

# Russia

Russia has over 13,000 “Specially Protected Natural Areas” (State Natural Reserves, National Parks, Nature Parks, State Natural Sanctuaries and Natural Monuments) which occupy more than 13% of its territory.<sup>1</sup>

## Unburnable carbon in protected areas

LINGO analysis<sup>2</sup> has identified 1.4 Gigatons of CO<sub>2</sub> in 171 oil & gas extraction projects inside Russia’s protected areas. The park with the largest emissions potential is the Yamal`skij Natural Sanctuary, at 582.7 Mt of CO<sub>2</sub>.

## Legislation

In accordance with the Federal Law of the Russian Federation,<sup>3</sup> exploration and extraction of mineral resources are prohibited within Protected Areas. However, there have been cases where fossil fuel companies have found ways to circumvent those restrictions.

For example in 2020 a bill was submitted to the State Duma, which allows the government to change the boundaries of National Parks.

Any section of any National Park could be cut out of it and used for any economic activity, like mining or building sports facilities.<sup>4</sup> Greenpeace Russia launched a public campaign against this initiative, including a petition which collected more than 60,000 signatures. Greenpeace activists and volunteers, together with the Fridays For Future climate movement organized the Online campaign #ForNationalparks (#ЗаНациональныеПарки). They held Friday online strikes on social networks for the preservation of National Parks.

In 2022, the State Duma adopted a law that allows regional authorities to make decisions on changing the boundaries of Specially Protected Natural Areas of regional or local significance until 2024 if they are planned to be used for the construction of “priority infrastructure projects”. Efforts of the Greenpeace public campaign bore some fruits as the law in its current form threatens the unique system of protected areas to a much lesser extent.



Now, as before, it is possible to withdraw land from regional protected areas only for the construction of the Baikal-Amur Mainline and the Trans-Siberian Railway. Environmental impact assessment remains necessary for any construction in all federal protected areas.

## *The case of Numto Nature Park*

Oil extraction in Nature Parks is still a common phenomenon in Russian oil-rich provinces.<sup>5</sup> The Numto Nature Park was created in 1997 in the Belayarskiy district, to preserve a unique wetland ecosystem and the traditional livelihoods of the local indigenous people - Forest Nenets and Kazym Khanty.



Indigenous villagers near Numto Lake in Siberia  
Image: [Greenpeace/Alexey Andronov](#)

In 1999, Surgutneftegas acquired a license for geological study and assessment of fossil fuel reserves in an area that overlapped with the Numto Natural Park.

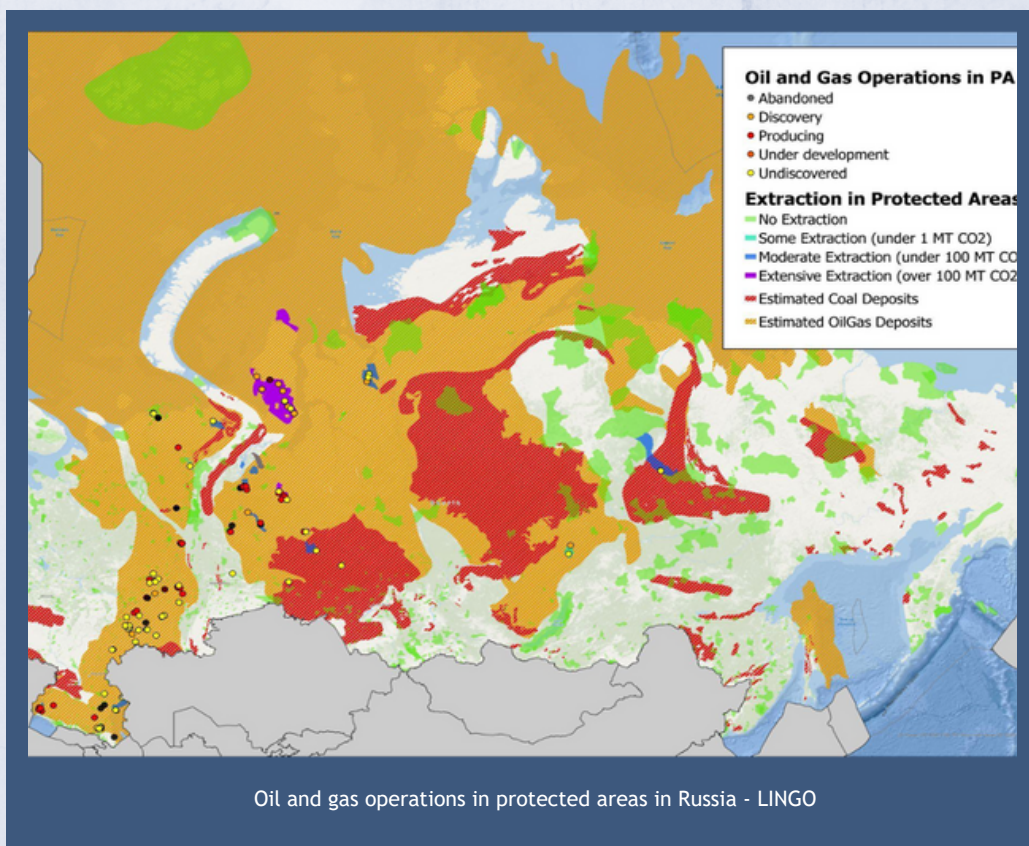
This assessment license was succeeded in 2004 by exploration and production licenses at the Vatlorskoye oil field, which overlaps the Park's most valuable Wetlands Protection Zone. Throughout the 2000s, Surgutneftegas has challenged the Park's original zoning to expand oil activities. Up until 2016, some 50 oil wells had been drilled outside of the Wetlands Protection Zone and more were expected to be established.

Upon petition of the oil company, changes to the Numto Natural Park borders and zoning were being prepared in 2016. About 80% of the park's area was licensed by the local administration for geological exploration, oil extraction and construction of infrastructure associated with these activities. In 2016, a public hearing on the changing of the Nature Park borders took place, which spurred protests in social and conventional media.<sup>6</sup> The Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East (RAIPON), 30 other organizations and a massive media campaign launched by Greenpeace collected 35,000 signatures and directed petitions to the state bodies against re-zoning Numto Nature Park.



These efforts resulted in a high turnout at the public hearing in Beloyarsky in February 2016. Some 80 participants, including indigenous people, came from Numto village, Beloyarsky, Surgut and Nizhnevartovsk cities. According to Greenpeace, the speeches of indigenous people during the public hearing demonstrated high levels of concern.

Following the protests, the federal and regional authorities formalized the re-zoning according to a ‘Compromise’ scenario proposed by Surgutneftegas. The designated zones in the ‘Compromise’ scenario deviated from the earlier proposal by the researchers. For the time being, the oil extraction ambitions in Numto remain unhampered. LINGO analysis has identified 8 extraction projects inside Numto, with just under 500 mmbœ to be extracted in total.





*The Leave it in the Ground Initiative (LINGO) is a German-based non-profit, working on accelerating the transition to a world with 100% renewable energy.*

## References

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