

11. Environmental management

Legal regulation, planning and funding of Environment

State environmental policy defines the national environmental legislation. It is intended to provide enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus the right of citizens to a healthy environment.

To date, the country formed a sufficiently developed legal framework in the field of environmental protection and rational use of natural resources. Leading position in it is the Law «On Environmental Protection» (1992, amended 2002), which has universal significance. Other laws and codes are more narrow focus and regulate, respectively, the mechanisms of environmental protection, rational use and protection of individual natural resources, the solution of individual problems and other issues.

Prior to the 1990 environmental management of natural resources in Belarus is carried out almost exclusively on the use of administrative methods. In 1991, after the adoption of the Law on Tax on Natural Resources, the economic mechanism was used in this area. Over time, as the development of market relations in the country, its scope is expanding.

Together with the laws governing environmental protection and rational use of natural resources in Belarus are worked also a number of special laws aimed at ensuring the ecological safety of population. They are related to radiation, sanitary, industrial safety, protection of population and territories from emergency situations of natural and manmade.

Environmental legislation of Belarus is developing on several fronts. They are



associated with the updating of existing and new legislation, as well as the introduction of environmental standards in legislation relating to economic and other spheres of activity.

Over the last five years the country adopted a series of new laws on environmental protection and rational use of natural resources. Thus, in 2006, it joined the Law of the Republic of Belarus «On hydrometeorological activity», in 2007 – Law «On Wildlife» and «On treatment of Waste Management», in 2008 – Law on Air Protection and the Code of the Republic of Belarus on the interior and on the ground, in 2009 – Law «On State Ecological Expertise».

Significant changes and additions were made to the Law of the Republic of Belarus «On Environmental Protection». In 2007

it introduced provisions that reflect the mechanisms for ensuring public access to environmental information and participation in environmental decision-making. In addition, for the first time legally enshrined the concept of «harm caused to the environment» and «environmental damage» determine the order size, how and when compensation for the harm caused to the environment.

The effectiveness in individual organizations, which is the source of impacts on the environment must ensure for effective environmental management in the whole country. With this purpose in Belarus conducted environmental certification of environmental management systems of organizations in t.ch using the international standard ISO 14001.

The number of organizations, where the certification of environmental management systems of organizations meets the requirements of the international standard reached 219 on the beginning of 2010. In this case, the rate of this type of activity increases with time. If during the period 2001-2005, undergo an annual certification of an average of 22 organizations in the period 2006-2009 – 33 organizations or 1,5 times more.

For successful implementation of environmental policies, a priority to address the most important environmental problems, the optimal expenditure for these purposes in the country is planning for environmental protection and rational use of natural resources. Nowadays the basic document for long-term conservation planning – Main policies of Environmental Protection of Belarus until 2025 is worked out. It covers the most important environmental issues to ensure implementation of environmental interests of the individual, society and state.

The strategic goal of environmental protection in the long term to 2025 determined to achieve new, higher its quality, providing an environmentally friendly living conditions, promoting solutions to global and regional

environmental issues, sustainable social and economic development of the Republic of Belarus.

Achieving this goal should be achieved by reducing harmful environmental impacts and restore natural systems, radical improvements in waste management sustainable territorial development, conservation of biological and landscape diversity, minimize the impact on climate and adaptation to changes.

Strategic issues in the field of environmental protection and rational use of natural resources linked with social and economic development provides a national strategy for sustainable socio-economic development, which is being developed for 15 years. To address medium-term objectives in the environmental field developed and implemented five-year National Action Plan on Rational Use of Natural Resources and Environment, and Environmental Health.

Territorial environmental planning is carried out within the framework of territorial complex schemes of environmental protection. In addition, environmental issues are also included in the developed integrated circuits of the territorial organization of administrative units at various levels, as well as schemes of land management areas.

To address some of the most significant problems the country faces environmental safety, environmental protection and rational utilization of natural resources are taken special purpose programs. These include the State Program for overcoming the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster, the State Program on Water and Sanitation «Clean Water», National Program for management of municipal waste management schemes placement of specially protected natural areas. In 2005-2008 the state implemented a program to improve the environmental situation in Naroch Lake.

Scientific support of environmental policy is part of the state of scientific and technical

programs. Crucial among them is the State Scientific-Technical Program «Ecological Safety».

Implementation of programs and activities on environmental protection and rational use of natural resources should be based on adequate funding. His sources, according to national environmental legislation, are the republican and local budgets, state budget funds of nature protection, legal persons and individual entrepreneurs, citizens, bank loans, foreign investments and other non-budget sources.

In the last five years, annual spending on environmental protection has changed in the direction of increasing or decreasing (*Figure 11.1*). The difference between the maximum (2005) and minimum (2006), their value was 25%. Characteristically, during the crisis of 2009 funding of environment is not only not decreased but even increased in comparison with the previous three years.

Relative measure of the cost of environmental protection, marked proportion of GDP, considered a five-year time period had a maximum value in 2005 – 1,5% In subsequent years it decreased and stabilized at the level of 1,1-1,2%.

As the costs of environmental protection are of special importance investments in fixed assets, which characterize the renewal of fixed assets of environmental and material prerequisites for the appointment of innovative development of this sector. Over the last five years the share of investment in the total value of expenditure on environmental protection amounted to an average of 30%. The maximum value of its accounts for 2009 – 37%. Preservation of positive dynamics of indicators of investment in fixed capital nature conservation has a positive meaning, since updating the material base of environmental protection is an urgent task for Belarus.

In the cost structure of the components of the environment is dominated by the cost of protection and rational utilization of water resources. Over the last five years, they accounted for more than half of the total value of environmental financing (*Figure 11.2*). The fifth of the cost falls on air protection, the sixth – the prevention of pollution of waste production.

In general, the current funding environment reduces specific emissions and discharges of pollutants and a relatively stable environment in the camp at high rates of economic growth.

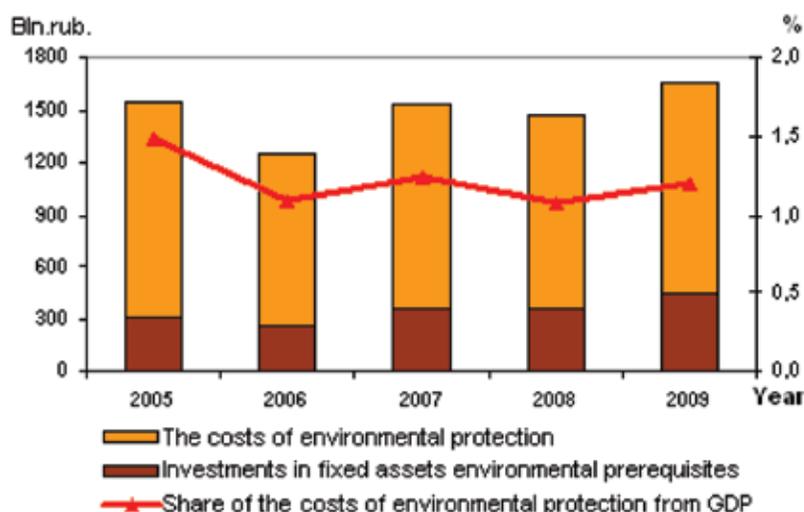


Figure 11.1 – Dynamics of the costs of environmental protection of Belarus, their share of GDP (%) and environmental investments in 2005-2009 (Prices 2009).

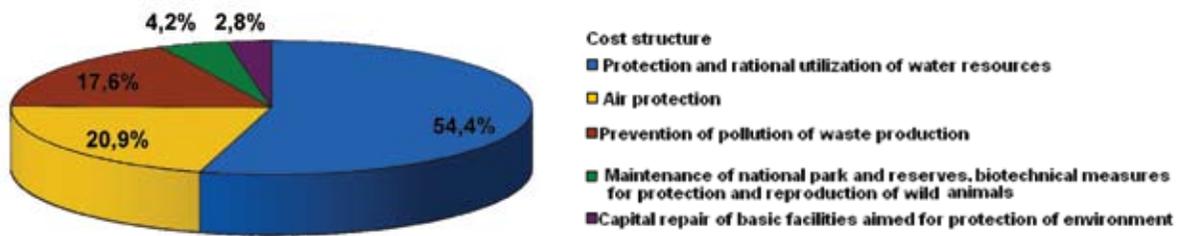


Figure 11.2 – The cost structure for environmental protection of Belarus for 2005-2009

The economic mechanism of nature and the environment

Introduction of economic instruments in environmental management in Belarus is at the beginning of 1990. It includes the planning and financing of environmental activities; concessional lending taxing and other payments for the use of natural resources, emissions (discharges) of pollutants into the environment, compensation in the prescribed manner of harm caused to the environment (Figure 11.3).

An economic incentive of environmental protection is based on:

- The establishment of a separate categories of businesses and individuals tax and other benefits in the implementation of low-emission, energy-saving technologies,

special equipment, reducing harmful impact on the environment by using waste as secondary raw materials and implementing other environmental activities;

- Accelerated depreciation of equipment and other facilities designed to protect and improve the environment.

Initially, the system of economic regulation of natural resources was of rather a fiscal, than stimulatory, as environmental payments had no real impact on the technical and financial status of polluters. It subsequently improved and its effectiveness increased, developed principles of payment for environmental management and compensation for harm caused to the environment, strengthening the role of environmental tax. Currently the system is largely aimed at encouraging business entities to reduce environmental impacts by reducing

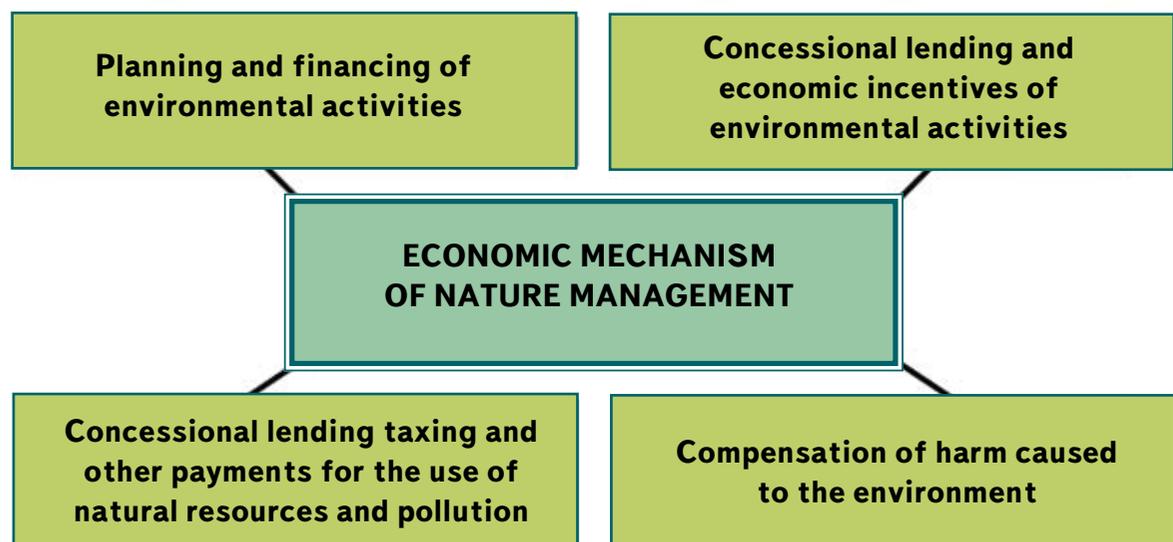


Figure 11.3 – The economic mechanism of nature management

energy and resource consumption, preventive measures to ensure environmental safety.

Part of the economic mechanism of nature and the environment – the ecological tax consists of the following types of payments:

- for the use (retrieval, extraction) of natural resources, pollutant emissions into the air, discharges of wastewater or pollutants into the environment, placing waste;

- for production and (or) import of plastic, glass containers, container-based paper and paperboard and other products, after the loss of consumer properties that generate waste, which have harmful effects on the environment and require the organization of systems of collection, disposal and (or) use as well as the importation of goods packed in plastic, glass bottles and containers on the basis of paper and paperboard;

- for the import and manufacture of products containing more than 50% of volatile organic compounds;

- for import into the territory of the Republic of Belarus of ozone-depleting substances.

To enhance the catalytic role of the environmental tax rate is adjusted periodically to. There is also a simplification of the tax system. With this purpose in 2008 the list of taxable environmental tax of pollutants released into the air is significantly (11 times) reduced. Simultaneously the tax rate for emissions of those substances has increased.

In 2009, legislation has adopted to improve the business aimed at reducing the number of eco-tax payers. From the environmental tax payers are excluded business entities whose annual volume of non-hazardous wastes such as waste generated during the life activities is 50 tons or less. Amounts of water used for technological purposes in the manufacture of alcohol, soft drinks and beer also excluded from the objects of taxation.

The country established a system of privileges for the categories of environmental

tax payers engaged in environmental activities. These activities should be aimed at reducing emissions of pollutants into the air (construction and reconstruction of gas purification equipment, the creation of automated systems for emissions control), discharges of wastewater (construction and renovation of facilities for sewage treatment) and the volume of waste (construction and reconstruction of the placement and removal of waste). Tax incentives also apply to enterprises introducing international environmental standards ISO 14000.

In Belarus environmental tax does not fully compensate for the costs of environmental protection. And over time, there is a decrease in its share of these costs. So, if in 2006 it was 43%, in 2009 – only 30% (*Figure 11.4*). There is also a decrease in the absolute magnitude of the environmental tax. During the period from 2006 to 2009 it decreased by 6.3%. Its share in the revenue part of the country's budget has decreased from 1,5 to 0,9%, and relative to GDP – from 0.47 to 0.36%.

For funding for natural resource management and environmental protection in the country are state budget environmental funds. Sources for their formation are the taxes, funds received as compensation for environmental damage, fines for pollution and other violations of environmental laws, etc. In recent years, the means of environmental funds are spent to ensure the uninterrupted supply of quality drinking water to the population, the introduction of advanced wastewater treatment technologies, reducing air pollution, the problem of dumping of toxic waste into the commercial production of secondary material resources, increased use of renewable energy sources, improvement of recreation areas and other activities.

Further development of the economic mechanism of nature and the environment involves the development of a system of economic stimulation for the introduction of environmental technologies and equipment

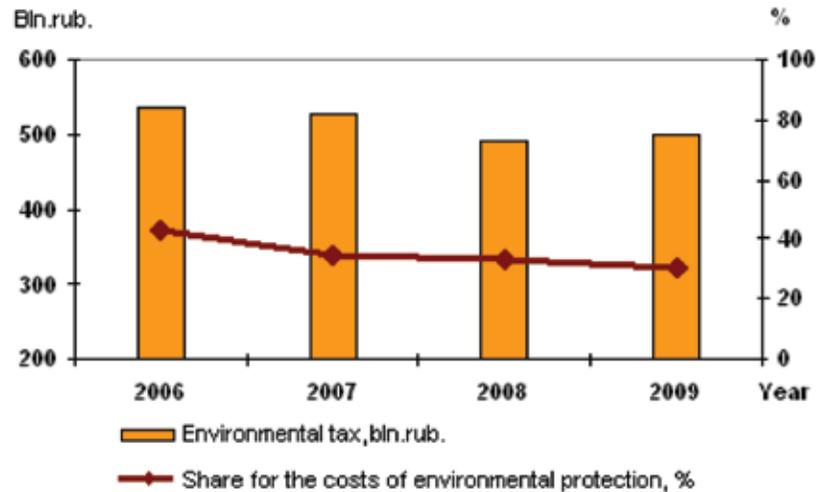


Figure 11.4 – The dynamics of the ecological tax in Belarus for 2006-2009 (at 2009 prices) and its share in the costs of environmental protection

with the use of differentiated credit. A promising direction is to introduce the rating of bank interest, depending on the environmental soundness of a nature. One should observe the principle of «credit neutral», which provides for the imposition of economic sanctions in the form of increased interest for lending to environmentally unsafe companies and their compensation through concessional lending companies successfully address environmental challenges.

The integration of environmental requirements in the privatization of enterprises using part of the proceeds to improve the environmental performance of production is the necessary element of the economic mechanism. Economic instruments are designed to provide the benefits of nature users, implementing effective business with a permanent reduction of environmental impacts. It is required to undertake a shift in priorities from economic instruments of negative motivation (payments for environmental pollution, the compensation of economic damage) in the direction of extension of positive motivation for nature, introducing technologies with minimal impact on the environment.

To improve fiscal management of natural resources requires the orientation of taxation on the following tasks:

- shift the tax burden towards those sectors which do the most damage to the environment;
- tax incentives for investment in environmental protection in energy sector, transport and agriculture;
- taxes on use of pesticides, nitrates, substances that deplete the ozone layer, etc.;
- development trade of rights to carbon dioxide using emissions, sulfur oxides, and water use;
- the inclusion of costs to eliminate the damage to the natural environment of harm in the price of goods or services, production of which caused the damage.

Used in the country an economic mechanism of nature and the environment helps to reduce specific indicators of environmental impacts. The future of its role should be strengthened in order to ensure translation of environmental policy on the principle of preventing environmental problems instead of removing them.

Environmental monitoring

The main objective of environmental monitoring – monitoring her condition and cause harmful effects on the environment to ensure those government agencies and other entities and individuals complete and accurate

information in this area. Achieving this goal ensures the functioning of the National Environment Monitoring System (NEMS), established in 1993.

Ensuring continuous operation of NEMS is one of the main directions of state policy on environmental protection. The country has developed legal and regulatory framework, including regulations governing the operation of NEMS as a whole and individual monitoring of its member.

The organizational structure of NEMS considers the distribution of competencies of national government bodies responsible for organizing and monitoring for each of his mind. As a single coordinating authority defined the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection. Ensure the functioning of interagency coordinating council, created by the chief information-analytical center of NEMS and information centers monitoring activities.

NEMS comprises 11 institutional identity, but operate and interact on the general principles of environmental monitoring (*Fig. 11.5*) and is based on an orderly system for collecting, processing, analysis and evaluation of information received by science-based network of more than 3500 monitoring stations included in the National Register of observation NEMS

For a complete and integrated information on the state of the environment and the factors influencing it NEMS interacts with the system of socio-hygienic monitoring system for monitoring and forecasting of emergency situations of natural and man-made.

Surface water monitoring is a system of regular observations over hydrological, hydro chemical and hydro biological indicators of surface water in order to timely identify negative processes, prediction of their development, the prevention of harmful effects and determine the degree of

effectiveness activities aimed at the rational use and protection of surface waters.

In samples of surface water is determined up to 90 hydro chemical parameters and ingredients, including such hazardous pollutants as heavy metals and persistent organic pollutants List of observed hydro chemical data on surface water monitoring network complies with international requirements.

Groundwater monitoring is carried out to analyze and evaluate changes in the quality and level of ground water and artesian water in the natural weak damaged conditions. Objects of observation for monitoring groundwater in the country are groundwater and artesian water.

In 2009 observations were carried out at 92 posts from 363 hydrogeological regime observation wells. The quality monitoring of ground water was conducted at 258 wells; for the level regime – by 363 wells. The chemical composition of groundwater was determined for 33 macro-and micro indicators.

Land monitoring – a system of regular observations of the state and change of land under the influence of natural and anthropogenic factors, as well as the changing composition, structure, condition of land resources, land distribution by categories and types of land users

Monitoring of background pollution of soil is carried out on the observational network, consisting of about 100 stations located throughout the country. Observations on the chemical contamination of soils in urban and agricultural lands and in the zone of highways are maintained by 182 points. There are also 12 observation stations for changes in agrochemical properties of soil of agricultural land, 20 observation stations for the reclamation and erosion-prone land.

In the system of **air monitoring** has monitored pollutants in ambient air,

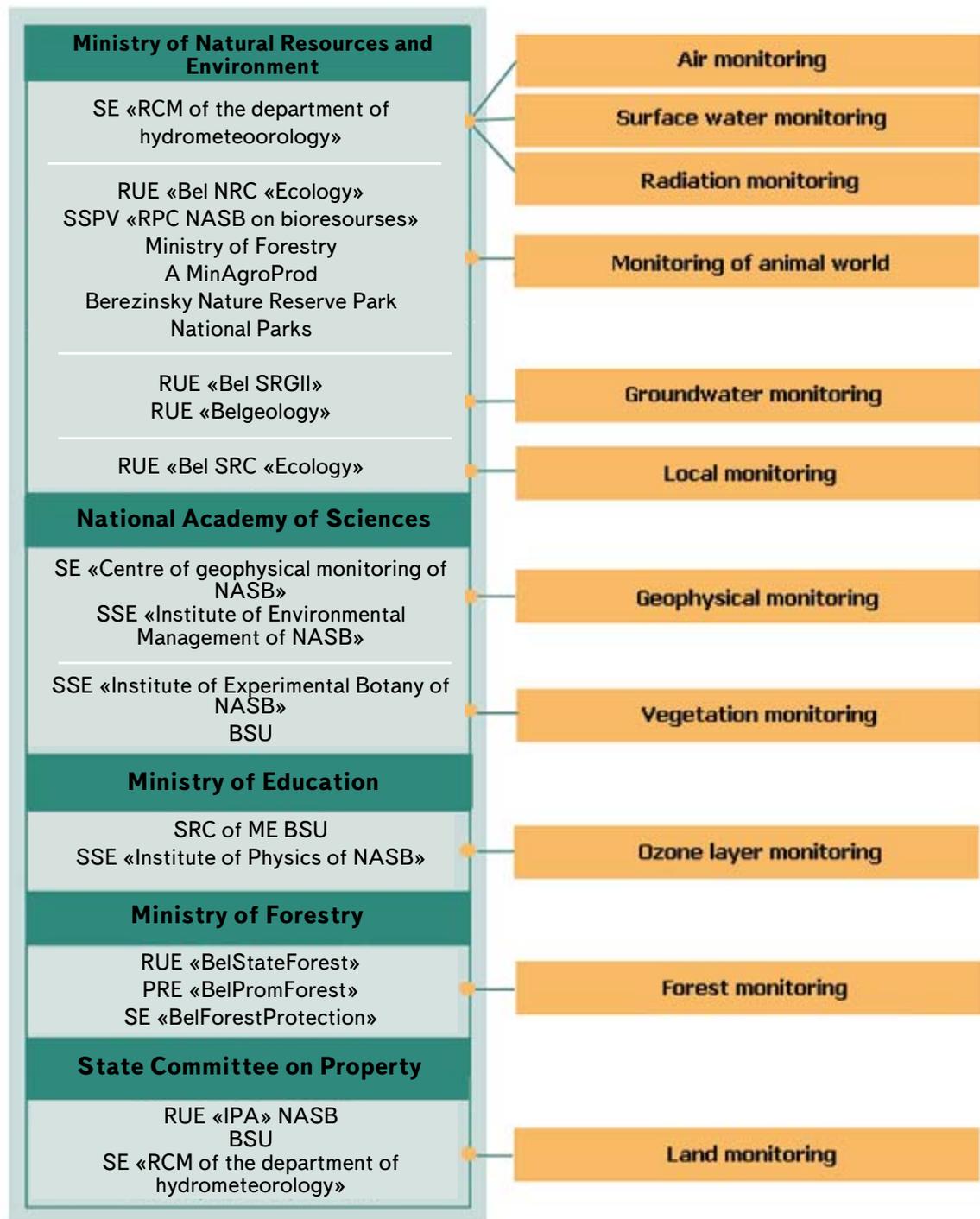


Figure 11.5 – Block diagram of the organization of the National Environmental Monitoring System in Belarus

precipitation and snow cover. Evaluation of long-range atmospheric transport of pollutants is conducted at a specialized cross-border station «Vysokoe» (western boundary of the country). At the station, integrated background monitoring «Berezinsky reserve» the state of air and precipitation was

analyzed on program of the Global Service of Atmosphere.

Monitoring of vegetation is a system of observation of the flora of the world and the environment of their habitat, as well as assessment and prediction of their changes

in order to conserve biological diversity, sustainable and efficient use of state resources, flora.

In 2009, the monitoring of fauna conducted in 6 areas:

- monitoring of the meadow and meadow-marsh vegetation (7 key areas);
- monitoring of aquatic vegetation (12 key areas);
- monitoring of protected (Red Book) species of plants and fungi (130 permanent observation points);
- monitoring resource plants (berries and mushrooms) (15 permanent observation points);
- monitoring of protective tree plantations;
- monitoring of green space on land settlements.

As part of **monitoring of forest** monitoring the general condition of forests, including the effect of air pollution (monitoring of forests), as well as state forests under the influence of insect pests and diseases (forest pest monitoring).

Monitoring of fauna conducted in two areas:

- observation of wild animals belonging to hunting, and their habitats;
- observation of wild animals included in the Red Data Book of Belarus and their habitats.

Monitoring of the ozone layer was held in 2009 at the Minsk ozone station of the National Research Center for ozone monitoring BSU. It included regular measurements of total ozone column, surface ozone concentrations and the levels of surface ultraviolet solar radiation.

Geophysical monitoring is conducted annually by 87 points in the following areas:

- seismic monitoring;
- geomagnetic monitoring;
- monitoring the Earth's gravitational field.

As part of the radiation monitoring determined the levels of radioactive contamination of air, surface water and soil in areas affected by radioactive contamination as a result of the Chernobyl disaster.

Local monitoring is carried out to monitor the environment in the vicinity and the impact of sources of harmful impacts on the environment. Within its framework in 2009, carried out surveillance:

- emissions of pollutants into the air (160 companies);
- disposal of wastewater into surface water and surface water quality in the field of abstraction (136 companies);
- the groundwater conditions in areas of influence of the enterprises – sources of pollution (250 objects);
- state land in the zone of influence of the largest sources of pollution (10 objects).

Environmental education

One of the conditions for successful environmental policy is to increase the environmental awareness of the population, the extensive public involvement in decision-making process on environmental issues. This requires the organization of environmental education, public education.

Education and training in the field of environment is carried out in Belarus in 1991 under the national education system as a single and continuous process. It covers all levels of basic education from preschool to postgraduate, including non-school education and training, system training and retraining. At each level it should be given the opportunity to receive the mandatory minimum of knowledge, as well as the possibility of in-

depth and profile of training in the field of environment within the required and optional training programs.

In preschool institutions of the country, environmental education and training is carried out in all age groups on the basis of an updated version of the National program for education and learning «Praleska», one of the most important sections of which is devoted to environmental education of children.

In general secondary education system in accordance with the objectives of reform schools is considerably strengthened the environmental component.

A special role in the system of environmental education facilities is owned by non-formal education and training. According to the Ministry of Education in Belarus there are 351 agencies of non-formal education and training: children's creativity centers, tourism and regional studies centers, including independent tourist bases, environmental centers, associations for the organization of extracurricular activities with children and adolescents. In the system of school education there are 25 ecological and biological centers and 78 tourist centers.

Environmental education, training and education is a compulsory part of vocational and specialized secondary education in the training of all categories, regardless of their future profession. In these institutions, environmental education is carried out either through general education and through special courses. In the special disciplines are considered environmental protection, improvements in technology, methods of treatment of polluting emissions, waste water, disposal of obsolete NiCd toxic industrial waste.

A special place in the system of continuous environmental education is given to institutions providing higher education. In the country's universities mandatory environmental training is carried out both by the ecologizing of the educational process

and through the introduction of integrated courses. Mandatory environmental training in higher education is carried out primarily on the basis of the course «Fundamentals of Ecology». A number of special disciplines of environmental profile are introduced in the curricula of agricultural and forestry specialties. Legal aspects of environmental management are studied at the universities on juridical specialties, and specialties that are subject to management training.

The 13 universities of the country prepare environmental experts on a wide range of specialties – «Bio-ecology», «Geo-ecology», «Medical Ecology», «Radioecology», «Environmental protection and rational use of natural resources», «Chemistry. Environmental Protection», «Environmental management and audit in industry», «Environmental monitoring, management and audit», «Ecology of Agriculture», «Environmental Economics», etc.

In the system of advanced training special attention is focused on training teachers in environmental education and upbringing of children and youth. For all categories of teachers appropriate courses, seminars and meetings are organized, methodological associations operate. With the aim of improving the environmental profile of specialists established State Educational Establishment of the «Republican Centre for training, advanced training and retraining of personnel in the field of environmental protection» of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Republic of Belarus.

Environmental instruction

System of environmental instruction complements the educational system. It provides an opportunity for every citizen, regardless of age and social status, receive the necessary information about the environment.

Environmental instruction contributes to the creation of a new scale of social values and creating a model of human behavior, focused on the careful and responsible attitude towards the environment, awareness of natural heritage as a national treasure. It is conducted through the dissemination of environmental information.

Education in the field of environmental protection, including informing citizens about the national environmental legislation, implemented by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Belarus and its territorial bodies, the republican state bodies, local and self-government, public associations, mass media and educational institutions, health care, museums, libraries and other cultural institutions, organizations, sports and tourism, other legal entities.

For a long time the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Belarus carries out systematic

work to implement a set of activities to raise awareness about the environment, measures taken for its protection and improvement, promoting environmental awareness.

In order to implement the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters in December 2007 in the Law of the Republic of Belarus «On environmental protection» amendments on environmental information. The Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus of 24.05.2008 № 734 approved the Regulation on the formation and maintenance of the State Fund of data on environmental conditions and impacts, as well as of environmental information in general purpose, subject to mandatory distribution, the holders of such information, are obliged to distribute it, and the frequency of its distribution.

It is available for public the information about the environment or causing injury, the emission of pollutants into the air and



wastewater into water bodies with excessive regulations; on discharges into the water of chemicals and their mixtures, articles or waste on introducing chemicals into the soil, resulting in the deterioration of its quality or groundwater quality; about ionizing and electromagnetic radiation, noise or other physical effects in excess of standards.

Belarus has established regular production of informational materials as air and surface water (Yearbook of air pollution and surface water in the territory of the Republic of Belarus), the data obtained from NEMS (National Environmental Monitoring System of the Republic of Belarus: Results observations). Every year since 1991, published an environmental bulletin «The state of the environment in Belarus». Basic information about the environmental situation included a separate section in the annual statistical compendium published by the National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus.

A major step towards improving the information management of environmental activities was the development of electronic communication. Increased number of national environmental web resources along with significant growth in the country the number of users the World Wide Web has significantly expanded opportunities to provide operational information to the public and allow access to electronic versions of already adopted regulations legal acts, as well as print production environment, produced on paper limited edition.

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Belarus opened in 2003 a public reception and converted it in 2005 to The Aarhus Centre in the Republic of Belarus, which allows citizens to directly receive environmental information of interest to them. A similar function is performed by «hot» phone lines are working in the Ministry, as well as in all

the Regional Committee of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection.

In Belarus, has spread the practice of various environment-related forums. Since 2003, the annually held National Environmental Forum In the framework of organized scientific conferences and exhibitions of modern technologies in environmental protection and rational use of natural resources summarizes the environmental competitions and other activities are carried out. Finals forums held in various cities across the country.

Like the Environmental Forum of the same regular character is an international cinema-TV forum dedicated to the environment. In 2009, Minsk hosted the Vth International Ecological cinema-tv forum «EcoWorld 2009. Environmental security – the basis of human life». In the framework of a conference titled «Environment and security» and review competition video environmental documentaries, television programs and commercials from the Russian Federation, Slovakia, Finland, Ukraine, Lithuania, the Czech Republic and the Republic of Belarus.

Due to the fact that the 2009 presidential decree on 29.12.2008 № 710 was declared as the Year of the native land, was it implemented a set of activities in engaging the population to the national spiritual and cultural heritage, historical heritage and natural resources, distinctive traditions of the Belarusian people. Also, close attention was paid to public participation in improving human settlements and impose order on the ground.

Progress on the implementation of national, regional and sectoral activities to celebrate the Year of the native land was widely reported in the media – radio, television, print and Internet.

During 2009, in all institutions of education events were held on the Year of the native land, including the various aspects of restoring order to the lands occupied by them

and adjacent territories. Particular attention was paid to care for the graves of soldiers killed in WWII, storage space and military glory.

In general, operating in Belarus, public information system on environment guarantees the right of citizens to receive such information. According to the evaluation of the UN EEC, the level of environmental education and education of people in the country is quite high.

Public ecological associations

Providing of favourable environment involves public participation in environmental decision-making.

Legislative strengthening also has the right of citizens to exercise social control in the field of environmental protection and rational use of natural resources. Such control is carried out primarily in order to realize the right of every citizen to a healthy environment and prevent the violation of Belarusian legislation on environmental protection. Social control can be implemented through a public environmental review, public participation in the environmental review and assessment of the environmental impact of planned economic activity, as well as in other ways.

The basis of the legal regulation of direct public participation in environmental decision-making based on the provisions of the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention). Aarhus Convention was ratified by Presidential Decree of 14.12.1999 № 726. It is part of the current legislation of the country and is subject to immediate execution. Under the provisions of this Convention effective participation of society in decision-making depends on important elements such as access to information, which

provides public awareness and access to justice, ensuring real participation in decision-making. Condition as the effectiveness of this participation is to work in partnership with public bodies.

To implement the provisions of the Convention in the country was created and operates the Aarhus Centre of the Republic of Belarus. Its purpose is to ensure public rights to timely and accurate information about the environment, the proposed and existing activities which may have a significant impact on her. In particular, in 2009 in connection with alleged construction on the territory of Belarus nuclear power plant Aarhus Centre was carried out the work on informing the public on the evaluation of its impact on the environment.

Currently, in Belarus there are about 65 public organizations that operate in the field of environmental protection. Such organizations exist in all areas of the country, more than half of them are in Minsk.

In order to ensure cooperation under the Aarhus Convention, public associations with the state government in 2001 under the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Belarus was established the Public Environmental Coordination Council. The Council holds regular meetings at which invited representatives from various environmental organizations for a joint discussion on important issues of environmental protection and rational use of natural resources and develop coordinated solutions.

In 2009, at meetings of public Environmental Coordination Council under the Ministry consider assessing the environmental impact of building nuclear power plants in Belarus and the activities of Aarhus Centre, the preparation and holding of events to mark the celebration of World Environment Day Council. The members also participated in the seminar «Problems of Nuclear Power

Development in Belarus» which was organized in order to familiarize the participants with advanced technologies in nuclear power, issues of radiation monitoring, the effect of radiation on human health, psychological aspects of related activities the use of atomic energy.

In June 2009, the Berezina Biosphere Reserve held a forum of environmental organizations in Belarus. The event was organized by leading environmental non-governmental associations and organizations in the country: international humanitarian and educational fund «Living Partnership», the environmental association «Green Network, a non-profit institution» Center for Environmental Solutions «, public organization «APB Birds of Motherland», Public Association «Eco House», an international public association «Ecoproject Partnership». Among the guests of the Forum was attended by representatives of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Belarus, the International State Environmental University A.D Sakharov, the Norwegian Society for the Protection of the environment.

The Forum was attended by over 120 participants from 59 different organizations. It became a platform for discussion of public participation in solving the most pressing environmental issues like sustainable energy and climate change, biodiversity, sustainable consumption and production, chemicals and waste. The issues of effective interaction between civil society organizations, governments, business community and the media were also the subject of the discussion.

Forum contributed to the consolidation of decisions on topical environmental issues and partnership arrangements to address them. This kind of consolidation enhances public influence on environmental decision-making, promotion of public environmental values.

International Cooperation

Belarus actively participates in international environmental partnership. International cooperation is carried out of the country in the following areas:

- implementation of international treaties in the field of environment and natural resources, and in the first place, together with the states bordering the Republic of Belarus;

- the development of contractual relations on a bilateral and multilateral basis

- attracting funds from international financial organizations and donor countries to implement activities under the implementation of obligations under international legal instruments (conventions, protocols and agreements) to implement plans and programs of environmental orientation.

The Republic of Belarus on a regular basis working with major international organizations in the field of environment: the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), UN Development Program (UNDP), World Bank and the Global Environment Facility (GEF), World Weather Organization (WMO), World Health Organization (WHO) and others.

Belarus is a Party to the 13 global and 9 regional and international agreements and 34 bilateral and multilateral treaties. The scope of international cooperation, the countries in the field of environmental protection is constantly expanding. So, on 12.09.2009 Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Belarus and the Government of the Republic of Poland on cooperation in environmental protection, 02.07.2009 Agreement entered into force with the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources of the Republic of Moldova on cooperation in environmental protection.

Particular attention is paid in the international cooperation on the settlement of various issues of nature protection and environmental management in transboundary areas. In particular, it were prepared to sign an agreement with the Ministry of Environmental Protection of Ukraine on cooperation in the protection and sustainable use of transboundary conservation areas, as well as between the Government of the Republic of Belarus, the Republic of Poland and the Government of Ukraine to establish Transboundary Biosphere Reserve «West Polesie». Together with Latvia developed a draft agreement on cooperation in the protection and sustainable use of transboundary protected areas.

One of the priority areas of cooperation with neighboring countries – Lithuania, Russia and Ukraine – is the protection of transboundary water bodies from pollution and implementation of joint monitoring of their condition.

Actively developing cooperation in the field of environmental protection with the Republic of Lithuania Thus, together with the Ministry of Environment of Lithuania prepared and signed cooperation plan for 2009-2011. In addition, a draft Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Belarus and the Government of the Republic of Lithuania on the implementation of the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context.

Further developed relations in the field of environmental protection with the Republic of Poland The negotiations resulted in the MEP, the Brest Regional Executive Committee and Regional Committee of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection with the Polish National Fund for Environmental Protection of the Republic of Poland approved the project on the allocation of financial resources for the reconstruction of treatment facilities in Brest in 2009-2010 to \$ 550 thousand U.S. dollars. At the meeting the two ministers (Poland and Belarus) in the town Bialowieza

(Poland), September 12, 2009 decided to intensify work on preparation for signing of agreements: on cooperation in transboundary waters on cooperation in the conservation and sustainable use of transboundary protected areas the establishment of a transboundary Biosphere Reserve «West Polesie».

Cooperation with the Swedish Environmental Agency allowed the development of a draft memorandum on cooperation in the field of ecology.

In the area of international technical cooperation for 2009 actively works on projects of international technical assistance, during which the country attract funding, UNDP/GEF, the World Bank, European Commission (Program ENPI and the TACIS) and the OSCE.

The main areas of project activities were issues relating to:

- biodiversity conservation;
- the formation of institutional and legislative framework for the implementation of integrated environmental permits;
- mitigation of climate change and the Kyoto Protocol;
- introduction of cleaner production methods and pre-treatment plants in small enterprises, aimed at reducing industrial pollution of the Dnepr River Basin;
- strengthening of the technical capacity to manage water resources;
- treatment of persistent organic pollutants Improving the network of meteorological and radar stations in the Baltic Sea region;
- sustainable development at local level and build capacity in strategic environmental assessment. The successful development of international cooperation in environmental protection and environmental management must ensure that;
- conducting meetings and negotiations with potential donors to raise funds in aid of Belarus, as well as coordination of all departments of the Ministry on this direction;

- the implementation of measures to ensure the management and coordination of the implementation of multilateral treaties (conventions), and bilateral environmental agreements at the international and national levels, and linkages with international organizations;

- establishing and improving of legal framework for the protection of the environment through the preparation for the signing of new agreements with Ukraine, Poland, Latvia, as well as further work with the projects of international treaties (Ukraine, Lithuania, Poland)

Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Belarus is the body authorized to perform the following global environmental international agreements:

- Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal;

- Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer and Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer;

- Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals;

- Convention and the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention on Biological Diversity;

- Convention and Protocols to the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution;

- Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitat;

- Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters;

- Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora;

- Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context;

- United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa;

- Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes;

- the Framework Convention and the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change;

- Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants.