

Zero Businesses on Russia's Lake Baikal Meet Environmental Standards – Official

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Lake Baikal shore **Rost.galis (CC BY-SA 4.0)**

None of the dozens of businesses working on the shores of the world's largest freshwater lake, Lake Baikal, meet current environmental standards, the head of Russia's state environmental watchdog [said](#) Monday.

UNESCO added Lake Baikal, the world's deepest and oldest lake, to its list of World Heritage Sites on the condition that Russian law grants environmental protections to the lake and its surrounding regions. But the lake, which holds some 20% of the world's unfrozen freshwater reserves, has been plagued by environmental problems caused by industrial pollution, mining and agricultural run-off in recent decades.

Related article: [With Lake Baikal's Key Protections Set to Expire, Russian Eco-Activists Sound the Alarm](#)

“There's a [government] order but not a single enterprise there, including those with

treatment facilities, fully meets its requirements,” Svetlana Radionova, who heads Russia’s state environmental protection watchdog Rosprirodnazor, said in an interview with the Vedomosti business daily.

Radionova hinted that environmental standards could be relaxed further to help enterprises meet them.

“They simply can’t reach the established standard so we need to think about how realistic this standard is for them,” Radionova said. “This [government] order has very high standards; there’s no such thing anywhere else in the country.”

Her remarks come one year after the passing of a controversial law that allows clear-cutting and construction near Lake Baikal’s shores — and lifts requirements for environmental impact evaluations — for transport infrastructure projects.

In December 2020, Rosprirodnazor [said](#) it measured levels of harmful substances that were 400 times the maximum allowed amount after untreated wastewater from the controversial Baikalsk Pulp and Paper Mill spilled into the lake. Reports this month [said](#) that plans are in motion to construct a tourist resort on the defunct paper plant's territory.

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