
Humberstone and Santa Laura (Chile) No 1178ter

1 Basic data

State Party
Chile

Name of property
Humberstone and Santa Laura Saltpeter Works

Location
Tarapacá Region, Province of Iquique

Inscription
2005

Brief description

Humberstone and Santa Laura contain over 200 former saltpetre works where workers from Chile, Peru and Bolivia lived in company towns and forged a distinctive communal *pampinos* culture. That culture is manifested in their rich language, creativity, and solidarity, and, above all, in their pioneering struggle for social justice, which had a profound impact on social history. Situated in one of the driest deserts on Earth, thousands of *pampinos* lived and worked in this hostile environment for over 60 years, from 1880, to process the largest deposit of saltpetre in the world, producing the fertilizer sodium nitrate that was to transform agricultural lands in North and South America, and in Europe, and produce great wealth for Chile. Because of the vulnerability of the structures and the impact of an earthquake, the site was also inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger to help mobilize resources for its conservation.

Date of ICOMOS approval of this report
13 March 2019

2 Issues raised

Background

The property was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2005 on the basis of criteria (ii), (iii) and (iv) by Decision 29 COM 8B.51. Taking into account the ascertained threats to the vulnerable structures of the property, and in order to support the urgent and necessary consolidation work, by Decision 29 COM 8B.52, the property was inscribed at the same time on the List of World Heritage in Danger.

At the time of inscription, the boundary of the property coincided with that of the designation as National Monument; the surface of the inscribed zone was 585 ha, with a buffer zone of 11,470 ha. The buffer zone was formed by desert landscape, other saltpetre works, tailing cakes, exploited saltpetre pampas and railway network, among others. Its objective was to maintain their environmental and historic values as well as the landscape and the views associated with the property. Its legal protection and regulation was thought to be carried out through the inclusion of the area in the Municipal Zoning Plan of Pozo Almonte (Housing and Urban Development Law). Finally, the non-feasibility for this legal protection was determined, given that, in Chile, Communal Regulatory Plans do not include rural areas, which is the situation in which the site and its surroundings are located, and the territorial planning instruments that consider rural areas are larger scale.

In 2011, the State Party submitted a request for a minor modification to the boundaries of the property to allow the re-routed A-16 Road to be excluded from the boundary. Since the Route A-16 would then run down and parallel to the south boundary, it was considered logical to move this boundary slightly upwards, so as to leave the Route A-16 outside the property. The nominated area has been slightly reduced from 647.28 ha down to 573.48 ha. The request was approved by Decision 35 COM 8B.58. While approving the requested minor boundary modification, the World Heritage Committee recommended that the State Party provide a map showing the revised boundary and the buffer zone.

Since the property is inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger, it has been, from 2005 onwards, the subject of yearly assessment by the World Heritage Committee. By Decision 37 COM 7A.37 (2013), the World Heritage Committee adopted the Desired State of Conservation and the corrective measures to remove the property from the Danger List. As for the buffer zone, the Committee requested that it be fully established and approved and regulatory measures for its protection be adopted and enforced. The indicators to verify that that request has been accomplished are an adopted buffer zone map, integrated with local and regional planning instruments; and the definition and implementation of regulatory measures for the proposed buffer zone.

In the report on the state of conservation of the property submitted in February 2018, the State Party informed that, during 2017, a proposed buffer zone had been established and work was carried out for its legal protection as a Typical Zone, being approved by the National Monuments Council on January 2018 and that, during 2018, works would be made to establish rules to regulate interventions in that territory.

By Decision 42 COM 7A.9 (2018), the World Heritage Committee welcomed the solution found for the protection of the proposed buffer zone and the declaration of this zone as a National Monument under the category of Typical Zone; requested the State Party to establish the regulatory measures for its management and protection and to submit the buffer zone as a formal Minor Boundary Modification application, as per Paragraph 163 and 164 of the *Operational Guidelines*, to the World Centre for evaluation by the Advisory Bodies and consideration by the World Heritage Committee.

Modification

This request for a minor boundary modification is a response to Decision 42 COM 7A.9 of the World Heritage Committee. The State Party proposes reducing the original buffer zone delineation to 1,826.39 ha; the reduction is justified by the State Party on the grounds that a smaller buffer zone fulfils the function of protecting the Outstanding Universal Value of the property, as it contains attributes related to environmental, historical and landscape values linked to the productive process of the saltpetre industry, and also protects visual cones from and to the saltpetre works.

The State Party acknowledges that it was not possible to protect, regulate and manage the buffer zone proposed at the time of inscription, since some sectors have been the subject of incompatible activities with heritage protection for several decades, among them mining production processes (iodine), transit activities and military training.

The proposed buffer zone contains attributes related to the significance of the property, among them the vestiges of 3 saltpetre works, with their respective tailing cakes, settlements with the first saltpetre processing systems, housing settlement associated with saltpetre exploitation. These vestiges help to better understand the complex urban and industrial saltpetre system and its insertion in the territory.

The proposed buffer zone is legally protected under the designation of Typical Zone "Surroundings of the Santiago Humberstone and Santa Laura Saltpetre Works", in the framework of the Law 17,288 of National Monuments and Regulation of Typical Zones. The designation was approved by the Council of National Monuments in January 2018, through the Official Decree issued on 28 August 2018. The designation of Typical Zone is intended to protect the environmental and specific character of areas where archaeological sites or buildings designated Historic Monuments are located.

Any intervention in the buffer zone must be approved by the Council of National Monuments, which gives the State Party the possibility of control and supervision of this area. During 2018, the rules of intervention for the Typical Zone were elaborated and approved at the Council's session on 31 January 2019. These rules include general criteria for the interventions within the

buffer zone and specific guidelines for each of the types of interventions that have been identified. In the case of necessity of construction of new buildings or structures within the buffer zone, specific rules have been defined, so that they do not have a negative impact on the landscape features of the area. Should it be a breach of the permits granted or an unauthorized work, the Site Administrator has to inform the Council so that, jointly, the effective protection of the World Heritage Site is achieved.

Most of the area proposed as buffer zone is under the administration and management of the *Museo del Salitre* Corporation, founded in 1999 by *pampinos*. The Corporation has permanent staff on the site and, among other actions, it has provided security and obtained resources to intervene buildings that were structurally damaged or for large-scale interventions, such as water networks to stop fires.

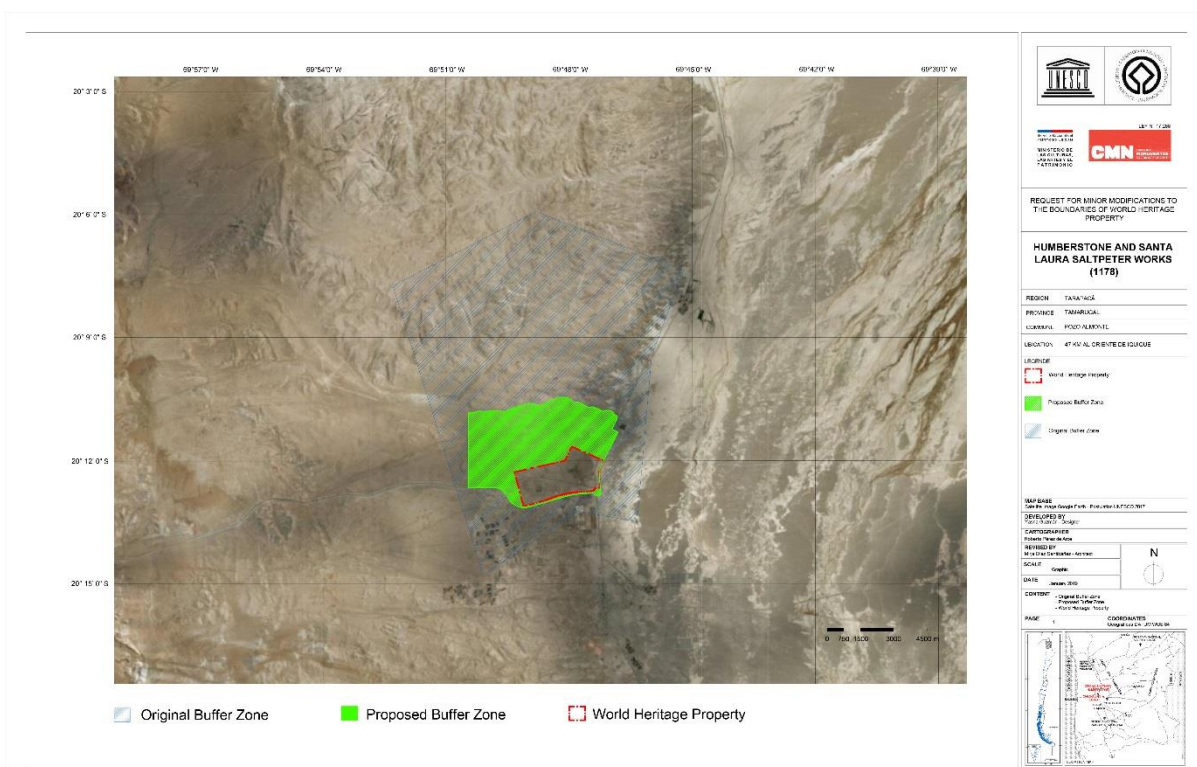
The northern area and part of the western area of the buffer zone is granted to the Army of Chile, who agreed to the protection of this area. The Army carries out periodic monitoring in the area to avoid the alteration of the works located in this sector and has installed signage for heritage protection, restricting any type of military activity in it. In addition, they are in permanent contact with the *Museo del Salitre* Corporation and collaborate in different activities.

ICOMOS considers that, although the minor boundary modification implies a significant reduction of the buffer zone proposed at the time of the inscription on the World Heritage List, the present proposal represents a more realistic approach, since it has been adequately protected through the designation of Typical Zone and a set of rules have been adopted and implemented to ensure its effective role. The proposed buffer zone includes all the elements required to support the Outstanding Universal Value of the property and to understand the whole territory as a productive cultural landscape devoted to the mining of saltpetre. Adequate maps have also been provided by the State Party.

3 ICOMOS Recommendations

Recommendation with respect to inscription

ICOMOS recommends that the proposed creation of a buffer zone for Humberstone and Santa Laura Saltpetre Works, Chile, be **approved**.



Map showing the revised boundaries of the buffer zone