

16. Shiretoko (Japan) (N 1193)

Year of inscription on the World Heritage List

2005

Criteria

(ix) (x)

Year(s) of inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger

N/A

Previous Committee Decisions

29 COM 8B.6

International Assistance

N/A

UNESCO extra-budgetary funds

N/A

Previous monitoring missions

February 2008: joint UNESCO / IUCN mission

Main threats identified in previous reports

- a) Expedite development of a marine management plan;
- b) Develop a salmonid management plan;
- c) Address other management issues included in the IUCN evaluation report.

Current conservation issues

A comprehensive state of conservation report was received from the State Party on 31 January 2008, which reported progress on the following issues:

- a) The establishment of a Scientific Council, three Expert Working Groups, and a Regional Liaison Committee to guide the conservation and management of the property;
- b) Extension of the marine component of the property from 1 km to 3 km and submission of a revised map in December 2005;
- c) Development of a multiple use integrated marine management plan;
- d) Assessment of the impact of river constructions on salmonids and countermeasures taken;
- e) Proper management of Sika Deer in the property and on the Hokkaido Island;
- f) Strategies for promoting ecotourism and proper use of the site, as well as research and monitoring activities.

On the invitation of the State party, a joint World Heritage Centre / IUCN mission visited the property from 18 to 22 February 2008 and the detailed mission report, responding to the various issues raised in the 2005 decision of the World Heritage Committee, is available at <http://whc.unesco.org/archive/2008> . The key findings from the mission included:

Management of marine resources

The mission team reviewed the multiple use integrated marine management plan and noted that it provides a good framework for management of marine resources and builds on a good base of local involvement and the best science currently available. However, the Mission Team feels that further detail and elaboration is required, particularly in relation to the identification of priorities, responsibilities and time lines, and it should also include clear targets and indicators for the conservation of the key indicator species, including Walleye Pollock and the Steller Sea Lion. There is also a need to prepare one comprehensive management plan which integrates the currently separate plans covering marine management, ecotourism, as well as other issues.

Additional measures are required for ensuring the long-term conservation of fish species, including adjustments to management practices, in consultation with local fishers. The Mission Team recommended the State Party consider identifying and designating locally relevant conservation zones, including no-take zones, and practices within the marine habitat to ensure sustainable productivity of the marine biodiversity. It is also observed that fisheries resources are affected by activities which occur outside of the property, in particular from fisheries activities in the wider Sea of Okhotsk. This requires action beyond the boundaries of the property and the need to continue the dialogue and consultation already initiated with relevant authorities and representatives of the fisheries sector from Russia. Effective measures are also required to minimise conflicts between fishers and the conservation of the threatened Steller Sea Lion.

Management of Salmonids and river constructions

Salmon species are an important element of the outstanding universal value of the property. Hence, providing for their unimpeded movement between the marine and riverine habitats is a crucial management strategy. The State Party has already started modifying some of the structures that exist in 14 of the 44 streams within the property, but these efforts need to be intensified, particularly in key areas such as the Rusha River, to enable free movement of the salmonids. There is also need to carefully monitor the long-term impact of modification of river structures on salmonid populations.

Management of Sika Deer

Proper management of Sika Deer populations is crucial to conserving the natural ecosystems and biodiversity of the property, as there is concern that they may be affecting the native vegetation through overgrazing. A management plan for this purpose has been developed and is being implemented, but impacts on both the ecosystems and the deer populations need to be carefully monitored and the management practices adapted accordingly.

Management of ecotourism

Several initiatives have been taken to develop responsible tourism activities and facilities within and adjacent to the property. The activities are guided by the working groups on proper use and ecotourism and are being undertaken in consultation and collaboration with local communities and the travel and tourism sector, and are based on the natural features and values of the property. They also aim to contribute to the development and diversification of the local economies.

Climate change

The outstanding universal value of Shiretoko is strongly related to the presence of sea ice at the lowest latitude in the Northern Hemisphere. This influences the productivity of the marine

ecosystem, which in turn influences the productivity and diversity of the terrestrial ecosystem. The effects of long term climate change could have a significant impact on this property and hence, there is a need to carefully monitor the impacts and take appropriate adaptation strategies to deal with them.

The mission notes the good progress made by the State Party in addressing recommendations from the World Heritage Committee and the IUCN Evaluation Report. The mission was particularly impressed by the strong commitment of stakeholders at all levels to ensuring the outstanding universal value and integrity of the property is maintained. The mission also applauds the bottom-up approach to management through the involvement of local communities and stakeholders, and also the manner in which scientific knowledge has been effectively applied to the management of the property through the scientific Committee and the specific Working Groups that have been set up. These provide an excellent model for the management of natural World Heritage properties elsewhere.

Draft Decision: 32 COM 7B.16.Corr

The World Heritage Committee,

1. *Having examined Document WHC-08/32.COM/7B.Corr,*
2. *Recalling Decision **29 COM 8B.6**, adopted at its 29th session (Durban, 2005),*
3. *Commends the State Party for responding effectively to the recommendations made at the time of inscription of the property;*
4. *Takes note of the recommendations of the joint World Heritage Centre / IUCN reactive monitoring mission and requests the State Party to implement them, with particular emphasis on the following:*
 - a) *Explore with the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) the obtaining of the Particularly Sensitive Sea Areas (PSSA) designation for the marine component of the property, with a view to giving it an added layer of protection;*
 - b) *Integrate the marine management plan with the overall management plan of the property and clearly identify activities, results and objectively verifiable indicators, assign clear roles and responsibilities and elaborate a time-frame for its implementation;*
 - c) *Complete the revision of the overall management plan for the property and integrate all the other individual plans, including the one for the marine component, salmonids, sika deer, and for ecotourism and proper use;*
 - d) *Consider identifying and designating locally relevant conservation zones, including no-take zones and practices, within the marine habitat, to ensure sustainable productivity of the marine biodiversity, including of the fishery resource;*
 - e) *Continue the cooperation which has been initiated with the Russian Federation to find long-term solutions to resource use problems, particularly the unsustainable harvesting of the Walleye Pollock, and for regular exchange of scientific information;*
 - f) *Continue and accelerate measures to promote the free movement of salmon within the property and also to increase salmon escapement, giving priority attention to the modification of structures on the Rusha River, and monitor impacts on salmon populations;*

- g) *Develop clear indicators to help define acceptable limits for the impact of grazing on natural vegetation, and monitor the impacts of control measures on sika deer populations and the biodiversity and ecosystems of the property;*
 - h) *Develop a consolidated ecotourism strategy for the property and ensure that it is closely linked and integrated with regional strategies for tourism and economic development within Shiretoko;*
 - i) *Develop a Climate Change Strategy for Shiretoko which includes:*
 - (i) *a monitoring programme; and*
 - (ii) *adaptive management strategies to minimise any impacts of climate change on its values;*
5. Also requests *the State Party to keep the World Heritage Centre informed regularly on the progress made with the implementation of the recommendations of the 2008 monitoring mission and submit to the World Heritage Centre, by **1 February 2012**, a report on the above issues for examination by World Heritage Committee at its 36th session in 2012.*