

# **Report on the state of preservation of UNISCO World Heritage Site Nature Reserve "Wrangel Island" (Russian Federation, № 1023rev) in 2016.**

## **Resume**

A complex of measures for provision of the necessary facilities and cleaning the territory from the accumulated environmental damage during the previous economic activity was carried out on Wrangel Island in 2016 to ensure the security of the Russian Federation.

The area of territory, affected by these works, is less than 0.001% of the total area of the World Heritage Site "Wrangel Island"; at that the location, earlier engaged in business activities, is in use. Thus, specified activity does not affect the outstanding universal value of the World Heritage Site "Wrangel Island".

Furthermore, in 2016 activity around removing the environmental damage accumulated during the last economic is continually conducted. As a result, more than 1200 tons of scrap metal were taken away from the Island.

Subsoil areas for oil exploration and production are absent within borders of the World Heritage Site. Drilling, mineral exploration and mining are prohibited within the boundaries of the state natural reserve "Wrangel Island" and its buffer zone by the legislation of the Russian Federation.

Seismic exploration work, undertaken in the license areas of mineral resources in the marine waters of the East Siberian and Chukchi seas, do not affect the waters of the reserve and its buffer zone. Oil production in the areas surrounding the World Heritage Site is not currently conducted and is not planned in the near future.

Further development of facilities for ecological educational tourism which can affect the outstanding universal value of World Heritage Site "Wrangel Island" is not planned.

## **1. Response of Russian Federation according to the decision of the World Heritage Committee 40 COM 7B.98**

1. A complex of measures for provision of the necessary facilities and cleaning the territory from the accumulated environmental damage during the previous economic activity was carried out on Wrangel Island in 2016 to ensure the security of the Russian Federation.

The area of territory, affected by these works, is approximately 20 hectare, which is 0,0009% of the total area of the World Heritage Site "Wrangel Island" and 0,0025% of total area of Island.

Mentioned activity is conducted at the location earlier engaged in business activities, remote from crucial habitants of rare and specially protected species of animals. It doesn't affect polar bear nurseries, walrus's haul-out and bird's nesting. The most part of area where the activity is carried out is not covered by topsoil. Thus, there aren't problems of its preservation. Rare and endemic species of flora are absent in this part of the reserve.

In view of the fact that specified activity doesn't influence directly the World Heritage Site "Wrangel Island" and is being carried out within extremely small area, which is less than 0.001% of the total area of the Site, it can't be estimated as a potential danger to the World Heritage Site "Wrangel Island".

During 2016 towards the area, adjoining the location of local business, repeated approaches and long staying of polar bears, reindeer and musk ox were mentioned by the reserve's workers.

In 2016 approximately 37477 empty drums (around 1001 tons of scrap metal) were removed from Wrangel Island. Furthermore, 264 tones of another type of scrap metal (remains of equipment) was accumulated and taken away. In addition, 4 decrepit buildings remained from the previous business activity were dismantled and removed from the World Heritage Site "Wrangel Island".

In 2017 it is planned to remove approximately 45000 empty drums and facilities got out of order. Also accumulating debris and scrap metal in the area of Doubtless is planned to be conducted by reserve's workers.

All activity conducted within borders of the World Heritage Site is controlled by security of state reserve Wrangel Island.

2. Subsoil areas for oil exploration and production are absent within borders of the World Heritage Site. Drilling, mineral exploration and mining are prohibited within the boundaries of the state natural reserve "Wrangel Island" and its buffer zone by the legislation of the Russian Federation.

Seismic exploration work, undertaken in the license areas of mineral resources in the marine waters of the East Siberian and Chukchi seas, do not affect the waters of the reserve and its buffer zone. Oil production in the areas surrounding the World Heritage Site is not currently conducted and is not planned in the near future.

3. Additional development of facilities for ecological educational tourism which can affect the World Heritage Site "Wrangel Island" is not planned.

Nowadays there are 6 guest houses for tourists which were erected in 2012-2014 and which are not capital construction. All houses are located in the places of the former cordons where used to be old buildings which got out of order. Construction of new guest houses is not currently planned.

Meanwhile environment-friendly technologies and renewed sources of energy were used for supporting tourist infrastructure and cordons which ensure protection of the reserve's territory. Furthermore, as part of modernization of reserve's infrastructure in 2016 in addition to solar panels wind-powered generator were installed at the central base Doubtless. For carrying out scientific researches only solar panels were used to produce electric power.

Furthermore, the annual flow of visitors is around 500 people and doesn't affect ecosystems of the World Heritage Site "Wrangel Island". Tourists usually arrive to the Island with cruise ships, whose annual amount is up to 6 in a year. Within area of Wrangel there are 8 developed itineraries or tourists, still only 1 of them is mostly used. It is attended only during a month after the 10th of August. All in all, the amount of tourist that visits this itinerary is 30 people during all season. Nowadays the tourist groups don't affect reserve's territory much and in advance there isn't a chance of increase of tourist flow, thereby, the conduction of EIA is useless due to absence of the increase in tourists flow.

4. According to the isolated location and limitation of technical facilities of the attendance of Wrangel Island the problem of invitation of UNESCO mission to the World Heritage Site "Wrangel Island" demands additional work out. The information about this question will be given additionally.

## **2. The information about another current problems, connected with preservation of the the World Heritage Site.**

The security of the territory of the Island is held with help of patrolling on transport facilities, which don't damage soil and plants, and also by observing the marine water from the coastal observation posts, during observations conducted by reserve's workers from the aircrafts and cruise ships which attend the Island.

From July till September the entire water area of Wrangel Island and the South water areas of Herald Island are observed from ship's board.

The monitoring of components of reserve's ecosystem is being conducted around 15 species of animals and problematic scientific researches are carried out around 11 species of animals.

As part of monitoring 58 trail cameras were installed within the territory of Wrangel and Herald Island. Mutual researches in the sphere of population of musk ox on the Wrangel Island and Alaska, monitoring of population of white geese including ringing, molecular genetics researches of population of polar bears, monitoring soil etnomofauna and fauna of limn biotic backboneless and also other species are carried out with top Russian universities and also with universities of Montana and Colorado state.

The monitoring of coastal area is being held in order to reveal the damaged areas of vegetation cover due to the melting of permafrost. New enormous damage of vegetation wasn't revealed.

Furthermore, the monitoring of the condition of stream flows is being held as a part of control of the influence of climate changes. Thereby the change in chemical condition of stream flow of Wrangel Island was revealed due to the melting of permafrost soil during last years.

There are 23 historical objects on the territory of the Island which need protection:

- archeological (1 object)
- the remains of buildings and signs of first settlers - trade dugouts and places of installing flags (7 objects)
- the building of the period of market hunting and deer farming on the island and ruins of the period of the absorption of the Island (15 objects)

Nowadays the research on specified places is being held in order to determine the method of their conservation.

## **3. Dramatic changes are not planned within borders of the World Heritage Site Wrangel Island.**