

Siberian Authorities Halt Construction of Lake Baikal Bottling Plant After Backlash

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Kirill Shipitsin / TASS

Authorities in Siberia have suspended the construction of a controversial Chinese bottling plant in the world's largest fresh water lake following public outcry and pressure from the Kremlin.

Residents in Irkutsk region criticized the Chinese-founded AquaSib company's plans to bottle 190 million liters of water per year from Lake Baikal starting in 2021, saying the plant would drain and pollute the lake. The issue has gained national attention in the past week, with the prime minister eventually [vowing](#) to audit the plant.

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A regional court ordered AquaSib to halt construction that began in January after inspections uncovered signs of an oil spill and industrial waste, the Irkutsk region administration [said](#) on its website Friday.

The governor's office [initiated](#) the inspection following complaints from local residents.

Nearly 1 million people have signed an online petition against the plant.

AquaSib has maintained that its water-bottling plant would not cause environmental damage.

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