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Press release

**Greenpeace and Ecoaction launch map of environmental destruction caused by Russia’s war in Ukraine**

**KYIV, Ukraine. Greenpeace Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), together with Ukrainian NGO Ecoaction, launched the “**[**Environmental damage map**](https://maps.greenpeace.org/maps/gpcee/ukraine_damage_2022/)**” - a set of cases of environmental destruction that were caused by the Russian war and should be considered both by the Ukrainian government and the European Commission’s Donor Coordination Platform for planning and financing of future nature restoration work in Ukraine.**

The data on severe damages were collected by Ecoaction and later confirmed by satellite imagery and mapped by Greenpeace. Out of almost 900 collected cases, 30 were chosen for the map to showcase the most serious nature damage. All cases in the map are categorised by the type of damage and include a short description of each. However, the war continues, and experts in Ukraine continue to work on monitoring.

Denys Tsutsaiev, Greenpeace CEE campaigner in Kyiv, said: “*It is complicated to map the damage caused by the war in Ukraine: much of the liberated territory is thought to be full of mines and other explosives, while Russian forces still occupy parts of the country, making data collection a challenge in those areas. However, we need to bring more attention to the environmental damage so that nature restoration can be an important part of the discussion about Ukraine's future. Nature recovery will need tools, expertise, and commitment, as well as significant funds. Those funds should be allocated already, not when the war is finished.*”

Based on official information, since February 24th, 2022, ​​1.24 million hectares of nature reserve territory have been affected by war. Hostilities have affected an area of ​​3 million hectares of Ukrainian forests, and 450,000 hectares of forests are under occupation or in combat zones.

Yevheniia Zasiadko, NGO Ecoaction, said: “*War affects our nature just as badly as our people and our infrastructure. However, this damage remains unseen and mostly ignored, for the environment is the silent victim. We want to be its voice so everyone is aware of the environmental consequences of the Russian war and so the restoration of nature is included in Ukraine`s recovery plans. After the war is over, we will feel the negative impact of the war on the environment for a long time. The Ukrainian government promises to rebuild our homeland – and the environment is part of what has to be rebuilt.*”

The map illustrates how Russia's invasion has destroyed Ukrainian nature: land and habitats are damaged, missile strikes cause wildfires, and soil and water are polluted by warfare. Fires at industrial sites caused by shelling cause additional air, soil, and water pollution.

Moreover, explosions of rockets and artillery create a cocktail of chemical compounds: carbon monoxide and dioxide, water vapour, nitric oxide (NO), nitrogen oxide (NO2), nitrous oxide (N2O), formaldehyde, hydrogen cyanide vapour (HCN), nitrogen (N2). After the explosion, those compounds are fully oxidised and the products of the reaction released into the atmosphere. The main ones – carbon dioxide and water vapour – are not toxic but are climate change contributors. Sulphur and nitrogen oxides may also cause acid rains, changing the pH of soils and causing vegetation burns, especially for conifers. Acid rains are also dangerous for humans, other mammals, and birds, impacting mucosae and respiratory organs.

Metal fragments of shells are also unsafe for the environment. Cast iron mixed with steel is the most common material for ammunition cases and contains not just the usual iron and carbon but also sulphur and copper. Those substances get into the soil and may leach into underground waters, eventually penetrating food chains and impacting humans and animals. All these have been going on since 2014, when Russian troops first set foot on Ukrainian soil. Since then, some of the territories have been occupied by Russia. Thanks to international monitoring, it is known that more than 30 coal mines have been flooded since 2014, and after the start of the full-scale invasion, another 10 have been flooded as of June 2022, which can cause groundwater contamination. The Donbas region is at risk of a disaster and poses significant risks to the health of the surrounding population.

Greenpeace CEE and Ecoaction believe that the reconstruction of the towns in Ukraine should happen parallelly with the nature restoration. The suffering and destruction of nature in wartime is immense and will have long-term consequences on the life of all humans and ecosystems in the affected areas. This is why the environmental organizations call for action on mechanisms and allocation of financial resources for nature restoration in Ukraine.

Greenpeace also encourages support for Ukrainian NGOs that work on nature restoration and monitoring impact on the ground. Here is the [list of them](https://en.ecoaction.org.ua/support-ukrainian-ngo-nature-restoration.html).

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