

Education for Sustainable Development: Russian-Swedish Project

RUSSIAN SUSTAINABILITY NewsLETTER



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Editorial: The green context of 2012

The topic of sustainable development has the chance to become decisive in the international agenda for 2012. To this contributes the fact that this year marks a number of anniversaries for the ideology of sustainable development. The main ones are: the World Conference Rio +20 in the capital of Brazil, the 40th anniversary of the historic Stockholm UN Conference on Environment, which laid the foundations for a global environmental policy, and the 40th anniversary of the UNESCO Convention on World Heritage, which plays an indispensable role in addressing global environmental problems and in establishing a more sustainable future for mankind.

It is obvious that the upcoming summit Rio +20 will be one of the central events of the year. Its declared main theme - «green development» - could not be more relevant to humanity. In essence, the question is this: either the development will be "green" or its future will become increasingly problematic. In the professional community, this is almost universally recognized. But can the world leaders at the upcoming meeting in Rio transform this awareness into concrete political decisions? Are there any prerequisites for optimism? Unfortunately, the current world economic situation, as well as the dramatic fate of the Kyoto Protocol, and many other recent events do not give a clear answer to this question. As in other similar cases, «it depends ...».

In the list of 40-year jubilarians this year is also the first report of the Club of Rome, "The limits to growth". It is amazing, but a fact that the interest in this brilliant work by Dennis Meadows and his co-authors has still not died down. The past decades have convincingly confirmed the reality of "limits to growth." Moreover, reality has proved much more rigid. That, however, has had little effect on world politics and global trends of development.



Ingermanlandsky Zapovednik (strict nature reserve) in the Leningrad region - Russia's new reserve, which can become a symbol of Russian-Swedish cooperation in the field of environmental policy.

In the picture – Maly (Small) Fiskar Island in the Gulf of Finland.

<http://www.rosfoto.ru/shop/photo/30978/>

We have reason to believe that the aforementioned events, forming a solid environmental context in 2012, will not go unnoticed in Russia. Though there is no doubt that what will clearly dominate are the political events themselves, particularly - the presidential election and the urgent political reforms in the society. In today's Russia, these will determine the country's sustainable development. However, there is no doubt that whoever becomes the new president of the country cannot ignore environmental factors in the development of Russia. In Russia, as in Sweden and most other countries in the world, there is no an alternative to "green development" and none is foreseen in the near future.

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Year of Russian History

The year 2012 has been declared the **Year of Russian History**, by a corresponding decree, signed by President **Dmitry Medvedev** on January 9. The decree has been adopted to attract public attention to the history of the Fatherland and the establishment of Russia's role in world history.

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev endorsed the proposal to declare 2012 the Year of Russian history. This he said at a joint meeting of the Council on Culture and the Arts and the Council for Science, Technology and Education. A conversation with historians took place before a joint meeting of the Council for Culture and the Arts and the Council for Science, Technology and Education, dedicated to preparing for the celebration of the 1150th anniversary of the birth of Russian statehood.

The President hopes that the celebration of the 1150th anniversary of the Russian state in 2012 will consolidate the Russian society. He noted that it is not by chance that he decided to declare 2012 a jubilee. *"It is always a consequence of certain social challenges facing a country, a state, governors in different historical period, when you need to deal with the consolidation of society. I think that no one of you doubts that our country has survived a difficult period from the moment of its emergence, and now, perhaps more than any other, needs consolidation: intellectual, economic, and ethnic consolidation,"* said Medvedev.



The history of the Russian state is traditionally measured from the Viking Rurik's calling to the Russian principality.

Arrival of Rurik in Ladoga. *Painting by the famous Russian XIX century artist **Viktor Vasnetsov**.*

In addition to the primary anniversary date, 2012 will also be adorned by celebrations in honor of other, not less important historical milestones: the 200th anniversary of the Battle of Borodino and Russia's victory in the Patriotic War in 1812, and the 150th anniversary of the birth of P. Stolypin. However, a

special event of huge national importance in 2012 will be the celebration of the 1000th anniversary of the unification of the Mordovian people and the peoples of the Russian state.

The "Varangian" (i.e. Scandinavian) version of the origin of the Russian state is far from the only one in Russian historiography, but undoubtedly the most widespread. Therefore, the year of Russian history is a very important occasion for a new understanding of the context and history of Russia's relations with its Nordic neighbors.

Source: Own information

Vladimir Putin's election program

The site of the candidate for president of Russia **Vladimir Putin**, www.putin2012.ru, posted his election program on January 12. This document is a draft election program, adopted at the XII Congress of the Russian political party "United Russia" in the nomination of Vladimir Putin candidate for President of the Russian Federation. Currently this draft is being finalized by the candidate, taking into account suggestions from the public received at the site. The final version of the pre-election program will be published within the terms established by legislation.

"This is, of course, the basic program," says Putin. "It is, in fact, collected and adapted wishes from our citizens in almost all areas in all sectors of activity. In order to make it the basis for future activities of the Government and the President, it must, of course, be properly worked out at expert level as well. This is an obvious fact, but it's still a very a powerful, good and proper guide."

The program consists of the following sections: Results of the decade and the challenges ahead, Our values, A decent life for the citizens of a great country, A strong economy - a strong Russia, Effective government under control of the people, A strong Russia in a complex world.

The word environment is mentioned only once in the program - in the context of health problems. In particular, the section "Human health - our priority", says: *"The environment has a huge impact on human health and quality of life. In the past, environmental problems were pushed to the background of other more pressing social concerns. Today we need to radically change the situation. For the coming years, we identify four priority areas: waste disposal, air and water quality, forest preservation, a radical increase in the area of parks and squares. "*

Another section refers to the problems of water supply and waste: *"With the support of the federal budget special institutions (funds) for municipal development will be created in the regions to, in the coming years, provide for advanced utility infrastructure in towns and villages, including water, recycling and disposal of municipal solid waste ..."*

Source: www.putin2012.ru

Putin on Russia's urgent development issues

The publication of two articles by the Russian Prime Minister **Vladimir Putin** in the national newspapers in January became significant events in the country's political life.

The first of them, **"Russia focuses - the challenges that we must answer"**, was published in the newspaper Izvestia on January 16. *"Our task over the coming years, as I see it," the author writes, "is to clear the road of national development from everything that prevents us from going forward. To complete creating in Russia such a political system, such a structure of social guarantees and protection*

of citizens, such a model of the economy, which together constitute a single, living, constantly evolving, and at the same time steady and stable, healthy state organism."

It is symptomatic that much attention is paid to education. Within the framework of this publication the following detailed quote from Putin's article is of interest:

"The main hope for Russia is a high level of education among its citizens, and above all - our youth. This is true - even with all the known problems and complaints about the quality of the national educational system.

Among our citizens in the age group 25-35 years, 57 percent have higher education - a level recorded in only three other countries in the world: Japan, South Korea and Canada. The explosive growth of educational needs continues: in the next generation (15-25 years) we might as well speak of universal higher education - more than 80 percent of the boys and girls are in the process of obtaining it, or are striving to.

We are entering a new social reality. The "education revolution" is dramatically changing the face of Russian society and Russian economy. Even if at this point in our economy we may not need as many workers with higher education - we cannot go back anymore. It is not people that should adapt to the existing structure of the economy and the labor market - but the economy must become such that citizens with higher education, with a high level of demands could find themselves a worthy place.

The main challenge to Russia is that we must learn to use the "educational drive" of the younger generation, to mobilize the increased demands of the middle class and their willingness to take responsibility for their welfare to ensure economic growth and sustainable development for the country.

More educated people - this means greater life expectancy, a lower level of crime and antisocial behavior, a more rational choice. All of this already - by itself - creates a favorable background for our future."

Putin's other article, called "**Russia: the national question**", was published in Nezavisimaya Gazeta on January 23. The publication states: *"We need a national policy strategy, based on civic patriotism. Any person living in our country must not forget about their faith and ethnicity. But they should first of all be a citizen of Russia and proud of it. Nobody has the right to set national and religious features higher than the laws of the state. However, the very laws of the state must take national and religious backgrounds into account."*

Observers have noted the high relevance of both publications and view them as an important part of the election campaign of an official candidate for the highest state position in the Russian Federation.

Source: The web site of Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin

Meeting of persons responsible for environmental policy

The Russian Ministry of Natural Resources has hosted a joint meeting of the leadership of the Ministry and the members of the newly elected State Duma Committee on Natural Resources, Environment and Ecology. The meeting was held under the direction of the Minister of Natural Resources and Environment **Yuri Trutnev** and the Chairman of the State Duma **Vladimir Kashin**.

At the beginning of the meeting Trutnev congratulated the MPs on being elected to the Duma and expressed hope for successful cooperation. The minister told the MPs about the activities of the Ministry in recent years and the measures taken aimed at long-term regulation in the field of

environmental protection and improvement of the ecological situation in the country.

The Minister noted the importance of a number of bills that will be considered at the second reading at the spring session of the State Duma. The first bill deals with improving the system of evaluating negative impact on the environment and economic incentives for the best available technology. In the second reading will also be considered a bill on stimulating economic activity in the field of waste management, aimed at attracting investments in waste recycling and increase the use of waste secondary resources. The third bill, on preservation of the marine environment and its protection against oil pollution, sets obligations for operating organizations to prevent oil spills, but also introduces mechanisms for financial support. A bill on regulating the activity of Russian citizens and legal entities in the Antarctic will also be introduced to the State Duma of the Russian Federation in February.

Summing up the meeting Trutnev said: "All issues will be resolved faster if we work together. There are no activities that are in perfect condition. We are prepared to discuss this in any form."

Vladimir Kashin underlined that the environmental component should be a priority in solving any problem, and the Committee will set up all the mechanisms for collaboration.

Source: Press Service of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation.

Day of nature reserves and national parks in Russia

On January 11, 2012, Russia celebrated the Day of nature reserves and national parks. It was on this day (December 29, 1916, Old Style) that the first large nature reserve in the country and the world at large was set up. This was the still existing Barguzinsky Reserve on the south-western shore of Lake Baikal This date has been celebrated in Russia since 1997. NGOs were The initiators were the NGOs Center for Wildlife Conservation and the World Wildlife Fund.

In the Russian Federation, the establishment of protected areas (PAs) is a traditional and effective form of environmental protection. Currently in Russia there are about 12,000 PAs of different levels and categories, covering a total area of 203 million hectares (including land with inland waters - 193 million hectares or 11.3% of the country). The natural complexes and objects most important for the conservation of biological and landscape diversity are represented precisely on scale in the PA system of federal significance, which is based on 102 state nature reserves, 42 national parks and 71 state nature sanctuaries. The formation of this unique system of protected areas is one of the most significant environmental achievements of Russia.

The federal system of protected areas has received intensive development since 1992: during this time in Russia were established 28 new nature reserves, 25 national parks and 11 federal reserves. In general, during the past period of years the total area of the territories of nature reserves, national parks and federal reserves has been increased by almost 80%.

In December 2011 the Russian government approved the Concept of development of specially protected natural territories of of federal importance for the period up to 2020, prepared by Russian Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment. The concept considers the issues of improving law and governance, economic, financial and human resources of protected areas, the organization of safety and protection of natural systems, cultural heritage preservation, tourism development, international cooperation and expansion of the geographic network of protected areas.

In particular, by the year 2020 it is envisaged to create 11 new nature reserves, 20 national parks and three federal reserves. Plans for 2012 includes establishing the state nature reserve Ingermanland (Leningrad region) and no less than three national parks: Beringia (Chukotka Autonomous Area), Onega

Pomorje (Arkhangelsk region), and Leopard Land (Primorsk territory).

According to the Minister of Natural Resources and Environment **Yuri Trutnev**, the concept is aimed at preserving natural and cultural heritage, and improving the efficiency of public administration in the area of protected natural territories.

Source: Press Service of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation.

Positive environmental dynamics

The number of cases of extreme air pollution by harmful substances in Russia decreased by 2.5 in 2011 in comparison with 2010, said **Vladislav Bolov**, head of the center Antistikhiya at the Russian Ministry of Emergency Situations .

According to the Ministry of Emergency Situations there are more than 10,000 potentially hazardous objects (PHO) in the country at present, and 70% of these are located in 146 cities with populations over 100,000 people. The vast majority of PHOs were put into operation 40-50 years ago. At the normative term of operation of 15 years, the chemical-processing equipment to date has worked out their resources several times; it is obsolete and physically worn out.

"47 cases of extreme and high air pollution with harmful substances were registered in the Russian Federation in 2011, which is 2.5 times less than in corresponding period in 2010 (102 cases)," said Bolov. According to his words, the main sources of air pollution in the past year were emissions from industrial plants and motor vehicles.

"The highest frequency of pollution incidents was recorded in the territory of Bashkortostan, the Trans-Baikal region, Sakhalin, Sverdlovsk, Nizhny Novgorod, Samara, Ryazan, and Tula regions", noted the head of the Antistikhiya center.

Source: RIA News

Temperature in the northern hemisphere in 2011

According to the Roshydromet, the average air temperature in the northern hemisphere in 2011 has entered the top ten highest values for the entire period of regular meteorological observations. However, it is significantly, +0,14 °, lower than the absolute record, set last year. It has been suggested that the decrease in average temperature for the year is caused by the existence of a La Niña at the beginning and the end of 2011, which forms abnormally cold water on the surface of the Pacific Ocean, which has a global impact on the weather. It was precisely during the first and last months of 2011 that the average monthly air temperature of the northern hemisphere were significantly lower than in 2010.

The list of the ten warmest years over 121 years of observations includes nine years of the XXI century and 1998, which before the middle of the zero years of this century was considered the warmest in history. Not in even one month in 2011 has the average air temperature reached record levels, and it has not even entered the top three. Whereas in 2010 five months had absolute record values (May-August and November) and two others (March and April) were among the top three warmest.

In 2011, as well as in 2010, the largest annual mean air temperature anomaly was formed in the Arctic, reaching +5 ° or more, but this time not in the Canadian sector, but in Russia. In the north of the Scandinavian countries and Canada, the European territory of Russia (ETR) and the Urals, in most of Siberia, and in some areas of the U.S. and France, as well as the waters of the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans

anomalies exceeded +2 °. Temperatures below normal were registered in the eastern Pacific Ocean, in south-eastern Asia and eastern India (these regions are particularly vulnerable to the influence of La Niña), as well as in northern Kazakhstan and parts of Greece, Turkey and North Caucasus. The absolute maximum annual temperature was recorded in the Arctic and repeated in Siberia. Europe is close to the record.

The distribution of rainfall in the northern hemisphere in 2011 was of a varied character, as it should be. Most countries in the world received quite familiar amounts of moisture, but there are areas where the normal order was markedly disturbed. These primarily include India and South-East Asia. The summer monsoon this year was longer and more powerful than the average. Precipitation totals were 120-180% of the normal ones. Record rainfall led to an abundance of the strongest floods in 50 years and literally paralyzed many countries. In central China after a heavy winter drought came abundant rains, which caused massive flooding. A marked excess of the annual amount of precipitation over the norm occurred in the northern and north-eastern states of the United States, Scandinavia, parts of the Middle East, Kazakhstan, Central Asia and the western part of the African Mediterranean. However, large parts of Africa, the Middle East, Central Asia, China, Mongolia, southern U.S. and northern Mexico, a number of European countries: France, Italy, the Balkan States had a deficit of precipitation. Europe suffered the strongest spring drought, which was estimated in England as the driest in the last 100 years. Drought and heat in the southern United States led to numerous fires. The area covered by them is classified as the second largest in the history of this region. In most parts of Russia rainfall for the year fell within the normal range.

2011 was very warm in Russia. It comes on the third place (along with 2008). Only in 2007 - the warmest in the history of the country - and in 1995, the average annual air temperature was 0.4 ° and 0.1 ° higher respectively. Most of all the anomalous heat manifested itself in the Arctic, where the average annual air temperature was 4-5 ° above normal (Taimyr, Yamal, the islands in the Kara Sea and the Arctic Ocean). Never before have the anomalies of annual average air temperature in Russia reached 5 °. This year was the warmest in Siberia. In Russia it was considerably warmer than usual in the spring and early summer (March-July), as well as in October and December. The absolute maximum monthly temperature in Russia was recorded in June. In July, the anomalous heat covered the rest of the country, with the exception of the Urals and Siberia. In all federal districts of the European territory and the Far East this month was among the warmest in the history of regular meteorological observations in the country. In the south of Russia (part of Southern and Northern Caucasus federal district) the year was colder than usual.

Source: The Federal Service for Hydrometeorology and Environmental Monitoring

New academic journal on the Arctic

A joint meeting of the Editorial Council and the Editorial Board of the new scientific and information-analytical magazine "**The Arctic: ecology and economy**" was held in March 2011 at the Presidium of the Russian Academy of Sciences under the leadership of Vice-President of RAS Academician N. **Laverov**. The magazine has been established on the initiative of the Institute of Nuclear Safety of RAS, which since many years is engaged in radioecological issues in the northern region.

The meeting discussed the organization of work at the journal, its research profile and subject matter. An Editorial Council and the Editorial Board were formed. These include scientists leading in their field, high-level heads of departments and their divisions, heads of regional structures, which are directly linked to addressing issues of the Russian Arctic. Academician N. Laverov was approved as Chairman of the Editorial Council. Editor in chief became Academician **A. Sarkisov**, advisor at RAS.

The meeting participants noted that the increasing importance of the Arctic region is becoming more apparent. This is due to the presence of the richest reserves of raw materials and biological resources, the huge role of the northern transport and communications, the growth of environmental problems associated with radioactive and chemical pollution, the accumulation of domestic and process waste resulting from previous activities in the Arctic. These circumstances dictate the need for a periodic scientific publication reflecting the role and problems of the Arctic.



The photo shows the most recent issue of the quarterly academic journal "Arctic: ecology and economy." The material presented in it are fully consistent with the publication's name and claimed subject matter. The magazine has 122 pages size A4.

In the journal "Arctic: Ecology and Economy" it has been decided to broadly cover research of the Arctic Ocean and seas of the Arctic shelf, geological and geophysical studies for the development of mineral resources; paleofrost issues on land and at sea, the processes of climate change in the northern region and their impact on the global climate, issues of reducing the anthropogenic impact on the ecosystem, problems and prospects of the state of the economy, issues of safety for human life and labour in arctic conditions, problems of preservation of indigenous peoples, international policy and international cooperation. To date, three issues of the new publication have already appeared.

Source: Own information

Green economy is on the website of the Russian Geographical Society

The heading "Economy and Ecology" at the site of the Russian Geographical Society - <http://www.rgo.ru/sustainability> is dedicated to issues concerning "Green Economy". Among the main topics of this heading are natural resource management, environmental management, solution of the energy, agricultural and other key problems in Russia, etc. The editor of the heading is **Kirill Degtyarev**.

The mission of the heading is in line with the strategy of the Russian Geographical Society, acting as a link between geography and society, government, business, and provides a practical output of geography - its active participation in addressing socio-economic, ecological, economic, and geopolitical tasks.

The heading "Economy and Ecology" includes a constantly updated range of information, analytical and cognitive materials of interest to a wide range of stakeholders, including: researchers, educators and

teachers, students, business people, potential investors and initiators of investment projects, employees of state agencies; analysts of corporations, government agencies, research organizations.

Main topics of "Economics and Ecology":

1. Natural resources - their reserves, the amount and pattern of consumption, the shortage of natural resources.
2. Energy and Power Engineering - Energy Resources and the possibility of their use, environmental aspects of energy issues energy management issues.
3. Вода как Water as a special vitally important resource, water supplies, water consumption and pollution problems, the solution of these problems.
4. Agriculture - food problem and the state of agriculture in Russia and in the world agricultural resources, food security, the development of agriculture, forestry, hunting, fishing industry.
5. Industry - the industry with its impact on the environment, the volume and nature of industrial production, resource conservation technologies,
6. The city as a separate system, now including most of the population of Russia and the world as a whole, with its own specific problems and ways to address them.
7. Disasters - Special states of the system, in this case - natural and man-made, the conditions under which they occur, and how to prevent them.
8. Scenarios - the development of humanity and civilization as a whole, taking into account the complex ecological and economic factors.

The heading "Economy and Ecology" includes analytical reviews, interviews with experts as well as current news information. In addition, the Russian Geographical Society conducts its projects, including real cases, among these - aimed at developing "green economy", of an educational as well as practical character. The heading "Economy and Ecology", in this case, reports the progress of projects and serves as a key information tool on the activities of the RGS, along with other headings of the information portal of the Russian Geographical Society.

Source: Information portal of the Russian Geographical Society

Newsletter "Climate Change"

The last regular issue in 2011 (№ 29) of the online newsletter «Climate Change» has been published. The main themes of this issue are: the International Scientific Conference "Problems of adaptation to climate change" (Moscow, 7-9 November 2011), the 17th International Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC and the 7th Meeting of States Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (Durban, South Africa, November 28 - December 9, 2011).

Since April 2009 Roshydromet has been preparing a monthly newsletter «Climate Change», which is regularly placed on the Roshydromet web-site <http://meteof.ru> and distributed for free by e-mail to more than 400 subscribers. Among the recipients are: institutes and territorial branches of Roshydromet, institutes of the Russian Academy of Science, state hydrometeorological universities and technical schools, Russian federal and regional mass media, nongovernmental Russian and international organizations, foreign diplomatic missions in Russia and Russian specialists working abroad. The geography of dissemination of our newsletter, apart from Russia, includes Ukraine, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Germany, Austria, USA, Finland, Sweden, Japan, Israel, Estonia, Norway, and Mongolia. This newsletter is available in Russian.

The newsletter is directed towards a wide audience including specialists of different levels: decision-makers, students, journalists and Russian scientists working abroad. It is aimed at circulating operational

and scientifically based information related to climate change. It is also directed at improving public awareness of current climate science and existing methods of mitigation and adaptation. The newsletter contains the following sections: Official news, Main topics, News of the Science, Climate news from abroad and NGOs, Energy efficiency, Renewable energy and new technology, Interesting Internet site.

To subscribe to the newsletter «Climate Change» send an e-mail to: meteorf@mail.ru or subscribe at <http://www.global-climate-change.ru> (where you can also find the previous issues of the newsletter).

Source: Newsletter «Climate Change»

Cooperation between the Nenets Autonomous District and WWF

The Administration of the Nenets Autonomous Okrug and WWF Russia have signed a cooperation agreement. The joint plans include the creation of the Environmental Council of the Barents Sea region and improving environmental standards of the gas industry. The agreement also covers work in the establishment and support of networks of protected areas and facilitating environmentally aware businesses.

WWF has been working in the NAO since 1996. During this time, supported by the Foundation five protected areas have been created - "Shoyninsky" (1997), "Nizhnepechorsky" (1998), "The Sea-U" (1999), "Pym-Ba-Shore" (2000), "Vaigach" (2007) and the natural monument "Stone Town" (2011). WWF-Russia has published a guide to the protected areas in the district and has developed a monitoring program for one of the most vulnerable of its inhabitants - the Atlantic walrus.

Recently, one of the potential environmental threats is the expansion of oil and gas: *"Especially serious environmental concerns for the District Administration is the implementation of projects for the extraction of hydrocarbons in the Arctic shelf,"* said **Igor Fedorov**, governor of the Nenets Autonomous District in March of last year, speaking at the conference Evroarktika-2011.

In the Barents Sea are migratory routes of pechora salmon, eel, cod and other commercially valuable fish. The subarctic and arctic tundra of the Nenets Autonomous District, the natural pristine landscapes and natural systems, large river deltas, vast areas of wetlands that have the ideal conditions for breeding and moulting of many species of birds, including the "Red Book" species, are absolutely defenseless against the oil threat from the sea.

"There is currently no technology that would allow to prevent oil spills and to deal with them. To ensure the environmental safety of the unique Arctic ecosystems clear solutions and specific measures are needed," says **Igor Chestin**, director of WWF-Russia, in solidarity with the NAO governor.

Experts believe that the signed five-year cooperation agreement will be one of these specific measures, which will appear in a subsequent work plan and have a beneficial impact on the environment and wildlife in the Arctic district.

Source: WWF Russia
