

# Uzbekistan, National report, 2021

## Monitoring of the ecological condition of Lake Dengizkul

Dengizkul Lake is the first wetland that was nominated to the Ramsar List and received this international status in 2003. Since 2010 LUKOIL Operating Company LLC started intensive development of gas fields around the lake. Understanding the importance of preserving the ecological balance, the company has been annually monitoring biodiversity (winter aspect of ornithofauna, spring and autumn aspect of vegetation and vertebrates) and environmental monitoring (water, soil, atmosphere) since 2012.

Along with monitoring activities LUKOIL Operating Company LLC developed a Management Plan to preserve the biodiversity of Lake Dengizkul. As part of the plan implementation, saxauls were restored, mostly after being destroyed by the local population. In 2017, to maintain the water level in the lake, which was constantly changing and unstable, a dam was built separating the main water area from the small lake in the northwestern part. Thanks to the hydraulic structure, there has been a stabilization of the lake's water balance since 2018, and the watered areas in the northwestern part of the lake have become a concentration of birds, both during the winter and migration periods, and during the nesting period. Thus, the reservoir has not lost its importance for waterfowl.



Figure 1 - Winter surveys at Dengizkul Lake      Figure 2 - Spring surveys at Dengizkul Lake

All reports are annually agreed and submitted to the State Committee for Ecology of the Republic of Uzbekistan and are available to the Ramsar Convention focal point for analysis. *However, here we should point out the peculiarity of these studies, aimed exclusively at analyzing the impact of oil and gas operations on the reservoir, in connection with which there is a need for a comprehensive assessment of the reservoir, according to the requirements of the Convention.*

## COORDINATION OF ACTIONS ON RAMSAR CONVENTION IMPLEMENTATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN CONSIDERING COMMON APPROACHES OF RRI-CA IN 2019-2021

### 1. Coordination and cooperation:

As everyone is well aware, the end of 2019 and the following years 2020 and 2021 were marked by the COVID-19 pandemic, due to which, all mass events were held in compressed formats or were cancelled altogether. However, after receiving the Terms of Reference for the implementation of the Ramsar Convention under the RRI-CA contract, the project action plan was included in the working strategy of the State Committee on Environmental Protection of the Republic of Uzbekistan on international conventions in the field of nature protection, which was approved by the First Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Uzbekistan A.J. Romatov on 24.10.2020. These actions made it possible to promptly obtain the necessary information at the interdepartmental level for the preparation

of nominations of new wetlands, as well as for as well as for the development of points in the State Environmental Monitoring Program.

### **Inclusion of wetland monitoring into the State Environmental Monitoring Program**

In order to obtain up-to-date data on the ecological condition of wetlands with the status of Ramsar territories, or planned for inclusion, it is necessary to have the updated data. In this regard, two items were separately identified in the preparation of the Environmental Monitoring Program in the Republic of Uzbekistan for 2021-2025.

In the Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On further improvement of the system to assess the level of environmental pollution" № 343 of 3.06.2021, Appendix 1 prescribes several points on conducting research on Ramsar sites and potential (proposed) for inclusion in the Ramsar List of wetlands in 2021-2025 under the State Environmental Monitoring Program:

Item 34: "Monitoring of biodiversity (flora and fauna, ichthyofauna) of Lake Dengizkul (Bukhara oblast), Aydar-Arnasay lake system (Jizzak and Navoi oblasts), Tudakul and Kuyumazar reservoirs (Navoi oblast)";

Item 42 "Monitoring of waterfowl migration in important ornithological areas of the Republic of Karakalpakstan (Aktepa lake system, Jiltirbas, Sudochie and Sarkamysh lakes)".

## **2. Promoting the effective conservation and wise use of existing and future Ramsar Sites in the country and CA regionрегионе**

### **Conducting an independent assessment of the condition of Lake Dengizkul**

In January 2020, a comprehensive independent assessment of Lake Dengizkul was conducted under a contract with RRI-CA. The assessment collected information on threats and social aspects of resource use of Lake Dengizkul and the surrounding area. Winter waterfowl surveys were conducted. The result of the assessment was a report, which is widely used in Uzbekistan by both governmental and commercial organizations. The assessment methodology used in these studies fully complies with international standards, and is used in the preparation of nomination lists for Ramsar sites.



Figure 12 - Experts on Dengizkul Lake (January 15, 2020) Figure 13 - Detention of poachers on Dengizkul Lake during a field trip

### **3. Communication and awareness, and capacity building:**

During the reporting period, since August 2019, several meetings were held with responsible ministries and agencies in the field of Ramsar sites, as well as with regional representatives of the departments of ecology and environmental protection in the Republic of Uzbekistan.

As mentioned above, there were no mass and active meetings with local residents because of the pandemic. The scheduled public hearings on the construction of the nuclear power plant on Lake Tuzkan were postponed until the spring of 2022.

The most fruitful was a face-to-face meeting on February 2, 2021 at the General Directorate of Biodiversity and Protected Areas. Both agency representatives and energy companies working on the Ramsar Sites participated in the meeting.

The experience of LUKOIL Operating Company LLC in developing the Biodiversity Conservation Management Plan for Dengizkul Lake for the new facility around the NPP at Tuzkan Lake was very fruitful.



Figure 15 - Participation of the Chairman of the State Committee for Environmental Protection in the meeting (February 02, 2021).



Figure 16 - General photo from the meeting on February 2, 2021.

### Preparation of information materials and calendars in 2021

A banner "Ramsar Sites of Uzbekistan", a banner "February 2 - International Wetlands Day" and a calendar for 2021 "Wetlands of Uzbekistan" were prepared with funds received from the Convention Secretariat for the Ramsar Regional Initiative of Central Asia in the Republic of Uzbekistan. These materials were used during the Wetlands Day anniversary celebration, and the calendars were widely distributed to local structural units at wetlands all over Uzbekistan.



Figure 17 - Poster "February 2 - World Wetlands Day".



Figure 18 - Poster "Ramsar Sites of Uzbekistan".

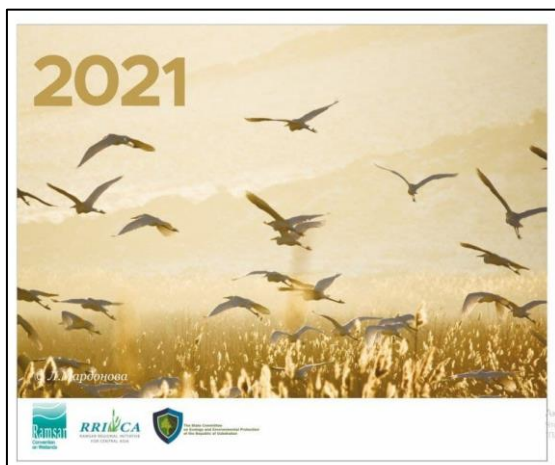


Figure 19 - Cover of the calendar for 2021, prepared with the support of RRI-CA



Figure 20 - page of the 2021 calendar, prepared with the support of RRI-CA

#### 4. Resources Mobilization:

##### **Inclusion of the Tudakul and Kuyumazar reservoirs in the list of Ramsar sites**

The final stage of activity of the Republic of Uzbekistan in 2020 was the final nomination and inclusion of two important water reservoirs for wintering waterfowl - the Tudakul and Kuyumazar Reservoirs - into the list of Ramsar Sites. Preparation for this nomination was started in 2011 as part of the Ramsar Convention small grants program, but for technical reasons was not completed by its initiators until 8 years later. Nevertheless, since August 19, 2020 there are 3 wetlands included in the list of Ramsar sites in Uzbekistan.

##### **Preparation of the RSIS on Lake Zhylytyrbas**

In September 2020, an expedition was conducted to the wetlands of the Southern Priaralie in order to obtain up-to-date data on the economic, social and environmental situation, which will be used in the preparation of the RSIS. To date, the draft of such a sheet on Lake Zhylytyrbas is ready and sent to the relevant ministries and departments for approval. Work is underway to coordinate the area of the new Ramsar site with the Ministry of Forestry and the Regional Society of Hunters, as some of their area falls within the area of the planned site.

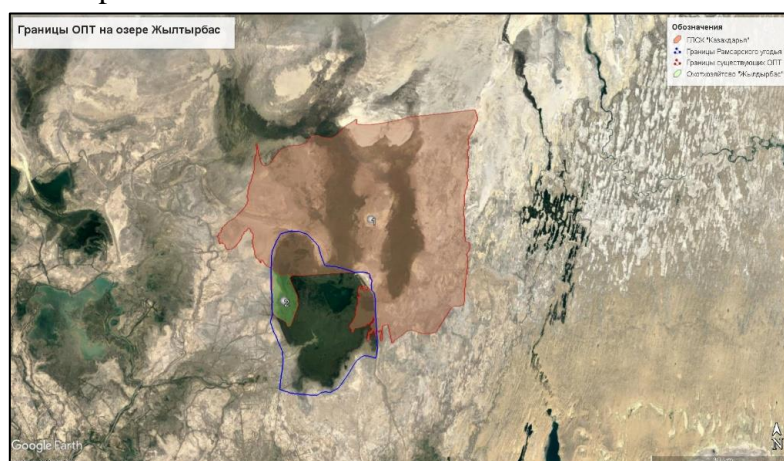


Figure 22 - Intersection of the area of the planned site "Lake Zhylytyrbas" and SPNA (Specially Protected National Area) of regional importance