

Greenpeace Demands Putin Reject Oil Firms' Scheme to Cut Environmental Laws

By [The Moscow Times](#)

February 24, 2015



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Activist group Greenpeace on Tuesday called for President Vladimir Putin to reject top oil executives' request to roll back environmental regulation as a steep drop in oil prices eats into profits.

In a letter penned by 50 Russian environmental groups, including Greenpeace, the signatories wrote that oil companies should instead seek savings by working more effectively and wasting less.

"Environmental destruction for the sake of a few companies is unacceptable," the letter delivered to the Kremlin stated, Greenpeace press secretary Maria Favorskaya said.

Environmental regulation of Russia's oil industry, the nation's top taxpayer, is already too lax, the letter stated. According to the signatories, oil leaks in Russia have reached "catastrophic" proportions, with up to 5 million tons of oil per year seeping out into the environment.

Last week, the heads of five of Russia's top oil companies, including LUKoil and Gazprom Neft, appealed to Putin for regulatory tweaks that would reduce their outlays on environmental compliance and cleanup.

Suggested changes to current legislation include freezing fines for pollution at their current levels for the next two years, lowering penalties for gas flaring, and delaying the creation of remediation funds till 2018, newspaper Vedomosti reported.

Benchmark Brent oil traded at \$58.85 a barrel on Tuesday, above the level most oil firms are considered to be profitable, but almost half of last June's peak of \$115 a barrel.

State-owned oil major Rosneft applied for over 2 trillion rubles (\$32 billion) in government aid last year. LUKoil, Russia's second largest oil company, has requested access to untapped oil fields.

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