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Russia's Baikal, Biggest Lake in the World, 'Becoming a Swamp'

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Lake Baikal contains roughly 20% of the world`s unfrozen fresh water. **Sergey Gabdurakhmanov**

Pollution is reducing the world's largest and deepest lake to a swamp, according to recent findings cited by Siberian media outlets Monday.

Invasive species of algae, including the Canadian waterweed, are multiplying on Lake Baikal's shores, environmental group Baikal Ecological Wave said in comments carried by Sia.ru.

Algae thrives on liquid waste, including fuel and excrement, hundreds of tons of which are accrued by local tourist sites and then dumped into the lake each year, environmentalists said.

Waste management companies — whether due to negligence or bad-faith — improperly dispose of the crud, which then flows into the lake, the report said.

Local ships also generate up to 25,000 tons of liquid waste every year, almost all of which is disposed directly into the lake, the environmentalists said.

The Baikal in eastern Siberia is the world's biggest freshwater lake by volume. The lake, which

has an unmatched maximum depth of 1,642 meters, is also the world's clearest and oldest at 25 million years, and hosts a unique ecosystem.

Lake, a UNESCO World Heritage site, has been sustaining environmental harm ever since a paper mill was opened on its shores on 1966.

The Kremlin was long reluctant to shut down the mill, the main employer in the nearby city of Baikalsk, but eventually closed the flagging enterprise last December.

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