
Testament of Kenozero Lake (Russian Federation) No 1688

1 Basic information

Official name as proposed by the State Party

Testament of Kenozero Lake

Location

Kargopol and Plesetsk Districts
Arkhangelsk Oblast
Russian Federation

Brief description

Located in Kenozero National Park in the far northern area of the European region of the Russian Federation, the nominated property depicts the peasant cultural landscape that evolved here from the 12th century, following the gradual Slavic colonisation. It incorporates a large number of traditional rural settlements with vernacular wooden architecture set in a picturesque landscape of lakes, rivers, forests, and fields. The cultural landscape reflects the communal management of agriculture and nature that developed when the indigenous Finno-Ugric forest culture combined with the traditional Slavic field culture, transforming and shaping the landscape over the centuries. Wooden churches, churchyards, and chapels, many of which were originally decorated with painted ceilings, or “heavens”, are the key social, cultural, and visual landmarks of the area. The spatial organisation of these buildings, together with the sacred groves, cemeteries, and wooden crosses dotting the landscape, highlight the spiritual connection of the residents with this environment. This connection is also embodied in customs and beliefs related to nature, including traditional crafts, folk stories, and epic songs.

Category of property

In terms of categories of cultural property set out in Article I of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, this is a *site*.

In terms of the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* (2023), paragraph 47, it has also been nominated as a *cultural landscape*.

Included in the Tentative List

11 April 2014, as a mixed property

Background

This is a new nomination.

Consultations and technical evaluation mission

Desk reviews have been provided by ICOMOS International Scientific Committees, members and independent experts.

Comments on the natural attributes of this nominated property, their conservation and their management were received from IUCN on 14 November 2023 and have been incorporated into the relevant sections of this report.

An ICOMOS technical evaluation mission visited the nominated property from 21 to 26 August 2023.

Additional information received by ICOMOS

A letter was sent to the State Party on 4 October 2023 requesting further information about the attributes of the proposed justification for inscription, integrity and authenticity, comparative analysis, communal management system, boundaries, factors affecting the nominated property, and legal protection.

Additional information was received from the State Party on 9 November 2023.

An interim report was provided to the State Party on 19 December 2023, summarising the issues identified by the ICOMOS World Heritage Panel.

Further information was requested in the interim report on wooden architecture, settlements, conservation, protection, and documentation.

Additional information was received from the State Party on 28 February 2024.

All additional information received has been incorporated into the relevant sections of this evaluation report.

Date of ICOMOS approval of this report

13 March 2024

2 Description of the nominated property

Note: The nomination dossier and additional information contain detailed descriptions of this property, its history and its state of conservation. Due to limitations on the length of evaluation reports, this report provides only a short summary of the most relevant aspects.

Description and history

The nominated property is located in Kenozero National Park in the Arkhangelsk Oblast in the north of the European part of the Russian Federation. It is a Northern European peasant cultural landscape that evolved from the 12th to 19th centuries and maintained its established character throughout the transformations of the 20th century. Here are preserved cultural traditions, forms of folk art, and traditional land management characteristics of the Russian North. Key elements of this remote, picturesque landscape of forests, semi-open agricultural lands, sacred groves, and floodplains are the traditional layout of villages and agricultural lands, and domestic and religious wooden

buildings, some with characteristic ceiling paintings (heavens), as well as the intangible heritage that developed through amalgamation of the indigenous Finno-Ugric forest culture with the traditional Slavic field culture.

The nominated property is located on a water-glacial plain forming an uplift between the watersheds of the White and Baltic Seas, and the Arctic and Atlantic Oceans. This ridge also serves as a boundary between two major geo-cultural regions, Fennoscandia and the Russian Plain. Extensive wetlands and taiga forests influence the relative isolation and rich landscape mosaic of the nominated property. Settlements emerged and developed throughout the centuries around the waterways and lakes. There are three main landscape clusters in the nominated property: the Kenozero cluster, the Lyokshmozero cluster, and the Vilno-Porzhenka cluster. Each cluster consists of landscape complexes (twenty-two in total), which are key typological units of landscape.

Fourteen landscape complexes are in the Kenozero cluster: Vedyagino-Tyrishkinskiy, Zekhnova-Ryapusovski, Matyorskii, Medvezhiy, Mamonovski, Tarasovski, Vershininskiy, Tambich-Lakhtinskiy, Chyelminskiy, Svinoe, Ust-Pochenskiy, Shuylakhtinskiy, Poromskiy, and Pochezerskiy.

Six landscape complexes are in the Lyokshmozero cluster: Dumino-Dolgozerskiy, Maselga-Guzhovskiy, Lyokshmozerskiy, Aglimozerskiy, Trufanovski, and Chelmogorskiy.

Two landscape complexes are in the Vilno-Porzhenka cluster: Porzhenskiy and Makaryevskiy.

Maps provided by the State Party show the villages and settlements included within the boundaries of the nominated property. As the State Party clarified in February 2024, sixty-two historic settlements are preserved in the area. The houses from the fifteen settlements abandoned as a result of the resettlement policies in the 20th century have been rebuilt in their new locations. Nowadays, many settlements are populated only seasonally, while twenty-two are continuously inhabited.

The planning and spatial organisation of historic villages have developed in line with the local geography and climatic conditions. The villages are claimed to have preserved most of the historical planning structure and spatial composition that is typical of rural settlements of the Russian North. The State Party presents various types of traditional planning structures and spatial compositions, based on selected examples of each type found in the nominated property, providing exhaustive statistics for all sixty-two historic settlements preserved within this territory.

Many of the late 19th to early 20th century residential and farm buildings in the historic villages have been preserved. The traditional domestic buildings are built of horizontal logs joined together at the corners by notching one of the

logs (a “Russian cup” or saddle notch). All traditional dwellings (*izbas*), barns, and bathhouses were built with this specific technique, many of which feature beautiful examples of wood carving on window frames, chiselled balusters on balconies and porches, painted pediments and shutters.

The Kenozero cultural landscape has a substantial collection of 746 traditional dwellings that illustrate the development of its typology from archaic “black” *izbas* to a more sophisticated five-wall *izba* type. Black *izbas* have black stoves with no chimneys, the household part is either not separated from the clean part of the dwelling or separated only with curtains or plank partitions that do not reach the ceiling. The smoke therefore heats the entire space. The five-wall *izba*, which by the early 20th century became the dominant dwelling type across northern and central Russia, is an *izba* with an interior partition wall, often with an additional log structure adjoining the main structure. Stoves have occupied a special place in traditional dwellings and served different domestic functions, from cooking and baking to sleeping and storage. In the additional information provided in February 2024, the State Party further clarified the evolution of the basic “cage” type of four-walled log cabin into the complex type of northern Russian courtyard house with living and household areas under one roof, which appeared at the end of the 16th century and developed over at least three centuries.

The churchyards and wooden churches have historically served as the main socio-cultural and spatial landmarks of the Kenozero cultural landscape. According to additional information provided by the State Party in November 2023, four monastic ensembles once existed in the nominated property: Makarievsky Hegozero Monastery (1630s); Kirillo-Chelmogorsky Monastery (1316); Pakhomievo Spaso-Preobrazhenskaya Kensky Monastery (15th century); and Aglimozersky Monastery (1640s). None of these survives today. They were converted into parish churches as part of the secularisation of monastic assets in the 18th century and demolished in the Soviet period. Within the grounds of the Church of the Life-Giving Trinity (1868, Trinity Church) is a belfry remaining from the Makarievsky Monastery, and a monastic cell survives on the monastic island of Naglimozero. These are amongst the few tangible reminders of monastic life in the area. In recent decades, efforts to reconstruct the Makarievsky Monastery were initiated at the Trinity Church site, and a new chapel was built on the former site of the Kirillo-Chelmogorsky Monastery.

The largest historic wooden architectural ensembles preserved in the Kenozero cultural landscape are the Porzhensky and Pochozersky churchyards. Both ensembles contain churches and chapels, belfries, and fences from the 18th to early 20th centuries. Porzhensky churchyard is situated in a sacred grove in the village of Fyodorovskaya at Bol'shoe Lake. The Church of St. George (1782 and early 20th century) is a rare surviving example of wedge-shaped roofing, which was a

dominant roofing type in the area until the 17th-18th centuries. The roof has steep wedge-shaped slopes, and the base of each slope is transformed into a flat part (*politsa*).

The Pochozersky churchyard is the only known wooden architectural complex here that combines two separate churches and a belfry into a single structure. It is located in the village of Filippovskaya, on the shore of Pochozero Lake, which is part of the ancient Kensky Volok, one of the main water/land routes between the Baltic and White Seas. The complex integrates the Church of the Procession of the Precious Wood of the Cross of Jesus (1785 and 1883), the Church of the Discovery of the Head of St. John the Baptist (18th century and 1882), and a belfry (18th century), and is surrounded by a log fence. The architecture of the ensemble is characterised by three different types of roofs (tent, gable, and barrel). The adjacent cemetery in the sacred grove is surrounded by a wooden fence of the 18th century.

Amongst other historic wooden churches preserved in the nominated property are the Church of St. Alexander of Svir in Hizhgora (1871) and the Church of St. Andrew the First-Called and Elijah the Prophet (1899) in the village of Vedyagino. A number of other historic churches in the area, as well as smaller chapels, were demolished during the Soviet period. Additional information provided by the State Party in November 2023 specified that, in the Lyokshmozero area, only five of the eleven churches and two of the sixteen chapels have survived, while in the Kenozero area, six of the seven churches and thirty-three of the forty-five historic chapels have been preserved. One chapel was relocated to the museum-reserve near Arkhangelsk in 1972. Further clarification provided by the State Party in February 2024 confirmed that ten out of sixteen churches and thirty-one of the forty-six historic chapels have been preserved in the nominated property, most dating to the 19th and early 20th centuries. Another thirteen chapels were rebuilt in recent decades, some of which maintain their original dedications and were built of traditional materials.

The spiritual and symbolic meaning of the landscape is further highlighted by thirty-seven sacred crosses, many of which mark the places of demolished churches and chapels, and forty-six sacred groves that are preserved in the area. These sacred places, along with the churches and chapels, occupy an important place in the traditional peasant culture.

Notable features of the historic wooden churches and chapels in the nominated property are the painted ceilings – “heavens” – of the 18th and 19th centuries. These are usually the ceilings of the prayer hall, in the form of a truncated pyramid with faces radiating from a central ring. The heavens usually consist of eight, twelve, or sixteen facets and represent the firmament with the sun and the moon – the Kingdom of God. The nominated property presents a remarkable collection of seventeen heavens as well as fragments of five others. This is the largest collection of the seventy-three known heavens dispersed

amongst separate churches and museums in the Russian Federation. Seventeen heavens are from eleven chapels and three churches in the nominated property. Some have been conserved and returned to their original place, while others, including the four heavens complexes of the Porzhensky and Pochozersky churchyards, are preserved in the Ruhlyadny Barn Museum in the village of Vershinino. The heavens represent a valuable source of information about the world view, values, and aesthetic ideals of the peasants of the Russian North, where peasant iconography existed in parallel with the works of masters from the larger townships and cities of northern and central Russia.

In the additional information provided in February 2024, the State Party specified the role and history of masonry churches. The first of six built in the nominated property appeared in the late 18th century. Most of them replaced wooden predecessors that had burnt down. Only three survive today: the cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul of the Lekshmozero parish, the cathedral of the Holy Life-Giving Trinity, and the cathedral of the Dormition of the Mother of God of the Kenozero parish.

The nominated property has an area of 71,030.91 ha, and a buffer zone of 68,989.406 ha. Located entirely within Kenozero National Park, the boundaries of the nominated property have been drawn to encompass the twenty-two identified landscape complexes situated within the Kenozero, Lyokshmozero, and Vilno-Porzhenka landscape clusters. The boundaries of the buffer zone coincide with the boundaries of the National Park.

Sixty-one archaeological sites identified within the nominated property testify to early human habitation of the territory. The Protosaam ethnic and linguistic group – the oldest Finno-Ugric population – began to settle in the area in the middle of the 1st millennium BCE. The first Slavic settlers appeared in the Kenozero area in the 12th century CE. These were Novgorod merchants and peasants who contributed to the development of the lake-river and portage routes between the Baltic and White Seas. The land, unaffected by serfdom, attracted further migrations from Rostov-Suzdal, Vladimir, and other lands where populations were fleeing Mongol invasions or oppression by the nobility. The full demographic shift from Finno-Ugric to Slavic population was completed by the 15th to 16th centuries.

Along with the demographic change, the transformation of a predominantly natural landscape to an agricultural one also took place in the 14th to 16th centuries. Communal agriculture and land management included grain cultivation, logging, fishing, and livestock farming, which were amongst the key local economies. In the additional information provided in November 2023, the State Party explained that, until the late 19th century, between thirty-three and forty-five percent of the land was in constant agricultural use, with some specific areas reaching up to sixty percent. The landscape has undergone important changes since the 19th century. The rural to urban migration left many local agricultural and land

management traditions redundant by the early 20th century.

During the Soviet period, the traditional peasant communities were organised into collective farms, which were later merged into larger state farms. A shift from grain cultivation to dairy production has led to significant changes in the landscape, also causing local mills to disappear. Since the mid-1950s, a new wave of out-migration to rapidly industrialising cities and a government-led village optimisation programme have resulted in the abandonment of some historic villages in the area. Inhabitants were resettled to concentrate in the few priority settlements where the state provided employment opportunities, services, and infrastructure. Specialised settlements such as Pocha were also established for workers during this period.

Despite these transformations and a substantial decline in population, the nominated property has preserved a rich diversity of elements of intangible cultural heritage, amongst them traditional systems of managing natural lands and agricultural practices, crafts, and a tradition of epic stories and folklore. These continue to underpin the local identity and serve as vital activities for the long-term conservation of the Kenozero cultural landscape.

State of conservation

Since the establishment of the Kenozero National Park in 1991, there have been regular measures for conserving the twenty-two identified cultural landscape complexes, forty-five listed monuments, and other architectural attributes, as well as intangible elements of the nominated property. According to the State Party, the majority of listed buildings (thirty-seven) are restored and maintained in a fair state of conservation. Eight monuments remain in unsatisfactory condition, one of which is in an emergency condition. The Kenozero National Park authority is in charge of the conservation process, with budgetary and human resources.

The state of conservation of the painted heavens can be considered satisfactory. The majority of them, including the four from the Porzhensky and Pochozersky churchyards, are restored and presented at the Ruhlyadny Barn Museum.

The abandonment of villages was behind the choice to transfer the original heavens to the museum while displaying high-quality replicas *in situ*. Where possible, the heavens were returned to their original locations after restoration. Seven restored heavens have thus been returned to the chapels in the villages of Vershinino, Zekhnova, Ryzhkovo, Glazovo, Tyryshkino, and Ust-Pocha, and the uninhabited village of Tyrnavolok.

Preserving sacred crosses, groves, paths, roads, and lake and canal systems have also been amongst the management priorities of the National Park. Along with key architectural landmarks, they are believed to define the historical and cultural character of the Kenozero cultural landscape.

In February 2024, the State Party provided additional clarification on the conservation measures for listed and non-listed buildings. It demonstrated that conservation is a main approach for the listed buildings, while non-listed buildings allow for more flexible renovations or reconstructions.

The most representative traditional dwellings have been purchased and restored by the National Park administration. Sixteen houses in thirteen villages were thus restored and opened to the public. Two more important houses with paintings on the façade were acquired from outside the National Park and rebuilt in the nominated property. In addition, the National Park purchased and restored three old barns to house various visitor and educational functions, and reconstructed *in situ* three forges and two mills. While the historical bathhouses have not survived due to their functional wear, new bathhouses (total number 635) are regularly built according to the characteristic plan, technology, and style, using ancient building methods.

Detailed conservation information is provided for forty-five listed buildings and the nineteen non-listed houses owned by the National Park. Conservation measures are based on regular annual monitoring.

The overall state of conservation of the landscape clusters can be considered mostly satisfactory, though abandonment, overgrowth, and rewilding seem to prevail in large parts of the nominated property. Nevertheless, the traditional landscape characteristics around the inhabited historic villages are relatively well preserved and maintained, thanks to targeted projects and programmes that include regularly clearing the overgrown agricultural lands and mowing the lakes to prevent the formation of bogs.

Based on the information provided by the State Party and the observations of the ICOMOS technical evaluation mission, ICOMOS considers that the state of conservation of the nominated property is satisfactory, with some exceptions.

Factors affecting the nominated property

Based on the information provided by the State Party and the observations of the ICOMOS technical evaluation mission, ICOMOS considers that the main factors affecting the nominated property are abandonment and renaturing of the former agricultural land. Depopulation, changes in economic sectors, modernisation, tourism, and seasonal holiday-makers have precipitated long-lasting changes. These include the loss of traditional agriculture practices, diminishing utilisation of the rivers and lakes associated with logging and fishing, alterations of land plots and settlement patterns, and stylistic inconsistency of newly erected and reconstructed houses. The State Party also mentions the negative physical impact of tourism on monuments, such as the violation of the visitation regime, temperature, humidity, and bioclimatic regimes, amongst other factors.

The State Party has additionally confirmed that rural-to-urban migration and replacement of the local population with seasonal residents poses demographic challenges. These trends further aggravate the loss of traditional land use and traditional farming expertise, resulting in alterations to the agricultural borders, as well as loss of memory of the place.

At the same time, the nomination dossier and additional information provided by the State Party in November 2023 provide an encouraging outline of the measures and programmes implemented by the managing authorities to mitigate the negative impacts of the described factors and trends. There is a shared acceptance of a strategy to allow managed decline or rewilding in peripheral areas while focusing maintenance and revitalisation efforts on the inhabited landscape parts. These efforts include harmonising tourism with local landscape characteristics and promoting sustainable forms of visitation to support the traditional agricultural profile of the area, regulating new construction, and promoting the adaptation of historic buildings to suitable new uses.

ICOMOS considers that the state of conservation is satisfactory, with certain exceptions, and that factors affecting the nominated property are considerable but currently under control.

3 Proposed justification for inscription

Proposed justification

The nominated property is considered by the State Party to be of Outstanding Universal Value as a cultural property for the following reasons:

- The Kenozero cultural landscape is an exceptional representation of the peasant culture in the Russian North, where the rural settlements and agriculture that developed from the 12th to 16th centuries reflect the communal agricultural practices and the traditional knowledge of natural resource use and management that emerged from the synthesis of the Indigenous Finno-Ugric forest culture with the Slavic field culture.
- The vernacular rural architecture of the Kenozero cultural landscape demonstrates the evolution of traditional log dwellings (*izbas*) and construction techniques characteristic of the Russian North. The landscape presents an exceptionally large collection of traditional residential and farm buildings and related infrastructural elements of the late 19th to early 20th centuries that preserve traditional decoration and interior design.
- The religious heritage preserved in the Kenozero cultural landscape, including churchyards and wooden churches, chapels, crosses, cemeteries, sacred groves, and the remnants of monasteries, convey the spiritual and cultural traditions of the Slavic population that has lived in the area since the 12th century. The “heavens” – interior paintings featured on the dome-like ceilings – are unique features of the wooden

churches and chapels of the Russian North. Crafted mainly by peasant workers with great creativity and liberty, often deviating from canonical orthodox forms, the Kenozero heavens present the world view, values, and aesthetic ideals of the local peasant communities.

- The nominated property is a cultural space of exceptional value, sustaining a living culture, traditional knowledge, skills, and ideas of northern Russian peasant communities. The Kenozero cultural landscape is one of the centres of myth and folklore that has had a distinctive place in the culture of the Russian North.

Based on the nomination dossier, the key attributes of the nominated property are the relict landscape complexes with forests, lakes, rivers, and agricultural fields bearing witness to logging, fishing, resin production, grain cultivation, livestock farming, and other traditional economic activities; the historic villages with their planning and spatial organisation patterns; the traditional wooden dwellings (*izbas*), barns, forges, bathhouses, and mills characterised by distinctive log construction techniques, decorative carving, and paintings; the churchyards and the wooden churches and chapels with their painted heavens; the wooden crosses, sacred groves, and remnants of monasteries; and the intangible heritage related to the use and management of natural resources, log construction techniques, beliefs, epic folklore, and legends.

On this basis, ICOMOS considers that, as it is, the name of the nominated property does not adequately convey its significance and its landscape features. Therefore, ICOMOS recommends that the name of the nominated property be changed to: “Cultural Landscape of Kenozero Lake”.

Comparative analysis

The comparative analysis is based on a typological, chronological, and regional framework organised around individual criteria. It has examined properties within the same region and throughout the world inscribed on the World Heritage List, included in the Tentative Lists of States Parties as well as other properties. The proposed geo-cultural region is Northern Europe.

The analysis includes a comprehensive comparative table highlighting the qualities of the nominated property in relation to fifty-six comparators. Most of the selected comparators feature rural cultural landscapes where traditional culture is preserved and the historic settlement and land-use patterns are still evident; and/or wooden architectural monuments or ensembles; and/or sites with well-preserved traditional spiritual practices, customs, and beliefs.

In terms of wooden architecture, the most similar is Kizhi Pogost (Russian Federation, 1990, criteria (i), (iv) and (v)). Apart from the similar typological, chronological, and regional features, it also presents painted heavens and is set in a similar lake-filled landscape in the Russian North. The architecture and construction techniques of Kizhi

Pogost are similar to the wooden churches and churchyards located in the nominated property but are considered by the State Party to be superior in craftsmanship and artistic achievement. Nevertheless, the nominated property is considered outstanding for its large concentration of authentic wooden domestic and religious buildings and painted heavens, its authenticity in terms of locations and settings, its wider typological and functional range, and its sustained functionality over time.

In terms of comparable landscapes in the region, the cultural heritage sites of Vodlozero National Park are presented as being the most similar to the nominated property. These sites are set aside by the State Party, however, on the grounds that the primary significance of Vodlozero National Park rests with its natural heritage, and that its cultural qualities are superseded by the richness and diversity of the nominated property, both for listed religious buildings and non-listed domestic wooden architecture.

In total, the comparative analysis evaluates forty-two properties inscribed on the World Heritage List, six sites on the Tentative Lists, and eight other properties. These range from Agricultural Landscape of Southern Öland (Sweden, 2000, criteria (iv) and (v)) to Buddhist Monuments in the Horyu-ji Area (Japan, 1993, criteria (i), (ii), (iv) and (vi)), Madriu-Perafita-Claror Valley (Andorra, 2004, criterion (v)), and The Network of Rural Heritage Buildings in Hungary (Hungary, Tentative List). It concludes that the nominated property is outstanding for the richness and diversity of its wooden architecture preserved in its authentic planning and landscape contexts, demonstrating traditional lifestyles in different types of landscape complexes that integrate cultural and natural values around a common agricultural functionality.

This conclusion was verified and reinforced by additional information provided by the State Party in November 2023 and February 2024. The values of the nominated property in the context of this geo-cultural region confirm that Testament of Kenozero Lake stands out from the extensive series of comparable properties. Above all, it is exceptional for its state of conservation and diversity of historic wooden architecture characteristic of the Russian North, including a large number of traditional domestic and religious buildings.

ICOMOS considers that the comparative analysis justifies consideration of this property for the World Heritage List.

Criteria under which inscription is proposed

The property is nominated on the basis of cultural criteria (i), (iii), (v) and (vi).

Criterion (i): *represent a masterpiece of human creative genius;*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the religious folk architecture of the nominated property represents a unique artistic achievement of the traditional architecture of the Russian North, distinctive for

the harmony of forms and asceticism of design due to its secluded location. The church and chapel ceiling paintings ("heavens") are unique in their quantity, state of conservation, and artistic expressiveness, and represent an outstanding example of the original peasant art of the Russian North that emerged due to their special lifestyle and social context.

ICOMOS considers that there is insufficient evidence to substantiate classifying the churches, chapels, and religious art located within the nominated property as masterpieces. The comparison with analogous properties confirms that there are religious monuments of superior craftsmanship and design, such as Kizhi Pogost. In addition, a number of comparable examples in the region demonstrate that the wooden architecture of Kenozero stands out primarily for the number and concentration of traditional wooden buildings preserved in their authentic setting, and not for the creative quality of individual buildings.

ICOMOS considers that criterion (i) has not been demonstrated.

Criterion (iii): *bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared;*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the nominated property represents peasant cultural traditions, management systems for nature and agriculture, customs, archaic forms of folk art, and crafts of the Russian North preserved almost unchanged to the present day.

Additional information provided by the State Party in February 2024 shed light on the specific characteristics of the traditional wooden architecture and settlement patterns of the nominated property. It provided convincing explanations of how the historic wooden buildings, in all their diversity of types and uses, serve as important representatives of the cultural traditions of this region, despite 20th-century social and economic disruptions. The additional information included clarification of the log construction techniques that originated in Russia, and the specific characteristics of Kenozero churches and chapels, including the painted ceilings. The features of the rural houses were explained in terms of planning, spatial organization, and construction, allowing the evolution of the characteristic dwelling house typology to be traced.

Testament of Kenozero Lake, with its richness and diversity of preserved traditional wooden architecture and its historic rural settlement patterns in a freshwater environment, exhibits exceptional evidence of the cultural traditions that developed throughout the centuries in the Russian North.

ICOMOS considers that criterion (iii) is justified.

Criterion (v): *be an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement, land-use, or sea-use which is representative of a culture (or cultures), or human interaction with the environment especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change;*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the nominated property serves as an outstanding example of a medieval cultural landscape of the Russian North that evolved as a result of the combination of traditional land use and agricultural and production systems, with conserved historic structures and functional links.

The evolution of the traditional land/water management patterns and systems over time to demonstrate the continuity of their functionality has not been adequately presented. No compelling evidence of an outstanding interplay between people and the natural environment has been provided. Furthermore, there exists significant evidence of the substantial transformations of the traditional management of nature and the landscape of Kenozero conditioned by out-migration of the population, industrialisation of traditional agriculture, resettlement and the resulting abandonment of about fifteen historic villages, particularly during the 20th century. Thus, the claim that the nominated property represents an outstanding example of a medieval cultural landscape of the Russian North remains unsupported by empirical data.

ICOMOS considers that criterion (v) has not been demonstrated.

Criterion (vi): *be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance;*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the Kenozero cultural landscape is one of the main centres of Russian epic folklore creativity, a place of preserved spiritual practices with sacred spaces, and the territory of the living heritage of local communities. Additional information provided by the State Party in November 2023 sheds additional light on the associations between traditional crafts and the surrounding landscape and nature.

ICOMOS considers that the outstanding universal significance of these traditions, ideas, and beliefs and their interrelationships has not been demonstrated. Furthermore, the justification lacks a clear and compelling demonstration that the Kenozero epic narratives are outstanding in a universal context. Finally, there is insufficient evidence concerning the distinctive type of Kenozero epic and the role the nominated property played in these folk tales, *bylinas*, and songs.

ICOMOS considers that criterion (vi) has not been demonstrated.

ICOMOS considers that the nominated property meets cultural criterion (iii), but that criteria (i), (v) and (vi) have not been demonstrated.

Integrity and authenticity

Integrity

The integrity of the nominated property is based on relict landscape clusters and complexes with lakes, rivers, agricultural fields, and forests bearing witness to once-thriving grain cultivation and other traditional economic activities; historic villages with their planning and spatial organisation patterns; traditional wooden *izbas*, barns, bathhouses, forges, and mills with characteristic log construction techniques, decorative carving, and paintings; churchyards, churches, and chapels with painted heavens; wooden crosses, sacred groves, and remnants of monasteries; and folk traditions, crafts, and beliefs characteristic of the area.

The nominated property contains most of the attributes necessary to convey the proposed Outstanding Universal Value. Some attributes are intact, while others are not. Major pressures such as rural-to-urban migration, state-led settlement optimisation, and collective farming during the Soviet period have influenced changing agricultural practices, the abandonment of many villages, and the growth of other settlements as hubs of meat and dairy farming and logging industries. Traditional grain production has largely been abandoned in favour of cattle breeding and dairy production, in contrast to the mid-19th century, when as much as sixty percent of the land was used for agriculture. These transformations suggest that the integrity of important aspects of the cultural landscape – i.e., agricultural patterns and traditional land uses – have been compromised to a significant degree. Furthermore, the destruction of monasteries, churches, and chapels in the 20th century has affected the integrity of the religious heritage in the nominated property.

Nevertheless, through additional clarifications provided in November 2023 and February 2024, the State Party has demonstrated that a substantial number of traditional wooden buildings have been preserved in their authentic locations and settings in the nominated property. Of the seventy-seven settlements that existed in the early 20th century, sixty-two have been fully preserved, with 1,520 traditional religious and domestic wooden structures. The largest share of these are 746 traditional wooden log houses of various types, demonstrating their historic evolution. The State Party also highlighted the continued use of traditional wood construction techniques. Sacred crosses have been erected in places where chapels and churches formerly stood, and thirteen new chapels have been built on such sites. Houses and outbuildings, especially bathhouses, which tend to deteriorate more rapidly due to their function, are regularly restored, reconstructed, and recreated using traditional building techniques.

ICOMOS considers that the integrity of the nominated property has been demonstrated.

Authenticity

The Testament of Kenozero Lake is considered authentic in terms of preserved wooden architectural elements, planning patterns of settlements, and their setting. Traditions and the spirit of the place complement key information sources reflecting the authenticity of the nominated property. The monuments of wooden architecture have been preserved with respect to their material authenticity as well as the authenticity of their forms, designs, locations, and settings. The painted heavens have been restored and conserved while fully respecting their material authenticity. Some of them were returned to their original churches and chapels, while others have been preserved and presented in the local museum. The fields and lakeshores around inhabited villages are regularly cleared to prevent overgrowth and to preserve the image of a peasant agricultural landscape of the Russian North. Despite modernisation and several restructurings of agriculture and production in the 20th century, the spirit and feeling of the nominated property remain. The intangible heritage, including the practice of folk crafts and other traditions, is supported by the local management authorities. However, with the reduced population, changing way of life, and out-migration, many such practices, including epic songs and *bylinas*, have disappeared from daily life.

ICOMOS considers that the authenticity of the nominated property has been demonstrated.

In conclusion, ICOMOS considers that the conditions of integrity and authenticity of the nominated property have been met.

Boundaries

At the turn of the 20th century, the nominated property had almost 7,000 adult inhabitants. As a result of population out-migration throughout the 20th century, only 1,680 inhabitants in total remain today. Most of the present-day population – 1,338 inhabitants – live in the northern part of the nominated property around the Kenozero Lake landscape cluster, while only 342 inhabitants live in the southern part around Lyokshmozero Lake. The boundaries of the nominated property embrace the twenty-two identified landscape complexes grouped within the three main landscape clusters: Kenozero, Lyokshmozero, and Vilno-Porzhenka. The nominated property is located within the territory of Kenozero National Park, and its buffer zone coincides with the boundaries of the National Park. The 500-metre-wide Kenozero National Park protection zone, established in 1995, forms an additional layer of protection beyond the proposed World Heritage buffer zone.

Additional information on the rationale for the delineation of the boundaries provided by the State Party in November 2023 confirmed that the boundaries were based on previous landscape and heritage surveys. They highlight the most valuable heritage and landscape features of the

Kenozero cultural landscape, with consideration given to its integrity, conservation, and sustainable development. The boundaries of the nominated property and the buffer zone follow the limits of forest districts and smaller forest regions within them, as identified in a 2014 forest management project. Units of this type commonly serve as a reference for the delineation of the territory of national parks in the Russian Federation.

The State Party further clarified in November 2023 that the distribution of heritage features across the landscape causes the boundaries of the nominated property and its buffer zone to coincide at certain places. However, the protection zone of the National Park ensures that this situation does not have an adverse effect on the nominated property.

ICOMOS considers it advisable to extend the buffer zone, through a minor boundary modification request, where it coincides with the boundaries of the nominated property. This is particularly relevant in the eastern parts of the nominated property, where the need for enlargement of the buffer zone is most noticeable.

Evaluation of the proposed justification for inscription

In summary, ICOMOS considers that the comparative analysis justifies consideration of this property for the World Heritage List. Criterion (iii) has been justified, while criteria (i), (v) and (vi) have not been demonstrated. The nominated property exhibits exceptional evidence of the cultural traditions of the Russian North in its richness and diversity of preserved traditional wooden architecture and its historic rural settlement patterns in a freshwater environment. The conditions of integrity and authenticity have been met, despite changes in the traditional landscape, and while the boundaries of the nominated property and its buffer zone are largely adequate, the eastern boundary of the buffer zone should be extended, through a minor boundary modification request, to provide an additional layer of protection for the nominated property.

4 Conservation measures and monitoring

Documentation

According to the State Party, establishment of the Kenozero National Park in 1991 was preceded by comprehensive scientific research on the territory of the nominated property. The work included detailed scientific studies on the physical and geographical features of the landscape as well as social, economic, and demographic characteristics, archaeological sites, traditional settlements, architecture, ethnography, oral traditions, toponymy, historiography, and documentary heritage of the area.

The full-scale archival, bibliographic, and ethnographic data was also used to develop territorial zoning and land-use regulations for the nominated property.

The sustained scientific interest of various regional and national research institutions ensures that the information on the different elements of the cultural landscape is kept up to date. The extensive bibliographical and documentary references as well as archival maps and documents provided by the State Party, along with the additional information in February 2024, confirm the sufficient level of documentation of various aspects of the nominated property from the 19th century onwards.

The Kenozero National Park has a rich archive and database for its cultural heritage. The digitisation of archival materials and the creation of an electronic archive are taking place. The Kenozero collection is also featured in the Russian Ethnographic Museum in Saint Petersburg, confirming the high importance and extensive ethnographic research of this area in 19th and 20th centuries. Additional information provided by the State Party in February 2024 includes archival documents from ethnographic research in the Russian North and Kenozero, including information on forges, water mills, barns, bathhouses, and crosses, with maps, lists, archival photos, and measured drawings. All this information is supported with references to scientific studies and a bibliography.

At the same time, the State Party acknowledges that, despite the long-term research, documentation, and conservation measures, some basic information such as the definition of individual boundaries and the object of protection have not been completed for all monuments (according to the nomination dossier, the boundaries of only fourteen monuments are fully delimited; work is underway on the rest). This indicates that further work is necessary to ensure the comprehensive documentation of all aspects of the nominated property.

Conservation measures

Since 1991, the Kenozero National Park administration has been the driver of conservation and restoration measures within the nominated property. The forty-five listed architectural monuments have been handed over to the National Park, leading to comprehensive restoration processes, including emergency measures as well as major conservation works on the complexes of the Porzhensky and Pochozersky churchyards and other iconic monuments.

In addition, nineteen non-listed traditional wooden houses and three barns have been purchased and restored by the National Park to present to visitors the traditional peasant lifestyle in the Russian North. Three forges and two mills have been reconstructed-recreated *in situ* to assist in understanding and reviving the traditional crafts and rural lifestyle.

The detailed recording of socio-historical, ethnographic, cultural, architectural, and other aspects was conducted within the long-term Certification of Villages project to prepare the basis for the conservation and rehabilitation of the historic settlements and villages. This comprehensive survey allowed the identification of the most significant

features of settlements and villages, including their overall development structure and significant buildings.

Furthermore, ethnographic surveys and archival studies have been conducted regularly by the National Park in collaboration with regional and national research institutions for the identification, documentation, and safeguarding of the intangible heritage of the Kenozero cultural landscape.

All identified archaeological sites have been studied, conserved, and monitored by the National Park authority in collaboration with the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

The National Park authority implements conservation measures for various other heritage objects and sites, including hydraulic and engineering structures. The management plans developed individually for the landscape complexes as well as the management plan developed for the World Heritage nomination include various actions for regular monitoring and conservation of these elements.

Conservation works are executed in accordance with Russian Federation legislation. Only licenced individuals and legal entities are allowed to work on the conservation of cultural heritage monuments. The issuance and approval of conservation work permits are conducted by the cultural heritage protection authority of the Arkhangelsk Oblast. The protection of cultural heritage monuments is funded by the National Park budget and targeted federal subsidies from the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment of the Russian Federation.

In February 2024, the State Party provided additional information on the conservation measures, including model projects for listed and non-listed buildings. Detailed conservation information was provided for the interventions undertaken on the 45 listed buildings and the 19 non-listed traditional dwellings owned by the National Park.

The owners of the non-listed traditional dwellings are assisted directly or by means of grants to undertake conservation-renovation works in compliance with the planning rules, which also include detailed provisions for traditional architecture (height, orientation, colour, etc.). The presented conservation projects confirm the careful approach taken regarding the use of new materials.

In situations where the owner is not interested in conservation or restoration, and purchase by the National Park administration cannot be agreed upon, the building is measured and documented to enable restoration-reconstruction to take place when the situation is more favourable.

Monitoring

The Kenozero National Park administration ensures that the entire nominated property and its buffer zone are monitored. Since 2000, the National Park has conducted annual monitoring of the condition and dynamics of the

cultural landscape complexes, as well as the measures for their maintenance and conservation.

The types of monitoring conducted by the National Park include monitoring of the general state of conservation of the cultural landscape complexes, monitoring of the implementation of the management plan, monitoring of the state of conservation of architectural monuments and the traditional structure of settlements, monitoring of intangible heritage practices in the local communities, monitoring of the anthropogenic load, environmental monitoring, and monitoring of the biodiversity. For architectural monuments, monitoring results obtained twice a year, in spring and autumn, serve as the basis for conservation planning.

A comprehensive framework of monitoring actions, the key indicators for assessing the state of conservation of respective attributes, and the periods in which monitoring has to be conducted have been provided by the State Party. Monitoring tasks are shared amongst different units of the National Park administration.

ICOMOS notes the ongoing digital systematisation of the documentation as an important step for the preservation of the built heritage and considers that the documentation of the entire nominated property needs to be continued and completed. A comprehensive monitoring system is in place. ICOMOS considers that it would be advisable that it is further adapted for easy integration of its outcomes into the Periodic Reporting questionnaire.

5 Protection and management

Legal protection

The nominated property is protected by several legal mechanisms at the national and regional levels. There is comprehensive legal protection from both cultural and natural sectoral perspectives. The Kenozero National Park was established in 1991, and a 500-metre-wide protection zone was established in 1995 as an additional protection of the Kenozero National Park. The protection zone is intended to ensure the preservation of the natural areas, the economic use of which directly affects the biological stability of ecosystems and the Kenozero cultural landscape, and to prevent potential adverse impacts by anthropogenic processes. No new construction is allowed in this zone. According to the State Party, the protection zone is planned to be extended.

Kenozero National Park has been included in the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere programme since 2004. The nominated property, with unique swamp and forest ecosystems, is recognised as a globally important habitat for migratory birds. At the same time, the traditional land use and agricultural practices are acknowledged to have contributed to the high biodiversity levels in the area.

National Parks enjoy the highest level of national protection. Therefore, the environmental regulations that apply to Kenozero National Park impose even tighter

restrictions on the use of the area and new construction than the regulations related to the protection of cultural heritage sites.

The territory of the Kenozero National Park is divided into functional zones with different levels of restrictions. In the zone encompassing especially valuable natural areas, any human impact, including visitation, is prohibited, while in the recreational zone, activities for the development of sustainable tourism are encouraged. The zoning system also provides a cultural landscape protection zone, which restricts economic activities in accordance with preserving the historical and cultural objects of the National Park.

The Regulations on Kenozero National Park were approved by Order of the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment of the Russian Federation No. 166 (2003), and amended by Order No. 72 (2009). Their revision is currently in progress. The Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment of the Russian Federation aims to finalise the approval of the Regulations on Kenozero National Park and register them with the Ministry of Justice by April 2024.

Forty-five architectural objects are listed as monuments under Federal Law No. 73-FZ (2002) on Cultural Heritage Properties (Historical and Cultural Monuments) of the Peoples of the Russian Federation. The majority are churches and chapels. Two of them, Porzhensky churchyard in Fyodorovskaya village and Pochozersky churchyard in Filippovskaya village, were given federal significance status in 1960 by Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the RSFSR No. 1327. Twenty-six are monuments of regional significance, registered by Decision of the Arkhangelsk Oblast Council of People's Deputies No. 154 (1990). The remaining monuments were placed under state protection by various acts of the Administration of the Arkhangelsk Oblast in the period from 1998 to 2013.

The boundaries of fourteen listed buildings have been defined, and work is underway on the rest. In order to effectively preserve and protect monuments, the Decree of the Ministry of Culture of the Arkhangelsk Oblast No. 20-p of December 31, 2015 on Establishing the Boundaries of the Territories of Cultural Heritage Properties (Historical and Cultural Monuments) of the Peoples of the Russian Federation as Objects of Urban Development Activity of Special Regulation defines the boundaries of their territories. Projects of their protection zones have also been developed.

So-called "passports" – inventory documents and security obligations for the users – have been completed for all monuments. In 2015-2016, the passports for thirty-two monuments were corrected and the subsequent changes were introduced in the Unified State Register of Cultural Heritage Properties (Historical and Cultural Monuments) of the Peoples of the Russian Federation. Regular updates and revisions of the passports for architectural monuments, archaeological sites, and landscape complexes are included in the action plans of the nominated property's management plan.

Historical and Cultural Monument Protection Zones have been elaborated for only twenty listed buildings. These zones include the protection zone of the cultural heritage monuments as well as development regulation zones and protected cultural landscape zones, with planning regulations and land-use regimes for each. Despite a decade-long process of discussion and revision, the Historical and Cultural Monument Protection Zones and their provisions still await approval by the Arkhangelsk Oblast government. Thus, the historic settlements, traditional dwellings, and domestic buildings, as well as the settings of the listed buildings, are currently covered only by National Park regulations and the Rules of Land Use and Development of the villages.

Rules of Land Use and Development were prepared by the Kenozero National Park administration and approved by the Decision of the Municipal Council of the Kenozero Municipal Formation No. 87 (2015). These affect twenty-two villages within the territory of Kenozero National Park, Plesetsk Municipal District of Arkhangelsk Oblast. Included in the Rules of Land Use and Development is a set of draft designs of traditional residential buildings recommended for construction. This important guiding document is intended to assist reconstruction and construction in accordance with the cultural heritage and planning regulations.

In the additional information provided in February 2024, the State Party clarified that the Rules of Land Use and Development were approved for all settlements within the territory of the National Park in 2017. In addition, the State Party provided a very detailed description of the provisions of the law regarding zoning of residential areas in national parks (Decree No. 857, 2023, issued by the Government of the Russian Federation). All these affirm that there is an operative and substantial control mechanism for preserving the traditional appearance of the historic settlements, even if it does not ensure that the material authenticity of non-listed buildings is protected by law.

In the additional information provided in February 2024, the State Party clarified that the planning regulations are the key reference for the protection of the non-listed buildings. Apart from the Rules of Land Use and Development, they could also be regulated by the listed building protection zones (with parameters automatically set, or established individually), in which reconstructions exceeding the existing volume and new constructions are prohibited.

Management system

Kenozero National Park is the main management authority. The administration of the National Park includes local community members as well as professionals from the region. There are several national, regional, and local strategies in place to support sustainable development. The National Park oversees all issues regarding the nominated property in coordination with the relevant sectoral institutions as well as local authorities of the respective municipalities.

Development issues in the nominated property and its buffer zone fall under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment of the Russian Federation. It issues construction permits for new developments and makes decisions on the permitted use of the land plots, based on advice from the National Park. According to additional information provided by the State Party in November 2023, the power to dispose of land plots and to issue permits for the construction of residential buildings in the villages that have approved Rules of Land Use and Development was handed over to these municipalities in 2021. However, Kenozero National Park retains final authority to approve new construction projects.

All cultural heritage monuments located in the nominated property are owned by the state. Twenty-two of these are assigned to the Kenozero National Park for operation. For the remaining monuments, the process of documenting property rights was on-going in 2022.

The issuance and approval of conservation work permits for cultural heritage monuments is conducted by the cultural heritage protection authority of the Arkhangelsk Oblast.

The Kenozero National Park has developed management plans for seven landscape complexes: Zekhnova-Ryapusovskiy; Maselga-Guzhovskiy; Pochezerskiy; Porzhenskiy; Shuylakhtinskiy; Vedyagino-Tyrishkinskiy; and Dumino-Dolgozerskiy. These plans define the areas and coordinate various maintenance and conservation measures, including mowing meadow grasses, cutting down self-seeding tree species on former agricultural lands, maintaining forests, and logging. The calculations of the economic costs of these activities are also conducted.

The management plan of the nominated property and its buffer zone covers the period 2021-2027 and is in the process of implementation. It introduces a unified approach to the management of the National Park, UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, and nominated property. The plan includes strategies for all these three different domains, integrating conservation and sustainable development within a holistic approach. Protection of the proposed Outstanding Universal Value of the nominated property is the basis for the entire strategic planning process.

The management plan also includes an obligation to prepare Heritage Impact Assessments in the context of developing sustainable tourism infrastructure (Action Plan 5). A comprehensive disaster risk management plan has been developed to improve fire and sanitary safety, including in emergency situations, in the nominated property and its buffer zone. Elimination of accumulated environmental damage and mitigation of potential environmental risks, ensuring security and fire safety of infrastructure facilities, and ensuring fire safety of architectural monuments are included in the objectives set out in the management plan.

The local community is recognised as having a special role amongst the stakeholders. It also represents an important resource for the National Park staff. Special promotion measures are in place to attract and retain quality staff. Furthermore, there are four Territorial Public Self-Governments established in the villages of Vershinino, Morshchikhinskaya, Pocha, and Ust-Pocha to promote communication and engage individuals in the joint management of the area.

Visitor management

The State Party notes that tourism plays a major role in the local economy. There are several large tourist routes and environmental trails across the nominated property. From 2012 to 2020, as a result of systematic actions for the development of tourism, the tourist flow increased by fifty-seven percent. From 2014 to 2020, the number of rural tourism facilities increased from eleven to twenty-nine, the number of tourism programmes with the participation of the local community increased by 270 percent, and local community income from the National Park increased by 135 percent.

According to the State Party, about 200 residents participate in different tourism activities. A survey conducted in 2014 and 2019 found that about seventy percent of the inhabitants in Kenozero feel positively towards the development of sustainable tourism in their area. There is a sustainable tourism development plan.

All guest accommodations in the Kenozero National Park are made in adapted abandoned historic wooden houses or former collective farm buildings. There are no plans for large-scale hotel infrastructure in the nominated property or buffer zone. The National Park owns reserved land outside the buffer zone that could be used for this purpose, if necessary.

A museum complex has been established in the village of Vershinino to exhibit the main traditional crafts of Kenozero. Thematic expositions have been opened there, and in the Ruhlyadny Barn Museum are a number of the heavens. According to the State Party, storage conditions for items from the Museum Fund of the Kenozero National Park do not meet lighting, temperature, humidity, and chemical requirements. Construction of a new museum in the nominated property is under consideration. Its location, size and design are not confirmed at this time.

The maximum carrying capacity of the nominated property and its buffer zone in the event of inscription on the World Heritage List is currently being assessed. The State Party believes that appropriate management strategies, planning regulations, and local population awareness are in place to mitigate any adverse effects of tourism.

Community involvement

From the very beginning of its operation, Kenozero National Park has been committed to promoting sustainable livelihoods for the local community and engaging them in its activities, according to the State Party. The 1990s saw the emergence of the first Public Councils, followed by the

first four Territorial Public Self-Governments in the 2000s. The primary objective has been to promote communication and engage individuals in joint management of the area.

Special measures are also in place to increase the awareness and engagement of local inhabitants in the conservation and maintenance of traditional dwellings and cultural heritage monuments, to respect the traditional planning of historic villages, and to revive the intangible heritage, including crafts, agricultural practices, and folklore of the region.

Effectiveness of the protection and management of the nominated property

In summary, ICOMOS considers that the legal protection and the management system are adequate. In order to enhance their efficiency, the protection zone established in 1995 should be extended through a minor boundary modification request. Historical and Cultural Monument Protection Zones should be elaborated for all listed buildings, the boundaries of all listed buildings should be defined. Revision of the Regulations for Kenozero National Park should be finalised and registered, and management plans should be developed for all cultural landscape complexes. Visitor management is adequate, but the carrying capacity of the nominated property should be determined.

6 Conclusion

ICOMOS considers that the Testament of Kenozero Lake presents a particularly rich and diverse collection of traditional Northern Russian domestic and religious wooden architecture set in a picturesque landscape of lakes, rivers, forests, and fields. The traditional settlement patterns and spatial organisation, village layouts, orientation, clustering of houses and outbuildings of this relict cultural landscape testify to the traditional knowledge and the use of natural resources and the environment. Woodworking customs and traditions, expressed in the log building typologies that are characteristic of the Russian North, are remarkable.

ICOMOS appreciates the efforts made by the State Party in elaborating the nomination dossier for this large and complex property and also appreciates the work carried out by the State Party to produce extensive and well-organised additional information on a broad range of subjects.

ICOMOS considers that the comparative analysis justifies consideration of this property for the World Heritage List. Criterion (iii) is justified and the conditions of integrity and authenticity have been met. The boundaries of the nominated property enclose the diversity of settlement clusters and landscape complexes, comprising sixty-two historic settlements with 1,520 traditional wooden buildings. Of these, the churchyards, churches and chapels are of special interest.

ICOMOS notes the efforts of the State Party to regulate, manage, and conserve the historic environment of the nominated property, integrating the objectives of nature conservation with the objective of protecting the proposed Outstanding Universal Value of the nominated property. Recommendations have been made concerning aspects of the legal protection, the management system, the boundaries of the buffer zone, and the documentation of the entire nominated property.

7 Recommendations

Recommendations with respect to inscription

ICOMOS recommends that the Testament of Kenozero Lake, Russian Federation, be inscribed, as a relict cultural landscape, on the World Heritage List on the basis of **criteria (iii)**.

Recommended Statement of Outstanding Universal Value

Brief Synthesis

Located in Kenozero National Park in the far northern area of the European region of the Russian Federation, the picturesque Kenozero relict cultural landscape depicts the peasant lifestyle that evolved here from the 12th century, following the gradual Slavic colonisation of the region. It incorporates a large number of traditional rural settlements with vernacular wooden architecture set in an evocative landscape of lakes, rivers, forests, and fields that preserve traces of past traditional practices. Wooden churches, churchyards and chapels, many of which were originally decorated with painted ceilings, or “heavens”, are the key social, cultural, and visual landmarks of the area. The spatial organisation of these buildings, together with sacred groves, cemeteries, and wooden crosses dotting the landscape, bear witness to the spiritual connection of the inhabitants to this environment.

Criterion (iii): The exceptional collection of historic wooden buildings of Kenozero Lake, in all their rich diversity of types and uses, is an important representation of the cultural traditions of this region. Traditional woodworking and log construction bear witness to the evolution of early log structures into a sophisticated assembly of domestic and religious buildings. Historic rural settlement patterns and evidence of the use of natural resources in a scenic lake-river landscape are likewise a testimony to a cultural tradition in the Russian North.

Integrity

The boundaries of the property contain all the key attributes necessary to convey its Outstanding Universal Value. A substantial number of traditional wooden buildings have been preserved in their authentic locations and settings within the property. Of the seventy-seven settlements that existed in the early 20th century, sixty-two have been fully preserved, containing 1,520 traditional religious and domestic wooden structures.

Authenticity

The property is authentic in terms of the preserved wooden architectural elements, the patterns of the settlements, and the setting. The monuments of wooden architecture have been preserved with respect for the authenticity of their materials, form, and design. The form and layout of fields and lakeshores around inhabited villages are also maintained. Despite modernisation and several restructurings of agriculture and production in the 20th century, the spirit and feeling of the cultural landscape remain complemented by surviving intangible heritage and traditional practices supported by the management of the property.

Protection and management requirements

The property is protected by several legal mechanisms at the national and regional levels. There is comprehensive legal protection from both cultural and natural sectoral perspectives. Kenozero National Park was established in 1991, and a 500-metre-wide protection zone was delineated in 1995 as an additional protection of the National Park. The protection zone is intended to ensure the preservation of the natural areas, the economic use of which directly affects the biological stability of ecosystems and the Kenozero cultural landscape, and to prevent potential adverse impacts by anthropogenic processes.

Kenozero National Park is the main management authority. The administration of the National Park includes local community members as well as professionals from the region. There are several national, regional, and local strategies in place to support sustainable development. Kenozero National Park oversees all issues regarding the property in coordination with the relevant sectoral institutions as well as local authorities of the respective municipalities.

The management plan of the property and its buffer zone covers the period 2021-2027 and is in the process of implementation. It introduces a unified approach to the management of the National Park, UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, and the property. The plan includes strategies for all these three different domains, integrating conservation and sustainable development within a holistic approach. The protection of the Outstanding Universal Value of the property is the basis for the entire strategic planning process. The management plans for all cultural landscape complexes should be developed. The local communities are recognised as having a special role amongst the stakeholders.

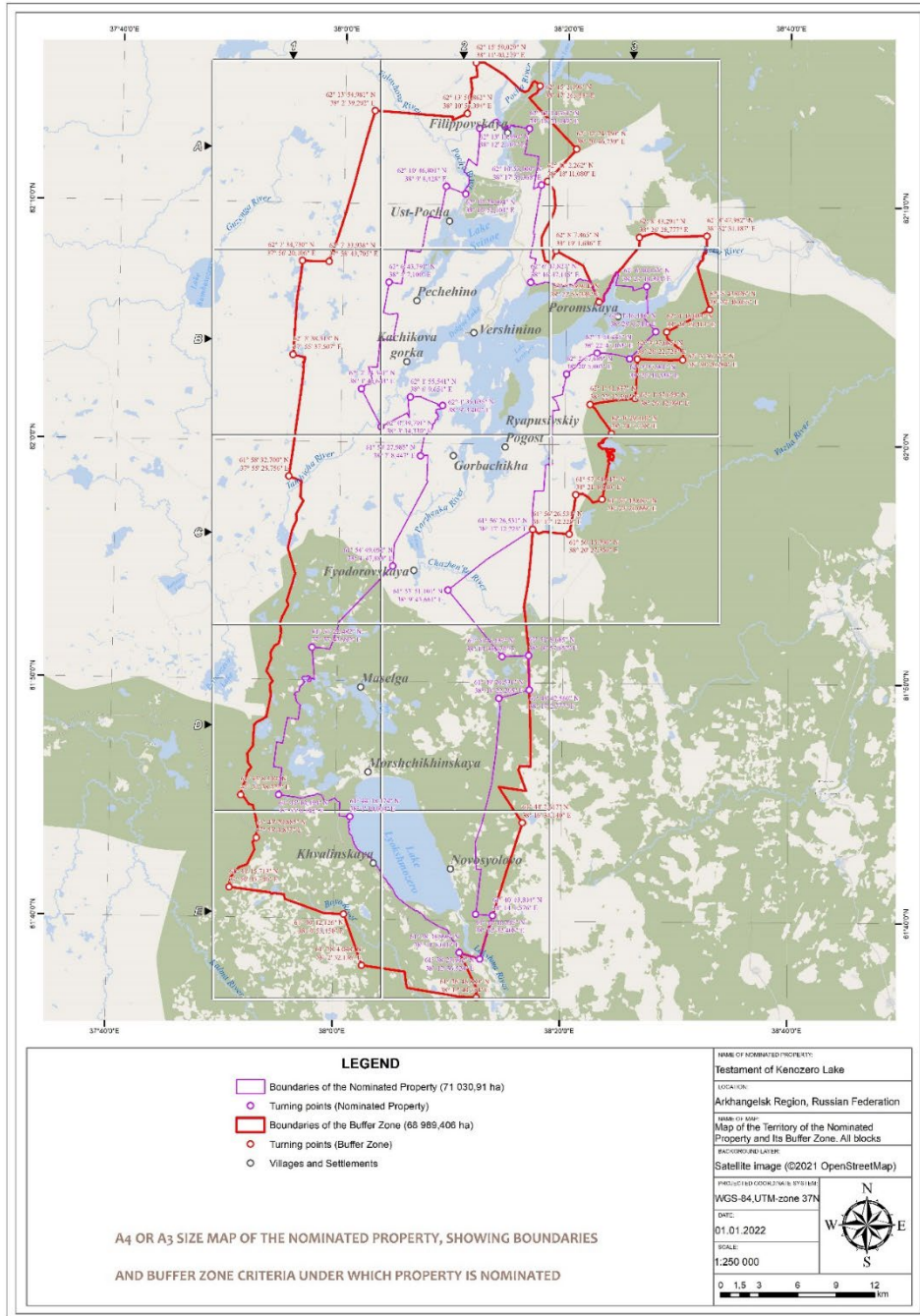
Additional recommendations

ICOMOS further recommends that the State Party give consideration to the following:

- a) Enlarging the boundaries of the buffer zone, through a minor boundary modification request, particularly where it coincides with the eastern boundary of the property, and extending the protection zone established in 1995,

- b) Completing the definition of individual boundaries of all listed buildings and their protection zones,
- c) Completing the management plans for all the landscape complexes,
- d) Finalising and registering the revision of the Regulations for Kenozero National Park,
- e) Ensuring the allocation of state funding for conservation on a permanent basis,
- f) Determining the carrying capacity of the territory,
- g) Enhancing the monitoring system and aligning it with the Periodic Reporting questionnaire,
- h) Completing the ongoing digitalisation of the documentation for the entire property;

ICOMOS recommends that the name of the property be changed to: "Cultural Landscape of Kenozero Lake".



Map showing the boundaries of the nominated property