

Safety and Ecology are above all

Minister of Natural Resources and Ecology of the Russian Federation

Kozlov Alexander Alexandrovich

answers the questions of the editor-in-chief Panova Inna Viktorovna.

Born on January 2, 1981 in Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk.

In 2003 he graduated from the Moscow Academy of Entrepreneurship under the Government of the City of Moscow with a degree in Law. He was awarded the degree of a lawyer. From 2000 to 2007, he held senior positions in the company Amur Coal LLC in the city of Raichikhinsk, Amur region.

In 2007 – Director of the branch of CJSC “Russian Coal” in Gukovo, Rostov region.

In 2008 – Director of the branch of JSC “Russian Coal” in the city of Blagoveshchensk, Amur region.

From 2009 to 2010 – General Director of Amur Coal LLC in the city of Raichikhinsk, Amur region.

February 2, 2011 – First Deputy Minister of Construction, Architecture and Housing and Communal Services of the Amur Region.

December 23, 2011 – Minister of Housing and Communal Services of the Amur Region.

Since September 14, 2014 – Mayor of Blagoveshchensk, Amur region.

Since March 25, 2015 – Acting Governor of the Amur Region.

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Since May 18, 2018 – Minister of the Russian Federation for the Development of the Far East and the Arctic.

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Abstract

Minister of Natural Resources and Ecology Alexander Alexandrovich Kozlov speaks about the prospects for preserving the ecological well-being of the country in modern conditions. Within the framework of national projects, the Ministry of Natural Resources builds a long-term planning strategy in order not only to protect the existing natural environment, but also to restore lost forest and water resources, create favorable conditions for life on our planet.

Keywords

Ministry of Natural Resources, Ministry of Natural Resources and Ecology, ecology, nature management, national projects

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— **Alexander Alexandrovich, could you share your thoughts on what things are the most vulnerable now from the point of view of ecology today?**

— Nature is generally vulnerable. Pollution of soil and water causes damage to ecosystems, which are difficult, and sometimes even impossible to restore. We all remember the environmental disaster associated with the oil spill in the Arctic in 2020. Norilsk Nickel then paid a record fine of 146 billion rubles.

But our task is not to collect fines, but to preserve the environment. On behalf of the President of the country, a special law was developed and adopted. This law establishes the responsibility of owners for the elimination of accumulated damage. Got a profit – clean up after yourself.

The same law introduces the “coloring” of environmental payments. Already from September 1, the regions will be able to spend these funds only on the environmental agenda. Administrative fines, payments for negative impact on the environment and claims for damages will be accumulated and directed to environmental protection measures in the region in coordination with the Ministry of Natural Resources. First of all, this is the elimination of large landfills, abandoned tailings dumps of mines and factories, abandoned landfills where hazardous waste from production, oil sludge barns, etc. were drained. The main condition is that information about such a site should be included in the state register of objects of accumulated environmental damage.

I know that there is talk now that the quality control of environmental protection will decrease in the new economic conditions. No. Despite the fact that Rosprirodnadzor has suspended scheduled inspections for this year, unscheduled inspections can be carried out. Environmental control will not weaken.

— **What resources does our country have to protect the environment in present conditions? Russia has one of the most progressive environmental legislation in the world. State environmental expertise is subject to documentation for capital construction, subsurface use; all gas stations, warehouses with fuel and lubricants. All equipment and technologies, the use of which can even potentially damage the environment.**

— I will say separately about strengthening control over forest fires. Last year, due to the extremely hot summer, the careless handling of people with fire on the lands of the forest fund, almost 15 thousand forest fires occurred on an area of over 10 million hectares.

Our task this year is to prevent such a scale. The beginning of the fire-hazardous period is just around the corner. Thanks to the support of the country’s leadership, in 2022, funding for fighting forest fires has been increased almost 2.4 times – up to 14.2 billion rubles. This is an additional staff of firefighters, equipment, hours of air and ground monitoring.

The money was brought to all regions in January. Now we are monitoring the presence of fire-fighting equipment in each region and the degree of their preparation to fire fighting. The headquarters are held in a weekly format.

— **Alexander Alexandrovich, what is the basis for the preservation of ecology by man as a consumer?**

— With the formation of a culture of consumption. We live on the planet Earth, we spend its resources, which are not infinite. And we will not get anywhere from our planet, in the next couple of hundred years – for sure. Consumption should be rational. Safety and ecology are above all. The lost forests must be restored, fresh water sources, clean air. In other words, all ecosystems should be healthy. Otherwise we will not survive.

— **As you know, one of the main sources of federal budget revenues is subsoil use. Please? Speak about the present state of the industry.**

— I'll start with the results of 2021. They are excellent. 100% compensation for the extraction of the main types of minerals by the increase in reserves has been provided. These are hydrocarbon raw materials, gold, silver, copper, nickel, platinoids.

37 new hydrocarbon deposits and 133 deposits of solid minerals have been discovered. Of these, 104 are gold, 20 are kaolin and cement raw materials, 4 are coal, three are copper and zinc and two are diamond deposits.

We managed to create a new federal project “Geology: the Revival of a Legend”. It aims to open 22 promising areas of minerals by 2024 in Yakutia and Western Siberia, Transbaikal, Irkutsk Region, Primorye, Altai, Bashkiria and the Urals. “Legend” will solve the problems of water supply – we will double the reserves in water-deficient regions: Kalmykia, Astrakhan, Kaliningrad, Kamchatka and Khabarovsk.

Also, for the first time in decades, we will be able to provide technical re-equipment of the state geological sector. Rosgeologiya will receive four billion rubles annually for three years.

In 2021, a large normative work in the field of subsoil use was completed. Its task is to make the industry transparent and convenient for business. On January 1, 2022, the updated law “On Subsoil” came into force.

Now auctions for the right to use subsurface areas are held exclusively in electronic form, the license is issued in a single form for the whole country. The terms of all administrative procedures have been shortened, a register of unscrupulous bidders who won but did not pay a one-time payment has been introduced. Now the main thing is that all this works as clearly as possible, without failures. We will definitely keep this under control.

— **The Government has recently adopted four packages of measures to support the economy. One of the significant costs of production is the payment for the use of water bodies. Are there any support measures provided in this direction?**

— Yes. We reduce the burden on water users and index the rates of payment for the use of water bodies by 10% instead of 15% for two years. Although initially the task was to significantly increase these rates in order to finance the same program for the rehabilitation of the Don.

According to preliminary estimates, industrialists can now save about 1.7 billion rubles. Russian companies working in the field of housing and communal services, hydropower, metallurgy, light

and chemical industries will be able to use these funds for technological re-equipment of production facilities and infrastructure development.

— **Roshydromet is one of the federal services on which work national security depends, among other things. How do colleagues cope with their tasks in a difficult global situation?**

— Our Roshydromet is the oldest service in the world. We have gained tremendous experience here, we have all the necessary competencies to work in a stable way. The service has its own grouping of satellites. Since last year, the unique Arktika-M spacecraft has been operating, which became the world's first hydrometeorological satellite launched into a highly elliptical orbit. It is designed to observe high latitudes, above 60 degrees north latitude, inaccessible for observation from geostationary orbit.

The termination of data transmission from foreign satellites is not terrible for the country. The observation network of Roshydromet is a web that envelops the whole country. These are 12 thousand observation points, 39 weather radars and 11 space satellites. The specialists of the service have achieved 97% in the prevention of dangerous phenomena. This is an international level. Today, our country is creating a system for monitoring permafrost on the basis of Roshydromet. The relevant bill is in the Government. For the exploration of the North Pole, which is now extremely difficult, a unique ice self-propelled platform is being built at the Admiralty shipyards. This year we will send it on the first expedition. This will allow our country to become a world leader in the field of polar research.

— **Which areas of the environmental agenda are included in the national project “Ecology”? What results have been achieved?**

— The structure of the national project includes 10 federal projects in five areas: waste, air, water, forest, biodiversity. I will briefly focus on each.

Four federal projects are devoted to the waste block at once. One of them is “**Clean Country**”. Last year, 39 unauthorized landfills were eliminated. The figure does not seem too big, but thanks to this, the quality of life has improved for 3.4 million people. After all, all these landfills were located within the boundaries of cities!

In 2022, we will finish the liquidation of 18 landfills and 10 most dangerous objects. A total of 48 objects are under implementation, 80 have been designed and all of them must pass examinations by mid-May. What is important: this year, work will begin on the infamous Krasny Bor landfill in the Leningrad Region. 21 billion rubles have been allocated for its liquidation until 2024. Also this year, the dismantling of buildings and structures at the Usolekhimprom industrial site in the Irkutsk region will begin. The first stage of the design and estimate documentation (PSD) will be ready by the beginning of summer, the second stage - until December. Funds have been allocated. The second federal project “**Waste management infrastructure of hazard classes I and II**”. A lot of preparatory work was done last year to manage this process. The institute of a federal operator has been established, a Federal Waste Disposal Scheme has been approved, a POI has been prepared for the creation of four industrial and technical complexes for recycling waste of classes I and II into secondary resources, the construction of two complexes in the Saratov and Kurgan regions has been financed.

In 2022, 17.7 billion rubles have already been allocated for the construction of two more facilities in the Kirov Region and the Udmurt Republic. The construction of three more complexes will be carried out at the expense of extra-budgetary sources, including at the expense of the Rosatom State Corporation.

The third federal project “**Integrated Solid Municipal Waste Management System**”. I would like to emphasize that last year the industry of waste collection, processing and disposal became the leader in Russia in terms of industrial production growth. This follows from the data of Rosstat. The growth was 35% – the maximum indicator among all classes of OKVED.

The President of our country, Vladimir Putin, has set a task to ensure 100% sorting of household waste by 2030 and halve the volume of disposal. By the end of 2021, we have fulfilled all the planned indicators of the year in full.

73.2% of the waste was sent for disposal with a plan of 93.8%. For sorting – 43.3% with the planned 26%, for disposal – 11.6% with a value of 6.2%.

In 2021, we helped the regions to purchase containers for separate garbage collection. One billion rubles – as a result, almost 63 thousand containers appeared in 44 regions. We will continue this program this year, we plan to allocate 500 million rubles for these purposes.

And the new federal project “**General cleaning**”. In 2022, 68 sunken ships out of 213 will be lifted from the bottom of coastal waters, 60 dangerous wells out of 500 will be liquidated and 192 dangerous objects out of 1929 will be examined. For the latter, a bill is being adopted that will allow Rosprirodnadzor and Rospotrebnadzor to conduct surveys and assess the impact of accumulated harm objects on the health of citizens and the environment using special methods that simply did not exist before. The bill has been submitted to the Government, and we plan to submit it to the State Duma by the end of April.

Our main task last year in the federal project “**Clean Air**” was to bring money to the regions. As a result, we have transferred 9 billion rubles for measures to reduce emissions of pollutants in 6 subjects.

For Chita and Novokuznetsk, we have financed the closure of small coal-fired boilers with the transfer of consumers to central thermal power plants. 389 units of trams, trolleybuses, gas-powered buses have entered routes in the Trans-Baikal and Krasnoyarsk Territories, Kemerovo, Chelyabinsk, Vologda and Omsk regions.

Nevertheless, the main effect is the ecological modernization of large industrial enterprises. They have already invested 370 billion rubles. Collectively, this had the effect of reducing emissions in 12 cities by 5%. Novokuznetsk, Chelyabinsk, Mednogorsk, Cherepovets, Chita and Nizhny Tagil have achieved maximum success.

Now a few words about our “water” federal projects: “**Improvement of the Volga**”, “**Preservation of unique water bodies**” and “**Preservation of Lake Baikal**”.

The main influence on the quality of water in the river, on its bioresource potential is caused by discharges from housing and communal services and industry enterprises. In the whole country, more than 70% of the existing treatment facilities were built 30-50 years ago and 80% of them require complete modernization.

One of the key tasks of the national project is to reduce by three times the volume of contaminated wastewater discharged to the Volga. To date, 69 housing and communal services treatment facilities have been commissioned in 13 regions, which allowed last year to exceed the target for 2022 and reduce the volume of contaminated wastewater by 1.3 times.

Within the framework of the project “**Preservation of Lake Baikal**”, it is necessary to complete the reconstruction of treatment facilities that have a negative impact on unique ecosystems in the Irkutsk Region, the Trans-Baikal Territory and the Republic of Buryatia.

It is important to note that today, within the framework of the national project, comprehensive restoration is provided for only two water bodies: the Volga River and Lake Baikal. In 2021, a roadmap for improving the water management complex of the Don River was approved, and its implementation has already begun. This year, a PSA and the clearing of riverbeds in nine regions of the Don basin will be developed.

I would also like to inform you that we have developed a “united water project”. We assume that any reservoirs of our country will be able to enter it after 2024. The project is large, expensive, but certainly necessary and timely. We have already reported it to the country’s leadership, and we are waiting for the final decision.

The main goal of the federal project **“Forest Conservation”** is to ensure a 100% balance between dead and felled forests and their reproduction, as well as to reduce damage from forest fires. So, by the end of 2021, the ratio of the area of restored forests to those lost was 109.6%. This is the first time in many years!

During the work of the project, about 43.1 thousand units of forest fire fighting equipment and equipment were purchased, which made it possible to qualitatively improve the situation with the efficiency of extinguishing forest fires in the ground zone. The regions received about 12.2 thousand units of forestry machinery and equipment.

The very title **“Conservation of biological diversity and development of ecological tourism”** contains its key objectives. Within the framework of the project, we are increasing the area of specially protected natural areas of federal significance, increasing the efficiency of their management, including from the point of view of the development of ecological tourism, and also working on the conservation of rare animal species.

At the moment, 16 protected areas out of 24 have been created. Their total area has been increased by 4.6 million hectares, and in total, at least 5 million hectares should be created according to the federal plan. In 2021, two protected areas were created. These are the state nature reserve **“Kazantipsky Marine”** (Republic of Crimea) and **“Paraskiny Lakes”** (Komi Republic). The territory of the State Natural Biosphere Reserve **“Daursky”** has been expanded by 39.3 thousand hectares. The number of visitors to protected areas of federal significance by the end of 2021 amounted to 10.6 million people, which already exceeds the final indicators of the national project. We need a modern tourist infrastructure. Over the past two years, more than 537 million rubles have been allocated to 35 national parks for these purposes. New visitor centers, viewing platforms, museum complexes, scientific and educational centers have been created.

In 2021, an important law on recreational activities in protected areas was adopted in the first reading in the State Duma. Now the bill is being submitted for the second reading.

The most important thing that we will get in the end is that the concept of “tourism in specially protected natural areas” will be introduced for the first time. That is, this is the answer to numerous arguments and to different understandings of recreation in protected areas. Accordingly, the purpose of the draft law is to lay a unified framework for the legal regulation of tourism and recreational activities in specially protected natural areas, as well as mechanisms for attracting investors to create tourist and recreational infrastructure facilities.

By the way, last year in December they released an updated Red Book, the volume **“Animals”**. This year we have already started preparing updates of the Red Book, the volume **“Plants”**.

— **The new FSTP (Federal Scientific and Technical Program) in the field of environmental development of Russia and climate change for 2021-2030 was approved in February of this year. One of the declared directions – “Mitigation of anthropogenic impact on the environment and climate” is connected with the problems of methodology of accounting for harmful anthropogenic impact. A number of environmentalists fear that everything will be reduced simply to taking into account the “carbon footprint” and other technogenic factors will not be taken into account. Is it so?**

— Of course, anthropogenic impact on the environment is not only a carbon footprint. One of the key tasks of this direction in the program is to create a system that will allow us, based on

scientific data, to assess which measures are most effective to reduce the negative human impact on nature, on climate change. Technological solutions are needed here. We are working with the Ministry of Education and Science in this direction.

Now we are creating a system for monitoring emissions of black carbon and methane in the Arctic to understand the volumes and their impact on the environment. The federal budget provides 155.7 million rubles for this for three years.

In addition, we have prepared a draft law on the creation of a system of state environmental monitoring. It will be a single resource where you can get information about the sources of air, water and land pollution; forecasts and models of anthropogenic and man-made environmental impacts will be published.

— **The Ministry of Natural Resources of Russia announced that special units will be created in Russia to fight fires in protected areas. When will this method come into effect, and what results are predicted regarding the innovation?**

— The mechanism works. At the beginning of March, I signed the corresponding order. Specialized units are created on the basis of 10 federal state budgetary institutions that manage nature reserves and national parks in different regions of our country.

Inspectors are currently undergoing an internship in the Khakass Nature Reserve, and the day before they took an in-depth theoretical course on extinguishing forest fires.

The fire-hazardous periods of the past years have shown the need to strengthen the work on fire prevention and extinguishing in protected areas. In 2021, fewer fires were recorded in nature reserves and national parks than in 2020, but their area has more than doubled. The problems associated with the insufficient number of well-trained people, as well as the weak application of advanced technologies: unmanned aerial systems, modern communication systems, high-precision systems for detecting wildfires have been identified. And, this directly affects the timely detection and elimination of fires.

Before the start of the fire-hazardous period, we will equip all special forces with the necessary equipment. We expect that this year we will see different statistics on fires in protected areas.

9. The Ministry of Natural Resources of Russia has prepared a bill “On responsible attitude to animals”. Will it somehow help to solve the problem of abandoned pets in our country?

I would like to note that the development of the draft law is a huge step forward in the formation of a humane and, most importantly, responsible attitude towards animals. The document prescribes such concepts as “breeder” and “animal breeders club”, “breeding” and “selection”.

The concept of a shelter is introduced – this is a place, a property complex where people are engaged in the rescue and subsequent maintenance of neglected animals or those pets that the owners refused. Even this has previously caused ambiguous interpretations. The document regulates the duties of the owners of shelters. For example, they should provide treatment for animals.

Everyone knows the danger posed by aggressive stray dogs that multiply uncontrollably. At the same time, we understand that this is the responsibility of entities whose budgets often do not have enough funds for this. Therefore, we suggest that, with unconditional respect for humanity, the regions themselves choose the methods of how to cope with the problem. This may be placement in shelters of such animals, castration with return to the places. Depending on the capabilities of the region.

Dear Alexander Alexandrovich! Thank you for a detailed and interesting story about the activities of the Ministry of Natural Resources. We wish you and the entire Ministry to successfully cope with the new challenges of environmental protection. We sincerely hope for further cooperation with our journal.