

Mr. David Sheppard
Head
Programme on Protected Areas
The World Conservation Union (IUCN)
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5 November, 2004

Dear Mr. David Sheppard,

Re: Response to the letter from the World Conservation Union (IUCN)

With regard to the two specific concerns addressed in your letter of 20th August, 2004, and the other three comments made at the evaluation mission in July 2004, please find our enclosed response which was prepared collaboratively by the authorities responsible for management of Shiretoko World Heritage nominated site: Ministry of the Environment, Forestry Agency, Agency for Cultural Affairs and Hokkaido prefectural government.

The response was also prepared in consultation with relevant local organizations including Fishery Cooperatives as well as municipalities. We also note that the management will be enhanced in collaboration with relevant authorities along with advice from experts and local communities in order to properly conserve the natural environment of the nominated site, which maintains links between forests, rivers, and marine areas, for future generations.

Also attached is some information on status of fisheries in the marine areas around Shiretoko Peninsula for your reference.

Thank you in advance for your kind consideration.

Sincerely yours,

Hiroshi ONODERA
Director General
Nature Conservation Bureau

Response to the letter from the World Conservation Union (IUCN)

1. Marine area of the nominated site

- Fisheries activity has been undertaken in the marine area surrounding the Shiretoko Peninsula for a considerable period of time. Particularly in the marine area on Rausu side, various types of fisheries are conducted including walleye pollack (*Theragra chalcogramma*) and arabesque greenling (*Pleurogrammus azonus*).
- In accordance with the Fisheries Law, the governor of Hokkaido prefecture enforces restrictions such as designating a fishing prohibition period for each type of fisheries to ensure sustainable fisheries. In addition, Fishery Cooperatives have also adopted voluntary tight restrictions to adequately manage fishery resources.
- With regard to chum salmon (*Oncorhynchus keta*), pink salmon (*Oncorhynchus gorbuscha*) and flatfish, there are ongoing protection and breeding programs such as fry releasing. In particular for salmon and trout, the numbers of captured adult fish, homing individuals, and released fry are monitored annually. The collected information is used to formulate an annual hatching and releasing plan to ensure appropriate management of resources and protection of subpopulations.
- The Hokkaido prefectural government analyzes resource levels of key fish species such as walleye pollack. The result shows, while there are annual fluctuations due to changes in seawater temperature, resource levels have been fairly stable. However, the stock of walleye pollack has been in the declining trend throughout the Sea of Okhotsk.
- With regard to the walleye pollack, in accordance with the Law Concerning Conservation and Management of Marine Life Resources based on United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, the Government of Japan manages the resources by setting the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) based on the findings from the surveys conducted by the Hokkaido National Fisheries Research Institute and other organizations.
- Additionally, fishing of walleye pollack is allowed only with the permission from the governor of Hokkaido prefecture in accordance with the Hokkaido Marine Fishery Adjustment Regulations. The permission restricts or imposes strict conditions on the number and size of fishing boats as well as the types of fishing gear and the fishing operation period.
- Furthermore, the fisheries organizations have already implemented self-imposed control on fishing of walleye pollack such as determining fishing prohibition areas to protect spawning adult, a fishing prohibition period during the spawning season, and restricted types of fishing gear. In response to the declining stock of walleye pollack, the fisheries organizations have been trying to conserve resources by reducing the number of fishing boats operating gill nets from 324 to 181 during the period from 1990 to 2003.
- Taking into consideration the measures described above, the Government of Japan, Hokkaido prefectural government and relevant stakeholders will take the following actions:
- In order to conserve the marine area within the nominated site as a World Natural Heritage, “Multiple-use integrated marine management plan” will be formulated. The plan will target both the stable fishery through the sustainable use of marine resources as well as the

conservation of marine life and ecosystems in the nominated site and the surrounding marine areas.

- Based on the existing fisheries rules, the management plan will describe scheme of maintenance of the key marine resources, measures to conserve and manage the marine life and ecosystem, methods for monitoring them, and appropriate marine recreation activities such as leisure fishing.
- At the beginning of formulation of the “Multiple-use integrated marine management plan,” a fact-finding survey will be conducted on the state of marine life, fisheries operations and leisure fishing in the nominated site and the surrounding marine areas. Based on the findings from the survey along with advice from experts, the plan is expected to be compiled in five to ten years under the agreement of local fishermen and other stakeholders.
- In the short term, from 2005, the Government of Japan, Hokkaido prefectural government and relevant stakeholders will start the joint study to identify the important marine areas for spawning and other activities of major fish species such as walleye pollack as well as detailed monitoring of marine life and fisheries activities in the coastal area including the nominated site. These studies will be conducted in collaboration with local fishermen and fisheries organizations and will also reflect advice from experts.
- After examining the results of the above studies, from the viewpoint of conserving and managing the fishery resources, marine life and ecosystem, the governments and stakeholders will review new measures to control fisheries activities in the marine area within the nominated site. The new measures will be modeled after the existing fishing ban on certain areas and period, which are voluntarily adopted by the local fishermen and fisheries organizations, to conserve and manage the walleye pollack stock. The new measures will be presented at the Shiretoko Nominated Site Regional Liaison Committee by 2008.

2. Dam Construction on Rivers

- The priority target of the management of riparian environment in the nominated site has been set to conserve it as an integrated forest ecosystem together with the surrounding forests. The erosion control works in the form of dam construction have been limited strictly to those necessary to protect inhabitant's lives and properties from disasters.
- There are 44 rivers of which the most part of the basin or whole of the basin are contained in the nominated site. The complementary field surveys to investigate the state of use by salmons are currently underway on those rivers that do not have obstacles for salmons to swim up such as waterfalls at the mouth. These field surveys will be finalized around spring in 2005, and based on the results, the impact of river structures on salmons will be assessed.
- Only nine of 44 rivers in the nominated site currently have erosion control works. All structures have been built to keep human lives and properties from disasters, mostly based on the local requests. They carry out functions of conserving the base of forest growth by preventing soil erosion and collapse on the mountainside, and of preventing the landslide disaster.
- Therefore, it is difficult to remove these structures while they have the necessities to protect human lives and properties; however there can be other measures in the future.
- Fish ladders on the artificial structure to allow free movement of salmons have already been installed in some rivers in the site, and also some are under consideration taking account of scientific advice.

- There are, however, cases in which fish ladders are not necessary because the structures exist in the part of flow which is usually dried-up. The study on needs to install fish ladders will be continued taking account of scientific advice, and we are prepared to take measures including installing fish ladders on an as-needed basis.

3. Development of ecotourism strategies

(1) Promoting ecotourism

- The number of visitors is expected to increase should the site be inscribed on the World Heritage list as a natural property. In order to prevent problems arising from excessive concentration of visitor use, it is necessary to disperse use and provide appropriate guidance for visitors in the nominated site and the surrounding area, thus conserving the outstanding natural environment of Shiretoko as well as providing high-quality and impressive experiences to the visitors at the same time. Ecotourism is one of the effective approaches to achieve these objectives.
- Therefore, the “Shiretoko Ecotourism Promotion Council” was established in July 2004 and started discussion on the appropriate approach to ecotourism in Shiretoko. The Council consists of representatives from relevant local organizations and relevant government agencies. The Council will formulate an ecotourism strategy for Shiretoko, “Shiretoko Ecotourism Promotion Plan,” by the end of 2005. This Promotion Plan will address the basic principles for reducing impacts on the natural environment, preventing excessive concentration of use, and promoting high-quality and interactive outdoor experiences in Shiretoko.
- In addition, based on the results of the projects such as training on guiding skills and implementation of model tours in collaboration with local primary industries in the surrounding area, the guidelines on ecotourism in Shiretoko, which will describe concrete policies for promoting sustainable use, and an action plan for the above Promotion Plan will be developed by March 2007.

(2) Promotion of proper use

- In order to conserve the diversity of ecosystems which consist of virgin natural environment and abundant wildlife for future generations, the basic policy for use in the nominated site is to regulate activities such as sightseeing at an appropriate level so as not to negatively impact the natural environment.
- A committee consisting of academic experts and representatives from relevant local organizations was established in November 2001 in order to review the ideal form of protection and use based on the above basic policy for Shiretoko National Park, which covers a major proportion of the nominated site. The committee has divided Shiretoko National Park into several zones, such as Tip of the Peninsula zone and Shiretoko Mountain Range zone, and has been planning proper use for the specific condition of each zone. A basic plan on proper use for each zone is expected to be compiled in 2005.
- In addition, “Use Rules” containing guidelines for control of use and visitor instructions will be established by 2005, and be disseminated widely among the park users.
- In addition to formulating and implementing the basic plan on proper use for each zone, the execution and outcomes will be monitored, analyzed and evaluated to review and enhance the

basic plan.

- Management of the mountain trails will be addressed when formulating the basic plan on proper use for Shiretoko Mountain Range zone.
- Necessary restriction on entry into the nominated site will be imposed by such measures as setting a limit on visitor numbers through “Regulated Utilization Area” based on the Natural Parks Law and Forest Ecosystem Reserve to prevent negative impact on the natural environment.

(3) Others

- In conjunction with the above activities such as formulation of the “Shiretoko Ecotourism Promotion Plan,” Hokkaido prefectural government will take initiative in developing wide-ranging travel routes that utilize the natural environment, history and culture of the nominated site and surrounding areas in northeastern Hokkaido. These activities will prevent excessive concentration of visitor use to Shiretoko and facilitate dispersion of visitors over a wider area.

4. Management of Yezo sika deer

- In response to the sharp increase in the Yezo sika deer (*Cervus nippon yesoensis*) population density in the Shiretoko Peninsula, measures implemented so far include studies on the population dynamics and the experimental construction of fences to prevent grazing/browsing by the deer. However, the density of deer is still very high in the Shiretoko Peninsula and there have been negative impacts on the ecosystem and natural landscapes such as sharp decreases in the number of herbaceous species or plant communities in some areas. Therefore, further adequate measures need to be taken.
- To respond to this need, “Yezo sika deer working group” was established in July 2004 under the Shiretoko World Natural Heritage Nominated Site Scientific Council, which is based on the Management Plan for the Shiretoko World Natural Heritage Nominated Site. Members of the working group include scientific experts and representatives from relevant government agencies. The working group will formulate a management plan by March 2007 to scientifically conserve and manage Yezo sika deer.
- The basic policy for the conservation and management of the Yezo sika deer in the nominated site will be discussed and established by March 2005. During the discussion, topics taken into consideration include the distribution of the Yezo sika deer and the level of negative impact caused by them in the nominated site as well as the state of land use in the areas on the peninsula adjacent to the nominated site. The expected outcome is a comprehensive basic policy that will set a clear management goal to ensure conservation of vegetation and ecosystem as well as maintenance of healthy Yezo sika deer population.
- During the implementation of the management plan, the outcome will be monitored and the obtained information will be used as feedback to conduct any necessary revisions and adjustments to the plan.

5. Development of indicators and benchmarks

- In managing the nominated site, the interaction and soundness of the terrestrial and marine ecosystems will be monitored. If there are any indications suggesting changes that will impact the natural environment, a scientific study will be conducted to analyze the cause and

determine necessary measures for restoration. Relevant actions will be taken as required.

- Taking into consideration the views of the Shiretoko World Natural Heritage Nominated Site Scientific Council, the actual indicators and benchmarks to be used in the monitoring will be developed shortly after the site is inscribed on the World Heritage List and will be incorporated into the management plan.
- The indicators and benchmarks to be considered include:
 1. Status of endemic species such as *Viola kitamiana*, internationally threatened species such as Steller's sea eagle (*Haliaeetus pelagicus*), white-tailed eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*), Blakiston's fish-owl (*Ketupa blakistoni blakistoni*), Steller's sea lion (*Eumetopias jubatus*) and keystone species such as brown bear (*Ursus arctos*).
 2. The population dynamics of Yezo sika deer (*Cervus nippon yesoensis*) and its impact on vegetation.
 3. Status of salmon and trout swimming upstream to spawn
 4. Resource levels of major fish species such as walleye pollack (*Theragra chalcogramma*).
 5. Number of visitors at major utilization area.