

RECREATION AND NATURE CONSERVATION: RESOLVING THE PROBLEM OF BALANCE

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Abstract

Conservation and long-term development of urban forests used for recreation, especially those of protected areas (PAs), should be based on long-term programmes incorporating fundamental studies of technogenic changes in natural systems. In this aspect, the National Park (NP) *Losiny Ostrov* is a unique object. This human-effected natural system with the area of 128 km² functions inside the largest Russia's urban agglomeration with the population of 12 mln. The land use traditionally has been limited there, as though preparing this territory to the role of PA. Simultaneously, some sites have been used for recreation for a century. Unlike the majority of Russia's PAs, this function is regarded as one of the most important in *Losiny Ostrov*. However, the current situation in Moscow region puts ecological and stabilizing functions to the forefront. The crucial problem is that the recreational use cannot be limited because of an intensive development of the city; on the other hand, the NP must not be turned into a purely recreational area because of its status, natural uniqueness, and ecological importance.

The problem of balance between recreation and conservation of ecological functions of the NP was resolved in the frames of long-term development plan. In particular, complex evaluation of landscape vulnerability was made concerning geological conditions, vegetation, dynamics of moisture regime, and intensity of urban effect, especially, recreation. The landscapes of recreational zone were found to conduct their functions incompletely because of damaged ecosystems and aesthetic poverty. Problem areas with high attendance and low stability were revealed; large-scale works are needed to maintain their functioning.

In connection with this, the long-term development plan envisages an active anticipatory planning of recreation, reorganization of damaged landscapes matching their purpose and increasing their carrying capacity, and revision of landscape structure of recreational zone, with an obligatory informational and aesthetic saturation.

Key Words

Recreation, ecological functions, protected areas, long-term planning