



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 National Parks of Canada Business Licence 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. PROJECT TITLE & LOCATION

Certified Guides Cooperative, Cirque of the Unclimbables Trip Proposal
Cirque of the Unclimbables
Nahᓄᓐ Dehé (Nahanni) National Park Reserve, NT

2. PROPONENT INFORMATION

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3. PROPOSED PROJECT DATES

For a one-week period during July or August, 2017: weather dependent.

4. INTERNAL PROJECT FILE #

NNPRMVRMA-201701



5. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Certified Guides Cooperative (CGC) is proposing a remote wilderness experience and adventure tourism guided trip in Nahʔą Dehé (Nahanni) National Park Reserve (NNPR), specifically at the Cirque of the Unclimbables. The trip will include climbing the Lotus Flower tower via the southeast face route and is proposed for July or August 2017 (weather dependent); maximum trip length is 8 days. Maximum group size will be 3 people: 1 guide and 2 clients.

CGC guides will hire a float plane to deposit/pick up the group at Glacier Lake. They will then hike to Fairy Meadows to camp, a distance of approximately 5 km, one way (see map, Section 14.1). From Fairy Meadows, the group will use the standard approach and descent routes for the Lotus Flower Tower formation and will return to Glacier Lake for their pick-up.

Camping will take place at the established campsite at Glacier Lake (facilities include a shelter/cabin, bear-proof food lockers, and a privy) and at Fairy Meadows (facilities include a 6-barrel outhouse and established informal campsites under the overhangs of erratics and in the meadows). Glacier Lake is a designated float plane and helicopter landing site in the *Nahʔą Dehé (Nahanni) National Park Reserve Management Plan* (2010) and is included in the *National Parks of Canada Aircraft Access Regulations*. The requested visitation by CGC would be included in the current capacity allotment for overnight camping in the Cirque of Unclimbables. This capacity is 12 climber/campers and 30 hiker/campers for a total overnight allotment of 42 overnight visitors per day. There are 77 days in the season and, when multiplied by the 42 overnight visitors per day, results in an annual total potential of 3234 visitor days in the Cirque.

6. VALUED COMPONENTS LIKELY TO BE AFFECTED

Water Quality and Aquatic Ecosystem

- Several alpine streams exist in the Cirque and stream crossings are necessary on the hike to/from Glacier Lake to Fairy Meadows and from Fairy Meadows to the Lotus Flower Tower. The float plane will land and take off from Glacier Lake, which is fish bearing.

Wildlife and Vegetation

- No known *Species at Risk Act* (SARA)-listed vegetation or wildlife species will be impacted. However, sensitive high alpine/tundra vegetation is predominant in the Fairy Meadows base camp area, along with lichen encrusted rocks. Grizzly bears (predominantly below tree line), mountain goats, ground squirrels, and alpine birds are present.
- The project area is located within the Ragged Range MB alpine-subalpine Ecoregion (ECG, 2010). The hiking route to Fairy Meadows follows the treed (primarily spruce) valley floor west from the Glacier Lake drop-off to the foot of the talus slope below



Mount Harrison Smith. It then ascends the talus slope to the base camp at Fairy Meadows. Vegetation in the Cirque area is representative of sensitive high alpine vegetation grading up into largely nonvegetated terrain above 2000 mASL except for lichen crusts on bedrock and boulder colluvium, and small pockets of vascular and non-vascular plants on moist ledges and sheltered areas. Wildlife throughout the project area consists of grizzly bears (predominantly below tree line), ground squirrels, mountain goats, and various birds (ECG, 2010).

Soil and Landforms

- Soil at this altitude is thin to non-existent, particularly above tree line (ECG, 2010).

Heritage Resources

- There is a buried precontact archaeological site at the Cirque, located by the barrel outhouse, and three historic sites have been identified along the north shore of Glacier Lake. One of the sites corresponds to the location of the Frost Creek campground at the west end of the lake where there are a number of culturally modified trees that should be left intact. The other two historic sites are located closer to the juncture of Brintnell Creek at the east end of Glacier Lake.

Visitors

- The Cirque of the Unclimbables is a world-class big-wall climbing area and visitors expect a "pristine" backcountry experience.

7. EFFECTS ANALYSIS

Water Quality and Aquatic Ecosystem

- Risk of contamination if human waste/grey water/fuel is not properly managed.
- Crossing/approaching stream banks/lake shores can result in erosion and associated decrease in water quality.

Wildlife and Vegetation

- Wildlife can be disturbed/attracted by human presence and food and waste smells.
- Vegetation can be trampled from hiking, movement around base camp, and tent placement.
- Lichen can be scraped off rocks from placement of tent flies, gear hanging, and by hiking.

Soil and Landforms

- Soil can be compacted/eroded from hiking, movement around base camp, and tent placement.



Heritage Resources

- Risk of disturbance from visitors to the historic cultural resources at the Frost Creek campground and the sub-surface artifacts at the Cirque.

Visitor Experience/Public Safety

- Risk or serious injury or death in this remote location and "high-risk" activity of big wall climbing.
- The hiking and camping experience can be negatively affected by habituated wildlife and "non-pristine" backcountry conditions (e.g.: presence of waste/careless site use by other users/climbing gear left behind on the wall).

CUMULATIVE EFFECTS:

- Because soils and vegetation regenerate slowly in the alpine environment of this project area, cumulative effects from trampling and erosion can accrue more quickly than at temperate or lower altitudes/latitude. Additionally, contamination from improperly stored/disposed of food, fuel, and waste takes longer to dissipate in alpine environments.

8. MITIGATION MEASURES

General Note:

- The requested visitation by CGC would be included in the current capacity allotment of no more than 12 campers per night (based on capacity of 3 campsites, with 4 people per site) at the Cirque and 42 total (including campers) day visitors x 77 days in the season for an annual total potential of 3234 visitor days.

Public Safety:

1. Groups climbing in the Cirque must register and de-register their trip with the park office in Fort Simpson either in person or over the phone.

Environmental Considerations/Visitor Experience:

2. Use of the draft "*Parks Canada Best Management Practice (BMP) for Aircraft Operations and Landings in Nahanni and Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserves of Canada, Southwest Northwest Territories Field Unit*".
3. Use of the following sections from the draft "*Parks Canada Best Management Practice (BMP) for Commercially Guided Eco-tourism Activities in Nahanni and Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserves of Canada, Southwest Northwest Territories Field Unit*":
 - a. Mitigation Measures Common to all Commercially Guided Eco-Tourism Activities in Nahanni and Nááts'ihch'oh
 - b. Mitigations for Hiking and Mountaineering
 - c. Mitigations for Overnight Camping



9. OTHER Considerations

- ✓ Surveillance: NNPR conducts pre and post-season teleconferences with its business license holders; this will be considered to be the surveillance for CGC's proposed trip.
- 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 magnitude of effects, the short term of the project, the timing and the application of the selected mitigation measures, the project is not likely to cause significant residual adverse effects to natural/cultural resources or visitor experience.

11. EXPERTS CONSULTED/CONSULTATION RECORD

<i>Department:</i> Parks Canada / Government of Canada	<i>Date of Request:</i> April 25, 2017
<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> Cultural resources	
<i>Response:</i> The project area is an area of interest for cultural resources. A survey was conducted in that area in 2012 (Deck, D. 2013. <i>Glacier Lake Archaeological Impact Assessment</i> . Terrestrial Archaeology, Cultural Sciences Branch, Parks Canada Agency) and (Deck, D. 2013. <i>Archaeological Site in Fairy Meadows Yields Early Date</i> . Terrestrial Archaeology, Cultural Sciences Branch, Parks Canada Agency). The main concerns from a CRM perspective are disturbance to the historic cultural resources at the Frost Creek campground and disturbance of the sub-surface artifacts at the Cirque.	



If it is "business as usual" with no actions beyond what is normal for these operators and no subsurface impacts arising, there should be no CRM concerns with the business application. Any permit should include that intentional disturbance of cultural resources is prohibited.

- This proposal was discussed on Oct 21 and December 2, 2016 with the Nahᓃᓴ Dehé Consensus Team providing feedback and comments. An update was provided on Thursday May 18, 2017; no comments were received from team members at that time.
- This preliminary screening was circulated to the list in Appendix 1 for a 21 day review period (May 15 to June 5, 2017). Only two comments were received; positive letters of support from South Nahanni Outfitters Limited (May 15) and the Alpine Club of Canada, Yukon Section (May 29).

11.1 References

Ecosystem Classification Group. 2010. *Ragged Range MB alpine-subalpine Ecoregion, Descriptions for Region 6.1.6.5. Excerpts from 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/default/files/reports/nwt taiga plains enrdoc full report ver 9 revisions2009 2ndprintingerrata corrected april2013web.pdf](http://www.enr.gov.nt.ca/sites/default/files/reports/nwt_taiga_plains_enrdoc_full_report_ver_9_revisions2009_2ndprintingerrata_corrected_april2013web.pdf)



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.



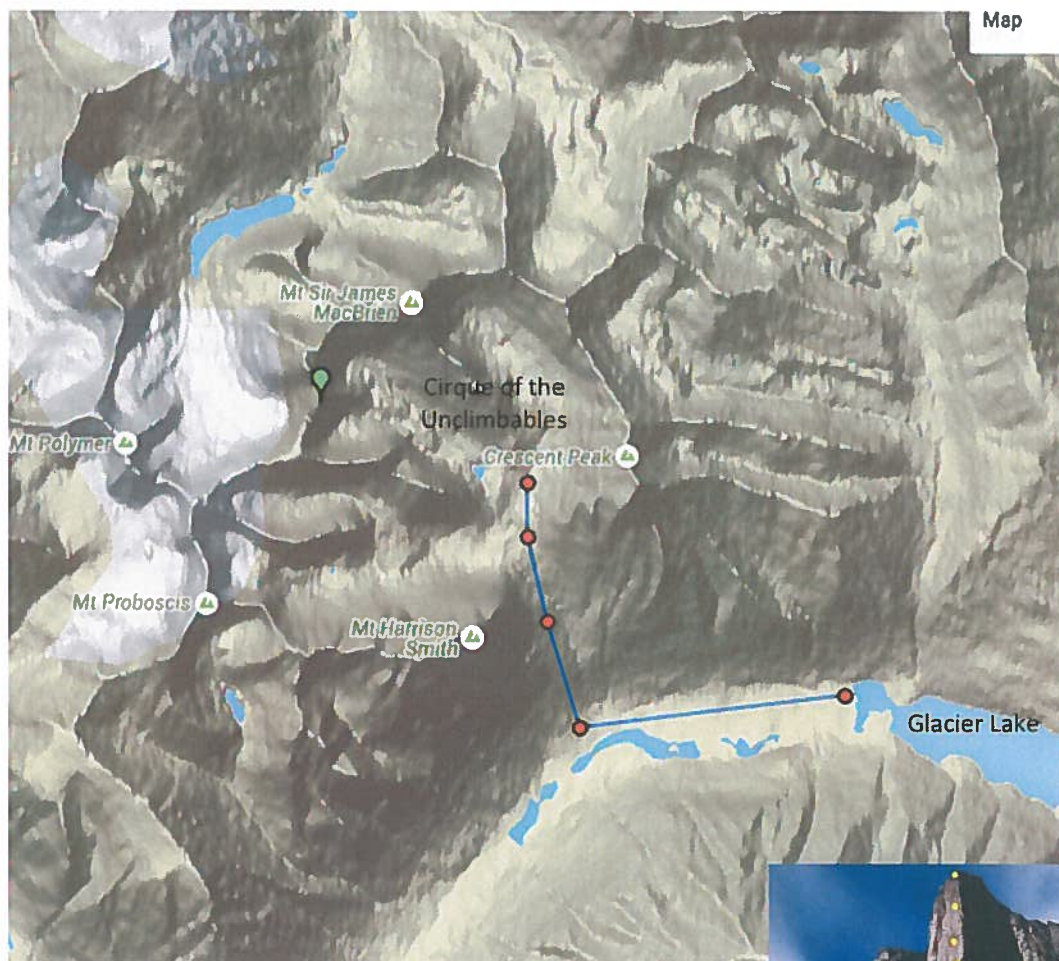
13. RECOMMENDATION AND APPROVAL

Prepared by: Jacquie Bastick Ecologist Team Lead, Nahanni National Park Reserve	Date: June 6, 2017
Recommended by:  Dorothy Stearns Visitor Experience Manager, Nahanni National Park Reserve	Date: 05/06/2017
Approval Signature:  <i>Acting Superintendent</i> Jon Testo Superintendent, Nahanni National Park Reserve	Date: 05/06/2017



14. ATTACHMENTS

14.1. Site Maps





APPENDIX 1: Circulation List

ORGANIZATION	CONTACT
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