

# Boston College Environmental Affairs Law Review

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Volume 19

Issue 3 *The 1991 Bellagio Conference on U.S.-U.S.S.R.  
Environmental Protection Institutions*

Article 14

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5-1-1992

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### Recommended Citation

Y.L. Maximenko, *Environmental Impact Assessment in the U.S.S.R.*, 19 B.C. Env'tl. Aff. L. Rev. 589 (1992),  
<http://lawdigitalcommons.bc.edu/ealr/vol19/iss3/14>

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## ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT IN THE U.S.S.R.

*Y.L. Maximenko\**

In the Soviet Union, environment impact assessment (EIA) activity has begun. EIA is the identification of the character and degree of danger—of all potential types—that a proposed economic or other project may pose to the environment. It involves evaluating the environmental, social, and economic consequences of the proposed project. EIA is a mandatory element in the development of planning decisions for economic or other activity: decisions whose realization could affect the condition of natural resources and the health and living conditions of present and future generations. Responsibility for the organization and completion of an EIA is incumbent on the sponsor of a project, whether the sponsor is a ministry, cooperative, or other enterprise. The Soviet Union's ministry for environmental protection, Goskompriroda, is responsible for developing EIA methodologies.

Project planners should undertake EIA with the goals of preventing degradation of the environment, restoring natural systems that previous economic activity has destroyed, ensuring the environmental-economic balance of future economic development, creating positive living conditions for people, and developing measures to reduce the level of environmental danger that the planned project poses. EIA should precede the making of a decision about the commencement of any particular project.

The basic components of EIA are the examination of the interrelationships between the technical, environmental, social, and economic factors related to the planned decision; and the creation of options that can ensure the fulfillment of environmental requirements. In addition, EIA involves the consideration of site-specific

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details such as the condition of the ecosystem and its sustainability in the face of expected impacts; prospects for the socio-economic development of the particular region; and the historical, cultural, ethnic, and other characteristics of the local population.

As a result of EIA activity, those projects are recommended for approval whose realization will not threaten human health in direct, indirect, cumulative, or other manners; promote the production of goods that are ecologically dangerous in their use, recycling, disposal, or destruction; or lead to inalterable or critical changes in the natural environment.

A project sponsor provides financing for its project's EIA and for related research and investigations necessary for the EIA's completion. Financing for an EIA should be planned into the budget for expenditures related to the study of the project's feasibility and to design documentation. The sponsor, when necessary, will engage specialists to prepare the EIA's documentation and formulate its results. The preparer is responsible for the completeness and quality of the EIA and for the trustworthiness of the information it contains. Prior to the presentation of this documentation to state environmental experts for review, the sponsor and preparer shall organize and conduct a preliminary review and discussion of the results of the EIA by a group of experts and by citizens whose interests the fulfillment of the project affects. State environmental expert review of the predesign and design stage documentation is the final step in EIA.