decision of the Russian Public Chamber's Plenary Meeting «On Russia's Environmentally Sustainable Development», were planned for consideration, but they all are still traveling through legislative and executive bodies. All the same, these draft laws are to be implemented in the nearest future.

Priorities in the work of the Russian Public Chamber's Commission on Environmental Safety and Protection are the country's environmental policy.

What can be done in specific areas? We see environmental conflicts going on across the country. The Public Chamber issued two general requests. One is Baikal, and here we hit the bull's eye, and a rational decision was finally made. And the second concerns amendments to the Urban-Planning Code; here we have not yet been heard. There are very many specific issues and conflicts. Each demands a serious examination of the situation. We might have established a sort of a rapid response force. A conflict arises; people who understand the problem get involved in it; and a balanced decision is made. The Russian Federal Agency for Nuclear Energy has created something similar to it under its public council. To ensure this work, we need a network of professional partners in the center and in the regions, like centers of environmental policy, many of which have united into the all-Russian public organization the Center of Environmental Policy and Culture. This name reflects the previous experience: human environmental consciousness is a part, or more precisely, a characteristic of the level of human culture. The role of public councils is great. The Public Chamber is the highest council, but we have many administrations in the center and in the regions. Here, the Public Chamber's mission is to monitor the work of these public councils. These councils have been established almost everywhere, and they are inactive almost everywhere. Their activity largely depends on their members. Councils will not work by themselves.

The diligence of civil society determines the successful solution to all these issues. Russia now has two priorities: natural resources and civil society. The environmental movement's objective is to share this with other sectors of civil society. The above priorities are not politically accepted now. We must change this situation. Civil society must demand the observance of law or insist on changing it. Other forms of diligence cannot find serious support and understanding.

No matter how much we speak about the importance of developing the environmental sector of civil society, it is not correct in general. We are unable to develop civil society separately by sector and by the environmental sector, in particular. The problem is in the level of the development of society. A highly developed society focuses on ecology. We will experience this too. Businesspeople in all developed countries allocate part of the budget for the development of civil society. Russia will experience this too. Until we have an agency responsible for ecology, we will have no finances. A law has been adopted that envisages support on behalf of business, but this law totally neglects the environmental topic.

Civil society can function only in the presence of professional public organizations. If civil society

wants to be heard, it must give an expert opinion on the situation and expert proposals to solve the problem. People must deal with problems professionally. Otherwise, such diligence would only be a nuisance both for society and for the government. One more important aspect. Ecology is not yet an officially recognized priority, but for civil society, it is already a priority; therefore, society actively protests against negative attitudes to ecology. As soon as this priority gains official support; that is, civil society finally delegates this concern to the authorities, civil society will perform nonprotest environmental actions.

V.M. Zakharov

Chair of the Commission on Environmental Safety and Protection, the Russian Public Chamber

PROTECTED TERRITORIES AND RESERVE MUSEUMS: POOLING ENVIRONMENTAL AND CULTURAL OPPORTUNITIES

Ecology and culture are inseparable. I think few people would question this statement today. This is a key position for us to work with society.

Protected territories – reserves and national parks, which preserve both primeval natural complexes and territories that are closely related to Russian history and culture and that often have unique cultural landscapes and objects of cultural heritage – can serve, in their educational work, as models for pooling environmental and cultural opportunities.

Recently we have handed over to Russian President V.V. Putin an open letter about the results of a conference in which the representatives of reserves, national parks, and reserve museums took part. Few people are aware that reserve museums fulfill, alongside other functions, the important tasks of preserving their natural environment, valuable historical and cultural landscapes, and have a colossal educational potential. I think that nobody needs to be explained how important Yasnaya Polyana (literally, the Clear Glade), where Leo Tolstoy lived and worked; the Kulikovo Pole (literally, the Sandpiper Field), where the Russians defeated the Golden Hordes in 1380; etc., are for Russia. Discussions at the conference showed that reserve museums are interested in pooling their efforts together with protected natural territories. They have a pile of unresolved common legislative and managerial problems, related, on the one hand, to the preservation of cultural objects located on specially protected natural territories, and, on the other, to the natural environments of historical estates and other cultural monuments, which have the status of reserve museums and are inseparable from the natural environment. These problems can be solved only by pooling the efforts of all interested parties.

The year 1992 saw a legislative attempt to link the preservation of natural and cultural legacies by creating a frame federal law that would set common principles and approaches in preserving and protecting valuable natural and cultural landscapes. However, this attempt failed. Today, unfortunately, both nature and culture have found themselves outside the government policy. Reserve museums are as neglected by the Russian Ministry of Culture as protected territories are by the Russian Ministry of Natural Resources. The Public Chamber's support for both would be extremely timely and useful.

The current situation is aggravated by the absence of a real mechanism of public influence on legislative and managerial decisions in the sphere under discussion. What is to be done to get a real opportunity to mitigate in any way the negative processes that are developing in the environmental sphere, to drive the position of experts home to the government decision makers and the country's leadership, and to actually facilitate the formation of environmental culture?

I would like to say a few words about the idea of creating a public council under the Public Chamber's Commission on Environmental Safety and Protection, which V.M. Zakharov, head of the commission, has announced. We all know that the Public Environmental Council

Protected territories – reserves and national parks, which preserve both primeval natural complexes and territories that are closely related to Russian history and culture and that often have unique cultural landscapes and objects of cultural heritage – can serve, in their educational work, as models for pooling environmental and cultural opportunities.

under the Russian Ministry of Natural Resources has, in fact, died: it has not gathered for more than a year. In addition, I have an impression that it is impossible to bring it back to life. Maybe, there is sense in establishing a public environmental council under the Public Chamber and inviting high-ranking officials from various departments there to set up contacts with them. I think that it is necessary to try to implement this idea. It would be a good instrument for interaction between public society and the authorities.

I think it is important to note that all-Russian environmental competitions are an effective instrument of dissemination of environmental knowledge, and government support for such all-Russian competitions is very important. In the middle of the last year, the Russian president issued a decree that stressed the necessity of conducting competitions, identifying young talents, and supporting them in all areas of activities within the framework of the national project Education. We were able to hold the Reserved Islands competition. However, it was not an easy job. Initially, it was kicked off to the Ministry of Natural Resources; the ministry shrugged it off to the Russian Federal Service for Supervision of Nature Management (Rosprirodnadzor), and it was the end of April that the process finally started, while the competition was to finish on June 30. Yet, despite the fact that financial support for this large organizational work was symbolic, the competition was held at a high level mainly thanks to the interested support of the public and the team of teachers, who traditionally conduct the Vernadsky Readings for school students.

Network structures, both government and nongovernment, play a very important role in the development of civil society. Cooperation with network organizations and their support can yield a substantial effect in achieving real environmental and educational goals. Moreover, this is an indispensable source of information on the situation in the regions.

In connection with this, I would like to note the role of the system of protected natural territories, where initiative civil groups are developing today.

In particular, the Baikal reserve initiated the establishment of the district development council in the Kaban district of the Buryat Republic. In the Republic of Marii El, the Large Kokshaga reserve and a municipal government also pooled their efforts to create a council, which is now actively attracting funds to develop tourism, support small business, etc.

Several reserves and national parks, for instance, the Astrakhan' and the Volga-Kama reserves, have established nongovernment organizations that assist in the development of several areas of activity, which are practically not financed by the government.

Another promising area is support for the development of environmental volunteerism, where young volunteers solve practical problems of nature preservation and cultural heritage. This movement is still very weak in our country. Here, the system of protected territories could be of great help, and it is already attracting volunteers mainly from among students. Young volunteer camps are becoming traditional in some specially protected natural territories (for example, in the Teberdinsk and the Baikal reserves). Active young people are also helping natural parks. The Mikhailovskoe reserve museum has been developing the movement of «well-wishers» for several years. Volunteer environmental camps are important for the environmental education of the campers and for the formation of an active civil position and responsible attitude to the country's natural and cultural heritage in young people.

N.R. Danilina

Director of the Zapovedniki EcoCenter

GLOBAL SAFETY AND ENVIRONMENTAL CULTURE

We can move to global safety by creating federal, national, and international projects; on the other hand, we can do so through regional initiatives. We can accomplish our goal only by combining these two ways.

When assessing the current initiatives, it is necessary to take into account a number of important factors. Let us consider the so-called boundary effect. Russia has a very long boundary, which is the specificity of our country. We must account for the situation in neighboring countries. To make sure that our neighbors and we do not bother each other, a project on creating the International Coordination Council «Altai is Our Common Homeland» has been initiated. This initiative belonged to public organizations and has developed since then. Governors, chairs of legislative assemblies, leading politicians, public organizations, scientists, and six constituent members (two Mongolian, two Russian, one Chinese, and one Kazakh) joined their efforts to solve common problems. «Altai is Our Common Home» is already five years old and holds annual sessions, at which mutually important issues are discussed.

The Public Chamber's support is very important for us. We understand that we work not only for the sake of our territory but also for the sake of the country as a whole. We solve not only regional but also federal problems. Hence, the federal interest and support would be very useful. Altai is a complicated region; four world religions coexist there. Many ethnicities live on this territory. At present, this region is the most peaceful. At the same time, against the background of difficult problems, interconfessional and interethnic relations are always a risk factor. «Altai Is Our Common Home» was created and is now working actively to eliminate this risk.

Priorities of our project are clear. As for energy generation on mountainous territories, such as Western Mongolia and Altai, large-scale energy generation is problematic there. Small-scale energy generation and, of course, the use of alternative energy sources are the most effective. In this connection, we held several large conferences that outlined the priority trends and types of small-scale energy generation. These projects have started to develop. No doubt, the adoption of a federal law on small-scale energy generation would stimulate this process. If the adoption of such a law is delayed, we could discuss the possibility to adopt a regional law that would support the development of small-scale energy generation (the International Coordination Council has already proposed this).

The International Coordination Council «Altai is Our Common Home» works in the legal sphere as well. It is very important for us to know our neighbors' legislations. Altaic wildlife reserves in Russia differ from those in China. To plan any activity with regard to biospheric processes, it is necessary to know the status of each contiguous territory.

I would like to advert to environmental culture. What makes small peoples unique? It is their precious experience in adapting to a given territory. There are no useless peoples on the planet. Each people

When speaking about global safety, we should advert to its main stabilizing factor, human consciousness. As soon as we begin focusing on this trend, contributing to it, and influencing and «opening» human consciousness, we will begin approaching global safety. All other trends, such as technological, economic, and legal, are derivatives from human consciousness.

keeps its unique experience. It is of no importance whether this people is large or small. Humanity as a whole should be interested in keeping this unique experience.

Let us consider a concrete example. There are studies on the properties of certain alpine medicinal herbs and animals. It is well known that yak meat has an immunomodulatory effect. Who will breed yaks in the highlands apart from people who have been living there for a very long time and have adapted to this environment and worked out respective economic forms? Nobody. There are many other examples that confirm this idea.

When speaking about global safety, we should advert to its main stabilizing factor, human consciousness. As soon as we begin focusing on this trend, contributing to it, and influencing and «opening» human consciousness, we will begin approaching global safety. All other trends, such as technological, economic, and legal, are derivatives from human consciousness.

Again, everything is important in this respect: religious experience, the experience of interconfessional dialogue, traditional nature management, and the traditional world outlook; the latter perceives the world as an integrity of people and nature viewed as inseparable in traditional culture. The integral cosmos unites an individual and a spire. This unique experience of true cooperation and evolution, about which we dream, is typical of traditional society. We should only go back to it.

However, adverting to traditional experience is clearly not enough. We should now consider new technological approaches that have been worked out by humankind. New technologies in combination with the traditional approach may result in a unique synthesis that will probably help us overcome the system crisis into which we are entering.

Are immediate breakthroughs possible? Probably no. The whole human experience shows that breakthroughs usually took place on small territories and in closed communities. As is known, monastic systems saved the economy and culture of the West. Similarly, relatively small territories with unique biospheric potentials, which preserve traditional culture and, at the same time, develop new technologies, may become demonstration areas on which humanity will solve its problems.

Obviously, this immediately casts doubts on certain technological decisions directly associated with the development of Altai. Is it necessary to build new hydroelectric power plants? Is it vital to lay a gas pipeline through a UNESCO-protected area? All these questions should be widely discussed. Sometimes, designers cannot understand certain requirements that are difficult to formalize. Local population considers Ukok

Plateau a sacred place. It is a sanctuary for local people, and they would not listen to any arguments. Naturally, they view any interference as an insult to their honor, dignity, and beliefs. Do we want such effects on the near-border territory? If no, I cannot understand why we are working for them. In other words, does it lead to global safety? Not exactly, it seems to me.

I would like to say some words about environmental culture. Environmental culture is the most important factor. We should take into account the following in this respect: any knowledge becomes a belief only if we feel it, if it is emotional. Without culture, art, literature, and religious experience, knowledge just slides on the surface of our consciousness but does not grow into it. Hence, we should try to combine the accumulated colossal material with the existing cultural practice. In this case, this unique material will fall not only into the sphere of knowledge but also into the sphere of beliefs.

I think we may pose a question about a special 15-minute program on energy saving before federal TV channels that are budgeted by taxpayers.

TV channels will hardly lose much if they tell people about both large-scale and everyday energy saving for 15 minutes a week.

I am sure that if such a program worked for a year, we would observe improvements. This is a small-scale proposal. It does not require huge funds but can lead to a considerable positive effect.

I think we should move to global safety starting from the regional level. In the first place, we must solve the problems of environmental culture.

M.Yu. Shishin
Professor, Dr. Sci. (Philos.)
The Altai – the 21st Century Foundation (Barnaul)

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION SHOULD NOT WAIT FOR TECHNICAL UPGRADING

A Duma deputy told me why there is no ministry of environmental problems, the environmental doctrine remains on paper, and the role of environmental policy is vilipended. His explanation was very simple: «It is very undesirable to set out on the path of environmentalism until we fully upgrade industry. This would deprive us of foreign investments». Unfortunately, we will have to wait another 10 to 15 years until we transfer to new technologies.

In my opinion, today we can do something concrete at our meetings, when developing universal views on topical environmental problems. Environmental education should not wait for technological upgrading. Ideas become material when they become popular among masses. At present, environmental ideas are unpopular among our officials; we have understood why. Now we should prepare the critical mass to ensure a breakthrough in public consciousness.

Several global problems deserve special attention. First, Russia has not signed the Aarhus Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making, and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters, although Mr. Mironov said at a congress that this idea would be central for his party. Let us hope that Just Russia will undertake solving this problem.

Second, a draft law on environmental culture still lies somewhere in the depths of the Duma Environmental Committee. Each time, its consideration is delayed. However, in my opinion, if the Public Chamber sent its concrete recommendations to the State Duma, it would be easier for the Environmental Committee to include this draft law into the plan of Duma's legislative activity.

The Ministry of Education and Science has not recognized the International Strategy of the UN Economic Commission for Europe for education in the interests of sustainable development as a document subject to compulsory implementation. In developing standards for the training of environmentalists, this aspect is ignored. When the president of the Russian Federation rejected the Draft Law On Environmental Education in 1996, it was said in the substantiation: «Why do you pose the question about environmental education and not physical education, mathematical education, and so on?» In all appearances, our Ministry of Education and Science still views this problem from this standpoint. It would be better if the Ministry of Education and Science viewed international documents from professional positions.

Finally, without waiting for the restoration of the Ministry of Environmental Protection or a similar body, the Public Chamber has the right to ask executive bodies to organize a coordination council or an interdepartmental public-state committee to coordinate environmental education and culture in Russia. On this basis, it would be possible to discuss the necessity to form a national strategy of education in the interests of sustainable development, in which environmental education is of basic importance.

S.A. Stepanov

Rector of the International Independent University of Environmental and Political Sciences

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FROM DIALOGUE TO PARTNERSHIP

The Chelyabinsk oblast public organization the Women's Network in the Urals was established in 1999. The members of this organization are scientists, doctors, and teachers who see their goal in setting up an open communication between the authorities and society for solving environmental, social, and health problems.

The priority areas of the organization's activity are:

- The preservation and rational use of water resources, the provision of quality potable water for the population, the revival and development of the public movement in Chelyabinsk oblast for the study and preservation of small rivers. The Potable Water project implementation began an open dialogue between the public, including scientists, specialists, and experts, and the authorities on intermunicipal cooperation and integrated control over water resources.
- The participation of the public in the primary inventory of obsolete and banned pesticides, the identification of their unauthorized storages, informing people of the impacts of persistent organic pollutants on human health, and initiating decisions by local governments on persistent organic pollutants.

Much attention is paid to the problems of continuous environmental education. A broad circle of specialists is elaborating this topic: school teachers, daycare-center trainers, the instructors of centers of additional education, scientists, university professors, librarians, and the workers of houses of culture. Special attention is paid to the social resources of environmental education. Best practices are generalized and disseminated, and books, expert articles, and roundtable proceedings are published. At present, the organization is involved in the preparation of public hearings on the legal framework for environmental education in the Southern Urals. Environmental education was inventoried, and the John D. and Catherine T. McArthur Foundation supported the preparation for the publication of the collection of materials entitled The Main Resource, Potential, and Prospects for the Development of Environmental Education in the Southern Urals.

The Women's Network in the Urals is experienced in conducting social research, consultancy, seminars, and trainings in environmentalism, social security, and health care for nonprofit organizations. The members of the organization take part in the public review of draft laws and programs on social and environmental safety; participate in the development of local self-governance and democratic procedures of managerial decision-making; interact with women's, environmental, and youth organizations and information-analytical centers of Chelyabinsk, Moscow, and Yekaterinburg; affiliate with the Chelyabinsk Oblast Public Chamber; and participate in the creation of the oblast resource center for nonprofit organizations.

The Women's Network in the Urals is open for cooperation, as well as for business and friendly partnership relations.

M.Ya. Sobol'

Women's Network in the Urals, Chelyabinsk

The members of the organization called the Women's Network in the Urals are scientists, doctors, and teachers who see their goal in setting up an open communication between the authorities and society for solving environmental, social, and health problems.

The coordinates of the Chelyabinsk oblast public organization the Women's Network in the Urals:

Tel./fax: (351) 266-73-13, (351) 263-82-08

E-mail: smaria@chel.surnet.ru

We have not been mentioning for quite a while a serious achievement of the environmental organizations of our country – the development of Russia’s Environmental Doctrine. Yet it was prepared on the Russian president’s request back in 2001. The doctrine has been launched officially, but absolutely nothing has been done yet. Therefore, the environmental commission must not ignore this flagrant fact, because many officials deal with environmental problems in an absolutely mediocre and ineffective way. I think that the Environmental Safety Commission of the new convocation should begin its work with an official request about what has been done to implement this basic environmental document. Public organizations are unable to do it officially, but the commission can do it. The officials must constantly feel public control over their work; otherwise, they will do nothing.

Another urgent problem is the absence of an environmental ministry in Russia. Only two countries in the world can «boast» of this – Russia and Honduras. Well, let it be an agency if not a ministry.

The issue of creating and developing a civil society has been urgent since the Green Cross started to function in Russia. Our organization, not waiting until it was posed officially, has been dealing with civil society very seriously. In my opinion, we may say that we have an effective civil society at the federal level. In particular, the idea of creating public councils, which was proposed at the Civil Forum, is being implemented. By the example of the Public Council at the Russian Federal Agency for Nuclear Energy (Rosatom), we may say that it not only exists on paper but also brings a lot of good in reality. For example, thanks to the activity of Rosatom’s Public Council, a decision was made to resettle the village Muslyumovo, which was exposed to radioactive pollution as a result of the 1957 disaster at the Mayak Production Association. After the problem was discussed at the Public Council, the Rosatom leadership agreed to allocate 600 million rubles and render what all environmentalists had long been speaking of – assistance to the affected villagers. In other words it is, no doubt, possible to use the instruments of civil society for resolving large environmental problems. Although not always everything goes well.

How are we to create the cells of civil society at the municipal level and locally? I think we can borrow this experience from the United States, where the heads of administrations have groups of public advisors. If a small settlement has an environmental problem related, say, to hazardous industrial production, this group meets to solve it. These people do not represent public organizations, because public organizations do not reach as far as this level –public organizations are simply nonexistent in a small settlement. These people are teachers, firefighters, etc. They form an ad hoc group of public advisors to solve a specific problem at the local level. Despite the resistance of governors, such groups can also be established in Russia; the first such entities have already started to operate. We know that they already enjoy the support of the heads of administrations.

First, I would like to note a positive fact that the Public Chamber has the Environmental Safety and Protection Commission. This is very useful for the «green» movement in general and for the dissemination of the ideas of sustainable development.

S.I. Baranovskii

The Russian Green Cross

ECODAL', A FAR EASTERN INTERREGIONAL PUBLIC ORGANIZATION

One of the main objectives in the current legal environment, we see in promoting the constitutional rights of citizens to participate in the making of environmentally important decisions.

To this end, the lawyers of our organization render assistance to executive bodies, local governments, citizens, and NGOs in organizing and holding public discussions of planned economic activities in the sphere of nature management on the territory of Khabarovsk and Primorskii krajs.

Thus, in 2007, on the request of the Amursk district administration, we held a seminar called «The Participation of Citizens and Public Organizations in the Public Discussions of Planned Economic Activities in the Sphere of Nature Management in Amur District (the City of Amursk).» We rendered assistance in organizing and holding public hearings called «Looking for Ways to Rehabilitate the Chernaya River in Order to Realize the Civil Rights for the Favorable Environment.» The hearings were initiated by citizens due to the extreme pollution of the river with wastewater. More than 30 people, including the representatives of the Russian Federal Service for Environmental, Technical, and Nuclear Supervision (Rostekhnadzor); the city water treatment plant; and the Khabarovsk city administration, discussed this problem.

At present, there is a tendency to hold public discussions on large projects executed by some companies. We think that nonprofit organizations must use such opportunities to be acquainted with project documentation beforehand and, if possible, improve its environmental component. For example, Ecodal's head together with the representatives of other NGOs took part in a Moscow roundtable to discuss the results of an independent review of the ways of natural gas export from the Kovyktinskoe gas condensate field. The roundtable resulted in a protocol, which reflected NGO proposals.

As major changes, especially concerning the scope and procedures of public discussions, have been introduced into the Urban-Planning Code since January 1, 2007, we think that it is necessary to assist citizens and initiative groups in exercising their rights to participate in urban planning.

At present, our organization actively monitors the observance of civil rights during the organization and holding of public hearings on the draft Introduction of Changes to the Rules of Land Management and Construction in the City of Khabarovsk.

These public hearings were organized by the Khabarovsk local government body, and the body authorized to hold the public hearings appointed a commission for the preparation of the Draft Rules of Land Management and Construction in the City of Khabarovsk, but public representatives were not included into it.

Note that issues regulated by these rules are extremely important for every citizen of Khabarovsk.

The Russian Urban-Planning Code states that the rules of land management and construction are developed in order to create conditions

Ecodal is a Far Eastern interregional public association, created in 1998; its goals are dissemination of environmental knowledge, protection of the violated environmental rights and interests of citizens and public associations.

for the sustainable development of territories, preservation of the environment and objects of cultural legacy; territory planning; observance of the rights and legal interests of individuals and companies; etc.

The Rules of Land Management and Construction is one of the most important urban-planning documents, which set the main areas of urban development. The rules are to create a legal environment for safe and favorable human life, to limit the negative impact of economic and other activities on the environment, and to protect the rational use of natural resources and objects of cultural legacy in the interests of the present and future generations.

In order to provide additional information about the public hearings on the Draft Introduction of Changes to the Rules of Land Management and Construction in the City of Khabarovsk and to draw proposals on the draft, we, jointly with other public organizations, made a decision to hold a preliminary discussion of the project and invite the interested citizens and public organizations of Khabarovsk.

In preparation for the discussion, we developed a memo for participants in public hearings, which explains the necessity and importance of taking part in the discussion of the Rules of Land Management and Construction, the procedures of public hearings, and the corresponding civil rights.

An argumentative application, stating the necessity of retrofitting the Draft Introduction of Changes to the Rules of Land Management and Construction in the City of Khabarovsk, was prepared and sent to the commission for the preparation of the Draft Rules of Land Management and Construction in the City of Khabarovsk.

The application stressed the importance of providing the interested citizens, public organizations, and their representatives with an opportunity to attend the meetings of the commission. We proposed to prolong the period of the public hearings on the draft rules and to conduct another meeting attended by the inhabitants of the city after the retrofit of the draft rules. We also stressed the necessity of developing the procedures of public hearings on urban planning on the territory of the city of Khabarovsk.

We think that, as a result, the Khabarovsk city Duma will approve the Draft Introduction of Changes to the Rules of Land Management and Construction in the City of Khabarovsk with regard to the protocol of the public hearings and the conclusion on the results of the public hearings.

Ecodal lays a great emphasis on the interaction with the Environmental Safety and Protection Commission of the Russian Federation and other environmental organizations.

In March 2007, the Far Eastern Branch of the World Wildlife Foundation (WWF Russia) organized, jointly with the Russian Public Chamber's Commission for Environmental Safety and Protection and the Scientific-Public Council of the Coordinating Committee for the Sustainable Development of the Amur River Basin, a roundtable on the protection of the Amur River from transborder pollution. It was preceded by a special poll concerning the Amur environmental problems and ways of solving them.

The goal of the roundtable was to inform the population and the representatives of mass media and scientific and public organizations about the urgency of environmental problems in the Lower Amur in particular and in the Amur basin in general, the possible consequences of the Amur's transborder pollution for human health and the ecosystem of the river, actions undertaken by the authorities to solve them, promising ways of improving the situation in the interests of the sustainable development of Khabarovsk krai and the Amur region.

About 45 people, including the representatives of the Khabarovsk krai government, the krai legislative Duma, Rostekhnadzor, the Russian Federal Service for Supervision in the Sphere of Consumer Rights Protection and Human Well-Being (Rospotrebnadzor), the Russian Public Chamber, and scientific and noncommercial organizations, took part in the roundtable.

The roundtable resulted in the appeal of the noncommercial associations and scientific organizations of the Amur basin to the Public Chamber of the Russian Federation and the authorities that attended the plenary meeting of the Russian Public Chamber.

I.B. Bogdan

Chair of the Council of the Far Eastern Interregional Environmental Public Organization Ecodal

INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR ANIMAL WELFARE

Very often, the policy of the Russian Federation is not based on environmentalist principles. This attitude creates many problems, in particular, the fulfillment of Russia's international obligations. Russia has signed a number of conventions, and it ought to fulfill them, but there is no special federal law so far that would dot the it's in this sphere. In other words, we must influence the government.

I would like to support the idea of close cooperation between the Russian Public Chamber's Commission on Environmental Safety and mass media. Indeed, this relation is very important. We, on our part, work closely with them. Unfortunately, all the time we come across the reluctance of Russian mass media to disclose real environmental problems. While international mass media, owing to the absence of Russia's distinct environmental policy, depict Russia as a highly environmentally polluted country with no understanding of environmental safety and as a global threat. Therefore, we must do all we can to encourage Russian journalists to be brave and enthusiastic enough to speak out about Russia's urgent environmental problems.

In the Soviet Union, various interdepartmental commissions used to deal with serious environmental problems, for example, the Baikal Commission. Now such commissions are nonexistent, and, as a result, many problems simply drop out of sight. It would be advisable to restore at least some of those commissions.

As for environmental education, I think that the Russian citizens are generally concerned with environmental problems. As a rule, these problems are silenced and neglected in the corridors of power. This situation necessitates the development of environmental educational systems at schools and universities.

If we speak about the development of civil society's local initiatives and the establishment of a dialogue with the authorities, then I can speak about our work in the Chukchi Peninsula as an example. We have been developing environmental tourism in this region for three years. We closely cooperate with the Chukchi Peninsula Red Cross, which deals with social problems. Fifty-five thousand people live in the Chukchi Peninsula (including 16 000 indigenous people) and take an active part in social life. A serious breakthrough occurred when the new governor's team came and created public organizations. Although they were largely created by directives from above, they work very efficiently. For example, all Chukchi children are taken out to summer camps. The work with the indigenous people covers many spheres. Mass media play an important role here. Each yaranga (a tent-like traditional mobile home of Chukchi nomads) has a radio set, and people know what is going on in the world. Many competitions are held, in particular, in ecotourism. Moreover, health programs are implemented. Our foundation worked jointly with Yakov Marshak, who conducted trainings to prevent alcoholism. All educational, social, medical, and environmental programs are interrelated, and they yield positive results.

Our foundation is the Russian representation of the international organization, and this predetermines our specifics. Russian government agencies often do not listen to our opinion and do not reply to letters written on the stationeries of international organizations. It is obvious that Russia, in its state policy, forgets about the fact that environmentalism has no boundaries.

M.N. Vorontsova

The International Foundation for Animal Welfare (IFAW)

THE OMSK ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE

In 2007, the Environmental Committee's experts represented the public in the organizing committee of the city's month of clean air. This competition, held by the city administration, involved all environmental agencies and was aimed toward improving control over automotive pollution.

The Environmental Committee's experts are members of the Irtysh steering committee, which is to introduce the principles of sustainable basin control over water resources in Omsk oblast. In 2007, the Environmental Committee's experts represented the steering committee at the 7th General Assembly of the International Network of Basin Organizations (Hungary), where the Om River control plan was presented. The plan is to promote cooperation between the public and the municipal authorities.

Another important area of the committee's work is environmental education and enlightenment for university and school students. Supported by the Center for Russian Environmental Policy, the Environmental Committee and its partners have organized and conducted the city competition «Solid Household Wastes Are Our Common Problem». This competition started in December 2006. The goal of the competition is to promote the recycling of plastic bottles and other solid household wastes. School students aged 8–17 from all types of the city and oblast schools took part in this competition.

Days of defense against environmental hazards are conducted every year in Omsk oblast. The Environmental Committee is a staff member of the days of defense in Omsk. The Environmental Committee initiated the regional conference «Environmental Safety Problems», which was held at the Omsk Law Institute in 2007. The conference was attended by the representatives of the federal, regional, and municipal governments; teachers and students of universities and institutes; and the leaders of the regional environmental movement. They discussed environmental problems that were included into the environmental policy of Omsk and its oblast: the Irtysh water content, automotive pollution and its impact on human health, and the ways of public participation in preparing managerial decisions. The conference decided to publish the presented reports and to hand over the proposals on the system of the Irtysh River flow regulation to the oblast legislative assembly. The proposals were handed over during the public hearings, held on May 17, 2007, on the construction of the hydropower facility in Omsk oblast. The Environmental Committee was invited to take part in the hearings as a representative of the environmental public.

The Environmental Committee's experts organizationally supported the conference dedicated to the International Nature Conservation Day. The conference work included a plenary meeting, a roundtable for the public and the authorities, and several workshops with competition entries for school students. The roundtable called the Problems of the Omsk Region's Bodies of Water was attended by the representatives of the Omsk and oblast administrations, educational establishments, public organizations, and businesses. During the discussion, a decision was made to draw an appeal to the heads of the municipal districts and to the governor of Omsk oblast to organize actions for the liquidation of garbage along the banks of the bodies of water.

S.V. Kostarev

The Environmental Committee, a nonprofit organization, Omsk

The Environmental Committee, a nonprofit organization, operates in Omsk oblast.

It unites environmental specialists from several universities and institutes of the City of Omsk. The committee is a member of the public coordinating council and the development strategy council at the Omsk Mayor's Office. A working group for environmental safety has been established within these councils. Within this working group, the Environmental Committee's experts represent the environmental interests of the public in the municipal government. This activity comprises the preparation of proposals and the design of programs that enhance environmental policy. All proposals are considered at the meetings of the councils and then are handed over to the Omsk city administration to be used for the development of local programs.

THE NOVOKUZNETSK ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION AGENCY

I think it is important to use mass media to create a strong interest among political parties in the inclusion of environmental priorities into their election programs. This may introduce an additional competitive aspect between them in the area that we need. Maybe, there is reason for all of us to consolidate and instruct political parties. On behalf of the Russian Public Chamber's Commission on Environmental Safety and Protection, it would look very impressive.

A few words about environmental review. It may seem seditious, but, in my opinion, there is no need to restore total environmental review, as it used to be before 2007. There was nothing good in it. Such environmental review did not allow us to pay attention to large and important projects, which really needed a thorough review. Instead, garages and buildings were reviewed, and no due time was left for environmentally hazardous projects. The state review mechanism needs further improvements both by industry and by region. Now it is absolutely absurd. One and the same panel served all: nuclear power plants, land reclamation, urban development, and stalls...

The main amendment to be introduced into the Urban-Planning Code is by all means to bring back environmental impact assessment with the addition of strategic environmental assessment. Another important problem is also related to the new Urban-Planning Code and the abolishment of the stage-by-stage approach to investment design. Unfortunately, the new edition of the code makes the concept design stage and declaration of intent nonobligatory. Municipal environmental control has also vanished. All losses and problems originate at the municipal level, and there are no control mechanisms whatsoever. The only area that the municipal authorities may deal with is wastes.

Our priority list must include the environmental-economic assessment of costs and advantages for the municipal, regional, and federal levels. Then, we would be able to avoid short-term profitable projects with great losses for the future.

This year the Russian president signed the Efficiency Indicators of the Executive Power. They contain approximately 30 criteria. However, there are no environmental indicators of efficiency of the executive power except for the quality indicators of potable water. This is inadmissible, and we must pay thorough attention to this too.

Money is, of course, a serious limiting factor in implementing civil initiatives. Yet another not in the least important limiting factor is the ignorance of officials in organizing public participation procedures and the absence of clear regulations for the organization and execution of these procedures. Officials can work only by regulations. However, except participation in the regulation process, civil society needs, as our experiences tells us, to instruct the officials themselves how to use regulations properly.

E.V. Perfil'eva

The Environmental Information Agency (InEcA), Novokuznetsk

A maximum program for us, as an integral part of civil society, is in delegating the responsibility for environmental protection to the Russian Public Chamber's Commission on Environmental Safety and Protection until a special authorized body (ministry or agency) in charge of this is established in Russia. Not fully, of course, but at least in such a priority sphere as Russia's environmental policy. Now, before elections, it is time to substantially intensify environmental work.

THE «LAND OF RESERVES» NATIONAL FUND

The most active public entities in Russia are, as a rule, human-rights and environmental NGOs. In my opinion, the real success in implementing environmental projects and programs was achieved when civil society, the authorities, and business pooled their efforts.

I sincerely believe that protests and single actions will not secure environmental safety and protection. We need a constructive dialogue between all interested sectors of society. In the first place, we need a dialogue with business, because, among other things, environmental problems are very closely related to economic development. We must use any opportunity to this end. The Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs annually holds the conference «The Social Responsibility of Business». It would be a good point to raise the topic of the social responsibility of business in the environmental sphere, which occupies a great place in the reports that businesses disclose to the public.

As an example of cooperation with business, I can mention the UN Development Program's project on the preservation of biodiversity in the Altai-Sayan ecoregion. One of the key objectives of this project is to monitor biodiversity in the region. Unfortunately, no funds were allocated for this item in the project budget. The public organizations and specially protected natural territories of the Altai-Sayan ecoregion pooled their efforts with the RUSAL Co. and found financial resources to solve this problem.

Supported jointly by the Abakan city administration and business, the model project called the Green Watch united the city school students concerned with nature conservation issues. The project was a great success, and RUSAL volunteered to finance it in all the regions of its presence. The number of such projects is increasing now.

As for mass media, we must work with them on a continuous basis: representatives of mass media must be included into public councils and attracted to participation in regional and federal environmental programs.

An example here is the implementation of the environmental-educational project called the Journalist Watch in Khakassia, organized by the representatives of mass media, business, and environmental organizations. Practically all the issues of municipal or republican newspapers there contain environmental and ethical topics. Moreover, the journalists themselves are establishing the public organization called The Sayan Heritage, which is to unite environmental journalists.

I.V. Sannikova

The «Land of Reserves» National Fund, Abakan

I would like to support the idea of creating a special public body under the Russian Public Chamber's Commission on Environmental Safety and Protection – the Public Council. I think that one of its key areas of work may be thematic meetings attended by experts from Moscow, as well as from the regions. Possible themes for discussion at these meetings may be the problems of biodiversity, the use of the potential of specially protected natural territories, and the increasing role of business in environmental protection and sustainable nature management.

THE SOCHI NATIONAL PARK

The Environmental Advisory Council, which unites specialists from the Association of Natural Reserves and National Parks of the Caucasus and the Sochi National Park, was founded in 2006 and plays the role of the regional center of environmental policy. In 2007, it continued its active work.

While assessing the environmental component of the Black Sea coast, the center's specialists decided to initiate a number of large-scale projects exemplifying successful cooperation between large businesses and environmental organizations. These projects became especially topical after the International Olympic Committee decision to conduct the 2014 Winter Olympic Games in Sochi. The reintroduction of the Anatolian leopard in the Caucasus is one of the main projects initiated by the center. This long-standing program has united such large companies as Rosa Khutor, Beeline, Interros, WWF, the Sochi National Park, the Caucasian State Nature Biosphere Reserve, and a number of other donors.

Another large-scale project is the creation of a nursery for rare and endangered plants on the basis of the Sochi National Park. Representatives of large business and state environmental organization take part in this project. While preparing the above project, the center's specialists organized and conducted meetings with interested parties and prepared presentations in the regional and federal mass media. The center also prepared a ceremony of laying the foundation stone on the nursery construction site.

Historically, the Black Sea coast has always been a place of amateur and sport hunting. According to preliminary estimates, more than 10 000 hunters live there and actively hunt every year. This «army» of hunters unites representatives of different social strata, nationalities, and confessions. Unfortunately, the state is not interested in hunting today. Regular departmental reorganizations have fully paralyzed the development of this industry. Meanwhile, hunters substantially affect the region's environment and biodiversity conservation. In this connection, the regional center's specialists decided to create the public organization «Sochi Society of Hunters and Fishermen.» By November 2007, more than 400 people became members of this organization. When people join the organization, its specialists familiarize them with the environmental legislation and the rules of hunting in Krasnodar krai and other constituent members. The hunters are supplied with detailed information about rare and endangered species that live in this region and need special protection. The regional center's specialists may influence hunting terms with regard to individual species and limit or forbid certain types and methods of hunting. Thus, the regional center of environmental policy, which initiated the creation of the public organization of hunters and anglers, was able to unite the region's social sphere and environmental policy. This allows it to influence managerial decisions in the field of the region's biodiversity and environmental protection.

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U.A. Semenov
The Sochi National Park

THE ECO-ACCORD CENTER

I think that one of the main problems in the work of the nongovernment environmental community in Russia is a shortage of information on powerful actions initiated by public organizations. It is not the fact that such actions are too few quantitatively. We simply do not know where and what events are being held. For example, public hearings on the construction of a new polyvinyl chloride production facility were held in Nizhni Novgorod. Environmentalists have long been sounding the alarm about this facility, which will produce hazardous wastes. Nobody of those present here took part in these hearings simply because they knew nothing about them. This characteristic example of the lack of information awareness and elementary communication between public organizations creates a very serious problem: we often work in an information vacuum and do not support efficiently one another.

In my opinion, representatives of the Russian regions must attend roundtables on environmental issues, including those organized by the Russian Public Chamber's Commission on Environmental Safety and Protection. The Eco-Accord Center has been working with public organizations since 1992. I should say that Russia's public organizations have come through substantial positive changes since that time. Many of them have turned into really expert and professional entities of civil society, and now they can provide their information to legislative and executive bodies at all levels, as well as to businesses.

As for the extent of influence that public organizations and civil society exert on resolving the urgent problems of Russia's environmental safety, it is a very difficult question. Let me take just one aspect, the provision of chemical safety.

My point of view is that the influence of civil society on the problems of Russia's chemical safety is, no doubt, growing. Since 2004, Russian public organizations have performed more than 20 projects aimed at reducing the negative impact of toxic chemicals on human health and the environment. In addition, these projects were both informational-educational and expert. Naturally, all the data obtained and the expert opinions were available for the public and were delivered to the local and federal government agencies. In other words, it was a direct exchange of information. This is a significant educational component of the work of public organizations with the local and federal authorities.

I think it extremely important to include public organizations into the work of the Interdepartmental Commission on the Development of the National Plan of Execution of the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants. This convention is a key international document, which greatly affects the formation of Russia's chemical safety policy. The fact that Russian public organizations were included into the Interdepartmental Commission is, no doubt, a positive factor. From this moment, we can include problems that we are concerned with directly into the convention execution plan.

O.A. Speranskaya

Leader of the chemical safety program, the Eco-Accord Center

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THE VORONEZH CENTER OF ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

In March 2007, within the framework of the International Day of Water, the Voronezh Center of Environmental Policy, a regional public organization, initiated two actions aimed at public environmental awareness. On March 21, the public action «Water Is Life and Health», supported by the Public Chamber, took place in Voronezh oblast. Specialists from the territorial bodies of the Federal Service for Supervision of Consumer Rights Protection (Rospotrebnadzor) and the Federal Service for Supervision of Natural Resources Usage (Rosprirodnadzor); experts from the Department of Water Resources of the Federal Agency for Water Resources, the Head Department of Health, the Voronezh Water Treatment Plant; the representatives of large water-consuming enterprises; and teachers and school and university students participated in this action. On March 22, 2007, the village of Rep'evka, Voronezh oblast, conducted the public action for fifth to seventh graders called «Piety with Water,» which was supported by the Rep'evka municipal administration. Information about these actions was published in the regional mass media, particularly in the newspaper Prirodoresursnye vedomosti (Natural Resources News), and was shown by regional TV channels (TNT-Province, Voronezh News (RTR), and the 41st Channel).

Activities on developing environmental awareness of school students continued in June and July in recreation camps «Iskra» (Spark) (Verkhne-Khavinskii district of Voronezh oblast), «Juvenalist» (Voronezh suburb Tenisty), and «Voskhod» (Sunrise) (the city of Anna of Voronezh oblast), where the center's activists conducted environmental games. These games helped show examples of environmental friendliness and consequences of environmental unfriendliness.

The center is establishing interaction with business to solve the region's environmental problems. For the local rubber producer OAO Voronezhsintezkauchuk, environmental booklets Efficiency of Voronezhsintezkauchuk Environmental Activity and Voronezhsintezkauchuk Environmental Policy were developed and disseminated. To increase the level of environmental awareness and mutual responsibility for the destiny of the small river of Peschanka, the Center of Environmental Policy began publishing the booklet Peschanka River Calls for Help and making banners to place them on the riverbanks; all this was financially supported by the Sibur Company.

The center in cooperation with experts from the Russian Federal Service for Environmental, Technical, and Atomic Supervision (Rostekhnadzor); Rosprirodnadzor; Rospotrebnadzor; and the Department of Water Resources of Voronezh oblast conducted the following workshops for enterprises and economic organizations: «Treating Hazardous Production and Consumer Wastes in the Russian Federation», «Retraining Specialists in Supervision of Water Development Facilities», and «Training Managers and Specialists in Nature Management». The activities of the Voronezh Center of Environmental Policy are licensed by the Head Department of Education of the Voronezh oblast administration.

N.V. Storozhenko
The Center of Environmental Policy, Voronezh

For a number of years, the Center of Environmental Policy has been ensuring the undisturbed operation of public environmental mail, which continues to bring letters from Voronezh citizens about the most urgent environmental problems. The regular review of answers to these letters is published in the newspaper Bumerang (Boomerang). In 2007, the center managed to widen the mail network by putting new mailboxes at the Voronezh Academy of Forestry Engineering and in the Line 1 and Line 2 hypermarkets.

THE KALUGA ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER

The Kaluga Environmental Center was organized on the basis of the Laboratory of Bioindication at the Kaluga State Educational University. Specialists from a number of regional environmental agencies participate in its activities. In 2006, the center received the Russian president's grant, which ensured its technological and financial support. In 2007, it worked along several priority lines: environmental education, environmental health, the region's sustainable development, the training of specialists in environmentalism and nature conservation, public environmental awareness and advice, and interaction between the public, federal-oblast authorities, and environmental agencies.

A.B. Strel'tsov, head of the Kaluga Center, is a member of the Public Advisory Council under the Ministry of Natural Resources of Kaluga oblast. In 2007, the council discussed the problems of environmental monitoring and the regional system of specially protected natural areas. To implement their developments, the center's experts participate in academic and technical councils of the national park «Ugra» and the natural reserve «Kaluzhskie zaseki.» In 2007, the Kaluga Center first succeeded to include the results of the regional assessment of sustainable nature management and sustainable development into the annual Report on the State of the Environment and the Rational Use of Natural Resources of Kaluga Oblast and presented the results of regional environmental health assessments (based on data collected by school students).

In 2007, the community liaison office of the Kaluga Center of Public Environmental Awareness and Advice, which is situated on the territory of the Kaluga State Educational University, continued its work. The Center for Russian Environmental Policy supported the preparation and publication of information booklets The Quality of the Environment in the City of Kaluga to maintain interaction between the liaison office and the public.

In 2007, the Kaluga Center's specialists continued to implement the project «School Biological Monitoring in Kaluga Oblast.» Within the framework of this project, which was partially financed by the Kaluga oblast Ministry of Natural Resources, groups of school students from different administrative districts of Kaluga oblast assessed environmental health using unified methods; the resultant report was submitted to the ministry. This work was based on the methodological aid developed by voluntary specialists of Kaluga oblast and supported by the Center for Russian Environmental Policy. In 2007, on request of the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Sport of Kaluga oblast, the center participated in developing the regional model of school environmental studies. The developed model generalizes the experience of environmental studies conducted by school students. The Kaluga Center's specialists supported the newly opened specialty «nature management» at the Institute of Natural Sciences of the Kaluga State Educational University.

A.B. Strel'tsov

The Environmental Center, Kaluga

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THE ASSOCIATION OF INDIGENOUS ETHNIC MINORITIES OF THE RUSSIAN NORTH, SIBERIA, AND FAR EAST

When we speak with officials, we often hear that we are incompetent and our proposals are merely our wishes. In reality, the situation is fundamentally different. The experts who represent civil society and work in the field of environmentalism should comprehensively, reasonably, and clearly show that, on the contrary, officials are incompetent and hinder the solution of many urgent problems.

It seems to me that those who make decisions at both the federal and regional levels practically do not think about environmental problems at all.

Today, it is very important to do two things to place environmental problems among priorities again. One of them is reviewing the laws and draft laws related to environmental protection. When we speak with officials, we often hear that we are incompetent and our proposals are merely our wishes. In reality, the situation is fundamentally different. The experts who represent civil society and work in the field of environmentalism should comprehensively, reasonably, and clearly show that, on the contrary, officials are incompetent and hinder the solution of many urgent problems.

For example, the State Duma Environmental Committee has blocked our ethnological review amendment to the Law On Environmental Review. When we made this proposal, some of the deputies supported us. At first, we had proposed a separate draft law on ethnological review; but we were told that we should better make the respective amendment to the existing Law On Environmental Review. However, no decision has been made.

The other trend is conducting actions. Unfortunately, no actions supported by public organizations have been conducted of late.

Recently, I have received an address of the community assembly of my native village in Primorskii krai, dedicated to the Governor S.M. Dar'kin's decision to begin deforestations in the Ussuri taiga.

From the legal point of view, the governor of Primorskii krai is absolutely right: he begins the deforestations in nut fields and regards them as sanitary. In addition, it is planned to build powerful roads in these districts to ensure fire safety and so on. However, this is only a pretext to enter the taiga and ransack it. This is why local people write that they are trying to explain to the authorities that this plan is wicked. Naturally, they will not use violence but, in the worst extremity, they are ready to embark on a hunger strike to make the authorities hear them. I am sure that there are many similar situations in our country. Public organizations, i.e., all of us, have no right to remain inactive. We should trace such situations and support people.

P.V. Sulyandziga

The Association of the Indigenous Minorities of the Russian North, Siberia, and Far East

When we speak with officials, we often hear that we are incompetent and our proposals are merely our wishes. In reality, the situation is fundamentally different. The experts who represent civil society and work in the field of environmentalism should comprehensively, reasonably, and clearly show that, on the contrary, officials are incompetent and hinder the solution of many urgent problems.

WORLD WILDLIFE FUND

I would like to say some words about the creation of an environmental agency, a specially authorized government body for environmental protection. Much has been said about it today. First of all, I would like to stress that the logic that implies that environmental standards hinder investment flows is the logic of environmental negation, from which we have been suffering since the current administration came to power, i.e., since 2000. I mean not only the liquidation of the State Environmental Committee but also changes introduced into the Law On Environmental Protection and the liquidation of the Federal Environmental Fund. These actions were systemic. At that time, we were unable to change the situation, but we managed to preserve certain things.

At present, this logic does not work any more, and nobody uses it. This is due to the fact that all environmental barriers have been removed, but the desired goal has not been accomplished: there are still no investments into hazardous production. Until recently, foreign investments into Russia were mainly speculative, circulating in the stock market; in other words, this money comes and goes. Foreign investors have been investing in production only for the last several years, but the absence of clear environmental rules hinders their activity instead of stimulating it.

In my opinion, we have only one problem today, which is associated with the creation of a specially authorized government body of environmental protection. This problem is interdepartmental. In other words, it is necessary to decide where this department (agency) will be created, who will head it, to whom it will report, and how it will limit the powers of the existing ministries and departments. This is the only problem, and we can solve it only by making a voluntary decision.

However, since this problem will not be solved in the nearest future, our zero hour is the spring of 2008. We may expect the new president's decree on the structure of federal executive bodies, which will include this agency in this or that form. We are actively preparing for this; the work is under way. We will see what spring will bring us.

The Committee on Environmental Safety and Protection, as well as any other committee of the Public Chamber, is not supposed to develop any independent trends. Our committee is not capable of doing this. We are ready to do our best to support activities in all environmental fields, but we cannot be fully responsible for any of them.

I.E. Chestin

A member of the Committee on Environmental Safety and Protection, director of the WWF Russia

All environmental barriers have been removed, but the desired goal has not been accomplished: there are still no investments into hazardous production. Until recently, foreign investments into Russia were mainly speculative, circulating in the stock market; in other words, this money comes and goes.

THE ALL-RUSSIAN PUBLIC MOVEMENT “FOR HEALTHY RUSSIA”

The main goal of the all-Russian public movement «For Healthy Russia» is to help people in their environment. We do not separate people from the environment in which they live.

Environmental forecasts made at the end of the 20th century are coming true dramatically rapidly. At first sight, there are positive changes: we speak about health and the preservation of the nation; however, all this is merely declared. There is no more or less clear legislative and managerial decision that could help implement these declarations. Even the existing national projects do not form a system: we budget only the spheres in which we see ruptures. We do not take into account that the system itself, into which we channel money, cannot bear this flow.

If a system is ruptured in one place, it will inevitably create problems in another. This is why environmentalism runs through all spheres of human activity. In my opinion, the Public Chamber's Committee on Environmental Safety and Protection should become a uniting component in this respect. Too many organizations are involved in environmental problems. When there are too many voices at different levels, we do not hear them. When they unite, they may be heard.

We have analyzed the protest actions of the past two years based on mass media and Internet data. People very quickly become aware of the fact that their environment has been disturbed. At present, this is associated with disorders in their and their children's and relatives' health. Since health is turning into a value the responsibility for which is laid upon the individual, environmental consciousness that we are trying to form from above is actively forming from below, inside society. People protest against urban and suburban infill, hazardous productions, and environmentally unsafe construction materials. People are for pure water and pure foods. They understand that their lives are in their hands.

Urgent measures should be taken, and we must consider this, because the number of protest actions in the environmental sphere is an order of magnitude higher than in all other fields.

Environmental forecasts made at the end of the 20th century are coming true dramatically rapidly. At first sight, there are positive changes: we speak about health and the preservation of the nation; however, all this is merely declared. There is no more or less clear legislative and managerial decision that could help implement these declarations.

E.Yu. Shatalova
All-Russian public movement «For Healthy Russia»

SARATOV STATE UNIVERSITY

The Regional Center of Environmental Policy has been organized under Saratov State University. It focuses mainly on environmental education and the development of and expert help in regional environmental actions. The center's experts are members of many Saratov oblast councils and committees associated with environmental problems, the preservation of biodiversity, and rational nature management.

Professor G.V. Shlyakhtin, who heads this center, is a member of the board of the Saratov Oblast Committee for Environmental Protection and Nature Management, deputy chair of the Regional Red Book Committee, and a member of the editorial board of the Saratov Oblast Committee for Environmental Protection and Nature Management. The center's specialists participate in the oblast Committee for the Creation of Specially Protected Natural Areas and Wildlife Reserves, in the academic council of the Oblast Museum of Local Lore, and in the Oblast Station of Young Naturalists. The center's experts are authors of the annual Report on the State of the Environment and Environmental Protection in Saratov Oblast, which is used by the local authorities to prepare plans on regional environmental measures.

At present, the center's experts are participating in the preparation of the 2007 report. In 2006, the second edition of the Saratov Oblast Red Book, revised and considerably widened, was published. In 2006, the regional center organized and conducted competitions in biology and environmentalism among school and university students. The center's specialists regularly organized environmental excursions for school students and other oblast residents; a regional competition for the best scientific paper on biology and environmentalism was conducted among school and university students.

In 2007, a series of publications on the Saratov oblast fauna was prepared: Fishes, Amphibians and Reptiles, Birds, and Mammals. The Regional Center of Environmental Policy supported the publication of the first book Fishes of the North of the Lower Volga Region. It will be given free of charge to schools and other educational establishments in the oblast. In 2007, the center's specialists in cooperation with the Center of Environmental Policy and Culture conducted two expeditions to study the biodiversity of Saratov oblast. Saratov State University students, as well as students of several Saratov gymnasiums and colleges, participated in these expeditions. Another trend of the center's work is long-standing monitoring studies of environmental health in different districts of the oblast.

G.V. Shlyakhtin

Dean of the Faculty of Biology at Saratov State University, head of the Regional Center of Environmental Policy

The Regional Center of Environmental Policy has been organized under Saratov State University. It focuses mainly on environmental education and the development of and expert help in regional environmental actions.

THE UNION OF RUSSIAN CITIES AND ITS «URBAN ENVIRONMENT» SECTION

New articles appeared in the Federal the Law On Environmental Protection no. 7 of January 10, 2002, and it became possible to develop municipal environmental control. The active development and adoption of local normative acts that established the procedure of municipal environmental control began immediately after this law had been issued. The section actively helped create municipal structures of environmental control by holding meetings, workshops, and conferences and by disseminating information.

The provisions on municipal environmental control have been adopted both in large cities, such as Nizhni Novgorod, Astrakhan', Velikii Novgorod, Kemerovo, Yekaterinburg, Volgograd, Perm', Ulyanovsk, Surgut, Chelyabinsk, Tomsk, and Tyumen', and in small towns, such as Sarov, Volzhsk, Onega and Onega district, Petushki and Petushki district, Bronnitsy, Sosnovyi Bor, Snezhinsk, and others. The legislative assemblies of the majority of the cities have approved these normative acts. Municipal environmental control has been successful and not limited to checks of the fulfillment of the environmental legislation. Databases on impact sources and waste materials have been created; control over payments for negative environmental impacts and environmental monitoring has been conducted; and the work on urban amenities has been coordinated. Cooperation with public environmental organizations has been established, and environmental education has been developed.

The URC Urban Environment Section has been working for many years to unite urban environmentalists, generalize their practices, and spread the best practices among municipal environmentalists. In the 1990s, these practices were generalized in the collections Urban Environment. Later, to accomplish this goal, four conferences on regional and municipal problems of environmental safety (2001, 2003, 2005, and 2007) and two All-Russian congresses of municipal environmentalists (2004 and 2007) were held. Regional conferences that gather environmentalists from the most distant Russian towns have been held in Tyumen', Surgut, Yekaterinburg, Vladimir, Kaliningrad, Cheboksary, Bratsk, Kirovo-Chepetsk, and other cities.

The section actively participates in discussions on draft laws, prepares amendments to legislative acts, and organizes their promotion by local deputies. The section's representatives participated in the work of D. Kozak's committee on preparing proposals concerning the delineation of powers between different levels of the authorities. A number of the prepared materials were included in the law on environmental protection. In the late 2005, when the question about the abolition of municipal environmental control arose, the cities rapidly prepared a number of amendments aimed at preserving this form of control. They were supported and advanced by the Federation Council, legislative bodies of Russia's federal constituent members, and State Duma deputies. Unfortunately, these amendments were not adopted. At present, we are preparing amendments to the Forest and Water Codes and to the Federal Law On Environmental Protection.

The Urban Environment Section cooperates with the Center of Environmental Policy and Culture: urban environmentalists participated in the creation of regional affiliates of this new all-Russian public organization in a number of cities.

Since the Law On Environmental Protection was adopted, bodies of environmental protection have been created in Russian cities for more than 15 years. The «Urban Environment» section of the Union of Russian Cities (URC) undertook coordination between environmentalists from different cities of Russia. The section was initiated by A.A. Dreier, who largely contributed to the unification of urban environmentalists, spreading best practices, ensuring their participation in legislative activities, conducting all significant environmental actions, and connecting public organizations. The first meeting of the section took place in 1992 in Rostov-on-Don, attended by the representatives of about 30 cities. Today, the URC Urban Environment Section unites more than 100 large, medium, and small cities.

One of the trends in the joint work of the section and the Center of Environmental Policy and Culture is the project «Networking Environmental Information Centers for Urban Sustainable Development.» On the basis of the existing 10 to 12 educational and public organizations, it is planned to create a network of centers to ensure Russian cities' participation in the implementation of the Convention on Sustainable Development through the local Agenda for the 21st Century. The environmental information centers on urban sustainable development will spread environmental information promoting urban sustainable development, public diplomacy in the field of environmental safety, and social activity of different layers of the population.

Much attention is paid today to the development of normative acts of local governments, which would regulate the issues of environmental safety. The majority of cities are developing programs on environmental protection.

In Yekaterinburg, this program, which is called Environmental Culture Protection and Development, is of strategic character. Its important feature is the priority development of environmental culture. The environmental program of Nizhni Novgorod focuses on decreasing the technological load on the environment. The main points of the Pure City of Tomsk program are creating an improved environment and solving environmental and sanitary problems. The System of Environmental Safety program is being created in the city of Bronnitsy.

As is known, local governments are responsible for the development of a system of waste collection, utilization, and processing. Municipal environmental authorities have been working actively in this respect over the last several years. Programs on the separate collection of household and industrial wastes and on the construction of waste-separating complexes and waste-processing plants are being developed.

The City of Samara's Industrial and Consumer Waste Disposal Concept until 2010 has been adopted. The City of Chelyabinsk's Consumption Waste Disposal Procedure regulates relations in the field of waste treatment in Chelyabinsk. The Provision On the Temporary Accounting Procedure for Household Waste Treatment in the City of Kemerovo has been adopted. The Act On the Approval of the Rules of Construction Waste Disposal in St. Petersburg establishes that waste formation, collection, accumulation, temporary storage, transportation, processing, utilization, management, and burial are integral parts of construction processes and must be regulated. The regulations are being developed within the framework of design documentation. According to the Rules of Construction Waste Disposal in the city of Cheboksary, no facility can be commissioned and put into operation without documents confirming that construction-waste volumes and disposal are in compliance with these rules.

The Provision On Organizing Waste Disposal in the City of Yaroslavl', the Provision On Organizing the Waste Disposal in the City of Abakan, the Temporary Procedure of Waste Disposal in Kaliningrad, the Procedure of Collecting and Transporting Industrial and Consumer Wastes in the City of Tomsk, and the Procedure of Mercury-Containing Waste Disposal in the City of Cherepovets have been adopted; and the «Draft Waste Management in the City of Yekaterinburg» has been developed.

A number of cities focus on maintaining and preserving urban forests. The federal legislation lays responsibility for maintaining and preserving urban forests on local governments, while control goes to state structures. Cities adopt normative acts that regulate the use and protection of urban forests. The examples are the Temporary Rules of Assessing and Compensating the Damage from Deforestation in Astrakhan', the Rules of Protecting and Supporting the Green Belt in the City of Snezhinsk, and the City's Head Resolution on Payments for the Use of Urban Forests in the City of Tomsk.

Urban amenities, which help create a friendly environment, are also in the focus of attention. The Rules of Ensuring Urban Amenities on the Territory of Yaroslavl' and the Municipal Rules of Ensuring and Maintaining Urban Amenities in Kaluga have been adopted. Many other cities have adopted similar documents.

Great efforts are made to develop environmental education and form an environmental outlook. These issues are present in the majority of environmental programs.

Since 2006, local governments have been mainly responsible for environmental safety in municipal formations. The fact that there is an organization that unites municipal environmentalists makes it possible to help local environmental authorities to solve these problems.

T.V. Shmal'

The Union of Russian Cities



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Letters to the editor can be mailed to

CENTER FOR RUSSIAN ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY
33, LENINSKY PR., RM 326,
MOSCOW, 119071,
RUSSIA
TEL./FAX:
(095) 952 2423
(095) 952 3007
E-MAIL: ECOPOLICY@ECOPOLICY.RU
WWW.ECOPOLICY.RU

Editorial Board

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