

Updated Report on the State of Conservation of the UNESCO World Natural Heritage site “Golden Mountains of Altai”

1. Response to the Decision of the World Heritage Committee 42 COM 7B.75

All areas of the “Golden Mountains of Altai” object are specially protected according to the Federal law dated March 14, 1995 No. 33-FZ “Concerning Specially Protected Natural Areas” and the Law of Altay Republic dated December 24, 2012 No. 70-RZ “Concerning Specially Protected Natural Areas in Altay Republic territories”.

Present condition of the World Heritage Site “Golden Mountains of Altai” is currently rated positively.

In 2018 no economic activity threatening the preservation of the World Natural Heritage Site “Golden Mountains of Altai” was carried out.

Harmful production is not carried out at the territory of the Natural Park “Ukok Quiet Zone” where indigenous populations traditionally use natural resources. Due to the territory inaccessibility and harsh seasonal climate tourists don't visits this place.

The Kalgutinskoye molybdenum-tungsten deposit that is located at the Specially Protected Natural Area isn't quarried. The right to use a mineral property under the license GOA 00141 TR issued by the Kalgutinskoye LLC for the geological exploration and mining of ores at the Kalgutinsky molybdenum-tungsten deposit was prematurely terminated by the order of the Federal Agency for Subsoil Use dated April 4, 2017 No. 144. At the present time the subsurface site is in the unallocated subsoil reserve fund.

Beginning from 2004 in order to protect the Natural Monument «Teletskoye» monitoring of Teletskoe water area and coastal zone have been organized. According to the Russian meteorological service data at the posts of the state observation network (points Artybash, Yaylu, Kyginsky Bay) the quality of Lake Teletskoye water is relating to 1 and 2 classes of conditionally clean and slightly polluted waters.

The monitoring data demonstrate that the current environmental situation in the area of Lake Teletskoye is at a favorable level and anthropogenic impact does not lead to a noticeable deterioration, including pollution of the lake's natural ecosystems.

In 2018 for purposes of improving the hydrological and ecological situation of Lake Teletskoe the Ministry of Natural Resources, Ecology and Property Relations of the Altay Republic at three areas of the Lake established the boundaries of water protection zones and coastal buffer zones by using special information signs:

- 1) on the right bank of Lake Teletskoye, near the Artybash village – 11 information signs;
- 2) on the left bank of the Teletskoye lake, near the Iogach village - 10 information signs;
- 3) within the area where the Chulyshman river flows into Teletskoye Lake - 6.0 km - 6 information signs.

Complex water protection of the Teletskoye focused on restoring its natural mode. The total length of the established boundaries of water protection zones and

coastal buffer zones along the left bank of Lake Teletskoye is 30 km using the installation of 27 information sign.

The Government of the Altay Republic held a meeting on the issue of a project for the construction of an enterprise of mining and processing of gold ore field reserves "Brekchiya" at the territory of Turochaksky district of the Altay Republic.

Following the results of discussion it was decided that the project is possible only in a case of conducting a public discussion and positive conclusion of the State environmental impact assessment that excludes damage to the environment.

In 1997 in the aims of preserving unique natural ecosystems of Beluha Mountain and its surrounding areas the Natural Park "Beluha" was established at the territory of 131 337 ha (Resolution of the Government of the Altay Republic dated June 10, 1997 No. 198).

The Administration of the Altay Republic Specially Protected Natural Area" day-to-day supervise the National Park.

In 2018 an action "Clean Path" with the participation of 150 volunteers was held to clean the foot of Beluha Mountain.

Moreover the Administration carried out inspections of the security arrangement at the Natural Park "Beluha" of regional significance and the Natural Monument "Beluha Mountain".

In 2018 within the events of the "road map" approved by the Resolution of the Government of the Altay Republic dated May, 2016 No. 509-r the work of adding boundaries of the Natural Park "Belukha" to the Unified State Register of Immovable Property was conducted.

Regarding the cluster "Katunskiy Reserve"

In 2018 transboundary cooperation of Katunskiy BR was extended by signing MoU with the Administration of protected areas of the Mongolian Altai.

Administration of Katunskiy BR fully implements measures to conserve OUV of its territory by systematic protection activities and monitoring. Within Katunskiy Reserve the state of biological and landscape diversity, as well as human pressures onto the environment, are being permanently monitored. The long-term project on research and monitoring of climate change impacts for high-altitudinal ecosystems was continued in 2018.

In the frameworks of the sustainable livelihoods program, run by Katunskiy Reserve, the mechanisms of involvement of civil society into conservation activities were developed and efficiently implemented.

Increased number of visitors to the property is followed by the relevant equipment of ecotrails, camping sites and visitor centers, with wide involvement of volunteers. At the same time, strict control of visitors and monitoring of the ecological impacts of the ecotourism are in place within Katunskiy Reserve, thus allowing to eliminate negative effects for natural environment and biodiversity.

The cultural heritage of the Altai, including intangible culture of native communities, is being conserved and popularized through the ethnic-ecological museum of Katunskiy Reserve.

Regarding the cluster "Altai Reserve"

The Altai nature reserve is one of the very first reserves of Russia (it was established in 1932); so long ago that it allows us to say that it has the most of the original biodiversity and natural ecosystems. The Altai nature reserve is one of the few areas on the planet where human activity has not led to irreversible changes of natural ecosystems. Altai-Sayan mountain region, located in the center of the Eurasian continent, is included into the "Global-200" list (World Wildlife Fund's Living Planet Campaign), into the list of virgin or less changed eco-regions of the world, in which 90% of the planet's biodiversity is concentrated. It proves the necessity and importance of preservation of the Altai nature reserve as a natural standard.

Based on the quantity of vascular plant species the Altai nature reserve takes the second place in Russia after the Caucasus biosphere reserve; by a species variety – within the five of the Russian reserves.

Altai nature reserve includes 4 key ornithological territories, of international value according to the program «Important Bird Areas», developed by BirdLife International.

Here are the main activity areas of Altai nature reserve:

- Guarding of the nature territories in order to preserve biodiversity and support natural state of the guarded nature complexes and objects;
- Organizing and carrying out research projects, including Nature records;
- Ecological monitoring;
- Ecological education, including development of ecotourism.

In 2009, by the decision of the 21st Session of the UNESCO Man and Biosphere Programme / International Coordinating Council (MAB/ICC), the Altai Reserve was included in the World Network of Biosphere Reserves. The total area of the Altai Biosphere Reserve makes more than 3.5 million hectares, with a cooperation zone that includes two administrative districts - Turochak and Ulagan.

In addition to its primary task - the preservation of the Protected Area, the Altai Reserve undertook obligations to promote its development and ensure the social and economic stability of the local communities. The Altai Biosphere Reserve actively involves representatives of local communities, indigenous people, businesses and local authorities in the management of the Reserve.

Acting as a biosphere extractive reserve, Altai Biosphere Reserve pays special attention to development and popularization of alternative electric power sources, supporting of local communities, and collaboration with mass media.

By 2018 9 of the Altai Biosphere Reserve (1 village and 8 cordons) in the core of the preserve were equipped with solar, wind, and water powered electric generators. This direction of work at the object of world heritage is for the use of renewable alternative energy sources to reduce the consequences of climate change by reducing use of forest resources and CO2 emission into the atmosphere. These projects supply the Reserve's remote outpost and checkpoint houses with electricity. Moreover, demonstration projects show sustainable use of alternative energy, environmentally friendly sources of electricity to local communities.

Media club "Reserve without Borders" was created at the Altai Biosphere Reserve. The Goal for creating this club is to organize regional mass media outlets for wider

information sharing on the Reserve's work. Collaboratively with the journalists the Reserve develops communication strategy and action plans for implementing it.

2. Information on other current issues related to the preservation of the heritage site

Regarding the cluster "Katunskiy Reserve"

During reporting period, numerous activities on conservation and popularization of the OUV, study and monitoring of the main stresses for the property, as well as on involvement of civil society (including indigenous people) into practical WH conservation, were implemented.

Conservation of the OUV was provided by systematic patrolling of the territory (76 patrols in total) and its fire fighting management. Within Katunskiy Reserve, five fire fighting stations were sustained, and fire danger level was monitored using remotely sensed data. During patrolling of the reserve, 13 violations were found (all of them are related to unauthorized access to the territory).

Research and monitoring. The program of monitoring in Katunskiy Reserve and surroundings is designed to provide coupled data on state of biodiversity and major threats and stresses for it (e.g. human pressure, climate change). Methodologically it is based on the UNESCO-GLOCHAMOST Research Strategy, recommended for the UNESCO Mountain Biosphere Reserves. In 2017, following monitoring activities were implemented:

1. *Hydrometeorological monitoring* using automatic weather stations located at different altitudes and field snow survey. These activities are being conducted under the special licence issued by the Russian Hydrometeorological Service.
2. *Monitoring the number of key species*, which shows the stable state of populations in 2018.
3. *Monitoring the state of natural ecosystems along ecotouristic trails*, providing the basis for management of visitors. Based on the results of this activity, it is defined that the recreation impacts the environment only at local level, and doesn't result in unacceptable changes. Results of this monitoring allowed to evaluate the optimal number of visitors as 2000 per year along all trails within Katunskiy Reserve.
4. *Glacier monitoring* is a long-term activity conducted jointly with the research institutions. Repeated photos of the glaciers and high-altitudinal landscapes of Katunskiy Reserve provided solid imagery for the unique photo-exhibition "Katunskiy Mountain Range: 120 years in the researcher's photocamera", clearly showing impacts of climate change onto high-altitudinal environments.
5. *Monitoring of alpine ecosystems* using international protocols of the GLORIA initiative indicated upward shift of the alpine plant species due to climate warming. Based on these data, the list of climate-threatened flora species was developed.

6. *Monitoring of the plant communities* in different habitats was established in 1999 and allows to assess not only natural fluctuations of plant associations, but also the rate of restoration of overgrazed pastures.
7. *Geochemical monitoring* is aimed at determination of transboundary air pollution and its traces in different environments. During 2018 monitoring of surface waters and snow cover indicated absence of pollution within the reserve area.

In 2018 Katunskiy Reserve was visited by 1886 persons. 3300 persons also visited the visitor-center of the reserve in Ust-Koksa town. Special volunteer camp was organized to involve youth into practical work on equipment of eco-trails within the WH cluster.

Involvement of stakeholders. In order to involve different stakeholders into management and daily activities on conservation and popularization of the WH OUV, Katunskiy Reserve established and supported following institutional formations:

- Science-technical Council, coordinating all activities within the territory of Katunskiy Reserve,
- Public Council, aimed at provision of public support to activities of the reserve,
- Joint Russian-Kazakhstani Commission on Transboundary Reserve "Altai", coordinating cooperation between Katunskiy Reserve and Katon-Karagaiskiy National Park.

Katunskiy Reserve is a co-founder of the NGO "Altai-Sayan Mountain Partnership", which runs the program of sustainable livelihoods of local communities in the villages, surrounding the WH property.

Implementation of this program fosters increase and diversification of the income of local communities. It consequently results in decrease of the level of poaching and other unsustainable land uses and increase of social acceptance of protected areas.

Also, Katunskiy Reserve initiated cooperation agreements with more than 30 partners representing different sectors – research institutions, environmental NGOs, educational organizations, business-companies and local communities. All of these partnerships targeted to support conservation, research and education activities of the reserve from different sectors of civil society. Special agreement is established with the administration of the Nature Park "Belukha", also located within the same cluster of the WH property. Under this agreement, joint patrols were held within the nature park. Project on designing the buffer zone of Katunskiy Reserve in the Mt. Belukha massif is continuing. It is considered, that establishment of the reserve's buffer zone will increase the effectiveness of the conservation efforts within this area as well as will allow to implement a number of recommendations of the 2012 evaluation mission, related to the management of the Nature Park "Belukha".

Transboundary and international cooperation.

In 2018 joint Russian-Kazakhstan activities within the TBR "Great Altai" includes (but not limited to) organization of joint training for ranger services, research activities targeted to inventory of biota and understanding global change effects for mountain ecosystems, wide ecological and information campaigns (like thematic lessons at schools, photo-exhibits, etc.) in the Republic of Altai and Eastern Kazakhstan.

The Altai Biosphere Reserve continues long-term transboundary collaboration with national park “Silkham” (Mongolia). Collaborative rare animal counts of argali and snow leopard take place. Range Chikhachov has a herd of argali, which has a transborder status. Their habitat covers the very top of the area, which forms a narrow strip along the range Chikhachov goes all the way to Chulyshman highland and includes part of its southern macroslope in the basin on Bogoyash river (Altai Reserve). On the South, this range is located in Mongolia, where in the basin of rivers Khara-Magnai-Gol, these animals also live. The range Chikhachov houses a transborder group of snow leopard.

Also in 2018 Katunskiy Reserve continued cooperation with the Administration of Protected Areas of the Mongolian Altai in the frameworks of MoU. Joint activities included several public awareness actions and exchange of experience. This practical cooperation of protected areas will help to enhance Russian-Mongolian cooperation in the region, as it is recommended by the 2012 evaluation mission.

During the reporting period, Katunskiy Reserve initiated cooperation with the reserve “Karatal-Zhapyryk” in Kyrgyz Republic as “sister parks”. Currently the framework agreement of this bilateral initiative is under finalization and approval.

The Altai Biosphere Reserve continues long-term transboundary collaboration with national park “Silkham” (Mongolia). Collaborative rare animal counts of argali and snow leopard take place. Range Chikhachov has a herd of argali, which has a transborder status. Their habitat covers the very top of the area, which forms a narrow strip along the range Chikhachov goes all the way to Chulyshman highland and includes part of its southern macroslope in the basin on Bogoyash river (Altai Reserve). On the South, this range is located in Mongolia, where in the basin of rivers Khara-Magnai-Gol, these animals also live. The range Chikhachov houses a transborder group of snow leopard.

Implementation of the recommendations of the 2012 Evaluation Mission

- **Develop an overall strategy for sustainable tourism of the property, which could be the basis to set the policy for sustainable tourism at the level of the Altai Republic** (in recent years the strategy of ecotourism development in Katunskiy Reserve and TBR “Great Altai” was designed and approved in the frameworks of the management plan of the TBR by the decision of the Joint Commission);

- **Further strengthen the transboundary cooperation with Mongolia and China based on the experience with Kazakhstan** (In 2017 Katunskiy Reserve initiated the MoU between reserve’s authorities and Administration of Protected Areas of the Mongolian Altai. The potential joint activities could include conservation of biodiversity, joint researches and monitoring, ecological and information campaigns, development of joint ecotours. Implementation of the MoU and building friendly relationship will contribute to strengthening cooperation of Russia and Mongolia in the field of conservation of unique natural and cultural heritage on the Altai transboundary region. In 2017 both sides already implemented a number of joint activities, including international children competition devoted to the nature and biodiversity of transboundary region).

- **Strengthen the cooperation with the civil society and in particular the indigenous communities, taking advantage of their knowledge relevant for the management of the property** (In the frameworks of this activity Katunskiy Reserve established a platform for involvement of local communities into conservation of the WH property in the form of the Public Council. Jointly with the NGO “Altai-Sayan Mountain Partnership” the program on development of ecotourism on the basis of local communities as an alternative to poaching was continued and provided financial support, trainings and promotion for local eco-microentrepreneurs).

Regarding the cluster “Altai Biosphere Reserve” and Teletskoe Lake

Currently, there’s a discussion to add the Nature Reserve status to the second half of Teletskoe Lake. The suggestion to adding of the territory to Reserve was discussed at the Scientific–technical council at the Altai Biosphere Reserve on August 24, 2018. Then the necessary documents were prepared, justifying the creation of the Reserve zone on the second bank and the basin of the Teletskoe Lake. Currently the proposal is being reviewed by the Russian Federation Ministry of natural resources and ecology.

Guarding of the World Heritage site Altai Biosphere Reserve and Teletskoe Lake:

There are 10 cordons spread around the territory of the Altai Biosphere Reserve. Communication between the cordons is conducted over portable radio transmitters, mobile phones (among 6 cordons), and satellite radio (for emergencies). The cordons are equipped with vehicles and fire safety equipment.

Protection and monitoring protocol of the Territory is in compliance with the legislation on protected areas by a special State reserve agency.

Biosphere Reserve core area is supplied with vehicles and fire-fighting equipment. 36 state inspectors (or rangers) protect the Territory, they are equipped with uniforms and weapons. Patrols are equipped with navigation devices GPS and photographic equipment.

For collaborative fire extinguishing of forest fires, an agreement with Autonomous agency in Altai Republic called Altai base of forest protection using aviation “AviaForestGuard” was signed. Fire prevention measures are being carried out on the Reserve territory.

Protection Services are the most important part of the nature reserve. Main violations of the protected area are related to poaching and illegal intrusion to the territory.

27 administrative violation cases on breaking the Reserve territory regime were filed in 2018.

Scientific and monitoring research.

In 2018 activities, to popularize and preserve of World Heritage site. Planned research studies were implemented, and monitoring of life and inanimate nature, as well as of the main threats to the Heritage site.

The scientific department of the reserve, as well as third-party research organizations monitor natural systems and their components inside the nature reserve. In

particular, surveys are regularly conducted of rare fauna species (musk deer, snow leopard and its forage base - Siberian Ibex, argali), avifauna, monitor changes of plant communities, and the impact of recreational activities.

One of the main scientific work directions of the Altai Biosphere Reserve is complex ecological monitoring (annual data collection for evaluation of the condition and changes of nature complexes of the Reserve), that is being carried out since 1932.

Monitoring of the numbers of snow leopard, argali, field research for finding summer habitats of reindeer, and the work on the project “organizing of the system of long-term monitoring of climate change and ecosystems of Altai Biosphere Reserve”.

According to the plan of monitoring program of snow leopard population, in June–July of 2018 and expedition was carried out to investigate the potential snow leopard habitat locations on Shapshal Range. Checking of the prior installed photo equipment data supported that this remote and hard to access part of the Reserve is indeed a snow leopard habitat. The field work was supported by the grant funding «Long-term Conservation of Altai republic Snow Leopard population».

In 2018 two volunteer expeditions were carried out for studying of potential snow leopard habitat on Chikhachov Range.

In October of 2018 Altai Biosphere Reserve, in collaboration with the reserve “Kuznetski Alatau”, with support of WWF Russia preparation of a Strategy of preserving forest subtype of reindeer and a Program of monitoring Altai-Sayan population of reindeer has began. Altai Biosphere Reserve is the only place in Altai Republic with any population of this rare subtype of reindeer.

Popularization of World Heritage site.

Systematic work to cover the work of Altai Biosphere Reserve through contests, exhibits, celebrations, festivals, trivias, conferences, etc., was continued. Events were held with the goal to develop cognitive and learning tourism.

Cognitive tourism is developing in the Reserve along the ecological routes, located near the cordons. The total number of people that visited the territory of Altai Biosphere Reserve is 54971. The most popular spot for visitors is the “observation deck of Korbu waterfall”. The route to the waterfall is built of wood boards, which allows to minimize the negative impact of tourism development on the Reserve territory.

Strict control of the visitors’ access to the specific parts (that are allowed for visits) of the protected territory is done, as well as informational preparation before their entry to the nature reserve territory. Nature preservation information is regularly shared with the land using local population that live near or on the territory of the Reserve.

Collaborative governing of the World Heritage site with the local communities and stakeholders

With the goal to attract additional capacity, Altai Reserve creates conditions conducive for development governing partnerships among all of the stakeholder entities. Defining partnership as a collaborative efforts of the entities with the common goal, Reserve’s leadership is leaning on such key principals as unity of goals, openness, equality of partners, reciprocity, mutual respect and responsibility.

The leadership of the Reserve gives an important role to the local population in governing of the development of the Altai Biosphere Reserve. Local

Community councils are created in the Reserve villages (located in the core on the Biosphere Reserve territory) - in village Yailu, and in village Bele. In February of 2014, in Yailu Territorial public self-government "Reserve Village" was registered.

Resource center, to support village territorial public self-government was opened in vilage of Yailu, where the central office of the reserve is located, in the second part of October 2018. Resource center will work on the base of Culture Center of Yailu village. Part of the project "Preserving future together" of EcoCenter "Reserves", which was supported by the President Grant Foundation, the necessary materials were purchased and local volunteers made the repairs to the Culture Center building. This work was coordinated by Territorial Public self-government "Reserve Village" with support of Altai Biosphere Reserve.

Non-Profit Organization 'Teletskoye Lake Council'

One of the brilliant examples of partnership in management and development of Altai Biosphere Reserve, is the non-profit organization 'Teletskoye Lake Council', established in 2009. The Altai Biosphere Reserve is a founding member of 'Teletskoye Lake Council'. The goals of 'Teletskoye Lake Council' say the following: - create conditions for preservation of a unique UNESCO World Heritage site - the Teletskoye Lake, in compliance with environmental and nature-protecting requirements and socio-economic development of the territory; - develop and implement a strategic plan for social and economic development of the area, taking into account nature conservation and biodiversity; - assist in the development of ecological, cultural, cognitive, sports and ethnic tourism; - collaborate with executive and legislative authorities, business, the public, environmental funds, etc., - educate in the field of ecology, promote sustainable use of natural resources. 'Teletskoye Lake Council' has become a wide platform for communication and collaboration of various stakeholders in the Teletskoye Lake area, and carry out their responsibility for the conservation and development of the UNESCO World Heritage Site.

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

