



Home » Under Secretary for Political Affairs » Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs » Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs Releases » Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs Fact Sheets » Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs Fact Sheets (2012) » US-Russia Cooperation on the Environment

U.S.-Russia Cooperation on the Environment

Fact Sheet

BUREAU OF EUROPEAN AND EURASIAN AFFAIRS

June 18, 2012



On May 23, 2012, the United States of America and the Russian Federation celebrated 40 years of cooperation under the Agreement on Cooperation in the Field of Protection of the Environment and Natural Resources. As we continue our engagement in traditional areas like wildlife conservation and protected area management, we are strengthening collaboration in others such as climate change, fisheries management, and in the polar regions.

Wildlife Conservation and Protection of Marine Natural Resources

Under our newest initiative, we will collaborate bilaterally and with scientists internationally to establish a wildlife disease diagnostics laboratory in the Russian Far East. This lab will help to preserve the Amur or "Siberian" tiger and leopard, two remarkable and critically endangered species.

The United States and Russia cooperate to conserve and manage the shared Alaska-Chukotka polar bear population. The establishment of a managed polar bear harvest on the basis of reliable scientific data and traditional knowledge is a historic milestone in our efforts to protect the traditional subsistence needs of native peoples while protecting polar bears.

Illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing depletes fish stocks, destroys marine habitats, distorts competition and markets by placing honest fishers at an unfair advantage, and weakens coastal communities. Global illegal harvest of seafood is estimated to be between 11 and 26 million tons per year, resulting in economic losses valued between \$10 and \$23 billion. The United States and Russia have concluded negotiations on a comprehensive agreement to cooperate in countering illegal and unregulated fishing, which we expect to sign this summer.

Protection of the Environment

The United States is committed to working with Russia and other countries to address climate change, including through the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and on emissions from the international aviation and maritime sectors at the International Civil Aviation Organization and the International Maritime Organization.

The United States and Russia are partnering under the Climate and Clean Air Coalition in order to scale up global action to reduce short-lived climate pollutants. Through this global initiative, the United States, Russia, and other Coalition partners will jump-start new efforts to address short-lived climate pollutants, including black carbon, as well as build on existing collaborations, including through the Global Methane Initiative, to reduce methane emissions in the oil-and-gas sector.

Collaboration in the Polar Regions

The United States and Russia plan in the near future to conclude a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Cooperation in Antarctica, which will significantly improve coordination of bilateral Antarctic policies, inspections, science, logistics, search-and-rescue efforts, training, and public outreach. The United States and Russia are among the most active countries in Antarctic affairs, conducting extensive and diverse scientific research on the continent. This MOU fortifies our cooperative relationship in the Antarctic, and the cooperative activities it calls for are already taking place. In January 2012, the United States and Russia conducted a joint inspection of foreign facilities in Antarctica in accordance

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with the Antarctic Treaty and its Environmental Protocol. Our governments will continue to work together closely to promote shared interests at meetings of the Antarctic Treaty and the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources.

In the Arctic, we are jointly working to protect the pristine environment and develop the resources of the area in an environmentally sound manner. The United States and Russia are addressing black carbon, both bilaterally and multilaterally. The United States collaborates with Russian partners on the Arctic Black Carbon Initiative to reduce emissions from diesel, power and industry, and open biomass burning. The National Academies of Science and the Russian Academy of Sciences will be holding a joint workshop on black carbon in October. In addition, the United States and Russia, along with Norway, are leading negotiations on a new agreement to coordinate oil pollution preparedness and response under the auspices of the Arctic Council. We are also considering steps to study and manage fisheries that may eventually move to the high seas areas of the Arctic Ocean.

We also seek to deepen our cooperation in the Bering Strait region in close participation with Alaska Natives and the indigenous peoples of Chukotka, local agencies, non-governmental organizations, and university researchers.

Back to Top

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[Press Releases & Special Briefings](#)
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[International Media Engagement](#)
[Photo Gallery](#)
[Translations](#)
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[Email Subscriptions](#)
[RSS News Feeds](#)
[More...](#)

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[Passports](#)
[Visas](#)
[Travel Information](#)
[Emergency Services](#)
[Intercountry Adoption](#)
[Parental Child Abduction](#)
[Foreign Per Diem Rates](#)
[More...](#)

Careers

[Foreign Service Officer](#)
[Civil Service Officer](#)
[Foreign Service Specialist](#)
[Civilian Response Corps](#)
[International Organizations](#)
[Student Programs](#)
[USAJobs: Working for America](#)
[More...](#)

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[Business Support: Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQ\)](#)
[Global Partnership Initiative](#)
[Commercial and Business Affairs Office](#)
[Key Officers of Foreign Service Posts](#)
[Trade Policy and Programs](#)
[Country Commercial Guides](#)
[Defense Trade Controls](#)
[Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization](#)
[Guide To Doing Business](#)
[Recovery and Reinvestment Act](#)
[FY2010 Service Contract Inventory Summary and Detail Report](#)
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[Travel](#)
[Photos](#)
[Biography](#)
[More...](#)

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[Diplomatic History](#)
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[Exchange Visitor Program](#)
[Fulbright Program](#)
[Student Career Programs](#)
[Youth Exchange Programs](#)
[U.S. Diplomacy Center](#)
[Intercountry Adoption](#)
[Parental Child Abduction](#)
[More...](#)

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[Mission Statement](#)
[QDDR](#)
[Organization Chart](#)
[Budget](#)
[Rules and Info Collection](#)
[Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton](#)
[Senior Officials](#)
[Special Envoys and Special Representatives](#)
[Alphabetical List of Bureaus and Offices](#)
[Advisory Groups](#)
[Biographies](#)
[Plans, Performance, Budgets](#)
[Open Government Initiative](#)
[No FEAR Act](#)
[Inspector General Hotline](#)
[U.S. Embassies and Other Posts](#)
[U.S. Mission to the United Nations](#)
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