

Ecological Situation

The rapid development of all spheres of economics and human activity has led to an increasingly negative impact on the environment, including the inefficient usage of natural resources. As can be seen in many other countries, Azerbaijan is interested in finding solutions to the problems regarding environmental protection and rational utilization of natural resources. In support of Azerbaijan's environmental protection goals, a number of important laws, legal documents and state programs, all of which conform to European law requirements, have been developed and approved in order to improve the ecological situation in the country.

These measures have been undertaken within the framework of the corresponding state programs to solve the urgent ecological problems at the very foundation of development principles.

The internal resources of the Republic of Azerbaijan are however insufficient in order to resolve many of their environmental problems that have been in dire need for some time now.

The following are the principal ecological problems of Azerbaijan

- The pollution of water resources by way of introduction of contaminated water, including transnational pollution;
- The supply of low-quality water to inhabited regions, the loss of fresh water prior to its delivery to the end consumers, insufficient development of sewer systems;
- Air pollution from industrial plants and transport vehicles;
- Degradation of soil (erosion, desertification, etc.);
- Improper regulation of industry and housing, as well as hazardous solid wastes;
- Decline in biological diversity;
- Decline in forest reserves and fauna, especially fish reserves

Major Environmental Issues in Azerbaijan

Issue: Petro-chemical plants, oil refineries and factories especially in Sumgayit and Baku; oil refineries, venting of natural gas from oil wells; burning of untreated garbage; and exhausts from engines.

Concern: Health may be affected especially to the pulmonary, digestive, circulatory, and immune systems. In severe cases, genetic mutation may occur.

Polluted Drinking Water

Issue: Ground water pollution from oil spillage and leakage from pipeline and storage tanks resulting in petroleum hydrocarbons, heavy metals and possibly radiation contamination; run off from heavy usage of fertilizers and pesticides in agriculture; factory wastes dumped into rivers; salinity of water table due to rise in Caspian Sea and sea water intrusion; rusted water pipes; obsolete and broken equipment in water treatment plants.

Concern: Transmission of bacterial diseases such as cholera and hepatitis; accumulation of heavy metals leading to health complications; cancers.

Inadequate Waste Management-Solid and Liquid

Issue: Burning of garbage in large dumps outside the major cities; breeding places for disease-spreading insects, rats, and wild dogs. Inadequate and antiquated equipment to treat liquid wastes.

Concern: Incomplete combustion of burning leads to air pollution; untreated sewage being released into rivers and Caspian; contamination when seepage from landfills and waste ponds enters ground water.

Deforestation

Issue: Burning of trees in villages due to Armenian land burning policy in war. Cutting of trees by vast refugee population as wood and kindling are needed as fuel to boil water which is contaminated. Fuel needed to cook the bread, main sustenance in refugee's diet; trees used for heating fuel in cold winters.

Concern: Soil erosion and loss of rich top soil into rivers; change in climatic patterns due to loss of trees which may affect agricultural process; loss of rare plant species; destruction of habitats of bird and animal species; loss of parks and state reserves.

Decrease in Supply of Sturgeon and Caviar

Issue: Overfishing of sturgeon; limiting the spawning area of sturgeon by damming river passages such as the Volga; lack of agreement and strict enforcement between countries bordering the Caspian; catching sturgeon before maturity; factory wastes discharged into rivers and sea; oil pollution.

Concern: Disruption in ecosystem chain which could lead to the diminishing or eventual extinction of certain species, especially sturgeon. Collapse of significant economical revenue for the countries bordering the Caspian.

Rising Level of the Caspian

Issue: Since 1978, the Caspian has risen more than two meters. Scientists are still trying to figure out the cause or causes which possibly relate to climatic and hydrologic changes.

Concern: Flooding of coastal low lying land and marsh areas, causing habitat destruction; severe loss of crops and top soil on arable land; flooding of disposal sites, industrial areas and oil fields which will lead to pollution of sea and seriously harm marine life. Salination of coastal areas causing desertification, deforestation of trees and plant life; loss of beaches, buildings, roads and railroads.

Impact of War

Issue: Due to Armenian land burning policy which has been carried out on 20% of Azerbaijan's territory, total destruction of many homes, schools, businesses, and government buildings. Loss of some of the most productive land in the country; loss of crops such as grapes, cotton and wheat; loss of pasture area for thousands of sheep and cows forcing overpasturing in remaining areas. Loss of therapeutic mineral spas and water; abusive exploitation of mines and forests by Armenians in attempts to make quick profit from natural resources in case they are forced to relinquish Azerbaijani land.

Excessive Use of Fertilizers Cotton, Grapes and Vegetables

Issue: Excessive use of fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides in agriculture; lack of adequate storage areas for toxins; aircraft spraying of pesticides not carried out to safe standards including height, wind velocity, and proximity to residential zones; people not warned nor protected during sprayings.

Concern: Pollution of air, soil, water and food. Toxic residues remain in clothing, fruit, wine and vegetables; toxins may enter the food chain; residues seep down into water table and contaminate drinking water supplies; cancers and possible genetic damage.

Oil Pollution-Onshore and Offshore

Issue: Offshore-Crude oil spillage into water can lower oxygen levels harming marine life and disrupt ecosystem; oil can be pushed by winds and waves to shore where it can harm marshlands destroying animal habitats, beaches, etc.

Onshore: oil spilled on the land can seep down to the water table and contaminate drinking water supply. Land becomes a dead zone; all vegetation dies in area. Cuttings that are expelled during extraction process and emptied into open pools may contain radioactive materials.

Genetic Mutation

Issue: Serious exposure to toxins in the air, soil, water, and the unknown effect of combinations of these poisons may seriously effect the health of men and women who live or work in these impacted areas which, in return, will effect their children.

Concern: Children may be born prematurely or evidence severe genetic mutation that cannot be corrected which, in turn, causes irreversible consequences to child, family and society.