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"Green Filter" to Weed Out Bad Laws

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Federation Council law makers may introduce a “green filter” to weed our draft bills that could damage the environment **Andrei Makhonin**

Federation Council lawmakers may introduce a "green filter" to weed out draft bills that could damage the environment.

Under the plan any new potential law would be subject to assessment by independent environmental experts, Federation Council speaker Valentina Matviyenko said at an environmental conference in St. Petersburg on Thursday.

"Any decision should be considered, so to speak, through green policy," she said, RIA-Novosti reported Thursday.

Matviyenko said the idea was one of several proposals being considered as part of an effort to improve the efficiency of the upper house.

Environmentalists welcomed the idea. "I'd rather that it were in the State Duma, because

by the time a bill reaches the upper house a lot of work has already gone into it, and it is harder to change. But such a procedure at the Federation Council would be much better than what we have at the moment," Igor Chestin, director of WWF Russia, told The Moscow Times by telephone from the conference.

The move would be in line with an environmental development strategy approved by then-President Dmitry Medvedev on April 30.

The policy document, which codifies the government's main environmental goals up to 2030, calls for mandatory environmental impact assessment of decisions on economic and other activities and a blanket ban on any project that could lead to a degradation of ecosystems.

Matviyenko continued to push a green agenda on Friday, calling for a switch to a green economy and the careful application of both incentives and sanctions to push businesses to improve their performance.

Meanwhile, acting Environment and Natural Resources Minister Yury Trutnev told the conference Friday that 20 billion rubles ($640 million) would be needed to clean up three of the country's most sensitive environmental "hot spots" — the Arctic archipelagoes of Franz Josef Land and Wrangel Island and Lake Baikal in Siberia.

A broader clean-up plan addressing 194 separate sites identified by the ministry has yet to be approved, Trutnev said, the RBK Daily reported.

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