

Nahanni National Park Reserve
Southwest Northwest Territories Field Unit
10002 100 Street
Fort Simpson, NT
X0E 0N0

March 23, 2022

To: Distribution List

Re: Notification of Completion of Preliminary Screening of Outfitter Operations in Nahanni and Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserves

In accordance with the *Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act*, Parks Canada has conducted a preliminary screening of Outfitter Operations in Nahanni and Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserves. Parks Canada has determined that the development may proceed after receiving appropriate authorization. Authorization will not occur until the 10-day pause period for preliminary screenings has completed. Please find the completed preliminary screening attached.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Colleen Murchison

A/Resource Conservation Manager, Nahanni National Park Reserve
Parks Canada
Phone: (867) 695-6639
Email: colleen.murchison@pc.gc.ca

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 Licence and Aircraft Access 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 Wilderness Adventures
(888) 897-5223
info@nahanniwild.com

3. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT DATES

Planned commencement: 2022-06-01
Planned completion: 2022-09-30

4. INTERNAL FILE #

NAH2022-002

5. DEVELOPMENT DESCRIPTION

Many visitors accessing Nahanni National Park Reserve (Nahanni) and Nááts'įhch'oh National Park Reserve (Nááts'įhch'oh) do so as clients of commercial outfitting companies. 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. Each guided trip includes a maximum of 15 people (including guides). Commercial river outfitters must obtain Parks Canada business licenses to operate in the parks.

The Guidelines for Licensing of Guided River Outfitting in Nahanni and Nááts'jch'oh National Park Reserves outline the considerations for safety and sustainability, set quotas for visitation and limit the number of licences Parks Canada issues in Nahanni National Park Reserve. As per the licensing guidelines and in accordance with the *Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act* (MVRMA), the activities of commercial outfitting companies must undergo preliminary screening before their licences can be issued. This preliminary screening applies to the following commercial outfitting companies, and includes the listed activities/locations:

Companies

- Black Feather Wilderness Adventure Company
- Nahanni Wilderness Adventures
- Canoe North Adventures

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'ene? Tué and for no longer than 14 days)

Locations (see map, Appendix 1)

WATER-BASED ACTIVITY START LOCATIONS	
Qtaa Tué Fehto (Divide Lake), Nááts'jch'oh	Access to Píjip'enéh léetóó Deé (Broken Skull River) which travels through both parks and for Tátsók'áá Deé (Raven's Throat River) (river outside of the park; outfitters may 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.

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

WATER-BASED ACTIVITY CAMP LOCATIONS	
<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'jhch'oh</i>	
Qtaa Tué Fehto (Divide Lake)	Nááts'jhch'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)	

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). To protect the alpine forests in Nááts'jhch'oh, fires at all lakes are prohibited. This does not apply to Sahtu Dene and Métis. 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

- SARA-listed Bull Trout are present in the South Nahanni River below Nájłjcho (Babaluk, 2015).
- 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 and Bunny Bar alluvial fans (Tate, pers. comm., 2017; Arnold, pers. comm., 2020).
- Five bat species – Little Brown Myotis (*Myotis lucifugus*), Northern Myotis (*M. septentrionalis*), both SARA-listed bat species, Long-legged Myotis (*M. volans*), Big Brown Bat (*Eptesicus fuscus*), and Hoary Bat (*Lasiurus cinereus*) – have been recorded in both parks (Lausen *et al.*, 2014; EDI, 2019), while the occurrence of two additional species – Longeared Myotis (*M. evotis*) and Eastern Red Bat (*L. borealis*) – has only been confirmed within Nahanni (Lausen *et al.*, 2014). As of 2019, two cave sites within Nahanni, including Grotte Valerie, have been confirmed as hibernacula for Myotis bat species and two additional sites are suspected (Horne and Critchley, 2020). Current evidence suggests that Grotte Valerie is likely used as a hibernaculum 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.
- Grizzly Bear (*Ursus arctos* - northwest population) have a widespread distribution throughout the parks (Weaver, 2006). However, grizzly bear encounters in the parks are relatively uncommon with between 0 and 10 sightings reported annually by visitors and park staff in Nahanni from 2010 to 2017 and 1-2 annual sightings reported in Nááats'ihch'oh from 2016 to 2017 (Nahanni National Park Reserve, 2017). The majority of grizzly bear sightings occur in areas of the park where food caches are provided for visitors to store food and other attractants – Gahnjthah Mje, Nájłjcho and Glacier Lake. With lower visitor numbers and no designated camping areas/food caches, Nááats'ihch'oh communicates notices of bear activity to visitors as early as possible. In Nááats'ihch'oh, camping within 1km of hot springs is prohibited. This is in part due to the high observations of grizzly bear activity recorded on remote cameras. Additionally, in accordance with Nahanni's Bear Management Plan, all reported bear observations are carefully reviewed by park staff to determine whether management action (e.g., public alerts, area closures, etc.) should be taken to prevent human-bear conflict.
- 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-listed species, exists at various locations along the Flat and South Nahanni

ivers (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 four are in Zone II Wilderness areas (Parks Canada, 2010); revised zoning or alternate protection measures are being 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).
- Public access to Zone I special preservation areas with significant cultural importance, including Mount Nááts'j'ch'oh and Chitú (Yohin Lake), is not allowed (Parks Canada, 2010; Parks Canada, 2017). Public access to the south tufa mound at Gahnjthah is permitted through guided hikes only (Parks Canada, 2010). Traditional use by local First Nations and Sahtu Métis is not restricted through park zoning

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 a 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'j'ch'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'j'ch'oh National Park Reserves of Canada*" (Appendix 2)

Additional mitigations for base camping at Nionep'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

8.1 COVID-19 CONSIDERATIONS

Outfitters, as well as their employees and clients, must comply with all directions and orders issued by the Northwest Territories Chief Medical Health Officer to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

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
- Additional conditions may be placed on business licenses for Nááts'ihch'oh

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)	
<i>Department:</i> Parks Canada / Government of Canada	<i>Date of Request:</i> June 15, 2017
<i>Expert's Name & Contact Information:</i> Doug Tate 22 Third Street, Nipigon, ON, P0T 2J0 Doug.Tate@canada.ca / Tel: 807-372-0011	<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)	

<p><i>Departments:</i> Wildlife Conservation Society Canada Parks Canada / Government of Canada</p>	<p><i>Date of Request:</i> November 2017</p>
<p><i>Experts Names & Contact Information:</i> Cori Lausen Suite 204 - 344 Bloor Street West, Toronto, ON M5S 3A7 cLausen@wcs.org Greg Horne 1 Compound road, Jasper, AB greg.horne@canada.ca / Mobile: 780-883-0253</p>	<p><i>Titles:</i> Associate Conservation Scientist Resource Management Officer II</p>
<p><i>Expertise Requested:</i> Information on bat species potentially using Grotte Valerie as a hibernaculum</p>	
<p><i>Response:</i> See information in section 6 (Valued Components)</p>	
<p><i>Department:</i> Parks Canada / Government of Canada</p>	<p><i>Date of Request:</i> February 21, 2020</p>
<p><i>Expert's Name & Contact Information:</i> Sarah Arnold PO Box 348, Fort Simpson, NT X0E 0N0 sarah.arnold@canada.ca / Tel: 867-695-7768</p>	<p><i>Title:</i> Ecologist Team Lead, Nahanni National Park Reserve</p>
<p><i>Expertise Requested:</i> Information on Common Nighthawk nesting locations</p>	
<p><i>Response:</i> See information in section 6 (Valued Components)</p>	



11.1 References

- Arnold, S. 2020. Personal communication February 2020. Ecologist Team Leader, Nahanni National Park Reserve, Parks Canada.
- 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).
- 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
- EDI. 2019. *HPAR Wildlife Baseline Studies – 2019 Field Season Results Summary*. Unpublished report.
- Horne, G. 2016. *Nahanni National Park Reserve, Report of Bat and Cave Monitoring - 2016*. Unpublished report.
- Horne, G. and D. Critchley. 2020. *Nahanni National Park Reserve, Report of Bat and Cave Monitoring – 2019*. Unpublished report.
- Lausen *et al.* 2014. *Bats of Nahanni National Park Reserve and Surrounding Areas, Northwest Territories*. *Northwestern Naturalist*. 95:186-196.
- Lausen, C. and G. Horne. Email, November 2017.
- 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.
- Nahanni National Park Reserve. 2017. *Bear Observation Database*. Unpublished raw data. Parks Canada.
- Canada. 2010. *Nahanni National Park Reserve of Canada Nahʔq Dehé Management Plan*. Parks Canada.
- Canada. 2013. *Cultural Resource Management Policy*.
- Parks Canada. 2017. *Nááts'jch'oh National Park Reserve Management Plan*.



Parks Canada. 2019. Guidelines for Licensing of Guided River Outfitting in Nahanni and Nááts'jch'oh National Park Reserves. Available online at: <https://www.pc.gc.ca/en/pn-nt/nt/nahanni/info/guides>

Tate, D. 2017. Personal communication June 2017. Ecologist Team Leader, Lake Superior National Marine Conservation Area, Parks Canada.

Weaver, J.L. 2006. Big Animals and Small Parks: Implications of Wildlife Distribution and Movements for Expansion of Nahanni National Park Reserve. Wildlife Conservation Society Canada. Conservation Report No. 1.

12. REVIEW PERIOD

The development description was sent to the MVEIRB, for posting on the public registry, and the distribution list on March 1, 2022. Anyone from the public could provide comments on or before March 22, 2022. No concerns were raised by the public.

13. DECISION

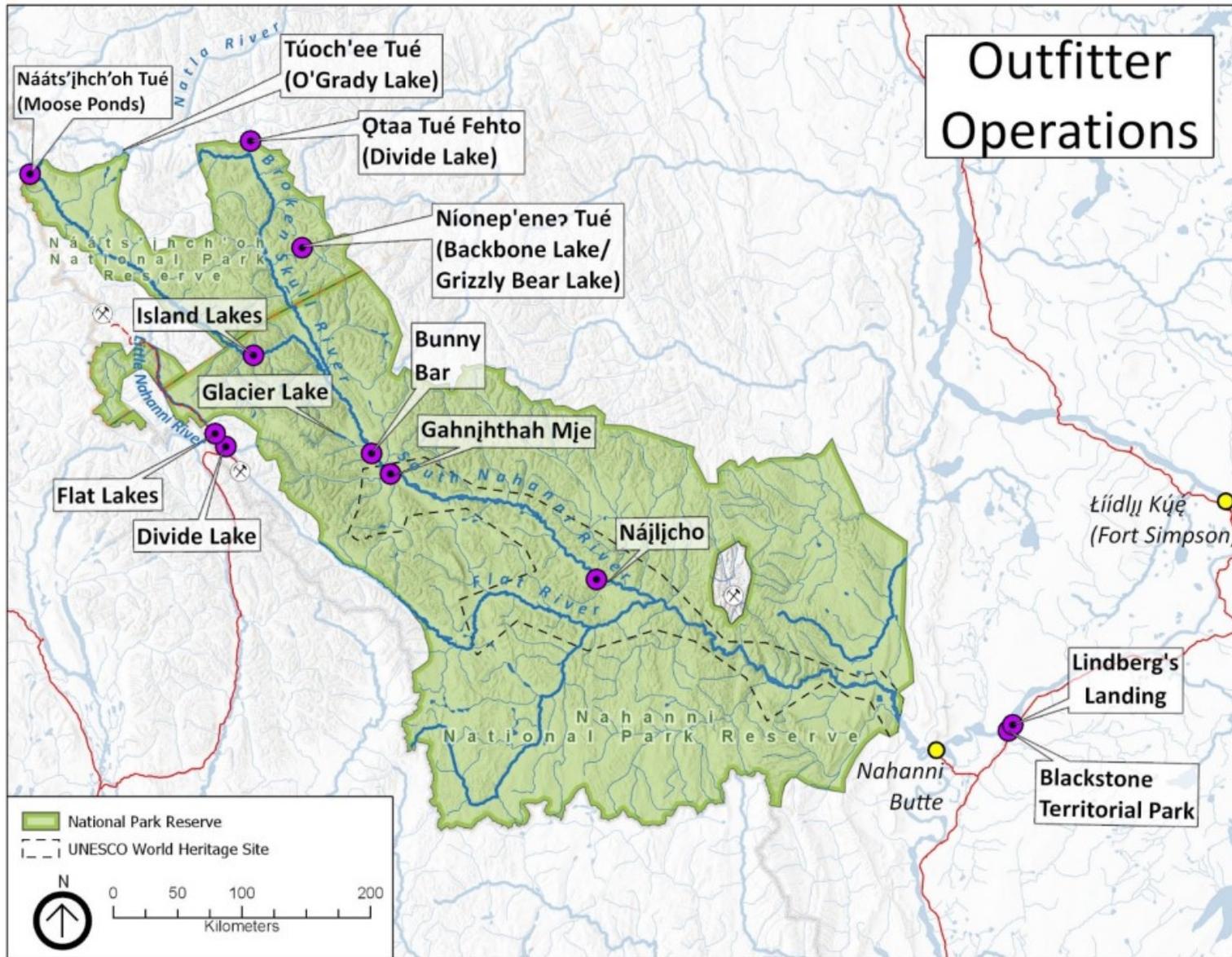
Taking into account the analysis and implementation of mitigation measures outlined in the analysis, the development:

- 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.



14. APPROVAL

Prepared by: <i>Colleen Murchison</i> Ecologist Team Leader, Nahanni National Park Reserve Johanna Robson Resource Management Supervisor, Nááts'jéhch'oh National Park Reserve	Date: March 22, 2022
Approved by:  <i>Nadine Gauvin</i> Superintendent, Nááts'jéhch'oh National Park	Date: March 23, 2022
Approved by:  <i>Vanessa Murtzell</i> A/Superintendent, Nahanni National Park Reserve	Date: March 23, 2022





APPENDIX 2: Parks Canada Best Management Practice (BMP) for Commercially Guided Ecotourism Activities in Nahanni and Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserves of Canada

Note: see attachment in accompanying email



APPENDIX 3 - Distribution List

<i>Organization</i>	<i>Contact</i>
Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board	preliminaryscreening@reviewboard.ca
Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board	jpotten@mvlwb.com ; tyree@mvlwb.com
Grand Chief Kenneth Cayen Dehcho First Nations	Grandchief_cayen@dehcho.org
Executive Director Alison de Pelham Dehcho First Nations	executivedirector@dehcho.org
Chief Kele Antoine Liidlii Kue First Nation	chief@liidliikue.com
Executive Director Liza McPherson Liidlii Kue First Nation	exdir@liidliikue.com
Chief Stanley Sanguetz JMR First Nation	chief@jmrfn.com
Chief Steve Vital Nahanni Butte Dene Band	chiefsteve.nbdb@gmail.com
Chief Joachim Bonnetrouge Deh Gah Gotie First Nation	chief@dehgahgotie.ca
Chief Lloyd Chicot Ka'a'gee Tu First Nation	kaageetu_chief@northwestel.net
Chief Dolphus Jumbo Sambaa K'e Dene Band	chief@sambaakefn.com
Chief Lloyd Moses Pehdzeh Ki First Nation	chief@pkfn.ca
Sub-Chief Florence Cayen West Point First Nation	chief@wpfn.ca
President Clifford McLeod Fort Providence Métis Council	fpmcpres@northwestel.net
President Daniel Peterson Fort Simpson Métis Local	metisnation52@northwestel.net
Keyna Norwegian	eaglefirelogistics@gmail.com
Air Tindi	info@airtindi.com
Alpine Aviation	alpineaviation@gmail.com
Black Sheep Aviation & Cattle Co. Ltd.	info@flyblacksheep.ca
Great Slave Helicopters 2018	fortsimpson@gsheli.com
Kluane Airways Ltd	info@kluaneairways.com
Liard Air Ltd	info@nrlodge.com
Northern Rockies Air Charter Ltd.	info@scooplake.com
North-Wright Airways Ltd	ops@north-wrightairways.com
Simpson Air 1981 Ltd	simpsonair@northwestel.net
Solitude Excursions Ltd	hike@helihikenahanni.com



South Nahanni Airways	info@southnahanniairways.ca ; charters@southnahanniairways.ca
Summit Air and Summit Helicopters	peter.rice@summithelicopters.ca info@flysummitair.com
Trans North Turbo Air Limited	dpachiorka@tntaheli.com
Tundra Helicopters	tundrahelicopters@hotmail.com
Goose Flying Services	gooseflyingcorp@outlook.com
Black Feather The Wilderness Adventure Company	info@blackfeather.com
Nahanni Wilderness Adventures	adventures@nahanniwild.com
Canoe North Adventures	info@canoenorthadventures.com
Jennifer Thistle , Regional Superintendent, Dehcho Industry, Tourism and Investment, Government of the Northwest Territories	Jennifer_Thistle@gov.nt.ca
Douglas Dillon (Aboriginal Tourism Development Officer, Industry, Tourism and Investment - Tourism and Parks Division Government of the Northwest Territories)	Douglas_Dillon@gov.nt.ca
Chief Executive Officer Donna Lee Demarcke NWT Tourism	executive@spectacularnwt.com
CPAWS, NWT Chapter	nwtadmin@cpaws.org
Tulita Land/Financial Corporation	president@tulitalandcorp.ca executivedirector@tulitalandcorp.ca
Fort Norman Metis Land Corporation	rockynorwegian@gmail.com execdirno60@gmail.com
Norman Wells Land Corporation	hci2@theedgenw.ca
Tulita Renewable Resources Council	trrc@northwestel.net
Norman Wells Renewable Resources Council	sahtuapple@hotmail.com nwrrc@nwlc.ca
Tulita District Land Corporation	hci2@theedgenw.ca district@allstream.net



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

February 2018

This Best Management Practice (BMP) examines potential interactions between the environment¹ and commercially guided eco-tourism activities in Nahanni National Park Reserve (hereafter Nahanni) and Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve (hereafter Nááts'ihch'oh). **The BMP is a component of the preliminary screening process and mitigations will be applied as required to commercial guiding operations as a condition of their business licence.**

Impact Assessment Officers (IAOs) may recommend use of this BMP during Step 4 (Conduct Preliminary Screening) of PCA's Preliminary Screening Process under the *Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act* (MVRMA). The IAO must ensure that the development is recorded in the [Parks Canada National Impact Assessment Tracking System \(northern section\)](#).

Name of Best Management Practice (BMP)	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.
Scope of Application:	<p>This BMP provides the preliminary screening assessment and mitigations required for the following activities:</p> <p>Commercially guided eco-tourism activities including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Items common to all activities (e.g.: waste management) • Hiking (on and off established trails) • Mountaineering (rock/ice climbing, ski touring) • Overnight camping (only occurs in association with other activities and includes camping at established and random sites) • Non-motorized boating (rafting, canoeing, kayaking, stand up paddle board, pack raft [only on the Broken Skull, Little and South Nahanni, and Flat rivers], and associated portaging) • Fishing (only occurs in association with other activities) <p><u>APPLICATION OF THIS BMP</u> This BMP will be applied, as relevant, as part of the terms and conditions of the business licence for commercial guiding operations.</p>
Exceptions:	<p>This BMP must either be amended, or a preliminary screening form completed, to address additional effects if the commercially guided eco-tourism activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • has the potential for residual adverse effects on an individual or a residence of a listed species at risk² (endangered, threatened, or

¹ Environment: land, water, air or any other component of the environment, as well as on wildlife harvesting, the social and cultural environment, and heritage resources (MVRMA, s 111(1)).

² Species at risk as listed on Schedule 1 of the *Species at Risk Act*

	<p>extirpated status) or any adverse effects on the critical habitat of a listed species at risk.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • requires a permanent or semi-permanent backcountry camp for the season; • is a large-scale operation (i.e.: greater than 15 people, excluding guides). • is a new type of commercially guided eco-tourism activity and/or is not listed in the “scope of application” section of this BMP. <p>Note: Guided activities in the case of emergencies (e.g.: rescue of sick, injured, or stranded clients) are not subject to this BMP or to the Environmental Impact Assessment process.</p> <p>Note: Impact Assessment advice: If there is any uncertainty concerning the application of this BMP, consult a member of the Impact Assessment Team.</p> <p>Species at Risk advice: If there is any uncertainty regarding potential adverse effects to species at risk, consult a member of the Species and Conservation Management Team.</p> <p>Cultural Resource advice: If there is any uncertainty regarding potential adverse effects to cultural resources, consult Patrick Carroll (Cultural Resource Management Advisor, SW NWT Field Unit)</p>
<p>Approved geographic area of application:</p>	<p>This BMP is intended for use in Nahanni National Park Reserve of Canada and Nááts’ihch’oh National Park Reserve of Canada.</p>

Effects Assessment (components of the environment that may be affected)

Potential effects from the commercially guided eco-tourism activities described in the "scope of application" section for Nahanni and Nááts'ihch'oh are well understood and predictable. They include:

Soil/Land Resources

- Soil compaction and rutting (from foot traffic and tent placement)
- Soil contamination (decomposition of garbage and solid human waste on the soil and spills of camp fuel, bleach etc. could release toxic chemicals that could leach into the soil)
- Soil and rock scarring/burning from fires
- Removal of fossils (Operators and/or clients may remove fossils from park)

Air/Noise Quality

- Decreased site-specific air quality (from campfire smoke)
- Site-specific noise pollution (talking/socializing by groups)

Aquatic Resources

- Compaction, rutting, and erosion of riparian areas (from human use and trampling at shoreline boat disembarkation and launching/pull up sites and at drinking/washing/cooking water collection locations)
- Decreased water quality (from improperly managed garbage and solid human waste and activities such as washing, bathing, and cooking)
- Negative impacts to fish populations (from overfishing, damage to habitat by foot traffic or decreased water quality, and the inadvertent introduction of non-native species (on waders and other gear)

Flora and Fauna

- Plant/berry collection
- Inadvertent introduction of non-native species (e.g.: seeds transported on footwear or clothing)
- Compaction of vegetation (from foot traffic and tent placement)
- Disturbance to plant and animal health (decomposition of garbage on the soil could release toxic chemicals that could be harmful to vegetation and wildlife)
- Conditioning of wildlife to human garbage and/or food (improperly managed solid waste and/or stored food/fuel are an attractant to wildlife, altering their behavior, movement patterns and natural feeding habits. Large wildlife (e.g.: bears) that receive food rewards are potential threats to public safety and may need to be relocated or destroyed)
- Wildlife disturbance (noise and wildlife viewing could cause displacement from habitat or alteration in the use of movement corridors)
- Disturbance, damage, or destruction of beds, roosts, or nests (by foot traffic or firewood collection)

- Human/wildlife conflict (camping and hiking near wildlife may result in human-wildlife conflict. If human life is in danger, the animal may need to be relocated or destroyed)
- Species at Risk: Although species at risk exist in both park reserves covered under this BMP it is not expected that commercially guided eco-tourism activities will result in residual adverse effects if the mitigations described in this BMP are applied.

Visitor Experience

- Decrease in wilderness and aesthetic experience (improperly disposed of garbage and/or human waste and disturbance to other visitors if groups are too numerous and/or closely spaced)

Social/Cultural Environment (including Wildlife Harvesting)

- Impacts to land use experience by Indigenous people (if visitor activities alter behaviours of harvested wildlife)
- Impacts to cultural and/or traditional renewable resource harvesting activities of Indigenous people (if visitor activities result in increased time and efforts for locating and harvesting wildlife)

Heritage Resources: (from MVRMA (s.2) - *archaeological or historic sites, burial sites, artifacts and other objects of historical, cultural, or religious significance, and historical or cultural records* and from PCA, 2013 - *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*)

- Trampling or unauthorized removal/disturbance of heritage resources
- Spills from camp stove refueling could contaminate or damage heritage resources

Mitigation Measures

[Mitigation Measures Common to all Commercially Guided Eco-Tourism Activities in Nahanni and Nááts'jch'oh](#)

[Mitigations for Hiking and Mountaineering](#)

[Mitigations for Overnight Camping](#)

[Mitigations for Non-Motorized Boating](#)

[Mitigations for Fishing in Nahanni](#)

Mitigation Measures Common to all Commercially Guided Eco-Tourism Activities in Nahanni and Nááts'ihch'oh

General

1. Check for, remove and dispose of into garbage containers any bur-like seedpods or mud from equipment, boots, clothing, and pets prior to departure to reduce risk of introducing invasive plant species.
2. Guides must inform clients that:
 - i. Vegetation and natural objects (e.g.: bones, antlers, rocks, fossils, plants and berries) cannot be collected, removed, defaced, damaged, or destroyed.
 - ii. If a dog is brought into the park, it must be kept on leash at all times and must not be left unattended. Immunizations must be up to date and waste must be dealt with the same way as human waste.
 - iii. When approaching water sources, remain on durable materials and avoid trampling vegetation wherever possible to help reduce erosion.
 - iv. Indigenous people can and may be exercising their traditional rights, including harvesting and motorized access, within park boundaries.
 - v. Heritage resources (defined above) must not be removed or otherwise disturbed. It is important that artifacts are left in place as their relationship to each other and the landscape tells an interpretive story.
 - vi. The discovery of a heritage resource must be reported to guides and Parks Canada. Include information on what was seen, the location of where the material was encountered and, if possible, a GPS coordinate and photograph.
 - vii. Rocks must not be removed or disturbed from any features that look, even remotely, like they were human made. These include, for example, cairns (rock piles), tent rings, and food caches.
 - viii. Inuksuks are not representative of the park or local Indigenous practises and should not be built.
 - ix. Parks Canada maintenance equipment and boats must not be used by visitors or guides.

Management of Solid Waste and Food

3. Reduce litter by minimizing the amount of cans, bottles, tin foil, styrofoam, and other wrappers/packaging taken into the park.
4. Organics (e.g.: cardboard, food waste, paper) may be burnt where fires are permitted, all other solid waste/garbage must be packed out on the same trip as they were brought in. Ensure food particles are completely burned; any unburned items must be packed out.
5. All food, garbage (including used hygiene products), and scented and flavoured toiletries (minimize the amount brought in) must be stored and secured from wildlife using one of the following methods appropriate to the camping location:
 - i. In sealed hard-sided containers.
 - ii. Food caches are available at Gahn̄hthah M̄je (Rabbitkettle Lake), Ná̄l̄l̄cho (Virginia Falls), and the park cabin at Glacier Lake.

6. All dishes and food utensils must be washed and stored immediately after use. Food particles must be strained from dishwater and stored with garbage, or burned.
7. Excess fuel, food, or other material must be packed out and disposed of at an approved facility.
8. When feasible, pick up litter left by others.
9. Report accumulations of solid waste or large items, such as empty fuel drums, to park staff.

Management of Human Waste

10. When pit privies, outhouses, or composting toilets are not available:
 - i. Where possible, urinate and defecate at least 60 meters away from travel routes, camping areas, water bodies, and heritage resources. Rocky or gravelly sites may reduce attraction of wild animals and are preferred sites for urination.
 - ii. Bury solid human waste in a shallow hole 15 to 20 cm deep (in snow/glaciers bury as deep as possible) and at least 60 metres away from travel routes, camping areas, water bodies, and heritage resources. Cover and disguise the hole when finished; avoid disturbing plant communities.
 - iii. Pack out or burn (in fire box or designated fire pit) all used toilet paper.
 - iv. Pack out all used hygiene products.
 - v. For larger commercial groups it is important to schedule “bathroom breaks” at random locations before arriving at well used or scenic viewpoints and campsites to reduce visual and aesthetic impacts and to avoid concentration of potential contaminants in one location.

Management of Grey Water and Fuel

11. At lake campsites, deposit strained grey water by dispersing widely on land at least 60 m away from water. At all other sites, deposit in fast moving river water. At Nájljcho (Virginia Falls), deposit strained grey water into the river.
12. Minimize the use of soap for dishwashing, laundry and bathing. Wash at least 60m away from lakes. Use biodegradable soaps.
13. Store fuel in leak-proof containers with a secondary containment unit (e.g.: river barrel or dry bag) and use a funnel when pouring.
14. Refueling of camp stoves shall occur at least 30 m from the high water mark of any water body.
15. Fuel shall not be stored or decanted near heritage resources as spillage would contaminate soil and potential buried resources, and inhibit opportunity for specialized residue analysis or dating.

Management of Human/Wildlife Interactions

16. Manage groups during wildlife viewing opportunities such that the animal's normal behaviour is not disturbed:
 - i. Do not approach and never feed, call, entice or disturb wildlife.
 - ii. Do not block lines of escape. If the animal(s) approach, display signs of aggression or any behaviour changes, move away immediately. Be

- especially suspicious if wildlife appears "friendly" or "tame" as it may be diseased or wounded.
- iii. Keep the group close together.
 - iv. Use binoculars in situations where it is desirable to enhance viewing opportunities.
17. Avoid carcasses, wildlife den/nest sites, calving areas, concentrations of birds (i.e.: breeding colonies and moulting areas) or young animals. Where possible, remain at least 300 m from these areas.
 18. Watch for bird nests and chicks so as to not step on them; many northern birds are ground nesters.
 - i. The *Migratory Birds Convention Act* (1994) and its regulations protect migratory birds and prohibit the disturbance or destruction of migratory bird nests and eggs in Canada. For a list of migratory birds protected under the Act, see <https://www.ec.gc.ca/nature/default.asp?lang=En&n=421B7A9D-1>
 - ii. Common Nighthawk are known to nest on the Prairie Creek Fan; nesting period begins in late May/early June and potentially extends to early August. This species nests in open areas, typically on sand if they can find it and may use a shrub or log as a backing object for their nest. Nests are difficult to locate, but they will have an adult on them during the day. To avoid stepping on a nest pay close attention while walking through an area of high risk, and if you flush a bird off the ground, back up and make a large circle around the area to avoid stepping on the eggs or nestlings. Once a location of a nest is known set up a no-disturbance buffer area; typically 50 to 100 m. Sightings of Common Nighthawk must be reported to Parks Canada.
 19. Leave an area immediately if a den, nest, or young animal is accidentally encountered.
 20. Report wildlife sightings and encounters, unusual wildlife behavior, injured animals, and carcasses to Parks Canada. Marked animals (radio collars, ear tags, leg bands on birds, neck bands on swans) shall also be reported.
 21. No person shall enter a cave in the parks.
 22. Adhere to the guidelines in the "*Nahanni National Park Reserve Bears and People*" brochure.

Management of Visitor Experience

23. All water to be used for drinking or cooking should be boiled, or filtered and treated chemically to eliminate water-borne pathogens.
24. Outfitters or individual guides do not have authority over management of visitors or visitation. Guides cannot compel or instruct non-guided visitors to stay away from popular campsites.
25. Lead guides are requested to complete the Nahanni river trip survey upon completion of each trip. These surveys assist with resource conservation and management planning.
26. Day visitors should bring their own filled water bottles to avoid having to pack in water purification equipment.

Mitigations for Hiking and Mountaineering

On-route travel

1. Make use of existing routes and established facilities where possible, appropriate, and available.
2. Where possible, remain on routes, do not use shortcuts or cut switchbacks and inform clients of the associated environmental impacts including vegetation damage, soil erosion, and damage to trail infrastructure.
3. Do not make markers, cairns, or inuksuks, and never damage vegetation to mark a route.
4. Concentrate rest stops in areas that are established for these purposes or that are resistant to impact (e.g.: gravel areas).

Off-route travel

5. Follow or utilize the most durable surfaces whenever possible (e.g.: rock, talus, gravel, sand and seasonally dry gravel stream bottoms). Snow is also a durable preferred travel surface provided that groups are equipped for comfort and safety.
6. Avoid concentrating use in sensitive areas such as wet meadows, steep slopes and riparian areas, or other areas close to water.

Zone 1 Areas

7. No person shall enter a Zone 1 Special Preservation Area in Nahanni unless specifically authorized by Parks Canada. These areas are:
 - i. Gahnjthah (Rabbitkettle Hotsprings)
 - ii. Wildmint Hotsprings
 - iii. Old Pots Hotsprings
 - iv. Grotte Valerie
 - v. Chitú (Yohin Lake)
 - vi. Nintsí Daheda (Sand Blowouts)
 - vii. Deadmen Valley Sheep Licks
8. No person shall enter the Zone 1 Special Preservation Area in Nááts'jch'oh. This area is:
 - i. Mount Nááts'jch'oh (Mount Wilson)

Mountaineering

9. Pack out solid human waste from locations where proper disposal is not possible (e.g.; big walls, areas with no mineral soil in which to dig catholes).
10. Minimize the amount of gear left behind at anchor or rappel stations, where possible and safe.
11. Use dull or appropriately coloured anchors, bolt hangers, slings, or other gear when gear is necessarily left in place.
12. Do not leave behind fixed line and ropes, food caches, or broken equipment.
13. Use slings to protect trees used for anchors.

Mitigations for Overnight Camping

1. Make use of camping facilities where provided. Otherwise, select campsites in durable locations.
2. Do not dig trenches around tents or build rock wind breaks.
3. If rocks are used to secure tents, disperse after use.
4. Do not modify areas to create camping sites.
5. Portable stoves, fire boxes, and other cooking implements must be set up on durable, heat resistant surfaces and away from vegetation or litter where possible.
6. Disperse ashes from fire boxes into moving water.
7. Where fires are permitted they must be only in designated fire pits or in fire boxes. Fires must be kept small and noise around the fire minimized in campsites shared with other users.
8. At all lakes in Nááts'ihch'oh, it is prohibited to collect, remove, deface, damage, or destroy dead wood, drift wood or wood of any kind for the purpose of making fires.
9. At Nailicho, use wood supplied by parks staff.
10. For all other locations within the park reserves, the use of fallen dead wood / drift wood is permitted unless otherwise posted.
11. Do not use leftover construction material as firewood unless provided by Parks Canada staff.
12. Do not bring firewood into a national park¹.
13. For reasons of wildlife safety, cooking, eating, and supply areas shall be set up at least 50 m away from tenting areas where possible.

¹ As per Canadian Food Inspection Agency guidelines

Mitigations for Non-Motorized Boating

1. Maintain visual contact with all boats in a group and stay within easy calling distance, when feasible, to minimize the spatial extent of, and repeated impacts to, wildlife.
2. When viewing wildlife, move to the opposite side of the river, stay in the boat, and remain as quiet as possible.
3. Do not approach swimming animals as this may cause stress and endanger them.

Mitigations for Fishing in Nahanni*

These mitigations only apply in Nahanni, as fishing is currently not permitted in Nááts'jéhch'oh.

A Parks Canada fishing license must be purchased and all park fishing regulations adhered to, under the *National Parks of Canada Fishing Regulations*. Guides are prohibited from fishing in Nahanni while carrying out duties for which they are employed as per Section 27 of the *National Parks of Canada Fishing Regulations*. In addition, the following mitigations are proposed to minimize negative impacts of fishing on aquatic environments:

1. Rubber-soled waders should be worn due to the difficulty in disinfecting felt-soled waders (creating the potential for unintentional introduction of exotic species).
2. Dispose of entrails by puncturing the swim bladder and depositing them into moving water downstream of camp².
3. Always clean your catch at least 50 m away from campsites, picnic sites, rest areas, or other facilities.
4. Do not play fish to exhaustion. Instead, use a landing net to bring fish under control before they're played out.
5. Catch and release fishing is discouraged in order to minimize stress to fish.

If catch and release fishing, the following guidelines apply:

6. Wet your hands when handling live fish. Dry hands and gloves will remove the protective mucous coating and scales.
7. Handle fish in the net. Grasp them across the back and head for firm but gentle control, keeping fingers away from the gills.
8. Use only barbless hooks and turn fish belly-up when removing hooks. This disorients them momentarily for easier, quicker handling.
9. Do not remove swallowed hooks. Instead, cut the line next to the fish's mouth.
10. Do not keep fish out of the water more than 10-15 seconds. Fragile gills are damaged after that, especially in cold weather.
11. 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 upstream in the current, gently moving it back and forth to move water past its gills. Be patient and give the fish as much time as it needs to recover and swim away on its own.
12. Choose wading locations where impacts to fish habitat may be minimized (e.g.: harder substrates).
13. Retrieve as many snagged hooks and lines as possible.

²This requires a superintendent's notice subject to s.26 (1) and s.26 (2) of the *National Parks of Canada Fishing Regulations*.

*Note that some of this information may be moved, at a future date, to the fishing brochure/information provided to visitors, which currently provides an overview of fishing

regulations as required by the *National Parks of Canada Fishing Regulations* (e.g. types of lures, hooks, and bait permitted; catch limits)

Approval

Name: Jonathan Tsetso (Superintendent, Nahanni NPR)	Date: February 21, 2018
Signature: 	
Name: Laani Uunila (Superintendent, Nááts'ihch'oh NPR)	Date: February 21, 2018
Signature: 	

Review Period

Review required: Every 3-5 years

Last reviewed: February 2018

References

In addition to receiving expert park-specific review and review by business licence holders, this BMP has been adapted from:

- Parks Canada Agency. March 2011. *Model Class Screening Report for Commercial Activities in the Northern National Parks of Canada (Aulavik National Park of Canada and Tuktoyaktuk National Park of Canada)*.
- Parks Canada Agency. April 2008 (original January 2005). *Model Class Screening Report for Aquatic-based Commercial Guiding Activities in the Mountain National Parks of Canada (Banff National Park of Canada, Jasper National Park of Canada, Kootenay National Park of Canada, Yoho National Park of Canada, and Waterton Lakes National Park of Canada)*.
- Parks Canada Agency. October 2009. *Model Class Screening Report for Land-based Commercial Guiding Activities in the Mountain National Parks of Canada (Banff National Park of Canada, Glacier National Park of Canada, Jasper National Park of Canada, Kootenay National Park of Canada, Mount Revelstoke National Park of Canada, Yoho National Park of Canada, and Waterton Lakes National Park of Canada)*
- Parks Canada Agency. 2013. *Cultural Resource Management Policy*. Heritage Conservation and Commemoration Directorate, Parks Canada