

10. 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

Requests approved: 0

Total amount approved: USD 0

For details, see page <http://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

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 29 November 2018, 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/>, with the following updates:

- Recent studies found that the majority of Western Steller Sea Lions migrating to Nemuro Strait belong to the Kuril substock, which has been increasing since 2007. During 2014/15-2016/17, 15 Western Steller Sea Lions were culled annually in the Nemuro Strait (out of an observed maximum average of 107 individuals recorded during the same period), and since this has not led to a decline in their population in this area, the State Party concludes that the impact of the current level of culling on the Kuril sub-stock is negligible;

- Significant damage continues to be caused to the fishing industry by pinnipeds in Nemuro Strait;
- Alternative non-lethal measures to prevent damage to the fishing industry have been implemented with no notable success;
- Joint Japan-Russia surveys of the sea lion rookeries in Russia have been undertaken since the 1990s, and population dynamic models are being designed to inform Steller Sea Lion management;
- The State Party commits to restoring the Rusha River to its most natural state possible to improve salmon migration and spawning. According to hydraulic experiments on the three check dams, the removal of just the central part of the dams was concluded to provide the ecological conditions required for salmon migration and spawning, whilst also managing sediment runoff that would otherwise damage the coastal fishery;
- A trial experiment has been initiated to test the proposed replacement of the bridge across the Rusha River with a riverbed path, through consultations with the River Construction Advisory Panel, fishery stakeholders and local communities;
- The marine components of the property are not subject to 'strong impacts' from the international marine industry and therefore the State Party will consider the need and possibility of introducing a Particularly Sensitive Sea Area (PSSA) in the future as necessary;
- The 2017-22 sika deer management plan (annexed) objectives include decreasing the population density from 17.6 deer/km² (2015) to 5-10 deer/km², and restoring vegetation;
- A 2012-22 long-term monitoring plan for the property (annexed) includes monitoring climate change impacts. Climate change is also addressed in the 2018-2023 Marine Areas Management Plan, including through the use of Japanese flying squid as an indicator.

In addition, the State Party has also annexed a 2009 Management Plan for the property, a 2018 Multiple Use Integrated Marine Management Plan, and a 2013 Ecotourism Strategy.

The State Party has invited an IUCN Advisory mission in autumn 2019 to coincide with the salmon migration season.

Analysis and Conclusions of the World Heritage Centre and IUCN

The joint surveys conducted by the States Parties of Japan and the Russian Federation on the Western Steller Sea Lion rookeries in Russia is welcomed and its findings will be valuable in enhancing the understanding of their population status. Whilst the explanation of the culling activities in relation to their population around Nemuro Strait is noted, accurate and

comprehensive data on this subspecies is still lacking, and there is a need to better understand what the population trends around Okhotsk and Kuril Islands are, and how that relates to the trends observed around the Nemuro Strait. The reported level of damage caused by pinnipeds to coastal fisheries is noted. While strengthening non-lethal measures to deal with the human-wildlife conflict is welcomed, further justification for the current level of culling of what is approximately 15% of the population each year is still required in terms of the impact on the population dynamics and its effectiveness to reduce damage to the fisheries. A precautionary approach should be applied until a population dynamic model of the Western subspecies is established. Such approach should also be reflected in the Multiple Use Integrated Marine Management Plan and other relevant management documents, which currently do not provide sufficient level of detail regarding the monitoring and management of the wildlife populations.

The State Party's commitment to restore the Rusha River, and the technical assessments undertaken to assess the different options around the three check dams and the bridge are welcomed. The State Party's expression of intent to invite an IUCN Advisory mission is also appreciated. IUCN is ready to provide assistance in this regard.

The 2008 Reactive Monitoring mission highlighted that the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of Shiretoko is strongly related to the presence of sea ice and the impacts of long term climate change could have a significant impact on this property. The reported 9.2% decline in sea ice between the 1970s and 2004 is a reason of concern. It is therefore recommended that the Committee encourage the State Party to continue monitoring the impacts of climate change and develop adaptive management strategies to minimise any impacts of climate change on the values of the Shiretoko World Heritage property.

Decision: 43 COM 7B.10

The World Heritage Committee,

- 1. Having examined Document WHC/19/43.COM/7B,*
- 2. Recalling Decisions 39 COM 7B.13 and 41 COM 7B.30, adopted at its 39th (Bonn, 2015) and 41st (Krakow, 2017) sessions respectively,*
- 3. Welcomes the joint surveys undertaken by the States Parties of Japan and the Russian Federation concerning the Western Steller Sea Lion rookeries in Russia and their plans to develop a population dynamic model of this subspecies to inform management, and requests the States Parties to submit the findings to the World Heritage Centre once they are available;*

4. Noting the reported ongoing damage caused by pinnipeds to coastal fisheries and the conclusion that the non-lethal measures used have not yet been effective in reducing the damage, also requests the State Party to provide justification for the need to continue culling in terms of its effectiveness in reducing the damage to fisheries and urges the State Party to reconsider the current level of culling of the Western Steller Sea Lion based on a precautionary approach considering that accurate and comprehensive data on this subspecies continue to be lacking and until such data are available to inform management;
5. Notes with concern the lack of detail on the monitoring and management of the Western Steller Sea Lion in the Management Plan and the Multiple Use Integrated Marine Management Plan, and further requests the State Party to ensure that these documents are further strengthened and reflect such precautionary approach towards management of the Western Steller Sea Lion population;
6. Also welcomes the State Party's commitment to restore the Rusha River to its most natural state possible, including the progress made in assessing options for the removal of three check dams and alternatives to the bridge, and notes with appreciation the State Party's invitation for an IUCN Advisory mission in autumn 2019 to provide further advice on this matter;
7. Encourages the State Party to continue monitoring the impacts of climate change on the property and to develop adaptive management strategies to minimize any impacts of climate change on its Outstanding Universal Value (OUV);
8. Finally requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by 1 December 2020, 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 45th session in 2021.