The Moscow Times
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# $3.3Bln to Clean Up Soviet Pollution

By Roland Oliphant

January 22, 2013




The government is preparing to allocate 100 billion rubles ($3.3 billion) to clean up pollution left over by Soviet-era industry.

Natural Resources and Environment Minister Sergei Donskoi told President Vladimir Putin that a bill to allocate that sum as well as define responsibilities for cleaning up decades-old industrial waste was set to be passed this year.

"We're planning 10 specific [cleanup] projects. The country has accumulated a lot of waste, and it usually remains from the Soviet era," Donskoi said at the meeting, according to a transcript posted Tuesday on the Kremlin website.

The bill, to cover industrial and other pollution dating back to Soviet times, will designate responsibilities for cleanup and appropriate funding for it.

The ministry intends to submit the bill for review in February.

Vast deposits of chemical and nuclear pollution from Soviet-era industrial and military programs still blight large swaths of Russian territory.

The bill on a cleanup drive follows a yearlong inventory of Soviet-era industrial pollution that identified no less than 77 sites with apparently no owner — and hence no one to take responsibility.

“For this we’re setting up a federal special purpose program worth 100 billion rubles. Eighty percent of that will come from the federal budget,” Donskoi said.

Donskoi said priority areas would include Soviet-era waste sites like the notorious “white sea,” a large reservoir of chemical waste near Dzerzhinsk in the Nizhny Novgorod region that then-President Dmitry Medvedev ordered cleaned up last year.

The Ministry is also overseeing an ongoing cleanup of Cold War-era military debris on several Arctic archipelagoes, including Franz Josef Land, Wrangel Island and Svalbard, which belongs to Norway but is used by Russian coal miners.

The legislation is one of several bills on environmental regulation that the ministry is hoping to push through this year.

Other planned legislation includes new regulations for nature reserves and national parks, financial mechanisms for dealing with waste disposal and laws providing access to technology.

Russia is also set to ratify an international agreement on environmental impact assessments.

The government is also planning to unveil two state “strategies,” one for protecting endangered species and another for solid waste processing, by the end of March.

The flurry of legislation coincides with the Kremlin’s designation of 2013 as a “year of environmental protection.”

The year will culminate in December with the Russian Congress of Environmental Protection, the first such high-level conference on the subject in 10 years.

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Original url: https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2013/01/22/33bln-to-clean-up-soviet-pollution-a20868