

ENVIRONMENT

Excerpts from Supreme Soviet Decree Aimed at Improving the Conditions in the Environment

On November 27, 1989 the Supreme Soviet of the USSR issued a decree outlining a series of "Urgent Measures for Improving the Ecological Situation Throughout the Country". The worst conditions of all existed in the Aral Sea region and the areas affected by the Chernobyl disaster. Listed as being "on the verge of an ecological crisis" were Kalmykiya, the Dnieper region, the Donbass, the Urals, the Kuzbass and the basins of the Volga River, Lake Ladoga, the Sea of Azov, the Black Sea, the Caspian Sea and the Baltic Sea, as well as a number of other, unspecified areas. There was a need to accelerate nature conservation measures that had already begun in the Baikal, Ob and Amur basins.

The document also noted that in 103 towns with a population of about 50 million people the maximum permissible levels of air pollution were being exceeded ten or more times, and that in 600 towns no provision had been made for what was described as "quality sewage treatment".

Insofar as the forestry sector is concerned, it was considered important to decide on the question of expropriating the lands occupied by "group 1 forests", including those performing shelterbelt, public health protection and water conservation functions, and placing them within the competence of the Supreme Soviets of the union republics and autonomous republics.

Beginning on January 1, 1991, overfellings of allowable cuts are to be prohibited, and beginning in 1990, fellings of cedar. It should be noted that this latter prohibition may refer at least in part, to the Siberian pine (Pinus sibirica Rupr.,) which is often grouped with the cedars.