

Natural sites have the right to exist

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One of the problems of water resources utilization in rather long rivers is degradation of natural sites downstream. This can be caused by excessive water intakes from rivers, water pollution by waste waters, re-direction of river flow to other areas. As a result - the decreased areas of flood-plain forest, death of fauna, reduced number of natural lakes, and some sites may simply disappear. Such situation is particularly observed in the arid regions that we see in the case of the Aral Sea. However, the legitimacy of such actions of anyone in relation to natural sites and people downstream of the rivers is not being discussed. Everywhere the attitude to such problem is as follows: "People in the upstream have more historically eligible rights for priority use of water, ignoring the degradation of natural sites downstream". Unfortunately, even people in the downstream tacitly agree with such situation. Then it is appropriate to put the same question in another way: "people downstream have the same right to possess the natural sites, which use water from this river". It is doubtful whether a sane person, even a politician, will confirm the correctness of such position. The person using water with extremely low efficiency will give any arguments in his defense, but never say out loud that the downstream inhabitants have fewer rights to clean water at appropriate volume. Nevertheless, this issue should be included in the agenda in order to strengthen the arguments of supporters of effective integrated water resources use. All the actions leading to the saved water for conservation and recovery of natural sites downstream are in the framework of human rights implementation, including the right of countries to possess the natural sites. Given that Central Asian countries are primarily agricultural, then shift to the industrial, development with less water use is also a matter of human rights implementation. The thesis about the need to comply with these rights must necessarily be included in all basic documents of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea. In turn, the IFAS's institutions should become a platform for wider and regular discussion of such issues by the residents of the upstream and downstream. Currently, such debates involving the public is almost impossible. But they could help to resolve many of the thorny questions, such as - can the river be a property of the state, through which it flows? Now we are under the threat of global warming and climate change, what extremely increases the responsibility of each business entity in each country for their actions. In such circumstances, only mutual respect, the conditions of equality of all stakeholders and the coordinated joint efforts should lead to protection and improvement of the environment as a base for physical existence of all peoples and all nations in Central Asia.

THE ARAL SHOULD BE SAVED AND RESTORED!