RESULTS OF 2017 MONITORING
OF THE TALGAR WORLD HERITAGE SITE
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ECOLOGICAL SOCIETY “GREEN SALVATION”
Almaty, 2017
ECOLOGICAL SOCIETY «GREEN SALVATION» EXPRESSES THEIR SINCERE GRATITUDE TO THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR DEMOCRACY (USA). WITHOUT THE NED ASSISTANCE, IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE TO CARRY OUT LARGE-SCALE PHOTO AND VIDEO MONITORING OF THE ECOLOGICAL SITUATION IN THE CITY OF ALMATY AND ITS VICINITIES.
Experts from the World Heritage Committee and International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), who visited Kazakhstan from October 31 to November 9, 2016, recommended that the authorized bodies “significantly improve the ecological and archaeological monitoring systems, with active involvement of public organizations and local communities”.\(^1\) Fully sharing the opinion of the experts, the Ecological Society “Green Salvation” continues monitoring the Talgar site, one of the eight Kazakhstani monuments on the Silk Road (Silk Roads: the Routes Network of Chang’an-Tianshan Corridor).

In their report, the experts called this case “one of the exceptional cases in the World Heritage international practice”\(^2\) due to numerous violations of the requirements of the Convention and national legislation, untruthful information provided by state agencies to the convention bodies, and poor conditions of the Talgar site.

The Ecological Society “Green Salvation” conducts monitoring, based on the recommendations set forth by the experts in the report. The data given in this material covers the period from December 1, 2016 to November 30, 2017.

**Legal situation**

Experts pointed out that the laws needed to be strictly followed and amendments to land legislation and the law on the protection of historical monuments of the Republic of Kazakhstan needed to be introduced.
1. The Land Code does not define the status of lands on which World Heritage sites are located. But the Article 7 states: “If an international treaty ratified by the Republic of Kazakhstan establishes other rules than those contained in this Code, the rules of the said treaty are applied. International treaties ratified by the Republic of Kazakhstan are applied directly in regards to land relations”. The mission found that 30 to 70% of the territory of the World Heritage sites and their buffer zones in Kazakhstan are privately owned! About 70% of these lands have been privatized over the past few years.3

2. The Water Code does not specify the status of water protection zones and strips at the World Heritage sites. “Water protection zone - is the territory adjacent to water bodies, where special regulations of economic activity are applied to prevent pollution, debris accumulation, and depletion of water. ... Water protection strip is a territory of at least thirty-five meters wide within the water protection zone adjacent to the water body on which regulations of limited economic activity are applied (Water Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Article 1, paragraph 28 and 29).

But Article 2, Paragraph 2, states: “If international treaties ratified by the Republic of Kazakhstan establish other rules than those contained in this Code, then the rules of international treaties are applied”. Consequently, the World Heritage Site and its buffer zone should be protected in the most effective way.
3. The entire territory of the site of ancient settlement is located within the limits of the Ile-Alatau State National Natural Park’s protection zone officially established by the Akimat of Almaty oblast. In the area of the ancient settlement, we did not find any special signs indicating the border of the national park’s protection zone on the terrain. The law “On Specially Protected Natural Territories” does not specify the status of protection zones of World Heritage sites. But the Article 2, Paragraph 4, states: “If an international treaty ratified by the Republic of Kazakhstan establishes other rules than those contained in this Law, then the rules of the international treaty are applied”.

4. Currently, the management of the site has been assigned by the Ministry of Culture and Sports to an organization called the State Historical and Cultural Reserve-Museum “Issyk”. In collaboration with local executive bodies, the Ministry conducts work “on transferring the state act on land to the reserve-museum”. This information is confirmed by a reply received from the State Historical and Cultural Reserve-Museum “Issyk”.

Buffer Zone
The boundaries of the buffer zone of Talgar site haven’t still been marked on site.
Water Protection Zones and Strips of the Talgar River
The water protection zone should cover almost the entire territory of the site of the ancient settlement. On the terrain, water protection zones and strips are not marked with special signs. During the construction of the bridge, the banks and the river bed were greatly altered, not to say disfigured. Most of the vegetation along the banks was destroyed. After the bridge was completed and the builders left, the river washed away most of the temporary roads.

The river flows along the west side of the site’s buffer zone.

Bridge and Road
The bridge over the Talgar River is completed. Construction of the road is almost complete. The entire length of the road is covered with asphalt, except for the bridge and the area, which was to pass through the site of ancient settlement. Works on improvement of the territory adjacent to the road are continuing: construction of sidewalks, drainage ditches, ramps, etc. is under way. The road comes close to the ancient settlement from the west and east. Local residents began to arbitrarily dismantle the fencing of the roadway on the bridge.

Construction Development
Construction of residential houses and other structures continues in the buffer zone, although some of the land lots look abandoned. But others are under active development.
The Main Territory of the Ancient Settlement

Borders
The borders of the World Heritage site are not marked on the terrain.

Fencing
The site is fenced off from the east, south-east, and partly from the north side. There is still no fencing from the west and south-west sides. Access to the site is opened from the north side in the middle part of the fort wall. The fence on the south-east side is partially broken and fallen. In some places there is no fence.

Informational Support
There is no information on the site that the Talgar ancient settlement is on the World Heritage List.
The informational stands on the site are in poor condition: cloth banners with information are torn at all four stands. The bases of the stands are deteriorating, which can cause them to fall. The stand on the west side of the site has collapsed.

Area Excavated for the Roadway
The area excavated for the roadway was filled with dirt on the day before the arrival of international experts in October 2016. In the spring of 2017, it sank, and a huge puddle formed attracting livestock to come for a drink of water.
Continuing sinking of the soil is particularly evident on the west side of the filled pit.

“Reconstruction”
No reconstruction, nor archaeological excavations were performed at the site during the period of monitoring. According to official sources, these works were not planned for 2017-2019. Earlier constructed walls are covered with cracks. Previously excavated areas are overgrown with grass.

Livestock Grazing
Livestock is grazed unhindered on the site of the ancient settlement, causing significant damage to the cultural layer. On the territory of the settlement, there are a lot of fragments of ceramics with recent splits.

Garbage
Garbage is found all over the territory. Judging by its content, it is dumped by the nearby homeowners and builders. In several spots, there are fragments of old building structures.

Other Constructions
A water pipe passes the territory of the site. A diverter was connected to the pipe for livestock drinking water needs. A soccer goal is installed near the northern wall of the fort.
“Visual appeal”
There is not a single point on the site where you can take a picture of the monument against the backdrop of the mountain ranges. Power lines, outbuildings, or residential houses are all around the site.

Safety
We have not noticed any security measures applied at the site of the ancient settlement. There are no rules for visiting the site. There is only one stand (next to the entrance) which informs that the monument is protected by the state. The inscription is in Kazakh.

Conclusions
Decision of the 41st Session of the World Heritage Committee
Based on the findings made by experts in late 2016, taking into account last year’s decision 40 COM 7B.34, in July 2017 a new decision 41 COM 7B.88 was issued.
It says that the World Heritage Committee:
“6. Also requests the State Party of Kazakhstan to submit to the World Heritage Centre by 1 December 2017 a detailed report on reconstruction work at the Talgar component site, both planned and undertaken, for review by the Advisory Bodies;
...
11. Reiterates its request that Management Plans for all eight component sites of the serial property in Kazakhstan and their landscape settings be revised taking

Road marking along the southern part of the Talgar site. January 4, 2015.
into consideration the results of Reactive Monitoring mission assessment as a matter of priority and be submitted to the World Heritage Centre by 1 December 2018 at the latest, along with an update on progress by 1 December 2017”.

Judging by the situation at the Talgar site by November 29, 2017, no effective measures were taken to ensure its preservation within 12 months after it was visited by experts from the World Heritage Committee and ICOMOS (November 8, 2016). All the above decisions and recommendations of the World Heritage Committee and experts of ICOMOS, apparently, were not heard again.

2 Report on the Mission to Kazakhstan. …, «Talgar remains in the center of the Mission’s attention and represents one of the exceptional cases in the World Heritage international practice», p.52.
4 Decree of the Akimat of Almaty oblast dated on June 15, 2015 No. 255 “On establishment of a protection zone and nature management regulations of the Ile-Alatau State National Natural Park on the territory of Almaty oblast”.
5 Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 43 of January 30, 2010 “On foundation of the Republican State Budget Enterprise (RSBE) “State Historical and
Cultural Reserve-Museum “Issyk” of the Culture Committee of the Ministry of Culture and Information of the Republic of Kazakhstan”.

6 Reply of the Ministry of Culture and Sports dated on October 18, 2017 (Ex. No. 09-03-16 / YL-S-226) to the letter of the Ecological Society “Green Salvation”.

7 Response of the RSBE “State Historical and Cultural Reserve-Museum “Issyk” of the Ministry of Culture and Sport of November 8, 2017 (Ex. No. 1-12 / 336) to the letter of the Ecological Society “Green Salvation”.


A map showing the main survey points during the monitoring period.

Results of monitoring of the Talgar world heritage site: March – November 2017.

General view

The buffer zone of Talgar site
Bridge and road
Water Protection Zones and Strips of the Talgar River
Construction Development

The main territory of the ancient settlement
Fencing
Informational Support
Area excavated for the roadway
«Reconstruction»
Livestock grazing
Garbage
Other constructions
«Visual appeal»
Safety
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GENERAL VIEW

Photo 1. *The site view (from south to north).*
August 31, 2017.

Photo 2. *The site view (from southeast to northwest).*
August 31, 2017.
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Photo 3. East view of the site.
August 31, 2017.

Photo 4. South view of the site.
August 31, 2017.
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Photo 7. View of the central part of the site.

Photo 8. View of the central part of the site.
THE BUFFER ZONE OF TALGAR SITE. BRIDGE AND ROAD

Photo 9. *Bridge over Talgar river. View from the east bank.*
March 2, 2017.

Photo 10. *East side of the bridge.*
Photo 11. *Bridge. View from the east bank.*
August 31, 2017.

Photo 12. *Bridge. View from the east bank.*
August 31, 2017.
Photo 13. The bridge rests against a covered pit excavated for the road. September 26, 2017.


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Photo 18. View of the bridge from the east bank of the river. September 26, 2017.
Photo 19. Construction of the road leading to the ski-resort is under completion.
October 17, 2017.

Photo 20. The road is almost completely paved.
October 17, 2017.
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THE BUFFER ZONE OF TALGAR SITE. WATER PROTECTION ZONES AND STRIPS OF THE TALGAR RIVER


Photo 27. Construction works on water protection strip of Talgar river.
March 2, 2017.

Photo 28. Results of the economic activity.
Photo 29. *Results of the economic activity.*
August 31, 2017.

Photo 30. *Results of the economic activity.*
August 31, 2017.
Photo 31. Results of the economic activity.
August 31, 2017.

Photo 32. Results of the economic activity.
August 31, 2017.
Photo 33. Results of the economic activity.
September 26, 2017.

Photo 34. Results of the economic activity.
October 17, 2017.
Photo 35. **Results of the economic activity.**
October 17, 2017.

Photo 36. **Results of the economic activity.**
October 17, 2017.
Photo 37. Results of the economic activity. October 17, 2017.

Photo 38. Results of the economic activity. October 17, 2017.
THE BUFFER ZONE OF TALGAR SITE. CONSTRUCTION DEVELOPMENT

Photo 39. **Constructions in the buffer zone.**
August 31, 2017.

Photo 40. **Constructions in the buffer zone.**
August 31, 2017.
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Photo 42. Constructions in the buffer zone. August 31, 2017.

Photo 44. Constructions in the buffer zone. August 31, 2017.
Photo 45. *Constructions in the buffer zone.*
August 31, 2017.
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the main territory of the ancient settlement. fencing

photo 46. fencing of the site from the southeast. march 2, 2017.

photo 47. fencing of the site from the southeast. march 2, 2017.
Photo 48. **Fencing of the site from the southeast.**

Photo 49. **Fencing of the site from the southeast.**
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Photo 50. Fencing of the site from the east. August 31, 2017.

Photo 51. Fencing of the site from the southeast. August 31, 2017.
Photo 52. *Fencing of the site from the southeast.*
August 31, 2017.

Photo 53. *Fencing of the site from the southeast.*
August 31, 2017.
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Photo 54. *Fencing of the site from the southeast.*
August 31, 2017.

Photo 55. *Fencing of the site from the southeast.*
October 17, 2017.
Photo 56. *Fencing of the site from the southeast.*
October 17, 2017.

Photo 57. *Fencing of the site from the southeast.*
October 17, 2017.
THE MAIN TERRITORY OF THE ANCIENT SETTLEMENT. INFORMATIONAL SUPPORT

Photo 58. *Informational stand at the north end of the site.*
March 2, 2017.

Photo 59. *Informational stand at the west end of the site.*
March 2, 2017.
Photo 60. *Informational stand at the southeast end of the site.*  
March 2, 2017.

Photo 61. *Informational stand at the east end of the site.*  
March 2, 2017.
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Photo 62. Informational stand at the west end of the site.

Photo 63. Informational stand at the north end of the site.
Photo 64. *Informational stand printed in Kazakh. Near the informational stand at the north side. Inscription: «The monument is protected by the state». June 19, 2017.*

Photo 65. *Informational stand at the east end of the site. June 19, 2017.*
Photo 66. *Informational stand at the southeast end of the site.*
August 31, 2017.

Photo 67. *Informational stand at the east end of the site.*
August 31, 2017.
Photo 68. *Informational stand at the west end of the site.*
August 31, 2017.

Photo 69. *Informational stand at the north end of the site.*
August 31, 2017.
Photo 70. *Informational stand at the west end of the site.* September 26, 2017.

Photo 71. *Informational stand at the east end of the site.* October 17, 2017.
Photo 72. *Informational stand at the west end of the site.*
October 17, 2017.

Photo 73. *Informational stand at the west end of the site.*
Photo 74. Puddle formed as a result of soil settling at the surface of the covered pit. June 19, 2017.

Photo 75. Puddle formed as a result of soil settling at the surface of the covered pit. June 19, 2017.
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Photo 78. General view of the area where the pit was excavated. August 31, 2017.

Photo 79. West side of the pit. Traces of fire can be noticed on the slope. August 31, 2017.
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Photo 80. **Dried puddle on the surface of the covered pit.**
August 31, 2017.

Photo 81. **West side of the pit.**
September 26, 2017.
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THE MAIN TERRITORY OF THE ANCIENT SETTLEMENT. “RECONSTRUCTION”


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Photo 86. **Northeast corner of the site. Corner tower. Fragment. New construction.**
August 31, 2017.

Photo 87. **Northeast corner of the site. Corner tower. New construction.**
August 31, 2017.
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Photo 90. **North of the site. Entrance gate. New construction. Fragment.**
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THE MAIN TERRITORY OF THE ANCIENT SETTLEMENT. LIVESTOCK GRAZING


Photo 94. *Livestock is moved onto the site of ancient settlement.*
August 31, 2017.

Photo 95. *Livestock grazing in the buffer zone of the site of ancient settlement.*
August 31, 2017.
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Photo 98. Livestock grazing on the territory of the site of ancient settlement. October 17, 2017.
THE MAIN TERRITORY OF THE ANCIENT SETTLEMENT. GARBAGE


Photo 100. Litter. Southeast part of the site. August 31, 2017.
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Photo 104. Litter. Southeast part of the site. October 17, 2017.

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THE MAIN TERRITORY OF THE ANCIENT SETTLEMENT. OTHER CONSTRUCTIONS


Photo 108. **Old channel in the southwest part of the buffer zone.**
August 31, 2017.

Photo 109. **Old channel in the southwest part of the buffer zone.**
August 31, 2017.
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Photo 110. Power lines in the south part of the buffer zone. August 31, 2017.

Photo 111. Soccer goal. North part of the site. October 17, 2017.
Photo 112. **Water wells. Livestock watering hole in the front. East part of the site.**
October 17, 2017.
THE MAIN TERRITORY OF THE ANCIENT SETTLEMENT. “VISUAL APPEAL”

Photo 113. Fencing. Southeast part of the site.
August 31, 2017.

Photo 114. Part of the north defense wall.
August 31, 2017.
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Photo 117. **Collapsed informational stand. West part of the site.**
September 26, 2017.

Photo 118. **Entrance. North part of the site**
THE MAIN TERRITORY OF THE ANCIENT SETTLEMENT. SAFETY


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Photo 121. *Excavation on the east part of the site.*
August 31, 2017.

Photo 122. *Excavation on the west part of the site.*
August 31, 2017.
Photo 123. **Excavation on the west part of the site.**
August 31, 2017.

Photo 124. **Excavation on the east part of the site.**
August 31, 2017.
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Photo 125. Excavation on the east part of the site. August 31, 2017.

Photo 123. Excavation on the east part of the site. August 31, 2017.