



**ПОСТОЯННОЕ ПРЕДСТАВИТЕЛЬСТВО
Российской Федерации при ЮНЕСКО**

**DELEGATION PERMANENTE
de la Fédération de Russie
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Subject: Reports on SoC of WH properties “Volcanoes of Kamchatka”, “Golden Mountains of Altai”, “Lake Baikal”, “Virgin Komi Forests” and “Wrangel Island”, Medium-term management plan of the Reserve “Wrangel Island”

Dear Ms. Rössler,

I have the pleasure to convey to your kind attention original reports on State of Conservation of World Heritage properties “Volcanoes of Kamchatka”, “Golden Mountains of Altai”, “Lake Baikal”, “Virgin Komi Forests” and “Wrangel Island”, as well as a detailed map of the borders of “Volcanoes of Kamchatka” and the Medium-term Management plan of the “Wrangel Island” reserve prepared by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Ecology of the Russian Federation in accordance with decisions of the 39th Session of the World Heritage Committee.

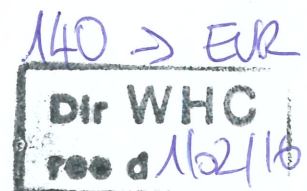
May I avail myself of this opportunity to renew to you, dear Ms. Rössler, the assurances of my highest consideration.

AMBASSADOR,
PERMANENT DELEGATE

Eleonora MITROFANOVA

Enclosure: 175 pages, maps.

**Ms Mechtild RÖSSLER
DIRECTOR, UNESCO HERITAGE DIVISION,
DIRECTOR, WORLD HERITAGE CENTRE**



**REPORT ON THE CURRENT STATE OF CONSERVATION
OF THE WORLD HERITAGE PROPERTIES
VOLCANOES OF KAMCHATKA, GOLDEN MOUNTAINS OF ALTAI, LAKE
BAIKAL, VIRGIN KOMI FORESTS, WRANGEL ISLAND IN 2015**

**Report on the Status of Conservation Actions at the UNESCO World Heritage
Property around *Lake Baikal* (Russian Federation, № 754) for 2015**

SUMMARY

The Russian Federation (RF) has adopted a number of normative laws and legal acts that were aimed towards preserving natural conditions around Baikal, while also aimed towards restraining any new industrial projects at the lake.

For example, there have been new restrictions placed on any new industrial production in the city of Baikal'sk—restrictions that were imposed by recent RF Government decisions.

Also, in 2014, amendments were added to the Federal law entitled "On Environmental Impact Reviews." According to these amendments, all design documentation for any construction or reconstruction projects that may be planned within the natural region around Baikal must first pass through a federal environmental impact assessment at a national level.

In March 2015 the Russian Government approved extended borders for the special "water protection zone" at Lake Baikal, as well as new boundaries demarking a "fisheries protection zone" at the lake. These government decisions imposed additional restrictions on various economic activities at Baikal.

In the territory that is included within the World Heritage Site, special economic zones for tourist-recreational activity have been created. These zones have been given the names of: "Gates to Baikal" and "Baikal Harbors." The design and siting of these special economic zones were completed by using techniques and approaches that were deemed both friendly to the environment as well as protective of local resources. These special economic zones will contribute to the sustainable development of the region through optimal preservation of our unique ecosystem at Lake Baikal.

In 2015, the RF Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment commissioned the development of new guidelines for preparing medium-term management plans for all the state nature reserves and national parks at Baikal. Once the methodologies are approved for preparing these plans, the Baikal protected areas will proceed to prepare all relevant management plans that govern park operations.

In 2015 it should be noted that the Baikal natural region experienced a series of intense wildfires. The bulk of these fires was limited to the highlands above the lake,

and passed by most of the nature reserves and national parks that lie on Baikal's shore. As a result, outstanding and universal World Heritage values did not sustain any significant damage.

1. Response of the Russian Federation with regard to Resolution No. 39 COM 7B.22 adopted by the World Heritage Committee

Regarding the industrial site at the Baikalsk Pulp and Paper Mill

Resolution of the Russian Federation Government related to the termination of recurring operations at Baikalsk Pulp and Paper Mill is mainly caused by the intention to eliminate the negative impact of environmentally unsound production to a unique ecosystem of Lake Baikal and necessity of the Russian Federation to perform its obligations related to Lake Baikal conservation as UNESCO World Heritage property.

The Russian Federation has adopted a number of normative laws and legal acts that were aimed towards preserving natural conditions around Baikal, while also aimed towards restraining any new industrial projects at the lake.

Restrictions on the placement of any new productive facilities in the city of Baikalsk were first established by a resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation dated August 30, 2001 (No. 643 "On approval of a list of activities prohibited in the central ecological zone within Baikal's natural territories"). More recently a resolution taken by the Russian Government from March 2, 2015 (#186) has inserted amendments to this law, removing bans on the placement of bakeries, confectioneries, and pasta production plants within the Baikal natural territory.

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In 2014 a new action was taken (№ 181-FZ) to amend the federal law entitled: "On Environmental Impact Reviews," under which project planning documentation for any construction or reconstruction projects that are planned within Baikal's natural territories will be subject to an environmental review at the Federal level.

On 5 March 2015, by decree of the Russian Government (No. 368-R) new boundaries were approved for the water protection zone of Lake Baikal (mainly for the borders of the Central Ecological Zone of Baikal)—within which the city of Baikalsk is located. New boundaries were also set for a 500-meter-wide fisheries protection zone along Lake Baikal's shores. This imposes additional constraints on the implementation of various economic projects in these zones.

With this amendment project documentation for reconstructing the central heating system for Baikalsk has been subject to preliminary impact reviews, with public hearings held on the project this past September, 2015. The planning documentation for this project has been sent to the Environmental Impact Reviews.

Regarding the "Kholodninskoe" mining site

By resolution of the government of the Russian Federation, dated August 30, 2001 (No. 643), and entitled "On approval of a list of activities prohibited in the Central Ecological Zone of Baikal's natural territory," there was prohibited any exploration or development of any new deposits that were previously unaffected by any operational works.

The "Kholodninskoe" site had at one time been allocated for use by the LLC "Invest-Euro—Company," under a license that would allow the mining of poly-metallic ores (where the validity of the license would extend up to March 2025).

In August 2015, in accordance with Russian legislation, this said license (as held by the LLC "Invest-Euro-Company") was suspended through actions taken by the Federal Subsurface Resources Management Agency.

In October 2015, the LLC "Invest-Euro-Company" formally withdrew its application, whereupon the Federal Subsurface Resources Management Agency returned the denied application package of materials without consideration.

Regarding the special economic zones: "Gates of Baikal" and "Baikal Harbors"

The territories contained within the special economic zone known as the "Gates of Baikal" was established in the Irkutsk Oblast in parts of the Slyudyanka and Irkutsk city districts – particularly around the areas of "Bolshoe Goloustnoye" and "Gora Sobolinaya." The first phase of this special economic zoning project was carried out by designating 756.9 hectares at the "Gora Sobolinaya" site. The development of the Bolshoe Goloustnoye site (some 1590 ha) is planned for an upcoming second stage of the program.

The recently completed work on the design of the infrastructure around the special economic zone at "Gora Sobolinaya" was formally approved by order of the government of the Irkutsk Region from December 1st, 2011 (№86-WHr).

The project planning documentation for the design of this zone has been remitted to the state environmental impact review committees. The completion of the infrastructures for this special economic zone is planned for later in 2016.

Under this plan, there will be 5 enterprises that will conduct tourism-recreational activities in this special economic zone, with the possibility that several more business plans will be approved for 2 other potential participants.

Meanwhile, the special economic zone for tourism and-recreation that is called the "Baikal Harbours" zone has been put into place by the Republic of Buryatia. An environmental impact assessment was completed on this zone to determine the potential impact of economic activities within the development plan. The impact assessment committee has since approved the application to create this zone.

The areas that are designated as part of this special economic zone stretches from the village of Turka to Peski and Bychya Mountain. It also pertains to Bezymyannaya Bay and Goryachinsk (covering a total area of about 3622 ha).

With the creation of this special economic zone, new environmental constraints have been put into place to make the design and construction of the "Baikal Harbors" site both "environmentally-friendly" and protective of local resources. As such, the tourist and recreational special economic zone must contribute to the sustainable development of the region, with a goal of optimally preserving the unique ecosystems of the overall Baikal World Heritage Site.

There are several public service, monitoring, and environmental components to this project. Recently two gas boiler plants were installed that run on imported liquefied gas. A local sanitary treatment plant was constructed next to Turka; and a recycling centre was also erected nearby. A new water supply network was put in, as were sewage and storm water pumping stations, each operating in automatic modes. Programs are also in place to promote the use of alternative sources of heat and electricity, along with regularly scheduled programs for cleaning trash and other debris from the local shorelines.

In all, some 37 new facilities or improvements have been commissioned and built, including production and operational facilities, heat-supply plants, electricity supply and storm-water removal facilities, new engineering networks, as well as a new walking promenade along the lakeshore, amongst other improvements.

So far, agreements have been signed for the conduct of tourism-recreational activities in this special economic zone with 12 separate enterprises.

On the development of management plans for protected areas which are part of the UNESCO World Heritage

In 2015, it was developed guidelines for the preparation of medium-term (5-year) management plans for state nature reserves and national parks commissioned by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation. After approval by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation these guidelines will be sent to subordinate protected areas for the organization of work on the preparation of management plans.

2. Information about other current issues related to the preservation of World Heritage Site properties

One of the most serious threats to the lands lying within the Lake Baikal World Heritage Site comes from forest fires that are both natural and anthropogenic in origin. The Baikal watershed falls in a zone that is often exposed to "dry" thunderstorms, a very common cause of forest fires.

In 2015, the situation with forest fires around Lake Baikal was very intense.

The areas that suffered the most from natural fires this last year were:

- The Baikal-Lena National Nature Reserve: where the total area burned by forest fires came to 92,000 hectares (or 14% of the Reserve area);
- Pribaikalsky National Park, where the total area burned by forest fires amounted to 34,000 hectares (or 11% of the Park area);
- Zabaikalsky National Park: total area affected by the forest fire was 15,000 hectares (or 6% of the Park).

In order to fight last year's forest fires on each side of the lake (in both the Republic of Buryatia and Irkutsk Region), some 800 firefighters were enlisted from various regional aviation bases for forest conservation; another 100 from fire departments and their parachute divisions; and 200 employees came from the Russian Ministry for Emergency Situations. A number of planes and helicopters were brought in as well, to extinguish the forest fires in the reserves and national parks. In addition, uncounted volunteers offered their help.

The main reason that such a large areas was consumed by these fires was because of the remoteness of the inaccessible mountain areas around Baikal. In most cases, fighting the fire from the ground was impossible; and even the use of aviation teams was often deemed ineffective.

In our Baikalski National Nature Reserve, one fire almost completely destroyed our largest surviving old-growth cedar forest, which was located on the northern slopes of the Khamar-Daban Range.

For the most part, the areas most affected by fire within our nature reserves and national parks at Baikal were areas of high mountains, often covered with shrubs, and of special value to various species of trees and shrubs, as well as the habitat to rare species of animals.

It should be said that the damage from these fires was not overwhelmingly significant to the overall protected area resources of Russia; nor were the outstanding universal world heritage values impaired in our region.

A significant factor that has affected the environment in the region, including the area around our Baikalski Nature Reserve, comes from impacts on our forests from regional industrial atmospheric emissions. It is characteristic of atmospheric flows in the Baikal basin that precipitates fall onto the northern slopes of the Khamar-Daban Range—which constitutes a large portion of the Baikalski Nature Reserve. The abundant local rainfall has brought suspended chemicals from industrial emissions that can be traced to enterprises within the larger Angarsk-Irkutsk industrial hub. However, the recent closing of the large pulp and paper mill (located 60 km upwind from the Baikalski Reserve) has led to a significant reduction in emissions that affect our reserve ecosystem.

By Russian law, the lands that lie within national natural reserves, national parks, or other reserves of federal significance—including territories that are part of the world heritage site system—are each protected as natural complexes by teams of government rangers or environmental “inspectors”.

In 2015, at the Baikalski Reserve there were only 15 separate violations that were registered against the protected status of the reserve. These included unauthorized entry

into reserve, the illegal collection of wild fruits, berries, nuts, mushrooms, as well as illegal fishing and poaching. In the smaller external protected areas controlled by our reserve (e.g., the "Kabanski" and "Altacheyski" wildlife refuges), the main types of violations were mostly related to unauthorized access to the refuge, and various violations of fishing regulations. Last year there were 21 cases where the special protection regime was legally violated in these adjunct federal refuges.

Further north, in the Barguzin National Nature Reserve, the main type of violations to our special protection regime was tied to unauthorized entry into the Reserve, as well as to illegal fishing activities. In 2015, this Reserve uncovered 12 separate violations of park regulations. Meanwhile, in Zabaikalsky National Park last year some 190 violations were identified, once again ranging from unauthorized entry to illegal fishing and hunting.

At the very northern end of the lake, in the Frolikha Federal Reserve, the main types of violations were unauthorized entry and illegal fishing. In all of last year, some six violators of the law were apprehended in this Reserve.

On the west side of the lake, in the Baikal-Lena National Nature Reserve and Pribaikalsky National Park, last year the state inspectors uncovered some 250 infringements of established laws and regulations, including 213 for illegal entry by citizens with their vehicles.

Finally, during 2,128 different patrol actions in Tunka National Park, located to the southwest of Baikal, park inspectors detected some 300 violations of various park rules and regulations last year - of which a large number were connected with the violation of fire safety rules.

3. Significant changes within the World Heritage properties are not expected.