

## **State of Conservation Report**

### **World Heritage Property “Golden Mountains of Altai”**

#### **1. Response to the Decision of the World Heritage Committee 44 COM 7B.106**

All areas of the “Golden Mountains of Altai” object are specially protected according to the Federal law dated March 14, 1995 No. 33-FZ “Concerning Specially Protected Natural Areas” and the Law of Altay Republic dated December 24, 2012 No. 70-RZ “Concerning Specially Protected Natural Areas in Altay Republic territories”.

Present condition of the World Heritage Site “Golden Mountains of Altai” is currently rated positively.

In 2019 no economic activity threatening the preservation of the World Natural Heritage Site “Golden Mountains of Altai” was carried out.

The current state of the Golden Mountains of Altai World Heritage Property is assessed positively at the moment.

During the reporting period there were no economic activities that threaten the integrity of the World Heritage Property "The Golden Mountains of Altai".

However, it should be noted that the route of the Altai gas pipeline will bypass the property.

#### **Regarding the cluster «Altai nature Reserve»**

The Altaisky nature reserve is one of the very first reserves of Russia (it was established in 1932); so long ago that it allows us to say that it has the most of the original biodiversity and natural ecosystems. The Altaisky nature reserve is one of the few areas on the planet where human activity has not led to irreversible changes of natural ecosystems. Altai-Sayan mountain region, located in the center of the Eurasian continent, is included into the "Global-200" list (World Wildlife Fund’s Living Planet Campaign), into the list of virgin or less changed eco-regions of the world, in which 90% of the planet's biodiversity is concentrated. It proves the necessity and importance of preservation of the Altaisky nature reserve as a natural standard.

Based on the quantity of vascular plant species the Altaisky nature reserve takes the second place in Russia after the Caucasus biosphere reserve; by a species variety – within the five of the Russian reserves.

Since 1998 – a UNESCO World Heritage Property, includes Altaisky reserve and Teletskoye Lake water area – a true pearl of Gorny Altai, also known as the “little Baikal” of Western Siberia. Part of the Teletskoe Lake basin (11757 ga) is included in the core of the Altaisky nature reserve.

Altaisky nature reserve includes 4 key ornithological territories, of international value according to the program “Important Bird Areas”, developed by BirdLife International.

Here are the main activity areas of Altaisky nature reserve:

- Guarding of the nature territories in order to preserve biodiversity and support natural state of the guarded nature complexes and objects;

- Organizing and carrying out research projects, including;
- Ecological monitoring;
- Ecological education, including development of ecotourism.

In 2009, by the decision of the 21st Session of the UNESCO Man and Biosphere Programme / International Coordinating Council (MAB/ICC), the Altaisky Reserve was included in the World Network of Biosphere Reserves. The total area of the Altaisky Biosphere Reserve makes more than 3.5 million hectares, with a cooperation zone that includes two administrative districts – Turochak and Ulagan.

In 2020, the Altaisky Biosphere Reserve submitted a report on its activities for ten years to the UNESCO International Committee on the Human and Biosphere Program. In 2021 the report of the Biosphere Reserve was approved and accepted without any comments.

In addition to its primary task – the preservation of the Protected Area, the Altaisky Reserve undertook obligations to promote its development and ensure the social and economic stability of the local communities. The Altaisky Biosphere Reserve actively involves representatives of local communities, indigenous people, businesses and local authorities in the management of the Reserve.

Acting as a biosphere reserve, Altaisky Reserve pays special attention to development and popularization of alternative electric power sources, supporting of local communities, and collaboration with mass media.

By 2021 of the Altaisky Biosphere Reserve (1 village and 8 cordons and 2 checkpoints) in the core of the preserve were equipped with solar, wind, and water powered electric generators. This direction of work at the object of world heritage is for the use of renewable alternative energy sources to reduce the consequences of climate change by reducing use of forest resources and CO2 emission into the atmosphere. These projects supply the Reserve's remote outpost and checkpoint houses with electricity. Moreover, demonstration projects show sustainable use of alternative energy, environmentally friendly sources of electricity to local communities.

Since 2009 media club “Reserve without Borders” was created at the Altaisky Biosphere Reserve. The goal for creating this club is to organize regional mass media outlets for wider information sharing on the Reserve's work. Collaboratively with the journalists the Reserve develops communication strategy and action plans for implementing it.

Altaisky Biosphere Reserve organizes media-tours to the Nature Heritage territories for the club members, and some invited journalists from other regions. These media-tours include getting acquainted with the collaboration territory and partner projects of the Altaisky Biosphere Reserve. In 2021, due to the covid-19 pandemic, the media-tours did not take place.

### **Regarding the cluster «Katunskiy Reserve»**

Katunskiy Biosphere Reserve is included into the Russian-Kazakhstani Transboundary Reserve “Altai”, which in 2017 was designated as the UNESCO Transboundary Biosphere Reserve “Great Altai”. For harmonizing the management of the transboundary reserve Joint Commission was officially established with equal

participation of the Russian and Kazakhstani representatives. Its tasks include planning and evaluation of the joint activities in the frames of the TBR. During the meeting of the Joint Commission in 2022 the joint action plan was agreed, with activities on effective patrolling of the transboundary zone, ecological monitoring and public awareness raising. In 2022 this cooperation increased due to termination of the COVID-19 restrictions.

Moreover, in 2021 Ministries of Ecology of Russia and Kazakhstan agreed joint Programme of cooperation of protected areas for 2021-24. In the frames of this program, transboundary cooperation of Katunskiy Reserve has been extended: new agreements of cooperation were signed with Zapadno-Altayskiy and Markakalskiy Reserves of the Eastern Kazakhstan. This cooperation envisages joint ecological campaigns, educational activities, scientific expeditions and international ranger trainings.

In 2022 Katunskiy Reserve developed the mechanism for organizing the international ecological campaign #CleanMountains, aimed at cleaning natural areas in mountain regions and formation of the ecologically-responsible mindset of the local communities. This campaign was organized in the Russian and Kazakhstani portions of the Altai transboundary region, and also was recommended for implementation in the other parts of the Altai by the International Coordination Council “Our common home Altai”.

Thus Transboundary Biosphere Reserve “Great Altai: as well as the abovementioned International Coordinating Council might be considered as the platform for implementation of the Decision with relation to fostering transboundary cooperation under the WH Convention.

Administration of Katunskiy Biosphere Reserve fully implements requirements of the WH Convention on protection of the outstanding universal value of the WH property cluster. In particular, protection of the whole reserve’s territory is provided along with monitoring of the biodiversity and human pressure onto its natural ecosystems. Within Katunskiy BR researches of the climate change effects on mountain areas are being conducted.

Katunskiy BR initiated activities targeted to the sustainable livelihoods of local communities by involvement of people into ecologically-responsible micro-entrepreneurship. In the frameworks of this long-term programme mechanisms of involvement of local communities into nature conservation are also developed and successfully implemented.

Along with increase of the number of visitors Katunskiy BR enhances its recreational infrastructure by construction of the visitor trails and visitor centers. These works are partly performed with participation of the volunteers. At the same time, monitoring of the tourists number and respective changes in natural ecosystems is being conducted systematically to prevent negative effects for the environment and biodiversity.

Part of the Katunskiy Biosphere Reserve was included into the World Cultural site “Treasures of the Pazyryk Culture” inscribed into the Tentative list. Practical actions on conservation and popularization of local cultural values are being implemented at the BR’s ethnic-ecological museum.

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

### **Regarding the cluster «Altai nature Reserve»**

Guarding of the World Heritage site Altaisky Biosphere Reserve and Teletskoe Lake:

There are 10 cordons spread around the territory of the Altaisky Reserve. Communication between the cordons is conducted over portable radio transmitters, mobile phones (among 6 cordons), and satellite radio (for emergencies). The cordons are equipped with vehicles and fire safety equipment.

Protection of the territory is carried out in accordance with the legislation on specially protected natural areas by a special department of the reserve – the protection service.

Biosphere Reserve core area is supplied with vehicles and fire-fighting equipment. 27 state inspectors (or rangers) protect the territory, they are equipped with uniforms and weapons. Rangers are equipped with navigation devices GPS and photographic equipment.

For collaborative fire extinguishing of forest fires, an agreement with Autonomous agency in Altai Republic called Altai base of forest protection using aviation “AviaLesOhrana” was signed. Fire prevention measures are being carried out on the Reserve territory.

The main violations identified in the protected area are related to poaching and illegal entry into the territory. 30 administrative violation cases on breaking the Reserve territory regime were filed in 2021. The poachers were detained on the territory of reserve and 7 criminal cases was opened. During the reporting period, the employees of the protection service during the patrol covered: 2766 km on foot, 2120 km on horseback, 9378 km on boat.

#### **Scientific and monitoring research.**

In 2021, events were held to promote and preserve the World Heritage Property. Planned research studies and monitoring of nature objects, as well as the main threats to the heritage site were carried out.

The Department of research work of the reserve, as well as third-party research organizations monitor natural systems and their components inside the nature reserve. In particular, surveys are regularly conducted of rare fauna species (musk deer, snow leopard and its forage base - Siberian Ibex, argali), avifauna, monitor changes of plant communities, and the impact of recreational activities.

One of the main scientific work directions of the Altaisky Biosphere Reserve is complex ecological monitoring (annual data collection for evaluation of the condition and changes of nature complexes of the Reserve), that is being carried out since 1932.

An underwater research station has been created in the Altaisky State Reserve. Divers collect hydrobiological samples regularly. This is an important part of monitoring the state of Lake Teletskoye. Work continues on sampling flooded trees for dendrochronological purposes. This research is carried out in cooperation with the

Institute of Water and Environmental Problems of Siberian Branch of Russian Academy of Science (Barnaul).

In the course of field work on the study of the ecology ungulates and large carnivores of the Altaisky reserve in 2021, a set of accounting works and monitoring observations was carried out. Special attention was paid to the study of the reserve population groups of representatives of the Cervus family (deer, elk, roe deer, and reindeer) and brown bear. Mostly field work was carried out in the Priteletsky part of the reserve.

Monitoring of the number of snow leopards, argali, field studies to search for summer habitats of reindeer, as well as work on the project "Organization of a system for long-term monitoring of climate change and ecosystems of the Altai Biosphere Reserve" were carried out.

In 2021, two scientific research expeditions were organized and conducted to study the habitats of a rare animal of the forest subspecies of the reindeer. The staff of the scientific department of the Altaisky Reserve received new data on the distribution of this species. The expeditions were carried out with the financial support of WWF Russia.

In 2021 two volunteer expeditions "In the footsteps of the snow leopard" were carried out for studying of potential snow leopard habitat on Chikhachov Range. In the course of the work, photo recorders were installed to assess the number of snow leopards on the Chikhachev Ridge. The expeditions were financially and informationally supported by Altaisky Biosphere Reserve, World Wildlife Fund (WWF), volunteer expedition "following of a snow leopard", and Regional Non-Government organization "Argali".

### **Popularization of World Heritage property.**

Systematic work to cover the work of Altaisky Biosphere Reserve through contests, exhibits, celebrations, festivals, conferences, etc., was continued. Events were held with the goal to develop ecological tourism.

Main results of this work in 2021:

- systematic mailing of press releases through the created Media-Center of Altaisky Reserve. The mailing list includes 145 email addresses of local, regional, and federal media outlets (55 press releases were mailed)

- Media-Center of reserve prepared and published 225 themed news items on the Altaisky State Reserve website

- 75 articles were published in paper print media outlets; 701 articles were published in electronic media outlets.

- active coverage of Altaisky Biosphere Reserve work was continued in the social media outlets, under the themes of: "Ornithology news", "Life of a Reserve Cordon", and "Theriology notes", "Phenological news"

- filling out of the reserve's own web site (altzapoved.ru), active publishing of the information in the news section, completed sections on science and guarding of the reserve, and updated sections "Scientific work", "Staff", "Photogallery", "Scientific publications";

- implementation of programs "Nature and Youth", "Teletskaya school of youth ecotourism", "Altyn-Kol reading room", "Boarder geography", that are tasked to involve youth in the preserving of the UNESCO World Heritage site and sustainable

development of the biosphere territory. Seminars and meetings for excursion guides are regularly held and knowledge about local history and culture is included in their education.

During the year, the following photo exhibitions about the Altaisky State Reserve are presented: 13 exhibitions (9 actual, 4 online). A new photo exhibition "Flowering plants of the Altaisky Nature Reserve" was opened in the Government building of the Altaisky Republic on November 29, 2021. A total of 24 virtual photo exhibitions are currently presented on the reserve's website.

Cognitive tourism is developing in the Reserve along the ecological routes, located near the cordons. In 2021, some ecological educational routes were supplemented with infrastructure elements (notices, banners, signs, signs, toilet).

The total number of people who visited the territory of the Altaisky Biosphere Reserve in 2021 is 60223. The most popular spot for visitors is the "observation deck of Korbu waterfall" was visited by 50564 people in 2021. The maximum number of visitors was in July and August. The route to the waterfall is equipped with wooden decking, which minimizes the negative consequences of tourism development in the protected area.

Strict control of the visitors' access to the specific parts (that are allowed for visits) of the protected territory is done, as well as informational preparation before their entry to the nature reserve territory. Nature preservation information is regularly shared with the land using local population that live near or on the territory of the Reserve.

### **Collaborative governing of the World Heritage property with the local communities and stakeholders**

With the goal to attract additional capacity, Altaisky Reserve creates conditions conducive for development governing partnerships among all of the stakeholder entities. Defining partnership as a collaborative efforts of the entities with the common goal, Reserve's leadership is leaning on such key principals as unity of goals, openness, equality of partners, reciprocity, mutual respect and responsibility.

The leadership of the Reserve gives an important role to the local population in governing of the development of the Altaisky Biosphere Reserve. Local Community councils are created in the Reserve villages (located in the core on the Biosphere Reserve territory) - in village Yailu, and in village Bele. In February of 2014, in Yailu Territorial public self-government "Reserve Village" was registered.

The joint activity of the Altaisky nature reserve and Territorial public self-government "Reserve Village" helps to resolve issues such as: collection and disposal of garbage, observing the nature of the reserve, and the participation of local residents in tourism.

### **Non-Profit Organization "Teletskoye Lake Council"**

One of the brilliant examples of partnership in management and development of Altaisky Biosphere Reserve, is the non-profit organization "Teletskoye Lake Council", established in 2009. The Altaisky Biosphere Reserve is a founding member of "Teletskoye Lake Council". The goals of "Teletskoye Lake Council" say the following: – create conditions for preservation of a unique UNESCO World Heritage site - the Teletskoye Lake, in compliance with environmental and nature-protecting requirements and socio-economic development of the territory; - develop and

implement a strategic plan for social and economic development of the area, taking into account nature conservation and biodiversity; - assist in the development of ecological, cultural, cognitive, sports and ethnic tourism; - collaborate with executive and legislative authorities, business, the public, environmental funds, etc., - educate in the field of ecology, promote sustainable use of natural resources. “Teletskoye Lake Council” has become a wide platform for communication and collaboration of various stakeholders in the Teletskoye Lake area, and carry out their responsibility for the conservation and development of the UNESCO World Heritage Property.

In 2021, at a joint meeting of the Teletskoye Lake Council and the leadership of the Altaisky Reserve, it was decided to implement a program on the cultural and historical heritage of the Teletskoye natural territory.

### **Transborder and trans-regional collaboration with the goal of preservation of the World Heritage property**

Altaisky Biosphere Reserve is a member of Association of Altai-Sayan Ecoregion Reserves and National Parks. Altaisky reserve takes an active part in the programs of the Association. One of the programs: Ensuring long-term conservation of biodiversity conservation in the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion. The goal of the program is to ensure the conservation of the biological diversity of the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion in the long term by developing sustainable Ecoregional environmental cooperation.

The Altaisky Biosphere Reserve continues long-term transborder collaboration with national park “Silkham” (Mongolia). Collaborative rare animal counts of argali and snow leopard take place. Range Chikhachov has a herd of argali, which has a transborder status. Their habitat covers the very top of the area, which forms a narrow strip along the range Chikhachov goes all the way to Chulyshman highland and includes part of its southern macroslope in the basin on Bogoyash river (Altaisky Reserve). On the South, this range is located in Mongolia, where in the basin of rivers Khara-Magnai-Gol, these animals also live. The range Chikhachov houses a transborder group of snow leopard.

### **Regarding the cluster «Katunskiy Reserve»**

In 2022 Katunskiy BR implemented measures to provide conservation of the OUV, its promotion among wide public, research and monitoring of its state and threats as well as involvement of local communities (including indigenous people) into practical activities of WH protection.

**Activities on protection of the WHS** included systematic patrolling of the territory of the reserve (totally, 82 raids) and development of fire-prevention infrastructure. There are 5 fires-prevention stations within the BR equipped with relevant tools and devices for fire fighting. Satellite monitoring of fires is in place. During 2021-2022 more than 20 violations of the protection regime of the territory were discovered.

**Research and monitoring.** Monitoring activities within the BR are aimed at linked observations of the biodiversity dynamics and respective threats. Methodologically this programme is based at GLOCHAMORE Research Strategy (Global Change and Mountain Regions) and uses international monitoring protocols. Currently following types of the monitoring are in place:

- *Hydrometeorological monitoring* with the usage of automated weather stations and registrators along altitudinal gradients as well as snow measures.
- *Monitoring for the wildlife*, demonstration the stable number of populations of typical species.
- *Monitoring of the ecosystem state along the eco-trails*, which allows to understand the degree of human pressure onto the ecosystems and species. Based on the monitoring data it is specified, that the impact of ecotourism appears locally and doesn't force any irreversible changes in ecosystems. Also this monitoring allowed to identify allowable number of visitors for each trail.
- *Monitoring of glaciers* is long-term activity and is being conducted jointly with other research institutions. Repeated imagery of glaciers and mountain views are used for development of the photo-exhibition "Altai: 130 years in the camera lens", which demonstrate climate change effects for fragile high-altitudinal environments.
- *Monitoring the dynamics of the vegetation communities* allows to figure out the trends of vegetation change due to natural (climate change) and anthropogenic (pastoral succession) factors.
- *Geochemical monitoring* is aimed at control of the transboundary pollution of the reserve's territory. Monitoring of the surface waters in 2022 showed the absence of significant pollution.

**Activities on promotion of the WH** were implemented during the whole reporting period. In cooperation with the UNESCO Associated Schools and other educational institutions of the region number of creative contests and thematic schools lessons were organized with more than 700 participants. Katunskiy BR initiated establishment of the 12 children ecological unions, whose activities also include protection and popularization of the WH OUV. Several thematic photo-exhibitions showing the "Golden Mountains of the Altai" territory were organized in Ust-Koksa, Gorno-Altai and Eastern Kazakhstan. 4 information stands were installed along the boundary of the WHS. Visitor-center at Ust-Koksa town is being constructed, to enhance the work with the WHS visitors. Two summer volunteer camps were organized in 2022, with participation of young people from different regions of Russia. One documentary was produced and more than 20 information materials were published in mass media in order to promote the WH site and Katunskiy BR's activities on protection of its OUV.

In 2022 there were more than 8000 visitors within the reserve: and the increase of its number is fixed.

**Work with stakeholders.** In order to involve different stakeholders into protection of the WH site Katunskiy BR established following consultative bodies:

- Scientific-technical council, which coordinates all activities within the territory of Katunskiy Reserve,
- Public Council, established to provide public support of the reserve's activities,
- Joint Russian-Kazakhstani Commission on the Transboundary Reserve "Altai" which coordinated transboundary cooperation of Katunskiy BR and Katon-Karagaiskiy National Park.

Under the umbrella of the reserve, the NGO "Altai-Sayan Mountain Partnership" was established for implementation of the sustainable livelihoods



programme at the territories adjoining to the WH site. The aim of this program is to increase and diversify the income of local people in order to reduce their dependency on natural resource exploitation and thus to reduce poaching and illegal collection of the non-timber forest products.

Katunskiy BR initiated more than 30 agreements on joint activities with different stakeholders (particularly, with research institutions, NGOs, educational organizations, business companies etc) with the overall goal of provision of different support to conservation, research and education activities within the reserve. Among that agreements there is the one on joint conservation activities with the administration of the Nature Park “Belukha”. Establishment of the buffer zone of the reserve is in process.

### **Implementation of the recommendations of the UNESCO-IUCN Evaluation Mission (2012)**

According to the Evaluation Mission report, Katunskiy Reserve acts in accordance with the requirements of the World Heritage Convention. Experts didn't identify any significant deficiencies in the reserve's performance as well as any significant threats to the OUV in within the Katunskiy Reserve.

Following recommendations could be partially considered in the management of the reserve:

- **development of the joint strategy of sustainable tourism within the WH series property “Golden Mountains of the Altai”**. Partly this topic is included into the management plan of the TBE “Great Altai”;
- **further development of the transboundary cooperation with Mongolia and China based on the Russia-Kazakhstani experience**: Katunskiy BR initiated the protocol of intentions to cooperation with the Administration of the Protected Areas of the Mongolia Altai.
- **Strengthening the cooperation with the civil community, including indigenous peoples**: Katunskiy BR established a platform for cooperation and involvement of the different stakeholders into conservation activities through a number of councils and an NGO.

**3. No significant changes within the World Heritage Property are foreseen for the near future at this time.**