

RESULTS OF MONITORING OF NATIONAL PARKS OF ALMATY OBLAST IN 2017



THE ECOLOGICAL SOCIETY
GREEN SALVATION

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ECOLOGICAL SOCIETY «GREEN SALVATION» EXPRESSES ITS SINCERE GRATITUDE TO THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR DEMOCRACY (USA), WITHOUT WHOSE ASSISTANCE IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE TO CONDUCT THE WIDE-SCALE PHOTO- AND VIDEO-MONITORING OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL SITUATION IN THE CITY OF ALMATY AND ITS VICINITIES.



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Recommendations of the IV World Congress of Protected Areas state that “establishment and maintenance of protected areas and use of resources on and around their territory should be socially responsible and fair” [1].

In order to assess the extent to which the maintenance of national parks located in the Almaty oblast and the use of their resources comply with the public interest, the Ecological Society “Green Salvation” (hereinafter - ES) performs monitoring. The main objective of the monitoring is to collect information on compliance with the environmental regulations on specially protected natural territories (hereinafter - SPNT). The main focus of the ES is on the territory of the Ile-Alatau National Nature Park (hereinafter - Ile-Alatau SNNP), which is invaluable for the safe existence of the Almaty agglomeration.



Part I.

LEGAL SITUATION

RESULTS OF MONITORING
OF NATIONAL PARKS
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IN 2017

1. Non-compliance with international conventions.

In the law “On Specially Protected Natural Territories” of 2006 (hereinafter - the Law on SPNT) [2], there is no concept of a protected area of international value. Paragraph 1 of the Article 14 of the law says: “Specially protected natural territories, depending on the significance of the objects of the state natural reserve fund, are classified into categories of national or local value”. However, it does not state special protection regulations for territories that fall under a scope of international conventions (“possibly more effective protection and preservation”) [3].

Thus, wetlands “of internationally recognized value are included into specially protected natural territories”. “Regulations of nature reserves and conservation areas or regulated economic activity are established” on these territories (Article 75). Paragraph 3 of Article 25 provides an explanation that the regulated economic activity provides for “limited use of natural complexes, as well as conducting by owners of land plots and land users of traditional types of economic activities by methods that do not adversely affect natural complexes and objects of the state natural reserve fund”. That is, no other stricter regulations are stipulated for protection of wetlands of international value. A site owner uses it based on his own understanding - but not in accordance with the requirements of the conventions. This poses a danger to natural complexes.

Thus, the law on SPNT only declares [4] the priority of international agreements over national laws stipulated in the Constitution (Article 4, paragraph 3) and other laws.

In practice, even the lands of national parks included in the World Heritage List or the preliminary list for nomination to the List can be transferred (and such transfers are already being made) to the zone of restricted economic activity, leased out, or transferred to the category of standby lands (which means that they are, in fact, excluded from the lands of SPNT!) with further privatization.

Similarly, the 2003 Land Code [5] does not contain norms regulating legal mechanisms for territories that are under the scope of international environmental conventions.

Paragraph 3 of Article 13 states that the competence of the government in the field of regulation of land relations includes “provision and withdrawal of land plots, including for state needs, from lands of all categories in cases involving creation and expansion of specially protected natural areas of national value, fulfillment of international obligations”. What is implied by the fulfillment of international obligations is not explained in the Land Code. The code, as well as other laws, specifies that if an international agreement ratified by the Republic of Kazakhstan “establishes rules other than those contained in this Code, the rules of the said agreement are applied” (Article 7).

However, Article 26 of the 1992 Law “On Protection and Use of Sites of Historic and Cultural Heritage” [6] states that in order to effectively protect monuments, they “are divided into the following categories: 1) historical and cultural monuments of international value, representing historical, scientific, architectural, art and memorial values included in the UNESCO World Cultural and Natural Heritage List”.

There is an obvious contradiction between the laws. According to the Land Code and environmental legislation, specially protected natural areas included in the UNESCO World Heritage List are not internationally protected areas. However, the Law “On Protection and Use of Sites of Historic and Cultural Heritage” recognizes the status of a protected area of international importance. But the Article 127 of the Land Code called “Lands of Historical and Cultural Purpose” does not mention anything about protected areas of international importance.

None of the laws of the Republic of Kazakhstan indicate that protection of sites that fall under international agreements should be stricter compare to other protected sites.

2. Numerous amendments and contradictions in the legislation regulating the work of specially protected natural territories.

Firstly, the above mentioned contradictions in the legislation are resulted due to a lack of a state environmental policy, particularly, in the sphere of SPNT development. Secondly, it is a result of endless amendments to the current legislation. Since 2006, the law on SPNT was amended 19 times. Most of the amendments were aimed at mitigating the environmental protection requirements. The most negative norms and amendments in the law that contradict the main principles in the area of specially protected natural territories (Article 3 of the law on SPNT) are:

1. The government’s authority “to transfer lands of specially protected natural territories into standby lands based on a proposal of an authorized body” (Article 7, subparagraph 6-1).

The Article 7 was supplemented with subparagraph 6-1, in accordance with the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated on December 1, 2008, No. 94-IV. The same law amended paragraph 2 of Article 23, which used to state: “Withdrawal of lands of specially protected natural territories, as well as their transfer into other categories of lands is not allowed.” In the current version, a transfer into the category of standby lands is permitted!

2. An authorized body’s competency to submit proposals “on transfer of lands of specially protected natural territories into standby lands” (Article 8, subparagraph 4) [7].

3. An authorized body’s competency to develop a plan for transferring lands of specially protected natural territories into standby lands (Article 8, subparagraph

16-6). The article is supplemented with subparagraphs 16-1 to 16-8, in accordance with the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated on January 25, 2012, No. 548-IV.

4. Zones of restricted economic activity on territories of national parks (Article 45, paragraph 1, subparagraph 4, paragraph 5). Dimensions of such zones are not regulated by law.

5. Lease (long-term use) of land lots of national parks (Article 46, paragraph 2).

6. Construction of facilities on leased lands of national parks (Article 46-1). The law is supplemented by the Article 46-1, in accordance with the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated on January 25, 2012, No. 548-IV.

3. Interference by local executive authorities in the environmental restoration works of national parks of national level.

According to the Article 10 of the Law on SPNT, local representative and executive authorities of oblasts, cities of national level, and the capital do not have any authority to protect, preserve, or use specially protected natural territories of national value, in particular, national parks. National parks, in accordance with the paragraph 2, Article 14, are SPNT of national value. They are managed by the Forestry and Wildlife Committee of the Ministry of Agriculture (Article 9, subparagraph 5 of the Law on SPNT).

References to the fact that part of the national park is located within the boundaries of the city and, therefore, are under a jurisdiction of the akim (mayor), are incorrect. Paragraph 6 of Article 108 of the Land Code states that “Inclusion of land lots into city, town, or village limits does not entail termination of ownership or land use rights on these lands.” That is, changes of administrative boundaries do not affect the main activity of national parks and environmental protection regulations on its lands.

But practice shows that local executive bodies violate these clear instructions. A striking example is the intention of the akimat (Mayor’s Office) of the city of Almaty to build a ski resort on the former territory of the Ile-Alatau National Park. It is obvious that the construction will damage the ecological systems of the protected area. Nevertheless, the akimat managed to transfer 1002 hectares of the national park into standby lands, openly ignoring the purposes and objectives of the specially protected territory. After that, a project of reconstruction of a road passing through the territory of the national park was prepared. Officials were not embarrassed by the fact that the project developers planned a massive clear-cutting of Red Book plants, which is prohibited by the national legislation, the Convention on Biological Diversity [8], and is considered a criminal offense [9]. Even the fact that the Ile-Alatau National Park was included in the preliminary list from the Republic of Kazakhstan for

nominations on the UNESCO World Heritage List [10] is not an obstacle for the akimat.

Intervention into the main activity of national parks is not limited to the actions of akimats and their departments. Active intervention comes from “Kazselezaschita” (land slides prevention organization) and various military departments. As a result, a significant part of the national park became inaccessible and dangerous for visitors. The reasons include unqualified operations for land slides prevention, slope strengthening works, picking up fallen trees, and other scientifically ungrounded actions in the park. Despite of the fact that the above listed types of works are allowed to be carried out in national parks, the ordering agencies prefer to transfer more and more lands into standby lands. As a result, integrity of the park’s ecological systems is further damaged, and they become fragmented.

All these manipulations with the lands of the national park are carried out with a tacit consent of the Forestry and Wildlife Committee (hereinafter - the Committee). It is quite unbelievable that a state body responsible to carry out “the functions of management, control and supervision, and protection of specially protected natural territories” (Article 1, subparagraph 9 of the law on SPNT), is empowered to submit proposals “on **transferring** lands of specially protected natural territories into **standby lands**” (Article 8, subparagraph 4 of the Law on SPNT) [11]. In fact, the Committee, contrary to the norm of subparagraph 9 of Article 1, becomes an initiator of a reduction of lands of SPNT.

Intervention by executive bodies in the main activity of national parks indicates serious shortcomings in the legislation and control over its implementation, which hinder normal functioning of national parks and tourism development.

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- 1 Parks for life: report of the fourth World Congress on National Parks and Protected Areas, 10-21 February 1992. IUCN, 1993, p.35, Recommendation 6: <https://portals.iucn.org/library/node/6584> (date visited: January 6, 2018).
 - 2 2006 Law “On Specially Protected Natural Territories” (with amendments as of June 15, 2017) .
 - 3 Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, Article 5. Ratified by the Decree of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan of July 29, 1994.
 - 4 Law “On Specially Protected Natural Territories”, Article 2, paragraph 4: “If international agreement ratified by the Republic of Kazakhstan establishes rules other than those contained in the this Law, then the rules of the international agreement are applied.”
 - 5 The Land Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan (with amendments and additions as of July 11, 2017)
 - 6 1992 Law “On Protection and Use of Sites of Historic and Cultural Heritage” (with amendments and additions as of 05.05.2017).
 - 7 This amendment was introduced in accordance with the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated on December 1, 2008, No 94-IV.
 - 8 Convention on Biological Diversity approved by the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Kazakhstan on August 19, 1994, No. 918.
 - 9 Criminal Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan (with amendments as of January 9, 2018), Article 339.
 - 10 Tentative Lists: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/state=kz>.
 - 11 This amendment was introduced in accordance with the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated on December 1, 2008, No 94-IV.



PART II.

VIOLATION OF SPNT REGULATIONS

RESULTS OF MONITORING
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4. Poor work of the authorized body and administrations of national parks in relation to specially protected natural territories.

A legal situation that does not support effective operation of national parks is the main cause of serious shortcomings in the work of authorized bodies and parks administrations. This is confirmed by the results of the photo monitoring carried out by the ES.

The following drawbacks are especially evident:

4.1. Websites of national parks do not provide enough information for visitors. None of the websites of national parks in Almaty oblast provide detailed maps of SPNT, or maps for tourists [12]. The websites can not compete with the websites of famous foreign national parks in abundance of informational materials [13]. In visitor centers and at the park entrances, there are no printed materials for tourists (such as maps, postcards, booklets with designated tourist routes and overlooks).

4.2. Poorly equipped trails, bridges, rest areas, restrooms. There is a lack of continuous monitoring of the condition of bridges, rest areas, informational stands, which leads to their dilapidation, littering, and destruction. There are no clear instructions for making arrangements for tourists in national parks, therefore, administrations act at their own discretion. Primitive rest areas look shabby and repel visitors.

4.3. Poorly equipped garbage collectors (unsealed, ugly). Wind carries garbage around. Animals eat food waste. Some garbage collectors contain remains of burnt garbage. The garbage is either burned in place, or as a result of lack of proper control, it is subjected to spontaneous combustion.

4.4. Tourist activity is conducted without accounting ecological pressure on the natural environment imposed by the tourists. As a result, in some areas of the national park, vegetation and topsoil are lost, garbage is accumulating.

4.5. There is no emergency communication system in the park to be used in case of natural disasters, wildlife attacks, injuries, or other unexpected situations.

4.6. Work of the park checkpoints is unsatisfactory; on the part of the administration, there is no clear control over receipt of entrance fees at the entrances to national parks.

4.7. Many areas in the Ile-Alatau National Park are closed to visitors, as seen from the numerous “no trespassing” signs. But these same places are open to tenants who carry out various activities, including those that damage the natural environment.

4.8. Air quality is not monitored in the Ile-Alatau National Park, although it has been scientifically proven that the smog that is formed over Almaty moves over the park and damages its ecosystems.

4.9. The website of the Forestry and Wildlife Committee does not have centralized access to information on national parks in Kazakhstan [14].

4.10. SPNT borders and their protected areas are not marked on site.

Lack of marked borders and marked protected areas of national parks on site shall be specially noted. This indicates that collaboration between the Forestry and Wildlife Committee and Land Management Committee is poor, in spite of the fact that the both agencies are subordinates of the Ministry of Agriculture. These facts also confirm a lack of collaboration between the local executive authorities and administrations of SPNT.

Lack of marked borders on site leads to many conflicts between local authorities and administrations of national parks, entrepreneurs, park visitors. Lack of marked borders contributes to plundering of lands of national parks and destruction of ecological systems.

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- 12 Ile-Alatau State National Nature Park: <http://www.ile-alatau.kz/>.
State National Nature Park "Altyn-Emel": <http://altyn-emel.kz/index.php>.
Charyn State National Nature Park: <http://charyn.kz/rus/>.
Zhongar-Alatau State National Nature Park: <http://zhongaralatau.kz/>.
State National Nature Park "Kulsay kulderi": <http://kolsay.kz/>.
13 Sequoia National Park: <https://www.nps.gov/seki/index.htm>;
Yellowstone National Park: <https://www.nps.gov/yell/index.htm>.
14 Forestry and Wildlife Committee: <http://fhc.kz/index.php>.

5. Photo illustration to the section 4. Poor work of the authorized body and administrations of national parks.



Photo 1. Aksai Canyon.



Photo 2. Canyon of Batareika River.



Photo 3. Issyk Lake.



Photo 4. Issyk Canyon.



Photo 5. **Butakovka Canyon.**



Photo 6. **Big Almaty Canyon.**



Photo 7. Talgar Canyon.



Photo 8. Aksai Canyon.



*Photo 9. **Butakovka Canyon.***



*Photo 10. **Kotirbulak Canyon.***



*Photo 11. **Charyn National Park. Valley of Castles.***



*Photo 12. **Butakovka Canyon.***



*Photo 13. **Turgen Canyon.***



*Photo 14. **Butakovka Canyon.***



Photo 15. Issyk Canyon.



Photo 16. Bank of Big Almaty Lake.



*Photo 17. **Turgen Canyon.***



*Photo 18. **Turgen Canyon.***



Photo 19. **Kaskelen Canyon.**



Photo 20. **Kaskelen Canyon.**



Photo 21. Butakovka Canyon.



Photo 22. Turgen Canyon.

6. Transferring lands of national parks into standby lands and re-zoning of national parks.

Transfer of lands of national parks from the category of “lands of SPNT” to the standby lands continues. Various explanations and justifications are made up for this, such as, need for reconstruction of structures for mud slides prevention, construction of retaining walls to strengthen slopes of roads, installation of water pipes, construction of ski resorts. The real reasons behind manipulations with SPNT lands include desire of businessmen to privatize valuable state lands, lack of a clear concept for SPNT development, directive on commercialization of the work of SPNT, failure to comply with national legislation and international agreements.

Revision and modification of functional zones of national parks continue. “As of 2012, 51.9% of lands in the Ile-Alatau National Park were transferred into a restricted economic activity zone” [15] and can be leased out. In other words, more than half of the park’s territory may become uninhabitable for wild animals and unsuitable for plant growth. Are things much better in other national parks?

7. Restricted economic activity.

7.1. Livestock grazing.

Livestock moving and grazing takes place in almost all the canyons of the Ile-Alatau SNNP. Especially large numbers of livestock are concentrated in the Kaskelen and Turgan Canyons of the Ile-Alatau SNNP. Livestock grazing also takes place in the Charyn SNNP. Wild animals, including birds, almost completely disappeared from the grazing territories. Local plant communities are severely damaged. Livestock brings in foreign plant species to the territory of national parks.

In most cases, livestock grazing is uncontrolled, which leads to destruction of vegetation, contributes to soil erosion, pollution of water sources (for example, the Kaskelen Canyon of the Ile-Alatau SNNP, the Valley of Castles of the Charyn SNNP).

7.2. Construction and other activities of outside land owners and tenants.

Construction works are constantly taking place on the territory of the Ile-Alatau and Charyn National Parks. Construction of parking lots, restaurants, cafes, and other facilities is conducted under the plausible pretext of developing tourism infrastructure. A special group of developers stands out from others: they erect mansions. Many of them are surrounded by 3, 4-meters high fences and resemble fortified bases (Butakovka Canyon of the Ile-Alatau SNNP).

Usually, with such economic activity, neither construction, nor ecological, nor sanitary norms are observed. Natural ecological systems, to put it mildly, are simply erased from the face of the earth. Red-book plants or animals are not taken into account. The resulting construction and domestic garbage is dumped in neighboring

canyons, often in the territory of the national park (Small Almaty Canyon, Big Almaty Canyon of the Ile-Alatau SNNP).

15 Draft. Correction of the Feasibility Study of the Ile-Alatau State National Nature Park in Terms of Functional Zoning and General Plan for Infrastructure Development. - Almaty, 2013, p.8. "In accordance with the above mentioned project of 2012, the areas of functional zones in the Ile-Alatau SNNP with a total area of 199,673.5 hectares, measure as follows:

- Zone of a nature reserve (protection level of a nature reserve) - 57,786 hectares (28.94%).
- Ecological stabilization zone (protection level of a nature reserve with some exceptions for scientific and recreation activities) - 23,280 hectares (11.7%).
- Zone of tourist and recreational activities (protection level of a conservation area) - 14,991 hectares (7.5%).
- Zone of restricted economic activity (protection level of a conservation area) - 103,616.5 hectares (51.9%).

Thus, 81,066 hectares, or 40.46% of the total park area, are currently covered by the protection regulations of a nature reserve."

8. Photo illustration to the section 7. Restricted economic activity: lease.



Photo 23. Prohodnoe (Almaarasan) Canyon.



Photo 24. Prohodnoe (Almaarasan) Canyon.



Photo 25. Prohodnoe (Almaarasan) Canyon.



*Photo 26. **Big Almaty Canyon.***



*Photo 27. **Big Almaty Canyon.***



*Photo 28. **Big Almaty Canyon.***



*Photo 29. **Kaskelen Canyon.***



*Photo 30. **Big Almaty Canyon.***



*Photo 31. **Big Almaty Canyon.***



*Photo 32. **Butakovka Canyon.***



*Photo 33. **Butakovka Canyon.***



Photo 34. Butakovka Canyon.



Photo 35. Big Almaty Canyon.



*Photo 36. **Big Almaty Canyon.***



*Photo 37. **Butakovka Canyon.***



*Photo 38. **Big Almaty Canyon.***



*Photo 39. **Charyn National Park. Valley of Castles***



*Photo 40. **Kaskelen Canyon.***



*Photo 41. **Kaskelen Canyon.***



Photo 42. Kaskelen Canyon. For Sale.



Photo 43. Kaskelen Canyon. For Sale.



Photo 44. Turgen Canyon. For Sale.



Photo 45. Kazachka River Canyon.



Photo 46. Butakovka Canyon.



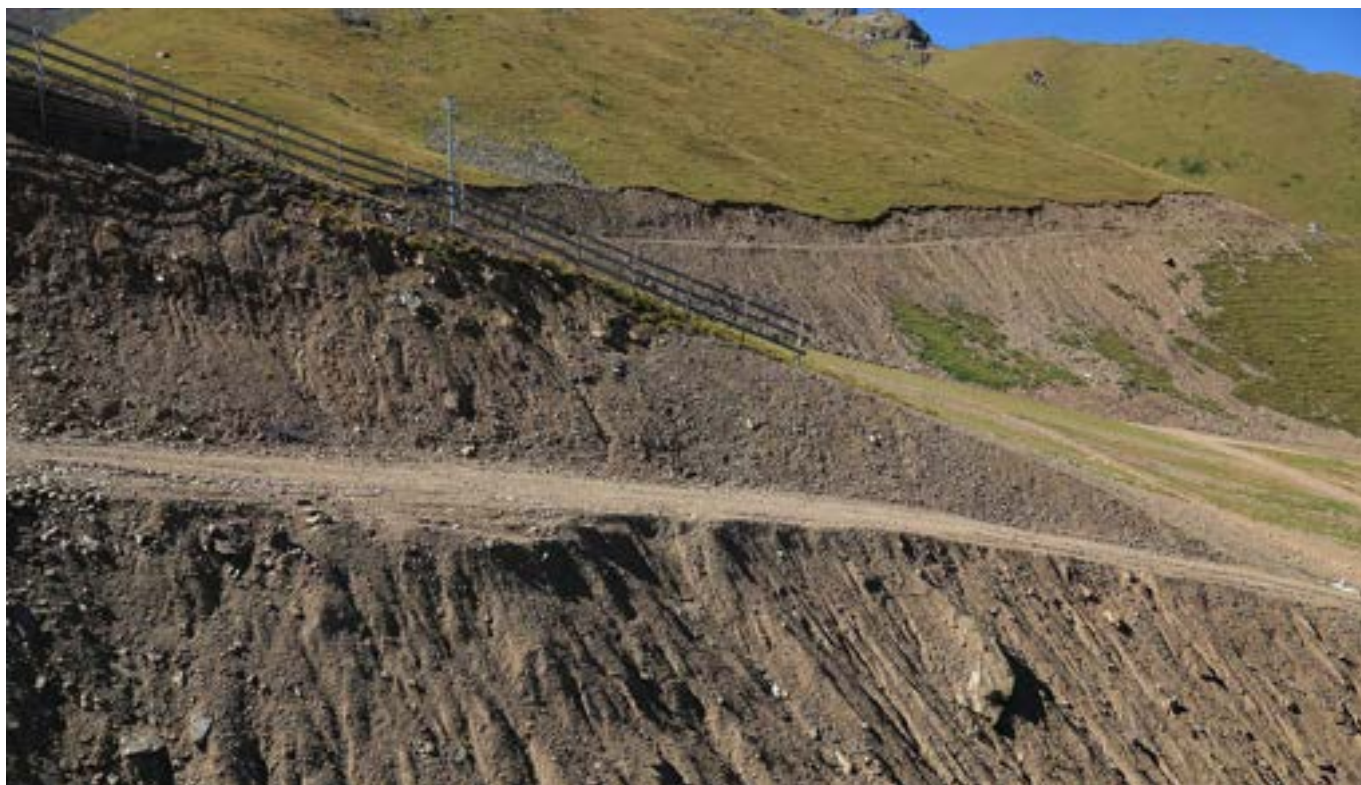
Photo 47. Issyk Lake.



*Photo 48. **Chimbulak Hollow.***



*Photo 49. **Chimbulak Hollow.***



*Photo 50. **Chimbulak Hollow.***



*Photo 51. **Turgen Canyon.***



Photo 52. Turgen Canyon.



Photo 53. Turgen Canyon.



Photo 54. Turgen Canyon.

8. Photo illustration to the section 7. Restricted economic activity: livestock grazing.



Photo 55. Kok-Jailau Hollow.



*Photo 56. **Kimasar Canyon.***



*Photo 57. **Kok-Jailau Hollow.***



*Photo 58. **Kok-Jailau Hollow.***



*Photo 59. **Turgen Canyon.***



*Photo 60. **Kaskelen Canyon.***



*Photo 61. **Kaskelen Canyon.***



*Photo 62. **Kaskelen Canyon.***



*Photo 63. **Butakovka Canyon.***

8. Photo illustration to the section 7. Restricted economic activity: outsider land users.



Photo 64. Prohodnoe (Almaarasan) Canyon.



Photo 65. Prohodnoe (Almaarasan) Canyon.



*Photo 66. **Talgar Canyon.***



*Photo 67. **Prohodnoe (Almaarasan) Canyon.***



Photo 68. Prohodnoe (Almaarasan) Canyon.



Photo 69. Prohodnoe (Almaarasan) Canyon.



*Photo 70. **Butakovka Canyon.***



*Photo 71. **Butakovka Canyon.***



*Photo 72. **Aksai Canyon.***



*Photo 73. **Turgan Canyon.***



*Photo 74. **Small Almaty Canyon.***



*Photo 75. **Small Almaty Canyon.***



Photo 76. Canyon of Batareika River. Top view.



Photo 77. Turgan Canyon.



Photo 78. Kaskelen Canyon.



Photo 79. Kaskelen Canyon.



Photo 80. Kotirbulak Canyon.



Photo 81. Butakovka Canyon.



*Photo 82. **Kaskelen Canyon.***



*Photo 83. **Kotirbulak Canyon.***



*Photo 84. **Butakovka Canyon.***



*Photo 85. **The Tien Shan Alpine Scientific Station. Big Almaty Canyon.***



Photo 86. The Tien Shan Alpine Scientific Station. Big Almaty Canyon.



Photo 87. The Tien Shan Alpine Scientific Station. Big Almaty Canyon.



*Photo 88. **Small Almaty Canyon.***



*Photo 89. **Small Almaty Canyon.***



Photo 90. Kaskelen Canyon.

9. Uncontrolled tourism.

Ile-Alatau and Charyn National Parks are visited by a large number of tourists. No exact data on the distribution between organized and unorganized tourism can be found in open sources. A large number of automobiles enter and uncontrollably move on the territory of the Ile-Alatau SNNP. A large number of cafes and other facilities have been built along the main routes to serve tourists, which in turn often violate regulations of protected areas.

Lack of effective control over the tourist activity results in many violations: littering, starting fires in undesignated areas, cutting trees, collecting red-book plants, parking cars on banks of rivers, etc.

10. Photo illustration to the section 9. Uncontrolled tourism.



*Photo 91. **Turgen Canyon.***



*Photo 92. **Turgen Canyon.***



Photo 93. Turgen Canyon.



Photo 94. Turgen Canyon.



*Photo 95. **Kok-Jailau Hollow.***



*Photo 96. **Kok-Jailau Hollow.***



Photo 97. Issyk Canyon.



Photo 98. Issyk Lake.



*Photo 99. **Bank of Big Almaty Lake.***



*Photo 100. **Bank of Big Almaty Lake.***



Photo 101. Big Almaty Canyon.



Photo 102. Prohodnoe (Almaarasan) Canyon.



*Photo 103. **Kumbel Peak.***



*Photo 104. **Turgan Canyon.***



Photo 105. Issyk Lake.



Photo 106. Kimasar Canyon.



*Photo 107. **Small Almaty Canyon.***



*Photo 108. **Small Almaty Canyon.***



*Photo 109. **Bank of Charyn River.***



*Photo 110. **Bank of Charyn River.***



Part III.

DAMAGE FROM VIOLATION OF SPNT REGULATIONS

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11. Fragmentation of ecosystems.

Transfer of lands of national parks into standby lands, leasing of lands, and other economic activities are conducted without taking into account natural and recreated ecosystems. As a result, fragmentation of forests, rare plants and animal habitats occurs. Animal migration routes are blocked, habitats of many species of animals and plants get destroyed, access to water is blocked. Even if in accordance with paragraph 6 of Article 46-1 of the Law on SPNT, at the end of a lease period, all facilities are dismantled and removed, natural ecological systems can not be restored. At best, ecosystems that resemble those that existed earlier may arise.

12. Photo illustration to the section 11. Fragmentation of ecosystems.



*Photo 111. **Kaskelen Canyon.***



*Photo 112. **Kaskelen Canyon.***



*Photo 113. **Kaskelen Canyon.***



Photo 114. Kaskelen Canyon.

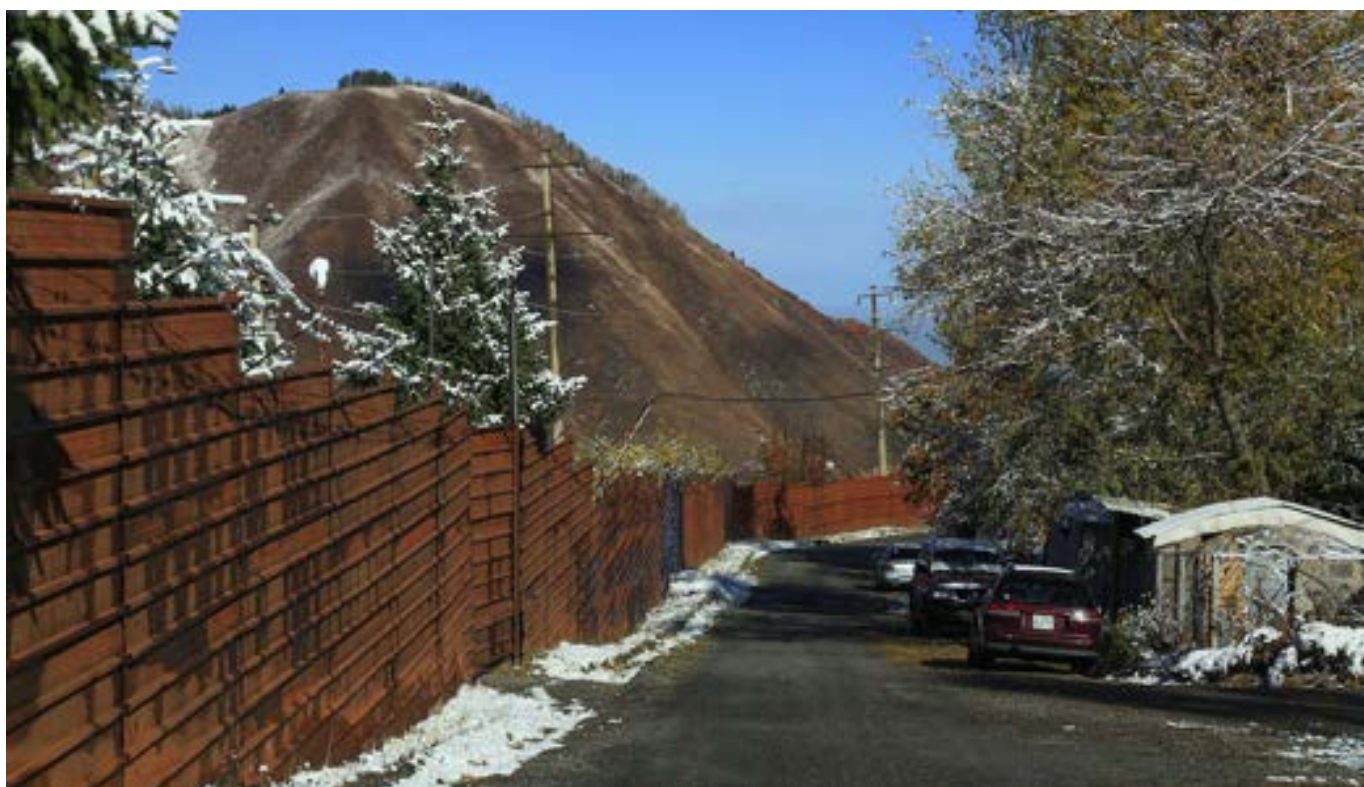


Photo 115. Prohodnoe (Almaarasan) Canyon.



*Photo 116. **Butakovka Canyon.***



*Photo 117. **Aksai Canyon.***

13. Damage from soil contamination.

Unauthorized dumps constantly form on the territories of national parks. Tourists, herdsman, construction and road workers, other special services leave a large amount of garbage. The largest unauthorized dumps are located on leased lots and lands of outside owners. Garbage contaminates soil, is washed away by water, carried by the wind, increases the likelihood of fires. No data on soil contamination in national parks is available in open sources. Measures for garbage collection, organized by parks administrations, are clearly insufficient. Ile-Alatau SNNP is especially heavily littered.

14. Damage from pollution and destruction of natural water bodies. In some cases, leased lots with mansions and other structures are located directly on the banks of water bodies. Facilities built without regard for sanitary and environmental standards and the requirements of the Water and Environmental Codes, become sources of chemical and biological pollution, as well as obstruct access to water.

The river beds undergo alterations and fencing. Natural banks are “improved” without taking into account their value for the life of animals and plants, flood water systems and hydrological system of river valleys undergo changes (Big Almaty Canyon and Small Almaty Canyon of the Ile-Alatau SNNP).

15. Damage from air pollution. Vehicles, construction machinery, industrial premises of restaurants, cafes, hotels, mansions, saunas greatly increase air pollution. The amount of dust rising from the curbs of asphalt and dirt roads, which were built in large numbers by tenants and other economic entities, is increasing (Big Almaty Canyon of the Ile-Alatau SNNP, the Valley of Castles of the Charyn SNNP).

16. Damage from noise pollution.

Noise pollution has become one of the constant factors of violation of the nature protection regulations in national parks. The sources of pollution are cars, various rented motorized vehicles, (including motor boats on Lake Issyk, on the border with the Almaty State Nature Reserve), unmanned aerial vehicles, restaurants and cafes with loud music (the Valley of Castles of Charyn SNNP), construction machinery, etc.

17. Photo illustration to the sections 13. Damage from soil contamination.



Photo 118. Canyon of Batareika River.



Photo 119. Canyon of Batareika River.



Photo 120. Kok-Jailau Hollow.



Photo 121. Kok-Jailau Hollow.



*Photo 122. **Bank of Big Almaty Lake.***



*Photo 123. **Prohodnoe (Almaarasan) Canyon.***



*Photo 124. **Kaskelen Canyon.***



*Photo 125. **Bank of Issyk Lake.***



*Photo 126. **Butakovka Canyon.***



*Photo 127. **Karagalinka Canyon.***



*Photo 128. **Big Almaty Canyon. The Tien Shan Alpine Scientific Station.***



*Photo 129. **Big Almaty Canyon.***



*Photo 130. **Prohodnoe (Almaarasan) Canyon.***



*Photo 131. **Prohodnoe (Almaarasan) Canyon.***



Photo 132. Charyn National Park. Valley of Castles.



Photo 133. Canyon of Batareika River.



Photo 134. Canyon of Batareika River.

18. Damage from the construction of infrastructure.

Any economic activity inevitably leads to construction of transport and engineering infrastructure, which requires additional territories and other resources. Its facilities are usually, chaotically, often outside the leased areas, which causes additional damage to ecosystems. Construction and operation of these facilities inevitably leads to irretrievable destruction of existing ecological systems and reduction of biological diversity.

19. Photo illustration to the section 18. Damage from the construction of infrastructure.



Photo 135. Canyon of Batareika River.



Photo 136. Kaskelen Canyon.



*Photo 137. **Kazachka River Canyon.***



*Photo 138. **Kok-Jailau Hollow.***



Photo 139. Kimasar Canyon.



Photo 140. Kimasar Canyon.



Photo 141. Kaskelen Canyon.



Photo 142. Small Almaty Canyon.



*Photo 143. **Turgen Canyon.***



*Photo 144. **Kaskelen Canyon.***



*Photo 145. **Kaskelen Canyon.***



*Photo 146. **Kaskelen Canyon.***



Photo 147. Issyk Canyon.



Photo 148. Issyk Canyon.



*Photo 149. **Small Almaty Canyon.***



*Photo 150. **Chimbulak Hollow.***



*Photo 151. **Chimbulak Hollow.***



*Photo 152. **Kaskelen Canyon.***

20. Abandoned sites.

Only on the territory of the Ile-Alatau National Park there are several dozen abandoned buildings that fall apart. These buildings were built after foundation of the national park (Butakovka Canyon, Turgan Canyon, Prohodnoe (Almaarasan) Canyon). Numerous sites built during the Soviet period, left abandoned, gradually turn into ruins and dumps. There are also abandoned sites that were built during the period of the country's independence.

Paragraph 5 of Article 46-1 of the Law on SPNT says: "Regardless of a transfer of the right of use of a land plot given for long-term use for implementation of tourism and recreational activity, individuals and legal entities retain the obligation to bring the site to a state that ensures preservation of the state-owned natural reserve fund, and compliance with environmental protection requirements." Some ruins remain for many years. The Committee, national park administrations, local authorities do not react to the fact that the ecological systems of national parks are damaged, to the fact that the ruins represent a danger to park visitors. They do not react to the demands of the public to liquidate the ruins and return the lands to national parks.

21. Photo illustration to the section 20. Abandoned sites.



Photo 153. Canyon of Batareika River.



Photo 154. Talgar Canyon.



Photo 155. Small Almaty Canyon.



*Photo 156. **Prohodnoe (Almaarasan) Canyon.***



*Photo 157. **Prohodnoe (Almaarasan) Canyon.***



*Photo 158. **Kimasar Canyon.***



*Photo 159. **Big Almaty Canyon.***



*Photo 160. **Canyon of Batareika River.***



*Photo 161. **Butakovka Canyon.***



Photo 162. Butakovka Canyon.



Photo 163. Butakovka Canyon.



*Photo 164. **Butakovka Canyon.***



*Photo 165. **Canyon of Batareika River.***



Photo 166. Issyk Lake.



Photo 167. Issyk Lake.



*Photo 168. **Big Almaty Canyon.***



*Photo 169. **Big Almaty Canyon.***



*Photo 170. **Small Almaty Canyon.***



*Photo 171. **Big Almaty Canyon.***



Photo 172. Turgan Canyon.



Photo 173. Canyon of Batareika River.



Photo 174. Kotirbulak Canyon.



Photo 175. Kotirbulak Canyon.



Photo 176. Kotirbulak Canyon.



Photo 177. Issyk Canyon.



*Photo 178. **Butakovka Canyon.***



*Photo 179. **Butakovka Canyon.***



*Photo 180. **Butakovka Canyon.***



*Photo 181. **Butakovka Canyon.***



Photo 182. Kotirbulak Canyon.



Photo 183. Medeu Hollow.



Photo 184. Kotirbulak Canyon.



Photo 185. Kotirbulak Canyon.



*Photo 186. **Butakovka Canyon.***



*Photo 187. **Prohodnoe (Almaarasan) Canyon.***



*Photo 188. **Canyon of Batareika River.***



*Photo 189. **Issyk Canyon.***

22. Damage from man-made disasters.

Practically uncontrolled activity of tenants, outside owners, tourists, and other economic entities on the territory of national parks significantly increases the probability of occurrence of man-made disasters. Persons, engaged in the business activity, cut mountain slopes, destroy vegetation cover, change river beds, increase fire hazards, provoke erosion of soils. A vivid example is the rain floods, which began to arise as a result of leveling of the slopes, which was carried out to improve the ski tracks in the Chimbulak area (Ile-Alatau SNNP). Vegetation and soil were completely destroyed on the slopes. Without slowing down by herbaceous and shrub vegetation, heavy precipitation forms rain floods. The road was damaged. It took considerable funds for its repair and for construction of a protective dam. Damage to the national park was not estimated.

In the conditions of increased seismicity and instability of mountain soils, any economic activity on the territory of SPNT (construction of roads, bridges, buildings, installation of power line supports, cutting down trees, grazing, etc.) increases the likelihood of man-made disasters. A striking example is a landslide that happened on April 19, 2018, near Lake Kolsai (Kolsai Lakes SNNP). This is one of the largest landslides in the last 50 years.

23. Photo illustration to the section 22. Damage from man-made disasters.



Photo 190. Canyon of Batareika River.



Photo 191. Canyon of Batareika River.



Photo 192. Canyon of Batareika River.



*Photo 193. **Canyon of Batareika River.***



*Photo 194. **Canyon of Batareika River.***



Photo 195. Canyon of Batareika River.



Photo 196. Canyon of Batareika River.



Photo 197. Talgar Canyon.



Photo 198. Talgar Canyon.



Photo 199. Talgar Canyon.



Photo 200. Talgar Canyon.



*Photo 201. **Small Almaty Canyon.***



*Photo 202. **Aksai Canyon.***



*Photo 203. **Chimbulak Hollow.***



*Photo 204. **Chimbulak Hollow.***



*Photo 205. **Aksai Canyon.***



*Photo 206. **Aksai Canyon.***



*Photo 207. **Aksai Canyon.***



*Photo 208. **Small Almaty Canyon.***



*Photo 209. **Small Almaty Canyon.***

24. Limitation of access to natural resources of national parks.

The main obstacle is the numerous fences installed by tenants and outside owners, which block access to the trails, roads, water bodies, sights of national parks. In some places, fences completely block access to natural sites, making significant areas inaccessible to tourists. The administration of parks does not even try to stop such actions. The law on SPNT does not qualify such actions as unlawful. Therefore, tenants do not bear any responsibility for installation of structures that are detrimental to tourism.

Meanwhile, at the 5th World Congress of Protected Areas, held in Durban, South Africa, from September 8 to 17, 2003, it was noted that when organizing protected areas, it is necessary to recognize the rights of local population to benefit from SPNT, and also to involve the people in the process of organization and management of SPNT [16].

16 Benefits Beyond Boundaries: Report of the Vth World Parks Congress, 8-17 September 2003, IUCN, 2005, p.34: <https://www.iucn.org/content/benefits-beyond-boundaries-proceedings-vth-iucn-world-parks-congress> (date visited: May 3, 2018).

25. Photo illustration to the section 24. Limitation of access to natural resources of national parks.



Photo 210. Prohodnoe (Almaarasan) Canyon.



Photo 211. Kaskelen Canyon.



Photo 212. Aksai Canyon.



*Photo 213. **Kaskelen Canyon.***



*Photo 214. **Kaskelen Canyon.***



Photo 215. Talgar Canyon. Private property.



Photo 216. Talgar Canyon.



*Photo 217. **Kaskelen Canyon.***



*Photo 218. **Butakovka Canyon.***



Photo 219. Kaskelen Canyon. Private property.



Photo 220. Kaskelen Canyon. Private property.



Photo 221. Big Almaty Canyon.



Photo 222. Big Almaty Canyon.



Photo 223. Kotirbulak Canyon.



Photo 224. Aksai Canyon.



*Photo 225. **Chimbulak Hollow. Private property.***



*Photo 226. **Chimbulak Hollow. Private property.***

26. Damage from loss of natural attractiveness.

Tenants and other business entities change the natural landscapes so much that they lose their natural attractiveness. Tourist sites are turned into food reception points against a background of relatively untouched nature. This is especially striking on weekends, when hundreds of cars are parked near restaurants and cafes in national parks. Animals and birds habitat and vegetation are almost completely destroyed on the territories leased to hotels, restaurants, cafes. Poor vegetation, trampled banks of rivers and water reservoirs complete the picture.

27. Photo illustration to the section 26. Damage from loss of natural attractiveness.



Photo 227. Canyon of Batareika River.



*Photo 228. **Kaskelen Canyon.***



*Photo 229. **Big Almaty Canyon.***



*Photo 230. **Big Almaty Canyon.***



*Photo 231. **Big Almaty Canyon.***



*Photo 232. **Prohodnoe (Almaarasan) Canyon.***



*Photo 233. **Prohodnoe (Almaarasan) Canyon.***



Photo 234. Kaskelen Canyon.



Photo 235. Kimasar Canyon.



*Photo 236. **Kaskelen Canyon.***



*Photo 237. **Issyk Canyon.***



Photo 238. Canyon of Batareika River.



Photo 239. Canyon of Batareika River.



Photo 240. Canyon of Batareika River.

28. Damage to the image of national parks.

Actions of tenants and other business entities are detrimental to the very idea of preserving nature through organization of national parks. Many visitors are puzzled by the additional fees collected already inside the national parks. A fee is required to even rest on a lawn, as the land is either leased or privately owned. “Here it is, service in Kazakhstan, which purpose is not to provide a quality service to customers, but, on the contrary, to do everything so that the customers no longer use your services” [17].

In the last 10-15 years, materials about the park visitors discontent by actions of tenants and outside owners periodically appear in the press. This proves that, firstly, neither the parliament, nor specially authorized agencies, nor the administration of parks take effective measures to resolve the conflict between visitors and outside owners. Secondly, this confirms the lack of real opportunities for tourism development in the presence of such contradictions.

17 A. Kalymov. Antitourism. The Kazakh Truth. July 19, 2017.
<http://www.kazpravda.kz/fresh/view/antiturizm1> (date visited: October 12, 2017).