



Scientists from 14 research institutes of the Russian Academy of Sciences' Siberian Branch have collected several thousand samples of water, soil, and living organisms and have conducted measurements on the Taimyr Peninsula. Now they are ready to embark on the expedition's most critical and important stage, namely lab tests and comprehensive data analysis.

According to expedition leader Nikolay Yurkevich, Ph.D(Trofimuk Institute of Petroleum Geology and Geophysics, Novosibirsk), the timing and location of the expedition were the best they could possibly be. It was for a reason that geochronology experts were the last to do the fieldwork. They collected samples by using core drilling, which can be managed regardless of the snow and ice cover, which is not the case with, for example, hydrobiologists, zoologists or botanists. "At the end of the season, weather started to pose problems," said Nikolay Yurkevich. "Stormy wind at Lake Pyasino caused us to stop drilling in water. The boat with my colleagues was driven ashore and they had to walk for around 20 km to get to the dock where they could find a vessel that is more suitable for bad weather."

Now it is about time to start lab work at the academic institutions in Novosibirsk, Tomsk, Barnaul, Yakutsk and Norilsk, where the collected materials will be studied for at least three months. Scientists will work to obtain the accurate contour of the oil spill following the May accident at HPP-3 near Norilsk, check living and non-living objects for the presence of petroleum products, trace back the history of anthropogenic pollution on the Taimyr Peninsula, track changes in the food resources available to birds, fish, and other animals, as well as any changes in permafrost, and solve many other tasks. The Great Norilsk Expedition will wrap up with a report slated for December.

"The expedition should result in much more than just a comprehensive picture of what happened there," said Valentin Parmon, Supervisor of the Great Norilsk Expedition, Academician, Chairman of the Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences. "We need to create holistic models of sustainable and safe interaction between humans and the Arctic environment, provide government authorities and large companies with strategies to use and develop natural resources of this macro region, which is of utmost importance for Russia."

Valentin Parmon highlighted the effective relationships between the Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences and Norinickel when organising and conducting the expedition: "It was important for the company not only to identify the pollution level, but also to ensure a comprehensive, unbiased, and high-quality research. We agreed in advance that the expedition will not be limited to areas near HHP-3, but will also cover remote locations so that the analysis of the collected materials would serve the interests of many Arctic-based entities. It stands to note that during the fieldwork, our scientists had absolutely no problems with transport, fuel, equipment, or anything else."

*2 September 2020*