

**Updated report on the state of preservation of the  
UNESCO Western Caucasus World Heritage site  
(Russian Federation) (№ 900) in 2019**

**1. Response of the Russian Federation in accordance with the decision of the World Heritage Committee 43 COM 7B. 18**

Information on Paragraph 4 of Decision 43 COM 7B.18:

1. Taking into account the conclusions of the IUCN Advisory mission in 2016, in order to avoid damage to the outstanding universal value of the Western Caucasus World Heritage site, the Russian Federation confirms the rejection of plans to build large ski facilities on the territory of the heritage, in its central part, in the basins of the Mzymta, Urushten and Malaya Laba rivers.

2. However, pursuant to paragraph 172 of the Guide to the implementation of the World Heritage Convention" (WHC. 13/1, July 2013), the Russian Federation notifies the World Heritage Committee that it is considering the construction of the Lagonaki mountain resort on the limited territory of the Lagonaki plateau, in the Sukhoi Kurjips river basin, provided that such construction and subsequent operation of the resort will not affect the outstanding universal value of the Western Caucasus World Natural Heritage site. No later than April 05, 2020 the Russian Federation will submit to the World Heritage Committee documents that fully disclose plans for the construction of the Lagonaki mountain resort and the results of an assessment of the impact of the planned construction and operation of this resort on the natural environment and the outstanding universal value of the Western Caucasus World Natural Heritage site. We also inform you that the Russian Federation intends to initiate a consultative mission with UNESCO and IUCN experts in April 2020.

The Russian Federation guarantees that, without the approval of the World Heritage Committee, it will not take any actions for the design and construction of the resort, as well as any other actions that could create an immediate or potential danger to the Western Caucasus World Heritage site (see Section 3 of this report).

Information on Paragraph 5 of Decision 43 COM 7B.18:

By order of the Russian Federation No. 586-R of March 30, 2017, in order to implement a large-scale investment project that provides for the organization of recreational, including recreational and sports, activities, land sites within the boundaries of two specially protected natural territories of federal significance (the Sochi National Park and the Sochi National Nature Reserve) were leased to four organizations. Both of these natural territories are not included in the Western Caucasus

World Heritage site.

The nature protection regime of the Sochi National Park and the Sochi Nature Reserve is maintained on the leased land sites.

The lease of the land sites did not entail any economic or construction activities, as well as other threats to the outstanding universal value of the Western Caucasus World Heritage site. The Russian Federation does not intend to allow any economic activity on the leased land sites without first assessing its impact on the environment and the outstanding universal value of the Western Caucasus World Heritage site. Pursuant to Paragraph 172 of the Guide to the implementation of the World Heritage Convention (WHC. 13/1, July 2013), in order to avoid potential danger to the World Heritage site, the Russian Federation intends to notify the World Heritage Committee of planned economic activities on the leased land sites in a timely manner and to assess the impact of the planned activities on the environment and the outstanding universal value of the Western Caucasus World Heritage site.

Information on Paragraph 6 of Decision 43 COM 7B.18:

Construction of the highway to Lunnaya Polyana along the route Chernigovskaya - Vodopadny creek - Lunnaya Polyana was stopped in 2008 at the final point: Vodopadny creek.

Construction of the highway to Lunnaya Polyana on the route Sochi - Lunnaya Polyana was stopped in 2016 at the final point: the Babuk-Aul ranger station of the Caucasian reserve.

At the same time, to ensure the protection of the territory from fires, it is necessary to restore and further maintain the service patrol passage in the form of a temporary, unpaved forest road along the route: Vodopadny Creek – Lunnaya Polyana. The purpose of the passage is patrol and fire protection. The passage is the only ground access to this mountain-forest area.

It is planned to restore the passage on the place of the similar passage and technological forest roads (hauls) that existed before 1999. The starting point of the passage is Vodopadny creek. The route of the passage is planned along the western border of the World Heritage site. In 2018, the existing forest road in the area of the Vodopadny tract was filled with rubble and graded. Since the beginning of 2019, work on the construction and maintenance of the road has not been carried out.

In July 2019, the Federal Service for supervision of environmental management of the Russian Federation conducted a review of the circumstances set out in the statement of the Environmental Watch for the Northern Caucasus (ex. on 28.06.2019, No. 1-19/0400) on the construction of the road from Vodopadny creek to Lunnaya Polyana. There were no significant violations of the legislation of the Russian Federation.

### Information on Paragraph 7 of Decision 43 COM 7B.18:

2019 was the year of significant expansion of alien insect species into the natural complexes of the North-Western Caucasus and the Black sea coast of the Caucasus. The number of the invasive insect species has reached 40. Among them, the marble bug (*Halyomorpha halys* Stål, 1855), the oak flea (*Haltica quercetorum* Foudr), the oak laceworm (*Corythucha arcuata* Say, 1832), the eastern chestnut gall wasp (*Dryocosmus kuriphilus* Yasumatsu, 1951), the boxwood firefly (*Cydalima perspectalis* Walker, 1859) are found on the Western Caucasus World Heritage site.

After a series of population spikes in 2014-2016, the boxwood firefly almost completely destroyed its own food resource and ceased to occur. However, it persists in pessimal conditions in artificial boxwood plantations on the Black sea coast of the Caucasus. It is likely that it will be able to give a population spike again when a sufficient amount of green boxwood appears in the natural forests. Natural seed growth and boxwood shoots are forming now. Effective means of combating the boxwood firefly in natural Colchis forests are still not developed.

Thus, the risk of damage to the outstanding universal value of the Western Caucasus World Heritage site from insect infestations is confirmed and will increase over time.

In this regard, following Decision of the World Heritage Committee 43 SOM 7B. 18, the Russian Federation is preparing proposals and materials to transmit them this year to the IUCN group of specialists on invasive species, and together with them:

- to develop a set of urgent measures to restore the Colchis boxwood inside the site and its surroundings, as well as to control the infestation of the boxwood firefly;
- assess the risks of damage to the outstanding universal value of the site from other invasive species introduced to the site and the region.

## **2. Information on other current issues related to the preservation of the Heritage site**

The Western Caucasus World Heritage site remains in its natural state without significant changes. The state of its natural complexes has positive dynamics. Anthropogenic interference in the ecosystems of the Western Caucasus site has been gradually decreasing for 20 years, and is currently minimal.

## **Preservation of natural complexes of the Western Caucasus World Heritage site**

There is almost no anthropogenic impact on remote and inaccessible natural monuments of the Republic of Adygea: the upper reaches of the Tsitsa river and Buiniy ridge. Noticeably recovered (after economic use in 1960s-1990s) are natural complexes of the upper reaches of the rivers Pshekha and Pshekhaskha nature monument and Bolshoy Tkhach natural park.

The core of the nomination is the Caucasian state natural biosphere reserve (93.6% of the total area of the Western Caucasus World Natural Heritage site), which does not experience anthropogenic influence and is in its natural state.

## **Preservation of biological diversity of the Western Caucasus World Heritage site.**

### 1. Preservation of the main types of landscapes:

- the mountain forest landscape – the preservation is complete, economic activity is not conducted;
- mountain-meadow landscape – the preservation is complete, economic activity is not conducted;
- mountain-meadow landscape of the biosphere polygon of the Caucasian reserve on the Lagonaki plateau - the state of the meadows has positive dynamics, the restoration of plant communities of the Lagonaki plateau continues after excessive pasture loads of the 1980s-1990s;
- the alpine landscape – the preservation is complete, economic activity is not conducted;
- water objects - the preservation is complete, they are not used in economic activities.

### 2. Preservation of species and species richness:

2.1. The species richness (species composition) is fully preserved. There was no loss of any species of flora or fauna (Colchis boxwood is preserved in the flora artificially). Lists of species belonging to poorly studied groups of living organisms, such as fungi and lichens, and invertebrates, are being updated.

2.2. The state of populations of rare species of animals and plants does not deteriorate (with the exception of the Colchis boxwood population).

2.3. New trends in the dynamics of populations of the main protected species of mammals – the most sensitive to anthropogenic influence - are noted. Data on the number and structure of populations of these animals suggest that their number for the first time since the 1980s is approaching the modern (exactly modern) natural capacity of the environment. For the first time since the crisis of the 1990s, the growth of populations of all these animals has slowed down, although their geographical sex and age structure remains optimal.

Type of animal	Number of individuals by year:	
	1999	2019
Wisent	190	1,150
Noble deer	892	1,900
West Caucasus aurochs	2,421	2,600
Chamois	1,095	1,300
Brown bear	260	450
Persian leopard	0	2
Wolf	60	70

### **Management of the Western Caucasus World Natural Heritage site**

#### 1. The general control and management:

The general control and management of the Western Caucasus World Heritage site is carried out by the federal executive authority – the Ministry of natural resources and ecology of the Russian Federation.

#### 2. Management of regional specially protected natural territories within the Western Caucasus World Heritage site:

The management of natural monuments "Upper reaches of the Psheha and Pshehashha rivers", "Upper reaches of the Tsitsa river", and "Buiny ridge" is carried out by the executive authority of the region of the Russian Federation – the Department for environmental protection and natural resources of the Republic of Adygea.

The management of the Bolshoy Thach natural park is directly carried out by the regional state institution Bolshoy Thach Natural Park, which is under the jurisdiction of the Department for environmental protection and natural resources of the Republic of Adygea.

Regional natural territories are managed on the basis of planning documents approved by the executive authorities of the Republic of Adygea. The Republic of Adygea finances and controls the management, protection, preservation, and study of these territories.

### 3. Management of a federal specially protected natural territory within the Western Caucasus World Heritage site:

The Caucasian nature reserve is managed directly by the federal state budgetary institution the Caucasian state natural biosphere reserve named after H. G. Shaposhnikov, which is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of natural resources and ecology of the Russian Federation.

Main areas of management:

- ensuring the preservation of the territory of the World Natural Heritage site and its natural-territorial complexes;
- study and monitoring of the state of the natural-territorial complexes and their single elements;
- formation of a positive attitude of the population to protected natural areas through environmental education and development of educational tourism.

The Caucasian reserve is managed on the basis of planning documents approved by the Ministry of natural resources and ecology of the Russian Federation. Planning documents are drawn up, accepted, approved, agreed upon, executed and stored in accordance with the current regulations and rules. The Ministry of natural resources of the Russian Federation provides funding and control over all activities related to the protection, preservation, and study of the nature of the Caucasian reserve.

In 2019, the following measures were taken to ensure the regime of the Caucasian reserve.

The Caucasian nature reserve is protected by a staff of 85 state inspectors.

In 2019, the state inspection of the Caucasian reserve revealed 81 violations of the protection regime of the Caucasian reserve, including:

- illegal presence on the territory – 67;
- illegal hunting and fishing – 7;
- violation of fire safety rules – 1,
- other – 6.

14 pieces of trout and 1000 branches of the *Rúscus cólchicus* were seized from the violators.

**3. Major changes within the World Heritage site under consideration are not predicted.**