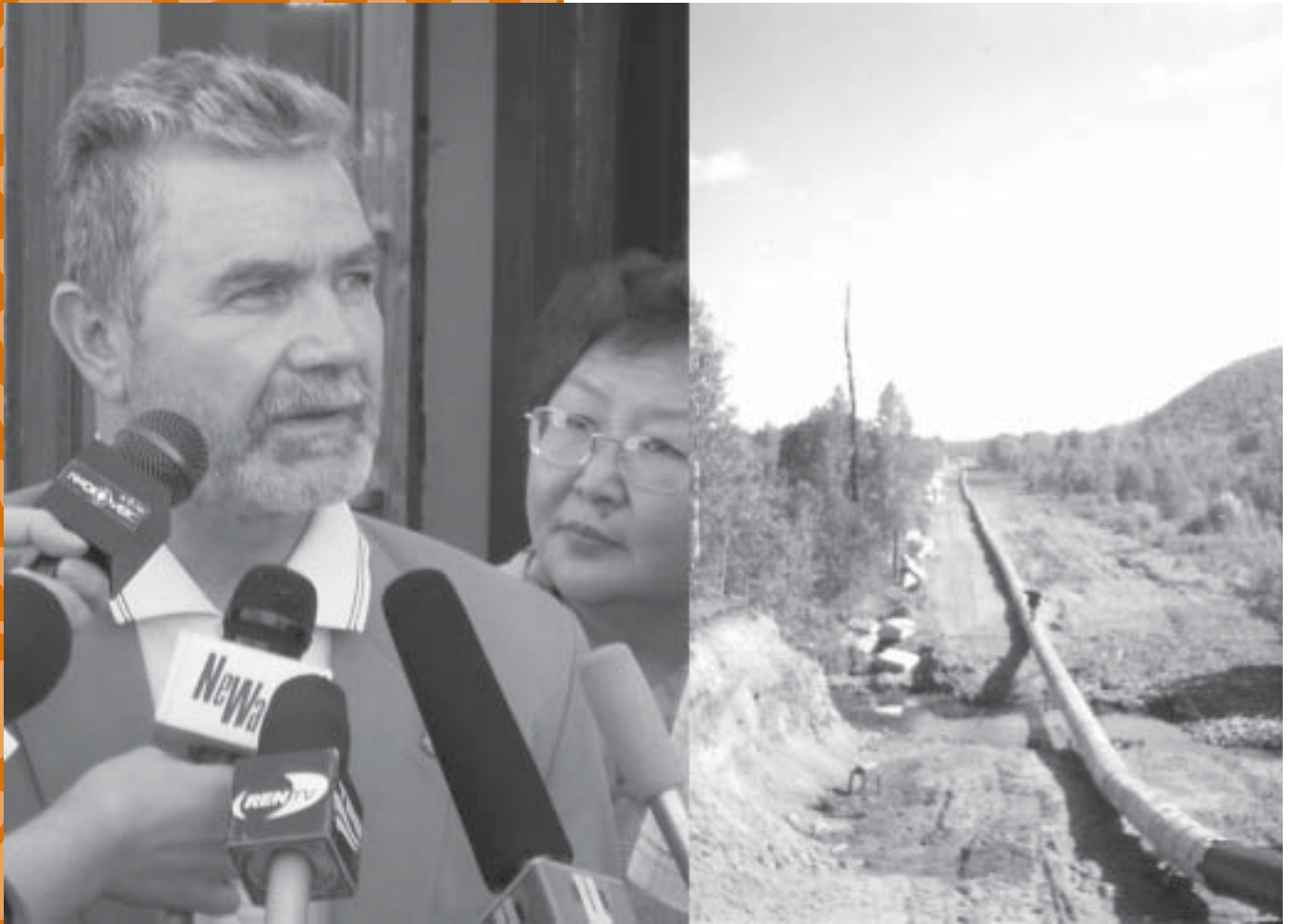


Give & Take

A Journal on Civil Society in Eurasia

Autumn 2003
Vol. 6/Issue 3



Pipelines and the Public:
Ecologists and NGOs
On Russia's Oil Boom



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Mission Statement

ISAR's mission is to strengthen the ability of citizens and social change organizations in Eurasia and their colleagues in the US to influence decision-making, advance social justice and promote environmentally sound stewardship of the earth and its resources. In order to achieve this mission, ISAR brings to bear the resources and experiences of the global community to:

- * support citizen initiatives;
- * acquire and disperse financial support for local grassroots projects;
- * gather, publish and broadly disseminate information;
- * provide consultation and technical assistance;
- * offer training and educational programs, including organizational development and environmental education;
- * initiate and support cooperation among nongovernmental organizations (NGOs);
- * foster dialogue and constructive interaction among citizens, NGOs, business and government;
- * research and analyze policies and issues relevant to NGOs;
- * represent the interests of NGOs on the local, regional, national and international level.

ISAR History

Established in 1983 by Harriett Crosby and Nancy Graham as the Institute for Soviet-American Relations, ISAR originally served as a clearinghouse on US-USSR citizen exchange and published the journal *Surviving Together* until the end of 1997.

Opinions expressed in articles in *Give & Take* do not necessarily reflect ISAR's views. More information about ISAR's programs is available on our web site, www.isar.org.

On the Cover: Alexander Malishev of the Vladivostok NGO Green Cross, left, addresses the media after a preliminary hearing contesting the legality of Transneft public hearings in Primorski Krai. Examples of environmentally questionable pipeline construction like this in Khabarovski Krai, pictured at right, worry activists and communities. Photos courtesy of Anton Semenov and environmental NGO Strazh Taigi.

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US and Russian Oil Activists Join Forces to Protect the Environment

This issue of *Give & Take*, our final one, focuses on pipelines and public participation—existing and proposed oil pipelines in the former Soviet Union (FSU) and the efforts of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), both local and international, to minimize the many threats that oil development poses to the environment. We specifically look at pipelines proposed for Siberia and the Russian Far East.

The issue has been funded by the Foundation for Russian American Economic Cooperation (FRAEC), as part of a partnership project linking the ISAR-RFE office with ISAR-DC and the Buryat Department on Lake Baikal, a Siberian NGO. FRAEC also supported the trip to Alaska for representatives of three Russian groups dealing with pipelines, which is described in Section Two.

Over the last few years, Russia has become one of the world's largest sources of oil, but lacks the ability to bring much of that oil to market. Building pipelines, therefore, is seen by government and corporate interests as a key to securing the financial benefits of this valuable natural resource. Enormous oil reserves have been found in Siberia and off-shore near Sakhalin in the Sea of Okhotsk. Plans are afoot to construct pipelines to transport oil to ports, whence it can travel to potential consumers in Asia, Europe and the United States. The oil must travel long distances through pristine wilderness areas, seismic zones and traditional homelands of indigenous people. Thus pipeline construction and the pipelines themselves raise tremendous concern among many citizens and environmental organizations in Russia. The only hope of protecting the land from such oil development threats lies in public pressure and oversight to insure that pipelines are built carefully and responsibly.

The journal begins by providing a Russian context for the Siberia-to-Pacific pipeline discussion and then looks at the reactions of citizens through whose territories the pipelines will be built. Aleksander Malishev, an environmental activist, writes about his NGO's efforts to challenge the state-owned pipeline company Transneft in court. We learn about the negative NGO reaction to the Primorski Krai government's illegal decision to build the pipeline terminal near Russia's only marine nature reserve. And a participant on an ISAR exchange to Alaska shares her perspective on what activists can learn from their colleagues in the "West" (though they lie to the East!).

Give & Take also explores the role that Western NGOs can play in mentoring local Russian groups. Western NGO activists speak about the importance of listening to their FSU partners and encouraging them to speak up to their own governments. Our story describing a Capitol Hill briefing with Sakhalin oil activist Dmitri Lisitsyn demonstrates that it is effective to have Russian NGOs bring their own stories to the West as well. In addition, Western NGOs recognize their own responsibility to reach out to the Western institutions involved in oil development in Russia, describing how they hold the international financial institutions accountable when they invest US taxpayer dollars in projects with inadequate environmental standards.

In the end, as *Give & Take* editor John Deever explains, the fate of Russia's oil-rich wilderness is closely tied to the US consumer. So long as Americans and other Westerners continue their gas-guzzling ways, the market for Russia's oil will remain strong. And as long as there is money in oil, Russian oil companies and their international partners will continue to drill and build pipelines. Thus, it turns out, the fates of Russia and the US are in many ways as closely intertwined today as they were twenty years ago. As a result, building partnerships between people and organizations who share the vision of a more peaceful and beautiful world remains an important goal.



Eliza K. Klose
Editor in Chief

Russia's Oil, Russia's People

by Alice Hengesbach

RUSSIA'S GOVERNMENT AND industrial leaders see the country's amazing array of natural resources as the source of tremendous wealth for the country. Among the most prized of those resources is oil, reserves of which, based on current estimates, could make Russia the world's biggest exporter of oil. With this in mind, Russia's budget is largely based on the production and transportation of oil. Maximizing the earning potential of this "black gold" means developing an extensive network of pipelines serving customers domestically and abroad.

A number of pipeline projects, in various stages of development, could make the export of Russian oil more efficient and profitable for government and industry. At the same time, communities and NGOs have concerns about the social and environmental costs of these pipelines. In recent years, activists and individual citizens have become more vocal and active in holding the Russian government and the oil industry accountable for their activities. The process of public monitoring and assessment is far from perfected, but it has emerged as a growing force for change in Russia and a catalyst for more responsible resource use.



Alice Hengesbach

Caspian Region

The Caspian Region holds global importance as a source of oil and gas. Recently, attention has focused on the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline planned to carry Caspian oil through Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey (bypassing Russia). However, already in existence is a pipeline constructed and managed by the Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC). The 1,580-km CPC pipeline runs from the Tengiz oil field in Kazakhstan, across southern Russia to the Black Sea port of Novorossiysk. Completed in late 2001, it cost an estimated \$2.6 billion. Expansion of the pipeline's capacity is already being planned.

Public involvement in reviewing the CPC serves as a lesson for NGOs looking to influence other pipeline projects. Before construction, communities and NGOs faced many obstacles in accessing technical documentation, project reports, and a complete environmental assessment of the project. According to Russian law, every industrial project must undergo a federal environmental impact assessment (EIA). The CPC's official

EIA—completed and approved in 1998—was challenged in 1999 by **Zelyeniye**, a Novorossiysk NGO. Zelyeniye argued that while regional EIAs were completed, a full federal EIA was not. Zelyeniye's legal challenge failed, but the group's actions raised public concern about the project.

Ultimately, CPC did respond to certain environmental concerns. It constructed river crossings using horizontal drilling technology, established a system to detect any disparity between the volume of oil being pumped and that being loaded into tankers. Also, it developed a basic emergency response and oil spill liquidation system in coordination with the Russian government—an NGO demand. However, NGOs and community leaders have continued to push for increased accountability by the Consortium on how spills should be handled. Unfortunately, CPC has not followed through on its promises to work with communities and NGOs. The Consortium failed to send a representative to a recent seminar about oil spill response organized by local NGOs and the international NGO **Crude Accountability**. In response, local NGOs are planning a public campaign to demand more information from CPC. It seems that only public pressure will ensure public involvement.

Sakhalin

Like the development in the Caspian region, the development of oil resources on Sakhalin Island began in the mid-1990s. The Russian government signed production sharing agreements (PSAs) with a number of international oil companies. Sakhalin Energy Investment Company began development of one of those PSAs, known as Sakhalin-II, in 1998. According to company materials, the first phase of this project, the Vityaz Complex (consisting of the Molikpaq production platform and other offshore units) began successfully producing oil in 1999.

The second phase of this extensive project is currently under review by several international financing institutions. It would include two pipelines (one gas, one oil) running the length of the island, as well as two platforms and four underwater pipelines off the eastern coast of Sakhalin, and a terminal at Aniva Bay. Environmentalists are concerned about the long-term effect of oil drilling and transport on the population of the Western Grey Whale, as well as the potential for oil

spills from land-based pipelines, which would cross numerous active faults and salmon spawning streams.

The construction and development of the first phase of Sakhalin-II occurred with little public attention, but since then several different campaigns, led in large part by the NGO **Sakhalin Environmental Watch** (SEW), have created intense interest in the project. In 2002, SEW, in cooperation with the regional coalition “Living Seas,” organized a public campaign focused on oil development on Sakhalin, raising public awareness not only on the island but throughout the Russian Far East. Earlier this year, SEW and 50 other Russian and international NGOs submitted a letter to Sakhalin Energy demanding safety improvements at Sakhalin-II. Sakhalin Energy responded by reasserting their claims that the project is environmentally safe.

Unsatisfied by these assertions, SEW and other activists continue to push for environmental accountability for the project by lobbying international finance institutions, as well as the governments holding stakes in those institutions, including the US (see page 20).

Siberia and the Russian Far East

Unlike the more finalized plans on Sakhalin Island, plans to bring Siberian oil to Asia and the Pacific are still in the planning phase. Building on previous experience, NGOs and communities have already started to make their voices heard.

One pipeline option, recommended by the Russian government-owned Transneft, would run from Angarsk (in Siberia, west of Lake Baikal) to Primorye on Russia’s Pacific coast. The pipeline would skirt Lake Baikal and end up 3,765 km later at a terminal on the Sea of Japan (see page 9). Another option, offered by Yukos-Sibneft, would take a shorter southern route directly to China’s hinterlands.

Despite a year of debate, no conclusion has been reached as to which option—if any—makes the most political, economic and environmental sense. Communities along the proposed routes question the actual regional economic benefits of the pipeline. Concerns include the technical aspects of such a long pipeline over areas of seismic activity, permafrost, and animal migration. And legal questions surround the proposed pipeline’s proximity to environmental treasures such as Tunka National Park, south of Lake Baikal. Not least of all, oil spills could ruin some of Russia’s most pristine salmon spawning streams and the watershed of Lake Baikal, the deepest body of freshwater in the world. NGOs and community groups have played a significant role in this debate over the last two years.

In Irkutsk Oblast, near the pipeline’s source, the NGO **Baikal Environmental Wave** and the **Buryat**

Regional Department on Lake Baikal, along with indigenous communities, have organized public awareness campaigns, held public hearings, and pursued legal action to protect Lake Baikal and Tunka National Park. ISAR-Far East, working with groups along the proposed pipeline route, has provided information and spread awareness about the project. The Vladivostok NGO **Green Cross** has sued Transneft and the regional Ministry of Natural Resources to get full access to information about the project (see page 13).

Murmansk

Another way to bring Russia’s oil to the US and Western Europe is via Murmansk on the Barents Sea. Tankers leaving from this deep, year-round port would take only nine days to reach the US, compared with the 32-day trip from the Middle East. As many as 80 million tons of crude a year from Western Siberia could be exported through Murmansk.

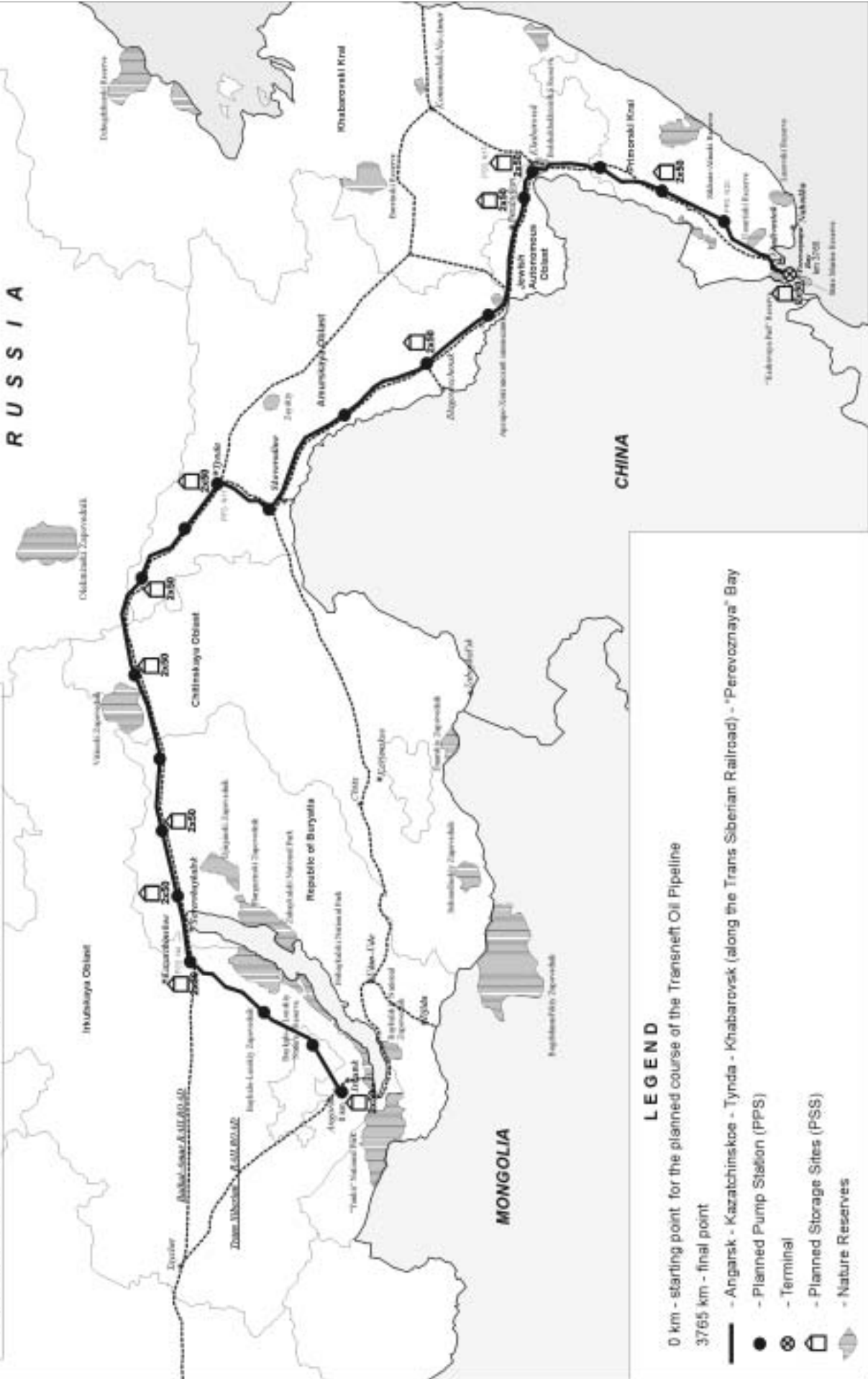
In November 2002, LUKoil, YukosSibneft, and Tyumen Oil set out to plan a pipeline from Western Siberia to Murmansk. BP and others have also expressed support for either a pipeline or a series of offshore platforms in the Barents Sea. The Russian government is supportive, but no official assessment has begun.

Even before concrete plans appeared, criticism emerged. Some industry and government figures view output estimates as unrealistic. Certainly the current relationship between the Russian government and oil companies like YukosSibneft casts doubt on privately funded projects like those proposed for Northern Russia. Environmentalists fear any oil development in the Barents Sea region, home to one of the world’s largest puffin colonies, the largest known cold water reef, and large populations of seals, whales and polar bears. Any oil spill could destroy the ecosystem of a region already jeopardized by significant port traffic, not to mention a rusting scrapheap of decommissioned nuclear submarines. International environmental organizations such as the **World Wildlife Fund** have already expressed concerns about such oil development. Some local NGOs have joined in opposition as well.

For many, the incentive to tap Russia’s vast resources is great, but at what cost? Public monitoring and assessment can go a long way toward insuring that economic development does not lead to environmental degradation. The key to effective public monitoring is cooperation among Russian NGOs and local communities. The pipeline issue is inspiring such cooperation on a greater scale all over the country. ●

Alice Hengesbach is ISAR’s Russia program officer and new co-director.

**TRANSNEFT PROJECTED OIL PIPE
FROM RUSSIA TO ASIA PACIFIC REGION COUNTRIES**



LEGEND

- 0 km - starting point for the planned course of the Transneft Oil Pipeline
- 3765 km - final point
- Angarsk - Kazatchinskoe - Tynda - Khabarovsk (along the Trans Siberian Railroad) - "Perevoznyaya" Bay
- Planned Pump Station (PPS)
- Terminal
- Planned Storage Sites (PSS)
- Nature Reserves

Map courtesy of Anton Semenov and Sergei Shapkhayev



NGOs Insist on Public Monitoring, Independent Evaluation of Pipeline

by Anton Semenov

RUSSIA HOLDS AN ESTIMATED 27 percent of the world's oil reserves and plans are being put into place to open a "window" to this resource to serve the energy needs of the Pacific Rim region, including the US and Japan. Intensive development efforts have focused on a pipeline project that would include the construction of an oil pipeline 3,765 km from Angarsk to the Pacific coast. The planned oil pipeline will cross eight territories of the Russian Federation (Irkutsk Oblast, Ust-Ordinski Buryatski Autonomous Okrug, the Republic of Buryatia, Chita and Amur Oblasts, Jewish Autonomous Okrug, Khabarovski and Primorski Krai) to Perevoznaya Bay. From there the oil will be put in tankers and transported by sea to countries surrounding the Pacific.

This project has become a key point for the discussion of the future energy development and resource use in Russia. Industry and government representatives, scientific and economic experts, environmental activists and individual citizens have all contributed their thoughts and ideas about what type of project would make the most sense for the region and the country as a whole. While those views vary greatly, environmentalists and community leaders have worked hard to draw attention to the potential environmental effects of the Angarsk-Primorye pipeline.

According to the environmental and scientific community, it is important to acknowledge that the oil pipeline presents some serious environmental threats to the region. The pipeline's route crosses a complicated geographical landscape including areas of permafrost, mountainous regions, and hundreds of streams, rivers and lakes, not to mention areas with regular seismic activity. In this regard the project is analogous to another pipeline, the Trans Alaska Pipeline System (TAPS).

Current plans provide for the pipeline to end at Perevoznaya Bay (Khasanski Raion, Primorski Krai).

In this pristine region, home to several specially protected territories (including Russia's only marine nature reserve), numerous rivers and rare plant and animal species, a terminal would be built and tanker traffic would compete with that of vacationers. From an environmental standpoint, the option of building a terminal at Perevoznaya is not only unprofitable, but environmentally dangerous, a fact supported by scientific experts who have analyzed the available information about Angarsk-Primorye project (see page 9).

Environmentalists are not the only voices of dissent when it comes to the discussion surrounding the pipeline; economic forecasters have concerns of their own. Estimates for how long Russia's oil reserves will last, based on current production levels, vary from seven to 35 years. The Angarsk-Primorye pipeline would have a lifespan of 25 years. And yet, a full capacity Angarsk-Primorye pipeline may not be

in operation for another eight to ten years. One has to ask, does it make economic sense to build a pipeline that may never be at full capacity and, in fact, may outlast Russia's oil supply? Along with the environmental concerns, these economic issues are an integral part of assessing the Angarsk-Primorye project.

Transneft, the state-owned company implementing the project, held a public meeting in Vladivostok on June 30, 2002 for residents of Primorski Krai. By law, public hearings are required in each region where a development project is planned. Hearings should provide the public with concrete information about a project, yet Transneft failed to present anything of significance. According to the director of the regional department for special protection of the environment, V. Alkhimenko, "There were very few people present. There was little publicity about the hearing. No one, not even our department, was alerted ahead of time. We only received the project documents the night before the hearing. At the hearing itself, the debate about the project was nonexistent. The company representa-

courtesy of ISAR-FE



Anton Semenov



courtesy of Anton Semenov

Activists fear that the Angarsk-Primorye pipeline could look like this pipeline in Khabarovski Krai, which lies directly on the soil and crosses a stream with no visible safeguards in place.

tives talked in generalities about how the territory of Primorski Krai is well suited for this type of construction project. Those present were simply not prepared for a full discussion and suggested that another hearing be scheduled for a later date. The suggestion, as you can see, was left to the hearing's organizers and another hearing was never planned."

Unfortunately, that practice was no exception. All the public hearings were organized in the same manner. The lack of information and public review of the proposed pipeline continues to violate citizens' rights to know about development in their regions. Transneft's actions suggest that it does not believe the public should be involved in or even concerned about the project. On the contrary, the complications of this project make it essential that citizens' environmental rights are absolutely protected and that every effort is made to include the public in the project's review, implementation and operation.

To address this need, ISAR-Far East along with ISAR-DC has partnered with the Buryat Regional Department on Lake Baikal (BRD) to coordinate the program "A Far Eastern Pipeline: Public Control." In the course of this project we have worked with local communities and regional and local NGOs along the pipeline's proposed route.

Most local communities have only a very basic level of knowledge of how the pipeline project would affect them and their environment. According to a public survey done by ISAR, only half of the population of Khasanski Raion knows something about the project, yet 80 percent have an interest in learning more (see page 11), not an uncommon phenomenon regionwide.

Participants at regional seminars organized by ISAR and BRD have repeatedly expressed their interest in learning more about the project and its possible effects. These seminars give communities the knowledge and tools they need to play a real part in the discussion about the Angarsk-Primorye pipeline project. At a recent seminar in Blagoveshchensk, Alaskan activists shared information about the pipeline system in Alaska, a place with an analogous geographical setting. Based on this presentation and the presentation of regional experts on the specifics of building a pipeline in Amurskaya Oblast, participants created a list of demands, including increased access to specific information about the pipeline and an assessment of the technical aspects of the project by a panel of independent experts.

In addition to informing the public about the project, ISAR and BRD have sought the data needed to conduct a complete public environmental impact assessment in each of the eight regions. So far, Transneft has officially registered the project in three regions: Irkutsk Oblast, the Republic of Buryatia and Primorski Krai. Yet the state-owned company has been reluctant to fully disclose the project materials, and regional NGOs have had to pursue legal action. While the fate of legal efforts like the Green Cross lawsuit against Transneft in Vladivostok (see page 13) has yet to be determined, the public attention from these cases goes a long way in sustaining public pressure on the government and Transneft to be more transparent.

The broad, interregional approach we are taking is an important part of the project. One activist, organization or even region acting alone cannot be successful in making real public participation possible, particularly in a project as complex as the Angarsk-Primorye pipeline. Our purpose is to carry out a broad public informational campaign about the myriad of issues connected with the pipeline project and train citizens in how to participate in decision-making through public hearings and independent environmental impact assessments.

We have worked and continue to work with NGOs and communities throughout the region, as well as with our American colleagues in Washington, DC and Alaska, to create a basis for new partnerships between environmental organizations in the Far East, Siberia, and US. Acting together we can effectively and constructively play a role in the future of oil development in the Russian Far East. ●

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Political Pressure Pushes Oil Terminal In Unspoiled Khasanski Raion

by Anton Semenov

ALL OF THE PRIMORSKI KRAI province suffers from economic and political chaos, but some of its subregions have it worse than others. Of these, Khasanski Raion—proposed site for the termination point of an oil pipeline from Siberia—has the most complex social problems of any region in Primorski Krai.

Constant political turmoil plagues the regional administration. The raion chief has been discharged from the execution of his duties based on a criminal case against him for abusing his official powers. Leadership of the region has changed frequently, with regional officials and legislators squabbling incessantly. In October, local deputies revolted. After declaring they would assume all authority for managing the government, they literally took over the central government building. The governor of Primorski Krai had to send a public prosecutor to resolve the situation and put things in order. As for the private sector, two thirds of Khasanski Raion's businesses are unprofitable and have deep deficits. Such chaos has made sound, long-term economic planning in Khasanski Raion impossible.

Amidst the confusion, Sergei Darkin, Primorski Krai's regional governor, has lobbied for locating a giant, controversial new industrial facility in the region.

Aquatic Farming and Management

It's not as if Khasanski Raion has no potential for sustainable economic development. Economic opportunities abound, given the right vision and sound management. For example, the coastal region is known for its rich waters. Today Khasanski's unique marine wildlife, horribly mismanaged, is intensively exploited by poachers, who find a boundless market for its sea creatures in nearby China. Many local residents earn a living from poaching, which has led to the near extinction of several kinds of animals. The Coast Guard cannot protect the sea from illegal activities due to a serious lack of financing. The region could remain protected

and even prosper economically, however, with the development of sustainable aquatic farming—development that is not so dependent on cash and oil pumped in from outside.

Fish farming would give impoverished local people an alternative to poaching. For far less investment and far less construction than a pipeline would require, “kitchen gardens in the sea” could be organized. Unique local technologies already in place could provide effective development of the economy. Unfortunately, various administrative barriers have prevented sustainable development from happening. Currently,

The Primorski Krai government sees a chance to use Khasanski Raion as a way to generate quick profits at the expense of the community and ecosystem.

potential aquatic farm sites are only available for rental for five years, whereas such a farm requires eight to ten years to become viable. Instead, the Primorski Krai government sees a chance to use Khasanski Raion as a way to generate quick profits at the expense of the community and ecosystem.

Why a Pipeline for Khasanski Raion?

In August 2002, citizens of Primorski Krai learned about plans to construct the Angarsk-Primorye pipeline, which would carry Russian oil to the Pacific, particularly for Japan and South Korea. The state pipeline monopoly Transneft would construct the pipeline. Initially, there was no official word about where the pipeline was to end and the oil terminal was to be built. Most people assumed the terminal would be located in Nakhodka, the major international port for the region. But recently, the public has learned that the terminal is to be built instead in a tiny bay near the sparsely populated village of Perevoznaya (see map, next page).

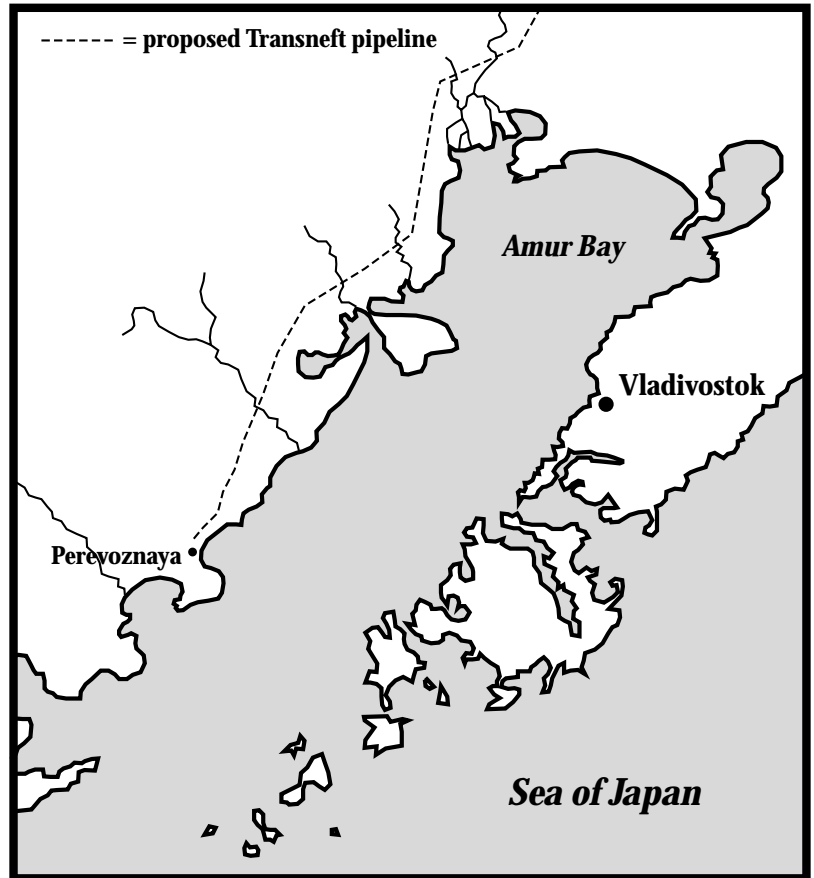
The arguments for choosing this site for the terminal are unclear. No one seems able to say why Perevoznaya would be a good site for a terminal. It's likely that the remoteness and emptiness of the location was an important factor in choosing it. According to some, Governor Darkin—who lobbied hard for the overall pipeline project—prefers Perevoznaya over Nakhodka, an industrialized site where new environ-

mental damage would be less. The catch is, Nakhodka is controlled by large western and Russian companies that have tried to maintain its status as Primorski Krai's main access point for the Pacific region.

Any oil pipeline terminal would obviously bring considerable profit to the region. Profits earned at a terminal at Nakhodka, however, would undoubtedly be split among various commercial and government interests, both domestic and international. Were the terminal to be constructed at remote Perevoznaya, on the other hand, its profits theoretically could remain under the complete control of the government. Thus, the plan to build a terminal at Perevoznaya appears to have no environmental or economic basis other than Darkin's interests.

What is really so bad about the construction of a terminal at Perevoznaya? Transneft has provided only limited information about the potential consequences of pipeline construction (despite legal requirements to do so). Even so, local environmentalists and scientists have identified some of the most significant environmental concerns. Last April they discussed these issues at a round table organized by ISAR.

A central factor is the tanker traffic that would come in and out of the shallow bay at Perevoznaya. The surf near shore is quite rough and the silty sea bed makes anchoring challenging. The relatively shallow waters will prevent large-capacity tankers from approaching the coast. Also, the site's strong currents would carry oil from any spills far and wide. These elements make the threats to Russia's only marine nature reserve, the region's recreational beaches, and nearby cities like Vladivostok all the more real. Additionally seismic activity in the area, only slightly less common than that on Sakhalin Island and Japan, poses a problem for Khasanski Raion. It raises the potential for oil spill and pipeline damage in a region rich with rare animals and plants.



Despite these concerns, the Perevoznaya site seems to have become the only option for the terminal. According to Russian law, an environmental assessment is required for any such decision, and this assessment must include the evaluation of several options—including the “zero option” (not doing the project at all). The assessment should include careful economic calculations and take into account a range of ecological and social factors. Only after all possibilities have been considered should a final option be presented; otherwise the project is in violation of Russian law.

Transneft has ignored the law in making its decision, confident that it is responding to the site selection the local government prefers. They operate on the belief that the “end justifies the means.” In this case, the end and the means leave much to be desired. ●

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Coastal Community Survey Raises Questions about Pipeline Construction

by Anton Semenov

A PRISTINE REGION OF RUSSIA'S Pacific Coast, long known as a haven for vacationers, could become the site of a new terminal for the proposed Angarsk-Primorye pipeline. Khasanski Raion (see map, left) includes Russia's only marine nature reserve. Environmentalists have already expressed concerns about the effects of pipeline and terminal construction in the region (see sidebar), but the key to gaining public support for environmental protection means understanding the perspective of residents regarding the project.

For this reason, ISAR, as part of its public monitoring project along the pipeline's path, surveyed 721 of the region's residents in March-April 2003. ISAR sent surveys to seven towns and villages, among them: Slavyanka, Bezverkhovo, Khasan, Zarubino, Primorski (including the nature reserve "Kedrovaya Pad"), Posyet and Andreevka. Of the 721 survey respondents, 347 were white collar workers, 147 blue collar workers, 18 businessmen, 12 facilities or organizational supervisors, six government representatives, 136 university and technical students, 26 enlisted military personnel (including police), 60 retirees, and 46 unemployed residents.

The overall results of the survey showed that the population as a whole has a relatively low level of knowledge about the pipeline and terminal construction project: 19.5 percent of the participants knew nothing about the project, 25.5 percent were vaguely aware of the project and 55 percent were able to say that they knew about the project. Despite the fact that only about half of the population surveyed knew something about the project, more than 80 percent expressed an interest in learning more about it. Just 9.5 percent thought that there was already enough information, while six percent were indifferent.

As far as public opinion about the project goes, a third of the participants (33 percent) expressed an extremely negative impression of the construction and operation plans. Another 26 percent expressed considerable negativity toward the project, but were open to a re-evaluation, if the interests of the local communities were taken into account before the construction and operation of the pipeline. Twenty-three percent of the participants had a positive impression of the project.

In terms of economic benefits to the region, 14 percent did not see the potential for any profit for the region as a result of the pipeline and terminal, and 28 percent suggested that the region would not only not receive any profit, but that it would suffer as a result of these development plans. At the same time, 37 percent think that the construction of an oil pipeline would create new jobs in Khasanski Raion.

From an environmental standpoint, 77 percent of the participants think that the construction of a pipeline and a terminal will threaten the environment, and 77.5 percent of the participants see the construction of a terminal in Perevoznaya Bay as a serious source of danger to the marine ecosystem. Sixty-nine percent do not believe that the construction of the pipeline and port will happen in accordance with environmental safety requirements. When asked "Do you consider the laying of oil pipelines across protected territories reasonable?" 69 percent were absolutely opposed to the idea, six percent thought it was reasonable, and 24 percent thought that that option could be reasonable once all the necessary safety measures were taken.

Of the survey participants, 96.5 percent take an active position regarding their environmental rights, believing that local citizens must do what they can to protect the health of their environment and habitat. However, almost half (47 percent) don't believe that public opinion can influence government decision-making in regards to the Angarsk-Primorye pipeline. Twenty-four percent of the respondents believed that public opinion could make a difference.

Aside from the overall results from all of the towns surveyed, some interesting results were discovered within particular communities.

In Khasan, 38 percent of the respondents viewed the pipeline and terminal construction project favorably. This is the highest level for approval in the whole region. Only 32 percent of the Khasan respondents had a negative view of the project (eight percent of that group had an extremely negative view of the project), a rate below the overall percentage for that category. In addition, the highest percentage of people who knew

In the village of Andreevka, nearest to the proposed site, not one respondent held a positive opinion of the project, and 67.5 percent held extremely negative views.

nothing about the project also were from Khasan (47 percent). These results seemed to be explained by the fact that, of any of the towns surveyed, Khasan is located the farthest away from the pipeline route. It seems that a significant percentage of Khasan residents (57 percent) believe that their personal interests will not be affected by the project.

On the other side, results from the Andreevka respondents paint quite a different picture. To the question “Do you think that there will be threats to the environment from the realization of the pipeline?” 100 percent answered “yes.” One hundred percent of the Andreevka respondents also believe that the construction and operation of a terminal would threaten the environment. Ninety percent of the Andreevka respondents do not believe that the technical safety requirements will be met.

Not one respondent held a positive opinion of the project, and 67.5 percent held extremely negative views. In addition, not one respondent from Andreevka responded positively about the potential for the pipeline to be constructed in protected areas, while 95 percent expressed a negative impression of this potential. It would appear that the reasoning behind the collective position of the Andreevka respondents lies in the fact

that the local economy is based in fishing and tourism. Andreevka, and its immediate surroundings, attract vacationers from all over the Russian Far East, giving its residents an annual source of income. Any damage to or loss of the clean, marine territory and recreational zone could cause significant financial harm to local residents and increase the level of unemployed people.

Only 10 percent of the respondents from Andreevka hope that the raion passes on the profits in the form of new jobs and increases in the regional budget. Nearly 13 percent suggested that raion won't get anything at all and 60 percent think that the raion will not only not gain anything, but it will also lose.

In Soviet times, massive industrial projects were undertaken whether the public liked it or not. Times are different—so the officials say. Russian industrialists and bureaucrats must take public opinion into account in their decision-making. In the villages of Khasanski Raion, public opinion is clear. A pipeline terminal? Not interested. ●

Anton Semenov is a project coordinator at ISAR-FE and the president of the Russian NGO Resource Center “Regional Activists Network” (RC RAN). He can be reached at isarrfe@vlad.ru. Translated by Alice Hengesbach.

RFE Environmentalists Tell Primorye Governor: Drop This Pipeline

A petition organized by the Living Seas Coalition, signed by 189 concerned residents of Primorski Krai, and sent to regional governor Sergei Darkin this year, stated, “The Angarsk-Perevoznaya pipeline construction project, if implemented irresponsibly, will cause irreversible damage to the environment of Primorski Krai as well as to the health of the region's residents.” The projected pipeline route is to go through the areas with vulnerable ecosystems. If the project is implemented without a whole series of necessary adjustments, several areas will be put in grave danger, namely the waters of the gulf of Peter the Great, the marine nature reserve of the Far East, and recreational areas and other protected territories of Vladivostok, such as Barsovyi and the Kedrovaya Pad nature reserves.

“The economic value of this project to Primorski Krai (considering all of the environmental threats) remains unclear. We

request that a different, environmentally sound pipeline route be considered. Perhaps, one that would avoid the Perevoznoy and Khasanski regions. We also suggest that you consider abandoning the project altogether.” Environmentalists are demanding that a second public hearing be held regarding the pipeline construction project. They are also asking the governor of Primorski Krai to speak with the public.

The Living Seas Coalition unites NGOs and activists from the six regions of the Russian Far East that share the coastline of the Sea of Japan, Sea of Okhotsk, and the Bering Sea. The coalition informs citizens of the Far East and advocates for their public participation in resolving issues of marine conservation in hopes of protecting these waters and keeping them as pure and rich as they are today.

—Living Seas Coalition.
Translated by Olga Segars.



Seeking Information Disclosure, Primorye Ecologists Go to Court

by Alexander Malishev

IN ITS ESSENCE, RUSSIA'S LEGAL framework for environmental impact assessments involves the government, industry and the community at all levels. It is meant to ensure that Russians' constitutional rights to a clean environment are protected. However, in practice, the process can be most frustrating for those who are attempting to ensure that the assessment happens in the best interests of the communities affected by industrial development.

In August of 2001, the President and the government of Russian Federation instructed Transneft, a state-owned oil company that transports more than 90 percent of all extracted oil in the country, to begin the development of a project now commonly known as the Angarsk-Primorye Pipeline.

On July 30, 2002, Transneft and officials from the Primorye region conducted a "public" hearing in Vladivostok. Company representatives, there to present information about the proposed Angarsk-Primorye pipeline, were to discuss issues surrounding the pipeline's construction and the investment needed to begin it. But the hearing was attended only by the heads of local administrations and project development leaders. In fact, the entire "hearing" consisted of only a brief introductory speech by the project manager and a 10-minute promotional video about Transneft's Baltic pipeline network.

Within the next few days, Green Cross, a Primorye environmental NGO, officially announced its intent to conduct a genuine public environmental impact assessment (EIA) of the documents presented during the public hearing. (Primorye's Green Cross is not affiliated with the organization Green Cross Russia, based in Moscow.) Federal law requires that projects of this scope be subjected to EIAs. Green Cross sent a letter to Transneft requesting the necessary documents for review. Transneft ignored the request, forcing Green Cross to send another letter in January and yet another in March. Green Cross activists also telephoned Transneft to request the documents, but were once again rebuffed. In a letter to Green Cross received shortly after the telephone conversation, Transneft reiterated its decision to withhold information, arguing that the proposed pipeline has national significance,

and that because it falls under federal jurisdiction any EIAs would have to be specially requested by the government.

Last May, environmentalists sent a special request to the Ministry of Natural Resources, but have yet to receive a response. Therefore, independent activists have been left to judge the project solely on already published materials—a practice that is faulty from a scientific point of view and illegitimate from a legal point of view. Yet independent ecologists are going ahead with their assessment. The public environmental expert committee consists of qualified professionals and scientists from the Far Eastern branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences and other institutions. Nevertheless, they do not expect their professional conclusions to be taken into consideration by the authorities.

Environmental scientists believe that in order for an objective and well-rounded EIA to be conducted, the Angarsk-Primorye pipeline materials must be reviewed by competent professionals. Such an assessment would have to take into account the project's economic feasibility, estimates of the overall hydrocarbon resources of the Russian Far East (both discovered and estimated), the potential effects that specific technologies could have on the environment, and whether the guarantees of ecological safety that are mandated by Russian and international environmental laws will be kept. Environmentalists were left with no other way to accomplish this than to take Transneft and the government to court.

In a preliminary hearing this September, Judge Medova of Primorski Krai reviewed the injunction that

courtesy of Green Cross



Alexander Malishev, director of the Vladivostok NGO Green Cross, speaking with media outside the courtroom.

Green Cross filed against Transneft and the Ministry of Natural Resources. In its initial suit, Green Cross sought simply to look at the Angarsk-Primorye pipeline project materials in hopes of postponing the project's implementation until a fully independent EIA could be completed. They proposed that until that time, pipeline construction should be banned. Green Cross also sought to have the lawsuit reviewed jointly by impartial jurors.

Three of the six petitions were denied immediately and without any explanation. The environmentalists' request to see the documents necessary to complete the EIA was not even considered. The NGO request to stop pipeline construction immediately was also denied by the court, suggesting that even if the court were later to grant some concessions, it would never mandate an independent EIA, but would merely accept the government-conducted EIA.

Green Cross also demanded that Transneft demonstrate why the plans describing the Angarsk-Primorye pipeline construction project must be kept secret. Transneft has responded that the investment project contains classified information that cannot be disclosed to environmentalists. They have never substantiated this claim.

When Judge Medova heard the appeal on October 21, she again demurred, postponing review of the case again. It is likely that the recess was scheduled only to

prolong the trial, since there is little other reason to drag out the case. Despite the delays, environmentalists will continue to meet with Transneft attorneys in court. At some point, Judge Medova will have to review the issues that lie at the heart of the lawsuit.

Supposedly, by 2008 the Angarsk-Primorye pipeline

project could bring in revenue amounting to three percent of the total income of Primorski Krai. But when one considers all the potential environmental and social risks attendant upon any project of such gigantic scale, the pipeline plan is economically irrational.

Regrettably, the current state of governmental affairs leaves public organizations little choice but to take up lawsuits and go to court to have their voices heard. That is unfortunate. The constitution of the Russian Federation guarantees Russian citizens the right to obtain information and the right to a healthy environment. Will government and corporate plans for a Trans-Siberian pipeline honor those basic rights?

The jury is still out. ●

Alexander Malishev is president of Green Cross. Material on recent judicial events written by Green Cross activist Alexander Konnov. Translated by Olga Segars.

Anton Semenov



Pipeline construction (and lawsuits against it) draw media attention in many of Russia's regions, where citizens want to know whether their communities will benefit from oil development.



Anton Semenov

Attorney for Transneft at Green Cross hearing. Transneft can spend a great deal of resources on NGO legal challenges.



Russian Activists Follow the Alaska Pipeline and Find Partners

by Anton Semenov

IF THERE IS A SILVER LINING TO BE found in the disastrous 1989 Exxon-Valdez tanker crash in Prince William Sound, Alaska, it is the growth and success that Alaskan environmental activists have achieved in the decade and a half since the spill. As Russian environmental activists, we can benefit from our colleagues' experience without having to suffer a similar catastrophe.

Alaskan activists, well aware of the potential hazards of oil production, have unique experience in protecting vulnerable ecosystems. They successfully defended citizens' environmental rights during the construction and use of the TransAlaska pipeline, often using advanced technology and with the help and participation of the public. Finally, they know how to insist that oil companies use the safest technologies, exhibit transparency, and accept steady control from the government and an informed public.

For these reasons, several representatives of environmental NGOs from Siberia and the Russian Far East traveled to Alaska this April to make connections and learn what Alaskan NGOs are doing. In addition to two representatives from ISAR, three Russian activists participated in this trip: Ludmilla Fedorovskaya from Blagoveshchensk, Irina Bogdan from Khabarovsk and Sergei Shapkhaev from Ulan Ude. Vladivostok resident and consultant for the US-based NGO **Pacific Environment** Misha Jones also participated. Our trip was made possible thanks to the financial support of the **Foundation for Russian American Economic Cooperation** (FRAEC).

During the trip, we became acquainted with the work of twelve US environmental organizations. We met with representatives of oil companies, public oversight departments, and commercial organizations working on oil spill prevention and response programs in Anchorage, Valdez and Fairbanks. In numerous meetings and discussions, we were able to establish new partnerships and collect interesting materials about how our Alaskan colleagues go about conducting public environmental monitoring. We were even able to see the TransAlaska pipeline up close, which gave us an invaluable opportunity to take a firsthand look at the

Anton Semenov



At the northernmost Denny's restaurant in the world, Russian and Alaskan activists meet with a representative of the Alyeska consortium to discuss environmental concerns.

type of pipeline construction technology used in the US more than 30 years ago.

The trip participants were eager to learn about the effects of the earthquake that had nearly ruptured the Alaska pipeline a few months before our visit. The pipeline was built to withstand an earthquake of 8 on the Richter scale; the November 2002 quake registered 7.9. The fact that the Russian Far East is also a seismically active region made information about the Alaska earthquake and its threat to the environment particularly relevant.

Among the many groups advocating for environmental protection are Alaska's native communities. Indigenous groups are continuously fighting to protect their rights and to defend unharmed ecosystems. Currently, a specific area of concern for the Gwich'in people is the issue of oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. The Gwich'in, with the support of Alaskan environmental groups, are campaigning to prevent oil extraction in the Refuge, where their people have lived for generations.

Interestingly enough, we learned that building the pipeline did not significantly improve the Alaskan economy and living standard. We discovered that fishing and sustainable ecotourism in national parks could perhaps have brought in more money for Alaska than the pipeline. In fact, one could argue that despite its well-publicized financial benefits, oil extraction has in some cases cost Alaska money. In the past 20 years, the state government of Alaska has spent over \$260 million paying lawyers to file lawsuits against oil companies to obtain the payments owed to the state from oil-related revenues. The oil companies, in turn, have been forced to pay the state over \$2 billion.

Hearing such stories was not really reassuring for us Russian activists, since the Russian legal system is

Anton Semenov



Misha Jones, Irina Bogdan, Alice Hengesbach, Michael Zwirn, Ludmilla Fedorovskaya, Dan Lawn, and Sergei Shapkhaev.

not capable of conducting the extensive investigations and trials necessary to collect such payments. Russian environmental groups cannot count on success when advocating for citizens' rights. If the Russian oil companies are supported by foreign capital, our chances appear even more slim.

The participants in the Alaska trip intend to use the experience we gained to enhance the ability of public organizations to hold government and corporations accountable. We will translate and distribute the information we collected during the Alaska trip, including the contact information for Alaskan organizations and professionals. (The materials will be available at www.isardvrc.ru.) Despite the challenges of dealing with oil companies and government in Russia, we hope that the fruits of our US partnership will enable other independent ecologists in our region to apply the successful techniques of NGOs in Alaska to their own work. ●

Anton Semenov is a project coordinator at ISAR-FE and the president of the Russian NGO Resource Center "Regional Activists Network" (RC RAN). He can be reached at isarrfe@vlad.ru. Translated by Olga Segars.



Anton Semenov

Trip participants get a firsthand look at the TransAlaska pipeline and its special construction meant to survive earthquakes and other threats to its structural integrity.



Lessons of Alaska: Partnering for Nature Protection

by *Ludmilla Fedorovskaya*

AS AN ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVIST from the Amur Oblast in the Russian Far East and a member of the Oil Projects and Public Control Coalition, I really understand what a difference strong partnerships—both within Russia and internationally—can make. So the opportunity to join a group of Russian activists traveling to Alaska to learn about the TransAlaska pipeline came as a wonderful surprise.

My first impressions of Alaska challenged my preconceptions. I was surprised by the elegant, warm buildings, which were very unlike the primitive 'northern style' housing I had expected. Eventually, I came to see the urban architecture as typical of Alaska's environment, culture, and highly developed society. Driving along the pipeline route, we had the chance to enjoy breathtaking scenery. Alaska's mountains seem surreal, like paintings I have seen of the Himalayas. Rocky, snow-covered mountain tops, alpine lakes, sky-blue glaciers, and frozen waterfalls dazzled me. Fortunately, many of Alaska's natural treasures lie within Denali National Park and thus are well protected.

Despite the environmental similarities between Alaska and Russia's Amur Oblast, Alaskans take a different approach to solving problems than we do, and we have much to learn from them. We met with many different organizations and initiative groups and learned about their activities and experience. The environmentalists we met had helped find solutions to many complex problems and spoke with authority about what could be done after crimes against the environment have been committed.

Our first meeting in Anchorage was particularly interesting. Dune Lankard of the **Eyak Preservation Council** briefly told us about the environmental rights

movement in Alaska and the fight to preserve the traditional way of life of Alaskan indigenous groups. Native leaders have redeemed land and protected it from industrial development; moreover, they have suggested

unorthodox ways to govern those territories and have managed to keep tribal land inheritance rules in effect. Such protection is particularly attractive, as land is then governed independently but with public oversight.

One practical approach to defending the environment that native groups use is to file lawsuits and then use the settlement funds to better affected communities, and, in fact, a significant amount of money has been directed to Alaskan communities in this way. Some settlements have come after direct harm or damage to a community. Others result from long-term influence (and

can include lost profits). Others are part of environmental restoration settlements. The level of success and the ultimate benefit to the communities of these legal efforts have varied, but it is significant that this process has, in some way, helped to make oil companies more accountable to the communities where they work.

Applying Acquired Knowledge

Upon returning home, I set myself the task of putting our Alaskan lessons into practice. The major current threat to the wilderness in the Amur Oblast is what I call the 'Siberian monster'—a 3,765-meter oil pipeline originating in Western Siberia and ending in Primorye that would transport Russia's oil to the countries of Asian-Pacific region. Like our colleagues in Alaska, our Oil Projects Coalition will need to push for effective environmental impact assessments and public hearings on this huge project.

Transneft, the Russian pipeline monopoly, has released an investment plan that shows the pipeline cutting across 13 regions of Amur Oblast after traveling around the top of Lake Baikal, a priceless environmen-

Alice Hengesbach



Ludmilla Fedorovskaya on her Alaska visit.



Anton Semenov

Fedorovskaya and Alaskan community activist Dune Lankard.

tal world heritage site that contains 20 percent of the world's fresh water. The immensely long project would eventually come to an end in Primorye, near Russia's only marine zapovednik. The Transneft pipeline promises to devastate biodiversity, prevent sustainable development, and threaten many urban and rural areas of Siberia and Far East for generations to come.

Officials have told us that the pipeline is a priority for the developing countries of the Asian-Pacific Region, but in a very "Soviet" manner they and the local press reveal nothing of the public's concerns. They do not point out that the oil deposits may be smaller than anticipated and that groups like ours are demanding more thorough geological research. They never describe the potential risks of extracting the oil and what they will do to deal with those risks. Before nagging Japan and other countries for construction loans, the oil companies and the government need to conduct environmental and economic studies and consider the public interest—not to mention the legal requirements. As a strategic, nonrenewable, essentially public resource, oil must be produced using only the most professional methods, and in strict accordance with the law.

ISAR and the participants of the trip to Alaska would like to thank the many organizations and individuals who helped make the April 2003 trip possible by meeting with the Russian activists. Your time, energy and interest were greatly appreciated.

In particular, we would like to thank Lois Epstein of Cook Inlet Keeper, Richard

Would Amur Oblast even benefit from the pipeline slicing across our territory? The plan projects revenues of 6 million rubles per year trickling into the regional budget. That's a mere six rubles per year per person. Should any oil spills or related accidents occur (and they will), how would our region be able to assist in cleanup? The plan calls for a buried pipe (how long will leaks go unnoticed?). Finally, we fear that the cheapest possible construction technologies will be undertaken, overlooking the law, security measures, and most of all the public interest.

By law, the public must be given an opportunity to participate in project discussions. Citizen input can prevent wasteful use of natural resources, unsustainable development, and the impoverishment of the Siberian and Far Eastern regions. Strategic suggestions by NGOs have included altering the pipeline route, combining gas and oil pipeline routes (an economically advisable recommendation), lengthening the pipeline to bypass unique environmental marvels, and transporting oil by railroad when feasible.

We have only begun to make our concerns known, but thanks to our visit to Alaska, we have seen that the public interest can and should play a role in oil development. Pragmatic strategies such as reaching out to indigenous groups, fighting ill-advised plans through legal channels, and demanding compensation to recoup environmental and social losses could all potentially be useful to Russian activists.

Thus, I am very grateful to have traveled to Alaska, a legendary place that seems at once both near and far. It was remarkable to meet so many people who share our goals and commitment. I am convinced that because these people are working to benefit the environment, success is much more likely. The ten days I spent in Alaska made it clear that it is entirely possible to find ways that government, business, and the public can better collaborate to protect the environment. ●

*Ludmilla Fedorovskaya is director of **Ecological Initiatives** in Blagoveshchensk. Translated by Olga Segars.*

Fineberg, an independent consultant and activist, and Dan Lawn of the Alaskan Forum for Environmental Responsibility for their valuable and significant contributions to the development of the program and the trip.

For contact information for these Alaskan environmental NGOs, please see page 27.



Lake Baikal—More Valuable Than Oil

by Alice Hengesbach and Sergei Shapkhaev

TUNKA NATIONAL PARK IS ONE OF the largest national parks in Russia. Tunka lies in the Altai-Sayanski ecoregion, one of 200 specially recognized ecoregions worldwide. The Park's integrated forest and river ecosystem is part of the Lake Baikal watershed. Created in 1991 along the borders of the Tunkinski Raion in the Republic of Buryatia, it includes the Irkut River valley and the Eastern Sayana and Khamar-Dabana mountain ranges. Its taiga, alpine meadow, and tundra are home to hundreds of different birds and other small flying species, as well as the Altai wapiti, elk, sable, otter, wolverine, snow leopard, and bears. Close to 200 mineral springs have made the park an internationally recognized resort area, leading to the growth of a local ecotourism industry over the last several years. But this pristine place and Lake Baikal itself are threatened by oil development projects planned for the region.

As part of the yearly "Lake Baikal Day," the NGOs Baikal Environmental Wave and the Buryat Regional Department on Lake Baikal (BRD) launched a public information campaign called "Lake Baikal is More Valuable Than Oil" in response to a Yukos-proposed pipeline from Siberia to the interior of China. Local residents have had a mixed response to the pipeline

project. While about a third of the residents favor development because they see it as a source of jobs for the region, two thirds are resistant to what they see as a threat to their traditional way of life. This negative

reaction towards the project has grown as community leaders, through training and informational seminars, have learned more about the issues surrounding the construction of the pipeline. At a recent seminar organized by BRD, local government leaders, residents and farmers came together to discuss the project and its potential implications for the region economically and socially. From these discussions, a more in-depth meeting was planned for December to assess alternative economic development options for the region.



Anton Semenov



At a 2003 environmental conference in Tunka National Park, environmentalists discussed threats to the park.

Recent events have made the Yukos pipeline now seem unlikely, at least in the way that the company envisioned it. The Russian government returned the environmental impact assessment (EIA) to Yukos for further review. Moreover, the majority of governmental support appears to be behind an alternative, a Transneft-built pipeline ending on Russia's Pacific Coast.

Regardless of which pipeline route is chosen and who manages such a project, the threat to Lake Baikal and its surrounding region is a reality and the public campaign continues to have resonance. Of chief concern is the effort to change the borders of Tunka National Park to make way for a pipeline, whether built by Yukos or Transneft. Despite the fact that building something like an oil pipeline in the territory of a national park is unconstitutional, the government of the Republic of Buryatia has already agreed to consider the option. Furthermore, this decision was made without the benefit of a complete EIA.

The campaign continues to provide some protection to Baikal and Tunka National Park, most recently in the form of legal action. BRD has coordinated with local community members to ensure that the public is

represented in any decisions made regarding the park. Sergei Shapkhaev of BRD and public interest lawyer Nadezhda Khaidurova have so far participated in two hearings regarding the decision to consider changing the park's borders. At the first hearing on October 16, the judge decided that more time was needed to review the petitions of local communities in this matter. On November 4, the judge sided with the government of the Republic of Buryatia in deciding that while the

results of the government EIA are not complete, it would be acceptable to violate rights to private property and review the park's borders. Shapkhaev and Khaidurova will appeal the decision to protect this important environmental landmark. ●

Alice Hengesbach is ISAR's Russia program officer and new co-director. Sergei Shapkhaev is the director of BRD. Translated by Alice Hengesbach.

Sakhalin Activist Briefs Congressional Committee on Oil Threat to Marine Life

by Alice Hengesbach

ON OCTOBER 29 ON CAPITOL HILL, Russian activist Dmitri Lisitsyn told a Congressional staff briefing at the US House of Representatives that Sakhalin Oblast's resources faced "danger from oil and gas development."

Lisitsyn, co-founder of the Russian NGO Sakhalin Environment Watch (SEW), has been monitoring oil and gas projects by Shell and Exxon offshore of Sakhalin since 1995. SEW has fought to protect marine biodiversity—including fisheries and endangered gray whales—from irresponsible oil development. Lisitsyn was invited to the hearing by GLOBE USA (Global Legislators Organization for a Balanced Environment) along with Keith Kozloff of the US Department of Treasury and Dr. Robert Brownell, Jr. of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to talk about US financing of oil and gas development projects and their effect on Sakhalin's unique environment.

The Sakhalin-II project is now under consideration for financing by a number of international finance institutions, including the US Export-Import Bank. Several major construction projects are planned: two additional offshore platforms, four underwater pipelines, gas and oil pipelines stretching the length of the island, and a massive terminal and processing plant. Since the Sakhalin-II project was begun in 1998, damage to the environment has been a significant concern to the scientific community as well as to local activists.

Brownell described for the hearing the condition of the Western Grey Whales that feed off the eastern

coast of Sakhalin. In 1999 marine scientists noticed a number of skinny whales, which coincided with the start of seismic surveying by Shell and Exxon. The number increased in the following two years and has now started to drop as the surveying has been curtailed. Brownell pointed out that despite the fact that the skinny whale problem seems to be improving, the long-term effects of oil and gas exploration and extraction are still not known.

"Much about the cumulative effects on the whales is unclear," Brownell said. "The impact of future activities on the whales' habitat is not known."

Planned offshore platforms, pipelines and tanker traffic could "box in the whales" and disrupt their migration, feeding and reproduction cycles, he added. Brownell called for independent, annual expert research of the situation, adding that the monitoring should be held to the highest possible international standards and that the researchers should be internationally qualified. Environmentalists have recommended moving both the platform and the pipelines further away from the feeding ground area.

While Brownell focused on concerns about the Grey Whales, Lisitsyn discussed other environmental concerns. He highlighted several different dangers to the environment and offered suggestions that would lessen potential environmental degradation. These concerns were included in a January 2003 letter from the Russian and international environmental community to Sakhalin Energy, the consortium managing the project. (So far, Sakhalin Energy has refused to consider these concerns or suggestions.)

Plans for underground land-based pipelines running the length of the island have dismayed local envi-

In 1999 marine scientists noticed a number of skinny whales, which coincided with the start of seismic surveying by Shell and Exxon. These numbers increased in the following two years, and the situation has slowly started to improve as the surveying has been curtailed.



ronmentalists. These pipelines would cross 24 active seismic faults, raising concern that pipeline cracks could leak oil or gas into Sakhalin's numerous streams, rivers, and groundwater. This is an immediate concern, since in 1995, Russia's worst-ever earthquake, measuring 7.5 on the Richter scale, killed 1,989 people in the oil-producing town of Neftegorsk on the north of Sakhalin Island. Lisitsyn and others have advocated for an aboveground pipeline that would use technology similar to that now in place in Alaska, making the pipeline more able to withstand seismic activity.

Another issue, Lisitsyn said, is that the pipeline would cross scores of salmon spawning streams, exposing them to the threat of oil spills. Environmentalists favor the use of pipeline bridges to cross these streams, keeping the pipeline away from the water and making it easier to monitor for possible leaks and corrosion.

Lisitsyn also pointed out that the planned location of the terminal in the southern part of Sakhalin on Aniva Bay would be a threat to the fish populations in this area. Lisitsyn estimated that half a million tons of sewage from the terminal would be dumped in the bay and more than 1 million cubic meters of soil would be displaced. Environmentalists have proposed that the soil be dumped into deep waters off the coast, helping to preserve the bay's ecosystem.

Finally, Lisitsyn noted the potential for disastrous tanker spills off the coast of Sakhalin, China and Japan. The waters between the northern part of Japan and the eastern coast of China are particularly hazardous, he asserted, and neither Shell nor Sakhalin Energy has prepared an oil spill response plan. Lisitsyn said that Shell should be held accountable for potential oil spills and should implement a system whereby tugboats would accompany tankers through difficult-to-navigate waters. Like the above-ground pipelines, this technology has been successfully used in Alaska.

Lisitsyn said he spoke for other environmentalists and scientists when he insisted that such concerns be addressed before the next phase of the Sakhalin-II project is allowed to proceed. Shell, however, has been reluctant to consider these issues. Despite its international status, Shell, along with other international corporations working on Sakhalin, has followed the example of Russian-owned oil companies by finding legal loopholes to push through its development plans without considering additional input, Lisitsyn told the hearing. Better enforcement of Russian environmental laws, international awareness, and pressure on the Russian government and the corporations operating on Sakhalin could make a difference in protecting the island's natural resources, he said. With a concerted, combined

Alice Hengesbach



Dmitri Lisitsyn speaking before US Congressional hearing on the Sakhalin-II oil project's potential environmental threats.

effort, Sakhalin's natural wonders have a chance of being protected.

Lisitsyn participated in the hearing in the interest of encouraging a more sustainable approach to the Sakhalin project. He expressed the hope that the US legislators who are members of GLOBE can influence the review process by the US Export-Import Bank and their colleagues in Russia to hold the oil companies and the Russian government accountable. He encouraged the congressional aides present at the hearing to inform themselves and use their information to protect the environment of Sakhalin. In the days following the hearing, Lisitsyn met directly with a number of senatorial and congressional staffers to further lobby for environmental protection.

A long-time resident of Sakhalin Island, Lisitsyn has worked for nearly a decade with an international NGO network to raise the environmental standards of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the Overseas Private Investment Corporation, and the Japan Export-Import Bank (JEXIM), which have financed the Sakhalin-II offshore oil and gas project. The staff and volunteers of SEW actively campaign for environmental protection on the island and their work is considered a model of successful NGO advocacy, respected throughout the country. ●

Alice Hengesbach is ISAR's Russia program officer and new co-director.

How to Achieve Effective NGO Cooperation on Oil

by John Deever

IF YOU HAD BEEN ASKED LAST AUGUST which country produced the most oil in the world, and you had answered Saudi Arabia, you'd have been right.

But in September, you'd have been wrong.

Quietly but historically, Russia has surpassed the famous oil-rich sheikdom as the planet's biggest oil pump, producing 8.5 million barrels of oil a day last September, according to the International Energy Agency, part of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). The Saudis still export far more than Russia, whose production centers are mostly isolated. But in a matter of years, that could change. And the consequences for Russia's environment (not to mention Russian society) are far from clear.

Russia now produces more than 10 percent of the global oil supply. Western press often contrast Russia today with its Soviet past, usually to marvel at how suddenly Russia's vast resources have been opened to foreign investment and development. Yet thorough scrutiny of how Russia's oil is produced and how it gets to world markets is still severely lacking. Like so much of what goes on in interior Russia, what becomes of the oil pumped up in Siberia's forests, tundra, and steppe is little noticed in the West.

Despite the shortage of reports and photographs of what oil production is doing to fragile Siberian tundra—or what new pipelines and transport systems *could* do to Lake Baikal and dozens of Russia's national parks—US consumers are nevertheless some of Russia's best customers and supporters (see sidebar, right).

So if the environmental movements of the US and Western Europe want to have an influence in what happens in the next decade when Russia's oil boom really takes off, what should they do?

Corporate Accountability at Home

Carol Welch, director of the international program of **Friends of the Earth** (FOE), said that FOE is focusing on corporate accountability, an issue that is essentially nonpartisan. "Who is against transparency and good governance?" Welch said. "We have often worked with conservatives and liberals in pushing for greater disclosure, for example at public financial institutions."

By pressuring the investment community, FOE has urged "public" funders like the World Bank not to rely solely on oil revenues to lift a country's budget. That strategy has meant several victories, Welch said. "For example, the US Export-Import Bank established a renewable energy advisory committee, which recommended that 10 percent of Ex-Im's energy portfolio be renewables. This was the result of NGO pressure. Also, we helped publicize impacts the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline would have. That resulted in more safeguards being put in place than investors originally planned, more consultations than on other World Bank-funded energy projects (though still too few), and better disclosure of information about the project, such as host government agreements, production sharing agreements, and so on."

That kind of expertise and pressure can be a boon to Russian environmental groups, which have a harder time holding multinational corporations accountable, Welch said. "Russian NGOs operate in a difficult political environment, and the geographic isolation of some resource extraction projects can make it difficult to shine a spotlight on problems or illegal practices."

Yuri Shirokov, ISAR-Siberia director, interviewed this fall in the *New York Times*, agreed. "Oil is big money. There is a lot of pressure on ecologists. It can be dangerous."

However, Welch noted, no campaign can expect to make its case persuasively without the help of strong, savvy, Russian partners. "Russian environmental organizations offer the essential on-the-ground information that good campaigns need. The testimonies that local groups have are crucial for groups like FOE to paint a picture about what corporations are doing overseas. In our efforts to call on our governments to take action on corporate accountability, we need stories that prove the need for such action, and these stories need to come from the region."

That means building partnerships among US and Russian groups. Travel by activists, collaborative projects, information sharing on legislation, and the trading of insider knowledge of local situations are essential. A two-way street of education and support

will render both sides better able to make their case and defend the environment and the communities that deserve to share in the great wealth being developed.

David Gordon, Associate Director of Pacific Environment, said: "We need to create a ground level awareness of public issues. Too often, activists from the West come in with a template, rather than listening to what's appropriate. The problem is, change is so slow that Western activists get frustrated. We need balance if we are not to alienate our partners and if we are to stay there, working in the country."

Welch added that, as outsiders, Western NGOs must recognize the need for caution in making statements that they are defending the environment. "It is not really the role of US NGOs to say to a particular government, 'you cannot extract in this place,'" she said. "It is the right of the citizens of that country to say what happens there."

Gordon concurred. "Since we work from the grassroots up, education is our first priority. There are differences among activists; outsiders can be too aggressive. They need to nurture activism, not focus on media splashes to change public behavior. Otherwise, their effectiveness in Russia will be lost."

Yukos Flap, Big Oil, and Russia's Boom

Just before this issue of *Give & Take* went to press, the richest man in Russia went to jail. The plight of

Russia's eight-billion-dollar man hit the headlines, and skeptical questions about the depth of Russia's democracy filled innumerable tons of newsprint. In late November, the implications of Mikhail Khodorkovskiy's arrest were still being parsed by analysts and media pundits around the world, but one fact is certain: large sums of money have fled Russia, at least for now. Capital, which poured into Russia in the first half of 2003 (\$4.6 billion), was suddenly sucked out at perhaps twice that rate. Nevertheless, most analysts seem to expect Big Oil to return as soon as possible. Western oil giants are committed to increasing their reserves, and Russian oil and gas remains the way to go, even at great costs.

One explanation of the Yukos debacle has been that Khodorkovsky, independent and often Western-leaning, could have sold off rights to much of Russia's oil reserves to ExxonMobil or another megacompany had merger talks gone through; thus, Putin stopped him. Another might be that if oil from Siberia is to travel through pipelines toward the East, the government wants the state pipeline monopoly, Transneft—not Yukos—to turn the spigot. As one strategic forecaster put it, "Considering all the drama in the Kremlin, not many are paying attention to deepest, darkest Siberia, even though an asset has just been forcibly transferred for purely political reasons to a company with a wretched transparency record [i.e., Transneft]" (Strate-

Do US Consumers Know There's A Siberian Tiger in Their Tanks?

When Russian President Vladimir Putin made an official visit to the US in September, he made a very brief and little-noticed stop in New York City, where he ate a glazed doughnut from a "Kwik-Farm" convenience store. Why? To "celebrate the grand opening" of a Russian oil giant's new service stations in New York City.

Starting in September, the Russian company LUKoil began operating eight retail gas stations in New York City. Soon it will sell its gasoline to Americans at 1,279 locations in New York and 12 other mid-Atlantic US states. LUKoil bought the Getty chain, the last remaining piece of the Getty Oil Company. Former Getty stations in the US have begun to sport LUKoil logo (see photo). Depending on your point of view, the logo's letter "O" (see photo, next page) looks like

either a droplet of oil, a teardrop, or an onion (*luk* is Russian for "onion").

At the grand opening at Tenth Avenue and 24th Street in Manhattan, Putin stood side-by-side with LUKoil President Vagit Alekperov (a good and obedient oligarch, unlike recently jailed Yukos head Mikhail Khodorkovsky?) and US Senator Chuck Schumer. Clearly proud of his state's new economic ties with Russia, Schumer issued a proud press release about the September event that, curiously, emphasized reducing dependence on foreign oil.

"More competition and new sources are the best way to loosen OPEC's stranglehold on New York and America," Schumer said. Russia's entrance into the US gas station market meant a dose of "good old-fashioned American competition" for OPEC.

gic Forecasting LLC, courtesy of Pacific Environment's Enviro-PacRim listserv). The consequences of Khodorkovskiy's arrest are impossible to predict. The Yukos debacle looks like a setback to democracy and the rule of law to some. But Putin, ever known for sly spycraft in service to the state, may simply be thinking of reversing the flood of power and control to the West so that Russia can keep Russian riches at home.

If the Yukos flap proves anything, it demonstrates that in Russia's unpredictable oil boom the environmental movement must be sure to cement international bonds and strengthening partnerships. More public participation, more in-depth environmental impact assessments, and more worldwide attention to the rush for Russian resources are all needed. Without communication among activists to compare experiences and legislation, progress will be difficult.

Western Consumption:
Engine of Russian Nature Destruction

Finally, activists say, an obvious and extremely compelling step the environmental movement in the West can take is to turn the mirror on itself.

The United States consumes 25 percent of global oil production. US domestic oil reserves have dropped dramatically, yet our consumption is increasing and is projected to go up by one-third in the next two decades. About two-thirds of US oil consumption is in the transportation sector—more than 70 percent of it used in consumers' cars and trucks.

According to the Washington DC lobbying organization **Friends Committee on National Legislation**, "The development of the US economy and prosperity was fueled in large part by cheap oil. However, the costs of US oil dependence are beginning to mount for both the US and the world. Air pollution from internal combustion engines is a primary source of urban smog. Oil exploration, production, transport, refining, and combustion processes harm sensitive ecosystems, reducing life-sustaining ecological diversity and productivity. These processes also release greenhouse gases, contributing significantly to global warming. As the US has become more dependent on imported oil, it has become more vulnerable to supply disruptions. In response, the US has deployed military forces, forged military alliances, and waged war to secure access to

Schumer's press release was downright gleeful: "OPEC and Saudi Arabia have held New Yorkers in the palms of their hands for too long, jacking up our gas prices at will. When President Bush says we have to cut our reliance on oil from the Middle East, I couldn't agree more—but for most of us, we've had no choice until now. LUKoil's huge investment in New York gives us a choice—an opportunity to cut our reliance on Middle East oil without having to drive our cars any less."

That "huge" investment will bring \$54 million in taxes into New York City—an amount measuring a third of what the New York Yankees pay in salaries. Meanwhile, LUKoil will charge 1.3 times what it can charge for gas in Russia



The Russian oil giant's beachhead on Pennsylvania Ave, NW, one of four LUKoil (formerly Getty) stations in DC. New York state will have 456 LUKoil stations.

and still beat prices at other US gas stations. LUKoil expects to draw in \$400 million in annual revenues from the stations, which, three years ago, cost it only \$71 million to purchase—that's about \$55,000 per gas station.

John Deever

At the time, the price for the Getty stations was "negligible" for LUKoil, according to a report in the Russian newspaper *Pravda*. LUKoil's profit in 2000, topping \$3.5 billion, had tripled from the year before. "Analysts questioned the economic reasons for the acquisition," *Pravda* reported, "saying the company most likely needed a safe place to put its extra cash."

The historic purchase made LUKoil the first Russian company to buy a US company publicly traded on the New York Stock Exchange. That speaks to the suddenness with which Russian industrial managers have caught up to their Western counterparts, at least in their ability to move dollars around the world.

Twelve years ago, what is now LUKoil was a small cluster of oil-producing industries and a Volgograd refinery. In case New Yorkers are

foreign oil, pipelines, and sea lanes" (FCNL Washington Newsletter, July/August 2003).

Friends of the Earth's Welch said that US NGOs should promote greatly reduced energy consumption by US consumers, greater efficiency, and more renewables. "Emphasizing these issues will help reduce pressure to increase extraction in hard to reach places. US consumers should also be aware of how our consumption increases incentives to extract in pristine areas or indigenous-inhabited land."

As many ecologists assert, US society's utter dependence on oil blinds us to the alternatives. BP's website notes that each day's sunshine contains more energy than the planet's 6 billion inhabitants would consume in 27 years. By one Greenpeace estimate, an investment of about \$660 million could make solar electricity competitive—that's about half of one percent of the \$89 billion spent by oil companies on exploration and production in 1998 alone. This fall, the cover of the *Economist* magazine—hardly a wild-eyed treehugging publication—read "the End of the Oil Age." As with impending global climate change, scientists no longer debate *whether*, they only debate *when*.

The sooner our society, the most resource-hungry country in the world, can express that understanding in government policies that reward green behavior, the sooner we can start to address the end of oil.

Meanwhile, Russian oil is coming to market (see below). The next time you stick the gas nozzle into your tank, picture Russia's wilderness of forest, mountain, and steppe. Picture gorgeous, unique Lake Baikal. Soon, that gasoline fueling your commute will have come from those places—places that all of us have a responsibility to know and care about. ●

John Deever is editor of Give & Take.

Alice Hengesbach



The TransAlaska pipeline, as seen by Russian visitors in April, 2003.

curious, the name LUKoil was a simplification of LangepasNeftegaz, UralNeftegaz, and KogalymNeftegaz. Obviously, LUKoil is less of a mouthful.

But never mind all that. Most US drivers, who are likely to pronounce the company name "Luck-oil," rather than "Luke-oil," may never guess at LUKoil's Russian pedigree. Furthermore, most probably won't care. After all, isn't increased US-Russian cooperation what the end of the Cold War was all about?

Well, if you rank private oil companies by largest proven reserves, LUKoil is the world's second largest after ExxonMobil—a brand US consumers are familiar with for many reasons, one being the tanker Valdez catastrophe in Alaska. LUKoil's reserves, however, are mostly in little-watched but also much-polluted Western Siberia. LUKoil is also hard at work pumping out the resources of Russia's arctic and subarctic regions such as the Komi Republic

and the Yamal region, both predominantly indigenous-inhabited, yet lacking the kind of social support and tribal rights legislation present in, for example, Alaska. Finally, LUKoil has big plans to explore and drill in Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Egypt, North Africa, and Colombia.

Perhaps few New Yorkers realize or are concerned that the next tank of gasoline they pump into their cars might have originated under the soil of the former USSR. Yet by buying a Kwik-Farm doughnut, US consumers are handing over dollars to the company now helping transport oil from the huge Karachaganak deposit in Western Kazakhstan and pump natural gas from Russia's far north Yamal Nenets region. Buying LUKoil's Regular Unleaded means supporting giant refineries in Odessa, Ukraine and Ploesti, Romania, and countless other projects whose environmental and social effects they have virtually no way of knowing. LUKoil plans to fill about half its pumps with Russian oil

and half from other sources. And for that matter, your local Shell, Exxon, or BP station may be selling gasoline bought from Russian suppliers or its own subsidiaries in Siberia or the Russian Far East. Corporate globalization of the economy is good at obscuring where products came from and what "external costs" were included in their creation.

But LUKoil's ownership of US gas stations demonstrates that some of the biggest Russian-owned businesses today compete quite handily on the same playing field as the rest of the world. That's an amazing triumph for the advocates of the speedy privatization that has taken place since 1991. From an environmental perspective, it means that US consumers should have as much information as possible when they pull up at the pump.

—John Deever

ISAR Outreach for a New Era

In 1983, when ISAR was founded by Harriett Crosby and Nancy Graham, our first magazine was called *Surviving Together*—a name deadly serious yet optimistic. That year the Soviets shot down Korean Airlines flight 007 over Sakhalin Island and President Ronald Reagan called the USSR an “evil empire,” resting hope in a “defensive” missile shield, quickly dubbed “Star Wars.” US schoolgirl Samantha Smith was invited by Soviet premier Yuri Andropov to visit the USSR after she expressed in a letter what everyone felt: fear of an impending nuclear war. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the US losses in the Vietnam War were still fresh memories. The Gorbachev phenomenon, though just a few months away, was still inconceivable.

ISAR was created as a way for citizens from the US and the USSR to respond to the Cold War by trying to build relationships. To survive together was not imagined as a temporary and esoteric goal, but as the most essential—perhaps the *only* essential work that had to be done at the time.

After the world changed, nearly overnight, *Surviving Together* was ultimately replaced by our current journal, *Give & Take*, whose title reflected a somewhat different ethos. The 1990s, a time of genuinely miraculous openness, represented the chance to participate in the mutual work of developing US-FSU citizen relationships. Citizens groups and nascent NGOs had completed some groundbreaking projects together, but the work of building real and deeper relationships had only begun. *Give & Take* articulated the complexities of crossing boundaries, embracing commonalities, and resolving cultural differences.

From 1992 to 2002, ISAR supported hundreds of projects, independent NGOs, environmental initiatives, and citizen campaigns. In 2001 alone, ISAR spent over \$2.9 million on small grassroots groups and projects, about half of that in the form of small subgrants provided directly to independent activists.

Much work remains among our peoples, but to do it will require new ways of responding to today’s challenges. For ISAR in the 21st century, these challenges will include several areas of focus. With our new Environmental Advocacy Project, we will concentrate on four themes.

First, we intend to encourage and promote sustainable, renewable energy. Second, we plan to combat environmental threats that damage human health—particularly that of people who are suffering from unwise policies that saturate their communities with toxins. A third focus will be to address the consequences of corporate exploitation of natural resources, which has left many citizens powerless to protect themselves and their children. Finally, ISAR is committed to programs that deal with the Cold War’s tragic nuclear legacy, which continues to harm the safety and security of communities in the US and FSU. By retaining our mission but sharpening our strategy, ISAR hopes to continue to serve the countries of the former USSR in a new, more effective way.

ISAR’s outreach and publications must change to fit our new mandate. You hold in your hands the final issue of ISAR’s quarterly journal, *Give & Take*. Our website will continue to contain the entirety of its 18 issues, as well as much of the *Surviving Together* archive. Meanwhile, ISAR’s publications and outreach efforts will shift increasingly to online dissemination of information, where the opportunity to target interested readers has so multiplied. Our website gets over 4,000 hits a day, mostly from Internet searchers typing keywords like “Russia” and “NGO” or “Kazakhstan” and “nuclear” into a search engine. Our web statistics and inquiries show that these interested citizens are in Argentina, India, France, Nigeria, and of course the US and FSU.

ISAR continues to promote environmental advocacy and partnerships. Although *Give & Take* has fulfilled its mission, ISAR will go on supporting environmentalists in the FSU. The NGO movement is now so broad and deep that no quarterly publication can address it adequately, even were we to restrict ourselves to environmental topics. Treaties and summits are important, but citizen and NGO interaction and exchanges are where cultural evolution really happens. It does not happen overnight, however. ISAR’s challenge is to sustain and foster it for the long haul. We depend on the support of people like you and hope you will enjoy witnessing and contributing to our ongoing work.

—John Deever, Editor, *Give & Take*, 2000-2003.

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