

OIL AND GAS

Indigenous Inhabitants of Nenetskii Region Clash With Geologists Over Drilling Rights

The Vyucheiskii Tundra Council of the Reindeer-Breeding Collective Farm refused to grant a request from geologists to allocate lands for new boreholes.

"This "mini-revolt" gave us the idea of creating a zone where indigenous inhabitants will have preferential land tenure, and where the presence of geologists and petroleum specialists is, for the time being, not desired," said the chairman of the Executive Committee of the Nenetskii District Council, L. Sablin. By decision of the executive committee, 70% of the most severely ecologically damaged lands were assigned to these zones, including the Arctic islands of Kolguev and Vaigach. Helicopters are not allowed to fly over regions densely populated by birds during their nesting seasons. In order to preserve the commercial shoal of Pechora salmon still in existence, the limits of the protected zone containing salmon spawning rivers have been pushed back by 1 kilometer.

By this decision, the local authorities have attempted to halt the costly process of prospecting for mineral which has been launched at full speed by the Ministry of Geology in the Nenetskii autonomous region. The search for oil and gas has been going on here for more than a quarter of a century now, and every second household has a borehole on its land. The geologists got a bargain on that land: a hectare of early spring reindeer pasture was obtained for a ridiculously low 2 roubles and 73 kopecks. The