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Park expansion could threaten mine developm

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Yellowknife, N.W.T.

A Northwest Territories first nation wants more protection for the wat around Nahanni National Park Reserve. The Deh Cho say they may se more land for protection under its claim. However, the move has con people who plan to mine-- or are mining-- in the area.

Deh Cho First Nations assistant negotiator Herb Norwegian says he m Parks Canada staff this week to talk about expanding the park's bour

The park protects about 20 per cent of the south Nahanni River water Norwegian says the Deh Cho may agree to set aside additional land f park under its interim measures agreement.

The Deh Cho First Nations and conservation groups oppose the re-op the CanTung and Prairie Creek mines within the Nahanni watershed.

"There are some really sensitive areas within the watershed that need protection right away," he says. "In the event that development the v been creeping up on us we could very well see a series of mines arou park. Right now we only have two, but right now is a good time to do business."

The CanTung tungsten mine, located about 40 kilometers west of the the Flat River, reopened in January. Even though a fuel spill there so afterwards didn't reach the water, it demonstrated how vulnerable th

Another mine, Prairie Creek, sits just 14 kilometers to the north of th owner, Canadian Zinc, is already having trouble getting permits to be advanced exploration.

Malcolm Swallow, the company's president, says people in the North Territories should think hard about closing the Nahanni to developme forfeiting royalties from mining.

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"If all development is going to be stopped in that area, then, really, a the thousand people a year who visit this park, no other economic activity going to take place," he says. "I don't know whether this is really what Northwest Territories wants in the event it becomes totally self-governing."

However, it is what the Deh Cho First Nation wants.

Norwegian says he's hopeful that once the land has been withdrawn, the expanded park will be fast-tracked by Ottawa.

In Monday's throne speech, the federal government promised to create new national parks in the next couple of years.