

implementation of the above, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 46th session.

84. 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 <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1193/documents/>

International Assistance

Requests approved: 0

Total amount approved: USD 0

For details, see page <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1193/assistance/>

UNESCO Extra-budgetary Funds

N/A

Previous monitoring missions

February 2008: joint World Heritage Centre/ IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission; September 2019: IUCN Advisory 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 States Parties)
- Hyper-abundant species (Excessive population density of Sika Deer affecting forest regeneration and vegetation more broadly)
- Impacts of tourism/visitor/recreation and Management system/Management plan (Tourism and visitor management)
- Climate change and severe weather events (Anticipated effects of climate change)
- Management activities (Management of the Western Steller sea lion population)

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

Current conservation issues

On 1 December 2022, the State Party submitted a state of conservation report, which is available at <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1193/documents/> and reports the following:

- The predicted impacts of climate change on the attributes of the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property are being reinvestigated and the government is aiming to establish an adaptive management strategy by 2024 to minimize climate change-driven impacts. Effects of climate change are generating greater concern, and there is insufficient data for grasping biological responses brought by climate change.
- The populations of Steller sea lions that migrate to the Japan Sea have been managed in line with a Basic Management Policy, which aims to minimize the damage they cause to the fishing industry “*within a range where there is no risk of extinction*”. The policy will be revised in 2024, under which the number of individuals in the migratory population will be estimated based on data acquired in the breeding area, migration and other trends of Stellar sea lions that migrate to Japan including the Nemuro Strait. Management will be based on scientific evidence with consideration of the precautionary principle;

- The damage caused by Stellar sea lions to the fishing industry in the waters around Nemuro decreased by 36.8% from 357 million yen (approximately USD2.6 million) at the highest recorded level in 2013 to 131 million yen (approximately USD972,000). However, the value of fishery landings also decreased significantly during this period, therefore the damage caused by Steller sea lions continues to be a threat to the sustainability of coastal fisheries. Until the Basic Management Policy is revised, non-lethal measures such as reinforced fishing nets will be continued, however since only limited effects have been achieved, the current catch quota will be maintained within a range where there is “*no risk of extinction of the Asian population*” of Steller sea lions based on past records;
- A Comprehensive Evaluation Report of the 2012-2021 Long-Term Monitoring Plan for the property (LTMP) was published in 2022 (annexed to the State Party report), which evaluated the property to have maintained its natural World Heritage value. The LTMP revision is expected to be completed by March 2023. It will set out enhanced monitoring of climate change driven impacts from 2022 and reflect biodiversity attributes under Criterion (x). Scientific evaluation of the status of the OUV is to be continued based on the results of this monitoring;
- Improvement work regarding dam modifications on the Rusha River is expected to be completed in 2024 in line with the roadmap developed based on hydraulic modeling and numerical simulation. Monitoring includes riverbed topography, numbers of migrating salmon, spawning beds, and juveniles migrating downstream. Factors affecting the distribution of spawning beds (e.g. water depth, flow velocity, riverbed materials, distribution of driftwood) are analyzed, and the improvement of the natural spawning environment and reproductive efficiency of salmon associated with dam modifications will be evaluated.

Analysis and Conclusions of the World Heritage Centre and IUCN

Noting that effects of climate change are generating greater concern and that there is a lack of data to monitor climate change impacts, the State Party’s commitment to researching predicted impacts of climate change on the attributes of OUV is positive, and the development of an adaptive management strategy by 2024 that is expected to minimize such impacts is welcomed. It is recommended that the Committee reiterate its request to the State Party to submit the finalised strategy to the World Heritage Centre.

The State Party’s concern that Steller sea lions continue to be associated with a reduction in fisheries catch is noted. It is also noted that the Basic Management Policy will be revised in 2024 based on the data acquired on population dynamics and will give more consideration to the precautionary principle. Recalling however that the Western Steller sea lion is classified as ‘Endangered’ since 2012 it remains concerning that culling will be continued under the Basic Management Policy until it is revised in 2024 (since non-lethal methods are considered to be less effective), and it remains an important priority for authorities to reconcile sustainable fisheries operations with the conservation of the Steller sea lion as an attribute of the OUV. The potential further reduction of the sea lion population in the absence of clear population dynamics remains concerning and it is recommended that the Committee request the State Party to accelerate the development of a population dynamic model to inform the planned 2024 policy revision as soon as possible, and that it urge again the State Party to reconsider, reduce or eliminate current levels of culling, and to consult the IUCN Species Survival Commission, as needed. The update of the policy should be based on scientific population data.

With the 2012-2021 LTMP concluding in 2021, it is positive that an evaluation of the heritage values of the property was undertaken by the Scientific Council in consultation with the Regional Liaison Committee, and that a new LTMP is being finalised in 2023. While noting the conclusion of the evaluation report that the natural heritage values have been maintained, the World Heritage Centre and IUCN are concerned about the reported decrease by half of some seabird populations (cormorants and gulls) since inscription, the reason for which is unknown, and recall that seabird populations are an important attribute of the OUV. It will therefore be important to ensure that the monitoring and management priorities identified through this process, such as climate change related impacts, a decrease in sea bird and fish populations including the Dolly Varden which is representative of the ichthyofauna of the property, conflicts between brown bears and humans, or an increase in sika deer, are addressed in the new LTMP and that measures are implemented to effectively manage pressures on the OUV going forward. The noted inclusion of biodiversity-related attributes under Criterion (x) will allow management authorities to respond to pressures as they arise.

The report that improvement work to address dam modifications on the Rurua river is expected to be completed in 2024 is positive, noting also that the evaluation report highlights a growing interest in dam improvement among fishers and promotion of more active dam improvement in the context of OUV. Recalling that the 2019 IUCN Advisory mission observed that models did not adequately represent the natural biological functions of the river needed to accurately inform decision making, the reported monitoring of factors related to salmon spawning and migration processes is important. The State Party should be encouraged to continue to explore additional tools that could enhance the current understanding of river restoration approach and options in line with the mission recommendations.

Draft Decision: 45 COM 7B.84

The World Heritage Committee,

1. *Having examined Document WHC/23/45.COM/7B.Add,*
2. *Recalling Decisions **41 COM 7B.30**, **43 COM 7B.10** and **44 COM 7B.186**, adopted at its 41st (Krakow, 2017), 43rd (Baku, 2019) and extended 44th (Fuzhou/online, 2021) sessions respectively,*
3. *Noting that effects of climate change are generating greater concern and that there is a lack of data to monitor climate change impacts, welcomes the planned development by 2024 of an adaptive management strategy that minimizes climate change-driven impacts on the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property, and reiterates its request for the State Party to submit the final strategy to the World Heritage Centre and to ensure that full support is provided for its implementation and the ongoing protection of the OUV of the property;*
4. *Also noting that Stellar sea lions, including their impacts on fisheries, have been managed in line with a Basic Management Policy and that research on population dynamics is underway, however reiterates its concern regarding the continued culling of sea lions in the continued absence of population data, and urges the State Party to continue to accelerate the development of a population dynamic model to inform the revision of the Basic Management Policy in 2024;*
5. *Urges again the State Party to reconsider, reduce or eliminate if necessary the current levels of culling of the Western Steller sea lion population, consulting the IUCN Species Survival Commission as required, and adopting a precautionary approach until accurate and comprehensive data on this subspecies become available;*
6. *Taking note of the Comprehensive Evaluation Report of the 2012-2021 Long-Term Monitoring Plan (LTMP) for the property, expresses concern regarding the reported decrease by half of some seabird populations since inscription and recalls that seabird populations are an important attribute of the OUV;*
7. *Also welcomes the planned revision of the LTMP by 2023 and that this will include biodiversity attributes under Criterion (x), and reiterates its request for the State Party to ensure that the attributes of the property's OUV are fully reflected in the LTMP to ensure aquatic biodiversity, specifically the salmonid species, seabirds and marine mammals, are all included and monitored, and requests the State Party to submit the final revised LTMP to the World Heritage Centre;*
8. *Also takes note of the State Party's ongoing response to the 2019 mission recommendations, including the monitoring of biological variables, and also encourages the State Party to continue to:*

- a) *Take measures to improve the representation of biological variables in river ecosystems, to enhance the current understanding of river restoration approaches and options,*
 - b) *Consider alternative methodologies to capture large wooden debris as a way to better balance river restoration needs with the fishery stakeholders' concerns,*
 - c) *Monitor the impacts of the riverbed path pilot project, especially in relation to erosion, fish passage and disturbance to the benthic habitat, and take prompt remedial actions in relation to any identified impacts, as necessary, based on comprehensive scientific understanding;*
9. *Also requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by **1 December 2024**, 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 47th session.*

85. Western Tien-Shan (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan) (N 1490)

See Document WHC/23/45.COM/7B.Add.2

86. 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 <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/284/documents/>

International Assistance

Requests approved: 2 (from 1988-1989)

Total amount approved: USD 80,000

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

UNESCO Extra-budgetary Funds

N/A

Previous monitoring missions

December 2002: IUCN monitoring mission; March 2016: IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission

Factors affecting the property identified in previous reports

- Ground transport infrastructure (Plans to construct a road and railway through the property; Proposed infrastructure projects)
- Invasive/alien terrestrial species (Spread of invasive species)
- Land conversion (Encroachment of wildlife habitats in the buffer zone)
- Management systems/Management Plan (Lack of appropriate inter-agencies and inter-ministries consultation and coordination for development proposals)
- Illegal activities (poaching)