

Russian Prosecutors Seek to Stop Chinese Bottling Factory at Lake Baikal

March 11, 2019



baikal_save / Instagram

Prosecutors in Russia's Irkutsk region want to stop a Chinese company from building a water-bottling factory that residents say will drain and pollute the deepest lake and largest reservoir of fresh water on Earth.

The AquaSib company [began](#) construction of the 1.5 billion-ruble (\$22.7 million) factory in January, with plans to bottle 190 million liters of water per year from Lake Baikal starting in 2021. A contract to supply water from the factory to the Chinese market has already been [signed](#) with a Chinese company that co-founded Aquasib and is the project's investor, according to the official government portal of Irkutsk.

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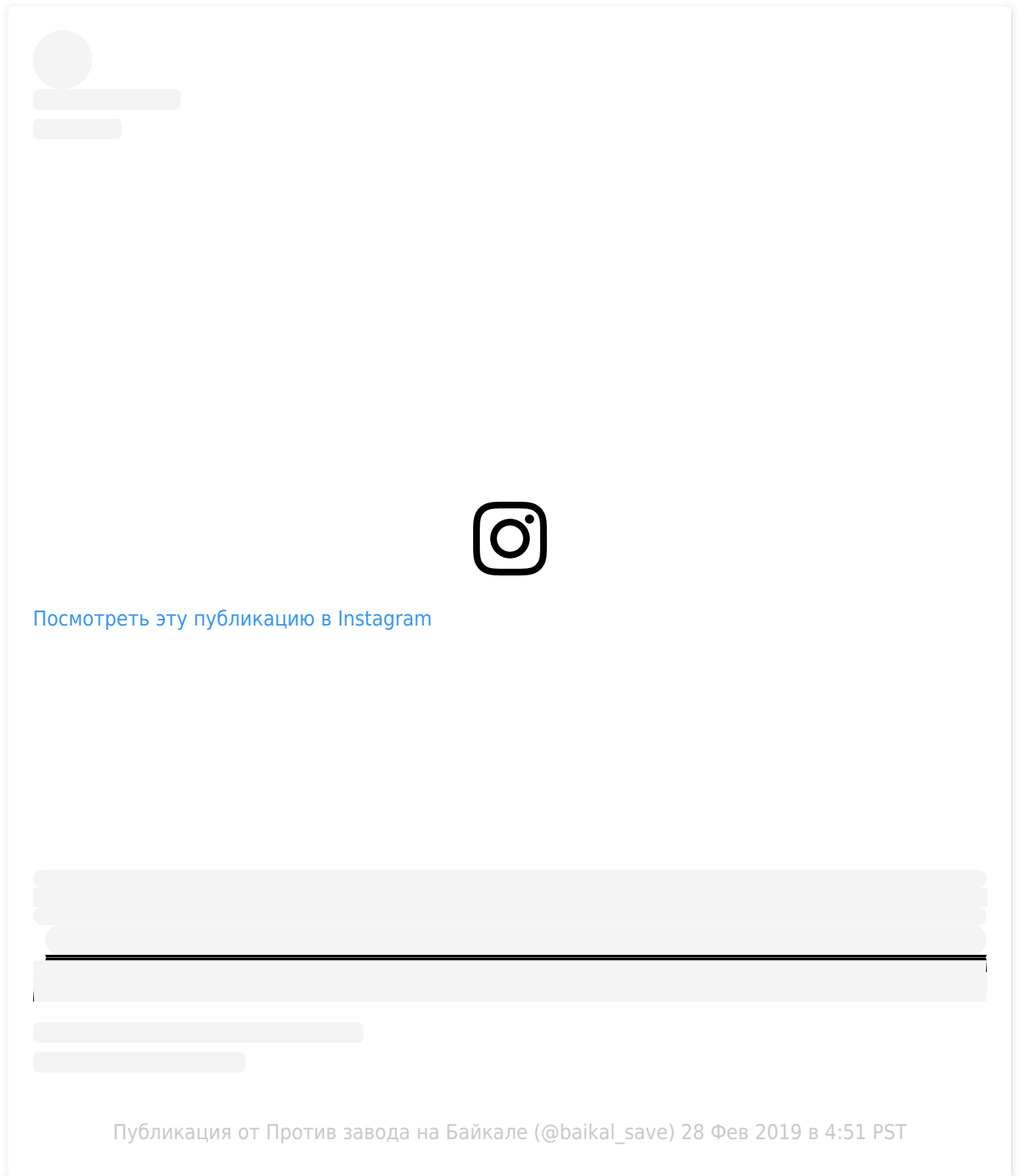
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Nearly 880,000 people have [signed](#) an online petition against the plant, leading Russian lawmakers to ask federal prosecutors to weigh in on the legality of its construction.

Regional prosecutors will seek a court order to stop AquaSib from completing the plant after inspections uncovered signs of an oil spill and industrial waste, the ircity.ru news website [reported](#) on Sunday.

The governor's office [initiated](#) the inspection following complaints from residents, The Daily Telegraph reported.

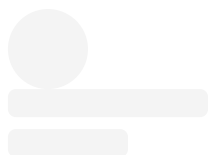
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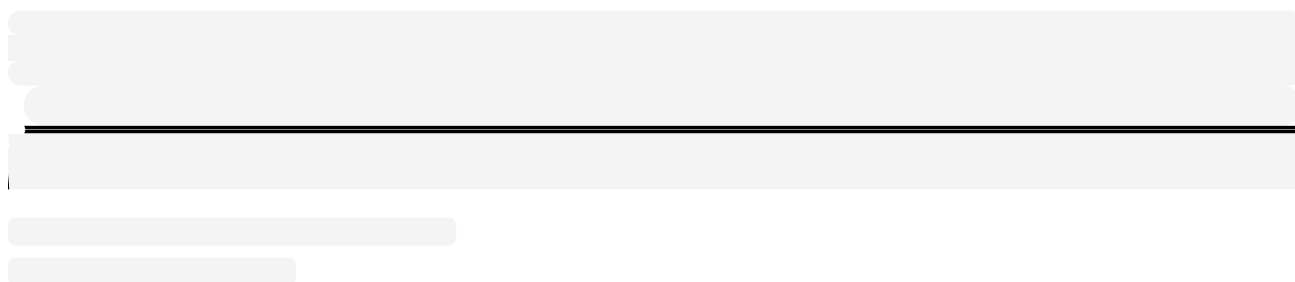
Meanwhile, AquaSib [maintained](#) that “one, two or even 100 factories won’t cause significant damage to the lake’s ecosystem.”

“Even if you put in a thousand of these plants, their total impact will be incomparable to that of one small tourist site,” the plant said on Facebook.

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