

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Accelerated Development of Yamal Peninsula a Threat to Ecological Balance

Our experience over the past 20 years in opening up the Soviet North in the Tyumen' area - Samotlor, Medvezh'ye, Urengoi, and last, Yamburg - has taught us many "lessons". It was thought that the experience of developing the Yamburg condensed gas-field in the Arctic would lead the gas-field workers and construction crews, now looking further north to the newly-found raw hydrocarbon deposits on the Yamal Peninsula, to reject the 'Go get it' strategy typical of the past.

Unfortunately, despite these good intentions, the development of the Yamal Peninsula -- "Treasure Peninsula" as it is called, -- has been underway for some time. Geologists have been drilling on the peninsula for over 10 years - in the Bovanenkovo and Kharasaveisk fields and on Beliy Island in the Arctic. Mechanized mobile construction units working on the Obskaya-Bovanenkovo railway are advancing steadily towards the heart of the Yamal. Nor is the peninsula unknown territory to the Ministry for the Construction of the Oil and Gas Industry. Crews from Arkhnftegazstroi, the general contractor for industrial construction on the peninsula, and from the Urengoineftegazstroi Association have succeeded in laying roads to Yamal's furthest reaches, Se-Yakhe and Sabett.

The onslaught has begun and the waterfowl population on the peninsula has already decreased eight-fold over the past 10 years. During the somewhat less than four years that the Arkhangelsk