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MAY 10 2002
MACKENZIE VALLEY LAND AND WATER BOARD
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Dear Mr. Christensen,

I am writing with a deep concern about the proposed renewal of the Water License for the Cantung mine. This upcoming season will be my fourth summer river guiding on the Nahanni river in Nahanni National park reserve. From my seasons spent in this area learning about it's unique and complex features and processes, I have come to a clear understanding of why this incredibly diverse and complex region needed so desperately to become a designated Canadian and World heritage site ensuring it's sacred protection. Although this designation served to protect aspects of the park and the incredible falls, much of the watershed remains vulnerable and unprotected. It is my hope that one day the entire watershed will become protected, for now I am optimistic for expanded park boundaries through the Deh Cho process.

The proposed renewal of the water License for the Cantung mine has potential for major environmental impact on the world heritage site located downstream. I write asking that the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board order a full Environmental Assessment before approving any license renewal.

It has been brought to my awareness that on January 19, 2002, a fuel spill estimated at 24 000 litres occurred at Tungsten mine site after it re-opened. We discussed this spill with Parks Canada Staff at our recent guide's workshop and know that this oil came very close to the shores of the Flat River, an upstream tributary flowing directly into the South Nahanni River. This spill highlights the massive environmental concern and risk associated with mines, and calls for a full assessment of these risks, particularly in relation to the "protected" world heritage site downstream.


As a guide who spends nights camping at Prairie creek alluvial fan each river trip, I am also greatly concerned about the proposed Prairie Creek Mine that also lies within the watershed of the South Nahanni River, again, upstream from the World Heritage site. It has been brought to my attention that this mine requires an all weather road in order to be viable. This road would run too close to the park boundary directly through the Karst lands of the Nahanni Plateau. This region is a fragile phenomenon and part of the land under consideration for expanded park boundaries through the Deh Cho process. The site is perched in a narrow valley on Prairie Creek that flows directly into the Nahanni. It has large quantities of cyanide, PCB's and diesel fuel that have been stored on the banks of Prairie Creek for 20 years. The ores at Prairie Creek are highly contaminated with Mercury as well as arsenic and antimony. The presence and positioning of this mine pose a major threat to the ecological integrity of the Park Reserve downstream. Unbelievably the site is to be stationed in a narrow valley in one of the most seismically active regions in North America. This is a fact not often mentioned in the media, as there are no tall buildings within a thousand kms to make it a public concern. From my own recent Nahanni river history I have witnessed flash flooding of this area and understand that it is extremely prone to a high frequency of such occurrences. There was a major landslide and flood that occurred as recently as 1998. It concerns me that diesel fuel is located in out of date storage tanks just meters from Prairie Creek as I write this letter.

I feel that until a proper land use plan is finalized, a buffer zone of the complete watershed is the only acceptable management position. It really is imperative that a moratorium on developments like this be imposed on this watershed until a proper land use plan is finalized.

Please ensure that my letter is included in the public register for the Prairie Creek Mine permit applications, as well as the Cantung Mine water permit application.

I feel that we as Canadians need to do everything possible to preserve and protect the entire Greater Nahanni Ecosystem in order to ensure the long term environmental integrity of the Nahanni National Park Reserve and World Heritage Site.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Diane Gribbin", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Diane Gribbin

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Etobicoke, Ont.
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