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NATURELS DU CANADA

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MAY 11 2001

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Date: May 11 2001

# Pages (incl. cover): 3

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NOTES:



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10 May 2001

The Hon. Sheila Copps, P.C., M.P.  
Minister of Canadian Heritage  
15 Eddy Street, 12th Floor  
Hull, Quebec  
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*Our Chapters:*

CPAWS Nova Scotia

CPAWS Ottawa Valley/  
Vallée de l'Outaouais

CPAWS Wildlands League

CPAWS Manitoba

CPAWS Saskatchewan

CPAWS Calgary/Banff

CPAWS Edmonton

CPAWS British Columbia

CPAWS Yukon

CPAWS NWT

**RE: Mining Threats to Nahanni National Park Reserve**

Dear Minister Copps:

I am writing on behalf of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) to express concern about the acceleration of mining activity in the South Nahanni watershed, and the negative impacts of such activity on the ecological integrity of Nahanni National Park Reserve (NNPR). CPAWS is also concerned that mining development around the park, if allowed to proceed, could preclude future conservation opportunities in the greater Nahanni ecosystem.

In its 1997 State of the Parks Report, Parks Canada identified mining as the number one threat to Nahanni National Park Reserve. The recent series of permit applications from Canadian Zinc for the Prairie Creek Mine, and developments at the Cantung mine site point to a dramatic increase in the potential threat that mining poses to the Nahanni region. The northward expansion of oil and gas and forestry development in the Liard Valley represents another threat.

CPAWS is aware that Parks Canada has expressed interest in expanding Nahanni National Park Reserve in the 1987 Park Management Plan, the 1994 Management Plan Amendments, the 1997 National Parks System Plan, and the 2001 Draft Management Plan. The Deh Cho First Nations have also expressed interest in protecting all of the South Nahanni watershed through the Deh Cho Process. Given this interest, CPAWS urges you to state publicly the government's intentions to protect the ecological integrity of the greater Nahanni ecosystem and expand the Park Reserve, and outline the steps being taken to do so. We also urge that you take an active role in seeking a suspension of mining and other industrial development in the region until the Deh Cho Process and associated land withdrawals for park expansion and other protected areas are completed.

In this spirit, CPAWS supports the actions of the NNPR Superintendent in referring three recent Canadian Zinc permit applications to the Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board. By doing so the staff of NNPR are fulfilling their duties to protect the



ecological integrity of NNPR as set out under the *Canada National Parks Act*, as well as addressing the recommendations of the Panel on the Ecological Integrity of Canada's National Parks.

NNPR staff were acting fully within their role as a federal agency, and wholly within the bounds of the *Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act*. Environmental assessments are a necessary step in ensuring that the impacts of the mining activity are adequately assessed. We urge you to publicly affirm your support for the Superintendent's decision to refer the applications to the Board.

We also note that the Pehdzeh Ki First Nation of Wrigley have similar concerns about the environmental impacts of Canadian Zinc's mining activity, as they also referred these applications for environmental assessment.

The threats to Nahanni National Park Reserve will only be mitigated through a broader public discussion about the conservation values of the greater Nahanni ecosystem beyond the park. CPAWS believes that the opportunity to broaden this debate exists now, given that the Deh Cho Process will be progressing to a discussion of interim land withdrawals in the coming months. The Government of Canada, and Parks Canada in particular, should take advantage of this opportunity and make the expansion of Nahanni National Park Reserve, and protection of the greater Nahanni ecosystem, a high priority during the coming year.

Sincerely,



Stephen Hazell  
Executive Director

cc \* Michael Nadli, Grand Chief, Deh Cho First Nations  
Hon. Robert Nault, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development  
Bob Overvold, Regional Director General, Dept of Indian Affairs and Northern  
Development  
Hon. Stephen Kakfwi, Premier, Government of the NWT  
\* Hon. Joe Handley, Minister Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development,  
GNWT  
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and Youth)  
Senator Nick Sibbeston  
Tom Lee, CEO, Parks Canada  
\* Roland Semjanovs, Executive Director, Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact  
Review Board  
Greg Yeoman, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society - NWT Chapter