

### 30. Shiretoko (Japan) (N 1193)

Year of inscription on the World Heritage List 2005

Criteria (ix)(x)

Year(s) of inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger N/A

Previous Committee Decisions see page <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1193/documents/>

International Assistance

N/A

UNESCO Extra-budgetary Funds

N/A

Previous monitoring missions

February 2008: joint World Heritage Centre/ IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission

Factors affecting the property identified in previous reports

- Water infrastructure (River engineering, in particular dams, impeding or restricting fish migration, including major runs of salmonids);
- Aquaculture (Management of commercial fisheries, including coordination and cooperation with neighbouring State Parties);
- Hyper-abundant species (Excessive population density of Sika Deer affecting forest regeneration and vegetation more broadly);
- Impacts of tourism/visitor/recreation, Management system/Management plan (Tourism and visitor management);
- Climate change and severe weather events (Anticipated effects of climate change).

Illustrative material see page <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1193/>

Current conservation issues

On 25 November 2016, the State Party submitted a report on the state of conservation of the property, which is available at <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1193/documents>. The report responds to Decision **39 COM 7B.13** (Bonn, 2015) with a focus on the management of Steller's Sea Lion and ongoing efforts to optimize fish habitat by removing or adapting human-made structures in or across watercourses. The report can be summarized as follows:

- Individuals of Steller's Sea Lion belonging to the Asian group of the Western subspecies are seasonally present in and around the property. In response to predation on commercial fish stocks and damage to gillnets, the Hokkaido Fishing Zone Coordination Commission sets an "Annual Catch Limit" (ACL), under the supervision of the Fisheries Agency of Japan and the Hokkaido government, by calculating a "Potential Biological Removal" based on data from past seasons. The State Party has recently moved to determining a separate catch limit for the Nemuro Strait, which includes the property. Acknowledging limited data for the Nemuro Strait, the ACL was maintained at 15 individuals, whereas it was strongly increased elsewhere in Japan. The current ACL for the Nemuro Strait is to be revised according to the results of future estimates and studies. The State Party acknowledges serious challenges in terms of establishing reliable numbers. Conventional visual counts are "not appropriate", as visiting Steller's Sea Lion have changed their behaviour due to disturbance from commercial and sports fishing, tourism and non-lethal deterrence activities;
- Further review of options to restore the Rusha River is reported. The river is located centrally in the property and of extraordinary importance for salmon runs. Under the overarching goal to

eventually restore the river to “as natural a state as possible”, further dam modifications to optimize migratory passage and spawning habitat are under ongoing discussion and modelling, including partial and complete dam removal. The efforts attempt to balance conservation with asset protection and coastal fishing. Pending further analysis of and experimentation with alternatives, the removal of the bridge crossing the Rusha River is under ongoing discussion, to be detailed in future reporting. The Committee recommendation to invite an IUCN Advisory mission will be discussed in 2018.

#### Analysis and Conclusions of the World Heritage Centre and IUCN

The further analysis of the competition between Steller’s Sea Lion and commercial fisheries is welcomed. While fully appreciating the State Party’s concerns about Steller’s Sea Lion, it is noted that the current IUCN Red List status of the subspecies occurring seasonally in the property (*Eumetopias jubatus ssp. jubatus*) is “EN” (endangered, <http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/17367725/0>), whereas the status of the overall species was changed from “EN” to “NT” (near-threatened) in 2012 (<http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/8239/0>). The Red List information highlights that the drastic population collapse of the subspecies by 69% from 1977 to 2007 remains poorly understood. In light of the endangered status, the massive, recent and unexplained population collapse and the State Party’s acknowledgement of methodological and data challenges, the commitment to an adaptive and precautionary approach is welcomed. Even though the IUCN Red List entry notes that there is “no evidence to suggest that intentional killing of Sea Lions currently occurs at any level that could be limiting recovery”, it is questionable whether selective culling of wintering individuals of a population known for wide dispersal across the territorial waters of several countries can be a tenable management approach, even from the narrow perspective of commercial fisheries. Further analysis of both the population dynamics of Steller’s Sea Lion and the multiple pressures on commercial fish stocks and investment in alternatives to culling, such as reinforced gill nets, are recommended. As far as possible, such efforts should be coordinated among all range countries. Furthermore, the reported behavioural changes of Steller’s Sea Lion in response to disturbance and deterrence raises questions in terms of impacts on other species.

Further discussion of, and investment in, restoring the naturalness of watercourses by partially or fully removing constraints to the extraordinary salmon runs in the property are also welcomed. Given that salmon migration is a vital element of the property’s Outstanding Universal Value (OUV), including as a major component of food webs and a complex ecological link between terrestrial, freshwater and marine ecosystems, it is strongly recommended that the Committee request the State Party to fully implement previous Committee decisions in that regard. In line with the most recent Committee Decision (**39 COM 7B.13**) which considered that the benefits of the three check dams for disaster risk reduction are outweighed by their impacts on the OUV of the property, it is argued that, especially on the Rusha River, every effort should be made to remove persistent constraints to explicitly recognized conservation values in the property. It should be recalled that impacts of river engineering are not restricted to migrating salmon, but affect river and coastal ecosystems in many ways, and that river transportation of sediments and woody debris are important ecological processes, while solutions are needed to ensure access for local resource users and emergency access. An IUCN Advisory mission, possibly in conjunction with IUCN’s Species Survival Commission, could considerably contribute to an informed decision-making process.

Finally, it should be recalled that the 2008 Reactive Monitoring mission recommended, among others, the consideration of the establishment of a Particularly Sensitive Sea Area (PSSA) and the revision of the management plans (including the Multiple Use Marine Management Plan), and also identified challenges as regards Sika Deer, tourism and climate change. It is recommended that the Committee request the State Party to include an update of all five of these issues in its future state of conservation report.

#### **Decision: 41 COM 7B.30**

*The World Heritage Committee,*

1. Having examined Document WHC/17/41.COM/7B,

2. Recalling Decisions **36 COM 7B.12** and **39 COM 7B.13**, adopted at its 36th (Saint-Petersburg) and 39th (Bonn, 2015) sessions respectively,
3. Notes with appreciation that the State Party is committed to an adaptive and precautionary approach to the culling of the endangered subspecies of Steller's Sea Lion occurring seasonally in the property, and urges the State Party to reconsider the culling of this species in light of significant data and methodological challenges in establishing reliable Annual Catch Limits;
4. Encourages the State Party to coordinate with neighbouring States Parties on the management of fisheries to ensure the protection of the Steller's Sea Lion population;
5. Notes that further discussion and analysis of options to remove persistent obstacles to salmon migration and spawning is ongoing and, recalling that the benefits of the three check dams on the Rusha River for disaster risk reduction are outweighed by their impacts on the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property, strongly urges the State Party to continue and strengthen its efforts to restore the property to the most natural state possible;
6. Reiterates its recommendation to the State Party to consider inviting an IUCN Advisory mission, possibly in conjunction with the IUCN Species Survival Commission's Salmonid Specialist Group, to provide further advice on this matter;
7. Requests the State Party to provide updated information on the revised management plans (including the Multiple Use Marine Management Plan), the management of Sika Deer, tourism, consideration of climate change and the analysis of the usefulness and feasibility of the establishment of a Particularly Sensitive Sea Area (PSSA) in its future report to the Committee, and to submit an electronic copy of the most recent Management Plans to the World Heritage Centre, for review by IUCN;
8. Also requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by **1 December 2018**, an updated report on the state of conservation of the property and the implementation of the above, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 43rd session in 2019.

### **31. Chitwan National Park (Nepal) (N 284)**

Year of inscription on the World Heritage List 1984

Criteria (vii)(ix)(x)

Year(s) of inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger N/A

Previous Committee Decisions see page <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/284/documents/>

#### International Assistance

Requests approved: 2 (from 1988 to 1989)

Total amount approved: USD 80,000

For details, see page <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/284/assistance/>

#### UNESCO Extra-budgetary Funds

N/A