

Russia's Rate of Global Warming Twice as High as World Average

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Temperatures in Russia increase 0.43 degrees Celsius per decade.

Russia is heating up 2.5 times faster than the rest of the world, but may yet stand to benefit from it, the country's chief meteorologist said in comments carried by the Interfax news agency.

Temperatures in Russia increase 0.43 degrees Celsius per decade, compared with a world average of 0.17 degrees, said Federal Meteorological Service head Alexander Frolov.

The change brings many benefits for the northern country, including lower heating expenses and a prolonged navigation season, Frolov told journalists on Monday.

Extra carbon dioxide in the air also boosts plant photosynthesis, a boon to agriculture, he said. "Productivity grows. Forests grow. Grasses grow."

Negative aspects, though, include ravaging wildfires and devastating floods, he said.

Central Russia was ravaged by massive wildfires in 2010, which blanketed Moscow in smog

for weeks. Wildfires also hit this year the Russian Far East, which suffered a massive flood the year before. In 2012, a flash flood killed 171 people in the southern city of Krymsk.

The growth of the "green economy" also undermines demand for oil, the foundation of Russia's already shrinking prosperity, Frolov said.

"It's the main risk for us. We can't rule out that this change will cause the loss of whole markets, giant markets, that we're counting on," the official said.

Frolov predicted an influx of "climate refugees" from Central Asia due to shortages of water, a resource he expects to overshadow oil in strategic importance.

Central Asia is an arid region, and tensions over water sources and plans for a dam are already mounting between local nations, including Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

"Oil will be relegated to second place," Frolov said. "Water will be No. 1."

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