

**REPORT ON THE JOINT UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE CENTRE / IUCN
REACTIVE MONITORING MISSION TO THE
WORLD HERITAGE PROPERTY 'WESTERN CAUCASUS' (RUSSIAN FEDERATION)**

FROM 15 TO 21 SEPTEMBER 2024



World Heritage property 'Western Caucasus' (*Credit: Lethier/UNESCO*)

March 2025

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Lastly, the team wishes to extend its warm thanks to all the representatives of the Republic of Adygea, as well as to the local institutions, NGOs, and experts and specialists met, who shared their views and opinions with the mission team on the various issues raised during the meetings and discussions.

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The mission team is grateful for their collective commitment to supporting the mission's work and responding to its questions, as well as for their efforts to ensure the long-term preservation of the property.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CSNBR	Caucasus State Nature Biosphere Reserve
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
IUCN SSC	IUCN Species Survival Commission
MNRE	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment
OG	Operational Guidelines
OUV	Outstanding Universal Value
SEA	State Environmental Assessment
SEIA	Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment
SFWR	Sochi Federal Wildlife Refuge
SNP	Sochi National Park
ToR	Term(s) of Reference
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

By its **Decisions 45 COM 7B.27** (2023)¹ and **46 COM 7B.54** (2024)² (Annexes 2 and 4), the World Heritage Committee (hereinafter ‘the Committee’) requested the State Party of the Russian Federation (hereinafter ‘the State Party’) to invite a joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission to assess the property’s state of conservation.

The mission was conducted from **15 to 21 September 2024** in order to review the overall state of conservation of the property, in particular the status of planned infrastructure and road development projects within and in the vicinity of the property and their cumulative effects, as well as the status and adequacy of the legal protection system of the property (see the terms of reference of the mission in Annex 1 and the detailed agenda in Annex 3).

The general context within the property has not changed significantly since the last joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission carried out in 2012, nor since the IUCN Advisory mission carried out in 2016. The whole property benefits from an overall stable and satisfactory conditions of integrity, meeting the relevant requirements set out in the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention (OG) in relation to criteria (ix) and (x), and its Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) is still present.

Therefore, the mission considers that the property does not currently meet the conditions for inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger, with regards to the issues raised during its visit and in line with the OG, § 180.

However, this general conclusion must be put into perspective from three points of view:

- the mission was not able to visit the entire territory and perimeter of the property, including controversial sectors (e.g. Lunnaya Polyana area, upper Mzimta valley/wildlife refuge, border of the Sochi National Park (SNP)). As a result, the mission does not have a comprehensive overview of all direct and indirect pressures exerted on the property, particularly from its periphery;
- the mission also collected and received conflicting information from the State Party and other local stakeholders met during the visit, which sometimes made its analysis difficult and uncertain (e.g. delineation, zoning and protection regime of protected areas of regional importance, existence, contents/progress of infrastructure projects, tourism development, achievements and success of the Persian leopard reintroduction project);
- most of the documents requested by the World Heritage Centre and IUCN in the mission’s Terms of Reference (ToR), to be shared preferably no later than one month prior to the mission, were only available a few days before the experts’ departure, during their on-site visits or after their return. As a result, several issues requiring additional and more detailed information were not discussed further and in depth with stakeholders and specialists during the mission, as expected in Reactive Monitoring missions.

In general, the pressures around the property are growing; socio-economic activities and the construction of infrastructure and facilities, including roads and buildings, continue to develop in its periphery, but also in the northern buffer zone of the Caucasus State Nature Biosphere Reserve (CSNBR), established in 1924³, a full part of the property as listed in 1999, abolished and not restored to date.

Although the property itself – with the exception of the northern buffer zone of the CSNBR – does not seem to have suffered significantly from these pressures since the previous Reactive Monitoring mission, it is clear that the challenge of preserving the OUV of the property lies

¹ <https://whc.unesco.org/en/decisions/8301/>.

² <https://whc.unesco.org/en/decisions/8580/>.

³ The reserve was initially created by Decree dated 12 May 1924 in order to preserve the European Bison (*Bison bonasus*).

primarily in the ability of the State Party to design and implement socio-economic development of the wider region that respects its ecological and biological sensitivity.

In this respect, there are many significant concerns associated with this type of development, particularly tourism and its collateral negative effects such as the deterioration and fragmentation of the property, partly linked to the increase in visitor numbers, and the potential construction of new major transport infrastructures in the wider region.

A major challenge also lies in the ability of public stakeholders to coordinate their strategies, programmes and projects at all levels – federal, regional and local – around a shared vision of preserving the property and developing economy accordingly.

Furthermore, during its visit, in its analysis of the documents made available to it, and throughout the discussions and debates, the mission observed marked conflicts and contradictions and, on several occasions, a lack of clarity, which made a proper assessment difficult. It is therefore challenging for the mission to draw clear conclusions on all the issues requested by the Committee.

Therefore, while the mission does not recommend the inscription of the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger, it considers that it is essential that the State Party urgently provide all necessary clarifications on each of the concerns expressed by the Committee and considered by the mission regarding the boundaries, zoning and regulation of certain key uses and activities within a number of components of the property, without which the property may meet the criteria for inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger, recalling that legal protection is a key pillar of OUV. The mission further reiterates the clear position of the World Heritage Committee that the construction of large-scale infrastructure within the property, including on the Lagonaki Plateau, would lead to the conditions for inclusion on the List of World Heritage in Danger.

The mission makes the following recommendations:

Within two months of receipt of the report, the State Party should:

Recommendation 1 – provide the World Heritage Centre and IUCN with all required detailed information on the boundaries, zoning and regulation of the Mountain Adygea Nature Park and the Upper Tsitsa River Nature Park as compared to the regulation of the natural monuments they replaced, as well as detailed high-resolution maps of those protected areas.

Recommendation 2 – clarify the protection and management context of the boundaries of the Bolshoy Tkhach Nature Park and, if necessary, restore their context, both in terms of the legal protection and the management regime, to levels at least equivalent to those which existed when the property was inscribed. The attention of the local authorities should also be drawn to the negative impacts of the all-terrain vehicle traffic in and along the property, and to the necessity to strictly regulate those uses and activities in the components under their responsibility, in order to ensure the features and environmental processes which convey the property's significance.

Recommendation 3 – immediately stop the road construction project between Lagonaki and Guzerypl and start the process of undertaking an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) in accordance with the *Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context*⁴. This EIA should be submitted to the World Heritage Centre and IUCN for review before any further work and extension (OG, § 118 bis).

⁴ <https://whc.unesco.org/en/guidance-toolkit-impact-assessments/>.

Recommendation 4 – provide written confirmation to the World Heritage Centre that the Lagonaki/Sochi road project and the Arkyz/Krasnaya Polyana railway and highway projects, as well as any other similar works and projects of transport infrastructure projects in the property or its surroundings, which may have a strong impact on its OUV, are not currently within the Government’s intentions (OG, § 139) and agenda.

Recommendation 5 – clarify the location of the Biosphere Centre in relation to the established boundaries of the property and the nature and level of use of this complex and provide written confirmation to the World Heritage Centre that no work has been carried out on it and access road since 2023. In the future, the State Party should not undertake any upgrading and extension works in this area (Biosphere Centre and forest access road) before providing the Committee with all necessary information and assessments to seek appropriate solutions to minimise the potential negative impacts of the works on the integrity of the property and to ensure the preservation of its OUV.

Recommendation 6 – provide a written commitment to the World Heritage Centre to stop and reverse the weakening of the legal status and protection regime of the property initiated by the creation of the Biosphere Polygon, and to ensure that all areas of the property benefit from a legal status sufficient to meet the requirements of the Operational Guidelines and previous Decisions of the World Heritage Committee.

As a matter of priority in the near future, and no later than 31 December 2025, the State Party should:

Recommendation 7 – complete the ongoing process to re-establishing the northern buffer zone of the CSNBR to its state at the time of inscription, in terms of boundaries, legal protection and management regime, and submit an updated high-resolution map of this zone with all necessary information to the World Heritage Centre for review by IUCN, prior to any decision⁵. The attention of the Federal and Regional Governments should also be strongly drawn to their obligations to fully preserve the functional integrity of this part of the property, where no work or project that may threaten or damage its OUV can be undertaken and authorised, wherever they are located, within the property or in the vicinity, including its northern buffer zone.

Recommendation 8 – as recommended by the previous Reactive Monitoring (2010, 2012) and Advisory (2016) missions and requested by the Committee in 2013, complete the ongoing process of establishing a buffer zone around the whole property that meets the requirements of the World Heritage Convention (Art. 103 et seq.) and the OG (§ 31 d). The boundaries, legal protection and management regime of this buffer zone should be closely discussed with the regional/local governments and other local stakeholders and then submitted to the World Heritage Centre for review by IUCN prior to their adoption, together with a detailed high-resolution map of its boundaries.

Recommendation 9 – initiate an overall strategic approach to ensure sustainable socio-economic development compatible with the OUV of the property and the requirements of the Operational Guidelines, including tourism, for the property and its surroundings, and undertake a Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment (SEIA) aligning with the principles outlined in the *Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context*. The State Party should also adapt its current legal framework and technical capacities to undertake cumulative impact assessments in a timely manner, including as part of EIAs for individual potential future projects, and to inform strategic development planning for multiple projects at the regional level.

Recommendation 10 – submit to the Committee, as soon as they are available, the master plan and EIA for any specific all-season mountain resort project that may be planned in the

⁵ See Decision 36 COM 7B.23.

future in the property and its vicinity. In accordance with the Committee's previous decisions, any such project should not include large infrastructure and facilities within the property, and should ensure that recreational and tourist activities are pursued only where their environmental impact can be demonstrated to be low.

Finally, in the medium/long term, the State Party should also:

Recommendation 11 – pursue the reintroduction of the Persian leopard in line with the 2013 IUCN Guidelines for Reintroductions and Other Conservation Translocations⁶, the 2017 IUCN Guidelines for Species Conservation Planning⁷ and the 2022 Strategy for the Conservation of the Leopard in the Caucasus Ecoregion⁸, in close cooperation with the IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC) Cat Specialist Group.

Recommendation 12 – pursue and foster all programmes to the fight against invasive species, together with regional/local protected area managers and stakeholders, in close cooperation with the IUCN SSC Invasive Species Specialist Group⁹, using products and methods that are fully compatible with the maintenance of the OUV of the property and guaranteeing its functional ecological and biological integrity. A detailed high-resolution map showing the distribution of invasive species and their trends over the years should be provided to the Committee in the future to monitor the situation.

⁶ <https://iucn.org/resources/publication/guidelines-reintroductions-and-other-conservation-translocations>.

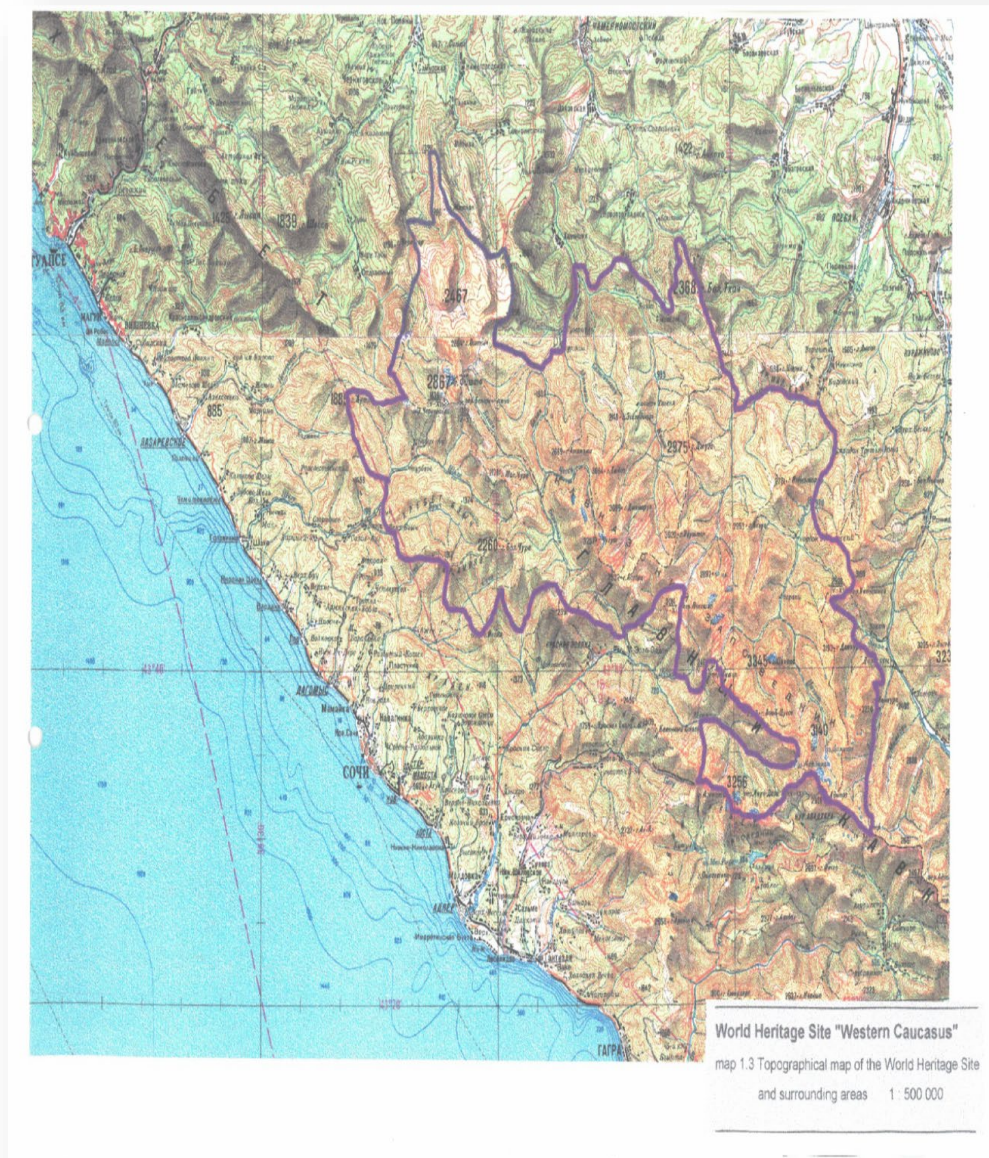
⁷ <https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/2017-065.pdf>.

⁸ https://www.cms.int/sites/default/files/document/Caucasus%20regional%20conservation%20strategy%20for%20Persian%20Leopard%20_Maka%20Bitsadze.pdf.

⁹ <https://iucn.org/our-union/commissions/group/iucn-ssc-invasive-species-specialist-group>.

1. 'WESTERN CAUCASUS' WORLD HERITAGE PROPERTY

Covering almost 300 000 ha, the 'Western Caucasus' property was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1999, based on criteria (ix) and (x) (**Map 1**)¹⁰.



Map 1 - Topographic map submitted by the State Party following the 1999 IUCN evaluation (Credit: UNESCO).

It is one of the few large mountain areas in Europe, still containing extensive elements of undisturbed forest, subalpine meadows and alpine ecosystems that have not suffered from heavy anthropogenic pressures and irreparable degradation.

The property hosts a high diversity of ecosystems, with important endemic plants and wildlife, and is the place of origin and reintroduction of the mountain subspecies of the European bison, and, more recently, the Persian leopard¹¹.

The property includes¹²:

¹⁰ Decision 23 COM VIII.A.1 (<https://whc.unesco.org/en/decisions/2546>).

¹¹ *Panthera pardus ssp. Tulliana*, a species endangered according to the IUCN Red List (<https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/15961/259040841>).

¹² <https://whc.unesco.org/en/documents/1843/>.

- the Caucasus State Nature Biosphere Reserve and its buffer zone¹³;
- the Bolshoy Tkhach Nature Park¹⁴;
- the River Tsitsa Headwaters Nature Park (former River Tsitsa Headwaters Natural Monument)¹⁵;
- the Mountain Adygea Nature Park (former Natural monument Pshekha and Pshehashkha)¹⁶;
- the Ridge Buijnij Natural Monument¹⁷.

¹³ Order of the President of the Republic of Adygea No. 322 dated 26 July 1996.

¹⁴ Order of the President of the Republic of Adygea No. 244 dated 8 October 1997.

¹⁵ Order of the Government of the Republic of Adygea "On the reorganisation of the natural monument of regional significance 'Upper reaches of the Tsitsa River' (together with the 'Regulations on The Natural Park 'Upper reaches of the Tsitsa River' of the Republic of Adygea" No. 116 dated 17 June 2020.

¹⁶ Order of the Government of the Republic of Adygea on the reorganisation of the Natural monuments of regional significance No. 97 dated 21 May 2020; Order of the Government of the Republic of Adygea "On approval of the boundaries of functional zones of the mountain Adygea Natural Park of the Republic of Adygea" No. 116-k dated 8 June 2020.

¹⁷ Order of the President of the Republic of Adygea No. 467 dated 9 December 1996.

2. SUMMARY OF THE NATIONAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEM FOR THE PRESERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF THE WORLD HERITAGE PROPERTY

The management of the property is under the lead and control of the MNRE, in close cooperation with the governmental authorities of the Republic of Adygea, with regards to the protected areas of regional significance that are included in the property and placed under its direct legal competence.

The Federal Law 33-FZ dated 14 March 1995 '*On specially protected natural areas*' provides the basis for protected areas and activities permitted in these territories. This legislation lists diverse types of protected areas such as:

- at the federal level, state nature reserves, national parks, natural monuments, dendrological parks and botanical gardens;
- at the regional level, natural parks, natural monuments, state nature reserves, dendrological parks and botanical gardens.

It also regulates the organization and management regime of those areas and is applicable to all protected areas comprising the property.

Conducting state monitoring of Western Caucasus is stipulated by the federal regulations¹⁸ and executed by the authorized federal agencies, in collaboration with regional executive bodies.

Since the last Reactive Monitoring mission, the specific regulations governing the protection and management regime of the components of the property significantly changed:

- the CSNBR protection and management rules are currently specified in the Order of the MNRE No. 981 dated 21 December 2021 and amended on 15 February 2022. Any use and activity that contradict the objectives of the reserve that are focused on biodiversity protection, research, education and monitoring, and its protection regime are prohibited. However, forest and tourism activities may be allowed as long as they are fully compatible with these objectives and do respect the World Heritage obligations and requirements. The order fixes also a special protection regime for the territory of the 'Lagonaki biosphere polygon' established in 2021, where educational tourism, as well as sport activities, can be allowed if they are compatible with the World Heritage status (see § 3.11 for further details);
- the three Nature parks are protected and managed under the responsibility of the regional government institution of the Republic of Adygea, according to orders from the regional government:
 - based on the same matrix, the Mountain Adygea Nature Park and the river Tsitsa Headwaters Nature Park that replaced former Natural monuments in 2020, have seen the legal regime of protection of those territories weakened compared to their previous regime as Natural monuments (see § 4-3-3 for further details). Some works that can be allowed¹⁹ would not be compatible with the intactness of the property that is part of its integrity and they could also perturb the ecological and biological processes on the basis of which the property was listed under criterion (ix);
 - according to third parties met during its visit, the boundaries of the Bolshoy Tkhach Nature Park that existed when the site was listed as World Heritage, have been adapted in 2023; shortly after its return, the mission was also informed by third parties of heavy disturbance and ground degradation caused by the intensive traffic of all-terrain vehicles, observed in this part of the property, since this adaptation; however,

¹⁸ Resolution No. 260 of the Government of the Russian Federation dated 18 February 2023.

¹⁹ For example, "*construction of linear facilities and hydraulic structures*" as well as "*selective and health tree cutting*" (Chapter IV of the annex to the orders).

according to the Department of Environmental Protection of the Republic of Adygea²⁰, this territory would be outside the park. However, noting the information subsequently provided as a factual clarification by the State Party²¹, there is a need for clarification of the exact boundaries of this area according to the original “graphic description” and its exact definition in the Unified State Register of Real Estate. According to the mission, these activities would not be compatible with the preservation of the functional integrity of the property and they may lead to decline in the populations of endangered species and ecosystems or those of OUV (OG, § 180). The mission was unfortunately not able to raise this issue for discussion with the officials during its stay and it did not succeed in getting a copy of the new regulation from alternative sources. This information should be verified with the State Party (OG, § 174) and it should be clarified in coordination with the local government. If necessary, the boundaries of the Nature Park should be restored as they were when the site was listed. The attention of the responsible authorities should also be drawn on the negative impacts of such uses and activities, in and along the property, the Bolshoy Tkhach Nature Park in particular, in order to ensure the features and environmental processes which conveyed the property’s significance;

- the Ridge Bujnij Natural monument is also protected and managed under the Regional Law; its status and regime have not changed since the last Reactive Monitoring mission.

Here below, **Table 1** summarizing the legal framework for the management of each component of the property, according to information provided by the officials from the MNRE during the mission’s visit.

In conclusion:

- the legal protection and management regime of the property significantly changed since the last Reactive Monitoring mission for most components; weakening the protective status for several of them, in particular the CSNBR and the Nature Parks;
- during its visit, the mission was unable to clarify the current boundary of one component, which would have changed in 2023, according to external sources of information, namely the Bolshoy Tkhach Nature Park;
- the management framework of most of the property’s components needs to be renewed and strengthened, in accordance with the World Heritage standards.

Overall, the mission concludes that the current management model for these components does not satisfactorily meet the requirements set by the management objectives, in a World Heritage context (OG, § 132.5). However, it notes that, according to the information provided from official sources, during its visit, the management framework for the several components and for the property as a whole will be renewed and established by the end of 2025.

It also notes that, although not fully satisfactory, the effective current management of the components of the property has not to date called into question its OUV, but that the pressures exerted on most of these components and on their periphery, require a sustained effort by the State Party to (1) ensure that the functional integrity of each component and that of the property, as a whole, are strictly preserved until the next management system is adopted and

²⁰ Letter dated 11 September 2024 (pers. com.).

²¹ Factual clarification by State Party (April 2025): the boundaries of Bolshoy Tkhach were established by Decree № 244 (dated October 8, 1997) *"On the establishment of the natural park of the Republic of Adygea on the territory of the Bolshoy Tkhach mountain massif"*. Subsequently, the Order of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Adygea (dated September 14, 2023) № 315-r *"On information about the boundaries of the natural park of the Republic of Adygea "Bolshoy Tkhach"* approved information about the boundaries of Bolshoy Tkhach taking into account the requirements of land legislation, containing a graphic description of the location of the boundaries of the territory, a list of coordinates of the characteristic points of these boundaries for entering information about them into the Unified State Register of Real Estate, while in the descriptive part the boundaries of the natural park remained unchanged.

(2) that the process to provide the property and each component with proper management that meets World Heritage standards is initiated immediately with a view to meeting the timeframe set mentioned here above.

Name of the Protected Area	IUCN Category	Current management status
Caucasus State Nature Biosphere Reserve	Ia	Order of the MNRE of the Russian Federation No. 981 dated 21 December 2021; New management plan for the property planned to be prepared by the end of 2025.
Buffer zone of the CSNBR	V	New management plan for the CSNBR planned to be prepared by the end of 2025.
Nature park 'Bolshoy Tkhach'		Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Adygea No. 21 dated 19 January 1998 (as amended by the Decrees No. 247 dated 13 December 2010 and No. 237 dated 3 October 2023); New management plan for the property planned to be prepared by the end of 2025.
Nature park 'Mountain Adygea'		Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Adygea No. 97 dated 21 May 2020; New management plan for the property planned to be prepared by the end of 2025.
Nature park 'Upper Tsitsa River'		Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Adygea No. 116 dated 17 June 2020; New management plan for the property planned to be prepared by the end of 2025.
Natural monument of regional significance 'Khrebet Buyny'	III	Order of the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Adygea No. 41-pr dated 11 November 2008; New management plan for the property is planned to be prepared by the end of 2025.

Table 1 – State of management of the components of the property (Credit: MNRE).

3. THE MISSION

By its Decision **44 COM 7B.110** (Fuzhou/online, 2021), the Committee requested the State Party to invite a joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission to evaluate whether the property meets the conditions for inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger with regards to the following issues, in line with the OG, § 180:

- the scale of impacts from invasive alien species on the OUV of the property and whether they represent an ascertained danger to the OUV of the property;
- the creation of the biosphere polygon and whether the changes in status of the nature monuments included in the property have affected the legal protection of these areas;
- whether the envisaged infrastructure and road development projects inside and near the property and their cumulative impacts represent a potential danger to the OUV of the property.

By its **Decision 45 COM 7B.27** (Riyadh, 2023), the Committee reiterated the need to deploy the joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission as soon as feasible, in order to assist the State Party in the evaluation of the state of conservation of the property, in particular the status of the envisaged infrastructure and road development projects inside and near the property and their cumulative impacts, and whether the property meets the conditions for inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger in line with the OG, § 180, as well as to assess other threats to the property including the scale of impacts from invasive alien species and the status and adequacy of the legal protection of the property.

The joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission to the property was organised from 15 to 21 September 2024 and conducted by Mr Hervé Lethier representing UNESCO and Mr Robert Brunner representing IUCN.

The mission was accompanied by representatives of the MNRE and of the UNESCO National Commission of the Russian Federation. The full programme of the mission prepared by the MNRE and the list of people met are enclosed (**Annexes 3 and 6**).

Based on its ToR, the complete text of which is enclosed (**Annex 1**), the mission was specifically tasked to review the status of the following issues affecting the state of conservation of the property:

- **review the legal protection status and boundaries of the property and any changes which would have occurred since its inscription, in particular:**
 - the protection status and boundaries of the whole Lagonaki Plateau,
 - the protection status and boundaries of the northern buffer zone of the CSNBR,
 - the protection status and boundaries of the different Nature parks and Natural monuments included in the property and their revised zoning (in particular the creation of economic zones),
 - the territory of the Lunnaya Polyana Biosphere Centre,
 - the status of any biosphere polygons created within the property and the impacts on the property's legal protection,
 - any other legal changes which might impact the legal protection of the property, including the current legal status of the regional protected areas managed by the Republic of Adygea, and assess whether the legal regulations applying to all the components of the property are consistent with the protection requirements of the OG;

- **analyse the development status of all major construction projects in the property and its wider setting, whether proposed, approved or being implemented and their potential impact on the OUV of the property, in particular:**
 - the planned ski resort at Lagonaki,
 - the road to the Lunnaya Polyana Biosphere Centre,
 - proposed large-scale infrastructure in the Sochi Federal Wildlife Refuge (SFWR) and the Sochi National Park (SNP), which are immediately adjacent to the property,
 - a proposed new highway and railway connecting the North Caucasus to the Black Sea, including routes that would bisect the property,
 - proposals to develop a 13 km tunnel, through the property for the road between Arkhyz and Krasnaya Polyana,
 - other potential road developments crossing the property or close to its boundaries,
 - any other major infrastructure project planned in or in the vicinity of the property,
 - assess the cumulative impacts from the above-mentioned developments;
- **review the progress achieved by the State Party in addressing Decisions by the World Heritage Committee, the recommendations of the 2010 and 2012 World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring missions, and the 2016 IUCN Advisory mission;**
- **evaluate the scale of the impacts of invasive alien species on the OUV of the property;**
- **assess the overall state of conservation of the property and evaluate factors and conservation issues that could potentially impact its OUV, including its conditions of integrity.**

The mission visited a part of the property only and focused on its western and northern borders, from Krasnaya Polyana to the Lagonaki Plateau through Mt Fisht and Oshten and their surroundings, including the Guzeripl area, utilising cars and helicopter. **However, the mission regrettably could not visit the Lunnaya Polyana area and did not go to the upper Mzimta valley in the sector of the SFWR.**

Most documents provided by the State Party were only available a few days before the mission's start, during its onsite visit and after its return, which did not allow the mission to raise and discuss further and more in-depth various topics with the stakeholders and specialists, as expected during Reactive Monitoring missions.

The mission had the possibility to discuss with the civil society but, with some exception in Lagonaki, did not have time to exchange with scientists.

These limitations make reporting on several issues challenging.

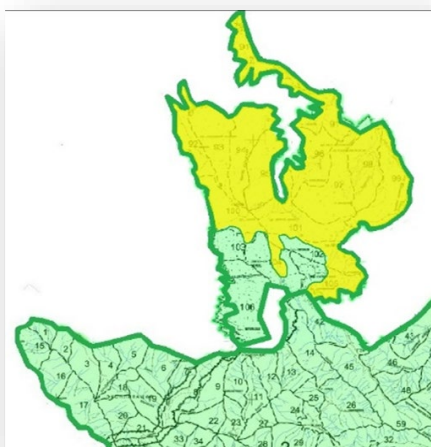
4. LEGAL PROTECTION STATUS AND BOUNDARIES OF THE PROPERTY

4.1 Protection status and boundaries of the whole Lagonaki Plateau

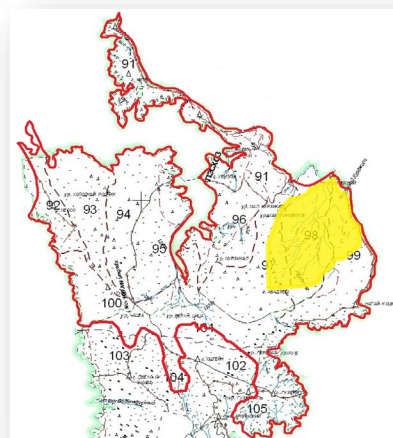
From the available documentation of the nomination and the IUCN evaluation, it is clear that entire Lagonaki Plateau is an integral part of the property.

Its exact boundaries have however been the subject of much controversy for years and the World Heritage Committee in several Decisions requested the State Party to clarify them. A boundary clarification proposal was submitted by the State Party in 2021 but it was not accepted by the World Heritage Centre, on the grounds that it was not consistent with the boundary of the property as inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1999 and constituted a significant change to the perimeter of the property²².

The legal regime that applies to this key sector of the property is currently defined by the regulations that apply to the entire CSNBR, whose legal regime was amended in 2022, and, with regard to the part of the plateau where the Biosphere polygon created in 2021 is located, in accordance with the Order of the federal government N° 603-r dated 23 April 2022 (**Maps 2 and 3**).



Map 2 – Lagonaki Biosphere polygon
(Credit: CSNBR).



Map 3 – Sector of planned location of touristic facilities (Credit: CSNBR).

4.2 Protection status and boundaries of the northern buffer zone of the Western Caucasus State Biosphere Nature Reserve

The question of the status and boundaries of the northern buffer zone of the property has also been controversial for many years.

This issue has been raised by the Committee in most of its decisions since the site was inscribed; it has also been the subject of recommendations reiterated in all the Reactive Monitoring mission and advisory reports.

²² See letter from the Director of the World Heritage Centre to the Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of the Russian Federation to UNESCO, ref. CLT/WHC/NOM/21/70, dated 14 June 2021, and letter from the Director of the World Heritage Centre to the Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of the Russian Federation to UNESCO, ref. CLT/WHC/NOM/22/26, dated 5 April 2022, in response to his letter dated 10 February 2022.

This buffer zone was established in 1996²³, then cancelled at regional level in 1998²⁴, but nominated by the State Party and inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1999; it was not re-established to date²⁵ although the 2012 mission was informed that the management authority indeed submitted a proposal to MNRE to reinstate the area that was returned to the CSNBR administration with the request to do the topographical measurement. Thus, 12 years later, boundaries and status of this area are still currently not established and imprecise under the law, while anthropogenic pressure within the area is very high and increasing. The legal protection regime of this zone, *de jure* remains the same as stipulated in the nomination dossier with regard to the World Heritage Convention and its OG. However, it does not benefit currently from an appropriate effective regime of protection and management, meeting the standards required in the OG (§ 98 *inter alia*).

More than 15 years after this issue was raised during the 2008 Reactive Monitoring mission²⁶, and in the light of the pressures on the area – which risk affecting the functional integrity of the property and damaging its OUV should they continue to grow – the northern buffer zone of the CSNBR should be soon and definitively reinstated in at least the conditions of its inscription.

The mission was informed during its visit that the process of re-establishing this buffer zone would be ongoing and should be completed by the end of 2024. However, the mission notes the repeated requests of the Committee to complete this, without success. It is therefore essential that the legal protection process of the property in this area is completed with urgency, in line with the OGs.

Furthermore, socio-economic activities and the construction of equipment, including roads, continue to develop and in nearby this northern buffer zone. During its visit, the mission observed that work on the construction of a road link between Lagonaki and Guzerypl had begun since the last Reactive Monitoring mission, likely at the border but outside the northern buffer zone of the CSNBR.

Based on information shared by the officials met during its field visit, this existing new road (**Figure 1**), located only a few hundred meters from the northern border of the core zone of the CSNBR, should be extended and completed in the near future.

The mission considers that, due to its nature and scale, this work should have been brought to the attention of the Committee before being undertaken, so that the Committee, with the support of IUCN, could have helped the State Party ensure that the integrity of the property is fully preserved and that no irreversible damage is done to its OUV (OG, § 172); its potential environmental effects on the property should have been assessed according to the World Heritage standards.

²³ Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Adygea No. 322 dated 26 August 1996.

²⁴ Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Adygea No. 147 dated 8 June 1998.

²⁵ However, according to the Constitution of the Russian Federation (Art. 15), the legal regime of protection of this zone as it was when the site was nominated and then inscribed, remains in force.

²⁶ File:///C:/Users/herve/Downloads/mis900-apr2008.pdf (§ 5.5.1, p. 30).



Figure 1 – New road constructed recently, likely in the northern buffer zone of the CSNBR (Credit: Lethier/UNESCO).

The mission also considers that, if the extension of this road is actually envisaged, this project should first be submitted to the Committee to ensure that the OUV of the property is fully preserved before making any decision that would be difficult to reverse; the State Party should also be invited to propose appropriate minimization measures of potential negative impacts on the property, based on the conclusions of an EIA meeting the World Heritage standards in a World Heritage context.

4.3 Protection status and boundaries of the different Nature Parks and Natural Monuments

When it was listed, the property included three protected areas with the legal status of natural monument: Ridge Buijnij Natural Monument, River Tsitsa Headwaters Natural Monument and Headwaters of Rivers Pshecha and Pshechashcha Natural Monument.

As mentioned above, the legal status of two of these protected areas changed in 2020:

- the Natural Monument ‘Pshekha and Pshehashkha’ was replaced by the ‘Mountain Adygea Nature Park’²⁷;
- the Natural Monument ‘Upper Tsitsa River’ was replaced by the ‘Upper Tsitsa River Nature Park’²⁸.

According to information collected by the mission during its visit from officials of the State Party and from the Government of the Republic of Adygea, the new Nature Parks would have the same delineations as the Natural Monuments they replaced and their legal status of protection would not weaken their previous status. These questions are however controversial and call for the following comments:

4.3.1 Boundaries of the Nature Parks

On the basis of the document made available to it, the mission was not able to check whether the boundaries of the new Nature Parks are exactly the same as the Natural Monuments they

²⁷ Decree of the Government of the Republic of Adygea “On the reorganisation of the Natural monuments of regional significance” No. 97 dated 21 May 2020.

²⁸ Decree of the Government of the Republic of Adygea “On the reorganisation of the natural monument of regional significance ‘Upper reaches of the Tsitsa River’” No. 116 dated 17 June 2020.

replaced.

4.3.2 Zoning of the Nature parks

The new status of the two Nature Parks set up in 2020 establishes a zoning of the parks' territories. Three zones are dedicated to protection, recreation and economic activities. They are established by order of the Department for Environmental Protection and Natural Resources of the Republic of Adygea²⁹.

It was not possible either for the mission to obtain detailed maps of the functional zones of both parks.

4.3.3 Legal regime of protection and management of the Nature Parks

According to the Nature Park regulation (Chap. IV), and by exception, construction of linear facilities and hydraulic infrastructures (Art. 1.3) as well as the development of deposits of mineral resources (Art. 3.2) and sanitary logging (Art. 4) can be allowed and conducted within the economic zone of each Nature Park.

Such activities may not be compatible with the preservation of species and ecosystems as well as the environmental processes, referred to in criteria (ix) and (x) of the Convention, under which the property was inscribed, and they may have significant negative effects on the property and its OUV and threaten its functional integrity (OG, § 180). Furthermore, the World Heritage Committee has a clear position that mining and mineral exploration is not compatible with World Heritage status, and thus should not in any circumstances be permitted within the property. In this context, any proposal for these types of activities, including deposits of mineral resources (see here above) should be fully and carefully considered, and any possible permission should be guided by comprehensive management planning, as well as informed by appropriate environment and social impact assessments to ensure that such works and operations, whatever they are, do not result in negative significant impacts on the OUV of the property, and fully respect the policies of the Convention.

The State Party should be invited (1) to confirm that the boundaries of the new Nature Parks coincide with those of the Natural Monuments they replaced and (2) to provide the World Heritage Centre and IUCN with high resolution maps showing the boundaries of the two Nature Parks, as well as those of their three functional zones, for review.

The regional/local authorities directly in charge of the Nature Parks' management, should also be reminded of the international commitments of the Russian Federation with regard to the World Heritage and their common legal obligation to maintain the OUV of the property and especially to preserve its functional integrity, including the main features and processes which conveyed the property's significance when inscribed on the World Heritage List.

Thus, all here above-mentioned works, and in general those listed in the regime of special protection of the Nature Parks' territories (Chap. IV of the orders), should not be undertaken in the economic zone of either park without a prior assessment of their potential environmental impacts on the OUV of the property, and especially on its functional integrity. According to the OG (§ 172), the State Party should also inform the Committee of its intention to undertake exceptionally such works before the local authorities make any decision that would be difficult to reverse.

As mentioned here above, during its visit the mission was unable to obtain a precise and

²⁹ Order No. 116-k dated 8 June 2020 on approval the boundaries of functional zones of the Mountain Adygea Nature Park of the Republic of Adygea + appendix 1.

detailed map of each Nature Park clearly showing the boundaries of their three functional zones (protection, recreation and economy). Despite its repeated request, it was also unable to obtain a comparative table of the regulations applied in these Nature Parks and the Natural Monuments they have replaced. It was neither able to get accurate information on the boundaries of the Bolshoy Tkhach Nature Park that, according to external sources of information, may have been modified in the recent past (see Chap. 2).

It is therefore difficult to reach a robust conclusion on the subject; as said here above, the regulations applicable in the new Nature Parks may lead to weaken the effective protection of those territories, should, for example, sanitary felling of trees and construction of linear and hydraulic facilities in the economic development zone be allowed in the future. In some cases, carrying out such works may not be compatible with the long-term preservation of species and ecosystems, as well as the environmental processes, referred to in criteria (ix) and (x) of the Convention under which the property was inscribed. In any case, the State Party should be invited to inform the Committee in advance insofar as such works may affect the OUV of the property (OG, § 172 and 174).

4.4 The management of the property

The development and implementation of an overall comprehensive management system for the whole property, meeting the international standards and requirements (OG, § 132) has been a permanent recommendation of previous missions and subject in the past to frequent requests from the Committee.

The coordination of this management between the various federal and regional/local structures responsible for managing the components of the property is both a challenge and a necessity.

While the management of the CSNBR seems meeting the OG requirements and done in a satisfactory way, this does not seem to be the case of the regional components of the property. The mission was unable to obtain clear answers on the zoning of those components and on their current management system, as well as on the effective enforcement of the regulation of certain uses (e.g.: circulation of motor vehicles) and activities (e.g.: logging including sanitary cutting, construction of roads, power lines and other large infrastructures) on their territories.

The mission was informed by the CSNBR staff administration that a process of elaborating such a system of management for the whole property may be engaged in the near future, under the coordination of the reserve administration. The mission welcomes this initiative which could respond to the past Committee's request and meet its expectations.

It was also informed that a process to update the current management plans of each component was underway.

4.5 Status of biosphere polygons and impacts on the property's legal protection

There is only one biosphere polygon within the property, the 'Lagonaki Biosphere Polygon'. This polygon was established as a test site in 2021, covering a total area of 17 264,13 ha (**Map 2**)³⁰, then reduced to a surface of 13 901,12 ha, excluding Mts Fisht and Oshten (**Map 3**)³¹.

According to the federal regulation³², this "test site" aims at developing recreational activities

³⁰ Order of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 561-r dated 6 March 2021.

³¹ Order of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 8-r dated 14 January 2022.

³² Order of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 603-r dated 23 April 2012.

that comply with requirements of the federal legislation on environment, protected areas and environmental expertise. The facilities and infrastructures that can be built within the polygon are the following: houses and buildings, visitor centres, guesthouses, lifts, cableways, ski slopes and various objects for transportation, engineering and functioning of the above-listed objects.

Its legal status is defined by the regulations on the CSNBR as approved in 2021 by the Order of the MNRE of the Russian Federation No. 981 dated 21 December 2021.

The State Party has confirmed that it is still considering the possibility of building an all-season mountain resort within the property in the sector of the Lagonaki Plateau³³. According to local sources, the technical concept of this project is still being studied and should be available in the second quarter of 2025. After discussions, the mission was assured that the master plan and an EIA for this project will be sent to the World Heritage Centre, as soon as they are available. The mission recalls that the position of the World Heritage Committee is: *“that the construction of large-scale infrastructure within the property, including on the Lagonaki Plateau, would constitute a case for inscription of the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger, in accordance with Paragraph 180 of the Operational Guidelines, and urges the State Party not to proceed with plans for a ski resort within the property, to immediately cease all ongoing preparatory work at Lagonaki and to identify alternative locations outside the property”*³⁴.

The mission also observed that the accommodation capacities and the scale of the infrastructures and facilities as presented during the discussions could be less ambitious than in the past; this decision by the State Party responds partly to a repeated request from the Committee to avoid large-scale tourism development in the Lagonaki area³⁵.

According to the most recent official information provided by the State Party to the mission³⁶, the current concept of this “eco-resort” would include 20 km of Alpine ski slopes accessible by five ski lifts located at the bottom of the Lagonaki Plateau, inside the property (**Map 2**), as well as a mountain village consisting of four hotels with a capacity of 735 rooms and related facilities. This village would be located outside the core zone of the CSNBR (**Map 3**). It will also include a visitor centre of the CSNBR.

The design of this resort is however likely to evolve in the future, as a part of a national project on ‘Tourism and Hospitality Industry’³⁷; it is expected that it will create about 2 000 jobs for mostly the local people and contribute significantly to the local economy of the Republic of Adygea.

³³ See *inter alia* “<https://туризм.пф/en/news/natsproekt-pomozhet-adygee-realizovat-proekt-lagonaki/>”.

³⁴ Decision 46 COM 7B.54 (<https://whc.unesco.org/en/decisions/8580>).

³⁵ Decisions 36 COM 7B.23, 37 COM 7B.23, 38 COM 7B.77, 41 COM 7B.8, 42 COM 7B.23, 43 COM 7B.18, 44 COM 7B.110 and 45 COM 7B.27.

³⁶ MNRE, no date - Update on the preparation of Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) for the following projects - Ski resort on the Lagonaki Plateau, p. 5.

³⁷ Instruction of the Deputy Chairman of the Government of the Russian Federation No. DCH-P44-15133 dated 20 November 2020.

Once the design of the project is completed, a State Environmental Assessment (SEA) will be undertaken according to the federal legislation and an EIA will be carried out in due time; the mission was ensured by officials met during the field visit that this assessment as well as the master plan of this eco-resort will be submitted to the Committee before any decision is taken that may have negative and irremediable effects on the property, in order to allow the Committee to advise the State Party in seeking appropriate solutions and ensure that the OUV of the property is fully preserved (OG, § 172).



Figure 2 - All season ski resort project – Ski facilities, vers. Nov. 2024 (Source: MNRE).



Figure 3 - All season ski resort project Mountain village, vers. Nov. 2024 (Source: MNRE).

Furthermore and based on the current scientific knowledge, the area pre-identified to host these facilities is karstic and does not appear to have any surface or underground water resources³⁸; moreover, it is particularly exposed to the wind in winter with negative effects on the snow cover and quality³⁹ and subject to strong meteorological instability in summer, making it not an optimal site for the development of mass tourism, as envisaged in the current resort concept. The region is also particularly exposed to climate change and its snow cover is decreasing year by year⁴⁰.

In this respect, the mission shares the decision of the CSNBR Scientific Council⁴¹ that the Lagonaki Plateau, as a whole, should only host recreational activities of ecological and educational nature. In this context, those activities would be the only ones fully compatible with the World Heritage status and the biological and environmental sensitivity of the area.

To conclude, the mission is concerned that part of the facilities (ski slopes and lifts especially) that could be located in a sensitive part of the property hosting threatened and endemic flora

³⁸ *Inter alia*: Litvinskaya, S.A. and Akatova, T.V. (2024) – Environmental problems in tourism development of mountain territories on the example of Lagonaki highlands (Western Caucasus) in Tourism and recreational complex in the system of regional development, XII International Scientific and Practical Conference, Krasnodar, 24-28 April 2024, pp. 124-129.

³⁹ *Inter alia*: Anatoliy, V. and al. (2019) – Snow cover of the Lagonaki highlands (the Western Caucasus), DSPU News Vol. 13 N° 1. 2019, pp 86-97.

⁴⁰ Pogorelov, A.V., Boyko, E.S., Petrakov, D.A. and Kiselev, E.N. (2017) – Response of the Fisht glacier (Western Caucasus) to modern climate change, DOI/ 10.24057/2414-9179-2017-1-23-159-171.

⁴¹ Appendix No 1 to the minutes of the meeting of the Scientific Council of the CSNBR No. 3 dated 28 December 2021.

and critical ecosystems, in a sector well known by scientists⁴² as contributing to build the OUV of the property and recovering slowly from past overgrazing⁴³. The mission did not either receive a clear response on whether this complex will be the first phase of a larger project as planned in the past, or not. The mission further reiterates that the information provided to it continues to indicate a development that would not be in line with the position taken by the Committee, including the inclusion of the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger, as noted above.

4.6 Other legal changes

Tourism development is growing fast in and around the property. With due respect for the environment, tourist activities can be a key factor in the socio-economic development of the whole Caucasus region. However, these activities must be planned and regulated in accordance with the property's carrying capacity and sensitivity, in a sustainable way.

The mission takes note of the progress recently made by the State Party, leading to regulate, organise and monitor the development of tourist and recreational activities⁴⁴ within protected areas of federal⁴⁵ and regional/local significance⁴⁶ and specifically in National Parks⁴⁷. It also

⁴² *Inter alia*: "<https://natural-sciences.ru/ru/article/view?id=37362>", also: Urbanavichus, G. & Urbanavichene, I. 2014. An inventory of the lichen flora of Lagonaki Highland (NW Caucasus, Russia). *Herzogia* 27: pp. 285-319. Akatova, T. and Akatova, E. 2015 "On the moss flora of Lagonaki highland (Republic of Adygea, the Western Caucasus), *Arctoa* 24: pp. 148-155. Urbanaviciene, I.N. and Urbanavicius, G.P. (2023) – Habitats of protected lichen species in the Republic of Adygea under threat of destruction, *in* Current state and problems of bioresources conservation, International Scientific and Practical Conference, Maikop, 24 November 2023, pp. 147-153.

⁴³ *Inter alia*: Akatova, T.V., Zakopaiko, B.A., Litvinskaya, S.A. Georgievich Perevozov, A.G., Urbanavicius, G.P., Urbanaviciene, I.N. and Shchurov, V.I. (2024) - Protected species of plants, fungi, and animals on the planned Lagonaki resort territory (Republic of Adygea): Current status and preservation problems.

⁴⁴ Law No. 77 on "Amending certain legislative acts of the Russian Federation" dated 18 March 2023.

⁴⁵ Order of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 1811 on "Approval of the rules for calculating the maximum permissible recreational capacity of specially protected natural areas of federal significance in the implementation of tourism" dated 31 October 2023.

⁴⁶ Order of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 1809 "On approval of the model rules for calculating the maximum permissible recreational capacity of specially protected natural areas of regional and local significance in the implementation of tourism" dated 31 October 2023.

⁴⁷ Order of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 2294-r "On approval of the List of capital construction projects, construction, reconstruction, major repairs, commissioning and decommissioning of which are permitted when carrying out recreational activities in national parks, as well as non-capital buildings, structures (including non-stationary trading facilities), improvement elements, related infrastructure facilities, the construction, operation and dismantling of which are permitted when carrying out recreational activities in national parks" dated 26 August 2023; Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 2040 "On approval of the specifics of construction, reconstruction and operation of linear facilities in national parks when carrying out recreational activities on their territories" dated 30 November 2023; Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 2124 "On approval of the specifics of construction, reconstruction, major repairs, commissioning and decommissioning, demolition of capital construction projects in national parks when carrying out recreational activities on their territories" dated 11 December 2023; Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 1407 "On approval of the Rules for coordinating and approving the plan for recreational activities of a national park, including requirements for the content, form and structure of the said plan, as well as amendments to such a plan" dated 30 August 2023; Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 1444 "On approval of the sample form of an agreement on the implementation of recreational activities in a national park" dated 2 September 2023; Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 1432 "On determining cases in which a federal government agency may act as the organiser of competitions and auctions for the right to conclude an agreement on the implementation of recreational activities in a national park" dated 1 September 2023; Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 1827 "On approval of the Rules for calculating the minimum fee under an agreement on the implementation of recreational activities in a national park" dated 31 October 2023; Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 2112 "On approval of the Rules for holding competitions and auctions for the right to conclude an agreement on the implementation of recreational activities in a national park" dated 11 December 2023; Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 1250 "On approval of the Rules for concluding an agreement on the transfer of powers to manage the recreational activities of a national park" dated 1 August 2023; Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 2229 "On approval of the rules for organising and implementing tourism in specially protected

notes that the transposition of this new regulatory framework, and *a fortiori* its enforcement to the regional/local level, in particular, is not yet complete and effective. In accordance with the recommendations of previous missions and several Decisions of the Committee, these efforts should also lead to the development of an overall tourism strategy concerted between federal and regional/local stakeholders, and to the implementation of a comprehensive plan for the development of sustainable tourism activities in the property, as well as at the level of the Western Caucasus region.

natural areas of federal significance" dated 21 December 2023; Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 2230 "On approval of the Model Rules for the organisation and implementation of tourism, including ensuring tourism safety in specially protected natural areas of regional and local significance" dated 21 December 2023.

5. DEVELOPMENT STATUS OF OTHER MAJOR PROJECTS IN THE PROPERTY AND ITS WIDER SETTING

5.1 Construction of large infrastructures

The mission received contradictory information on the State Party's intention to undertake construction works that have been announced publicly in the press by officials⁴⁸, the two projects that follow, crossing or adjacent to the property, amongst others:

- the Lagonaki-Sochi road⁴⁹;
- the Arkyz-Krasnaya Polyana railway and highway that would include the development of a 13 km tunnel through the property and connect the North Caucasus to the Black Sea⁵⁰.

The officials met during the mission's visit assured the mission that no works and projects are currently included in the governmental agenda and that the State Party will strictly respect the spirit and rules of the Convention, as well as the OG requirements, if such works and projects were ever planned in the future.

The mission pointed out that the Committee requested the State Party several times in the past to halt all road developments in the property. Overall, these projects would constitute a clear threat to the property's values, including direct and indirect detrimental impacts on its integrity if they were confirmed and result in the property meeting the conditions for inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger (OG, § 180).

It also reminded the officials met during its visit that those projects, as any other similar project of large infrastructures that could be undertaken **within and in the adjacent territory of the property**, should also be subject to an EIA, meeting the international standards, in this specific context⁵¹ in order to clearly document any potential impacts on the OUV of the property and ensure that these impacts can be fully mitigated.

It was also confirmed to the mission that no other large project of restoration, upgrading or construction of new infrastructures, (e.g. roads, railways, airport) are currently planned or underway in the property and in its immediate vicinity, that may have negative effects on its OUV. This includes water reservoirs, pipelines and ski resorts in Zikhiya and on Mt Tabunnaya.

The mission pointed out once again during its discussions with the officials that, according to the OGs, if the State Party and any other regional/local stakeholders, including the regional governments, intend to develop such large projects inside or in the vicinity of the property, and should these projects have negative direct and indirect effects on the OUV of the property, they are invited to inform the Committee before taking any decision that would be difficult to reverse and provide it with notice on their contents (OG, § 172).

The mission also pointed out that the State Party may request Advisory missions at any time to receive guidance and advice from UNESCO and the Advisory Body IUCN with a view to seeking optimal technical solutions and avoiding negative impacts of these works and projects on the OUV of the property (OG, § 176).

⁴⁸ https://kuban.rbc.ru/krasnodar/freenews/66e2a52c9a7947d3cf96a875?utm_source=yxnews&utm_medium=desktop&utm_referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fdzen.ru%2Fnews%2Fsearch%3Ftext%3D.

⁴⁹ <http://government.ru/news/48168/>.

⁵⁰ <https://www.interfax.ru/russia/967366>.

⁵¹ <https://whc.unesco.org/en/guidance-toolkit-impact-assessments/>.

5.2 The Lunnaya Polyana area

This issue was raised by the previous Reactive Monitoring missions in 2008⁵², 2010⁵³ and 2012⁵⁴ and regularly discussed by the Committee in its decisions, in particular in 2023⁵⁵.

As was the case for the two previous Reactive Monitoring missions, the mission was not allowed to visit the area from the ground or fly over it. The mission did also not have the opportunity to examine this question in greater detail with the officials met during its visit. Thus, it was not able to assess the current situation *in situ*. **The following appraisal is therefore based exclusively on a desk analysis and using satellite images.**

According to the MNRE, this complex has been established in the early 2000s, and is stated to be located right next to the western boundary but outside the property. However, as evidenced by the nomination dossier, Lunnaya Polyana is without doubt fully located within the boundaries of the property.

Firstly, from the discussions and public information available on the web⁵⁶ and as raised by the Committee in 2024, there is some strong evidence that this facility is not used only for management, research and monitoring activities, as repeatedly reported in the official documents⁵⁷, but also as a winter sports resort.

Secondly, the road to the complex is considered by the State Party to be a forest road, constructed and used for forestry and fire prevention, in accordance with the Art. 13 of the Forest Code of the Russian Federation and forest by-laws⁵⁸. The access to the road is strictly regulated. According to the State Party, this road is a response to the fire hazards in a context of climate change and increasing extreme weather events. In the mission's view however, this argument must be put into perspective by the fact that no fire has been recorded on the entire property over the 2018-2024 period, with the exception of two minor events in 2020 and 2024 in the CSNBR, which caused damage to 24 ha and 0.1 ha respectively⁵⁹.

This road has been upgraded in the past as it can be seen on the satellite images; however, the mission was unable to check if works have been undertaken recently on it, as claimed by various sources.

⁵² file:///C:/Users/herve/Downloads/mis900-apr2008-1.pdf (p. 11).

⁵³ file:///C:/Users/herve/Downloads/Monitoring_mission_Caucasus_2010.pdf (§ 3.3.2, p. 17).

⁵⁴ file:///C:/Users/herve/Downloads/mis900-sep2012-5.pdf (§ 3.2.5, p. 26).

⁵⁵ Decision 45 COM 7B.27.

⁵⁶ <https://www.hs.fi/feature/art-2000009365336.html>.

⁵⁷ *Inter alia*: Note on "Consider the progress made by the State Party in implementing the decisions of the UNESCO and the recommendations of the 2010 and 2012 Reactive Monitoring missions (as of 2024)", p. 8.

⁵⁸ Forest regulation dated 20 January 2022.

⁵⁹ Credit: MNRE. October 2024 (Information note on Infrastructure on the territory of the Caucasus State Nature Biosphere Reserve, p. 3).



Figure 4 – The Lunnaya Polyana area in 2013
(Credit: Maxar Technologies/UNESCO).



Figure 5 – The Lunnaya Polyana area in 2016
(Credit: Maxar Technologies/UNESCO).



Figure 6 – The Lunnaya Polyana area in 2017
(Credit: Maxar Technologies/UNESCO).

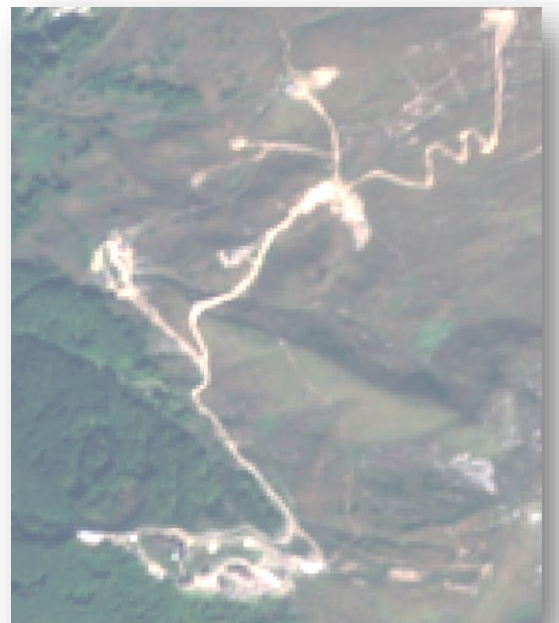


Figure 7 – The Lunnaya Polyana area in 2023
(Credit: Maxar Technologies/UNESCO).

As shown on the satellite images (**Figures 4 to 7**), whilst the overall complex does not appear to have been significantly extended since the last Reactive Monitoring mission, the development within it has become denser. It also seems to have improved in terms of integration of those facilities into the overall natural landscape. No further works seem to have been undertaken since 2023, that have compromised the OUV of the property (in response to the question of the Committee).

Furthermore, the mission was not able to obtain precise information on the frequency and level of occupation of this complex, which could have provided useful information on the existence and level of potential threats to the integrity of the property.

The mission deeply regrets that it was not able to visit the area to assess the current context in more normal and acceptable conditions. Under these conditions, it cannot reasonably come to a more robust conclusion on the impacts of the Lunnaya Polyana complex and its access road on the OUV of the property.

5.3 Pressure on the Sochi National Park

Pressure is also growing in the SNP, on the eastern and southern borders of the property.

Although often diffuse, the sprawl of this territory increases the accessibility of the property and is a factor of degradation and disturbance of the ecosystems and species present, both flora and fauna (criterion x), as well as of the ecological and biological processes that govern them, on the basis of which the site was listed as World Heritage (criterion ix).

In this overall context and as recommended by the previous missions, the establishment of a buffer zone, seems more necessary than ever in order to constitute an added layer to the protection of the property. This new buffer zone should not be confused with the northern buffer zone of the CSNBR which is part of the property.

According to the State Party⁶⁰, “*work has been organized to establish a protection zone of the Caucasus State Natural Biosphere Reserve along the entire perimeter of its borders. Activities that have a negative harmful impact on the natural complexes of the reserve will be prohibited within the boundaries of the protection zone*”. The State Party should be encouraged to continue and accelerate its efforts in the establishment of this protection zone that should cover a part of the SNP territory, adjacent to the reserve, and consequently, to the property.

A particular attention should be given to the preservation of the Mzimta valley where the SFWR also adjacent to the property, play a key role in maintaining the biological interest of the whole region, especially in winter, for the brown bear and other large fauna species contributing to the OUV of the property and its functional integrity⁶¹.

The mission considers that an Advisory mission could help the State Party in completing that work of delimitation of the boundaries and definition of the management of this buffer zone, in a way that may meet the Committee requirements; this buffer zoner would strengthen the effective protection of the property, in accordance with the State Party’s intention to establish a protection zone along the entire perimeter of the CSNBR (OG, § 31 d).

5.4 The Persian leopard reintroduction project

Disappeared from the Western Caucasus in the nineteen fifties, before the site was inscribed on the World Heritage List, due to poaching and the degradation and fragmentation of its habitats, the Persian leopard (*Pantera pardus tulliana*) was not one of the assets that determined the establishment of its OUV on the basis of criteria (ix) and (x). The reappearance of this species in the early 2000s therefore constitutes a strengthening of the OUV of the

⁶⁰ MNRE, no date - Note on “Recommendations of the monitoring mission held from 23-27 September 2012”, § 7, p. 8.

⁶¹ *Inter alia*: Trepet, S.A., Eskina, T.G., Pkhikv, A.B., Kudaktin, A.N. and Bibina, K.V. (2020) – Current status and dynamics of the brown bear population (*Ursus arctos meridionalis*) within the Western Caucasus, in Zoological Journal, vol. 99, N°3, 2020, pp. 351-360.

property under criterion (x), following the decision of the State Party to undertake a reintroduction project.

Launched in 2007, this Target Federal Programme is run by the MNRE with support from the private sector and scientific organizations, such as the Academy of Science and other national and international (IUCN and European Association of Zoos and Aquaria).

It is based on the release of individuals born in captivity in a dedicated breeding centre located near Sochi, outside and on the south-western edge of the property, from a brood stock consisting of 7 individuals coming first from Iran and Turkmenistan then supplied by zoos in Portugal and more recently Sweden⁶²; this stock would have produced to date 15 cubs, 11 of them released into the wild⁶³.

According to information provided by the State Party, four individuals (one female and three males) born in captivity were released in the property between 2018 and 2023, and four others in Northern Ossetia Alania.

All individuals were fitted with radio-collars when released and they were monitored from the air and from the ground. A camera trap programme also helps provide information on the movements of the animals and their behaviors in the wild. Local population is informed on a regular basis on the presence and movements of the released individuals.

The mission visited the breeding centre (**Figure 8**), spoke with the team in charge of what is a very delicate and sensitive programme and shared various publications on this project (**Figures 9 to 11**).



Figure 8 – Persian leopard breeding centre facilities (Credit: Lethier/UNESCO).

⁶² For more details on this project and on the Persian leopard in general: IUCN/SSC/Cat Specialist Group Cat News special issue No. 15 (<http://catsg.org/index.php?id=779>).

⁶³ The data provided should be considered with caution; they vary depending on the sources used and it was often difficult for the mission to verify and cross-reference them.

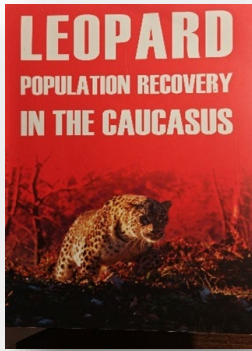


Figure 9
(Credit: Lethier/UNESCO).

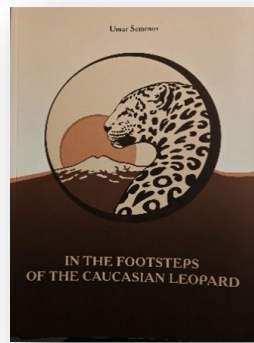


Figure 10
(Credit: Lethier/UNESCO).

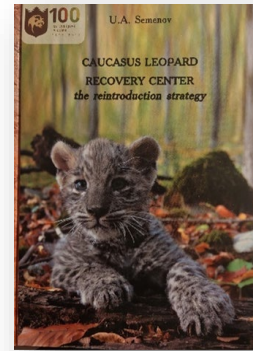


Figure 11
(Credit: Lethier/UNESCO).

In addition, due to the limited lifespan of the GPS transmitters, the released animals can only be monitored for a few months, after which it becomes more difficult to ensure their monitoring. Thus, at present, none of the individuals released on the property's territory are still being monitored, and converging information suggests that all released individuals have left this territory after having been observed sometimes in very remote lowlands areas close to Maikop, for example⁶⁴.

It is not currently possible to conclude on the full success of this project as no sign of reproduction *in situ* has yet been confirmed. Furthermore, according to external public information⁶⁵, several individuals would have been poached or destroyed, one of them shot during a recent release operation in July 2024, leading to reactions from the scientific community⁶⁶ and the opening of a judicial enquiry by the prosecutor of the Krasnodar region⁶⁷. However, the mission was not able to obtain confirmation about this last incident, despite several requests to the officials met during its visit and after its return.

To conclude, the mission did not receive clear information on the progress of this project, in particular on the various difficulties encountered in its implementation. It also had to base its analysis on sometimes contradictory data depending on the sources used, without always being able to confirm the reliability of the available information, despite repeated requests to its official contacts.

5.5 Impacts of invasive alien species on the OUV of the property

The development of invasive plant and animal species in the Western Caucasus region became an issue raised by the Committee in 2018, in connection with the invasion of the box tree moth (*Cydalima perspectalis*) in the Colchic boxwood forests in the Sochi region (**Figure 12**). Within just a few years, this species decimated nearly all boxwood forests along the Black Sea coast. However, despite its presence in the SNP, it appears to have largely spared the property so far; while it is present, it has not yet spread widely.

⁶⁴ Source: CSNBR staff members.

⁶⁵ <https://kedr.media/research/pochemu-ubili-terek/>. <https://kedr.media/news/ohrannik-ispugalsya-za-ministra-chto-izvestno-o-veroyatnoj-gibeli-leoparda-terek-pri-vypuske-v-prirodu/>.

⁶⁶ <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Sh2iznkeTTcGilldPiNV5irj1uqDXFB8/view>.

⁶⁷ <https://tass.ru/proisshestiya/21744469>.



Figure 12 - Colchic boxwood forests degraded by the box tree moth in the SNP and being restored (Credit: Lethier/UNESCO).

Coming from East Asia, this invasive species of moth is unfortunately not the only invasive alien species present in the Western Caucasus region. Although there is no official exhaustive list of invasive alien species present in the region, the scientific literature reveals the presence of many of them, both animal (mammals⁶⁸, reptiles⁶⁹ and insects⁷⁰ amongst others) and plants⁷¹. According to the information provided to the mission and to the best of knowledge, 74 alien invasive plant species and three invasive insect species have been recorded to date in the property.

In the context of the Western Caucasus, the State Party is also concerned about two other species of parasites, the oak lace bug (*Corythucha arcuata*) and the oriental chestnut gall wasp (*Dryocosmus kuriphilus*), affecting chestnut (*Castanea sativa*) forests, another emblematic species of the Caucasus (**Figure 13**). Both species are listed on the unified list of species subject to quarantine inspection of the Eurasian Economic Union that regulates amongst other uses and activities, export/import and transportation of those species⁷².

⁶⁸ Tembotonova, F.A. and Emkhuzheva, M.M. (2023) – Alien mammals in the ecosystems of the Central Part of the North Caucasus, Tembotov Institute of ecology of mountain territories, Russian Academy of Sciences, Nalchik, Russia, Russian Journal of Biological Invasions 14(3): pp. 417-436.

⁶⁹ Tuniyev, B.S., 1* Leo M. Shagarov, L.M. and Olkhovsky, D.A. (2023) – Trends in the Transition of alien herpetofauna species to the status of invasive in the Krasnodar Kray, Russian Journal of Herpetology, Vol. 30, No. 1, 2023, pp. 20-26.

⁷⁰ Shchurov V.I. (2021) – Findings of new, rare, little-known and invasive species of insects (insecta: odonata, mantodea, orthoptera, heteroptera, coleoptera, hymenoptera, diptera, lepidoptera) in the north-western Caucasus. Caucasus, doi:10.47370/978-5-91692-926-3-2021-157-176.

⁷¹ Pshegusov, R.Kh. and Chadaeva, V.A. (2023) – Integrated approach to taking into account environmental factors in models of current distribution and climatic dynamics *Ambrosia Artemisiifolia* L. in the Caucasus, Russian Journal of Biological Invasions, N°3, 2023, pp. 149-166. Pshegusova, H., Chadaevaa, V.A. and Komzhab, A.L. (2020) - Spatial modeling of the range and long-term climatogenic dynamics of *Ambrosia* L. Species in the Caucasus, Tembotov Institute of Ecology of Mountain Territories, Russian Academy of Sciences, Nalchik, 360051 Russia, Russian Journal of Biological Invasions, 2020, Vol. 11, No. 1, pp. 74-84. Shchurov V.I., Tabachnikova E.V., Zamotaylov A.S., Bely A.I. and Trubilin, T. (2021) – New findings of the invasive bed bug, *Oxycaenus Lavaterae* (Fabricius, 1787) (Heteroptera, Lygaeidae) from the Krasnodar territory, DOI:10.47370/978-5-91692-926-3-2021-176-187.

⁷² Decision of the Eurasian Union Commission No. 158 dated 30.11.2016. (<https://www.fao.org/faolex/results/details/fr/c/LEX-FAOC185127/>).



Figure 13 – Attack of chestnut gall wasp on a leaf of chestnut tree
(Credit: Lethier/UNESCO).

The State Party is also working on a new legal framework aiming to improve the existing law on specially protected areas⁷³ to better address the protection of protected areas from invasive species of flora and fauna in general.

In 2018, the Committee requested the State Party⁷⁴ (1) to assess the extent of the damage and its impact on the OUV of the property, (2) to develop with relevant specialists, including the IUCN SSC Invasive Specialist Group, a set of urgent measures for the restoration of these forests and control the box tree moth invasion, and (3) to evaluate risks posed to the OUV of the property by other potential invasive alien species which may also have been introduced to the property or the broader region.

Since then, the State Party has taken a series of measures to prevent and combat the invasion of these species in the region, including on the property, where their spread seems to have been relatively well contained to date.

Since then, a roadmap for implementing measures for the use of biological methods and chemicals to combat invasive organisms⁷⁵ as well as a guidance on the use of chemical and biological pesticides in specially protected areas⁷⁶ were adopted, at federal level, in 2021.

Various technical activities have also been experimented and are being undertaken in order to fight these pests:

- use of chemical and biological methods and programmes to fight the oak lace bug;

⁷³ Law No. 33-FZ dated 14 March 1995.

⁷⁴ Decision 42COM 7B.80 of the World Heritage Committee.

⁷⁵ Decision of the Minister of Natural Resources and Environment No. 01-15-53/7201 dated 19 March 2021.

⁷⁶ Decision of the Minister of Natural Resources and Environment No. 01-15-53/9964 dated 9 April 2021.

- release and monitoring of an entomophagus (*Torymus sinensis*) to fight against the chestnut gall wasp; this insect imported from Italy, was released both in the SNP and in the CSNBR where this pest is locally present;
- implementation of a box tree nursery and planting programme in the SNP; several thousand of seeds are sowed every year in the SNP.

In conclusion, the issue of invasive alien species is addressed by the State through three complementary approaches:

- improving knowledge of the presence, trends and tendencies of these species throughout the Western Caucasus region, with support of the scientific community;
- improving the legal framework aimed at preventing the risk of invasion by these species and regulating the use and methods designed to combat their spread by biological and chemical means, taking into account the ecological sensitivity of the area, in particular the SNP and the CSNBR;
- developing and implementing restoration programmes of forest ecosystems that have been adversely affected, with priority given to preserving oak, chestnut and boxwood trees that are the most sensitive and directly affected by invasive alien species.

According to the information provided by the State Party, the native boxwood forests of the property are affected locally. However, they seem to be regenerating slowly, particularly in the northern sector where the parasite appeared in 2016; however, it is not yet possible to conclude that it has completely disappeared from its territory.

The mission concludes that the presence and development of invasive alien species remains a matter of concern for the preservation of the OUV of the property. It is crucial to pursue the programme of activities dedicated to the fight against these species, while recognising the extreme difficulty of combating this problem through the usual means, given the ecological sensitivity of the property and the need for the State Party to preserve both the species and the ecosystems present, as well as the ecological and biological processes which also contribute to preserving its functional integrity.

5.6 Cumulative impacts from the above-mentioned developments

Noting (1) the intentions of the State party to develop tourism projects (e.g.: Lagonaki Plateau) and upgrade existing roads in the property and in its immediate vicinity (e.g.: Lagonaki/Guzerypl), (2) the potential threats mentioned earlier in this report coming from the new regulation applied within several components (e.g.: Nature parks regulation), (3) as well as information received by the mission during its visit of other major construction works and projects (e.g.: upgrade of Lunnaya forest road, Lagonaki/Sochi road, Arkhyz/Krasnaya railway and highway) that may be initiated in the future within the property or in its vicinity, the mission considers it is relevant, at this stage, to start a process to develop an overall strategic approach to socio-economic development in the whole area, including the property and its surroundings.

This approach should (1) involve the respective governmental agencies at federal and regional levels, as well as all relevant stakeholders (e.g.: economic and academic sectors, NGOs), (2) be based on a thorough assessment of all the expected impacts of those foreseen and potential initiatives (e.g.: intentions and projects), and seeks to define a clear vision and strategic objectives for a development in the whole area, which is consistent with the long-term conservation of the OUV of the property.

To this end, it also concludes that a Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment (SEIA) should be carried out prior to any work and project that may create potential threats to the OUV of the

property, in line with *the Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context* taking into consideration the cumulative effects with other projects in the perspective area. The State Party should be made aware of this and invited to take this recommendation into account in its future intentions, plans and projects, at all levels, federal and regional.

6. PROGRESS ACHIEVED BY THE STATE PARTY IN ADDRESSING THE DECISIONS BY THE WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE AND THE PREVIOUS REACTIVE MONITORING MISSIONS AND ADVISORY MISSION

The elements above already provide an overview of the progress made since the last Reactive Monitoring mission, by the State Party, in order to respond to the expectations and concerns of the Committee, some of which having been reiterated several times over the past 20 years.

The mission considers however that the preservation of the OUV of the property will depend, in the future, mainly on the capacity of the State Party (1) to ensure that large infrastructures (e.g.: roads, railways, airport, ski facilities in Lagonaki), will not be created inside the property and (2) to organize a wise territorial development throughout the region of the Western Caucasus, taking into account the values and particular sensitivity of the property, recognized worldwide.

In this context, the mission wishes to emphasize the absolute need for the State Party to continue and accelerate its efforts with a view to clarifying and resolving the following issues, raised up by the Committee and during previous missions, as a high priority:

- clarify without delay the exact current boundaries of the Bolshoy Tkhach Nature Park;
- complete the work in progress to delineate the northern buffer zone of the CSNBR and define its legal protection status in domestic law as well as its objectives and management regime in the nearest future, according to the official timetable established by the State Party;
- lead without further delay the reflection on an overall management system for the property, meeting the standards imposed by the Convention and the OGs and apply this regime at the latest by the end of 2025, according to the official timetable established by the State Party;
- continue and complete as soon as possible, the ongoing reflection with a view to creating a buffer zone of the property around its entire perimeter, and define also both its legal protection status and its management regime;
- start a process to develop an overall strategic approach for a sustainable socio-economic development in the region (Western Caucasus), including tourism.

The State Party should also commit to stop and reverse the weakening of the legal status and regime of protection of the property, initiated by creating the biosphere polygon.

Overall, these priorities are included in the mission's recommendations.

7. OVERALL STATE OF CONSERVATION OF THE PROPERTY AND FACTORS AND CONSERVATION ISSUES THAT COULD POTENTIALLY IMPACT ITS OUV INCLUDING ITS CONDITIONS OF INTEGRITY

The property was inscribed on the World Heritage List under natural criteria (ii) and (iv) (currently criteria (ix) and (x))⁷⁷. While there is not yet a Statement of OUV for the property, the IUCN evaluation of the nomination justifies these criteria as follows:

- Criterion (ix): since the last glaciation, ecological succession has taken place across the property, resulting in a great diversity of ecosystems. The forests are remarkable at the European scale for their lack of human disturbance, i.e., natural ecological processes have continued over millennia. Vegetation dynamics and timberline have not been influenced by the grazing of domestic animals; an unusual situation at a global scale. There are notable and important populations of both ungulates and wolves, providing opportunities for studying both competitive interactions between grazing animals and predator-prey interactions.
- Criterion (x): the Caucasus are one of the global centres of plant diversity. The nominated site includes nearly one third of the 6,000 plant species of the Greater Caucasus, including Tertiary relicts and Mediterranean and Asiatic Turano-Iranian elements. About a third of the high mountain species and about a fifth of the forest species are endemic. The fauna is also very rich. The site is the place of origin and reintroduction of the mountain sub-species of the European bison, and acts as a reservoir for its expansion through the region. There are stable populations of many other large mammals. The Western Caucasus avifauna is rich and includes many endemic species. There are also high levels of species richness and endemism in the lower orders. The rich biological diversity of the site is of global value, reflecting its location at the meeting place of elements from surrounding regions and its isolation, its size, including a wide range of undisturbed ecosystems above an altitude of more than 3,000 m and its importance as habitat for threatened species.

The evaluation report noted that apart from the Virgin Komi Forests in the Ural Mountains, the nominated site is probably the only large mountain area in Europe that has not experienced significant human impacts.

Since then, the overall context has evolved significantly in the West Caucasus region, and pressures on the property have considerably diversified and increased. Several new projects could in the future constitute major threats to the property and its OUV, in particular the construction of road and railway infrastructures as well as the development of large-scale socio-economic activities (e.g. ski facilities) within and in the immediate periphery of the property where these threats appear strongest and may lead to inscribing the property on the list of World Heritage in Danger if those intentions were to be confirmed.

The state of conservation of the property does not appear to have deteriorated in recent years to the point of compromising its OUV; furthermore, its functional integrity remains largely intact, with most challenges originating outside of the property's boundaries, although very close to the property (e.g. road equipment on the edge of the Lagonaki Plateau, deterioration of certain sectors within the SNP).

However, given the weakening of protection status and the still largely insufficient progress made by the State Party in responding to the Committee's expectations and concerns, including restoration of adequate protection across the whole of the property, it is imperative that the State Party unwaveringly honour its commitments to resolve issues central to the

⁷⁷ IUCN Evaluation report, March 1998.

future of the property, within the deadlines it has set (see the priorities set out in § 6).

Hence, whilst not recommending inscription of the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger, the mission considers that it is essential that the State Party deliver urgently all clarifications needed on each concern expressed by the Committee and, above, by the mission, in terms of boundaries, zoning and legal regulation of certain key uses and activities, within a number of components of the property, without which the property may meet the criteria for inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger, recalling that legal protection comprises a key pillar of OUV. The mission further reiterates the clear position of the World Heritage Committee, as noted above, that the construction of large-scale infrastructure within the property, including on the Lagonaki Plateau, would lead to the conditions for inclusion on the List of World Heritage in Danger being met.

The mission recommends that all parties (i.e. the State Party, UNESCO, IUCN and the other socioeconomic stakeholders) pursue and strengthen dialogue that will enable progress towards concerted responses to the difficulties the property currently faces and towards the full preservation of its functional integrity.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, the mission considers that there is a strong need to urgently address the aforementioned issues through full and effective implementation of the recommendations hereafter to avoid inscription of the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger in the future. More efforts should be made by the State Party to respond properly and urgently to the Committee's decisions, with the scientific and technical expertise of IUCN, as Advisory Body to the Committee.

Furthermore, the direct involvement of local authorities in these efforts to preserve the OUV of the property and its integrity should also be considerably strengthened, given their responsibilities for the protection and management of several components of the property and their key role in the socio-economic development of the whole region.

The mission makes the following recommendations:

Within two months of receipt of the report, the State Party should:

Recommendation 1 – provide the World Heritage Centre and IUCN with all required detailed information on the boundaries, zoning and regulation of the Mountain Adygea Nature Park and the Upper Tsitsa River Nature Park as compared to the regulation of the natural monuments they replaced, as well as detailed high-resolution maps of those protected areas.

Recommendation 2 – clarify the protection and management context of the boundaries of the Bolshoy Tkhach Nature Park and, if necessary, restore their context, both in terms of the legal protection and the management regime, to levels at least equivalent to those which existed when the property was inscribed. The attention of the local authorities should also be drawn to the negative impacts of the all-terrain vehicle traffic in and along the property, and to the necessity to strictly regulate those uses and activities in the components under their responsibility, in order to ensure the features and environmental processes which convey the property's significance.

Recommendation 3 – immediately stop the road construction project between Lagonaki and Guzerypl and start the process of undertaking an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) in accordance with the *Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context*⁷⁸. This EIA should be submitted to the World Heritage Centre and IUCN for review before any further work and extension (OG, § 118 bis).

Recommendation 4 – provide written confirmation to the World Heritage Centre that the Lagonaki/Sochi road project and the Arkyz/Krasnaya Polyana railway and highway projects, as well as any other similar works and projects of transport infrastructure projects in the property or its surroundings, which may have a strong impact on its OUV, are not currently within the Government's intentions (OG, § 139) and agenda.

Recommendation 5 – clarify the location of the Biosphere Centre in relation to the established boundaries of the property and the nature and level of use of this complex and provide written confirmation to the World Heritage Centre that no work has been carried out on it and access road since 2023. In the future, the State Party should not undertake any upgrading and extension works in this area (Biosphere Centre and forest access road) before providing the Committee with all necessary information and assessments to seek appropriate solutions to minimise the potential negative impacts of the works on the integrity of the property and to ensure the preservation of its OUV.

⁷⁸ <https://whc.unesco.org/en/guidance-toolkit-impact-assessments/>.

Recommendation 6 – provide a written commitment to the World Heritage Centre to stop and reverse the weakening of the legal status and protection regime of the property initiated by the creation of the Biosphere Polygon, and to ensure that all areas of the property benefit from a legal status sufficient to meet the requirements of the Operational Guidelines and previous Decisions of the World Heritage Committee.

As a matter of priority in the near future, and no later than 31 December 2025, the State Party should:

Recommendation 7 – complete the ongoing process to re-establishing the northern buffer zone of the CSNBR to its state at the time of inscription, in terms of boundaries, legal protection and management regime, and submit an updated high-resolution map of this zone with all necessary information to the World Heritage Centre for review by IUCN, prior to any decision⁷⁹. The attention of the Federal and Regional Governments should also be strongly drawn to their obligations to fully preserve the functional integrity of this part of the property, where no work or project that may threaten or damage its OUV can be undertaken and authorised, wherever they are located, within the property or in the vicinity, including its northern buffer zone.

Recommendation 8 – as recommended by the previous Reactive Monitoring (2010, 2012) and Advisory (2016) missions and requested by the Committee in 2013, complete the ongoing process of establishing a buffer zone around the whole property that meets the requirements of the World Heritage Convention (Art. 103 et seq.) and the OG (§ 31 d). The boundaries, legal protection and management regime of this buffer zone should be closely discussed with the regional/local governments and other local stakeholders and then submitted to the World Heritage Centre for review by IUCN prior to their adoption, together with a detailed high-resolution map of its boundaries.

Recommendation 9 – initiate an overall strategic approach to ensure sustainable socio-economic development compatible with the OUV of the property and the requirements of the Operational Guidelines, including tourism, for the property and its surroundings, and undertake a Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment (SEIA) aligning with the principles outlined in the *Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context*. The State Party should also adapt its current legal framework and technical capacities to undertake cumulative impact assessments in a timely manner, including as part of EIAs for individual potential future projects, and to inform strategic development planning for multiple projects at the regional level.

Recommendation 10 – submit to the Committee, as soon as they are available, the master plan and EIA for any specific all-season mountain resort project that may be planned in the future in the property and its vicinity. In accordance with the Committee's previous decisions, any such project should not include large infrastructure and facilities within the property, and should ensure that recreational and tourist activities are pursued only where their environmental impact can be demonstrated to be low.

Finally, in the medium/long term, the State Party should also:

Recommendation 11 – pursue the reintroduction of the Persian leopard in line with the 2013 IUCN Guidelines for Reintroductions and Other Conservation Translocations⁸⁰, the

⁷⁹ See Decision 36 COM 7B.23.

⁸⁰ <https://iucn.org/resources/publication/guidelines-reintroductions-and-other-conservation-translocations>.

2017 IUCN Guidelines for Species Conservation Planning⁸¹ and the 2022 Strategy for the Conservation of the Leopard in the Caucasus Ecoregion⁸², in close cooperation with the IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC) Cat Specialist Group.

Recommendation 12 – pursue and foster all programmes to the fight against invasive species, together with regional/local protected area managers and stakeholders, in close cooperation with the IUCN SSC Invasive Species Specialist Group⁸³, using products and methods that are fully compatible with the maintenance of the OUV of the property and guaranteeing its functional ecological and biological integrity. A detailed high-resolution map showing the distribution of invasive species and their trends over the years should be provided to the Committee in the future to monitor the situation.

⁸¹ <https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/2017-065.pdf>.

⁸² https://www.cms.int/sites/default/files/document/Caucasus%20regional%20conservation%20strategy%20for%20Persian%20Leopard%20_Maka%20Bitsadze.pdf.

⁸³ <https://iucn.org/our-union/commissions/group/iucn-ssc-invasive-species-specialist-group>.

ANNEXES

Annex 1. Terms of Reference of the joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission to the World Heritage property ‘Western Caucasus’ (Russian Federation) (15 to 21 September 2024)

I. Purpose of the Reactive Monitoring mission

At its 45th session, the World Heritage Committee requested the State Party of the Russian Federation to invite a joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission to the World Heritage property ‘Western Caucasus’.

The objectives of the Reactive Monitoring mission are to review the overall state of conservation of the property and the progress made in the implementation of the Committee’s Decisions **45 COM 7B.27** (Riyadh, 2023) and **46 COM 7B.54** (New Delhi, 2024), as well as previous Committee Decisions and mission recommendations.

The main objective of the Reactive Monitoring mission is to assess the state of conservation of the property, in particular the status of planned infrastructure and road development projects within and in the vicinity of the property and their cumulative impacts, as well as the status and adequacy of the legal protection system of the property.

With regard to this purpose, the mission shall:

1. Review the legal protection status and boundaries of the property and any changes which would have occurred since its inscription, in particular:
 - a. The protection status and boundaries of the whole Lagonaki plateau;
 - b. The protection status and boundaries of the northern buffer zone of the Western Caucasus Strictly Protected area;
 - c. The protection and boundaries status of the different nature parks and nature monuments included in the property and their revised zoning (in particular the creation of economic zones);
 - d. The territory of the Lunnaya Polyana Biosphere Centre;
 - e. The status of any biosphere polygons created within the property and the impacts on its legal protection;
 - f. Any other legal changes which might impact the legal protection of the property, including the current legal status of the regional protected areas managed by the Republic of Adygea, and assess whether the legal regulations applying to all the components of the property are in line with the protection requirements of the Operational Guidelines, and provide detailed information on the legal status of all components of the property ahead of the Reactive Monitoring mission.
2. Analyse the development status of all major construction projects in the property and its wider setting, whether proposed, approved or being implemented, and their potential impacts on the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property, in particular:
 - a. The planned ski resort at Lagonaki;
 - b. The road to the Lunnaya Polyana Biosphere Centre;
 - c. Proposed large-scale infrastructure in the Sochi Federal Wildlife Refuge and the Sochi National Park immediately adjacent to the property;
 - d. A proposed new highway and railway connecting the North Caucasus to the Black Sea, including routes that would bisect the property;

- e. Proposals to develop a 13 km tunnel, through the property, for the road between Arkhyz and Krasnaya Polyana;
 - f. Other potential road developments crossing the property or close to its boundaries;
 - g. Any other major infrastructure project planned in or in the vicinity of the property;
 - h. Assess the cumulative impacts from the abovementioned developments.
3. Review the progress achieved by the State Party in addressing Decisions by the World Heritage Committee, the recommendations of the 2010 and 2012 World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring missions, and the 2016 IUCN Advisory mission.
 4. Evaluate the scale of the impacts of invasive alien species on the OUV of the property.
 5. Assess the overall state of conservation of the property and evaluate factors and conservation issues that could potentially impact its OUV, including its conditions of integrity.

Based on the above, the mission shall assess if the property fulfils the criteria for inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger, in accordance with Paragraph 180 of the Operational Guidelines.

II. Organisation of the Reactive Monitoring mission

The State Party should facilitate necessary field visits to key locations inside the property and its setting, in particular Lagonaki Plateau, the area of the northern buffer zone included in the property, the Lunnaya Polyana biosphere centre and road development towards it, and the leased areas in the Sochi National Park and the Sochi Federal Wildlife Refuge.

In order to facilitate the preparation of the mission, the State Party should cooperate with the World Heritage Centre and IUCN in preparing a detailed mission programme and a list of persons and institutions to be consulted, which should be submitted in draft form to the World Heritage Centre for review as soon as possible and no later than 15 days prior to the mission.

In addition, preferably no later than one month prior to the mission, the State Party should provide the World Heritage Centre with the following documentation:

- a. A concise overview of the legal protection of the property, including the legal protection regime of the whole Lagonaki Plateau and details on the legal protection status of all the regional protected areas included in the property including the so-called northern buffer zone;
- b. Status update of the preparation of Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) of following projects:
 - the ski resort at the Lagonaki Plateau,
 - large-scale infrastructure in the Sochi Federal Wildlife Refuge and Sochi National Park,
 - the road to Lunnaya Polyana;
- c. Updated maps, including a map of the established economic zones.

The State Party should organise working meetings and consultations between the mission team and the relevant authorities/organisations and all other stakeholders, including the representatives of the local communities, the scientific community, relevant tourism associations, and environmental NGOs, in particular, Environmental Watch North Caucasus, Environmental Association "Nature protection", "Expert council of the nature protected areas

management”, Independent initiative group “Lagonaki live (Lagonaki zhivi)”, and the NABU Caucasus programme.

In accordance with established practice, the World Heritage Centre and IUCN mission experts will not address the media or discuss the findings and recommendations of the mission, which should be presented only in the final report of the mission.

III. Report to be delivered

Following the on-site mission, the World Heritage Centre and IUCN will prepare a concise report in accordance with the terms of reference of the mission for consideration by the World Heritage Committee at its 47th session. The mission report will follow the report format of the World Heritage Centre and Advisory Bodies Reactive Monitoring mission. Prior to finalisation, the report will be transmitted in electronic format to the State Party for verification of any factual errors.

Annex 2. Decision 46 COM 7B.54 - Western Caucasus (Russian Federation) (N 900)

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Document WHC/24/46.COM/7B.Add,
2. Recalling Decisions [32 COM 7B.25](#), [42 COM 7B.80](#), [43 COM 7B.18](#), [44 COM 7B.110](#) and [45 COM 7B.27](#) adopted at its 32nd (Quebec City, 2008), 42nd (Manama, 2018), 43rd (Baku, 2019), extended 44th (Fuzhou/online, 2021) and extended 45th (Riyadh, 2023) sessions, respectively,
3. Recalling that the Lagonaki Plateau is essential in expressing the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property, in particular for its rich biodiversity, especially its high carabid species diversity, and the fact that the area contains two thirds of the vascular plant species of the property, including many endemics, expresses its utmost concern at the confirmation that the construction of a ski resort in the Lagonaki area of the property remains under consideration;
4. Reaffirms its position that the construction of large-scale infrastructure within the property, including on the Lagonaki Plateau, would constitute a case for inscription of the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger, in accordance with Paragraph 180 of the Operational Guidelines, and urges the State Party not to proceed with plans for a ski resort within the property, to immediately cease all ongoing preparatory work at Lagonaki and to identify alternative locations outside the property;
5. Reiterates its utmost concern about the plans for the construction of a new highway and railway connecting the North Caucasus to the Black Sea, including routes that would bisect the property, and urges again the State Party not to proceed with these developments, in accordance with the assurances provided at the time of inscription that no linear infrastructure projects such as highways or railways would be allowed within the property;
6. Requests the State Party to provide further information on the proposals to develop a 13 km tunnel, through the property, for the road between Arkhyz and Krasnaya Polyana, including its exact location, and further urges the State Party not to proceed if it is inconsistent with the protection requirements outlined in the Operational Guidelines, or if it may negatively impact the OUV of the property;
7. Noting the information that the Lunnaya Polyana road is used for forestry and fire management purposes, recalls the importance of ensuring that all infrastructure, even if deemed necessary for management and research purposes, does not have a negative impact on the OUV of the property, and further requests the State Party to clarify whether the road provides access to the private ski resort / Biosphere Centre at Lunnaya Polyana;
8. Reiterates its request to the State Party not to allow the construction of large-scale infrastructure in the Sochi Federal Wildlife Refuge and the Sochi National Park immediately adjacent to the property, given its potential impact on the OUV of the property, and also requests the State Party to immediately halt the notified infrastructure projects until their potential impacts have been adequately assessed in accordance with the Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context and the resulting Environmental Impact Assessments submitted to the World Heritage Centre for review by IUCN;

9. Also reiterates its request to the State Party to define a strategic approach to tourism development, including through the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) reported to be underway, by identifying suitable alternative locations for tourism infrastructure development outside the boundaries of the property, as well as appropriate mitigation measures to ensure that any tourism-related development in the vicinity of the property is consistent with the preservation of the OUV of the property;
10. Notes with appreciation that the draft law that would have allowed the boundaries of federally protected areas to be changed to accommodate economic activities has been suspended;
11. Expresses further concern about the protection status of different components of the property managed by the Republic of Adygea, and urges again the State Party to ensure that the legal regulations applying to all components of the property are brought into line with the protection requirements of the Operational Guidelines, and to provide detailed information on the legal status of all components of the property ahead of the Reactive Monitoring mission;
12. Notes the proposal by the State Party to hold the joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission in October 2024 and reiterates the need for the mission to assess the state of conservation of the property, in particular the status of planned infrastructure and road development projects within and in the vicinity of the property and their cumulative impacts, the status and adequacy of the legal protection of the property and whether the property meets the conditions for inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger in accordance with Paragraph 180 of the Operational Guidelines, and to assess other threats to the property, including the extent of the impact of invasive alien species;
13. Finally requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by **1 February 2025**, 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, **considering that the urgent conservation needs of this property require a broad mobilisation to preserve its OUV, including the possible inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger.**

Annex 3. Mission programme

Agenda of the Reactive Monitoring mission to the World Heritage property 'Western Caucasus'

No	Timing	Activity	Content of the activity/item of the Mission's ToR	Place
14 September				
1.	03.00	Arrival of the UNESCO expert	Pick up the delegation at the airport of Sochi; Assignment of interpreters to the delegation; Transfer to the 'Laura' cordon	Sochi Airport
2.	04.30	Accommodation		Sochi, Krasnaya Polyana, 'Laura' cordon
15 September				
1.	09:00 – 10:00	Breakfast		Sochi, Krasnaya Polyana, 'Laura' cordon
2.	10:00 – 13:00	Excursion to the aviary complex	1. Familiarization with the fauna of the Western Caucasus and tourist "traps" to reduce recreational pressure 2. Visit to the Trail of Feelings	
		Familiarization with tourist routes and tourist infrastructure of the Caucasus State Reserve	Visit to the tourist route No. 14 'Along the Achipse River Valley'	Caucasus State Nature Biosphere Reserve
3.	13:00 – 14:00	Lunch		Sochi, Krasnaya Polyana, 'Laura' cordon
4.	14:00 – 19:00	Visit to Krasnaya Polyana	Tourist routes and historical sites visit around the village: Efremov's Krugozor, dolmen complex, observation point on the Main Caucasus Ridge (Khmelevsky lakes).	Krasnaya Polyana
5.	19:00 – 20:00	Dinner		Krasnaya Polyana, 'Ranger's house'
6.	21:00	Returning to the 'Laura' cordon		Sochi, Krasnaya Polyana, 'Laura' cordon
16 September				
1.	09:00 – 10:00	Breakfast		Sochi, Krasnaya Polyana, 'Laura' cordon
2.	10:00 – 13:00	Meeting on the UNESCO site 'Western Caucasus'	Inception meeting on the Reactive Monitoring mission agenda, as well as providing of	

No	Timing	Activity	Content of the activity/item of the Mission's ToR	Place
			documentation on the Reactive Monitoring mission's ToR items	
3.	13:00 – 14:00	Lunch		
4.	14:00 – 16:00	Meeting on the UNESCO site 'Western Caucasus'	1 a. Conservation status and boundaries of the entire Lagonaki Plateau 1b. Conservation status and boundaries of the northern buffer (protection) zone of the West Caucasus strictly protected area 1 d. Territory of the Lunnaya Polyana Biosphere Center 1 e. Status of any biosphere polygons established on the site and their impact on the legal protection of the site 1 f. Any other changes in legislation that may affect the legal protection of the site, including the current legal status of regional PAs managed by the Republic of Adygeya, and assess whether the legal regulations applicable to all components of the site are consistent with the protection requirements set out in the Operational Guidelines 2 b. road to the Lunnaya Polyana Biosphere Center	
5.	16:00 – 16:30	Coffee break		
6.	16:30 – 18:30	Meeting on regional protected areas included into the UNESCO site 'Western Caucasus'	1c. The conservation status and boundaries of the various natural parks and nature monuments included into the site and their revised zones (in particular the creation of an economic zone)	
7.	19:00 – 20:30	Dinner		
17 September				
1.	03.00	Arrival of the IUCN expert		Sochi, Krasnaya Polyana, 'Laura' cordon
2..	04.30	Accommodation		
3.	09:00 – 10:00	Breakfast		
4.	10:00 – 11:00	Flight to Lagonaki Plateau		

No	Timing	Activity	Content of the activity/item of the Mission's ToR	Place
5.	11:00 – 13:00	Inspection of sites on the Lagonaki Plateau, inspection of the territory of natural parks included in the boundaries of the 'Western Caucasus' site	1 a. Conservation status and boundaries of the entire Lagonaki Plateau 1c. The conservation status and boundaries of the various natural parks and nature monuments included into the site and their revised zones (in particular the creation of an economic zone) 2 a. Planned Lagonaki ski resort 2 h. Assessment of cumulative impacts of the abovementioned developments	Lagonaki Plateau
6.	13:00 – 14:00	Lunch		
7.	14:00 – 16:00	Meeting on the development of projects in the Lagonaki Plateau area	1 a. Conservation status and boundaries of the entire Lagonaki Plateau 2 a. Planned ski Lagonaki resort	
8.	16:00 – 18:00	Transfer to the Republic of Adygea		Republic of Adygea
9.	18:00 – 18:30	Accommodation		
10.	18:30 – 20:00	Dinner		
18 September				
1.	09:00 – 10:00	Breakfast		Republic of Adygea
2.	10:00 – 13:00	Transfer by car from Republic of Adygea to Tuapse		
3.	13:00 – 14:00	Lunch		Tuapse
4.	14:00 – 15:00	Visit to Lazarevskoye forestry	4. Evaluate the magnitude of the impact of alien invasive species on the site's environment	Lazarevskoye forestry
5.	15:00 – 19:00	Transfer to Krasnaya Polyana		
6.	19:00 – 20:00	Dinner		Sochi, Krasnaya Polyana, 'Laura' cordon
19 September				
1.	08:00 – 09:00	Breakfast		
2.	09:00 – 10:30	Transfer from the 'Laura' cordon to the Leopard Recovery Center in the Caucasus		

No	Timing	Activity	Content of the activity/item of the Mission's ToR	Place
3.	10:30 – 13:00	Meeting on biodiversity conservation in the territory of the UNESCO site 'Western Caucasus'	3. Consider the progress made by the State Party in implementing the decisions of the UNESCO WHC, the recommendations of the 2010 and 2012 Reactive Monitoring missions and the 2016 Advisory mission	Sochi, Leopard Recovery Center in the Caucasus
4.	13:00 – 14:00	Transfer from the Leopard Recovery Center in the Caucasus to 'Laura' cordon		
5.	14:00 – 15:00	Lunch		Sochi, Krasnaya Polyana, "Laura" cordon
6.	15:00 – 17:00	Meeting on the scope of the environmental impacts of alien invasive species on the site's environment		
7.	17:00 – 17:30	Coffee break		
8.	17:30 – 20:00	UNESCO WHC decisions follow-up meeting	3. Consider the progress made by the State Party in implementing the decisions of the UNESCO WHC, recommendations of the 2010 and 2012 Reactive Monitoring missions and the 2016 Advisory mission	
9.	20:00 – 21:00	Dinner		
20 September				
1.	09:00 – 10:00	Breakfast		
2.	10:00 – 13:00	Meetings of the Reactive Monitoring mission team with representatives of authorities, organisations and all other stakeholders	Working meetings and consultations between the mission team and relevant authorities/organisations and all other stakeholders, including representatives of local communities, academia, relevant tourism associations and environmental NGOs, should be organised as part of the implementation of point 2.	Sochi, Krasnaya Polyana, 'Laura' cordon
3.	13:00 – 14:00	Lunch		Sochi, Krasnaya Polyana, 'Laura' cordon
4.	14:00 – 18:00	Summarizing the results of the Reactive Monitoring mission	5. Evaluate the overall state of preservation of the site and assess preservation factors and issues that could potentially affect its appearance, including its preservation conditions	Sochi, Krasnaya Polyana, 'Laura' cordon

№	Timing	Activity	Content of the activity/item of the Mission's ToR	Place
5.	18:30 – 19:30	Dinner		Sochi, Krasnaya Polyana, 'Laura' cordon
21 September				
1.	09:00 – 10:00	Breakfast		Sochi, Krasnaya Polyana, 'Laura' cordon
2.	10:00 – 14:00	Familiarization with tourist routes of the Caucasus State Reserve	Inspection of alpine meadows on the section of the Main watershed ridge between the Pseashkha massif and the Kardyvach mountain junction, altitude 2000 meters.	Caucasus State Nature Biosphere Reserve
3.	14:00 – 15:00	Lunch		
4.	15:00 – 19:00	Familiarization with tourist routes and tourist infrastructure of the Caucasus State Nature Biosphere Reserve	Panorama of snowy peaks and glaciers of Agepsta massif (3256 m).	
5.	19:00 – 20:00	Dinner		
6.	21:00	Returning to the Laura cordon		
22 September				
1.	22:00	Departure of the delegation of the UNESCO Reactive Monitoring mission		

Annex 4. Relevant Decisions of the World Heritage Committee since the last Reactive Monitoring mission (2012)

Related Decisions of the World Heritage Committee

Decision 36 COM 7B.23 (2012)⁸⁴

Expresses its utmost concern about Federal Law No. 365-FZ dated 30 November 2011, which is weakening the protection status of Strict State Nature Reserves and therefore could affect the Outstanding Universal Value of several World Heritage properties in the Russian Federation and reiterates its request to the State Party to take appropriate legal measures to maintain a high level of protection of the property or other Natural World Heritage properties on its territory, in accordance with Paragraph 15(f) of the Operational Guidelines when establishing the list of allowed infrastructure in the Strict Nature Reserves that are part of a World Heritage property;

Also expresses its serious concern about the plans to construct tourist and mountain ski facilities at Lagonaki and considers that a decision to proceed with plans to develop these facilities would affect the Outstanding Universal Value of the property and constitute a case for inscription of the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger, in line with Paragraph 180 of the *Operational Guidelines*;

Reiterates its request to urgently implement all recommendations of the 2010 monitoring mission in order to protect the property's Outstanding Universal Value, and in particular urges the State Party to immediately abandon any plans for recreational use of the Lagonaki Plateau, Mt Fisht and Mt Oshten areas and to halt all road developments in the property;

Encourages financial institutions not to invest in any developments on the Lagonaki Plateau or other parts of the property, which might impact its Outstanding Universal Value;

Regrets that the State Party has not submitted the updated map of the boundaries of the property and detailed information on the activities allowed in the Natural monuments which are part of the property, and urges the State Party to submit the updated map, showing the exact location of all proposed or planned infrastructure and the special economic zone, as well as documentation of all EIAs conducted for projects inside or adjacent to the property that might affect its Outstanding Universal Value for review by the World Heritage Centre and IUCN;

Decision 37 COM 7B.23 (2013)⁸⁵:

Expresses its concern about the changes in the legal protection of the property which make it possible to develop large scale tourism infrastructure on the Lagonaki Plateau situated within the property boundaries and reiterates its request to the State Party to ensure that no large scale ski or tourism infrastructure is built within the property;

Though the State Party reiterates its commitments not to develop any new capital construction projects that would affect the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) within the property boundaries, the World Heritage Committee considers that the installation of any such construction on the Lagonaki Plateau including Mount Fisht and Oshten would constitute a case for inscription of the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger in line with Paragraph 180 of the *Operational Guidelines* and its previous decisions;

⁸⁴ <https://whc.unesco.org/en/decisions/4671>.

⁸⁵ <https://whc.unesco.org/en/decisions/5029>.

Related Decisions of the World Heritage Committee

Notes the conclusion of the joint 2012 World Heritage Centre/IUCN monitoring mission that anthropogenic pressures on the property are increasing and urges the State Party to implement all its recommendations, in particular to:

- a) Develop an overall sustainable tourism strategy and comprehensive plan for the property and adjacent special protected areas, privileging low impact tourism activities and ensuring that proposed tourism and recreational infrastructure does not impact on the OUV of the property,
- b) Ensure that no areas of high biodiversity and key to the OUV of the property are included within the components of the biosphere polygon of the Caucasus Strict Nature Reserve, which might be used for construction of recreational infrastructure and that no activities are permitted within the polygon which are contrary to the property's integrity,
- c) Urgently clarify the delimitation of the northern buffer zone of the Caucasus Strict Nature Reserve, which is part of the property, and reinstate its legal protection,
- d) Ensure that the potential impacts of any proposed infrastructure upgrading inside the property on its OUV are carefully assessed and that an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is sent to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies before a decision is taken in accordance with Paragraph 172 of the *Operational Guidelines*,
- e) Finalize the exact delineation of the boundary of all components of the property, establish a functional buffer zone for the property and submit an updated map of the property and its buffer zone to the World Heritage Centre,
- f) Ensure the implementation of an overall management plan for the property by developing an operational plan and establishing an overall coordination body,
- g) Adapt the "certificates" of the Natural monuments included in the property to ensure all logging, including sanitary cutting, construction of roads, overpasses, power lines and other communication infrastructure are not allowed and the construction of capital construction projects for recreational use is prohibited,
- h) Halt all construction and/or extension of buildings and facilities in the upper Mzimba Valley within the property boundaries and upgrade the legal protection status of this area;

Takes note of the intention of the State Party to submit a proposal for a boundary modification by excluding parts of the Lagonaki Plateau from the property which are reported to be degraded and by including other parts and recalls that such a proposal has to be clearly justified in terms of the OUV for which the property was inscribed, should be based on reliable scientific data and should be submitted as a new nomination, in accordance with Paragraph 165 of the *Operational Guidelines*;

Decision 38 COM 7B.77 (2014)⁸⁶:

Expresses its utmost concern about the adoption of amendments to Federal Law N°406-FZ, dated 28 December 2013, which make it possible to develop large scale tourism infrastructure in strict nature reserves, and could also impact other natural World Heritage properties in the Russian Federation, and reiterates its request to the State Party to ensure that no large scale ski or tourism infrastructure is built within the property;

Takes note of the intention of the State Party to submit a proposal for a boundary modification by excluding parts of the Lagonaki Plateau from the property which are reported to be degraded and by including other parts, and recalls that such a proposal has to be clearly justified in terms of the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) for which the property was inscribed, should be based on reliable scientific data and should be submitted as a major boundary modification, in accordance with Paragraph 165 of the *Operational Guidelines*;

⁸⁶ <https://whc.unesco.org/en/decisions/6063>.

Related Decisions of the World Heritage Committee

Reiterates its position that the installation of capital construction on the Lagonaki Plateau, including Mount Fisht and Oshten, would constitute a case for inscription of the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger in line with Paragraph 180 of the *Operational Guidelines*;

Notes with concern that development pressures on the property appear to increase continuously, as noted by reports that new construction works have been conducted inside the property without prior assessment of their potential impact on its OUV, including upgrade of Babuk Aul forest road, cable car construction at “Biosphere scientific centre” and other facilities nearby, and urges the State Party to ensure that the potential impacts of any proposed infrastructure upgrading inside the property on its OUV are carefully assessed and that an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is sent to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies before a decision is taken in accordance with Paragraph 172 of the *Operational Guidelines*;

Also reiterates its request to the State Party to implement all the recommendations of the 2012 joint World Heritage Centre / IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission;

Requests the State Party to report on the status of the proposed Persian leopard reintroduction project and provide the World Heritage Centre with detailed information and data on this project, in line with the 2013 IUCN Guidelines for Reintroductions and Other Conservation Translocations;

Decision 40 COM 7B.101 (2016)⁸⁷

Welcomes the information provided by the State Party concerning the reintroduction of the Persian leopard, and encourages the State Party to continue its efforts in that regard, in consultation with the IUCN Species Survival Commission Reintroduction Specialist Group;

Notes the information provided by the State Party that amendments to a number of federal legal provisions concerning protected areas have been proposed and are currently being considered by the Russian parliament, and requests the State Party to provide further details on the proposed amendments, including on how they are related to past legislative changes over which concerns were raised in previous Committee Decisions, namely the Federal Law N°406-FZ and the Order of the Government of the Russian Federation No.603-r;

Notes with concern further legislative changes, specifically the amendments adopted by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Ecology in 2015 to the Decrees on the Sochi National Park and the Sochi Federal Wildlife Refuge, providing for expansion of recreational zones and construction of large scale tourism infrastructure in these protected areas, which adjoin the property, and considers that such amendments could have negative impacts on the property, including on the efforts to reintroduce the Persian leopard in the property by disrupting the connectivity of its natural habitat;

Also notes the information provided by the State Party that no new capital infrastructure projects are planned on the Lagonaki Plateau or on the slopes of Mount Fisht or Mount Oshten and that the recovery of the Lagonaki Plateau from past excessive grazing continues to show a positive dynamic, and also reiterates its position that the installation of capital construction on the Lagonaki Plateau, including Mount Fisht and Oshten, would

⁸⁷ <https://whc.unesco.org/en/decisions/6764>.

Related Decisions of the World Heritage Committee

constitute a case for inscription of the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger, in line with Paragraph 180 of the *Operational Guidelines*;

Regrets that the State Party did not provide any updated information on progress achieved to prevent logging in the entire property, including sanitary cuttings within the nature monuments, and also reiterates its request to the State Party to implement the recommendation of the 2012 mission in that regard, namely to “adapt the “certificates” of the “Natural monuments” included in the property to ensure all logging, including sanitary cutting, construction of roads, overpasses, power lines and other communication infrastructure are not allowed and the construction of capital construction projects for recreational use is prohibited”;

Further reiterates its request to the State Party to implement all other recommendations of the 2012 mission;

Decision 41 COM 7B.8 (2017)⁸⁸:

Notes with concern the recent legislative changes adopted by the State Party, which may weaken the protection regime of the property and recalls its concerns over a number of previous legislative changes potentially affecting the property;

Considers that such continuous degradation of the legal protection regime of protected areas comprising the property represents a potential danger to the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property, in line with Paragraph 180 of the *Operational Guidelines*, and requests the State Party to provide detailed information about all recently adopted legislative changes and measures taken to avoid negative impacts on the property;

Notes the conclusions of the 2016 IUCN Advisory mission that the recent plans for development of skiing facilities within the property may have significant impacts on the OUV of the property including its conditions of integrity;

Recalls that the Committee has repeatedly reiterated its position that the installation of capital construction on the Lagonaki Plateau, including Mount Fisht and Oshten, would constitute a case for inscription of the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger, in line with Paragraph 180 of the *Operational Guidelines*, and considers that this also applies to such constructions in any other part of the property;

Reiterates its concerns over potential development of large-scale skiing facilities within the property and also requests the State Party to confirm the current status of any existing plans for large-scale tourism and sport infrastructure within the property;

Decision 42 COM 7B.23 (2018)⁸⁹:

Welcomes the State Party’s statement that the recent legislative changes do not impact on the obligations of the State Party under the *Convention* to preserve and transfer the heritage object to future generations in an unchanged state, but regrets that no detailed information about these changes has been provided and therefore reiterates its request to the State Party to provide detailed information about all recently adopted legislative changes and measures taken to avoid negative impacts on the property;

⁸⁸ <https://whc.unesco.org/en/decisions/7008>.

⁸⁹ <https://whc.unesco.org/en/decisions/7309/>.

Related Decisions of the World Heritage Committee

Also recalling that the Committee has on several occasions reiterated its position that the installation of construction of large-scale infrastructure on the Lagonaki Plateau, or in any other area inside the property would constitute a case for inscription of the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger, in line with Paragraph 180 of the *Operational Guidelines*, also welcomes the statement of the State Party in its August 2017 letter addressed to the World Heritage Centre that no plans exist for construction of large-scale infrastructure on Lagonaki Plateau, nor any intentions to develop the territory of the property for recreational, tourism or sport purposes;

Reiterates its concern expressed in Decision 40 COM 7B.101 on legislative changes providing for expansion of recreational zones and construction of large-scale tourism infrastructure in the protected areas adjoining the property, which could have negative impacts on its Outstanding Universal Value (OUV), including on efforts to reintroduce the Persian leopard to the property, by disrupting the connectivity of its natural habitat;

Expresses serious concern regarding the reported lease of land plots for the development of large-scale investment projects related to sports and recreational activities directly bordering the property and located on the territory of Sochi Federal Wildlife Refuge and Sochi National Park, and requests the State Party not to permit any construction of large-scale infrastructure in areas immediately adjacent to the property, particularly if located on the territory of other protected areas, if such construction could have negative impact on the property's OUV, which should be assessed as part of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for each proposed project, in line with IUCN's World Heritage Advice Note on Environmental Assessment; Also regrets that the State Party did not provide information regarding the current status of any existing plans for large-scale tourism and sport infrastructure on the territory of Sochi Federal Wildlife Refuge and Sochi National Park property and also requests the State Party to urgently provide this information;

Notes with utmost concern that part of the Colchic Boxwood forests in the property have been destroyed by the invasive box tree moth, and further requests the State Party to:

1. Assess the extent of the damage and its impact on the OUV of the property,
2. Develop in cooperation with relevant specialists, including IUCN's Invasive Species Specialist Group a set of urgent measures for the restoration of Colchic Boxwood within the property and its surroundings, and to control the box tree moth invasion,
3. Assess risks posed to the OUV of the property by other potential invasive alien species, which may have also been introduced to the property or the broader region.

Decision 43 COM 7B.18 (2019)⁹⁰:

Welcomes the confirmation provided by the State Party that no plans exist for development of the property for recreational, sport or tourism purposes or for construction of large-scale tourism facilities in protected areas adjacent to the property;

Also recalling that the Committee has on several occasions reiterated its position that the construction of large-scale infrastructure within the property would constitute a case for inscription of the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger, in line with Paragraph 180 of the *Operational Guidelines*, and further recalling that the 2016 IUCN Advisory mission discussed plans for construction of large-scale skiing facilities within the property, including by Gazprom and Rosa Khutor companies, and concluded that these would have significant impacts on the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property, requests the State Party to confirm whether the companies' plans have been unequivocally abandoned;

⁹⁰ <https://whc.unesco.org/en/decisions/7482>.

Related Decisions of the World Heritage Committee

Also requests the State Party to confirm the status of the land plots reported to have been leased on the territory of Sochi Federal Wildlife Refuge and Sochi National Park, including the purpose of the lease;

Recalling furthermore Decision 32 COM 7B.25, which urged the State Party to halt further construction of the road to Lunnaya Polyana, further requests the State Party to provide the World Heritage Centre with a response to third party information raising concerns about the resumption of construction of this road within the property;

Noting with utmost concern that the entire area of Colchic Boxwood forest in the property was destroyed by the invasive box tree moth and welcoming the State Party's readiness to work with IUCN on the restoration of the forest, reiterates its requests to the State Party to:

1. Develop in cooperation with relevant specialists, including IUCN's Invasive Species Specialist Group, a set of urgent measures for the restoration of Colchic Boxwood within the property and its surroundings, and to control the box tree moth invasion,
2. Assess risks posed to the OUV of the property by other potential invasive alien species, which may have also been introduced to the property or the broader region;

Finally requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by 1 February 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 44th session in 2020.

Decision 44 COM 7B.110 (2021)⁹¹:

Welcomes the confirmation that plans to build large ski facilities in the property in the basins of the Mzymta, Urushten and Malaya Laba rivers have been rejected but notes with concern that the construction of a "mountain resort" at Lagonaki Plateau is being considered and requests the State Party to provide more details on the planned resort, and that an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) to be submitted to the World Heritage Centre before any decisions are made, in line with Paragraph 172 of the *Operational Guidelines*;

Reiterates its position that the construction of large-scale infrastructure within the property, including on Lagonaki Plateau, would constitute a case for inscription of the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger, in line with Paragraph 180 of the *Operational Guidelines* and urges the State Party to confirm that no infrastructure is planned within the inscribed property;

Also welcomes the information provided to the World Heritage Centre by the State Party during the present session of the World Heritage Committee, stating that there will be no exclusion of three enclaves on the Lagonaki Plateau area from the property, and requests the State Party to submit an updated boundary clarification, taking into account the comments provided by the World Heritage Centre and comprising high resolution maps that meet the current technical requirements, for review by the World Heritage Centre;

Also requests the State Party to clarify the current legal protection regime of the whole Lagonaki Plateau, in order to ensure that all areas within the World Heritage property as inscribed benefit from the required level of protection;

Noting with serious concern that land plots, located in the Sochi Federal Wildlife Refuge and Sochi National Park, continue to be leased for a large-scale investment project,

⁹¹ <https://whc.unesco.org/en/decisions/7826>.

Related Decisions of the World Heritage Committee

reiterates its request to the State Party not to permit any construction of large-scale infrastructure in the Sochi Federal Wildlife Refuge and Sochi National Park immediately adjacent to the property, given the high likelihood that such construction could have a negative impact on the property's OUV, and further requests the State Party to submit an EIA, in line with the IUCN World Heritage Advice Note on Environmental Assessment, for review by IUCN before any investment project is considered;

Requests furthermore the State Party to provide clarification on Resolution No. 97 of the Government of the Republic of Adygeya of 21 May 2020, which allegedly enables the establishment of an economic zone inside the property where logging and the construction of linear facilities would be possible;

Also urges the State Party not to conduct any further works on the road to Lunnaya Polyana and reiterates the assessment of the 2012 mission on this road project, which stressed that it should be ensured that all infrastructure facilities, even if deemed necessary for management and research purposes, have no negative impacts on the OUV and that an EIA should be submitted to the World Heritage Centre before any final decision is taken on this development, in line with Paragraph 172 of the *Operational Guidelines*;

Requests moreover the State Party to invite a joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission to evaluate whether the property meets the conditions for inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger with regards to the following issues, in line with Paragraph 180 of the *Operational Guidelines*:

1. The scale of impacts from invasive alien species (IAS) on the OUV of the property and whether they represent an ascertained danger to the OUV of the property,
2. The creation of the biosphere polygon and the changes in status of the nature monuments included in the property has affected the legal protection of these areas,
3. Whether the envisaged infrastructure and road development projects inside and near the property and their cumulative impacts represent a potential danger to the OUV of the property.

Decision 45 COM 7B.27 (2023)⁹²:

Reiterates its deep concern that the construction of the Lagonaki Mountain Resort remains under consideration, with preparatory work underway, and the alleged planning of another ski resort within the property on Tabunnaya Mountain range, and requests the State Party to provide the World Heritage Centre with more details on both projects, indicating their exact location with respect to the inscribed property and explaining how this development is consistent with statements committing to no large-scale infrastructure development in the property;

Reiterates its position that the construction of large-scale infrastructure within the property, including on Lagonaki Plateau, would constitute a case for inscription of the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger, in line with Paragraph 180 of the *Operational Guidelines*, and urges the State Party to confirm that no infrastructure is planned within the property as inscribed in 1999;

Recalls that the entire Lagonaki Plateau was included in the property on the basis of the 1999 IUCN evaluation, which considered the area to be an essential element to express the property's Outstanding Universal Value (OUV), in particular, for its rich biodiversity, especially its high carabid species diversity, and the fact that the area includes two thirds of

⁹² <https://whc.unesco.org/en/decisions/8301>.

Related Decisions of the World Heritage Committee

the site's vascular plant species including many endemics and therefore also requests the State Party to confirm unequivocally that no economic development is possible or planned in the Lagonaki Plateau;

Reiterates its request to the State Party not to permit any construction of large-scale infrastructure in the Sochi Federal Wildlife Refuge and Sochi National Park immediately adjacent to the property given its potential impact on the OUV of the property, and further requests the State Party to immediately halt the reported infrastructure projects until an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is carried out in conformity with the Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context and submitted to the World Heritage Centre, for review by IUCN;

Also urges the State Party to ensure that the legal regulations applying to all components of the property, in particular the Nature parks and Natural monuments managed by the Republic of Adygeya, are brought into line with the protection requirements of the Operational Guidelines;

Expresses its utmost concern over reports of a possible new draft law which would allow the boundaries of federally protected areas to be changed to accommodate economic activities and recalls that the legal protection status is an integral part of the OUV of the property and that the removal of the legal protection from parts of the property would constitute a clear case for inscription of the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger, in line with Paragraph 180 of the Operational Guidelines;

Notes the confirmation by the State Party that no further works have been undertaken on the road to Lunnaya Polyana, invites nevertheless the State Party to further clarify the status of this roadwork in response to third party information (based on satellite imagery) indicating that works are on-going, and recalls the importance of ensuring that all infrastructure facilities, even if deemed necessary for management and research purposes, have no negative impacts on the OUV and that an EIA should be submitted to the World Heritage Centre before any final decision is taken on this development, in line with Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines;

Expresses its utmost concern about the plans for the construction of a new highway and railway connecting North Caucasus to the Black Sea, including routes which would bisect the property, and further urges the State Party not to proceed with these developments, in line with the assurances provided at the time of inscription that no linear infrastructure projects such as highways or railways would be allowed within the property;

Reiterating its position that the construction of large-scale infrastructure within the property, including on Lagonaki Plateau, would constitute a case for inscription of the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger, requests furthermore the State Party to define a strategic approach to tourism development which respects this position, including through the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) reported to be underway, by identifying suitable alternative locations for tourism infrastructure development outside the boundaries of the property, as well as appropriate mitigation measures to ensure that any tourism-related development in the vicinity of the property is consistent with the conservation of the property's OUV.

Decision 46 COM 7B.54 (2024)⁹³ – see Annex 2

⁹³ <https://whc.unesco.org/en/decisions/8580>.

Annex 5. Legal regime in the protection of the property.

Federal Laws:

1. Law No. 26-FZ 'On Natural Healing Resources, Medical-Recreational Areas and Resorts' dated 23 February 1995 (as amended on 6 June 2021) (available [here](#));
2. Law No. 77 'On Amending certain legislative acts of the Russian Federation' dated 18 March 2023;
3. Law No.166-FZ 'On Fishing and Conservation of Aquatic Biological Resources' dated 20 December 2004 (as amended on 30 March 2023) (available [here](#));
4. Law No. 132-FZ 'On the Basics of Tourist Activity in the Russian Federation' dated 24 November 1996 (as amended on 13 June 2023) (available [here](#));
5. Law No. 33-FZ 'On Specially Protected Natural Areas' dated 14 March 1995 (as amended on 1 September 2023) (available [here](#));
6. Law No. 52-FZ 'On the animal world' dated 24 April 1995 (as amended on 1 September 2023) (available [here](#));
7. 'Water Code of the Russian Federation' (law No. 74-FZ dated 3 June 2006 (as amended on 9 September 2023) (available [here](#));
8. Law No. 7-FZ 'On Environmental protection' dated 10 January 2002 (as amended on 1 October 2023) (available [here](#));
9. 'Code of the Russian Federation on Administrative Offenses' (law No 195-FZ dated 30 December 2001) (as amended on 30 October 2023), Chapter 8: Administrative Offenses in the Field of Environmental Protection and Nature Management (available [here](#)).

Federal regulation on tourism

1. Order of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 2294-r "On approval of the List of capital construction projects, construction, reconstruction, major repairs, commissioning and decommissioning of which are permitted when carrying out recreational activities in national parks, as well as non-capital buildings, structures (including non-stationary trading facilities), improvement elements, related infrastructure facilities, the construction, operation and dismantling of which are permitted when carrying out recreational activities in national parks" dated 26 August 2023;
2. Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 1407 "On approval of the Rules for coordinating and approving the plan for recreational activities of a national park, including requirements for the content, form and structure of the said plan, as well as amendments to such a plan" dated 30 August 2023;
3. Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 1432 "On determining cases in which a federal government agency may act as the organiser of competitions and auctions for the right to conclude an agreement on the implementation of recreational activities in a national park" dated 1 September 2023;
4. Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 1444 "On approval of the sample form of an agreement on the implementation of recreational activities in a national park" dated 2 September 2023;
5. Order of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 1809 "On approval of the model rules for calculating the maximum permissible recreational capacity of specially protected

natural areas of regional and local significance in the implementation of tourism” dated 31 October 2023;

6. Order of the Government of the Russian Federation No.1811 on “Approval of the rules for calculating the maximum permissible recreational capacity of specially protected natural areas of federal significance in the implementation of tourism” dated 31 October 2023;
7. Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 1827 “On approval of the Rules for calculating the minimum fee under an agreement on the implementation of recreational activities in a national park” dated 31 October 2023;
8. Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 2040 “On approval of the specifics of construction, reconstruction and operation of linear facilities in national parks when carrying out recreational activities on their territories” dated 30 November 2023;
9. Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 2124 “On approval of the specifics of construction, reconstruction, major repairs, commissioning and decommissioning, demolition of capital construction projects in national parks when carrying out recreational activities on their territories” dated 11 December 2023;
10. Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 2112 “On approval of the Rules for holding competitions and auctions for the right to conclude an agreement on the implementation of recreational activities in a national park” dated 11 December 2023;
11. Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 1250 “On approval of the Rules for concluding an agreement on the transfer of powers to manage the recreational activities of a national park” dated 1 August 2023;
12. Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 2229 “On approval of the rules for organising and implementing tourism in specially protected natural areas of federal significance” dated 21 December 2023;
13. Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 2230 “On approval of the Model Rules for the organisation and implementation of tourism, including ensuring tourism safety in specially protected natural areas of regional and local significance” dated 21 December 2023.

Normative legal acts of the Government of the Russian Federation, federal ministries and departments

1. Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 60 “On Approval of the Regulations on Conducting Social and Hygienic Monitoring” dated 2 February 2006 (as amended on 25 May 2017) (available [here](#));
2. Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 681 “On State Environmental Monitoring (State Environmental Monitoring) and the State Fund of State Environmental Monitoring Data...” dated 9 August 2013 (as amended on 30 November 2018) (available [here](#));
3. Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 476 “On Issues of State Control (Supervision) and Recognition of Some Acts of the Government of the Russian Federation as Invalid” dated 5 June 2013 (as amended on 28 February 2019) (available [here](#));
4. Order of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 561-r dated 6 March 2021;
5. Order of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation No. 456 “On Approval of the Procedure for Conducting State Monitoring and State Cadastre of Wildlife Objects” dated 30 June 2021 (available [here](#));
6. Order of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 603-r dated 23 April 2012;
7. Order of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 8-r dated 14 January 2022;

8. Decision of the Minister of Natural Resources and Environment No. 01-15-53/7201 dated 19 March 2021.

Regional Orders

1. Order of the President of the Republic of Adygea No. 322 dated 26 August 1996;
2. Order of the President of the Republic of Adygea No. 467 dated 9 December 1996;
3. Order of the President of the Republic of Adygea No. 244 dated 8 October 1997;
4. Order from the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Adygea No.147 dated 8 June 1998;
5. Order of the Government of the Republic of Adygea No. 97 "On the reorganisation of the Natural monuments of regional significance" dated 21 May 2020;
6. Order of the Government of the Republic of Adygea No. 16-k "On approval of the boundaries of functional zones of the mountain Adygea Nature Park of the Republic of Adygea" dated 8 June 2020;
7. Order of the Government of the Republic of Adygea No. 116 "On the reorganisation of the natural monument of regional significance "Upper reaches of the Tsitsa River" together with the "Regulations on The Natural Park "Upper reaches of the Tsitsa River" of the Republic of Adygea" dated 17 June 2020.

Annex 6. List of participants to the mission

Ms Irina Yurievna Makanova, Director of the Department of State Policy and Regulation in the Sphere of Protected Areas Development, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation

Ms Olga Krever Nickolaevna, Deputy Director, 'RosZapovedCenter'

Ms Elena Vikulova, Head of International Organisations Division, Department of International Cooperation in the Sphere of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation

Ms Elena Kostrachenkova, Department of International Cooperation in the Sphere of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation

Ms Marina Yankova, Senior advisor of the Department for Multilateral Humanitarian Cooperation and Cultural Relations, Secretary of the Commission of the Russian Federation for UNESCO, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Ms Yulia Suschennko, Head of the Environmental Education Department (Roszapovedcenter)

Mr Anzaur Kerashev, Chairman, Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Adygeya

Mr Sergey Kolesnikov, Head of the Department for Environmental Protection and Natural Resources of the Republic of Adygea

Mr Rashid Belmekhov, Head of the Forestry Department of the Republic of Adygea

Mr Alexander Kainov, First Deputy Minister of Natural Resources of the Krasnodar Region

Mr Sergey Shevelev, Director, 'Caucasus State Nature Biosphere Reserve' and 'Sochi National Park'

Mr Nickolay Yeskin, Deputy Director for science, 'Caucasus State Nature Biosphere Reserve'

Mr Sergey Glebov, Head of Mountain Resorts Development Department, "Mantera Group LLC"

Mr Inver Kalashaov, General Director of 'Lagonaki LLC'

Mr Kirill Chereshko, Russian interpreter

Mr Robert Brunner, IUCN expert

Mr Hervé Lethier, World Heritage Centre expert