Exploring Russia's Environmental History and Natural Resources

Funded by a Leverhulme International Network grant, specialists in several disciplines from British, American and Russian universities are studying the environmental history and natural resources of lands that have come under Russian rule. Led by David Moon of the University of York, they are combining conventional historical research with field work.

At the heart of the activities are field trips to locations that illustrate key aspects of the environmental history of these lands: the Solovetskii Islands in the White Sea; the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone in Ukraine; and Lake Baikal in Siberia.

The environmental history of Russia and the former Soviet Union has been generally misunderstood. First thoughts are of gargantuan schemes to conquer nature, ruthless exploitation of natural resources, and disasters on the scale of Chernobyl. The undeniable damage to the environment, however, is only one side of the story.

The network aims to:
- offer a more nuanced interpretation of the interaction between the human and natural worlds in these lands and consider the changing 'balance of power' between them.
- locate Russian and Soviet environmental history in a global comparative perspective in order to question notions of Russian 'exceptionalism' and highlight areas of Russian innovation.
- offer a historical perspective on important contemporary environmental issues.
- take the network partners in new research directions and contribute to the further development of environmental history of Russia and in Russia.

Network Institutions:
- The University of York, UK
- Glasgow University, UK
- Georgetown University, USA
- The Ohio State University, USA
- The European University at St Petersburg, Russia
- The National Research University Higher School of Economics in St Petersburg, Russia

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