

ASIA / PACIFIC

THREE PARALLEL RIVERS OF YUNNAN PROTECTED AREAS

CHINA



THREE PARALLEL RIVERS OF YUNNAN PROTECTED AREAS (CHINA) - ID N° 1083

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Three Parallel Rivers of Yunnan Protected Areas is a large natural serial property (1.7million hectares, 25 component parts), consisting of 15 protected areas which are grouped into 8 clusters. The property was inscribed on the World Heritage List at the 27th Session of the World Heritage Committee (Paris, 2003) under all four natural criteria. The inscription was recommended by IUCN, alongside a number of recommendations for further action that were also conveyed in the World Heritage Committee's decision.

The boundaries of the property have been a subject of discussion since the time of its inscription. In its evaluation of the original nomination IUCN welcomed that work was being considered on corridors, and that continuing inventory and research was leading to identification of additional areas that merit protection to more fully provide coverage to the range of natural values found in the region. The Committee decision (27COM 8C.4) encouraged "the continued refinement of the boundaries of the property, including the addition of other areas of equally high natural value, expansion of core zones and discussion of transboundary issues with neighbouring jurisdictions." The property was discussed at the 28th and 29th sessions of the Committee, mainly in related to issues related to planned dam building in the region, and a mission to the property was requested.

At its 30th Session (2006) the World Heritage Committee considered the findings of the mission. Amongst these were concerns regarding boundaries. The mission found that the boundaries of the property were confusing and also reported that significant changes were proposed for a number of the components of the property, which the mission report stated would result in a 20% reduction of the original inscribed property. The mission noted that "When asked to explain the proposed changes, the response was that the 2003 inscriptions were of remote areas and actual boundaries were not fully demarcated". The mission also noted the development of mines and hydropower. The mission found that the actual boundaries of the WHS were confusing, and also reported confusion regarding the status of the boundaries of the inscribed property and the buffer zones. The mission concluded that the property "seems to have been inscribed before the State Party had fully defined what was to be included and what regimes were to be applied to the protection of the sites. By a letter received by the

World Heritage Centre on 7 July 2006 in response to the report of the mission, the Chinese authorities had stressed that no modification of the boundaries of the property had been approved or even officially proposed, and that no mining operations had been or would be allowed in the future within the property. The Committee noted with grave concern the findings of the mission in relation to proposed changes to the boundaries of the property which could significantly alter the values for which the property was inscribed, and mining operations within the property which threaten its integrity and values. It requested further information from the State Party on these and a range of other matters related to the property.

The State Party provided further information on boundary modifications to the 31st Session of the Committee (2007). The World Heritage Committee requested "the State Party to amend the boundaries of the property to exclude major cleared encroachments and to add critical habitats for conservation, ensuring the establishment of linkage between different parts of the property via biological corridors or other options for ecological connectivity, and to submit all proposals for boundary changes for consideration by the Committee in line with paragraph 165 of the Operational Guidelines" (see decision 31COM 7B.15). At its 32nd Session (2008), the Committee commended the State Party on consultations being undertaken with stakeholders on the modification of the boundaries of the property, and requested a detailed report [inter alia] on the boundary modification, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 34th session in 2010 (see decision 32COM 7B.11).

A proposal for a boundary modification following the above requests was submitted to the World Heritage Centre and transmitted to IUCN for review on 1st September 2009. IUCN was invited by the China Association of National Parks and Scenic Spots to visit the area, and was able to see firsthand some of the proposals under discussion and also meet a number of officials, community and business representatives and technical experts, including NGO experts, who had been involved in the discussion of the nomination (although in a very short visit an entire review of the area was not possible). This visit was able to visit first hand some of the areas where mining activities are in conflict with the World Heritage property (see below).

On 16th October 2009 IUCN transmitted, through the World Heritage Centre, a request for supplementary

information on the boundary modification, including a range of questions regarding the maps, boundaries, justification for amendments and supporting documentation discussed during the above mission. A substantial document and new maps were provided by the State Party in response on these matters and were received by IUCN in early December 2009, in time for initial consideration but not full review by the IUCN World Heritage Panel. Following the IUCN Panel meeting one further point of clarification was requested of the State Party, and a response was received in mid-March 2010. All of the above documentation was also officially submitted to the World Heritage Centre.

2. BRIEF SUMMARY OF PROPOSAL

The boundary modification submitted comprises amendments to all of the eight “clusters” of component parts within the property either by modifications to the boundaries of the inscribed areas (termed “core areas” in the submission), or by revisions to buffer zones including the identification of habitat connectivity corridors between the different component parts of the property. Summary maps showing the boundaries as submitted and as amended are shown in Maps 1 and 2, however the original documentation should be used as the definitive record due to the large size of the area and the complexity of the property and the changes proposed.

Overall the proposed revisions marginally increase the size of the property (by 1.7%) and also of its buffer zone (by 1.9%). In addition the review identifies three existing nature reserves to be recognized as ‘Influencing Areas’ for the property. A new category of buffer zone is defined as ‘genetic corridors’ to emphasise the importance of protecting habitat integrity and connectivity to help maintain biological geneflow between isolated sub-units and core zones.

In addition, the State Party has remeasured the areas of the components of the property and the buffer zones, and the proposals as revised. These remain based on the organization of the property in 8 “Sub-units”, each being a cluster of component parts with a common buffer zone. Although this is not the preferred format for submission of serial nominations, the original terminology (of sub-units) has been retained in the text below for clarity of discussion. The remeasured figures for both the original and proposed extent of the property are also used as these are understood to represent the

reality of the scale of changes proposed. The table of areas as originally reported, as remeasured and as proposed by the modification are included in this report. There were some discrepancies between the measurements quoted in different stages of the State Party submissions: the figures quoted are from the supplementary information. Some of the differences between the quoted original and remeasured figures are very large, representing errors of up to c.50% but the degree of discrepancy is also not consistent. It has not been possible to fully ground the reasons for the differences, but IUCN has considered the most recent figures, which have been endorsed by NGO partners as the most accurate estimates within the discussion below.

In summary the changes to each of the eight “clusters” is as follows.

1. Gaoligongshan Sub-unit (3 component parts as revised): The inscribed components remain unchanged in the proposal as three isolated core areas comprising the three sections of Gaoligong Nature Reserve. Two modifications to the buffer zone are made that are considered to enhance its integrity, one extends a buffer zone and wildlife corridor to the south down the Nu River, while the other refines boundaries based on better mapping of important forest areas. There is no change in the inscribed area of the components in this sub-unit (344,386.5 ha)¹, and an increase in the area of the buffer zone from 173,135.10 ha² to 231,910.30 ha.

2. Baima-Meili Xueshan Sub-unit (4 component parts as revised): No changes are proposed to the extent of the inscribed property. However the buffer zone is increased to a total area of 165,342 ha³, equivalent to 3.95% of the original sub-unit area and includes 128,418 ha of newly defined genetic corridors. These changes result in a new connection between the two buffer zones of the Baima-Meili Xueshan, and the buffer zone of the Gaoligongshan Sub-unit.

3. Laowo Sub-unit (2 component parts as revised): The inscribed area of this small sub-unit of the property remains unchanged (17,394.60 ha)⁴ but the buffer zone is marginally extended southwards so as to include the highest peak in this sector of the Biluo mountain chain and including part of the western slopes of the crest within the Nujiang catchment, which were not represented in the original reserve. These changes give the unit a greater altitudinal range and reflect the fact that the Biluo Mountains have been listed as one of China’s

1. Measured at 305,306.1 ha at the time of the nomination

2. Measured at 208,176.3 ha at the time of the nomination

3. Measured at 267,507.8 ha at the time of the nomination, and remeasured at 230,642.1ha

4. Measured at 17,426.1 ha at the time of the nomination

Important Bird Areas (IBA) by Birdlife International. The increased buffer zone is 44,642 ha⁵ in area .

4. Yunlingshan Sub-unit (1 component part as revised): The inscribed boundaries of the Yunlingshan Nature Reserve are not ideal due to a very high border to area ratio and a straggling long shape comprising three small cores linked by very narrow connections. The Yunnan Snub-nosed Monkey *Rhinopithecus bieti* was a principal focus for conservation in this component, as well as an indicator of ecosystem health. The northern sector of the component is stated to have been already heavily disturbed by human activities at the time of inscription, including formerly logged areas and crossed by roads. No Yunnan Snub-nosed monkeys occur in the northern sector having withdrawn to the better forests in the central part of the reserve. The State Party proposed as a modification a redesigned reserve to consolidate protection of the remaining good habitat and to also extend the reserve eastwards to the next sub-range of hills, thus bringing the borders closer to Laojunshan Sub-unit and allowing the possibility of some genetic exchange with that protected area. The State Party note that the original Yunlingshan boundary was a proposed Nature Reserve but was never legally gazetted. The proposed revised boundary matches a fully gazetted Nature Reserve, which has been shaped on the basis of more detailed and up to date knowledge of the distribution of the Yunnan Snub-nosed Monkeys following 20 years of study by scientists of Kunming Institute of Zoology, and evidenced by a detailed distribution map for the species. The new sub-unit is reduced in area from 31,124.7 ha⁶ to 27,907.0 ha (a decrease of c.10%), and is stated to have a 60% overlap with the original sub-unit. The buffer zone for the revised area is reduced from 60,331.3 ha⁷ to 50,552.9 ha

5. Laojunshan Sub-unit (2 component parts as revised): Since inscription as part of the WH site, Laojunshan has undergone considerable survey, and planning by staff of Yunnan Forestry Bureau, the European Community Biodiversity Programme in China and the US-based NGO, The Nature Conservancy (TNC). The unit has been gazetted as a full Nature Reserve. A management plan has been drawn up for its protection and approved by Yunnan provincial government. These developments lead the State Party to propose changes and an overall extension of the boundaries of the World Heritage property. The inscribed areas have been linked, buffer zones extended and two small heavily occupied residential zones excluded. In total a reported 22,693.6 ha are proposed to be

added and 6,756 ha excluded from the original inscribed areas, as per the original submission. The supplementary information provided reports a net increase in area from a reported 43,388.2 ha⁸ to 59,325.8 ha in the inscribed components within this sub-unit. The area of the buffer zone is increased from 68903.5 ha⁹ to 72,923.8 ha.

The impacts of the changes are considered to be highly positive in the submission, which states that they result in greater inclusion of Danxia rock formations especially the turtle erosion patterns of the Buddha head peaks and protection of biodiversity and threatened species (especially Yunnan Snub-nosed Monkey). All these values are stated to be better protected under the refined boundaries by including all geological and scenic sites of the unit and all occupied habitat of the monkeys. By extending the buffer marginally both northwards into the Jinsha valley and westwards into the Lancang valley, the range of biological communities included in the sub-unit is increased and the degree of isolation from the Yunlingshan sub-unit from other sub-units of the property is reduced to 5 km.

6. Hongshan (Red Mountain) Unit (2 component parts as revised): The State Party submission reports that southern sectors of the unit are both degraded and are also a permanent management problem and cause of conflict with local people who hold ownership of most of the land under customary laws of the province and have requested that their lands remain outside of the World Heritage property. It appears these views were not considered at the time of inscription. This sector of the unit is also stated to have been degraded by logging prior to the introduction of a national logging ban, and the State Party reports it is heavily grazed in summer by yaks, horses and cows. It is also extensively used for collection of traditional medicines and home to several small villages and is crossed by two major roads leading via the large township of Gezan over the mountains to Sichuan.

It is more evidently damaged by a long history of mineral mining. Although many small illegal mines are reported to have been closed, the State Party has found it impossible to gain agreement of local communities for further termination of their economic activities, relocation or restoration of habitat to a natural condition. This is notably the case in relation to a number of extant, legal mines that predated the nomination of the property but were not mentioned in the nomination or other subsequent reports, were not included in the itinerary for the IUCN evaluation mission, and were

5. Measured at 31,735 ha at the time of the nomination, and remeasured at 25,603.1 ha

6. Measured at 31,346.1 ha at the time of the nomination

7. Measured at 58,441 ha at the time of the nomination

8. Measured at 44,265.7 ha at the time of the nomination

9. Measured at 87,161 ha at the time of the nomination

not detected by the evaluation process by IUCN at the time of consideration. Mining exploration licenses remain active and mining development licenses have been granted for a few rich copper deposits identified within the sector. The proposed amendment of the boundary primarily has the effect of the excision of land that is included in legal licensed mining exploration and production areas. This amounts to a loss of a stated c.22,000 ha of the inscribed components of Hongshan (according to the original State Party submission), amounting to a change from 164,823 ha¹⁰ to 142,604.7 ha (a reduction of 13% in area). This involves the removal of one of the component parts of the property, and the reduction of a second, plus the reassignment of the southern component. The revision also involves a large reduction of the buffer zone of Hongshan from 260,864.8 ha¹¹ to 144,604.6 ha. There are related additions made to the Haba Snow Mountain sub-unit which are described below, which include “moving” one component to this sub-unit of the property. 668.0 ha of genetic corridors are also delineated within the Hongshan buffer zone to strengthen connectivity between its remaining component parts, and the two most northerly core zones have would be linked together.

7. Haba Snow Mountains Sub-unit (3 component parts as revised): This unit is proposed to be enlarged through extension to join the southernmost components of what was formerly the Hongshan sub-unit, after the exclusion of degraded areas (see above), and buffer zone areas are increased through both addition of some of the former buffer zone of the Hongshan sub-unit, as well as an additional area connecting to the former northern boundary of the Haba Snow Mountains Sub-unit. The area of the inscribed property would therefore increase from 59,561.8 ha¹² to 79,689.0 ha through the proposal. The buffer zone of this sub-unit would be increased from 37,414.0 ha¹³ to 77,080.7 ha. The State Party proposal states that in addition to increasing the area, the proposals increase the biotic range and degree of connectivity within this sub-unit.

8. Qianhushan Sub-unit (1 component part as revised): The sub-unit has very few amendments within the proposed modification. The buffer zone has been minimally realigned to include forest and exclude open village lands at the periphery. The area of the inscribed property remains unaltered at 38,905.9 ha¹⁴ and the buffer remains 29,355.9 ha¹⁵. The minor realignments of the buffer increase forest inclusion and reduce residential and farmed area.

9. Influencing Areas: In addition to the above amendments the State Party also proposed to recognize three areas that are not connected geographically to the inscribed property (comprising a total of 89,830 ha of land) as “influencing areas”, These areas would be formally recognised as analogous to buffer zones to the World Heritage property, which whilst not adjacent to the inscribed property nevertheless play an important role in enhancing the unique values of the site, the State party wishes to register three such influencing areas as important for the value of Three Parallel Rivers of Yunnan Nature Reserves. These are:

- **Napahai Lake** (3,532 ha): This lake and wetland was included in the initial nomination document but dropped on the advice of the original IUCN review team on the basis that the site was small and isolated from other mountain sub-unit. The State Party emphasizes that the Napahai Lake is the largest lake within the Three Parallel Rivers area and the most important for wintering rare waterfowl especially Black-necked cranes *Grus nigricollis*. The site has been listed by Birdlife International as an Important Bird Area (IBA).
- **Yulong Snow Mountain** (26,440 ha): This area is a nature reserve, containing mountain and forest habitats. It is a sacred mountain for the Naxi minority who claim communal rights under provincial law. The site has been partially developed for tourism including a golf course, an outdoor theatre and construction of a cable car to the edge of the main glacier. It was considered too disturbed to be added to the property as was proposed in the original IUCN evaluation in 2002. Yulong Snow Mountain however for the most part is in a natural condition and is important as the partner peak to Haba Snow Mountain on opposite sides of the “Tiger Leaping Gorge”. It also provides a scenic background of the World Heritage cultural property of Old Lijiang town. The site also has important biodiversity value and has been listed as an Important Bird Area (IBA) by Birdlife International.
- **Cangshan** (58,857.4 ha): This nature reserve protects important forested mountains to the west side of Erhai lake close to the town of Dali, and is a tourism destination for Yunnan province. The reserve is one of the

10. Measured at 205,603.8 ha at the time of the nomination, the reduction in area would be 31% based on this figure

11. Measured at 159,083.6 ha at the time of the nomination

12. Measured at 28,356.7 ha at the time of the nomination

13. Measured at 73,419.1 ha at the time of the nomination

14. Measured at 39,629.6 ha at the time of the nomination

15. Measured at 58,910.4 ha at the time of the nomination

biologically richest sites in the Hengduan mountain biodiversity hotspot. In relation to the conservation of the existing property, Cangshan forms an important stopover point for populations of many passerine birds that nest in the high mountains of Three Parallel Rivers before migrating to tropical and subtropical habitats during the winter months. It is also anticipated that this area will be important to the capacity of the southern parts of the property to adapt to predicted climate change.

The State Party considers that the revisions meet the requirements placed upon the State Party to exclude major cleared encroachments, add additional important natural areas and better link isolated units of the property in previous Committee decisions. It suggests that they will reduce management conflicts, increase the 'naturalness' of the property, strengthen its ecological integrity and provide greater adaptability and resilience in the face of predicted climate change. The State Party notes that it considers the modifications should be regarded as a minor boundary modification given the small percentile change in size of the property, relative to the huge size of the entire property. The proposal states that no scenic areas, geological features or biological communities would be lost that are not adequately represented within the refined boundaries and that most of the changes relate to the buffer zone.

The first submission of supplementary information provided includes detailed information on a number of aspects of the proposal including high quality mapping, information related to values included vegetation maps, key species maps, and maps of geological phenomena, detailed information on mining licenses affecting the property, and information concerning the legal protection and management arrangements for the property. A second request for supplementary information provides further elaboration on the mining licenses affecting the property.

3. IMPLICATIONS FOR OUTSTANDING UNIVERSAL VALUE

IUCN has considered the proposed boundary modifications with great care, in view of the long history of the consideration of this property by the Committee, and the range of decisions that have been taken related to requests for boundary amendments. IUCN's evaluation has also considered expert input from both the original evaluation team and a number of people with senior experience in relation to conservation in China.

In relation to the overall proposal, IUCN notes that some of the changes involve rather significant

modifications to the boundaries of the property. In principle these are of the scale that might equally well be considered as an extension of the property. Whilst IUCN takes note of the past decisions of the Committee that seem to imply the invitation of a minor modification to the property, IUCN also notes that a very significant amount of background work has gone into the proposals involving the input of leading experts and NGOs. IUCN considers that it would have been preferable that the State Party would have put forward the proposals as a formal extension, allowing a longer period of consultation and evaluation, and an official mission to review the proposals.

IUCN considers that the boundary proposals appear to have clear positive, or neutral aspects for four of the sub units of the property. The changes proposed to the Gaoligongshan, Baima-Meili Xueshan, Laowo and Qianhushan sub-units all appear to result in either no change or in improvements to the configuration of the property and its buffer zones. The addition of buffer zones that connect the Gaoligongshan and Baima-Meili sections of the property, and the definition of wildlife corridors within many of the buffer zones is also welcome.

The changes to four of the other units is more significant and require discussion. IUCN's evaluation of these proposals is as follows.

a) **Yunglingshan sub-unit.** The proposal results in a substantial reconfiguration of the components of this Sub-unit. It leads to a decrease in its area, but also a reconfiguration to better reflect the distribution of key habitats and species. The work of TNC in both mapping habitats and the distribution of the Yunnan snub-nose monkey is cited as supporting evidence of the reconfiguration. The proposed amendments are strongly supported by leading experts. The State Party also indicates the revised area proposed as the sub-unit is a legally protected area with a specific management unit, whereas the property as currently configured is only partly protected. Based on the information provided by the State Party and experts, IUCN concludes that this amendment appears to retain existing values of the property, but be better configured to the best available evidence of the ecological values of the area (as per recent studies by TNC), and also to be tied to a clear legally defined protected areas. The proposals therefore appear to have a positive effect in relation to the integrity of the property as it stands, despite the reduction in overall area, although the edge to area ratio is still high the resulting component is a single area rather than separated components. IUCN notes the assurance of the State Party of the implementation of effective and strengthened protection and management on its revised boundaries, including protection of both the natural habitat within it, and the populations

of key species including the Yunnan snub-nose monkey that lie within it.

IUCN considers this amendment to this sub-unit should be approved as a minor modification to the boundaries of the property.

b) **Laojunshan.** The changes to this component of the property appear to be positive overall, in adding significant areas of land of biodiversity importance to the property and connecting previously separate components. The supplementary information provided by the State Party demonstrates that the main geographical/geological features of this sub-unit remain included within its revised boundaries, justified by the distribution map of Danxia landforms. TNC's information also demonstrates the improvement of the boundaries in relation to key habitats and species.

IUCN considers this amendment to this sub-unit should be approved as a minor modification to the boundaries of the property.

c) **Hongshan and Haba Snow Mountain.** The changes related to these components are related to each other, and land is "transferred" between the two sub-units. These changes are therefore discussed together. Overall the cumulative changes in these two components result in a small decrease in overall area of inscribed property (the total inscribed areas of both properties before inscription is 224,384 ha, and afterwards would be 222,293 ha) but a large change in the area of the buffer zone (total before 298,278 ha and afterwards 221,684 ha). In principle IUCN notes that the World Heritage Committee has, in the past, not accepted such changes to buffer zones to be made through the minor boundary modification process.

The State Party argues that the overall impacts on the Outstanding Universal Value of the property may be regarded as minimal. The submission suggests that the remaining area is still sufficient to protect the full range of the geological formations exhibited and all the most scenic areas and the full range of biological communities. The State Party suggests that due to the less steep nature of the geography, this open area is the most heavily grazed portion of the property and that this area has been affected by a long history of artisanal and illegal mining.

The changes proposed in these sub units are the most problematic within the proposal, notably because the area is subject to both legal active mining and legal mining exploration within both the inscribed property and the buffer zone of the Hongshan Unit. The State Party provides information on five legal operating licenses that were granted between 1995-2000. 19 mining exploration licenses also affect the property and were granted between 1998-2000 which are understood to include areas

currently being considered for additional mining. Map 3 shows the configuration of the current and proposed revised boundaries of these components, relative to relatively small areas of active mining production and large areas licensed for exploration. It can be seen that the effect of the change is to exclude the mining areas from the property.

The IUCN visit was also able to review the mining impact in the field and also met with one of the private sector operators and representatives of the local community. The visit confirmed the existence of a series of mines within the current boundary of the property. These include both open-cast and underground operations, and a significant mineral processing infrastructure including a series of processing plants, and banded settlement areas. IUCN was concerned to note that some of the mineral processing was taking place in the watercourse, with no separation between the water used for mining and the natural flow of water. This represents a permanent impact on the natural system, and also could present risks in relation to downstream communities. IUCN is not in a position to review this information in depth but considers that the State Party should urgently implement more appropriate standards of environmental control and management of mining, meeting internationally accepted standards of best practice.

The conflict between the legal mining and the creation of the World Heritage property is also reflected in a strong community objection to the World Heritage property. Community representatives stressed during the IUCN visit that they had not been consulted on the inclusion of their land in the property, and that they are opposed to this. A petition requesting the removal of their land from the World Heritage property was also presented in the supplementary information by the State Party.

The highly problematic situation is that legally licensed mining production clearly predates both the inscription of the property, and the establishment of effective protected areas on which it can be based. The State Party makes it clear that at the time of nomination, the responsible authorities were not aware of the mining activities, although knowledge of illegal mining existed. IUCN's evaluation was not shown the mining areas, or made aware of the mining, and neither did it detect these areas through its review network at the time of inscription. The 2006 monitoring mission to the property heard about the mining issue but did not visit the area. In its current and earlier reports on the property the State Party referred to the issue and informed of the closure of 146 illegal mines, but did not note the ongoing presence of legal mining production and exploration. The State Party makes it clear in its submission that there has been no issuing of any new mining license since the inscription of the property on the World Heritage List, and that

it “can guarantee that no further mining licenses are granted in other sectors of the World Heritage property or buffers”.

IUCN recognizes that the corollary of the Committee’s position on the incompatibility with mining and World Heritage properties, is that World Heritage properties should not be created in areas where there is existing, ongoing mining. In line with the provisions of the Operational Guidelines, the situation should not have arisen where such areas had been nominated by the State Party, and if they had been detected during the evaluation they could not have been recommended for inscription by IUCN. They were inscribed by the World Heritage Committee without the knowledge of the presence and extent of mining areas. However as the property is inscribed on the basis of all of its components, and consistent with the past decisions of the Committee, there is not a possibility to accept that such a modification can be accommodated through the minor boundary modification process. IUCN notes that the Operational Guidelines contain at paragraph 165 details of the procedure to be followed, which would also allow an official World Heritage evaluation mission to visit the property and consider matters in the field.

IUCN considers that the amendments to the Hongshan and Haba Snow Mountain sub-units of the property should not be accepted as a minor modification to the boundaries of the property.

d) **Influencing Areas:** IUCN considers that the proposed addition of three zones as influencing areas to the property is an interesting proposal, that appears to be motivated by both a concern for the ability of these areas to help to protect the values of the property, and because of the values of these areas in their own right. They include one area noted by IUCN for possible consideration at the time of inscription of the property on the World Heritage List (Yulong Snow Mountain), whilst the other areas show some linked importance to the property. The areas appear to have adequate legal and management capacity, and in the overall context of the property would not add unduly to the already complex management arrangements. However IUCN notes that the term “influencing areas”, whilst proposed by an expert meeting on buffer zones, has not been adopted into the Operational Guidelines, IUCN is also concerned that the supplementary information regarding these suggested buffer zone additions is framed in terms of a nomination and refers to the “Outstanding Universal Value” of these areas. IUCN considers that the status of these areas would not be clear if they were adopted at this stage, and recommends that they are either reconsidered as additional extensions to the property, or as buffer zones.

IUCN considers that the amendments inscription of three “influencing areas” to the property should not be accepted as a minor modification to the boundaries of the property.

Connectivity conservation

A welcome innovation in the proposals, taking into account IUCN’s earlier recommendation is the increase in connectivity both within and between components, and increases in buffer zone areas that are envisaged in most cases. Overall the revisions add natural areas to the property that increase the range of biological communities protected, including representation of communities on both sides of each major valley. Revised boundaries of some components better reflect the distribution of key threatened species.

Extended buffer zones reflect the identification of new sites of biological significance, in particular revealed by the publication of maps and descriptions of Important Bird Areas (IBAs) by Birdlife International and regions of high biodiversity significance revealed by the TNC project ‘China Blueprint Project’ which has identified priority areas for conservation in the Upper Yangtze Catchment.

Effective management of the property

The information provided by the State Party demonstrates that the past decisions of the Committee have been interpreted as a reason to delay the formal recognition of the boundaries of the World Heritage property under Chinese Law. NGO submissions are extremely concerned about this issue as well, considering that it is impacting on the ability to impact effective conservation management. The submission of the State Party notes that a number of the sub-units await confirmation and final approval of boundaries to precede management planning and the allocation of additional resources and staff. A table provided in the supplementary information indicates that 5 of the 9 management plans related to the property are finished but awaiting adoption of the boundary modification. Only two sub-units (Baima-Meili and Laojunshan) have completed plans, and two (Hongshan and Yunlingshan) have plans still under development. The same table indicates provision is made for more than double the number of staff in the property (an increase of 828 to 1873) assuming the boundary modifications are confirmed. IUCN considers that the proposed increases in staffing and recognition is to be welcomed, but notes that it is of concern that the State Party has not already put in place required management planning and staffing, pending issues of the fully resolved boundaries. IUCN urges the State Party to establish, at the earliest opportunity, approved management plans and adequate resources for the property.

4. OTHER COMMENTS

IUCN notes the inscription of a natural property with, inadvertently, the inclusion of areas of active mining as an unfortunate decision which is not in line with the Operational Guidelines to the Convention, nor the policy of the World Heritage Committee in relation to mining and World Heritage. This issue provides a number of general lessons, especially regarding large and complex serial nominations. The most obvious of these is the importance of States Parties fully consulting with all interests and to carry out thorough research on nominated areas, and especially those where properties are large, remote and not well researched. Consultations with other ministries that may not integrate their activities with protected areas, and with industry and communities is highly important in the preparation of nominations. The issue emphasizes the importance of gaining clear assurances from States Parties regarding conflicting land uses, especially where properties are too large for every part to be visited during an evaluation mission. The issue also points to the possible utility of remote sensing techniques in reviewing areas that are remote and cannot be seen on the ground. These issues are far more likely to occur in large properties, and large serial properties and thus the World Heritage Committee should also be particularly careful in reviewing the integrity, protection and management of such nominations.

5. RECOMMENDATION

IUCN recommends that the World Heritage Committee adopt the following decision:

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Documents **WHC-10/34.COM/8B** and **WHC-10/34.COM/INF 8B2**,
2. Approves as minor modifications the changes proposed by the State Party within the areas referred to as the Gaoigongshan, Baima-Meili Snow Mountains, Laowo Mountain, Yunling Mountain, Laojun Mountain and Qianhu Mountain sub-units of the property;
3. Does not approve as minor modifications the proposed amendments to the Haba Snow Mountain and Hongshan Mountain, in view of the potentially significant nature of these proposals in relation to the integrity of the property, and also does not approve the addition of three proposed “influencing areas” to the property;

4. Welcomes the commitment of the State Party to increase the staff and resources for the property and to complete, approve and implement all of the management plans for the property and urges the State Party to implement these commitments at the earliest opportunity within all of the sub-units where minor modifications are approved and the boundaries are fully clarified, and to also establish without delay effective protection and management for all components and buffer zones of the property, and to reinforce the overall management of the property;
5. Notes with regret the apparent inadvertent inscription of legal mining areas that were operational prior to the nomination, in the inscribed property, and reiterates that active mining is not compatible with World Heritage Site status. The Committee further reminds States Parties to ensure that mining areas are not nominated inappropriately to the World Heritage List, and requests IUCN to give particular consideration to possible mining conflicts in relation to its evaluation and monitoring processes;
6. Requests the State Party to propose amendments to the Hongshan and Haba Snow Mountain components of the property, to be considered through the process foreseen for significant modifications to the boundaries of a World Heritage property, as set out in paragraph 165 of the Operational Guidelines. The Committee notes that this process would allow an official IUCN mission to consider this matter and advise the Committee upon the proposal. The Committee further notes that this significant modification, if submitted, should consider the basis for exclusion of the existing legal mining production areas that have been under operations before the inscription of the property and that could not have been considered to be of Outstanding Universal Value at that time. The Committee also notes that the significant modification should indicate the impacts that it would have on the Outstanding Universal Value of the property at the time of inscription of the property on the World Heritage List in 2003, and also considering the approved modifications to the other sub-units of the property referred to in paragraph 2 of this decision that enhance the integrity, protection and management of a number of the components of the property;

7. Further considers that, unless they are clearly demonstrated to not contribute to Outstanding Universal Value of the property, the areas currently subject to mining exploration licenses in the Hongshan component of the property should be considered for retention in the property, and also considers that the commitment to not mine in World Heritage Sites applies to these areas. The Committee therefore requests the State Party to not permit the conversion of mining exploration licenses to production licenses in these areas, as this would clearly be counter to the Committee policy position to not mine in World Heritage properties;
8. Requests the State Party to take all necessary steps to ensure that the mining operations that have already become established within this sector of the property and its buffer zone conform to appropriate international standards regarding the risk to the environment including human health;
9. Recommends the State Party to consider the renomination of the proposed influencing areas as either extensions to the property, or to include them within extended buffer zones that are contiguous with the property;
10. Requests the World Heritage Centre and IUCN, in collaboration with the State Party, to expedite the agreement of a Statement of Outstanding Universal Value for the property, based on the draft submitted by the State Party, for approval by the World Heritage Committee at its 35th Session in 2011;
11. Further requests the State Party to also take note of the above recommendations in relation to any requested actions decided by the World Heritage Committee in relation to the State of Conservation of the existing property.

Map 2: Map of the Three Parallel Rivers Yunnan Nature Reserves with new boundaries



Map 3: Map of Hongshan Sub-unit, the mining and mineral exploration sites currently within it.

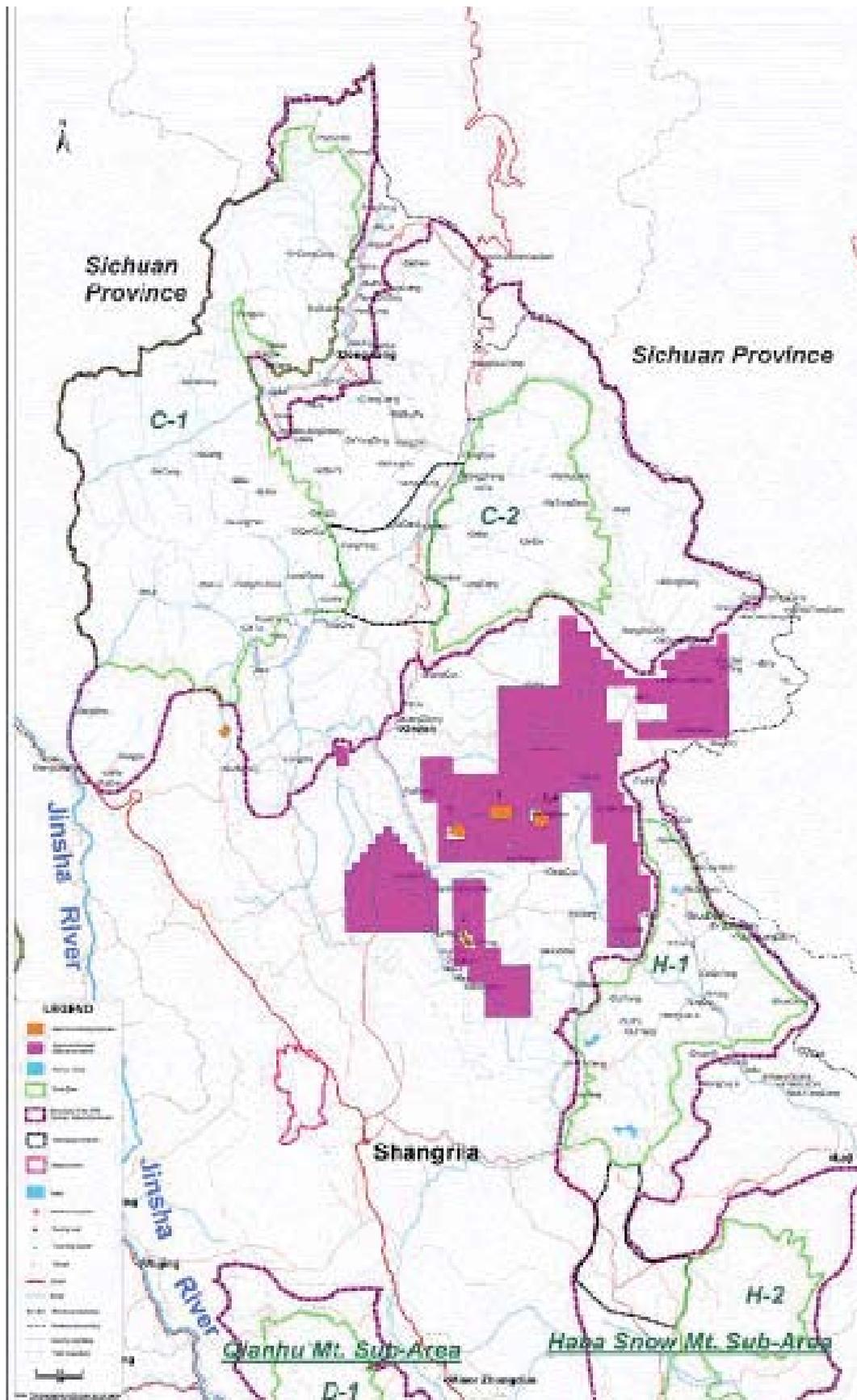


Table 1: Size measurements of the sub-units of the property as currently inscribed (original and remeasured figures) and in proposed boundary modification

Name (Cluster of components)	Listed inscribed	Remeasured inscribed	Refined inscribed	Listed buffer	Remeasured buffer	Total buffer
1. Gaoigongshan	305,306.1	344,386.5	344,386.5	208,176.3	173,135.1	231,910.3
2. Baima-Meili Snow Mountains	267,507.8	230,642.1	249,870.0	81,511.0	127,590.7	165,342.3
3. Laowo Mountain	17,426.1	17,394.6	17,394.6	31,735.0	25,603.1	44,642.0
4. Yunling Mountain	31,346.1	31,124.7	27,907.0	58,441.0	60,331.3	50,552.9
5. Laojun Mountain	44,265.7	43,388.2	59,325.8	87,161.0	68,903.5	72,923.8
6. Haba Snow Mountain	28,356.7	59,561.8	796,89.0	73419.1	37,414	77,080.7
7. Hongshan Mountain	205,603.8	164,823.8	142,604.7	159083.6	260,864.8	144,604.6
8. Qianhu Mountain	39,629.6	38,905.9	38,905.9	58910.4	29,355.9	29,355.9
TOTAL	939,441.9	930,227.6	960083.5	758,437.4	783,198.4	816,412.5
Influencing areas						
Napahai Lake						3,532.5
Yulong Snow Mountain						26,440.5
Cangshan						59,857.4
TOTAL						89,830.4