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Oil Spill in Siberia's Yenisei River Causes $15M in Damages, Officials Say

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Authorities in Russia's Krasnoyarsk region said Friday that nearly 80 metric tons of diesel fuel spilled into the Yenisei River last month, causing an estimated 1.2 billion rubles ($15.3 million) in environmental damage.

The June 8 spill occurred after a vessel towing two barges struck an underwater obstacle and ran aground, investigators said. The impact caused the barges to detach and rupture the ship's hull, leading to a major fuel leak.

Krasnoyarsk's Deputy Ecology Minister Yulia Gumenyuk said 79.3 tons of diesel were discharged into the river.

The company operating the vessel, the Tyumen-based Ob-Irtysh River Shipping Company, was charged with violating environmental protection laws, according to Gumenyuk. It has 30 days to pay damages to the local government.

Initial reports estimated 30 tons of diesel had spilled into the Yenisei River, contaminating up to 50 kilometers (31 miles) of shoreline. A second leak occurred on June 21 as emergency workers attempted to lift the wreckage.

Gumenyuk said recent water samples showed pollution levels in the river had returned to within permissible limits.

The Yenisei River, which begins in northern Mongolia and empties into the Arctic Ocean, stretches 3,487 kilometers (2,167 miles), making it the fifth-longest river system in the world.

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