

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

July 28, 2022

To: Distribution List

Re: Notification of Completion of Preliminary Screening of Summit Mountain Guides in Nahanni National Park Reserve

In accordance with the *Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act*, Parks Canada has conducted a preliminary screening of Summit Mountain Guides in Nahanni National Park Reserve. Parks Canada has determined that the development may proceed after receiving appropriate authorization and completion of the pause period for preliminary screenings.

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 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

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

2. PROPONENT INFORMATION

David Lussier
Summit Mountain Guides
1106 Hall Mines Road
Nelson, BC
V1L 1G6
(250) 354-9028
summitmountainguides@gmail.com

3. PROPOSED PROJECT DATES

14 days between August 2-16, 2022; weather dependent

4. INTERNAL PROJECT FILE #

NAH2022-003



5. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Summit Mountain Guides (SMG) is proposing a remote wilderness experience and adventure tourism guided trip in Nahᓃᓗ Dehé (Nahanni) National Park Reserve (NNPR), specifically at the Cirque of the Unclimbables (see site maps below). The trip will include climbing the Lotus Flower Tower and is proposed for a maximum 14-day period from August 2-16, 2022; exact timing of the trip will depend on weather. Maximum group size will be 3 people: 1 guide and 2 clients.

SMG will fly in via float plane from Finlayson Lake to Glacier Lake with Kluane Airways, a licensed aircraft carrier in the park. The group will hike to Fairy Meadows to camp, a distance of approximately 5 km, one way. From Fairy Meadows, they will use the standard approach and descent routes for the Lotus Flower Tower formation and will return to Glacier Lake for their float plane pick-up. Camping may take place at the established campsite at Glacier Lake (facilities include an emergency shelter/cabin, bear-proof food lockers, and a privy) and will take place at Fairy Meadows (facilities include a 6-barrel outhouse and informal campsites under the overhangs of erratics and in the meadows).

The Cirque of the Unclimbables is a world-class big-wall climbing area and represents a "pristine" backcountry experience. The natural environment is representative of high-altitude northern regions with thin soil and sensitive high alpine/tundra vegetation. No species listed on the Species at Risk Act (SARA) are known to use the project area, though Collared pika (*Ochotona collaris*) are present in the area and have been assessed as Special Concern by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC). 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.

The group will follow a leave-no-trace camping/wilderness use ethic and will adhere to the mitigations described in the Parks Canada Best Management Practice for Commercially Guided Eco-tourism Activities in Nahanni and Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserves of Canada. The current capacity allotment at the Cirque is no more than 12 campers per night (based on capacity of 3 campsites, with 4 people per site) and 42 total (including campers) day visitors x 77 days in the season for an annual total potential of 3234 visitor days. During the requested visitation period (August 2-16), SMG's booking does not exceed the capacity allotment of 12 visitors but does increase the number of campsites to 4. All the groups will be climbing during the 6 day overlapping period, and it is not expected that the additional campsite will have significant adverse effects on the natural or cultural heritage of the area.

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 but contains no known *Species at Risk Act* (SARA)-listed species.

Wildlife and Vegetation

- 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 non-vegetated 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.
- 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. Wildlife throughout the project area consists of grizzly bears (predominantly below tree line), ground squirrels, mountain goats, and various birds (ECG, 2010). The COSEWIC assessed Collared pika (Special Concern) is known to inhabit the talus patches in Fairy Meadows.

Soil and Landforms

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

Heritage Resources

- There is a buried pre-contact 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 must be left intact. The other two historic sites are located closer to the juncture of Britnell Creek at the east end of Glacier Lake (these are not in the proposed project area).

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 as well as food and waste.
- Vegetation can be trampled and/or compacted from hiking, movement around base camp, and tent placement.
- Inadvertent introduction of non-native species (from foot traffic 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 of 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 SMG would be included in the current capacity allotment of no more than 12 campers per night, though for a period of 6 days, this would be spread over 4 campsites rather than the 3 campsites the capacity allotment was initially based on. The proposed trip falls within the 42 total (including campers) day visitors x 77 days in the season for an annual total potential of 3234 visitor days. It is not expected that the addition of one campsite will have significant adverse effects on the natural or cultural heritage of the area.



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. SMG must adhere to the following sections of the "*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*" (Appendix 1):
 - 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
3. SMG will utilize only aircraft operators licenced to operate in Nahanni.

8.1 COVID-19 CONSIDERATIONS

Guiding companies, 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

Note: Nahᑭá Dehé Consensus Team has approved this project and will be kept apprised of its progress.

- ✓ Surveillance: NNPR conducts pre and post-season teleconferences with its business license holders; this is considered to be the surveillance for SMG'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 time frame of the project activity, 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

<i>Department:</i> Parks Canada / Government of Canada	<i>Date of Request:</i> April 23, 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> Heritage resources	
<p><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.</p> <p>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.</p>	



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 ver9 revisions2009 2ndprintingerrata corrected april2013web.pdf](http://www.enr.gov.nt.ca/sites/default/files/reports/nwt_taiga_plains_enrdoc_full_report_ver9_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

<p>Prepared by:</p> <p><u>Alexandra Heathcote</u> Alexandra Heathcote A/Ecologist Team Lead, Parks Canada (Natural Resource Conservation Branch)</p>	<p>Date:</p> <p>July 9 2022</p>
<p>Approval Signature:</p> <p><u></u> Jonathan Tsetso Superintendent, Nahanni National Park Reserve</p>	<p>Date:</p> <p>July 28, 2022</p>



14. ATTACHMENTS

14.1. Site Maps





APPENDIX 1:

The following Best Management Practices (BMPs) will be included as attachments in the email notification of preliminary screening completion.

- *Parks Canada Best Management Practice (BMP) for Commercially Guided Eco-tourism Activities in Nahanni and Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserves of Canada*
- *Parks Canada Best Management Practice (BMP) for Aircraft Operations and Landings in Nahanni and Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserves of Canada*

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
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