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# Green Belarus News & Events in Belarus



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## National Environment Forum in Vitebsk on 11 May Society

**The 14th National Environment Forum in Vitebsk will be co-located with the 6th International Economic Forum "Innovations. Investments. Prospects". The events will be held on 11 May, BelTA learned from the Vitebsk regional committee of natural resources and environment protection.**

Co-locating the two events will emphasize the priority of promoting the rational use of natural resources, attracting investment and implementing innovative technologies in order to facilitate a gradual transition to the green economy, the organizers said. Vitebsk expects more than 250 delegates, including representatives from the environmental agencies of Belarus and foreign countries, government bodies, the UNDP, national environmental funds and centers, educational and cultural institutions, and also public associations. The main venue will be the regional sport palace. It will host an exhibition and the panel discussion "Water". Its participants will discuss the ecosystem approach to the water management of the river basins in Belarus, industrial wastewater and sewer networks of

towns and villages, the industrial wastewater treatment technologies and other issues. There are plans to sign protocols, contracts and agreements and to hold a ceremony to award the enterprises and organizations for their significant contribution to the cause of environmental protection.

The roundtable "Promoting the green economy in the Republic of Belarus: principles and mechanisms" will discuss the principles of organizing resource-efficient and cleaner production at enterprises in Belarus. The participants will also review the experience of Polotsk and sustainable urban mobility opportunities for Belarusian cities to improve the transport system, security and environment. The roundtable will also feature the presentations of environmental certification and the environmental management system at Orsha machine-tool plant Krasny Borets. The organizers have also scheduled a workshop on the practical use of software products in the emission inventory and reporting procedures in accordance with the Gothenburg Protocol. The event will wrap up with a ceremony to honor the winners of national environmental

competitions and also the individuals and legal entities who have made a significant contribution to the cause of environmental protection.

The forum participants will take part environmental events.

The organizers of the 14th National Environment Forum are the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment Protection, the Vitebsk Oblast Executive Committee, the Vitebsk Regional Committee of Natural Resources and Environment Protection, and the Vitebsk Regional Marketing Center. The forum is organized with the assistance of the international technical assistance project "Supporting the Transition to a Green Economy in the Republic of Belarus" funded by the EU and implemented by the UNDP, and the international technical assistance project "Technical assistance to support the development of green economy in Belarus" funded by the EU and implemented by a consortium run by Hulla & Co Human Dynamics.

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10.05.2017

## Belarus, Russia to set up cross-border protected area

**Belarus and Russia intend to sign an agreement to set up a cross-border protected area by the end of the year, BelTA learned from the press service of the Belarusian Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection.**

"We are planning to sign the inter-governmental agreement on the cross-border protected area by the end of the year. It will include the Osveya and Krasny Bor reserves of Belarus and the Sebezhsy National Park of the Russian Federation. The draft document is undergoing harmonization in accordance with the requirements of the legislation of the two countries," the press service informed.

According to Belarus' Minister of Natural Resources and Environment Protection Andrei Kovkhuto,

the setting up of the Belarusian-Russian cross-border protected area will prove essential in strengthening environmental cooperation in the Union State, and will have a positive impact on the development of bilateral cooperation in the environmental field. In addition, the area "Protected Lake District" that we are developing now may grow into a transboundary biosphere reserve that can be further integrated into the UNESCO world network of biosphere reserves.

According to the press service, a plan of joint action has been signed to promote cooperation between the protected areas of the Republic of Belarus and the Association of Reserves and National Parks of Russia's North-West for 2017-2020, including in ecotourism.

The area of protected territories account for 8.66% of the total territory of the country. In 2016, the number of protected territories increased by 22 units to make up 1,287 in Belarus.

The theme of the Belarusian-Russian cooperation in the field of conservation and sustainable use of biological and landscape diversity was discussed during a meeting between Belarus' Minister of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Andrei Kovkhuto and Russian Minister of Natural Resources and Environment Sergei Donskoy on 26 May on the sidelines of the 8th Nevsky International Environment Congress in St. Petersburg.

BELTA,  
29.05.2017

## Belovezhskaya Pushcha biosphere reserve set up in Belarus

Certain areas of Kamenets District and Pruzhany District of Brest Oblast, Svisloch District of Grodno Oblast have been designated as the Belovezhskaya Pushcha biosphere reserve in line with a decision by the Brest Oblast Executive Committee and the Grodno Oblast Executive Committee, BelTA learned from Vasily Arnolbik, deputy director general for science and environmental education at Belovezhskaya Pushcha National Park.



The biosphere reserve was established under Article 11 and Article 63.3 of the Law on Protection of the Environment to boost sustainable development of the territories through an optimal combination of activities to protect the landscape, biodiversity, historical and cultural heritage and to promote their sustainable use. "Previously, the national environmental legislation did not cover such objects as biosphere reserves, even though the national park has been part of the global network for almost a quarter of a century. Several years ago, the legislation was amended to comply with international standards. Essentially, our resolution on the national park fitted well into the category of a biosphere reserve," Vasily Arnolbik explained.

The reserve covers an area of 216,400 hectares. It includes not only the territory of the national park, but also that of the adjacent farms and for-

ests. The biosphere reserve consists of three functional parts, and each of them has a specific status and protection guidelines. For instance, the main zone (the core of the reserve) is as large as 56,900 hectares, and all human activities are prohibited in this area. The buffer zone (60,200 hectares) is designed for preventing or mitigating any impacts on the main zone and creating conditions for the development of tourism and recreation. The transit zone (99,400 hectares) will be an area of moderate farming and conservation of natural resources.

"The Belarusian part of Belovezhskaya Pushcha borders on the Polish biosphere reserve Bialowieza that was set up in 1979. Today it occupies an area of some 92,000 hectares. The office of the UNESCO's International Coordinating Council of the Man and the Biosphere Program in Belarus is considering the prospects for establishing a cross-border biosphere reserve Belovezhskaya Pushcha, Belarus-Poland," Vasily Arnolbik added.

The decision of the Brest Oblast Executive Committee and the Grodno Oblast Executive Committee to establish the Belovezhskaya Pushcha biosphere reserve was published on the national legal portal and came into effect.

BELTA,  
3.05.2017

## BELARUS TO RELEASE 1,500 STERLETS TO RESTOCK DNEIPER

About 1,500 sterlets weighing a total of 300kg will be released in the Dnieper River in Dubrovno District, BelTA learned from the State Inspectorate For Wildlife Protection under the aegis of the President.

The stocking material has been provided by the Beloye aqua farm from Zhitkovichi District. The funding has been allocated by the Belarusian Association of Hunters and Fishermen.

The restocking campaign was initiated by the State Inspectorate for Wildlife Protection under the aegis of the President. August 2016 recorded a high level of fish mortality which was due to the abnormal heat in the upstream part of the Dnieper River on the territory of Russia. For several days the river carried dead fish. Thousands of fish were collected and destroyed.

Experts of the State Inspectorate for Wildlife Protection held talks with colleagues from Russia and agreed to conduct restocking programs on the Dnieper River in the two countries in 2017.

The river will be further restocked with pike and zander. Under the restocking program in the next year or two specialists of the wildlife service will release nearly 7,000 pike, 3,500 zander and about 2,000 sterlets in the Belarusian cross-border part of the river.

Russia is expected to hold a mass restocking program of the cross-border Dnieper in autumn.

BELTA,  
12.05.2017

## BELARUS TO FINE-TUNE SUBSOIL USE AND PROTECTION REGULATIONS

An interagency working group for the settlement of issues related to the use and sale of mineral resources by developers, and for the improvement of the laws and regulations on subsoil use and protection has been set up in Belarus under Resolution No.164p signed by the prime minister on 10 May, BelTA learned from the press service of the Belarusian government.

The group is chaired by Minister of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Andrei Kovkhuto.

It has been tasked with analyzing the materials about issues regarding the use and sale of mineral resources, including widespread ones, by developers submitted by the Architecture and Construction Ministry, the Transport Ministry, the Energy Ministry, Belneftekhim Concern, the oblast executive committees, Minsk City Hall, and other stakeholders by 15 June.

The working group will also review the proposals on the improvement of the legislation on the protection and use of subsoil resources, the tax legislation in part of increasing the tax rates for extraction of natural resources, and will consider the proposals on the use of the funds that are transferred to the national and local budgets in the form of environmental tax, natural resources extraction tax, and other payments levied for the violation of the environmental legislation for environmental purposes.

The proposals shall be submitted to the Council of Ministers by 1 July.

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection has been instructed to provide the necessary organizational support to the working group.

BELTA,  
11.05.2017

## Fifty-kilometer cycling tourist route opens at Augustow Canal

A fifty-kilometer cycling tourist route passing through major tourist attractions is opening at the Augustow Canal, BelTA learned from Sergei Koleda, Deputy Chairman of the Belarusian Tourism and Sport Union.

The marking of Yatvyazhsky cycling route No.433 is almost completed. Despite the considerable length of the circular route that runs along the two banks of the Belarusian part of the canal, the cycling trail is expected to be one of the most interesting ones in the region.

"It is important to note that we unveil the route in the run-up to the Victory Day celebrations. Among other sites, the trail will take tourists to the pillboxes of Grodno fortified region No.68. The region witnessed heavy fighting at the beginning of the war. The area near the pillboxes has been cleaned and spruced up. However, I should point out that one should be careful when visiting such places," Sergei Koleda said. He added that the Augustow Canal also saw events of the First World War, and the cycling route includes places connected with that war.

"The trail passes through many other interesting sites telling about the history of the region and Grodno Oblast. The attractions date back to different historical periods, from ancient to contemporary times," Sergei Koleda emphasized. The route will be introducing foreign tourists to the Belarusian part of the Augustow Canal as they enter the country through the Lesnaya-Rudawka border checkpoint. The status of Lesnaya-Rudawka has recently

been changed from a river border checkpoint to a cyclist- pedestrian- and river checkpoint.

The trail will also take tourists to the oldest sundial in Grodno Oblast that was discovered during the renovation of the canal. The sundial is some two centuries old. Apart from that, the route runs through all the popular sluices, museums and other attractions.

"The circular cycling route has 10km, 20km and 50km options. There are several bike rentals along the trail," Sergei Koleda pointed out. He said that the route will be of interest even to those who are well familiar with the canal as they will certainly find new things to discover. For tourists from abroad, the route is also a wonderful opportunity to learn more about the Belarusian part of the canal, especially given that they can enter the country visa-free.

The recreation park Augustow Canal, the city of Grodno and its surroundings have been part of one visa-free zone under Decree No.318 since 26 October. Foreign nationals are allowed to stay on the territory of the park and its surroundings for a period of up to five days. Over 12,000 foreign tourists from 56 countries have visited Grodno Oblast without a visa since 26 October.

BELTA,  
5.05.2017

## Minsk Oblast, Austria's Carinthia seek cooperation in alternative energy

**Minsk Oblast of Belarus and Austria's Carinthia State are interested in expanding cooperation in the area of alternative energy. The matter was discussed at a meeting between Minsk Oblast Governor Semyon Shapiro and Economy Minister of Austria's Carinthia Christian Benger, BelTA has learned.**

The agreement on cooperation and partnership between the Belarusian and Austrian regions was signed in 2008. Last year the delegation of Minsk Oblast took part in the Central and Eastern European Forum in Velden. Minsk Oblast held a presentation with an emphasis on the potential of the China-Belarus Industrial Park Great Stone.

The Minsk Oblast governor noted during the meeting that the two countries are implementing a number of big joint projects in telecommunication technologies, banking sector, and woodworking industry. "We lack, however, small and medium-sized business projects. For instance, all Minsk Oblast districts need to build energy sources running on local fuels. The move will help reduce the dependence on natural gas. Strengthening our cooperation in the sector is seen as promising," he said.

Christian Benger supported the initiative. In his words, there are companies in Carinthia that are involved in the production of heat and electric energy from wood. They produce the corresponding equipment and provide its maintenance. These companies are also investors. "During the meeting in Velden, the parties discussed the issues of the biggest mutual interest. One of them are renewable energy resources. Carinthia is ready to expand cooperation in the area. Cooperation in the areas such as electronics, microelectronics, mechanical engineering, metalworking, woodworking, plastic processing and plastic waste recycling

also looks promising. Tourism is considered as a long-term perspective," said Christian Benger.

The parties noted that the conditions for Belarus-Austria cooperation are favorable, but they need to be further developed. For instance, a proposal was voiced to improve conditions for cooperation in the financial sector and in the area of aviation communication.

During the visit to Minsk Oblast the delegation from Carinthia visited Dzerzhinsky Agrokombinat where Christian Benger praised the performance of the agricultural company. The program of the visit also envisages the familiarization with the Great Stone Industrial Park. Christian Benger invited Semyon Shapiro to visit the next Central and Eastern European Forum in Velden in 2018. The parties also plan to take stock of the progress made by the two regions in expanding cooperation.

Taking into account Carinthia's economic structure, Minsk Oblast also considers tourism (hospitality, gastronomy, spa services), agriculture, forestry and construction as promising areas for bilateral cooperation. Austria is a traditional investor in the Minsk Oblast economy. In 2016 Austria's FDI in Minsk Oblast totaled \$3.4 million (117.7% to 2015). The companies that raised the most of net FDI included Henkel Bautechnik and Severstal Distribution. Minsk Oblast trade with Austria made up \$20.6 million in 2016. Minsk Oblast main exports to Austria were potash fertilizers, vegetables, and frozen fruits. Minsk Oblast imported Austrian medications, rubber and plastic processing equipment, furniture and door furnishings.

BELTA,  
12.05.2017

## PLANS TO SET UP WASTE RECYCLING PLANT NEAR MINSK IN 2017

**There are plans to set up a venture to recycle biodegradable and construction waste outside Minsk in 2017, Director General of SOOO Remondis Minsk Ervin Kurtbedinov told the media on 29 May, BelTA has learned.**

"Some wastes can be recycled. We have started working with some of them. For instance, this year we will launch a plant to recycle biodegradable and large-size construction waste outside Minsk. Biodegradable waste includes organic waste used to produce compost and potting soil. The company is expected to recycle from 10,000 to 20,000 tonnes of biodegradable waste a year," Ervin Kurtbedinov noted.

SOOO Remondis Minsk is considering building a waste sorting station. "As for domestic waste, at the moment we do not have a waste sorting station. Although the project is on the agenda, it has not become topical yet. The point is that the city has quite a few capacities that need to be utilized," the director general clarified.

In order to optimize secondary processing in Belarus SOOO Remondis Minsk has worked out a concept to bring the problems of waste minimization, waste sorting, and recycling to the attention of school students. The concept was implemented in cooperation with the Minsk City Committee of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection and the Minsk City Hall. This initiative helps



children play and learn how to dispose of waste, sort it correctly and explore the advantages of recycling. The project involves numerous Minsk schools. Such an event was held at Minsk Gymnasium No.21. "We want the children to communicate the message that domestic waste sorting is important to adults," Chairman of the Minsk City Committee of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Sergei Maslyak underlined.

In turn, a state-run company Operator of Secondary Material Resources shot a 30-minute video on waste sorting for pupils. "This video features an 'ecohero' that teaches the children how to sort waste. We plan to send around 3,000 CDs to Belarusian schools to help teachers with lessons on this topic," the company's director Natalia Grintsevich pointed out. With over 750 branch offices and affiliated companies in 35 countries, the German Remondis company is one of the world's leading water, waste and environmental management organizations. In 2010 the Minsk City Executive Committee and Remondis signed a framework agreement on setting up a Belarus-Germany waste management company, Remondis Minsk. The company has become the first public-private partnership in Belarus' housing and utility sector.

BELTA,  
29.05.2017



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# BELARUS TO WORK OUT SPENT NUCLEAR FUEL HANDLING STRATEGY BY YEAR END

A strategy for handling spent nuclear fuel will be worked out in Belarus by the end of the year. Belarusian Deputy Energy Minister Mikhail Mikhadyuk made the statement as



he answered questions of foreign diplomats after their tour of the Belarusian nuclear power plant's construction site on 26 May, BELTA has learned.

The official said: "Together with the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus we are developing a strategy for handling spent nuclear fuel. The

document is supposed to be approved by the government by the end of the year." Mikhail Mikhadyuk stressed that all the issues will be fixed. "Trust me, we are not going to deviate from international practice," he stated.

Mikhail Mikhadyuk said that two approaches to handling spent nuclear fuel are practiced in the world. As part of the first one spent nuclear fuel is extracted from the active zone and stored in the cooling pond for some time. After that spent nuclear fuel is reloaded into special containers and can be stored on site for the entire duration of the nuclear power plant's operation if proper conditions are available. The second approach provides for extracting spent nuclear fuel, putting it inside a transport container, and sending it to the processing factory. Processed fuel is then stored at a special storage facility. Belarus and Russia have signed an intergovernmental agreement, which stipulates that Belarusian spent nuclear fuel will be sent to Russia for processing. In line with the Russian Federation legislation processed fuel can be stored in Russia for up to 20 years. After that Belarus will build a storage facility of its own. Mikhail Mikhadyuk explained that the strategy for handling spent nuclear fuel will determine which approach Belarus will follow in the end. The deputy



energy minister stressed that there are no technologies in the world for the ultimate disposal of nuclear fuel. "But science advances all the time. I think that it will become available by the time we need the technology," said the official.

As far as operational costs are concerned, the Belarusian nuclear power plant's design provides for places and conditions for storing the amount of spent

nuclear fuel that the power plant can generate over the course of ten years. "The government has approved a strategy for handling radioactive waste. In line with the document we are going to build a standalone storage facility after the waste has been stored for ten years," said Mikhail Mikhadyuk.

Speaking about which country will make nuclear fuel for the Belarusian nuclear power plant, Mikhail Mikhadyuk stressed that Belarus will choose the vendor bearing the price and safety in mind. "Every reactor type needs a specific kind of fuel. Belarus and Russia have signed an intergovernmental agreement, according to which Russia will supply us with fuel. I cannot rule out the possibility that we will consider other options in the future if a tried and tested alternative is available. Everything is possible given enough time," said the Belarusian deputy energy minister.

More than 25 diplomats, who are accredited in Belarus, came for a tour of the construction site of the Belarusian nuclear power plant on 26 May. The number included heads of diplomatic missions and charges d'affaires. In particular, ambassadors of Russia, the UAE, Palestine, the UK, Turkey, Germany, Ukraine, Serbia, Romania, and Turkmenistan were made familiar with the Belarusian nuclear power plant construction progress. Diplomats from Slovakia, Czechia, Poland, Japan, Hungary, the USA, and Netherlands also came to Ostrovets.

The Belarusian nuclear power plant is a project to build a new-generation nuclear power plant with two VVER-1200 type reactors (1,200MW each) 18km away from Ostrovets, Grodno Oblast. The first power-generating unit is scheduled for commissioning in 2019, with the second one to go online in 2020.