The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Sakhalin Becomes First Russian Region to Reach Carbon Neutrality, Officials Say

August 04, 2025



The Sea of Okhotsk in Sakhalin. **Vihljun / commons/wikimedia**

The Far Eastern Sakhalin region has become the first in the country to achieve carbon neutrality, Russia's Economic Development Ministry announced over the weekend.

Launched in 2022, Sakhalin's climate experiment aimed to achieve carbon neutrality by the end of 2025. The program involved 35 major companies committing to a combined 2% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, along with a mix of carbon quotas, a cap-and-trade system, a shift from coal to gas for heating, expanded use of renewables and increased forest carbon absorption.

"Sakhalin has achieved carbon neutrality," Economic Development Minister Maxim Reshetnikov said at a forum in the regional capital of Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk on Saturday.

Governor Valery Limarenko said the region had become Russia's first where greenhouse gas absorption exceeds emissions.

“Thanks to this experiment, Sakhalin is now a region with clean air, unique wildlife and a high quality of life,” he said.

Related article: Sakhalin Region Aims to Chart Russia's Climate Neutrality Course With Carbon Quotas

Russia’s Economic Development Ministry credited the program with doubling air quality, cutting particulate pollution fivefold and reducing the area affected by forest fires tenfold.

Reshetnikov said the next challenge is ensuring the region maintains that balance over the long term, adding that other regions interested in replicating the program would receive government support.

He also touted the initiative’s potential to boost the international competitiveness of Sakhalin’s low-carbon industries, including aluminum, petrochemicals, fertilizers, lithium and energy from nuclear, hydropower and renewables.

Sakhalin’s Ministry of Ecology and Sustainable Development said the neutrality target was achieved a year ahead of schedule. The region’s pilot program is set to run through 2028.

Critics, however, have argued that the program has been weakened by enforcement gaps and compromises that raise questions about its scalability.

Russia, one of the world’s top greenhouse gas emitters and a major energy exporter, aims to reach carbon neutrality by 2060 and cut emissions by 30% from 1990 levels by 2030, according to official climate doctrine. Moscow claims to have already met that goal after a more than 50% drop in emissions as of 2020.

Still, while the country is already feeling the effects of climate change, the issue remains largely absent from Russian politics, media and education.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2025/08/04/sakhalin-becomes-first-russian-region-to-reach-carbon-neutrality-officials-say-a90086