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# Russia Breaks Arctic Pledge After Stripping Nature Reserves of State Protection

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Russia has failed in its promise to protect the country's Arctic wildlife by boosting the number of government nature reserves, a new report by Greenpeace Russia has revealed.

The Kremlin pledged in 2013 that it would increase the number of protected natural areas in the country's far north "several times over." At the time, 322,000 sq. kilometers – just 6 percent of the Russian Arctic – had been designated as a reserve.

Now that figure has fallen to just 281,750 sq. kilometers: largely due to the government's decision to strip much of the Franz Josef Land archipelago of its status.

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Government documents show that the Rosneft oil company owned tracts of land which neighbor protected area, Greenpeace reported. The company also owns similar pieces of land

close to the Wrangel Island and Great Arctic national reserve.

The area of protected land in Russia's Arctic region is now more than five times less than that owned by major oil and gas companies, Greenpace said. Oil companies currently own 1,460,706.2 sq kilometers of land in the far north.

The organization petitioned Russia’s Supreme Court to see the land reinstated as a protected area, but saw its case rejected on March 15.

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