

**Progress Report from the State Party – Lithuania to the World Heritage Centre on the  
implementation of the World Heritage Committee’s Decision 42 COM 7B.25**

**2020**

The Curonian Spit (Lithuania/Russian Federation) (C 994)  
Name of world Heritage Property (State Party) (Identification number)

**1. Executive Summary of the report**

Responding to the World Heritage Committee’s Decision 42 COM 7B.25, Lithuania would like to notify that documentation regarding Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for the deepening of the navigation channel and a reconstruction of Klaipėda State Seaport, and draft of the General Plan of Klaipėda State Seaport territory was submitted to the World Heritage Centre. The acknowledgement of the receipt of these documents by the World Heritage Centre is dated 16 July 2020.

Regarding the submission of EIA documentation for the construction of an external deep sea port, Lithuania informs that the above mentioned assessment is not currently being carried out as no decision has been taken to implement this port development alternative. If such information will be available, relevant information will be provided in the future in accordance with the Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines.

Lithuania informs that currently there are no intentions to build the Sea Therapy Centre in Nida.

The high-voltage line-cabling project has been partially implemented. In 2019 all high-voltage line was cabled and part of pillars was removed in 2020. It is planned to finish this project 2021 and the power line that currently dominates in the landscape will be dismantled.

Regarding remaining recommendations of the Reactive Monitoring mission in 2015, Kuršių nerija (Curonian Spit) National park administration has been implementing some national and international projects related to protection and maintenance of cultural and natural heritage, education and information.

**2. Response to the Decision of the World Heritage Committee**

1. In paragraph 4 of the Decision 42 COM 7B.25 regarding the completion of for the deepening of the navigation channel and a reconstruction of Klaipėda State Seaport.

Lithuania would like to notify the completed EIA procedures related to the deepening of the navigation channel and a reconstruction of Klaipėda State Seaport. Relevant information has been submitted to the World Heritage Centre on 10 December of 2019.

Planned economic activity (PEA) is proposed to be implemented within the site of Klaipėda State Seaport which is located at the western part of the territory of the Republic of Lithuania and within the limits of Klaipėda City Municipality. The activity will be improved by the external shipping channel of Klaipėda State Seaport, reconstruction of the southern and northern piers (breakwaters) (maintaining the current layout), improvements of the internal shipping channel (dredging and distribution, to strengthen the slopes), construction of the southern port gate.

The assessment conducted in 2017 by the working group established by the Lithuanian National ICOMOS Committee stated that the formation of the southern port gate will have a negative impact on the exceptional value of the World Heritage Site as it will create a significant “visual pollution” and the development of Alksnynė pier will also cause significant infrastructural changes in the Curonian Spit itself. But it should be noted that the EIA report (of reconstruction of Klaipėda State Seaport and dredging of the shipping channel) stated that the southern port gate performs an environmental function aimed at avoiding and minimizing the potential impact (changes in water permeability, saline water dispersion) of the planned solutions (dredging and distribution of the shipping channel). Coastal protection dam at Alksnynė also plays environmental role as it reduces water permeability and salt water dispersion into the Curonian Lagoon due to the dredging of the port water area and protects the Curonian Spit particular shores from the erosion. The environmental solutions provided for in the above mentioned EIA report are binding for the developer of the proposed economic activity. It should be noted that the environmental measures envisaged in the EIA report will be further detailed during the technical design of the project. In order to achieve the most environmentally friendly solution, the parameters of the coastal protection dam at Alksnynė and the choice of construction elements will be discussed with the specialists of the State Service for Protected Areas, the Curonian Spit National Park Administration and the Neringa Municipality Administration. The option proposed in the EIA report is that the Alksnynė dam should be covered / reinforced with natural stones / boulders. The solution of Alksnynė pier is also provided in the management plan of the Curonian Spit National Park.

It is planned to strengthen the existing southern and northern piers (breakwaters) without changing their current position. In order to stabilize the outer parts of the piers (breakwaters) retaining walls are built at the northern and southern piers, and they separate the dredging zones from the piers. After analysis of the condition of the existing piers reconstruction works have been proposed were necessary. During the reconstruction works, the clay ridge would be raised and the stone blocks would be stabilized / reinforced. Raised piers would reduce waves in the port area. The results of the underwater archaeological investigations have shown that valuable cultural values discovered do not fall into the area of reconstruction works of the northern and southern piers (breakwaters) of the sea gate, therefore no negative impact on the underwater sea heritage is expected.

During the improvement of the Klaipėda State Seaport external navigation channel, it is planned to change the parameters of the external navigation channel: direction, depth and width. The outer shipping channel would be turned north in the direction of 102-282° 104-284°, deepened to a stretch of 17.5 m until a similar natural depth of the seabed is reached (approximately 2.2 km from the port gate) and spread up to 250 m, forming stable channel slopes.

During the improvement of the Klaipėda State Seaport internal navigation channel, it is planned to change the parameters of the internal navigation channel: configuration, channel axis, depth and width. The inland navigation channel would be deepened to 17.0 m and widened at least 200 m in the channel and up to 630 m at ship turning points. In some sections of the shipping channel, the slopes would be formed without additional protection measures, maintaining their steepness in a ratio of at least 1: 6. In other sections, in order to achieve the parameters of the planned shipping channel and protect the underwater slope of the Kuršių nerija (Curonian Spit), it will be necessary, according to the preliminary assessment, to apply technical protection measures - to install underwater retaining walls.

During the construction of the southern port gate, about 1.24 km long southern and about 0.88 km long northern protective dams would be installed, deepening the water area between them up to 3 m and about 190 m long coastal protection dam at Alksnynė. The coast protective dam of the planned southern gate extending into the Curonian Lagoon would not fall within the boundaries of the Curonian Spit National Park and approach the Curonian Spit at a distance of about 400 m. The purpose of the southern port gate is preventive environmental protection. It is designed to minimize changes in water permeability and saline water dispersion into the Kuršių marios (Curonian Lagoon) by improving (deepening, distributing, changing direction) of the port's shipping channel and water areas.

It is noteworthy that three of the ten properties and elements of World Cultural Heritage Site (WCHS) Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) such as (1) a unique scale and a common spatial structure that reveals the harmonious coexistence of people with nature; (2) panoramas and silhouettes characteristic of the Curonian Lagoon; (5) marine heritage elements can be influenced by the PEA. The implementation of Klaipėda State Seaport PEA solutions may lead to the risk of different levels of impact on individual WCHS properties and elements, ranging between neutral and insignificantly adverse impact in the case of implementation of proposals set in PEA alternative A. The risk of insignificant, although negligible adverse impact on OUV properties “(1) a unique scale and a common spatial structure that reveals the harmonious coexistence of people with nature” and “(2) characteristics and elements of panoramas and silhouettes of characteristic Curonian Lagoon” is possible due to the planned construction of the southern port gate provided for in all PEA alternatives, but the proposed mitigation measures should ensure that the impact on these elements is minimal (insignificant).

2. In paragraph 5 of the Decision 42 COM 7B.25 regarding the potential impact of the proposed construction of a deep sea port.

In the light of the World Heritage Committee's Decision 42 COM 7B.25 to submit EIA documentation for the construction of an external deep sea port, Lithuania informs that the above mentioned assessment is not currently being carried out as no decision has been taken to implement this port development alternative. However, before any decision is made, relevant information will be provided in the future in accordance with Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines.

3. In paragraph 6 of the Decision 42 COM 7B.25 regarding the submission of the General Plan of Klaipėda State Seaport territory.

Please be informed that Lithuania submitted draft General Plan of Klaipėda State Seaport territory to the World Heritage Centre on 7 August 2019, in line with Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines.

The Government of the Republic of Lithuania approved the General Plan of Klaipėda State Seaport by its resolution of December 11, 2019 No. 1278 “On the Approval of the General Plan of Klaipėda State Seaport (Land, Inner Water Area, External Raid and Related Infrastructure)”. In accordance with the order of the Minister of Transport and Communications of the Republic of Lithuania of June 29, 2012 No. 3-459 “On the Approval of the Implementation Plan for the Development of Klaipėda State Seaport with the Construction of an External (Deep Sea) Port” (current edit 2019-04-11), the following decisions and activities are envisaged in Lithuania in the near future:

a) Renewal and publication of the feasibility study for the development of Klaipėda State Seaport by building an external (deep Sea) port;

b) Preparation of a draft resolution of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania by which the external (deep Sea) port would be recognized as an economic project important to the state;

c) Preparation of a draft resolution of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania or a law by which an external (deep Sea) port would be recognized as a project of special state importance;

d) Preparation of conceptual solutions for the general plan of the territory of the Republic of Lithuania, performance of strategic consequences assessment (hereinafter - SEA). Approval of conceptual solutions of the general plan of the territory of the Republic of Lithuania by a resolution of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania and approval of concretized (specific thematic) solutions of the general plan of the territory of the Republic of Lithuania by a resolution of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania;

e) Preparation of project proposals for the external port, performance of necessary studies (navigation, hydrogeological, etc.) and environmental impact assessment of the planned economic activity;

f) Preparation of a special plan for a project of national importance and implementation of an SEA (for land acquisition for public needs by constructing transport connections with an external (deep Sea) port). Preparation and implementation of a land acquisition project for public needs, implementing a project of special state importance;

g) Preparation of an investment project for the construction of an external (deep Sea) port, consulting on the project publicity procedure and selection of a land tenant or port operator operating under the concession agreement;

h) Organization of public actions in order to acquaint Klaipėda city and other Lithuanian residents with the purpose of the external (deep Sea) port, the necessity of its construction and activity perspective, significance for the city and the state, possible impact on the environment and residents.

4. In paragraph 7 of the Decision 42 COM 7B.25 regarding new construction of the Sea Therapy Centre, designing works for the small boats and yachts harbour in Juodkrantė and high-voltage line-cabling project.

In order to start designing the Sea Therapy Centre in Nida, it is necessary to prepare a detailed plan for this area. Lithuania informs that currently there are no plans to build Sea Therapy Centre.

The high-voltage line-cabling project is partially implemented. In 2019 the entire high-voltage line was cabled and part of pillars was removed in 2020. The project will be finished next year and the power line that is now dominant in the landscape will be dismantled. This activity was planned as a landscape protective measure in Kuršių nerija (Curonian Spit) National Park Management Plan (1994, 2012) in order to reduce accidents and improve the visual environment. Any other infrastructure in the place of former high-voltage line is not planned.



5. In paragraph 8 of the Decision 42 COM 7B.25 regarding remaining recommendations of the 2015 Reactive Monitoring mission.

Kuršių nerija (Curonian Spit) National Park administration has been implementing some national and international projects for the protection and maintenance of cultural and natural heritage, education and information.

Since the end of 2016 Kuršių nerija (Curonian Spit) National Park administration has been implementing EU Structural Funds project “Maintenance of the Baltic sea coast (coastal foredune ridge) of the Curonian Spit”. The project is focused on implementation of special coastal protection measures envisaged in national strategic document – the Coastal Zone Management Programme for 2014-2020. The coastal foredune ridge is one of OUV elements as well as a very important coastal protection unit and valuable Natura 2000 habitats area. The project activities are contributing to the continuation of more than 100 years tradition of coastal foredune formation and maintenance. Since the beginning of this project, 16 km of foredune ridge have been straightened and the part of recreational infrastructure has been maintained. The Project activities will be finished in 2022.

In 2020 the State Service of Protected Areas under Ministry of Environment together with Kuršių nerija (Curonian Spit) National Park administration finalized EU Structural Funds project “Implementation of nature conservation measures in the Natura 2000 area”. Two main project activities were implemented: 1) for protection of grey dunes habitats in Nagliai and Grobštas strict nature reserves, woody vegetation and shrubs were removed in the area of 677 ha; 2) measure for eradication of invasive species *Rosa rugosa* population was implemented in coastal part in total area of 18 Ha. Both activities were implemented in accordance with the Kuršių nerija (Curonian Spit) National Park Management Plan (2012), Forest Management plan for 2013-2020 (2013) and plans for regulation of invasive species. The performed works are important for the preservation of biodiversity as well as cultural landscape of Kuršių nerija (Curonian Spit). These activities help to ensure the protection of the main elements of OUV - the characteristic panoramas and the silhouette of the Kuršių nerija (Curonian Spit). After the finalization of this project and previous projects' activities of sandy habitats restoration, the main challenge for the National Park administration is to maintain the good condition of these habitats. It should also be mentioned that in recent years there have been quite intensive landscape felling in the area of the Curonian Spit planted with forest. Such felling is carried out in accordance with the Curonian Spit (Curonian Spit) National Park Management Plan and Forest Management Plan and aim to open up former spaces that have been improperly afforested.

Since 2017 Kuršių nerija (Curonian Spit) National Park administration has been implementing Interreg South Baltic Programme project “Development of UNESCO Natural and Cultural assets – DUNC”. The variety of project partners includes the World Heritage sites and Biosphere Reserve Areas in the South Baltic region (Sweden, Germany, Poland and Lithuania) which face similar conservation, preservation and social challenges. In-line with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the UNESCO Sustainable Tourism guidelines, project aim is to connect people and to develop tourism strategies that help build inclusive communities, provide 'future-friendly' economic growth and safeguard heritage assets for future generations. Project addresses these challenges by facilitating networking and clustering of tourism stakeholders, by raising awareness about responsible behaviour and by working with businesses on creation quality activities that help to prolong the tourist season. The

following projects were implemented in Kuršių nerija (Curonian Spit) National Park have been achieved: a Multifunctional bicycle service station powered by solar energy installed that shows an innovative approach to ecological and users' friendly infrastructure, and a scenic tour about the life on the Curonian spit in 1926 created. The widely visible project results have been published in the book "Curonian Spit Travel guide", that represents transboundary UNESCO WH site (Russian and Lithuanian parts), and in the promotional video "A Journey to Yourself" that reached 150 thousand reviews in social media in few months (the video in Youtube channel <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mtofvspqCz8>).

Kuršių nerija (Curonian Spit) National Park administration together with partners from Germany and Poland is implementing Interreg South Baltic programme project "Supporting sustainable nature tourism in transboundary coastal areas in the SB Region via establishing a common education scheme for Local Guides". In the scope of the project activities, 23 persons completed one-year nature guide training courses and entered the local and international labour market. They are ready to communicate Kuršių nerija (Curonian Spit) OUV to the visitors and will help the National Park administration to reach a wider audience. During the project, prepared training programme can be used in other protected areas and can help to create a national network of nature guides.

The year of 2020 is proclaimed as the World Heritage Year in Lithuania. This year the Kuršių nerija (Curonian Spit) commemorates the twentieth anniversary of Site's inscription into the UNESCO World Heritage List. New educational programs were created and special events or some traditional festivals were dedicated to this celebration. The international scientific conference "Common heritage - common knowledge: the cultural landscape of the Kuršių nerija (Curonian Spit) in the past and present" was moved from spring to autumn. Lecturers' from Eberhard Karl University of Tübingen - Institute of Geography, Klaipėda University and other institutions participated in the conference. The main topic of the conference was to discuss cultural landscape changes and their significance for current perception of the Site.

Regarding recommendation of the 2015 Reactive Monitoring mission to establish buffer zones, Lithuania notes that the buffer zones will be implemented when preparing a new version of the Curonian Spit National Park Management Plan.

Regarding decisions of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Lithuania on illegal constructions on the Curonian Spit Lithuania notes that process is ongoing. On 25 of November 2019, Constitutional Court of the Republic of Lithuania adopted the resolution that final decisions of courts in civil cases must be implemented and Government must amend the Management Plan of the Curonian Spit National Park in order to solve contradictions between court decisions and decisions of the management plan. In the summer of 2020, amendment of the Curonian Spit National Park Management Plan was prepared. Interinstitutional coordination of this spatial planning document is ongoing. In the nearest future the Ministry of Environment will submit the revised Management Plan to the Government for approval. Conclusion: there will be no contradictions between the final Court decisions and the decisions of the Curonian Spit National Park Management Plan.

6. In paragraph 10 of the Decision 42 COM 7B.25 regarding Management Plan for the property.

In 2019, the version of the joint Russian-Lithuanian Management Plan for the entire property prepared by Lithuania and translated into English was handed over to the administration of the Kurshskaja kosa National Park of Russian Federation, so that the Russian side would also start preparing the management plan.

It should be noted that Kuršių nerija (Curonian Spit) National Park administration continues cooperation with Kurshskaja kosa National Park administration of Russian Federation in the field of nature conservation and cultural heritage protection.

3. Other current conservation issues identified by the State Party which may have an impact on the property's Outstanding Value

1. The State Service for Protected Areas under the Ministry of Environment together with Kuršių nerija (Curonian Spit) National Park administration in 2017 started implementation of an EU Structural Funds project, which foresees establishment of the National Park's Nature school, a new Visitors' Centre, and renovation of visitors' information infrastructure in the territory of the National Park. All works will be finished by the end 2023. It is planned that the new infrastructure will contribute to the quality of communication and education and will help to reach larger audience.

Kuršių nerija (Curonian Spit) National Park administration is participating in the Interreg South Baltic programme project "The use of active barriers for the nutrient removal and local water quality improvement in Baltic lagoons – LiveLagoons". Project aims at improving the water quality in eutrophicated lagoons in the South Baltic by the use of innovative floating wetlands for nutrient removal. During the project, two floating islands installed in the National Park including one separate installation in Nida. Klaipėda University collected scientific data and all partners together organized information dissemination and communication with stakeholders.

In 2020 Kuršių nerija (Curonian Spit) National Park administration together with other partners from Lithuania and Latvia started to implement Interreg Latvia-Lithuania programme project "Development of Forest trail in Latvia and Lithuania and expanding the Baltic Coastal Hiking route in Lithuania". Till 2022, there will be Baltic Coastal Hiking Route developed and promoted. The route will expand the present Coastal Hiking Route Tallinn – Riga – Nida village (in Latvia). With Lithuania added, the Baltic Coastal Route will cover all three Baltic States and will be 1374 km long. Benefits will be gained by local stakeholders running their businesses along the trail – accommodation, food, transport service providers, local shops and others receiving visitors in the area. In general, tourists will receive new products in new destinations as the coastal environment will be made accessible safely and comfortably on marked trails.

With the aim to promote intangible cultural heritage Kuršių nerija (Curonian Spit) National Park administration implemented three projects supported by Lithuanian Council for Culture. One of them was about organizing of traditional international symposium on reed sculptures that were placed on the water in the Gintaro įlanka (Amber Bay) and burned down during the autumn equinox. In 2019 the theme of international symposium was "Living nature" and in 2020 theme was "Constellations". The aim of the other project – "Curonian Spit in the old maps" – is to find and digitize the historical pictures and maps relevant to the Kuršių nerija (Curonian Spit) in the archives of East Prussian Regional Museum in Lüneburg (Germany). The old maps and other valuable historical material will also be

published and the new digital products for educational purposes will be developed. The third project called "The sanded-up villages of the Curonian Spit" is related to history of the villages buried under the sand in 17-19th centuries and the great impact of that phenomenon for cultural and physical landscape. The aim of the project is to make a research on this topic and to represent it in an artistic form by creating an artwork for commemoration of buried villages in one of the most popular tourist attractions - the Cognitive path of Nagliai strict nature reserve.

Since 2017 Kuršių nerija (Curonian Spit) National Park administration together with other partners has been implementing the project "Looking for a wonderful land" - the route of cultural tourism from the Nida artists' colony to Pranas Domšaitis (Lithuanian painter) gallery in Klaipėda. The visitors of Kuršių nerija (Curonian Spit) have possibility to find out more about Nida artists' colony painters and their works and to participate in painting workshops themselves. Each year Kuršių nerija (Curonian Spit) National Park administration dedicates workshops to particular animal or plant species and concentrates all activities in communication, education and scientific research of these species. In addition to this, in 2020 Kuršių nerija (Curonian Spit) National Park administration prepared four specific educational programmes to commemorate the World Heritage Year in Lithuania: the old villas in resort Smiltynė (<https://youtu.be/LB-lwouYhKU>), changes in Nida urban structure (<https://youtu.be/oZhu1Q6mav1>), traditional fishing boat kurėnas (<https://youtu.be/PD-Q3RVUAsY>), and intangible cultural heritage and fishermen houses' decoration (<https://youtu.be/bEUC5yYXJCE>). Preparation of such education programs was financed by Cultural Heritage Department.

Kuršių nerija (Curonian Spit) National Park administration continues to work with volunteers and actively involves them in restoration of open habitats and maintenance of recreational infrastructure. At the same time Kuršių nerija (Curonian Spit) National Park administration seeks to maintain close contact with local people, local authorities and research institutions. In 2020, it signed the cooperation agreement with Nature Research Centre (scientific institution) on strengthen collaboration between researchers and practitioners. Kuršių nerija (Curonian Spit) National Park administration continues cooperation with Kurshskaja kosa National Park administration of Russian Federation in the field of nature conservation and cultural heritage protection. In 2019, an updated cooperation agreement and new cooperation program for the period 2019-2024 was signed. Kuršių nerija (Curonian Spit) National Park administration informs Russian counterpart about the most actual issues and on-going projects invites to participate in its activities or events. Due to pandemic of COVID-19 the border crossing to Russian Federation Kaliningrad district was closed for majority of the year 2020 and organisation of meetings and common activities was suspended.

In 2019, Kuršių nerija (Curonian Spit) National Park administration, Neringa Municipality administration and Lithuanian Sailors' Union signed a memorandum on reducing the consumption of disposable plastic products. Such concerted efforts help to decrease pollution on the site and to change consumption habits of local habitants and tourists.

2. As it was stated in the letter from the World Heritage Centre on 8 of October 2020, the deputies of the Kaliningrad Regional Duma supported the draft federal law, which simplifies the procedures to obtain permits for economic activities in the country's national parks, including the Kuršių nerija (Curonian Spit) and possible changes of the boundaries of the national park. It is noted, that the urbanisation or removal of part of the territory from the National Park could weaken the protection of the territory and the significance of this unique cultural and natural complex (or part of it) could be lost.

Moreover, above mentioned letter from the World Heritage Center also provided information on the possible environmental incidents on the Russian oil platform D-6 that could have caused damage to the Baltic Sea ecosystem, including Kuršių nerija (Curonian Spit).

Research, carried out by the Lithuanian Environmental Protection Agency on the substances found in Juodkrantė coast suggested, that this pollution is most likely related to the incidents in oil platform D-6 oil. On 2 July, 2020, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania sent a Note Verbal to the Embassy of the Russian Federation in Lithuania and asked to provide detail information about alleged incidence in the oil platform D-6. On 20 of August, 2020, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania received a Note Verbal from the Embassy of Russian Federation in Lithuania which did not provide detailed information that was requested. Only information that all necessary measures were taken to eliminate the identified violations in order not to damage the Baltic Sea ecosystem were provided.

It should be noted, that oil extraction activities and operation of installations are potential sources of increased risk of pollution, threatening a sensitive ecosystem of the Baltic Sea and a unique and highly sensitive UNESCO site – the Curonian Spit. Thus, all the extraction-related activities should be a subject to the highest environmental standards and Best Environmental Practices and Best Available Technologies should be applied. The preparedness to respond quickly and efficiently to possible pollution incidents should be adequate, and the exchange of relevant information maximized.

4. In conformity with Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines, describe any potential major restorations, alterations and/or new construction(s) intended within the property, buffer zone(s) and/or corridors or other areas, where such developments may affect the Outstanding Universal Value of the property, including authenticity and integrity.

Currently, no potential major restorations, alterations and/or new constructions which may affect OUV of the property have been identified.

5. Public access to the state of conservation report

State party – Lithuania – agrees to upload the full Report for the public access on the World Heritage Centre's State of conservation Information System – <https://whc.unesco.org/en/soc>.

6. Signature of the Authority

