

DOI 10.28995/2073-0101-2026-2-385-403

For citation

Makeeva, E. D. (2026). Departmentalization as a Factor in the Deterioration of the Environmental Situation in the USSR in the 1960s–1980s, Based on materials from the Volga Region archives, Herald of an Archivist, no. 2, pp. 385-403. DOI 10.28995/2073-0101-2026-2-385-403

Makeeva, E. D.,

Samara State University of Social Sciences and Education, Samara, Russia

Departmentalization as a Factor in the Deterioration of the Environmental Situation in the USSR

in the 1960s–1980s, Based on materials from the Volga Region archives

Abstract

The article presents the results of the study of departmentalism as a socio-economic phenomenon that significantly influenced the nature of natural resource management and environmental policy in the USSR from the 1960s to the 1980s. An analysis of sources and scientific literature revealed that the departmentalism factor, which played a crucial role in the functioning of the national economy, has remained insufficiently studied by historians to date. Meanwhile, the negative consequences of anthropogenic impact on nature remain a pressing issue for the Russian Federation today, necessitating a study by specialists of the Soviet experience of regulating and monitoring the actions of ministries and departments in relation to the natural environment. The purpose of the study is to identify the role of the departmental approach to the use of natural resources, which was practiced by various sectors of the national economy of the Soviet Union, in the gradual deterioration of the environmental situation in the country, which in some places reached a crisis point by the end of the 1980s. The author applied the following research methods: analysis, synthesis, generalization, analysis of statistical data, the historical-genetic method, and a systems approach. The source material used was regional archives from the Samara, Saratov, and Volgograd regions and the Republic of Tatarstan. The facts recorded in the archival documents are presented in the article as examples of departmental bias in the exploitation of natural resources by various sectors of the national economy. They demonstrate that, under the administrative-command system of economic management, every enterprise sought to meet planned targets at any cost, without regard for the environmental impacts of production activities. This often led to confrontations between ministries and departments, government agencies, and environmental protection agencies. At the same time, enterprises violating environmental legislation defended their departmental interests and often prevailed in such conflicts. In an attempt to counter this, government agencies adopted decrees and other official documents aimed at improving environmental protection in the country. However, these were not fully implemented at the local level, as enterprises were not interested, and effective mechanisms for influencing them were lacking. As a result, by the late 1980s, the environmental situation in the USSR deteriorated significantly, and in some regions even reached crisis status. Departmental influence undoubtedly played a key role in this.

Keywords

Departmentalization, nature management, transformation of nature in the USSR, planned economy, historical ecology, nature conservation, departmental interests, socio-economic history, environmental policy.

Download the article: [makeeva_doi](#)

References

Balakina, L. P. (2014). Transformation of Nature in the USSR, Ideology, Departmentalization, Consequences, Second Half of the Twentieth Century. IN: Science of South Ural State University, Proceedings of the 66th Scientific Conference, Chelyabinsk, South Ural State University publ., pp. 899-903.

Vlasova, E. Ya., Yandyganov Ya. Ya. (2017). Problems of a General Approach to Nature Management, Socio-Ecological-Economic Aspects, Theory and Practice of World Science, no. 5, pp. 2-6.

Galkin, O. V. (2021). History of the Formation of State Environmental Management Bodies for Nature Protection with Special Competence, Issues of Russian Justice, no. 15, pp. 28-40.

Kalimullin, A. M. (2011). Environmental History of an Industrial City in the Second Half of the Twentieth Century, Kazan, Kazan University publ., 362 p.

Mikhalev, N. A. (2021). Development of the Yamal North in the 1930s-1950s, Forms and Methods of Attracting Labor. IN: Archive in Society, Society in the Archive, Proceedings of the Fourth All-Russian Scientific and Practical Conference, Chelyabinsk, n. publ., pp. 152-155.

Galeeva, A. M., M. L. Kurok (Eds.) (1981). On Environmental Protection, Collection of Party and Government Documents, 1917–1981, Moscow, Politizdat publ., 383 p.

Plekhova, O. A. (2012). Reforms of L. I. Brezhnev and the Strengthening of the Top Soviet and State Bureaucracy in the Period 1964-1983, Humanities and Social Sciences, no. 2, pp. 250-258.

Rashevskaya, N. N. (2022) The Role of Departmentalization in Shaping the Everyday Practices of Workers in the Khanty-Mansiysk National Okrug in the Second Half of the 1940s – 1960s, Bulletin of Surgut State Pedagogical University, no. 2 (77), pp. 145-159.

Repinetsky, A. I. (2023). Industrial Development and the Ecological State of the Middle Volga Region, 1950-1970, Based on Materials from the Samara Region. IN: Historical Ecology and Historical Demography, Moscow, ROSSPEN publ., pp. 336-342.

Salakhova, L. M. (2022). Departmental Factor in Shaping the Cultural Landscape of New

Industrial Cities of the Angara Region in the Second Half of the 20th Century. IN: Russia and Siberia in a Changing World, History and Modernity, Proceedings of the All-Russian Scientific and Theoretical Conference, Irkutsk, Reprocenter+ publ., pp. 100-106.

Stas, I. N. (2020). The Problem of the Departmental City in the West Siberian Oil and Gas Complex. IN: Industrial Heritage of Russia, Interdisciplinary Research, Preservation Experience, Renovation Strategies, Collection of Abstracts of the All-Russian Scientific Conference, Khanty-Mansiysk, Yugorsky Format publ., pp. 149-155.

Tulupov, N. S. (2024). Party and State Control under Soviet Departmentality, From the Era of Stagnation to Perestroika, Social Sciences and Humanities, Domestic and Foreign Literature, Series 5, History, no. 2, pp. 49-67.

Khromov, E. A. (2010). Formation of departmental and regional interests in the oil and gas sector of the USSR in 1957-1965, based on the development of the West Siberian oil and gas province, PhD in History Dis., Tomsk, 256 p.

Shmygleva, A. V. (2016). Environmental policy of the Soviet state, the main stages of formation and implementation mechanism. IN: 1917 in Russia, socialist idea, revolutionary mythology and practice, Collection of scientific papers, Ekaterinburg, UrFU publ., pp. 159-171.

Bruno, A. (2016). The nature of Soviet power, an Arctic environmental history, New York, Cambridge University publ., 288 p.

Josephson, P. R. (2013). An environmental history of Russia, Cambridge, Cambridge University publ., 340 p.

Lajus J. (2017). Environmental History in Russia and about Russia, Environment and History, v. 23, no. 4, pp. 627-631.

Mandrillon, M.-H. (2012). L'expertise d'Etat, creuset de l'environnement en URSS, Vingtieme Siecle, Revue d'histoire, no. 113, pp. 107-116.

Ziegler, C. E. (1987). Environmental policy in the USSR, London, Pinter publ., 195 p.

About authors

Makeeva E. D., Doctor of Historical Sciences, Associate Professor, Samara State University of Social Sciences and Education, Department of Physics, Mathematics and Teaching Methods, Professor, Samara, Russia, 8-903-300-40-94, makeeva.ed@mail.ru

The article was received in the editorial office on 16.02.2025, recommended for publication on 20.03.2026.

You can read completely article in the russian historic-archival magazine “The Herald of an Archivist”. Read more about terms of subscription [here](#) .

Полностью материал публикуется в российском историко-архивоведческом

журнале ВЕСТНИК АРХИВИСТА. Ознакомьтесь с условиями подписки [здесь](#) .