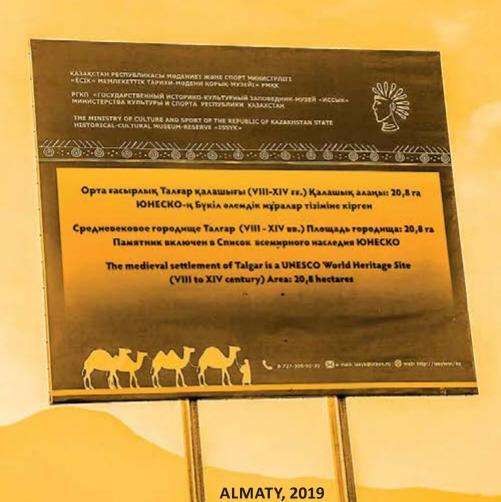
ECOLOGICAL SOCIETY "GREEN SALVATION"

RESULTS OF 2018 MONITORING OF THE TALGAR WORLD HERITAGE SITE



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RESULTS OF 2018 MONITORING OF THE TALGAR WORLD HERITAGE SITE

(Ref: 1442: http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1442)

(The World Heritage Site is under a threat of destruction caused by incompetent actions of the state authorities)

THE ECOLOGICAL SOCIETY "GREEN SALVATION" EXPRESSES ITS SINCERE GRATITUDE TO THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR DEMOCRACY (USA). WITHOUT THE NED ASSISTANCE, IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE TO CARRY OUT THE PHOTO AND VIDEO MONITORING OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL SITUATION IN THE CITY OF ALMATY AND ITS VICINITIES.

The material is prepared by the staff members of the Ecological Society "Green Salvation:" Sergey Kuratov, Nataliya Medvedeva, Ravil Nasyrov.

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In 2014, Talgar site of ancient settlement was included in the World Heritage List as a part of the joint nomination from China, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgystan: Silk Roads: the Routes Network of Chang'an-Tianshan Corridor. Talgar site is one of the eight Kazakhstan sites included in this nomination.¹ It is located 25 km east of the city of Almaty, near the Almaty nature reserve, in the protection zone of the Ile-Alatau National Park. The site is included in the "State List of Monuments of History and Culture of the Republic-level significance."²

The Ecological Society "Green Salvation" monitors the condition of the Talgar site since 2015. By the results of the 2017 photo monitoring, a report was prepared and published on the website of the organization in Russian and English languages.³ The present report is a continuation of this material. It includes the period from March to December 2018.

1. Description of the problem 2014 - 2015

In the fall of 2014, a group of Chinese experts decided to inspect the sites located in Kazakhstan, including the site of Talgar. Imagine the surprise of the Chinese, who saw a bridge being built to the center of the ancient monument from the west bank of the Talgar River, and markings were made across the monument for construction of a highway to the Ak-Bulak ski resort.



Construction of the bridge. August 9, 2015.

A scandal broke out. It turned out that as a result of inconsistency of actions between various governmental agencies, the process of inclusion of the site into the World Heritage List was happening at the same time as the road construction project was being developed. Multiple violations of the national legislation (related to land, water, environment, protection of monuments, etc.) took place during the project development.

On March 18, 2015, Deputies of the Mazhilis of the Parliament sent a request to the Prosecutor General's Office with a request to clarify the situation around Talgar site and conduct an inspection. On April 17, 2015, the Prosecutor General, responding to the Deputies, indicated that "at the present moment, construction works have been suspended in the right of way of the highway, archaeological surveys are being conducted and conclusions will be submitted for approval to the Ministry of Culture and Sports."⁴

In the summer of 2015, archaeological pits appeared on the site slicing to the base its rampart in two places, breaking integrity of the monument. In place of the corner tower destroyed during digging of the pits, Kazakhstani restorers built a new tower out of cinder block. It was erected on a concrete foundation and plastered with cement.

In a few dozens of meters from the northern wall of the ancient settlement, residential homes were constructed in the protection zone of the monument.

2016

On March 21-23, 2016, at the official request of the party of the Convention, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the mission of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (hereinafter ICOMOS) arrived in the country. One of its tasks was to determine the impact of the road construction on the outstanding universal value, integrity and authenticity of the Talgar site.⁵

ICOMOS experts came to the following conclusions:

- the threat to the monument was caused by a lack of coordination between various governmental agencies, both at the state and local levels;
- norms of the national legislation and requirements of the Convention were violated;
- the Ministry of Culture and Sports was supposed to exercise control and manage the site, however, no monitoring was carried out, and the system for managing World Heritage sites, developed by the Convention, was not applied.

The experts of ICOMOS were especially surprised by the conclusion made by representatives of a private archaeological company on the basis of excavations carried out on the Talgar site. The archaeologists "found no evidence of a cultural archaeological layer."

ICOMOS experts recommended to urgently declare a moratorium on the construction of the road to a ski resort and develop an alternative that would not affect the ancient settlement and its buffer zone, and to take a decision on dismantling the bridge over the Talgar River.

The mission indicated that it is necessary:

- to reinforce significantly the control over the implementation of the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan "On the protection and use of objects of historical and cultural heritage," and bring it in compliance with the terminology and mechanisms of the Convention:
- to strengthen significantly the mechanisms for implementation of the Convention in the country;
 - to make changes to the Land Code, in order to prevent destruction of monuments;
- as a matter of urgency, to establish efficient coordination and a harmonization of decisions between the relevant State departments and branches at all levels;
- to halt all reconstruction works at the site which are not based on complete and detailed documentation, to submit a reconstruction project to the World Heritage Center;
 - to use non-destructive research methods on archaeological monuments;
- to declare a moratorium on any further construction in the buffer zone and consider removing new structures;



Excavations for the proposed road passage. September 2, 2016.

- to develop a General plan for the buffer zone in order to prevent individual construction projects and to facilitate the buffer zone development; submit the General plan to the World Heritage Center.⁷

It should be noted that the ICOMOS mission specifically recalled that according to the Article 1 of the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan "On the Protection and Use of Historical and Cultural Heritage Sites," "if an international agreement ratified by the Republic of Kazakhstan establishes different rules than those contained in this Law, the rules of the international agreement apply." That is, the Convention takes precedence over the laws of Kazakhstan.⁸

But the ICOMOS mission left, and in the summer of 2016 construction resumed. A private archaeological company made new excavations along the proposed passage of the road and reiterated that there was nothing valuable at the World Heritage Site.

By August, preparation of the road bed reached the southeastern edge of the hillfort, in order to continue work already on the site. Fence around the site was broken in several areas.

An attempt of the Ecological Society "Green Salvation" to address a court and obtain comprehensive information about what was happening and raise a question of the actual inaction of the Ministry of Culture and Sports, which is directly responsible for the preservation of the site, ended in failure. All courts refused to satisfy claims of the organization. The courts made their decisions based on inaccurate information provided by the state authorities.

In July 2016, the 40th session of the World Heritage Committee was held. Based on the findings of the ICOMOS mission, the Committee made a decision.⁹ Regarding the Talgar site, the decision reads as follows:

- to stop immediately the construction of the road through the ancient settlement, to explore other routes outside the boundaries of the Talgar site and its buffer zone, and to dismantle the parts of the bridge that have already been constructed;
- to stop reconstruction works of the settlement, which are carried out without careful preparation of the reconstruction projects;
- to halt the residential development in the buffer zone and to provide full details on the situation in the buffer zone to the World Heritage Centre;
- authorized bodies to address the recommendations of the ICOMOS Advisory mission with regard to protection, management and awareness-raising and to take all necessary actions to ensure the safeguarding of the authenticity and integrity of the Talgar component site;
- to invite, as soon as possible, a joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS mission to consider the implementation of the recommendations regarding Talgar and other World Heritage sites.

Destruction of the southern part of the ancient settlement

Despite the findings of the ICOMOS mission and the decision of the World Heritage Committee, in September-October, road workers dug out a passage for the roadway through the southern part of the hillfort, destroying a significant part of the monument. However, protests and a campaign organized by the public, 10 scientists, and journalists prevented them from finishing what they started. On October 27, Deputy Prime Minister of Kazakhstan I. Tasmagambetov arrived at the site of Talgar and held an on-site meeting with representatives of authorized bodies. Construction was stopped. The dug out passage for the roadway was filled with soil and covered with straw on top. Informational boards were installed, the fence was repaired. However, construction of the bridge did not stop.

On November 8, after the excavation was filled back up, experts of the World Heritage Center UNESCO and ICOMOS visited the site. They were accompanied by representatives of the Ministry of Culture and Sports, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (National Commission for UNESCO and ISESCO), specialists of the Institute of Archaeology, representatives of local authorities, the Office of passenger transport and highways of the Almaty oblast, public and media.



Excavation for the road bed. October 15, 2016.

2. Condition of the site in 2017

In July 2017, experts of the World Heritage Center and ICOMOS published a detailed report on the results of the World Heritage Site Survey in Kazakhstan,¹¹ which became a base for the World Heritage Committee's decision 41 COM 7B.88.¹²

Positive changes on the site in the end of 2016 - beginning of 2017 cannot be considered as pivotal. Despite of the harsh evaluation of the situation made by the experts, and the decision of the World Heritage Committee, the authorities did not go beyond half-measures, and the condition of the monument still did not meet the requirements of the Convention (for more details, please, see the report prepared by the Ecological Society "Green Salvation").

3. Condition of the site in 2018

Inquiries of Deputies of the Lower House of the Parliament of Kazakhstan (Mazhilis) on the condition of the ancient settlement

The continuing incompetent actions of the state authorities made the Ecological Society "Green Salvation" address the deputies.

In February and April, the organization sent letters to the Secretary of the Committee on Ecology and Environment of the Lower House (Mazhilis) of the Parliament G.A. Baymakhanova. The organization asked the deputies to make inquiries to the Prime Minister B.A. Sagintayev about measures taken by the government to ensure preservation of the monument. The deputies sent two inquiries.¹³

The government's reply of February 21, to the inquiry of January 25 does not state anything about:

- changes that are needed to be introduced to the land and water legislation;
- dismantling of the bridge over the Talgar River;
- plans for the reconstruction and the future of new structures (reconstructions);
- the current situation on the hillfort (condition of fences, littering, cattle grazing, foreign structures, access roads, power lines around the hillfort).
 - the lack of informational stands on the site.

This reply did not satisfy the deputies, on May 2, they submitted a new inquiry. Again, the government's reply of May 31 ignored a number of important questions which were posed back in the first inquiry:

- changes that are needed to be introduced to the land and water legislation;
- what actions are taken to ensure preservation of the hillfort;
- dismantling of the bridge over the Talgar River;
- plans for the reconstruction and the future of new structures (reconstructions);
- the lack of informational stands on the site;
- the new archaeological excavations started in the spring of 2018.

The letter says: "Currently, in order to ensure preservation and strengthening of protection of the Talgar hillfort, the Ministry of Culture and Sports is working on transferring the property to the Ministry's branch organization, the Issyk State

Reserve Museum [sic]. To date, for implementation of this work, the Museum-Reserve received staff units (employees), who are currently conducting work on monitoring the condition of the monument and maintaining it in the proper state."¹⁴

Decision of the 42nd session of the World Heritage Committee

Before the 42nd session of the World Heritage Committee, which was held in June-July 2018, the Ecological Society "Green Salvation" sent to the World Heritage Center information on the results of monitoring in 2017 - beginning of 2018. The Committee made a new decision, 16 in which the Committee:

- notes the decisions to re-route the highway outside all protective zones of the hillfort, and requests to provide Details of the preferred option for the Talgar bypass road, showing the precise route and the location of the new bridge, as well as any areas which are to fulfil the functions of demolished buildings, accompanied by a Heritage Impact Assessment;
- reiterates its request to provide details on the dismantling of the bridge over the Talgar River; mitigation measures to address reconstruction work and illegal, uncontrolled residential developments near the boundaries of the Talgar component site; measures to strengthen the legal, planning and management frameworks of the site and its setting.



Experts' visit to the site. November 8, 2016.

Condition of the site

Monitoring of the site in 2018 showed that no drastic improvements were made.¹⁷

1. Buffer zone

Boundaries

The boundaries of the buffer zone are not marked.

Talgar River water protection strip and zone

In the national legislation, there is still no norm which would regulate water protection strips and zones on the monuments of culture included in the World Heritage List.

The bridge and the highway

Since the bridge over the Talgar River is not dismantled, drivers of off-road vehicles and heavy construction machinery equipped a ramp to the bridge from the hillfort, passing through its unfenced part. To the east and southeast of the hillfort, the construction workers repaired the road raising its level. This can lead to negative consequences for the territory of the monument.

Construction development

Construction of residential houses and other structures in the buffer zone continues.

2. The main territory of the site

Boundaries

The boundaries of the World Heritage site are not marked.

Fencing

The fence was partially renovated in 2018 from the northern and eastern sides. From the south-eastern side the old fencing is partially broken or absent. From the southern and western side, there is still no fencing installed. Access to the site by foot or a vehicle from the south, southeast, and west is open.

Informational support

In the first half of the year, the informational stands remained empty. To the middle of the year, all stands except for the one at the entrance, were removed. Only in the second half of the year, the stand by the entrance was filled with information. In the other areas, no informational stands were installed, as of the end of the year.

The area of excavation for the road bed

The area, which was excavated for the road passage and later filled back with dirt, continues to settle. In spring, huge puddles formed in the specified area. In fall,

local residents and, probably, the road construction workers set a pass to the bridge through this area of the hillfort.

Reconstruction

New reconstructions built on the site (entrance group and corner citadel) were severely deteriorated. In summer, reconstruction works started. It ended up being a simple patching of the falling apart entrance group. Construction materials and waste generated during the works was dumped on the territory of the monument. Judging by the reconstruction, it was carried out without any scientific approach.

In the eastern part of the site, new excavations were carried out, as a result of which the rampart was damaged in one more area.

Livestock grazing

In 2018, livestock grazing on the site continued.

<u>Garbage</u>

Household waste is scattered throughout the whole territory. Building structures debris laying around the hillfort for many years are still not removed.



Current condition of the area where the ground was excavated for the road bed. December 16, 2018.

Other structures

Soccer goals were removed. But the water pipeline, which was installed through the territory of the monument many years ago, is still in place. It represents a threat to the integrity of the monument.

Visual attractiveness

Compare to 2017, the visual attractiveness became worse due to the fact that offroaders practically turned the south part of the hillfort into an entertainment arena. The local authorities are either unable to stop these illegal activities, or they turn a blind eye on it.

Preservation

The integrity of the site is threatened by a significant increase in the volume of water flowing through the hillfort. It is possible that the volume has increased due to bursting of a water pipeline which passes through the territory of the monument, or increase in the water level in the stream flowing through the hillfort from south to north. Water erodes the soil, forms huge puddles in the northern part of the site and approaches the old excavations.

Fragmentary fencing and unobstructed access of vehicles to the territory of the hillfort cause a significant damage to the monument.

The process of destruction of the Talgar site of ancient settlement continues. During 2018, the local authorities and the Ministry of Culture and Sports did not organize a proper control over the condition of the site and did not secure its protection. As before, there is a lack of coordination between different branches of power.

Transfer of authority to manage the monument to the State Historical and Cultural Reserve-Museum "Issyk" hasn't lead to a significant improvement of the situation yet.¹⁸

¹ Silk Roads: the Routes Network of Chang'an-Tianshan Corridor: http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1442/.

² The list is approved by a Decree No.119 of the Minister of Culture and Sports of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated on March 30, 2015 (with amendments as of October 24, 2017): http://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc_id=39962306&show_di=1#pos=0;0.

Results of photo monitoring of the Talgar site in 2017 (Ref: 1442: http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1442). The materials are published on the Ecological Society "Green Salvation" website in Russian (http://esgrs.org/?p=19352) and in English (http://esgrs.org/?p=19187). Based on the results of the video monitoring, a short film is produced in Russian language: "Talgar site of ancient settlement is a theater of absurd:" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FWrdpY8KWc4.

⁴ Site of ancient settlement Talgar is in danger! We demand the minister's resignation!: http://esgrs.org/?p=13553.

⁵ Report on the ICOMOS Advisory Mission to Kazakhstan. The Talgar component (S 01-KZ-

- 01) within the serial World Heritage property Silk Roads: the Routes Network of Chang'an-Tianshan Corridor (China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan) (C 1442). 20 to 28 March 2016, p.5: http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1442/documents.
- 6 Report on the ICOMOS..., p.19. "However, the Mission was told that the results of this research presented no evidence of a cultural archaeological layer, which the mission considers rather surprising."
- 7 Report on the ICOMOS..., pp.26-29.
- 8 Report on the ICOMOS..., p.11.
- 9 Decision 40 COM 7B.34: http://whc.unesco.org/en/decisions/6699.
- 10 Ecological Society "Green Salvation" submitted a statement about destruction of the southern part of the hillfort to the World Heritage Center. Report on the Mission to Kazakhstan. Silk Roads: the Routes Network of Chang'an-Tianshan Corridor (China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan) (C 1442), 31 October 9 November 2016. WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE. Forty-first session. Krakow, Poland. 2-12 July 2017, p.47: http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1442/documents.
- 11 Report on the Mission to Kazakhstan. Silk Roads: the Routes Network of Chang'an-Tianshan Corridor (China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan) (C 1442), 31 October 9 November 2016. WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE. Forty-first session. Krakow, Poland. 2-12 July 2017: http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1442/documents.
- 12 Experts recommended authorized bodies of Kazakhstan to "significantly improve the ecological and archeological monitoring systems, with active involvement of public organizations and local communities." Report on the Mission to Kazakhstan. Silk Roads: ... p.12.
- 13 Deputy Inquiry dated on May 2, 2018: http://www.parlam.kz/ru/mazhilis/question-details/15800.
- 14 Reply of the Prime-Minister dated on May 31 to the Deputy Inquiry of May 2, 2018: http://www.parlam.kz/ru/mazhilis/question-details/15800.
- 15 Results of photo monitoring of the Talgar site in 2017 (Ref: 1442: http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1442). The materials are published on the Ecological Society "Green Salvation" website in Russian (http://esgrs.org/?p=19352) and in English (http://esgrs.org/?p=19187).
- 16 Decision 42 COM 7B.5: http://whc.unesco.org/en/decisions/7234/.
- 17 Results of photo monitoring of the Talgar site in 2017 (Ref: 1442: http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1442). The materials are published on the Ecological Society "Green Salvation" website in Russian (http://esgrs.org/?p=19352) and in English (http://esgrs.org/?p=19187). Based on the results of the video monitoring, a short film is produced in Russian language: "Talgar site of ancient settlement is a theater of absurd:" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FWrdpY8KWc4.
- 18 2015-2017 Conservation Report of "SILK WAY: ROUTE NETWORK OF THE CHANGAN TIEN-SHAN CORRIDOR:" of the Republic of Kazakhstan: http://whc.unesco.org/en/soc/3739.

A map showing the main survey points during the monitoring period

- 1. North. Informational stand.
- 2. Entrance.
- 3. Northeast. Tower.
- 4. Residential houses in the buffer zone.
- 5. Southeast. Open access to the hillfort.
- 6. Excavation 2018.
- 7. The area, which was excavated for the road passage and later filled back with dirt, continues to settle.
- 8. The downhill path to the bridge from the hillfort.
- 9. Road across the hillfort equipped by drivers of off-road vehicles and heavy construction machinery.
- 10. Bridge across Talgar River.



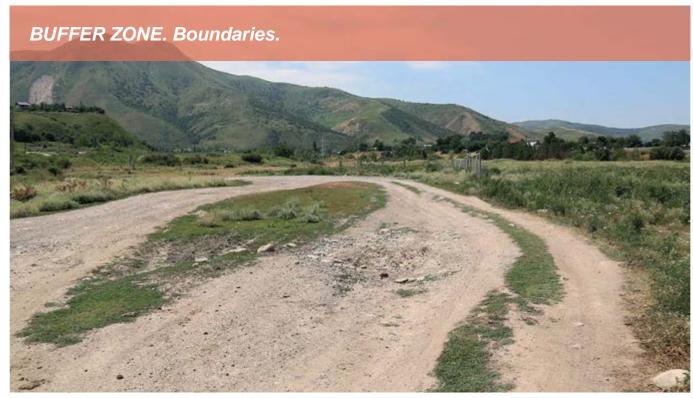
Annex. Photographs.

Results of monitoring of the Talgar world

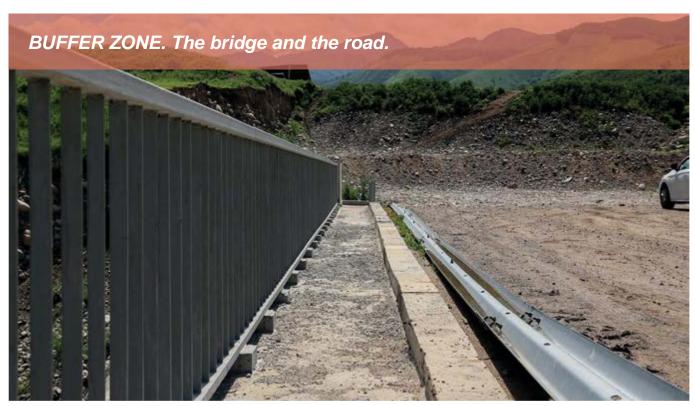
heritage site: March – December 2018.



Buffer zone	
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Picture 1. Condition of the road and fencing around the site. July 6, 2018.



Picture 2. View from the bridge. June 5, 2017.



Picture 3. **Downhill path to the bridge from the hillfort.** July 26, 2018.



Picture 4. View of the bridge from the hillfort. July 26, 2018.



Picture 5. The bridge and the downhill path to it from the hillfort. July 26, 2018.



Picture 6. Vehicles started to drive onto the bridge. September 10, 2018.



Picture 7. Excavated and refilled area in front of the ramp to the bridge. October 30, 2018.



Picture 8. Excavated and refilled area in front of the ramp to the bridge. October 30, 2018.



Picture 9. **Passage from the bridge onto the territory of the hillfort.** October 30, 2018.



Picture 10. Passage from the bridge onto the territory of the hillfort. December 16, 2018.



Picture 11. Passage from the bridge onto the territory of the hillfort. December 16, 2018.



Picture 12. **Passage from the bridge onto the territory of the hillfort.** December 16, 2018.



Picture 13. Construction workers repaired and raised the road from the east and southeast side of the hillfort.

December 16, 2018.



Picture 14. Construction workers repaired and raised the road from the east and southeast side of the hillfort.

December 16, 2018.



Picture 15. Construction workers repaired and raised the road from the east and southeast side of the hillfort.

December 16, 2018.



Picture 16. Construction workers repaired and raised the road from the east and southeast side of the hillfort.

December 16, 2018.



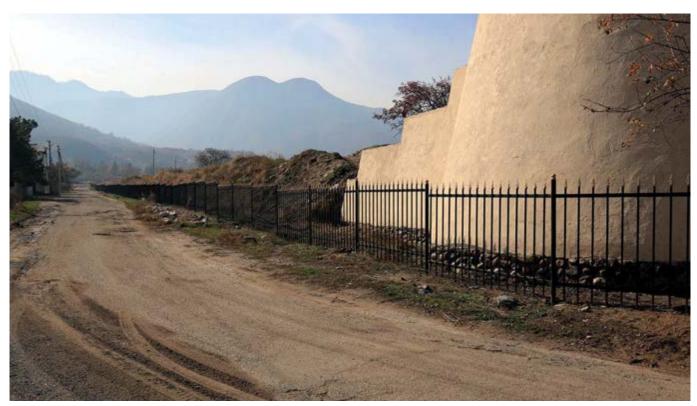
Picture 17. **Old fencing from the east side.** March 4, 2018.



Picture 18. Installation of the new fencing is not completed. September 10, 2018.



Picture 19. Installation of the new fencing is not completed. September 10, 2018.



Picture 20. Installation of the new fencing is not completed. October 30, 2018.



Picture 21. Installation of the new fencing is not completed. October 30, 2018.



Picture 22. **Information board is empty.** March 4, 2018.



Picture 23. Information board is empty. April 17, 2018.



Picture 24. **Broken information board.** June 5, 2018.



Picture 25. **Broken information board.** June 5, 2018.



Picture 26. **Place where there used to be an information board.** July 26, 2018.



Picture 27. Information board is empty. September 10, 2018.



Picture 28. **New information board.** December 16, 2018.



Picture 29. **New information board.** December 16, 2018.

TERRITORY OF THE SITE. Area excavated for the road bed.

Picture 30. Area excavated for the road bed. March 4, 2018.



Picture 31. Area excavated for the road bed. March 4, 2018.



Picture 32. **Area excavated for the road bed.** April 17, 2018.



Picture 33. Area excavated for the road bed. December 16, 2018.



Picture 34. Area excavated for the road bed. December 16, 2018.



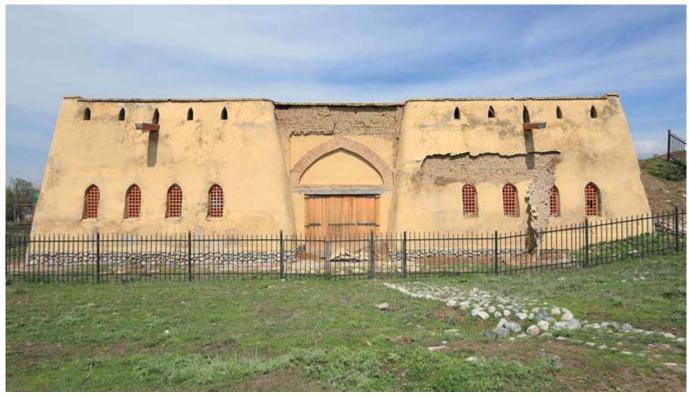
Picture 35. Area excavated for the road bed. December 16, 2018.



Picture 36. **Deteriorating corner tower and rampart that is being washed off.** April 17, 2018.



Picture 37. Washed off rampart where there used to be a pit. April 17, 2018.



Picture 38. **Deteriorating entrance group.** April 17, 2018.



Picture 39. **Deteriorating entrance group and trash.** April 17, 2018.



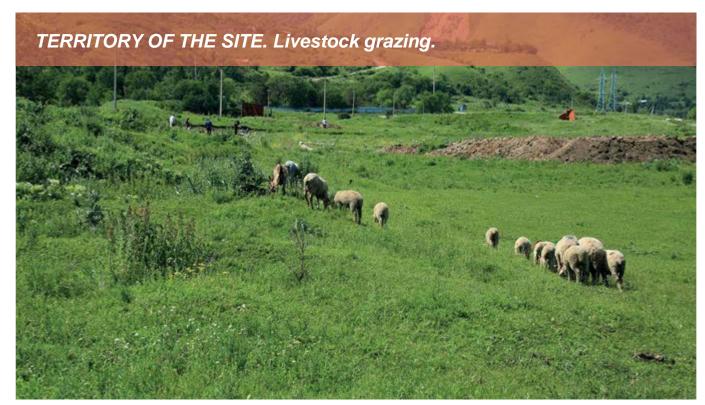
Picture 40. In summer 2018, one more area of the rampart was destroyed. July 26, 2018.



Picture 41. During the reconstruction, the construction materials were dumped on the territory of the hillfort.
September 10, 2018.



Picture 42. **During the reconstruction, the construction materials were dumped on the territory of the hillfort.**September 10, 2018.



Picture 43. Livestock grazing. June 5, 2018.



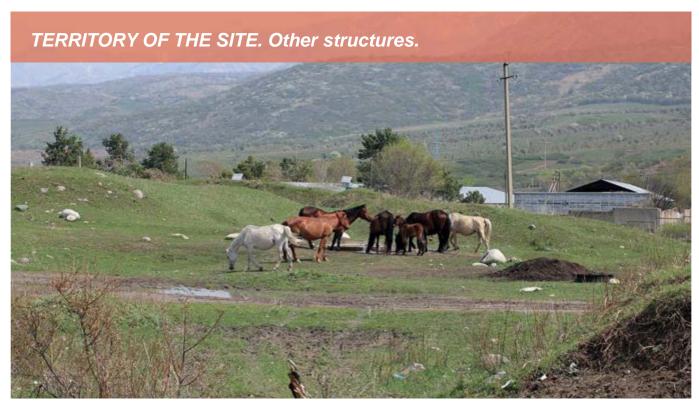
Picture 44. Livestock grazing. July 26, 2018.



Picture 45. Household waste is scattered throughout the whole territory. April 17, 2018.



Picture 46. Pile of garbage at the downhill pass to the bridge. October 30, 2018.



Picture 47. Livestock drinking bowl is set up by the water well. April 17, 2018.

TERRITORY OF THE SITE. Visual attractiveness.

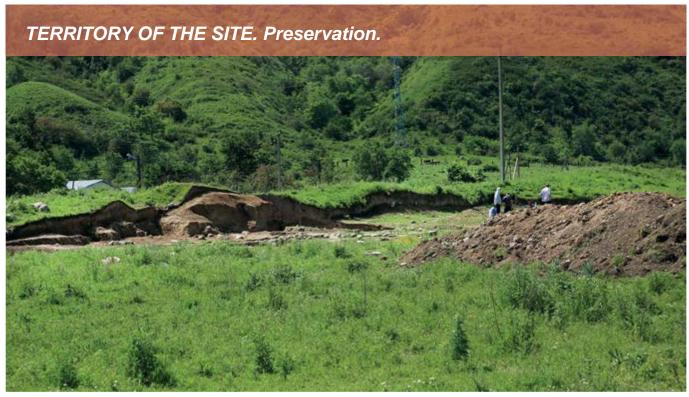
Picture 48. Off-road drivers practically turned the south part of the hillfort into an arena for entertainment.

December 16, 2018.



Picture 49. Off-road drivers practically turned the south part of the hillfort into an arena for entertainment.

December 16, 2018.



Picture 50. Excavated pit, the dirt is dumped onto the hillfort. June 5, 2018.



Picture 51. The water washes off the soil, creates huge puddles in the north part of the monument, and approaches the old excavations.

October 30, 2018.



Picture 52. The water washes off the soil, creates huge puddles in the north part of the monument.

October 30, 2018.



Picture 53. The water washes off the soil, creates huge puddles in the north part of the monument.

October 30, 2018.



Picture 54. The water washes off the soil, creates huge puddles in the north part of the monument.

October 30, 2018.



Picture 55. The ground is washed off in the central part of the hillfort. December 16, 2018.



Picture 56. Condition of the excavation pits of 2018. December 16, 2018.



Picture 57. Condition of the excavation pits of 2018. December 16, 2018.



The Ecological Society "Green Salvation" will continue monitoring the condition of the Talgar site.