



Interim Best Management Practices for Guide Outfitter Operations in Thaidene Nene National Park Reserve

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Context

Thaidene Nene National Park Reserve is located on the East Arm of Great Slave Lake, in the Northwest Territories. The Park Reserve is part of Thaidene Nënë Indigenous Protected Area (IPA), which also includes a Territorial Protected Area and a proposed Conservation Area.

Thaidene Nene National Park Reserve is co-operatively managed by Parks Canada and Indigenous partners: Łutsël K'é Dene First Nation, the Northwest Territories Métis Nation, Deninu Kųę First Nation, and the Yellowknives Dene First Nation. Here, Indigenous peoples will continue resource harvesting, cultural, and spiritual practices in accordance with their constitutionally protected Aboriginal and treaty rights. Areas with spiritual or cultural significance within Thaidene Nene National Park Reserve may have specific management requirements and special protection status.

Carrying these relationships into the future, the ecological integrity and Indigenous way of life will be a living legacy for all, where Indigenous peoples and Parks Canada will welcome the world. Thaidene Nene National Park Reserve is a destination known for spectacular fishing, boating and recreational opportunities. Guide outfitter companies offer various single and multi-day excursions, providing visitors with the expertise, equipment and local area knowledge needed for safe travel in remote wilderness.

Scope

These Best Management Practices (BMPs) apply to guide outfitter operations in Thaidene Nene National Park Reserve. Guide outfitter operations include any charters and commercially-based recreation, and the associated impacts that may occur (e.g., human waste, soil compaction, human-wildlife conflict etc.). These BMPs do not apply to leased lands.

The following recreation activities may be guided by ecotourism companies licenced to operate in the National Park Reserve:

- Hiking
- Overnight camping
- Non-motorized boating (e.g., canoeing, kayaking, stand up paddleboard, pack raft, and associated portaging)
- Motorized boating
- Sport fishing
- Cultural tours
- Over-snow vehicles (OSV)
- Dog sledding
- Non-motorized winter sports (e.g., snowshoeing, cross-country skiing)

These BMPs are a key component of the preliminary screening process as defined in the *Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act*. Abiding by these BMPs will be a requirement of the terms and conditions specified on guide outfitter business licences issued by Parks Canada.

Goal

The overarching goal of these BMPs is to support guide outfitter companies operating in Thaidene Nene National Park Reserve, while minimizing potential impacts associated with guide outfitter operations on the natural, cultural and social environments.

Impact Assessment

The impacts of guide outfitter operations on the natural environment include potential damage to soil, air, water, vegetation, and wildlife. Several species at risk are known to inhabit Thaidene Nene National Park Reserve; however, impacts from guide outfitter operations should be negligible if these BMPs are applied.

Soil

- Rutting and compaction at campsites, landing sites and along hiking and portage trails
- Contamination from improper human waste management, grey water, fuel spills
- Garbage that is left behind and not packed out

Air

- Reduced localized air quality from campfires and engine exhaust
- Localized noise disturbance from engines, group interactions

Water

- Contamination from human waste, grey water, fuel spills

Vegetation

- Overharvest of plants (and berries)
- Physical damage/destruction at campsites, landing sites and along hiking and portage trails
- Introduction of non-native and invasive species

Wildlife

- Stress responses
- Altered movement patterns
- Nest disturbance and/or abandonment
- Human habituation (loss of natural wariness)
- Food conditioning
- Mortality from human-wildlife conflict and illegal harvesting

The potential impacts of guide outfitter operations on the cultural and social environments include negative effects on Indigenous people and heritage resources¹, within Thaidene Nene National Park Reserve. Again, impacts from guide outfitter operations should be negligible if these BMPs are applied. Moreover, several

Indigenous business owners will likely benefit from associated tourism activity within local communities.

Indigenous People

- Interference with traditional harvesting rights and on-the-land activities
- Noise disturbance
- Reduced soil, air and water quality

Heritage Resources

- Unauthorized access to current and historic cultural and ceremonial sites
- Physical damage/destruction of cultural and ceremonial sites
- Removal/destruction of historical artifacts

The potential impacts of guide outfitter operations on social environments may also include negative effects on the visitor experience within Thaidene Nene National Park Reserve. Again, impacts from guide outfitter operations should be negligible if these BMPs are applied.

Visitor Experience

- Overcrowding at popular recreation sites
- Degraded wilderness experience
- Threats to human health and safety from recreation-related accidents

Best Management Practices

It is anticipated that guide outfitter operations in Thaidene Nene National Park Reserve will grow with increasing interest in and knowledge of the Park and the Indigenous Protected Area. With that in mind, the following BMPs are recommended to minimize the potential negative impacts associated with commercially-based recreation on the natural, social and cultural environment of the area.

If an Indigenous tour operator is proposing activities that do not align with these Best Management Practices, the proposed activities can be reviewed through the Operational Management Board (Thaidene Nënë xá dá yá lti) so culturally appropriate best management practices can be developed.

¹ Heritage resources are defined as archaeological or historic sites, burial sites, artifacts and other objects of historical, cultural, or religious significance, and historical or cultural records directly associated with an important aspect or aspects of human history.

Registration and Permits

Visitors are required to register for travel within Thaidene Nene Indigenous Protected Area. Guide outfitters (e.g., flightseeing tours, cultural tours, sea kayak tours) are expected to register their clients. Self-guided groups, such as those using a boat or air charter to access the park, must register themselves. Groups are asked to limit themselves to 15 people. If your group is larger than 15, please contact us in advance.

A permit is required to fish in the National Park Reserve. Fishing permits can be obtained from www.pc.gc.ca/thaidene-nene

A permit is required to cache fuel within the National Park Reserve. More information can be found in the *Interim Best Management Practices for Fuel Caching in Thaidene Nene National Park Reserve*.

Protect the Natural Environment

As part of the pre-trip briefing all park visitors must be:

1. Informed that natural and cultural resources cannot be removed, defaced, damaged or destroyed. Picking of berries and medicinal plants, as well as the collection of wood for campfires are allowed for personal use in Thaidene Nene National Park Reserve.
2. Asked to remove mud and/or seeds from their footwear, clothing, and pets prior to departure to prevent the introduction of non-native/invasive species into the National Park Reserve.
3. Encouraged to use washroom facilities before departing for the National Park Reserve for a day trip.
4. Reminded to pack out all items brought into the Park, including personal belongings and **garbage**.
5. Informed that they are in bear country. Visitors should always be aware of their surroundings (i.e., be watching for fresh tracks, scat, digs). Bear spray is recommended for effective self defence. People should be familiar with its use before travelling into the park, and have quick (and unimpeded) access to it at all times.
6. Informed that firearms are permitted in Thaidene Nene National Park Reserve for wildlife defence only – visitors are not permitted to hunt. All firearms must be properly locked and stored when travelling.

Please note: Traditional harvest by Indigenous peoples continues in Thaidene Nene National Park Reserve. Lease holders within Thaidene Nene National Park Reserve with a NWT hunting licence (small game only), or holders of a Special Harvesters Licence, are permitted to hunt.

To minimise compaction and damage to soils and vegetation:

7. Bring motorized and non-motorized boats to shore at the same general location to minimize the overall footprint of the landing site.
8. Choose landing sites with durable surfaces (e.g., rock, talus, gravel or sand), when possible.
9. Encourage clients to avoid trampling down flowers and vegetation during stopovers (e.g., lunchbreaks) or while recreating in the National Park Reserve.

To minimize contamination from improper human waste management:

10. Use outhouse facilities where available.
11. Move at least 60 m away from the landing sites, heritage resources, hiking trails, camping areas, and water bodies before urinating/defecating.
12. Bury solids in a shallow hole (e.g., 15 to 20 cm deep) in soil-covered areas and a deep hole (1 – 2 ft) in snow-covered areas. Avoid disturbing plant communities.
13. Pack out or bury ~~it~~ (in the hole ~~or a fire box~~) all used toilet paper. Pack out all garbage.
14. Properly dispose of grey water by filtering out solids (must be burned or packed out with all other garbage) and pouring the liquid into fast-flowing water (e.g., creek or river) or spread over the ground at least 100 m from landing sites or campsites.

To minimize impacts to wildlife:

15. Keep dogs on a leash and under physical control at all times. Off-leash dogs can cause wildlife to feel threatened and become aggressive. Aggressive animals pose a significant risk to human safety.
16. Avoid recreating in or near wildlife travel corridors, feeding areas, and calving grounds.
17. Ensure clients stay at least 100 m away from known den or nest sites.
18. Remind clients to never approach wildlife or encourage wildlife to approach them. This can cause wildlife to lose their natural wariness of people. Habituated animals are at greater risk of human-wildlife conflict.
19. Be respectful when photographing wildlife. Animal behaviour is unpredictable – keep a safe viewing distance (100 m) at all times.
20. Calmly back away if a large carnivore (e.g., bear, wolf) is encountered. Never run – it may trigger a pursuit.
21. Dispose of fish offal into fast-flowing or deep water. Fish offal left onshore can attract wildlife and increase the potential for human-wildlife conflict.

Please note: Activities that intentionally disturb wildlife for viewing or photographic opportunities can result in a business licence being revoked or charges being laid under

the *Canada National Parks Act*. Feeding wildlife is also illegal and can result in charges. This includes feeding them directly by offering them food, or indirectly by leaving food/garbage behind for them to find.

Protect Indigenous rights, and the Cultural and Social Environment

To minimize potential impacts to Indigenous people, clients must be informed during the pre-trip briefing that:

22. Indigenous people can and may be exercising their traditional rights (e.g., harvesting wildlife and other on the land activities) within the National Park Reserve and that these rights must be respected.
23. Certain areas of the park may be closed due to cultural significance or activities. Please check for area closures prior to travel.

To minimize potential impacts to heritage resources and visitor experience, clients must be informed during the pre-trip briefing that:

24. Heritage resources cannot be removed or otherwise disturbed. This includes rocks from any features that look, even remotely, like they were human-made, such as cairns (rock piles), tent rings, and food caches.
25. Inuksuit are not culturally appropriate and should not be built.
26. Parks Canada and Łutsël K'é Dene First Nation equipment and boats are not for public use.
27. Turn off boat engines while at landing sites to reduce exhaust fumes and noise.
28. Limit group noise and disturbances when other visitors are present in the area.

Camping

To minimize the impacts of camping and its associated activities:

29. Camp at the same general location to minimize the overall footprint of overnight camping activities.
30. Choose tent sites with durable surfaces when possible.
31. Set up portable stoves and other cooking implements on durable, heat resistant surfaces and away from vegetation or leaf litter where possible.
32. Ensure fire pits are located on durable surfaces, away from vegetation and trees. Use of a firebox is recommended, but not mandatory.
33. Check that all fires are completely extinguished before leaving the area, regardless of the duration of time away.
34. Remove all evidence of fire scars (e.g., unburnt wood, ashes) so as to leave the site in pristine condition in support of traditional use and visitor experience. If rocks are used to secure tents, return them to their original locations.
35. Prepare and cook food away a minimum of 50m from sleeping areas to help avoid attracting wildlife into campsites.

36. Ensure all food and other wildlife attractants (e.g., toiletries, dish detergent, fuel) are stored in bear resistant containers or hung in a tree a minimum of 50 m away from sleeping areas.

Boating (motorized and non-motorized)

To minimize the impacts of activities related to boating in general:

37. Avoid disturbances to birds and wildlife that are on land or in the water. Approach wildlife slowly (i.e., 5 knots) and do not chase, herd or cause animals to change course by blocking their direction of travel. Avoid rapid movements and loud noises while viewing and during departure.
38. Stay at least 100 m back from large colonies of birds and nesting waterfowl, and at least 100 m away from other wildlife on shore. Do not approach swimming wildlife (e.g., moose, bear etc.).

Motorized Boating

To minimize the impacts of motorized boating and its associated activities:

39. Empty the bilge and remove any mud and vegetation from the hull and propeller of your boat before transferring it from one body of water to another. This helps to keep non-native and invasive species from establishing in areas where they don't belong.
40. Travel slowly in shallow waters to protect important fish spawning and egg-rearing habitat.
41. Approach landing sites at slow to no wake speed (i.e., 5 knots) to minimize disturbances to banks, shorelines, and shallow water habitats.
42. When refuelling a boat, use extra caution and avoid spills if possible. Deal with any spill immediately. Have a cloth at hand to catch any spills. Use one for the filler and one for the fuel tank vent.
43. Refuel portable fuel tanks and engine-mounted tanks (where feasible) onshore (at least 50m from water). Use a funnel and refuel over an impermeable surface or absorbent material. Have your spill kit ready to mop up a spill, if necessary.

Dog Sledding

To minimize the impacts of dog sledding and its associated activities:

44. All dogs must be on leashes or fixed lines at all times including while at camp; no dogs are allowed to run free. They must be in their harnesses and picketed to self-carried anchors.
45. Do not line out or picket your dogs at the same location each trip.
46. Store all dog food in bear resistant containers or hung in a tree at least 50 m from sleeping areas.
47. Provide Parks Canada with records (e.g., dates) of your de-worming program and vaccinations (i.e., distemper, parvovirus, and rabies).

48. To help control the spread of giardia, do not leave dog faeces on a lake surface (ice). Instead, move the faeces to a location on land (i.e., at least 50 m inland) and bury it following the same protocol used to bury human waste. That said, dog sledding guides are encouraged to pack out all dog-related waste from the National Park Reserve.

Over-Snow Vehicles (OSV)

To minimize the impacts of snowmobiling and its associated activities:

49. Travel over ice, when safe, to avoid damaging underlying soil and vegetation.
50. Follow existing snowmobile tracks whenever possible.
51. Select locations where snow cover is thick enough to buffer the shoreline from tread damage when crossing water bodies. Approach at a 90° angle when possible to minimize disturbance to underlying soil and vegetation.
52. Do not follow fresh wildlife tracks to minimize potential disturbances to animals.
53. Store fuel in sealed containers and use appropriate nozzles/funnels for refueling to avoid potential spills.
54. Refuel at least 50 m away from water bodies and over an impermeable barrier (e.g. rock or a tray or tarp). Have your spill kit ready to mop up a spill, if necessary.

Fishing

To minimize the impacts of fishing and its associated activities:

55. Remove all mud and debris from all waders and gear that will enter the water to avoid introducing non-native and invasive species. If waders or equipment is known to come from an area affected by whirling disease, disinfect them with bleach (1-part chlorine to 9-parts water for 10 minutes), rinse and let dry in the shade.
56. Only use barbless hooks.
57. Decide quickly whether to keep the fish or not. Do not retain fish on stringers or in live wells to be set free when a larger fish is caught.
58. Educate clients about the importance of non-sport fish to prevent destruction of these species when they are accidentally caught.
59. Avoid wading in water bodies where fish are spawning.
60. Retrieve as many snagged hooks and lines as possible.
61. Dispose of entrails by puncturing the swim bladder and depositing them into deep or moving water downstream of your camp, using a boat if available.
62. Always clean your catch at least 50 m away from campsites, picnic sites, rest areas, or other facilities.

Information specific to catch and release:

63. Fish cradles are recommended to minimize fish injury or death during catch and release.
64. Do not play fish to exhaustion.

65. Wet your hands when handling live fish. Dry hands and gloves will remove the protective mucous coating and scales.
66. Handle fish in fish cradle (or net) in the water, rather than handling them in the boat. Grasp them across the back and head for firm but gentle control.
67. Turn fish belly up when removing hooks. This disorients them momentarily for easier, quicker handling.
68. Do not remove swallowed hooks. Just cut the line next to the fish's mouth.
69. Do not keep fish out of the water more than 10-15 seconds. Fragile gills are damaged after that, especially in cold weather.
70. Revive fish before releasing. Hold it under the belly and by the tail, keeping it in an upright position underwater. If you are fishing in a river or stream, hold the fish facing the current. Be patient and give the fish as much time as it needs to recover and swim away on its own.
71. When bringing a fish up from depths of 10 m or greater, do so slowly. This allows them to decompress and increases chances of survival. Pause while reeling the fish in and allow air or gas from the swim bladder to rise to the surface.

In Case of Emergency

If you observe anything or you are involved in a situation that requires *immediate* assistance, please call:

Parks Canada Dispatch (24hr emergency line) at 1-877-852-3100 (toll free), 1-780-852-3100 (landline), or email jasperdispatch@canada.ca.

Please report all *minor incidents* (at the end of your trip) to:

Thaidene Nene National Park Reserve (non-emergency line)
Parks Canada Yellowknife Office (M-F; 9-5)
867-766-8460 (landline), or e-mail pc.thaidene.nene.pc@canada.ca.