

Court Rejects Suit On 'Kremlin Sanatorium'

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The Supreme Court on Tuesday upheld a plan to carve out a plot of land from a wildlife reserve on the Black Sea for what evidence suggests is a Kremlin-connected luxury resort, RIA-Novosti reported.

The project at the Utrish reserve in the Krasnodar region had prompted a lawsuit by Greenpeace Russia, which said the resort would slice the reserve up into four parts, effectively destroying it.

Authorities in Krasnodar were originally ordered to create the reserve near the city of Anapa in 1994. But its boundaries were never clearly defined and for years its administration was defunct, prompting loggers and real estate developers to infringe on the territory.

In March, the Natural Resources and Environment Ministry released an order setting out Utrish's borders, but in June revised it, slashing them from the initially planned 10,780

hectares to some 10,000 hectares, the report said.

Greenpeace Russia said the order was changed to allow for a "sports and recreation complex" to be built in the midst of the protected forest and was illegal.

Environmentalists claim the complex is intended for senior officials, and the main investor in the project is the Office for Presidential Affairs, [according](#) to Save-utrish.ru, a web site for the campaign defending the reserve.

Vladimir Kozhin, head of the Office for Presidential Affairs, said last year that his agency was not connected with the project, which was announced in 2009. But copious evidence indicates [links](#) between Kozhin's agency and the developer, Dar.

Greenpeace sued to have the ministry's order on Utrish's boundaries canceled as illegal because the ministry did not conduct proper environmental checks to determine how the new layout would affect the reserve's operation.

But a lower court threw out the lawsuit, and the Supreme Court upheld the ruling. It remained unclear Tuesday whether Greenpeace would appeal.

The Justice Ministry argued that the boundaries were not changed, blaming the alleged shrinking on a "typographical error," RIA-Novosti [reported](#).

No one was available to comment Tuesday at the Natural Resources and Environment Ministry because officials overseeing wildlife reserves were attending a national seminar in Krasnoyarsk, a ministry spokeswoman said by telephone.

Mikhail Kreidlin, the Greenpeace activist spearheading the Utrish campaign, did not return repeated telephone calls Tuesday.

This is not the first scandal involving alleged residences of senior officials on the Black Sea. In January, photos circulated on the web of "Putin's Palace" — a posh seaside property in the Krasnodar region allegedly built for Prime Minister Vladimir Putin by the Office for Presidential Affairs.

In that case, Kozhin also publicly denied involvement, but Novaya Gazeta later released copies of orders to develop the project signed by Kozhin during Putin's tenure in office.

In February, reports emerged of a "Patriarch's Dacha" — another mansion allegedly built by the Office for Presidential Affairs for the head of the Russian Orthodox Church in the midst of a protected forest on the Black Sea coast. Both the Kremlin and the Church denied involvement.

In October, UNESCO voiced concerns over plans to build a paved road through a World Heritage Site on the Black Sea to a "meteorological station" that environmentalists claimed was only to allow Putin easier access to skiing grounds. Putin's representatives did not comment.

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