



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

Fireweed Helicopter Ltd. in Nahanni National Park Reserve

2. PROPONENT INFORMATION

Fireweed Helicopters Ltd.
60 Lodestar Lane
Whitehorse, YT
Y1A 6E6
(867) 668-5888
clint@fireweedhelicopters.com

3. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT DATES

Planned commencement: 2019-06-12
Planned completion: 2019-10-31

4. INTERNAL FILE

NAH2019-003

5. DEVELOPMENT DESCRIPTION

Nahanni National Park Reserve is accessed primarily by air (fixed and rotary wing aircraft) for park operational and tourism purposes; other than permit-only road access via the Howards Pass Access Road in the extreme northwestern portion of the park. The majority of air access is facilitated by aircraft charter company outfitters such as Fireweed Helicopters. These companies must obtain a Parks Canada business licence to operate in the park; according to the *Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act* (MVRMA) their activities must undergo preliminary screening before these licences can be issued. Aircraft operations run throughout



the year, though decrease substantially, and are primarily limited to park operational requirements, during the fall, winter, and spring.

Activities

- Day flight seeing experiences
- Commercial transport of visitors and freight for recreational activities such as hiking, mountain climbing, mountaineering, and river trips
- Nahanni NPR operational activities
- Transport of researchers for purposes outside of park operational activities

Please note: The purpose of this permit is to provide helicopter support for Solitude Excursion Ltd. and their park tourism business (heli-hiking) in Nahanni National Park Reserve.

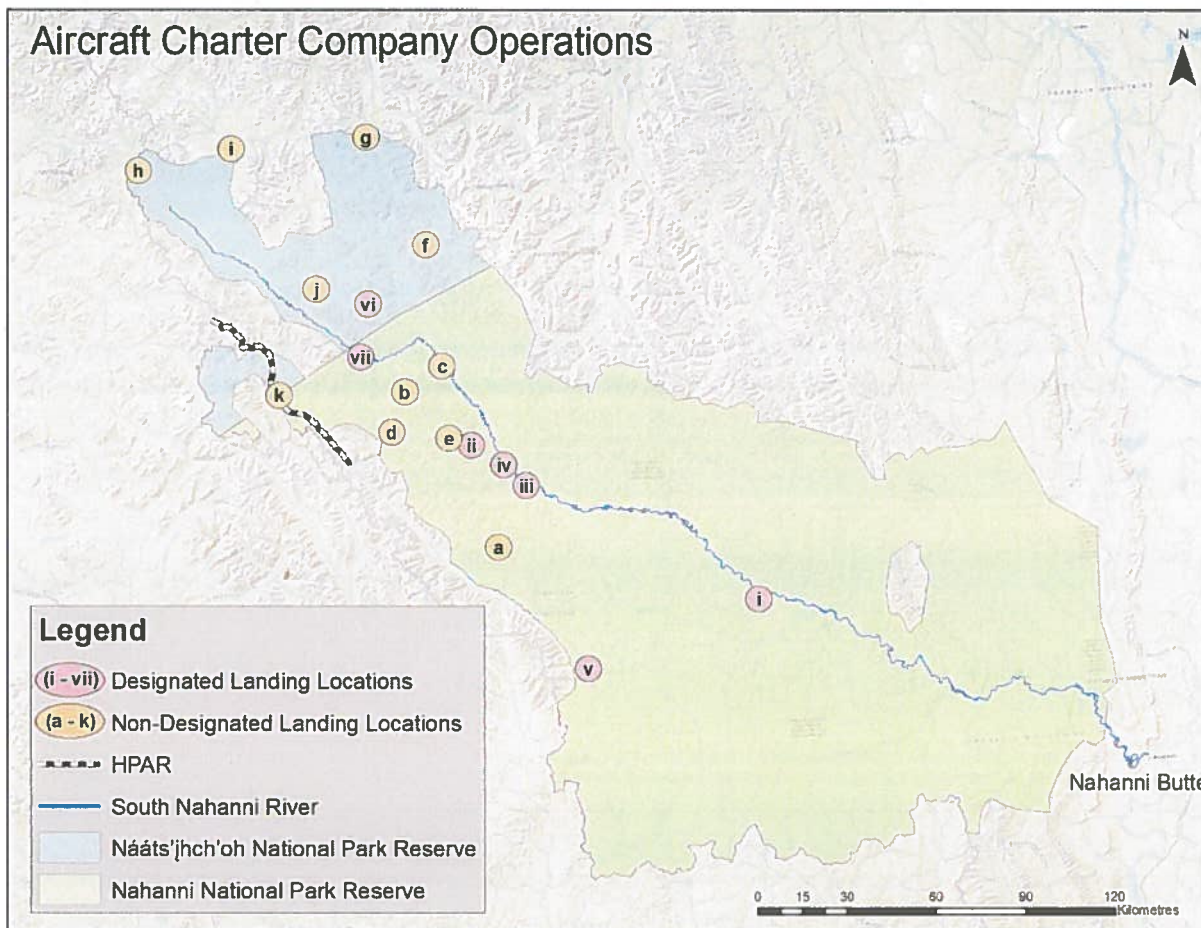
Aircraft Used by Fireweed

- Bell 206L1
- Bell 206B
- Bell 206L4
- Bell 204C



Locations (this map pertains to both Nahanni and Nááts'ihch'oh national park reserves; however this preliminary screening encompasses only Nahanni)

Note: all flights - start/end location is Whitehorse



Air Based Activity Designated Landing Locations

- (i) South Nahanni River above Nájljcho (Virginia Falls): 61°36'25"N, 125°45'12"W
- (ii) Glacier Lake: 62°05'00"N, 127°34'00"W
- (iii) Gahnjthah Mje: 61°05'00"N, 127°12'18"W
- (iv) Bunny Bar: 62°01'35"N, 127°19'35"W
- (v) Seaplane Lake: 61°24'50"N, 126°49'00"W
- (vi) Island Lakes: 62°30'50"N, 128°11'00"W
- (vii) Honeymoon Lake: 62°21'15"N, 128°13'50"W



6. VALUED COMPONENTS

Note: Aircraft charter companies have utilized the same takeoff/landing 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 pilots and their clients.

Soil/Land Resources

- The park is 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).

Air/Noise Quality

- No formal observations of air/noise quality have occurred in the park, 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

- Wildlife congregation areas (caribou, migratory birds) are present in the park and vary seasonally. Yohin Lake, Mid Lake, and Fishtrap Creek are, collectively, identified as a Key Migratory Bird Terrestrial Habitat Site (NT Site 17) (CWS, 2008).
- Interaction with SARA-listed species in the parks (i.e.: Collared pika (*Ochotona collaris*), Caribou (*Rangifer tarandus* - boreal population), Woodland caribou (*Rangifer tarandus caribou* - Northern Mountain population) and other species of special significance such as COSEWIC-listed species will be minimal if the mitigation measures described in this screening are followed.



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 (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 the park.

7. EFFECTS ANALYSIS

See "*Parks Canada Best Management Practice (BMP) for Aircraft Operations and Landings in Nahanni and Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserves of Canada*" (Appendix 1).

8. MITIGATION MEASURES

Fireweed Helicopters will adhere to mitigations described in the "*Parks Canada Best Management Practice (BMP) for Aircraft Operations and Landings in Nahanni and Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserves of Canada*" (Appendix 1) and, when applicable, the *Fuel Caching Protocol for Nahanni National Park Reserve and Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve*.

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 & 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)	

- The development description was publically circulated for a 10 day review period (May 10 to May 24th, 2019). Comments were received and addressed.
- The proposal has been approved by the Nahᓂᓂ Dehé Consensus Team.

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
- Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS). 2008. *Key Migratory Bird Terrestrial Sites in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut*, 3rd edition. Occasional Paper No. 14. Environment Canada.
- 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'jᓂᓂ'oh National Park Reserve Management Plan*.
- Parks Canada. 2013. *Cultural Resource Management Policy*.
- Parks Canada. 2010. *Nahanni National Park Reserve of Canada Nahᓂᓂ Dehé Management Plan*.

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

Prepared by: 	Date: June 12, 2019
Approved by:  _____ Jonathan Tsetso Superintendent, Nahanni National Park Reserve	Date: June 12, 2019



APPENDIX 1: Parks Canada Best Management Practice (BMP) for Aircraft Operations and Landings in Nahanni and Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserves of Canada

Note: see attachment in accompanying email