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XI

Таних тэмдэг

Сүмсний төв
БЦГ-ын хилийн цэг
Улсын хил
Сүмсний хил
Хөгжлэлийн БЦГ-ын хил
Өндөгтэй бус
Алхах  жүүлсэн бус
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Хөгжлэлийн дүүрсэн зохион байгуулагч: Д. Энхтайван (PhD) / ШУА, Газаргүйн хүүхэлдэг /
Төөн хөлбөрт хөрөгчүс: Э. Одбатар / ШУА, Газаргүйн хүүхэлдэг/

Зураагийг зохиосон:
Д. Энхтайван (PhD) / ШУА, Газаргүйн хүүхэлдэг /
Төөн хөлбөрт хөрөгчүс: Э. Одбатар / ШУА, Газаргүйн хүүхэлдэг/

Масштаб 1:200 000

Хөгжлэлийн БЦГ-ын хилийн заагийн зураг

Хөвсгөл аймаг
Lake Hovsgol National Park General Management Plan 2012
VISITOR SERVICES SECTION
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General Management Plan 2012
Visitor Services Section

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this General Management Plan is to set forth clear direction for the management of Lake Hovsgol National Park. The plan consists of four separate sections:

- Foundation Document
- Transportation Section
- Visitor Services Section
- Interpretation and Education Section

Background

Southern Portion of Lake Hovsgol – Access and Services

Most visitors to the park spend their time in the southern portions of the lake, and enter the park through the south entrance at Hatgal. Many of these visitors take scheduled flights to Murun, thus avoiding the long two-day drive from Ulaanbaatar.

Construction work to pave the road from Murun to Hatgal is expected to be completed by 2013. Additionally, the airport in Hatgal is being reconstructed with completion scheduled in 2013. It is clear to all, that once these projects are completed, visitation to the southern portions of Lake Hovsgol National Park will increase dramatically, perhaps three or four times the present numbers.

The existing network of roads in this area is limited to the established roadways around town and a graded dirt road that extends from Hatgal to the park boundary near Jankhai Pass and northward along the west side of the lake; this road ends about 35 km north of Hatgal. The Huzuuvch - Dood Modot Corner area, a five km stretch of lakeshore and ger camps immediately north of Hatgal, is accessible to vehicles on an unimproved and very rough route along the southern shore of the lake.

A variety of accommodations for visitors are available in Hatgal, the southern gateway town of about 3,000 permanent residents. The town was removed from within the boundary of the park by virtue of a boundary adjustment passed in 2011. In addition to overnight accommodations, a variety of supplies, recreation equipment, outfitters, communications, and the park’s visitor center are found here.

Just outside of Hatgal, on the road to Murun, a staffed entrance station or “post” has been established to collect park entrance fees and give visitors a one-page park handout and a garbage bag to pack out their litter.

Within the entire park, accommodation for visitors is available at 30 - 35 permitted ger camps and guest houses. Many of the ger camps offer three meals/day. The great majority of these facilities are clustered along the Westside road approximately 20 km to 30 km from Hatgal. Two are located approximately 30 km from Hatgal along the unimproved road that skirts the east side of the lake. While some of the ger camps own boats and offer access to their camps over water from Hatgal, most visitors choose to go by car.
Northern Portion of Lake Hovsgol National Park-Access and Services

Virtually all visitors to the northern portion of the lake enter by traveling across the Mongolian/Russian border, about 30 km north of the village of Hankh. Except by special arrangement, that crossing is open only during week days and is restricted to Mongolian nationals and Russian citizens with visas. Cross border traffic also provides for commercial transportation of goods between Hankh and larger Russian cities to the north. Because the road between the north and south portions of the park is poor, Mongolian visitors tend to remain at the southern end of the lake; over 99% of visitors to the northern shores of the lake come from Russia. Most visitor use is in and around the village of Hankh, (population approximately 2,400), the only significant village with services in the northern portion of the park. As in and around Hatgal, a large area around Hankh was removed from the park in 2011 to allow for community growth. Basic supplies and several ger camps are available in and around Hankh, both inside and outside the park. The only place where visitor contact occurs in this area is at the park entrance post co-located with border authorities on the trans-border road. Fee collection and basic verbal information from the duty ranger occurs at this entrance post. There is no written information or maps available by the park staff. Some selected local information can be obtained from individual ger camps; but that is very limited and usually offered only in the Russian language.

There has long been discussion to open this Mongolia/Russia border crossing to all international travelers. A significant increase in the number of visitors to the northern portion of Lake Hovsgol National Park can be expected should this change be implemented.

The northern portion of the park is also accessible via a very primitive and notoriously bumpy road around the east side of the lake. At the present time, few visitors make the 10 to 12 hour drive. There are no visitor facilities along this route. Much of it is located in the Special Zone of the park where construction of visitor facilities is not permitted.

The Mongolian Parliament has directed evaluation of a possible new road to be constructed around the west side of the lake. Most local people and others knowledgeable about this potential route suggest that costs and devastation to the environment would be so drastic that it does not yet seem appropriate to address potential visitor recreation that might follow completion of such a road.

The Mongolian Parliament has directed evaluation of a possible new road to be constructed around the west side of the lake. Most local people and others knowledgeable about this potential route suggest that costs and devastation to the environment would be so drastic that it does not yet seem appropriate to address potential visitor recreation that might follow completion of such a road.
THE VISITOR

Visitors to Lake Hovsgol National Park fall generally into three categories:
1. Domestic visitors from beyond the Hovsgol aimag.
2. Local visitors from within the Hovsgol aimag.
3. International visitors.

Domestic visitors are primarily residents of Mongolia and drive their own vehicles to the park while on holiday. They may stay at ger camps or guest houses, but often camp in tents. Visitor counts and ger camp surveys indicate that this visitor sector is growing rapidly. Local people often visit just for the day and are relatively self-contained.

Most international visitors travel to the park via a commercial tour company or some type of packaged tour to accommodate language translation and transportation needs. Most tour operators have established relationships with local accommodations and horse guide/outfitter services either within the park or adjacent to it. A few tour operators own and/or manage their own ger camps.

There is also a small but growing number of independent international travelers who arrange their own itineraries and logistical needs. This group relies more heavily on written maps and guidebook information to plan routes, accommodations, and recreational activities.

Lake Hovsgol National Park Visitation 2004 - 2012

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Visitation statistics provided by Lake Hovsgol National Park administration staff.
Most visitors come to the park with the expectation that they will participate in some type of recreational activity related to park resources such as hiking, boating, sightseeing, and nature study. An official park brochure with a map of designated trails, as well as signing at the trail head and intersections is needed to fill that need and provide for a quality visitor experience.
Number of Visitors

Park administration sources report that approximately 20,000 domestic and local visitors and approximately 4,000 international visitors came to the park in 2011. Fee payments at the park entrance at Hankh indicate that about 700 visitors drove down from Russia by mid-August, 2012. Similar counts at Hatgal show approximately 3,000 international visitors entering the park in 2012.

While international bookings to the park were down in 2012, several ger camp managers indicated that substantially more domestic Mongolian visitors are staying in higher-end accommodations than in the past. This could be an indicator of a growing Mongolian economy coupled with a downturn of the global economy. By one estimate, total visitors to the park may double between 2011 and 2012.

Currently, there does not appear to be any comprehensive or coordinated program to develop visitor use projections and integrate such projections with design and development of infrastructure needs.

Visitors of all ages look for activities during their time in the park. They may bring their own, such as ball games, small boats and fishing gear, etc., or they may look to the park to provide other recreational opportunities and interpretive programs.
Current Conditions - Policies, Standards, and Recommended Actions

The various laws and resolutions pertinent to strictly protected areas in Mongolia, generally, require that natural and cultural resources of these special places be protected and preserved. The laws and resolutions that established and have expanded the boundaries of Lake Hovsgol National Park likewise clearly demand that the resources and waters of the park be preserved. These laws also, however, recognize that opportunities for visitor recreation be provided, specifically mentioning trails, boating, and hiking. In essence, visitor enjoyment of park resources is a fundamental purpose of the park.

Accordingly, standards and recommendations for each of the various visitor services and activities set forth in this section shall be based upon:

1. Permit only those developments and activities that are sustainable and do not cause unacceptable harm to park resources. Unacceptable impacts are those that would:
   a. Be inconsistent with a park’s purpose or values, or
   b. Prevent achievement of the park’s vision or desired future conditions, or
   c. Reduce or eliminate opportunities for other visitors to enjoy, learn about, or be inspired by park resources or values, or
   d. Unreasonably interfere with the atmosphere of peace, tranquility, and the natural quiet that has long characterized Lake Hovsgol and the surrounding landscape.

2. All visitor development/activities must be actively managed and monitored, which may include restrictions on the amount, time, and place applicable to any form of authorized recreation.

3. Scientific knowledge of natural and cultural resources sufficient to understand potential impacts of recreational activities and to mitigate such impacts through visitor education and establishment of rules and regulations that may limit amount, kind, time, and place where various recreational activities may be allowed.

4. Collaboration and communication with partners, including other government entities (aimag and soums), ger camp owners, international tour operators, local residents, and other interested individuals and groups.

Quality of the Visitor Experience

Critical to visitor management in Lake Hovsgol National Park is the quality of the visitor experience. Achievement of such an experience is based on a variety of factors including visitor expectations, existing park information and facilities, safety, a diversity of recreational opportunities, quality of the private commercial permitted facilities (mainly ger camps and guest houses) within the park, and private guide and equipment rentals. Equally important is the general appearance of the natural landscape of the park. Do dusty or poor roads spoil views and physical comfort? Is the view cluttered with too many ger camps and guest houses? Are views of the lake and beyond spoiled by illegal camping and cars randomly parked along the lake or everywhere? In essence, does Lake Hovsgol look and feel like a national park?
On-site evaluation of the visitor use areas in the Huzuuvch - Dood Modot corner area, and especially along the Westside road north from Jankhai Pass indicates that unplanned development of low-end ger camps and guest houses, spaced randomly amidst the homes of nomadic herder families and their domestic animals, is creating a chaotic and unattractive viewshed for visitors.

The deterioration of a quality visitor experience and satisfaction along this route can be attributed to:

- Increasing and unplanned density and lack of space between ger camps and herder camps.
- Obstruction of views and impacts on the visual landscape.
- Inadequate number, location, and maintenance of designated camping areas.
- Uncontrolled camping outside designated areas, often adjacent to the lakeshore.
- Lack of established car parking areas for day-use activities, including picnicking.
- Illegal use of fire leaving unsightly fire-rings and litter.

All visitors to Lake Hovsgol National Park should KNOW that they are in a national park. They should know and appreciate the significance and value of the lake and the natural and cultural resources supported by the landscape around it. And, by virtue of establishment and enforcement of standards for roads, trails, buildings, ger camps, guest house, signs, and visitor behavior, visitors should be able to see and feel that the park is special and different.
Management actions necessary to improve the quality of visitor experiences include:

1. Clear and distinct (English and Mongolian – and Russian in the northern portion) entrance signs should be placed at each place where an established road crosses the boundary and visitors enter the park.

2. Every visitor should be provided with an official park brochure that includes basic information about the significance of the park, a park map, a listing of recreational opportunities available to them, regulations, safety considerations, etc. Such brochures should be available at entrance posts, ger camps, the visitor center, and other places where visitors congregate. Such brochures should be available in English, Mongolian, and Russian languages. Additional information should be available on panels and wayside exhibits located around the park as described in the Interpretation and Education Section of the General Management Plan 2012.

3. All appropriate laws, regulations, and approved national policies regarding location and management of ger camps are routinely, fairly, and predictably enforced, with penalties and permit revocation a clearly understood consequence of violation.

4. If necessary, additional basic standards should be established and enforced for all overnight accommodations.

5. Park roads, parking areas, signs, trails, entrance stations, and other structures will be designed and maintained in a fashion that reflects, in appearance, the traditions of the region and purpose and themes of the park.

6. Park rangers, at least when assigned to the developed areas of the park, will wear a distinct uniform so that they can be recognized as a source of information, assistance, and enforcement.

7. Surveys will be developed and implemented from time to time to determine visitor expectations and evaluation of visitor services provided in the park.
Enforcement of Laws and Regulations

An essential component of a successful visitor service management program is an effective law enforcement program. Based upon personal observations and discussions with ger camp owners, tour operators, local residents, and others, it is apparent that enforcement of laws and regulations at Lake Hovsgol National Park is not effective. This is especially true in the so-called “front-country,” the areas around the lake where visitors congregate during the summer season. While it appears that the very limited ranger staff gives a high priority and substantial focus and energy to the prevention of poaching of fish and wildlife in the undeveloped portions of the park, it likewise appears that lower priority and less attention is given to routine and predictable enforcement of basic prohibitions on illegal camping, inappropriate parking, sanitation laws, etc. in developed areas.

Answers to questions about authority (“who” is entitled to enforce laws) and jurisdiction (“where” rangers have such authority) are unclear. A few rangers (also labeled “inspectors”) have full authority to issue citations; other rangers cannot do so and therefore are deprived of this essential tool to be effective in their work. It is also unclear how authority to establish and enforce laws and regulations is divided or shared among the Federal government, aimag government, and soum governments.

Recommended Actions:

1. A culture of education and routine, fair, and effective enforcement of all existing laws and regulations will be established.
2. Presence of ranger patrols in developed areas – and also in the undeveloped areas of the park will be substantially increased by virtue of increased staff and more effective scheduling.
3. Rangers will receive training and equipment necessary to carry out their responsibilities in a fully professional fashion.
4. Questions regarding authority and jurisdiction, and current constraints on the enforcement authority of some rangers will be eliminated to the extent possible.
5. Uniforms standards will be adopted and rangers – especially those working at fee collection posts and in developed areas – will be recognizable as sources of assistance and enforcement.
6. Formal and informal agreements will be established with aimag, soum, and other Federal law enforcement organizations to assure full understanding of respective responsibilities and the best possible collaboration among limited staff.

Fee Collection

Visitors to Lake Hovsgol National Pak should be required to pay a fee that can be used to, in part, contribute to the services available to them in the park. Generally, and as now occurring, entrance fees should be collected at appropriate locations where visitors enter the northern and southern ends of the park.
The ranger stationed at the south end entry post collects fees, distributes a one-page information handout, and provides a plastic trash bag for visitors to collect their own trash and deposit it upon departing the park.
Standards and policies set for collection of fees should provide for:

1. Reflecting the very substantial needs to bring more revenue to park operations as well as to pay for the costs of fee collection structures and staff assigned to this activity.
2. In addition to collection of fees, entrance stations should also be a place where visitors receive information (brochures, information panels, etc.) about the park.
3. Independent fee collection structures should be constructed that are attractive, inviting in appearance, and reflect the architectural themes established for the park.
4. Every effort should be made to modify existing laws so that fees collected remain in the park and are available to spend on capital or recurring operational needs of the park.
5. Groups and individuals who enter the park for activities not related to recreational activities should not have to pay the entrance fee. In order to assure consistency, such exemptions should be listed in writing, and may include:
   • Nomadic families who live in or around the park.
   • Residents of soums and bags located within the park.
   • Those conducting pre-approved research projects.
   • Access to medical or related needs.
   • Those conducting government business at Federal, aimag, or soum level.

NOTE: During the summer of 2012, entrance fees were 3,000 tugrugs for foreigners and 300 tugrugs for Mongolians.
VISITOR ACTIVITIES and SERVICES

Sight-Seeing and Nature Study

Feedback from tour operators, ger camp managers, visitors, and guides overwhelmingly indicate that most visitors come to Lake Hovsgol National Park to enjoy nature in a contemplative fashion. Birding, photography, painting, and simply sightseeing are widely recognized as the most popular and most sustainable ways that visitors enjoy the park. Such nature-based recreation is complementary to the vision and long-term desired future conditions established for the park; it is complementary to the legislated purposes of the park; it does not interfere with opportunities for other visitors to enjoy and appreciate the park in their own ways; and such activities do not threaten the integrity of natural and cultural resources.

We urge that all messages, communication, and marketing regarding Lake Hovsgol National Park focus on the many opportunities for nature-based recreation available in the park.

Ger Camps and Guest Houses

Generally, ger camps are those accommodations that consist of a grouping of (numbers range from a few to more than two dozen) gers arranged around a complex that usually includes buildings where meals are served, and sometimes include showers and western toilets. Guest houses are normally less well developed, sometimes established by nomadic families, where visitors are provided with little more a bed inside a ger and traditional primitive toilet facilities.

Such camps are clearly the traditional and most appealing means of accommodating guests to the park. The quality and levels of service at such camps vary widely, and range from very primitive family managed accommodations to those that offer luxury bedrooms, toilets, showers, restaurant/bar services and varied recreational opportunities. Prices range from a few US dollars/night up to $100/night, although $60 - $70/night seems the average for full service ger camps. Booking arrangements vary widely; the most successful camps have access to international tour partners. All operate at peak during a short summer season; a few camps are available for winter visitors.

There are a variety of camps and guest lodges outside the park in and around the town of Hatgal. Most of these offer limited to moderate level services because more affluent visitors choose to stay at one of the dozen full service camps established along the shore of the lake. Visitors to the ger camps and guest houses in Hatgal come mostly from Mongolia, although budget travelers from abroad stay in town as well.

Around the southern portion of the lake, clusters of ger camps have been established in three areas. On the southeast shore, approximately 20 km north of Hatgal, three full-service ger camps have been established. These camps are widely spaced, provide good and full-service accommodations, and are located in otherwise pristine, undeveloped, and very scenic landscape adjacent to the shore of the lake. For these reasons, this general area is the target of additional investment in high-end accommodations.
A second cluster of five moderate-level and one luxury level ger camps has been established along a very primitive route along the lakeshore in the Huzuuvch area, which is located a few km directly north of Hatgal. All but one of these camps is located inside the park boundary. The “road” to these camps is simply terrible, and most of the camps offer boat service to clients for more comfortable transport between Hatgal and their camp.

The greatest number of ger camps and guest houses has been developed along the south-western shore of the lake. Beginning about 15 km from Hatgal and extending for some 15 km north to the terminus of an improved (but unpaved) road, where over two dozen ger camps and guest houses offer a great variety of accommodations. Mixed among these commercial camps are more than a dozen private and mostly seasonal nomadic family camps, hundreds of domestic animals wandering about, and uncontrolled tent camping. As a consequence, scenic qualities are compromised, pollution to the lake is occurring, and there is the perception of uncontrolled and unplanned growth.

At the present time, occupancy levels of ger camps and guest houses vary widely. Full service and moderately-priced camps surpassed 80% capacity during the summer of 2012, while a few camps that appeared over-priced, or offered limited services, averaged less that 50% bed capacity during the same period. In and around the community of Hankh, outside the park, there are several full-service ger camps; two or three additional camps offer more primitive services and no meals. Virtually all visitors to these camps come from Russia and speak only Russian. There are also two ger camps and several family-owned guest houses located in the north portion of the park.

The current location, number, size, and level of services available at all of these ger camps and guest houses appear to be the result of individual owner/managers seizing commercial development opportunities rather than the result of any level of planning. While many of the camps are located at legal or greater distance from the waters edge, several are located in clear violation of the law. While a few of the full service camps have individually managed and functional systems for catching and removing sewage and garbage, many have pit toilets and other primitive facilities that invariably result in pollution of the lake.

Permits are issued for five years by the Ministry of Environment and Green Development in Ulaanbaatar and can be revoked only at that level. Authority and jurisdiction to enforce established laws and regulations, especially regarding setbacks from the lake and sewage removal seem split and dysfunctional.

Proposed policies/standards for management of ger camps and guest houses

1. Ger camps and guest houses will be permitted only when there is a determination that such a service is necessary and appropriate for resources preservation and a quality visitor experience.
2. Establishment of ger camps and guest houses will be permitted only to the extent that such facilities and activities do not cause unacceptable impacts to natural or cultural resources or to the quality of overall visitor experiences.
3. Establishment of ger camps and guest houses will be authorized through issuance of a permit unless otherwise authorized by law.
4. The term of such a permit will normally be five years.
5. Upon expiration a permit may be renewed provided that the permittee has complied with all applicable laws, regulations, and established conditions.
6. All structures that support commercial services will be minimal in size and fully integrated with the natural and cultural landscape of the park. Structures will be designed to harmonize with traditional practices in terms of proportion, color, texture, construction materials, etc.
7. Ger Camps and related commercial services will be approved for locations consistent with established zones and only in locations that the park determines to be appropriate for their intended purposes.
8. Minimum standards of service and appearance for all commercial ger camps and guest houses will be established and enforced. Permits for camps that do not or cannot meet such standards will not be renewed.
9. All commercial services that operate in the park will train their employees and, through their facilities and services and will instill in their guests an appreciation of the purpose and significance of the park. Such information, and interpretation where appropriate, will be consistent with the vision, long-term desired future conditions, and interpretive themes established for the park.
10. Merchandise, especially souvenir items, sold in ger camps and other in-park sites will reflect the nature and spiritual values of park. Theme related merchandise that is handcrafted or manufactured in Mongolia, or especially in the immediate vicinity of the park, is encouraged.
11. Sale of any merchandise in violation of Mongolia or local laws and regulations is not permitted. Sale of items that might be inconsistent with local religious beliefs and culture may also be prohibited. The sale of original objects, artifacts, or specimens of a historic, archeological, paleontological, or biological nature is prohibited.
12. Ger camps incorporate sustainable principles of design, location, construction, and maintenance.
13. Planting for purposes of revegetation or landscape enhancement around ger camps and other commercial services will be done with native species or plants that are historically consistent with local cultures and traditions.
14. No building in the park should be more than two levels in height.
Recommended actions to implement proposed policies/standards and improve management of ger camps and guest houses:

1. The park must soon launch an intensive initiative to ensure that all sewage is removed from all permitted ger camps and guest houses in a timely manner and consistent with established law and regulations. Costs for this service will be shared with client ger camps and guest houses.

2. Programs to remove sewage and garbage must be supported by delegation of authority to local rangers and inspectors to issue citations for violations as appropriate. Should illegal practices continue, decisive and timely action should be expected and implemented to close a ger camp until actions necessary to properly remove sewage are developed and implemented.

3. Establish and carry out a comprehensive program of recurring inspections that are perceived as independent, predictable, and fair, and result in appropriate consequences when violations are detected.

4. Establish minimum standards for ger camps and guest houses permitted in the park in terms of appearance, levels of service, infrastructure, etc.

5. Launch a program to relocate those permitted ger camps that are constructed less than the legal distance from the shoreline of the lake. Such actions should be immediate where
sewage and garbage disposal violate existing laws. Or, where disposal of sewage is in compliance with existing laws, and substantial investment may be required to move, relocation may be delayed until an existing permit expires and before a new permit is issued.

6. Establish a firm ceiling on the number and location of ger camps permitted in the existing areas where such camps have already been established. These areas should be clearly mapped to set forth where new camps may be established. Based upon the goals of resources preservation and assurance of a quality of experience, the total number and general areas where ger camps are located should not exceed existing distribution.

7. Clearly determine and set forth on a map all remaining areas around the lake as places where permission to build a ger camp and guest house will be denied.

8. Work with the communities of Hatgal and Hankh to plan development of a range of quality ger camps, restaurants, and other services outside the park that meet the desires of wealthy international travelers, domestic travelers, and especially more budget conscious visitors. These communities should become the host of the influx of new visitors expected when paved access roads and restoration of the airport in Hatgal are completed.

9. Establish and implement architectural and design standards to assure that new and existing ger camps complement in size and appearance the cultural and natural themes of the park.

10. Develop and implement a program that provides opportunity and assurance that all ger camps make available to visitors comprehensive information about park significance, values, orientation, safety considerations, and appropriate behavior.

11. Require, or strongly emphasize need to do so, employment of local people in the commercial ger camps. Provide basic training to ger camp managers and especially locally hired staff to assure quality service and capacity to communicate essential information about the park.
Camping

Camping is rapidly becoming one of the most popular visitor activities in the park. It is also becoming one of the greatest challenges in terms of managing visitor use and preserving the pristine values of the park, especially water quality of the lake. The damage caused by uncontrolled camping will increase rapidly as road access improves and significantly more Mongolian people drive to the park and choose a low-budget way to spend the night.

Tent camping is especially popular along the road that skirts the west side of the lake. Five sites have been signed as designated campgrounds. These very primitive camps include a pit toilet located some distance from the lake. Because enforcement of the requirement that all campers stay in one of these designated camping areas appears to range from very limited to non-existent, however, most campers ignore the rules and erect their tents immediately adjacent to the lakeshore. Failure to control such illegal camping along the shoreline contributes to unsightly clutter of cars, tents, etc. along this stretch of road, and inevitably results in pollution of the lake—a major problem.

In the northern portions of the park, tent camping by Russian visitors is likewise become a popular activity. In the absence of designated campgrounds in that area, camps are increasingly set up immediately adjacent to the lakeshore.

When campsites and parking areas are not clearly designated, visitors tend to park wherever they desire. This often causes resource damage and diminishes the quality of the visitor experience.
Recommendations to improve camping:

1. All camping must be restricted to designated campgrounds that meet the following criteria:
   a. They must be located on high ground and set back at least 200 meters from the lake.
   b. There must be safe and easy access for vehicles to access and park alongside sites where tents and a family camp are placed.
   c. There must be a well constructed and maintained toilet that is placed at a reasonable distance from where campsites are established.
   d. Each designated campground must be signed (most now are) with prominent and attractive signs in both Mongolia and English language (Russian in the north part of the park).
   e. To avoid conflict with a different user group, designated campgrounds should be established some distance (several hundred meters) away from ger camps.
   f. Consideration should be given to establishing a separate designated campground for large groups.
   g. Garbage containers and regular (at whatever intervals is needed) removal of garbage should be part of every campground.

2. An informal and inexpensive handout describing (perhaps on a map) the location of designated campgrounds and the rules that apply to camping should be made available at entrance posts, visitor centers, and other places where visitors might gather information about their stay in the park. Such a handout should be in Mongolian and English languages, and Russian for distribution in the north portion of the park.

3. A very active and assertive program of enforcement must be established and effectively implemented to assure that campers who set up tents and camps outside the designated sites, especially along the lakeshore, are required to relocate their camps to the designated campgrounds. Rangers performing this function must have authority to write citations that result in penalties for violators who do not comply.

4. At present levels, there does not seem to be a need to designate places where backpackers should camp as part of extended treks in the undeveloped portions of the park. However, educational efforts about minimum impact wilderness camping practices should be prepared and distributed with maps and other supplies that backpackers may acquire.
Mongolia is world famous for their horses and horsemanship. So it is not surprising that guided horseback tours are a popular form of recreation, especially in the southern portion of the park that is more accessible to visitors from Mongolia or other countries from the West that favor such recreation.
Horseback Trips

Mongolia is world famous for its horses and horsemanship. So it is not surprising that guided horseback tours are a popular form of recreation, especially in the southern portion of the park that is more accessible to visitors from Mongolia or other countries from the west that favor such recreation. Russian visitors who dominate tourism in the Hankh soum mostly choose other forms of recreation.

Guided rides range from a few hours to several days to extended trips that may circle the lake or range to the west and north into other protected areas and popular destinations. Horse trips are almost always provided through informal arrangements made by tour operators and ger camp managers with local residents, often nomadic families who provide horses and guides for their clients. Trails and areas of travel are informally established by the guides and normally radiate outward from their home stations. Most are routes long known to the guides and have evolved over time and use. Few of these trails and routes were designed and constructed for the purpose of horse trips and are not maintained or signed for independent travel. There does not appear to be any formal permitting system that authorizes such services or establishes standards of operation for horse-guided recreation. Anecdotal conversations indicate strong emphasis is given by most all guides to safety but there is little or no capacity to provide park information.

Recommendations to Improve Horse-Guided Travel

1. A system that requires that a permit be acquired everyone who conducts horse-guided trips for visitors should be developed and implemented so that the park and ger camp managers can ensure that all such businesses provide a safe experience to visitors in terms of “tack” and safety messages provided to clients. Such a system can be informal and permits granted free of charge.
2. Park staff should prepare and maintain an up-to-date brochure/handout that lists businesses and local family groups that offer horse-back rides around the park.
3. Training should be provided annually to assure that all guides have a basic level of information about the park, its natural and cultural significance, and safety/orientation issues that clients should know.
4. Maps of popular horse trails should be developed – as described below – so that all persons utilizing the services of guides and their horses can understand and make informed choices about where they wish to go.
5. Periodic and informal evaluation should be conducted with all commercial operations that conduct horse-mounted tours to ensure safe conditions and communications.

Hiking and Backpacking – trails and trail signs

Lake Hovsgol National Park provides virtually unlimited opportunities for hiking and backpacking. At present, however, the potential for visitors to do so is severely limited by the lack of established trails and trail signs that invite independent travelers to find their way from ger camps or parking areas to especially appealing destinations such as mountain tops, special places along the lakeshore, or just a walk in the woods. Equally important, there are no maps of the park trails that offer visitors sufficient information to determine and follow walking or
hiking routes. Nor are there established trailheads with designated space for visitors to park cars and begin a short walk or longer hike. Signs at existing starting points for hikes or at trail intersections that correspond with maps and/or otherwise direct hikers to their destinations do not exist. Guides services are commonplace and invited in the text of various websites and other materials inviting visits to the park; however, such guide service can be costly for some, and more and more visitors can be expected to choose to find their own way on park trails.

Standards and recommendations for developing and managing a trails program for hikers:
1. The process of establishing management zones for the park should be completed as soon as possible. Development of a trails system must comply with whatever uses are permissible in each zone.

2. A high priority task for rangers and guides is to inventory (GPS-based) existing trails and other off-road routes.

3. A determination of which of the many existing trails and routes now used by various horse guides, hiking guides, tour operators, and others should be made part of the park trails system should be made. Such decision-making should be based upon many criteria, including:
   a. Full communication and collaboration with guides and others who lead horse and hiking tours
   b. Protection of natural resources. Establishment of trails and walks can serve as a management tool to help control the distribution and intensity of use in sensitive areas. Especially, wetlands should be avoided and, where unavoidable, should be spanned by a boardwalk or similar means using sustainable materials.
   c. Trails and walks should be situated to reduce conflicts with automobiles.
   d. Maintained and signed trails should provide safe and the best possible routes of access to the most scenic places outside special zones.
   e. Approved trails should not invite visitors to places that are not reasonably safe.

4. Trail planning should reflect coordination with other protected areas managers, aimag and soum leaders, various NGOs, and others that might also be planning trails programs in other places neighboring the park. As tourism and the numbers of distance hikers increase in the Hovsgol region it is inevitable that visitors will hike from one protected area to another and pass through various boundaries; these long walks should reflect development of a region-wide system of trails.

5. In the absence of a local guide, some form of a trail map is essential for visitor enjoyment and safety. Considerations when preparing a trails map should include:
   a. A map should identify all trails that are determined to be part of the park trails program. It should not identify the many paths and routes utilized by nomadic families and other local people to travel about the landscape.
   b. Trail maps do not need to be made for the entire park. The most effective way to assist visitors who want to hike on their own would be to prepare maps of hiking/walking opportunities in specific developed areas, such as around the Huzuuvch area, or along the Jankhai Road, or radiating outward from the Hankh or Hatgal areas. Other maps may include popular long-distance routes, such as the multi-day trek to visit the Dukha peo-
ple—also known as the Reindeer people.

c. Trails maps should identify the location of key park features, mountain contours if possible, streams, points of interest, designated campgrounds, and roads or other motor vehicle routes.

d. Trail maps should be available where-ever visitors congregate, such as at the park visitor center, at ger camps, and especially at commercial outlets where recreational supplies are available. They could be simple and free, or more sophisticated and sold for a sufficient fee to at least recover costs to develop and publish.

6. Signs should be located at key trailheads where hikers are invited to park their cars and begin a walk or hike. Such trailhead signs can be simple in design, but should:

a. Contain basic information about the trails the lead from them, including principal destination, trail conditions (steep, rocky, river crossings, difficulty, etc.) distance to main destinations, etc.

b. Trailhead signs should clearly indicate the types of travel permitted—or prohibited—such as 4-wheel drive vehicles, horse, bicycle, or on foot.

c. Trailhead signs should be uniform in design and appearance.

d. Trailhead signs should be maintained so that they remain pleasing in appearance and need to be replaced should they be vandalized or damaged.

7. Beyond the trailhead, a very limited number of signs are needed along walking routes. These signs should be restricted to trail intersections, and should be small and non-intrusive in size. They should provide direction to key destinations/features, be consistent in appearance, and complement the information contained in the trail’s map. Weather and domestic animals can be expected to damage trail signs so strong materials such as stone and metal are recommended to avoid constant replacement.

**Boating**

Travel by boat can be an ideal way for visitors to experience the beauty of Lake Hovsgol and to view the scenery and high mountains that surround the lake. If managed carefully, the lake can accommodate a variety of boats and boat travel in a fashion that does not pollute the lake nor disturb the tranquility and quality of the visitor experience.

Authority and jurisdiction regarding boating activities on the lake is not clear. While obviously a key part of the park, it appears as if a separate authority, the Sea Administration, is assigned by law the responsibilities of establishing and enforcing regulations for boating as well as developing and implementing a certification requirement for those responsible for operating motorized boats.

Current levels of boating seem quite limited and not yet a major challenge. An aging Russian made ship, The Sukhbaatar, is available in Hatgal throughout the summer for 60 to 90 minute sight-seeing tours of the southern portion of the lake. A substantial portion of visitors take advantage of this opportunity. However, boat operators provide little to no information about the park, its resources, and values.
Smaller in-board and out-board motorboats are likewise available for tours. Most are owned by the more up-scale ger camps and used both for transporting guests to/from Hatgal and most often for tours on the lake. A few older boats operate independently and host several trips per day taking visitors to scenic sites around the southern portion of the lake. Operators of all motorized boats are required to have certification issued by the Sea Administration.

Kayaks and rubberized rafts are made available to clients at some of the full-service ger camps, but do not appear to be utilized by many visitors to these facilities and Mongolians tend to be inexperienced with respect to water recreation. Cold water temperature and sudden storms can generate waves and threaten safety. Safety instructions are likewise limited or non-existent for those who rent kayaks or small rafts.

Standards and recommendations for developing a boating program

Because present levels of boating activity on the lake are minimal, now is the time to establish limits on the types and levels of boating that are appropriate to achieve the vision and desired future conditions of the park. While boating can be a wonderful and peaceful way to appreciate the beauty of the park, it can also be a noisy, intrusive, and polluting sport that spoils the quality of the visitor experience. Additional boating opportunities and activities should be encouraged. Now is the time to set policies that prevent the harm of inappropriate boating that might otherwise develop.

The following recommendations are made to establish a resource-based boating program:

1. The actions of the Sea Administration and National Inspection Agency, especially with respect to rule-making and enforcement, should be meshed with those of the park to assure that the long-term goals of the park are achieved. A partnership agreement between the Sea Administration and the park that sets forth respective responsibilities and opportunities for collaboration should be prepared. At the least, such an agreement will prescribe appropriate inspections and certification of boats and boat operators to ensure visitor safety and prevent pollution of the lake.

2. Thrill-type personal boats such as Jet-skis, should be prohibited now along with large and excessively noisy boats that serve mainly for thrill-type recreation.

3. To ensure visitor safety, basic standards of equipment (i.e. life vests), training/instruction, and quality of non-motorized watercraft, i.e. kayaks, rafts, etc, should be established for ger camps and other businesses that choose to rent such boats to their clients. Such standards should become part of the permit that authorizes the business.

Fishing

Lake Hovsgol and its tributary rivers and streams offer over a dozen species of fish that are available to recreational fisherman. Commercial fishing is prohibited within the park, although poaching with nets by local people is a significant enforcement challenge for park rangers. And local residents fish legally for food. Park regulations require purchase of a fishing permit and prescribe limits on the number of fish taken. Fishing is a principal recreational pursuit for many Russian visitors and is especially popular in the northern portion of the park around Hankh. Some fishing occurs in streams that feed into the lake; but guided trips by boat to fish on the lake is also quite popular, again in areas of the park visited mainly by Russians.
Picnicking

Picnicking is especially popular among Mongolians, who typically set up their food service where convenient, most often along the lakeshore. There are no facilities, tables, car parks, nor toilets to accommodate such use, and the remains of illegal fires from their past visits mar the landscape. Pollution of the lake is an inevitable consequence of such use. Except for inappropriate car parking, which is addressed in the Transportation Section of this plan, current levels and distributions of picnicking seems appropriate. Visitors should be able to have a picnic where they want. Restrictions on fires, however, should be rigorously enforced.