



## **Parks Canada Preliminary Screening under the *Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act***

### **TYPE OF DEVELOPMENT:**

- New
- Amended
- Requires a permit, licence or authorization under the *Preliminary Screening Requirement Regulations* (issuance of a Business Permit pursuant to the *National Parks of Canada Business Regulations* s 4.1)
- Does not require permit, licence or authorization and is proposed by PCA

### **1. DEVELOPMENT TITLE & LOCATION**

Outfitter Guided Trips in Nahanni and Nááts'įhch'oh National Park Reserves

### **2. PROPONENT INFORMATION**

Black Feather Wilderness Adventure Company  
(888) 849-7668  
info@blackfeather.com

Canoe North Adventures  
(519) 941-6654  
(867) 587-4440  
info@canoenorthadventures.com

Nahanni River Adventures  
(800) 297-6927  
info@nahanni.com

Nahanni Wilderness Adventures  
(888) 897-5223  
info@nahanniwild.com

Summit Cultural/Helicopter Tours  
(855) 355-5527  
info@summithelicopters.ca



### 3. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT DATES

Planned commencement: 2018-04-01  
Planned completion: 2019-03-31

### 4. INTERNAL FILE #

NAH2018-001

### 5. DEVELOPMENT DESCRIPTION

Many visitors accessing Nahanni National Park Reserve (Nahanni) and Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve (Nááts'ihch'oh) do so as clients of commercial outfitting companies. These companies must obtain Parks Canada business licences to operate in the parks; according to the *Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act (MVRMA)* their activities must undergo preliminary screening before these licences can be issued. Guided trips typically begin at earliest the first week of June (more often, the second to third week of June) and, on average, run until the first week of September. They range anywhere from one to three weeks in length and include river tripping and hiking as primary activities. This preliminary screening applies to the following commercial outfitting companies who operate standard trip packages (e.g.: no custom trips) with 15 clients or less and includes the listed activities/locations:

#### Companies

- Black Feather Wilderness Adventure Company
- Canoe North Adventures (only for canoe trips originating at O'Grady and/or Divide Lake, on rivers that flow outside Nááts'ihch'oh)
- Nahanni River Adventures
- Nahanni Wilderness Adventures
- Summit Cultural/Helicopter Tours (only for tours in Nááts'ihch'oh at Divide and O'Grady lakes, and at Moose Ponds)

#### Activities

- *Water-based*: canoeing, rafting, kayaking, stand up paddle board, and packrafting (packrafting only on the Broken Skull, Little and South Nahanni, and Flat rivers)
- *Land-based*: camping, day hiking, backpacking (overnight camping), and base camping (only by the above companies who are licenced for base-camping at Níonep'eneᑦ Tué (Backbone Lake/Grizzly Bear Lake) and for no longer than 14 days)



**Locations** (see map, Appendix 1)

<b>WATER-BASED ACTIVITY START LOCATIONS</b>	
Qtaa Tué Fehto (Divide Lake), Nááts'jch'oh	Access to Píjip'enéh léetóq Deé (Broken Skull River) which travels through both parks and for Tátsók'áá Deé (Raven's Throat River) (river outside of the park; outfitters heli-sling over)
Nááts'jch'oh Tué (Moose Ponds), Nááts'jch'oh	Access to headwaters of South Nahanni River, which travels through both parks
Túoch'ee Tué (O'Grady Lake), Nááts'jch'oh	Access for the Túoch'ee Deé (Natla River) (most of the river is outside of the park – there is a small portion in the park, connecting two parts of Túoch'ee Tué (O'Grady Lake), but most groups put in downstream of this connector section)
Island Lakes, Nahanni	Access for the South Nahanni River
Bunny Bar, Nahanni	
Gahnjthah Mje, Nahanni	
Nájljcho, Nahanni	
Flat Lakes, NT	Access to Little Nahanni River, which travels through both parks
Divide Lake, NT ( <i>Note: near Flat Lakes; this is a different location than the Divide Lake in Nááts'jch'oh</i> )	Access to Flat River which begins outside Nahanni park boundary in NT and travels into Nahanni National Park Reserve joining up with South Nahanni River below Nájljcho.

<b>WATER-BASED ACTIVITY END LOCATIONS</b>	
Gahnjthah Mje, Nahanni	Blackstone Territorial Park, NT
Nájljcho, Nahanni	Łíídlj Kúé, NT
Nahanni Butte, NT	Tulita, NT
Lindberg's Landing, NT	

<b>WATER-BASED ACTIVITY CAMP LOCATIONS</b>	
<i>Nahanni</i>	
Nájljcho	Gahnjthah Mje
Glacier Lake	
Random camp locations along the Broken Skull, Little and South Nahanni, and Flat river corridors	
<i>Nááts'jch'oh</i>	
Qtaa Tué Fehto (Divide Lake)	Nááts'jch'oh Tué (Moose Ponds) (on old tundra tire strip)
Níonep'ene? Tué (Backbone Lake/Grizzly Bear Lake)	Túoch'ee Tué (O'Grady Lake) (on sand peninsula)
Random camp locations. Most frequently used: Creek junction above Swallow Falls; Creek junction of creek flowing from Sadée Shúh Gaofáá (Grizzly Bear Hot Springs ) and Broken Skull River; Broken Skull Hot Springs, access campsite; Three Valley Confluence (White Wolf Creek, Rainbow Creek and Broken Skull River)	



<b>HIKING / BACKPACKING ROUTES</b> (Note: all are backcountry/non-maintained routes)	
<i>Nahanni</i>	
South Nahanni River to Glacier Lake (multi-night)	Glacier Lake to Fairy Meadows (multi-night)
Gahnjthah Mje to Gahnjthah Tufa Mounds (day)	Gahnjthah Portage and Campground (day)
Sunblood Mountain (day)	Marengo Creek (day)
Pulpit Rock and Gate Viewpoint (day)	Painted Canyon (day)
Scow Creek (day)	Lafferty's Creek (day)
Other exploratory day hike routes along river corridors	Ram Plateau (rarely)
<i>Nááts'jch'oh</i>	
Tuedéveh Tué (Clearwater Lake) / Sedzeeféetó Piehtéh (Broken Heart Plateau) (multi-night)	Níonep'eneᑦ Tué (Backbone Lake/Grizzly Bear Lake) (multi-night or day hikes)
Níonep'eneᑦ Tué (Backbone Lake/Grizzly Bear Lake) to Sadée Shúh Gaofáá (Grizzly Bear Hot Spring) (day)	Píjip'enéh íéetóq Deé (Broken Skull River) to Píjip'enéh íéetóq Gaqfáá (Broken Skull Hot Springs) (day)

## 6. VALUED COMPONENTS

Note: Outfitting companies have utilized the same locations in both parks since the 1960's and 70's; many have been surveyed for natural and heritage resources (these surveys are ongoing) and areas of significance are avoided/respected by guides and their clients.

### *Soil/Land Resources*

- The parks are located within the Taiga and Boreal Cordillera Ecological regions of the Northwest Territories. These regions include a complex landscape of rugged peaks and ridges, rolling hills, eroded plateaus, deep V- and U-shaped valleys, fast-flowing braided rivers and streams and slow-flowing meandering rivers, and in the south and west, glaciers and icefields. Glacial deposits are widely distributed and occur mainly on the floors and lower slopes of valleys, lakes and ponds are small and sparsely distributed, and wetlands are locally common only on the floodplains and lower slopes of large rivers and on a few broad plateaus. It is an area of discontinuous permafrost (ECG, 2010). The area within the original Nahanni park boundary is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, recognized for its exceptional representation of on-going geological processes, including karst topography, hot springs/tufa mounds, and caves. Several of these areas are Zone 1, Special Preservation, and visitor access is restricted (Parks Canada, 2010).

### *Air/Noise Quality*

- No formal observations of air/noise quality have occurred in the parks, however it is expected that these valued components are excellent and representative of their natural state. The majority of both parks are zone II Wilderness, which represents "extensive areas that are good representations of a natural region and are conserved in a wilderness state" and "in much of Zone II, visitors have the opportunity to experience



remoteness and solitude. Motorized access is not permitted except for controlled air access" (Parks Canada, 2010 & 2017).

#### *Aquatic Resources*

- No SARA-listed fish species have been reported in the South Nahanni River watershed or in the Nahanni North Karst area (Babaluk, 2015), however Bull Trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*) has been recommended by COSEWIC to be listed as Special Concern.
- The South Nahanni River is silt-laden (March and Scotter, 1975), as is common of many of the rivers and streams in this area as they flow through glacial deposits (ECG, 2010).

#### *Flora and Fauna*

- Migratory and SARA-listed birds are present in the parks and may nest at locations visited by guided groups; the general nesting season for this area extends from approximately May 1 to August 25. Common Nighthawk (*Chordeiles minor*), a ground-nesting species has been observed nesting on the Prairie Creek alluvial fan (Tate, pers. com., 2017).
- Little Brown Bat (*Myotis lucifugus*), Northern Myotis (*M. septentrionalis*), both SARA-listed bat species, Longeared Myotis (*M. evotis*), Long-legged Myotis (*M. volans*), Big Brown Bat (*Eptesicus fuscus*), Hoary Bat (*Lasiurus cinereus*), and Eastern Red Bat (*L. borealis*) have been recorded at various locations along the shoreline of the South Nahanni River (Lausen *et al.* 2014). There are no confirmed bat hibernacula in the parks other than in Grotte Valerie. However, based on evidence of bat usage in many more caves, it is possible that other hibernacula exist. Current evidence suggests that Grotte Valerie is likely used as a hibernacula by five species: Little Brown Bat, Northern Myotis, Long-legged Myotis, Big Brown Bat and Longeared Myotis (C. Lausen and G. Horne, pers. comm., 2017). All caves in the park reserves are off-limits to visitors.
- Interaction with other SARA-listed species in the parks (i.e.: Collared pika (*Ochotona collaris*), Caribou (*Rangifer tarandus* - boreal population) and Woodland caribou (*Rangifer tarandus caribou* - Northern Mountain population), will be minimal as visitors either do not frequent habitats where these species are located or visitation does not occur during periods of significant congregation such as calving. No adverse effects are anticipated if the mitigation measures described in this screening are followed.
- No SARA-listed vegetation species will be impacted. Nahanni Aster (*Symphotrichum nahanniense*), a SARA-listing candidate, exists at various locations along the Flat and South Nahanni rivers (COSEWIC, 2014). Three of these populations are protected as Zone I Special preservation (no public access except by permit or with Parks staff present) and the remaining two are in Zone II Wilderness areas (Parks Canada, 2010); revised zoning or alternate protection measures will be examined for these latter populations during the current management planning process.



### *Social/Cultural Environment (including Wildlife Harvesting)*

- Harvesting (wildlife, plants, and trees) and motorized access for traditional activities within park boundaries is a right of local First Nations and Sahtu Métis (Parks Canada 2010 & 2017).

### *Heritage Resources*

- Heritage resources are defined as a human work, an object, or a place that is determined, on the basis of its heritage value, to be directly associated with an important aspect or aspects of human history and culture of an heritage area (Parks Canada, 2013). Heritage resources include archaeological or historic sites, burial sites, artifacts and other objects of historical, cultural, or religious significance, and historical or cultural records (MVRMA (s.2)). Heritage resources exist throughout both parks. Although surveys have been conducted to identify these resources at certain locations along major river valleys, lakes, and in the Glacier Lake/Cirque of the Unclimbables area, there remains a high potential for the presence of undocumented resources throughout both parks.

## **7. EFFECTS ANALYSIS**

See "*Parks Canada Best Management Practice (BMP) for Commercially Guided Eco-tourism Activities in Nahanni and Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserves of Canada*" (Appendix 2)

## **8. MITIGATION MEASURES**

Outfitters will adhere to mitigations described in the "*Parks Canada Best Management Practice (BMP) for Commercially Guided Eco-tourism Activities in Nahanni and Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserves of Canada*" (Appendix 2)

Additional mitigations for base camping at Níonep'ene? Tué (Backbone Lake/Grizzly Bear Lake):

- All human waste will be packed out of the park
- Base camping at the lake will take place on shale substrates only
- If food and kitchen equipment are left unattended, they must be stored in bear resistant containers and bear deterrents must be in place (e.g., portable bear fence, acoustic device). All deterrent(s) must be removed when the camp is dismantled
- The camp location must be left in a natural state, with no evidence of human occupation remaining after dismantling



## 9. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- ❑ Surveillance
- ❑ Follow-up monitoring, general
- ❑ Follow-up monitoring, required by legislation or policy (indicate basis of requirement e.g. required by the *Species at Risk Act*)
- ❑ SARA Notification

## 10. SIGNIFICANCE OF RESIDUAL ADVERSE EFFECTS

Given the limited and short-term magnitude of effects, the location in predominantly pre-impacted areas, and the application of mitigation measures the development is not expected to cause residual adverse effects to natural/cultural resources or visitor experience.

## 11. EXPERTS CONSULTED

<i>Department:</i> Parks Canada / Government of Canada	<i>Date of Request:</i> January 9, 2018
<i>Expert's Name &amp; Contact Information:</i> Patrick Carroll PO Box 750, Fort Smith, NT X0E 0P0 Patrick.carroll@pc.gc.ca / Tel: 867-872-7936	<i>Title:</i> Cultural Resource Management Advisor, SW NWT Field Unit
<i>Expertise Requested:</i> General information on heritage resource surveys/inventories for both parks	
<i>Response:</i> See information in section 6 (Valued Components)	
<i>Department:</i> Parks Canada / Government of Canada	<i>Date of Request:</i> June 15, , 2017
<i>Expert's Name &amp; Contact Information:</i> Doug Tate PO Box 750, Fort Smith, NT X0E 0P0 Doug.Tate@pc.gc.ca / Tel: 867-872-7936	<i>Title:</i> Ecologist Team Lead, Lake Superior National Marine Conservation Area
<i>Expertise Requested:</i> Information on Common Nighthawk nesting locations	
<i>Response:</i> See information in section 6 (Valued Components)	



## 11.1 References

- Babaluk *et al.* 2015. *Distribution of Fish Species within the South Nahanni River Watershed, Northwest Territories*. Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada. Winnipeg, MB
- COSEWIC. 2014. *COSEWIC assessment and status report on the Nahanni Aster Symphyotrichum nahanniense in Canada*. Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada. Ottawa. ix + 39 pp. ([www.registrelep-sararegistry.gc.ca/default\\_e.cfm](http://www.registrelep-sararegistry.gc.ca/default_e.cfm)).
- Ecosystem Classification Group (ECG). 2010. *Ecological Regions of the Northwest Territories – Cordillera*. Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Government of the Northwest Territories, Yellowknife, NT, Canada. Available online at: [http://www.enr.gov.nt.ca/sites/enr/files/resources/cordillera\\_ecological\\_land\\_classification\\_report.pdf](http://www.enr.gov.nt.ca/sites/enr/files/resources/cordillera_ecological_land_classification_report.pdf)
- Horne, Greg. 2016. *Nahanni National Park Reserve, Report of Bat and Cave Monitoring - 2016*.
- Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act (MVRMA). 2016. Available online at: <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/M-0.2/>
- March, A.H. and G.W. Scotter. 1975. *Vegetation Survey and Impact Assessment of the Nahanni Hot Springs and Virginia Falls Areas, Nahanni National Park*. Prepared for Parks Canada by the Canadian Wildlife Service, Edmonton.
- Parks Canada. 2017. *Nááts'jhch'oh National Park Reserve Management Plan*.
- Parks Canada. 2013. *Cultural Resource Management Policy*.
- Parks Canada. 2010. *Nahanni National Park Reserve of Canada Nahʔq Dehé Management Plan*.
- Lausen *et al.* 2014. *Bats of Nahanni National Park Reserve and Surrounding Areas, Northwest Territories*. *Northwestern Naturalist*. 95:186-196.
- Lausen, Cory, and Greg Horne. Email, November 2017.
- Tate, Doug. 2017. Personal communication June 2017. Ecologist Team Leader, Lake Superior National Marine Conservation Area, Parks Canada.

## 12. DECISION

Taking into account the analysis and implementation of mitigation measures outlined in the analysis, the development:





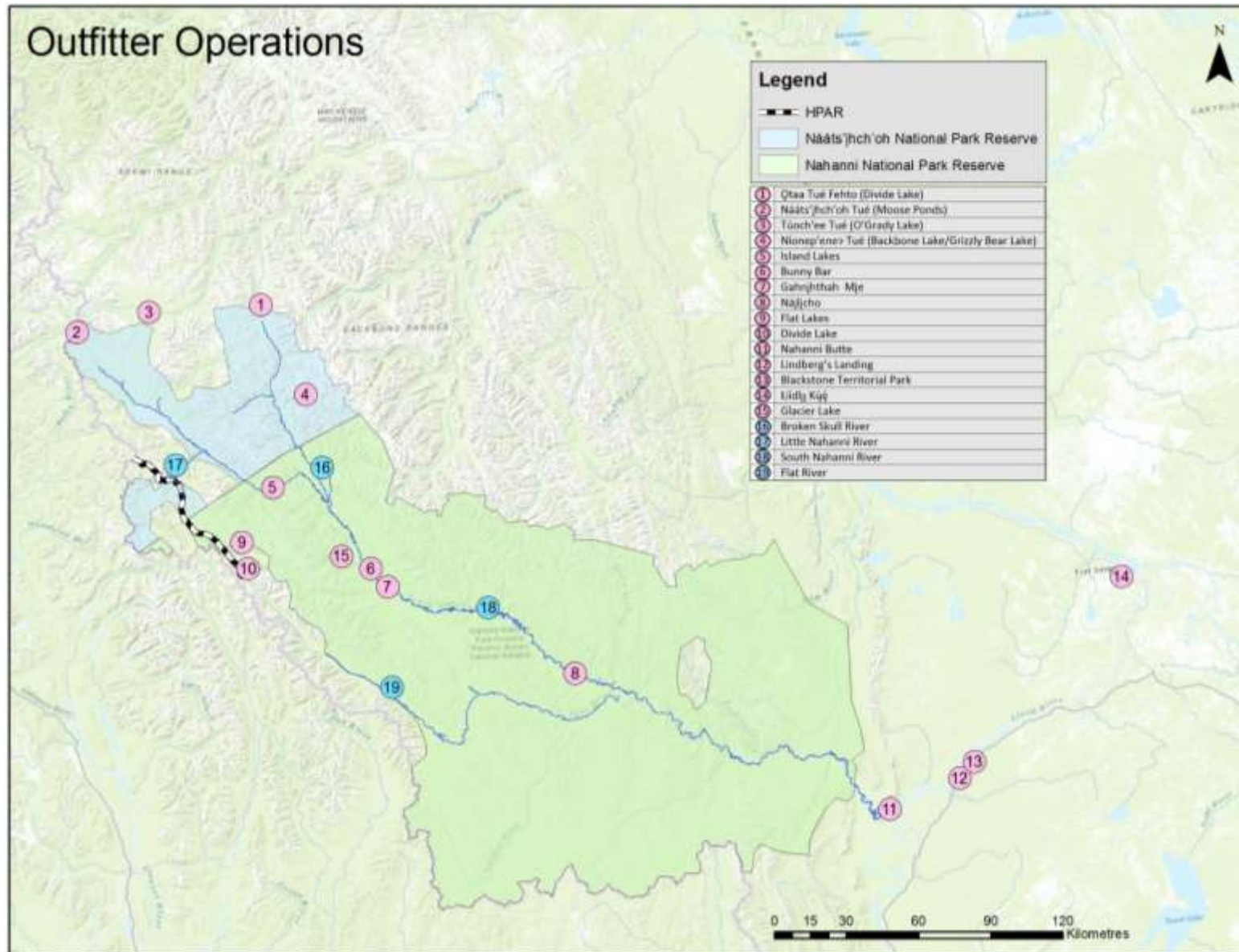
- Might have a significant adverse impact on the environment, and the proposal should be referred to the *Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board* for environmental assessment.
- ✓ Does not have a likelihood of causing significant adverse impact on the environment.
- Might be a cause for public concern, and the proposal should be referred to the *Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board* for environmental assessment.
- ✓ Does not have a likelihood of causing public concern.

### 13. APPROVAL

<b>Prepared by:</b> <i>Jacquie Bastick</i> Impact Assessment Specialist, Natural Resource Conservation Branch, Parks Canada	Date:  March 22, 2018
<b>Approved by:</b>  <i>Laani Uunila</i> Superintendent, Nááts'ihch'oh National Park	Date:  March 23, 2018
<b>Approved by:</b>  <i>Jonathan Tsetso</i> Superintendent, Nahanni National Park Reserve	Date:  March 23, 2018



## APPENDIX 1





**APPENDIX 2:** *Parks Canada Best Management Practice (BMP) for Commercially Guided Eco-tourism Activities in Nahanni and Nááts'j'ch'oh National Park Reserves of Canada*

Note: see attachment in accompanying email