

Environment Ministry Steps In on Murmansk Road Dispute

By [The Moscow Times](#)

September 25, 2012

The  **Moscow Times**

The government will draw up an "environmentally friendly" solution for a controversial road planned to traverse the Khibiny Mountains in the Arctic region of Murmansk, the Natural Resources and Environment Ministry said Tuesday.

Environmental groups say that the road, which is intended to connect an apatite and nepheline deposit in the northern part of the mountain chain with a processing center in the southeast, would irreparably damage the area, slated to become a national park.

Natural Resources and Environment Minister Sergei Donskoi said after meeting with environmental groups and mining representatives Tuesday that the road would be discussed by a local public council, the ministry said in a statement.

"Considering current expert opinion as well as public outcry, the minister decided to submit the project for a road to the Partomchorr deposit for discussion at the public council,"

the statement said.

Donskoi ordered his deputy, Rinat Gizatulin, to consult Russian Railways and the Apatit mining firm about using existing transportation links. The minister also requested that his deputy present an "environmentally friendly" solution by the end of the year.

The World Wildlife Fund and the Kola Conservation Center last week ceased involvement in a task force meant to find a compromise for the road project because they said the body was only a means to legitimize the project.

Acron-owned Northwestern Phosphorus wants the road to connect the Partomchorr deposit with a refinery at Oleny Ruchei.

Environmental groups say the chosen route would sabotage efforts to promote ecotourism in the area. They also accuse Northwestern Phosphorus of clearing forestland for the project while negotiations are still under way.

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