

INTRODUCTION

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The articles in this issue deal with urgent issues that result from the current practice of managerial decision-making concerning environmental policies and exploitation of natural resources. Current policies, both in Russia and elsewhere, are often based on a deep-rooted but unacknowledged misconception that the assimilatory capacity of the environment is virtually limitless. This has a number of implications:

- Companies strive to maximize immediate revenues at the expense of possible long-term environmental impacts.
- The general assumption is that some environmental protection measures are sufficient to completely restore the damage that has already been inflicted on the environment.
- The cost of environmental protection activities is determined based on the amount of damage to individual components of the environment, rather than taking into account externalities that impact other sectors or policy arenas.
- Efficiency indicators are calculated without regard to the sustainability of natural ecosystems.

Meanwhile, a much more advanced approach to the solution of environmental and economic problems of natural resource preservation and protection is needed. Such an approach would be to view biological, social and environmental systems as complex open systems that may become irreversibly corrupted by the accumulation of negative impacts. In this perspective, it would be crucial to achieve equilibrium between expected material gain and preservation, or even improvement, of natural ecosystems.

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In this context, it is significant to note that environmental protection initiatives in the Russian Federation are currently severely underfunded, which is very likely to lead to the aggravation of environmental problems in the future. In fact, according to the Russian Federal State Statistics Service, the total amount of environmental expenditure decreased from 1.3% to 0.7% GDP in the period from 2003 to 2015, while the volume of environmental capital investment halved, going from 2% to 1% of total capital investment.

With that in mind, the authors of the articles that make up this issue focus on highly topical issues in Russia policy circles, which may have relevance in other countries as well. These include the development of methodologies and guidelines for evaluating the performance of environmental programs and investment projects; the accommodation of interests of the state, the private sector and civil society during policy implementation; and rationales for new approaches to global climate regulation, including various mechanisms of technology transfer that would contribute to a decrease of carbon emissions embodied in trade.

In my article, “Criteria and Methodologies for Assessing Efficiency of Environmental Government Programs in the Russian Federation,” I look at existing approaches to performance evaluation for environmental government programs in Russia, and I suggest avenues for improvement of evaluation criteria. In the next article, I partner with co-author Valentin Krasnoshchekov in “Accommodations of Interests of the State, Business, and Civil Society in Environmental Projects Implemented through Public Private Partnership in the Russian Federation,” to evaluate the social efficiency of public private partnerships (PPP), based environmental projects. Finally, in their article, “Carbon Emissions Embodied in Russia’s Trade: Implications for Climate Policy,” Igor A. Makarov and Anna K. Sokolova explore how greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions that result from Russia’s imports and exports impact Russian national interests and trade policy writ large.

While not exhaustive, the research findings in this issue enhance our understanding of current policy discussion in Russia, as well as providing the foundation for comparative analysis. The authors hope that these articles will contribute to a better mutual understanding among policymakers and business leaders, civil society groups, and researchers worldwide who see the problems of environmental preservation as a top priority.

After all, joint research and the creation of viable mechanisms for rational environmental management bring us closer to the successful implementation of a sustainable development strategy that will allow future generations to flourish and enjoy this planet in its best possible state.

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