

Siberian Ecological Center Fined \$6,000 for Not Registering as 'Foreign Agent'

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A screenshot of The Siberian Environment Center official website

A Siberian environmental conservation agency has been fined 300,000 rubles (\$6,000) for failing to label itself a foreign agent after accepting funding from abroad, the Interfax news agency reported Wednesday.

The Siberian Environment Center received funding from the Dutch Embassy, as well as U.S. organizations the Earth Island Institute and the Global Greengrants Fund, the report said.

A 2012 Russian law obligates nongovernmental organizations that accept foreign funding and conduct vaguely defined political activity to register as foreign agents, a term that critics argue has connotations of Soviet-era espionage.

A court in the Siberian city of Novosibirsk imposed the fine, which the organization's head Ilya Smelyansky said they would immediately appeal.

"We will appeal this ruling ... as soon as we receive a copy of the court order," he told Interfax.

Last month St. Petersburg's Regional Press Institute paid the country's highest-ever fine — 400,000 rubles (\$8,000) — for failing to register as a foreign agent.

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