



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

Villers Air Services Ltd. Operations in Nahanni National Park Reserve

2. PROPONENT INFORMATION

Villers Air Services Ltd.
170 Bell Road
Fort Nelson, BC
V0C 1R0
(250) 774-2072
fly@villersair.com

3. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT DATES

Annual operations, primarily from June to September

4. INTERNAL FILE #

NAH2026-001

5. DEVELOPMENT DESCRIPTION

Nahanni National Park Reserve (Nahanni) is accessed primarily by air (fixed and rotary wing aircraft) for park operations and tourism purposes. Air access is facilitated by aircraft charter companies. Although aircraft operations occur year-round, they decrease substantially during the fall, winter, and spring and are largely limited to park operational requirements during these seasons.

Day flights to drop off and pick up overnight visitors and park staff, or to facilitate day sightseeing excursions, comprise most charters. Occasional overnight stays are required for



park operational purposes. All aircraft charter companies operating within the park reserve must obtain a Parks Canada business licence.

Villers Air Services Ltd. has not previously held a business licence for Nahanni. In accordance with the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act (MVRMA), the company's proposed activities must undergo a preliminary screening before a licence can be issued.

Activities at designated landing areas in Nahanni

- Day flight seeing experiences
- Commercial transport of visitors and freight for recreational activities such as hiking, mountain climbing, mountaineering, and river trips
- Nahanni operational activities
- Transport of researchers for purposes outside of park operational activities

Locations (see map, Appendix 1)

Designated aircraft landing areas in Nahanni National Park Reserve	
①	Honeymoon Lake
②	Island Lakes
③	Glacier Lake
④	Bunny Bar
⑤	Gahnjthah Mje
⑥	South Nahanni River above Nájłjcho (Virginia Falls)
⑦	Seaplane Lake

6. VALUED COMPONENTS

Note: Outfitting companies have utilized the same locations in Nahanni National Park Reserve (NNPR) 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 park reserve is located within the Taiga and Boreal Cordillera and Taiga Plains ecozones of the Northwest Territories. These ecozones 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). The area within the original boundary of NNPR 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, 2020).

Air/Noise Quality

- No formal observations of air/noise quality have occurred in NNPR; however, it is expected that these valued components are excellent and representative of their natural state. The majority of NNPR is 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, 2017 & 2020).

Aquatic Resources

- SARA-listed Bull Trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*) 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 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 NNPR 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, Clearwater Creek, and Bunny Bar alluvial fans (Tate, pers. comm., 2017; Arnold, pers. comm., 2020).
- Eight bat species (including two SARA-listed species) – Little Brown Myotis (*Myotis lucifugus*), Northern Myotis (*Myotis septentrionalis*), Long-legged Myotis (*Myotis volans*), Big Brown Bat (*Eptesicus fuscus*), Long-eared Myotis (*Myotis evotis*), Eastern Red Bat (*Lasiurus borealis*), Silver-haired Bat (*Lasionycteris noctivagans*), and Hoary Bat (*Lasiurus cinereus*) – have been confirmed or are suspected to occur in NNPR (Lausen et al., 2014; EDI, 2019; NNPR 2026). As of 2019, two cave sites within Nahanni have been confirmed as hibernacula for Myotis bat species and two additional sites are suspected (Horne and Critchley, 2020). Current evidence suggests that one of these caves is likely used as a hibernaculum by five species: Little Brown Bat, Northern Myotis, Long-legged Myotis, Big Brown Bat and Long-eared Myotis (C. Lausen and G. Horne, pers. comm., 2017). All caves in the park reserves are off-limits to visitors.
- Grizzly Bear (*Ursus arctos* – Western population) have a widespread distribution throughout NNPR (Weaver, 2006). However, grizzly bear encounters in NNPR are relatively uncommon with between 0 and 10 sightings reported annually by visitors and park staff in Nahanni from 2010 to 2017 (Nahanni National Park Reserve, 2017). Most 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. 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 (*Symphyotrichum nahanniense*), a SARA-listed species, exists at various locations along the Flat and South Nahanni rivers (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, 2020).

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 Métis (Parks Canada, 2017 & 2020).
- Public access to Zone I special preservation areas with significant cultural importance, Chitú (Yohin Lake), is not allowed (Parks Canada, 2017 & 2020). Public access to the south tufa mound at Gahnjthah is permitted through guided hikes only (Parks Canada, 2020). Traditional use by local First Nations and 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, based on 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 NNPR. 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 NNPR.

7. EFFECTS ANALYSIS

See "*Parks Canada Best Management Practice (BMP) for Aircraft Operations and Landings in Nahanni and Nááts'j'ch'oh National Park Reserves of Canada*" (Appendix 2).



8. MITIGATION MEASURES

Villers Air Services Ltd. will adhere to mitigations described in the "*Parks Canada Best Management Practice (BMP) for Aircraft Operations and Landings in Nahanni and Nááts'j'ch'oh National Park Reserves of Canada*" (Appendix 3) and, when applicable, the *Fuel Caching Protocol for Nahanni National Park Reserve and Nááts'j'ch'oh National Park Reserve*.

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

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)	
<i>Departments:</i> Wildlife Conservation Society Canada Parks Canada / Government of Canada	<i>Date of Request:</i> November 2017
<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	<i>Titles:</i> Associate Conservation Scientist Resource Management Officer II
<i>Expertise Requested:</i> Information on bat species potentially using Grotte Valerie as a hibernaculum	
<i>Response:</i> See information in section 6 (Valued Components)	
<i>Department:</i> Parks Canada / Government of Canada	<i>Date of Request:</i> February 21, 2020
<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	<i>Title:</i> Ecologist Team Lead, Nahanni National Park Reserve
<i>Expertise Requested:</i> Information on Common Nighthawk nesting locations	
<i>Response:</i> See information in section 6 (Valued Components)	

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.
- Nahanni National Park Reserve. 2026. *Bat acoustic data*. Unpublished raw data.
- Parks Canada. 2013. *Cultural Resource Management Policy*.
- Parks Canada. 2017. *Nááts'jch'oh National Park Reserve Management Plan*.
- Parks Canada. 2020. *Nahanni National Park Reserve of Canada Nah?q Dehé 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/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 2, 2026. Anyone from the public could provide comments on or before March 24th, 2026. Two comments were received:


- A stakeholder expressed support for the proposal, noting that diversifying transportation and access options could benefit visitor access to Nahanni National Park Reserve.
- A leaseholder requested that their lease area at Glacier Lake be recognized and avoided by other users and operators conducting activities in the area. A map of Glacier Lake and the lease area was added to the screening (Appendix 2) so that the lease location is clearly identified for the awareness of stakeholders and proponents.

13. DECISION

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

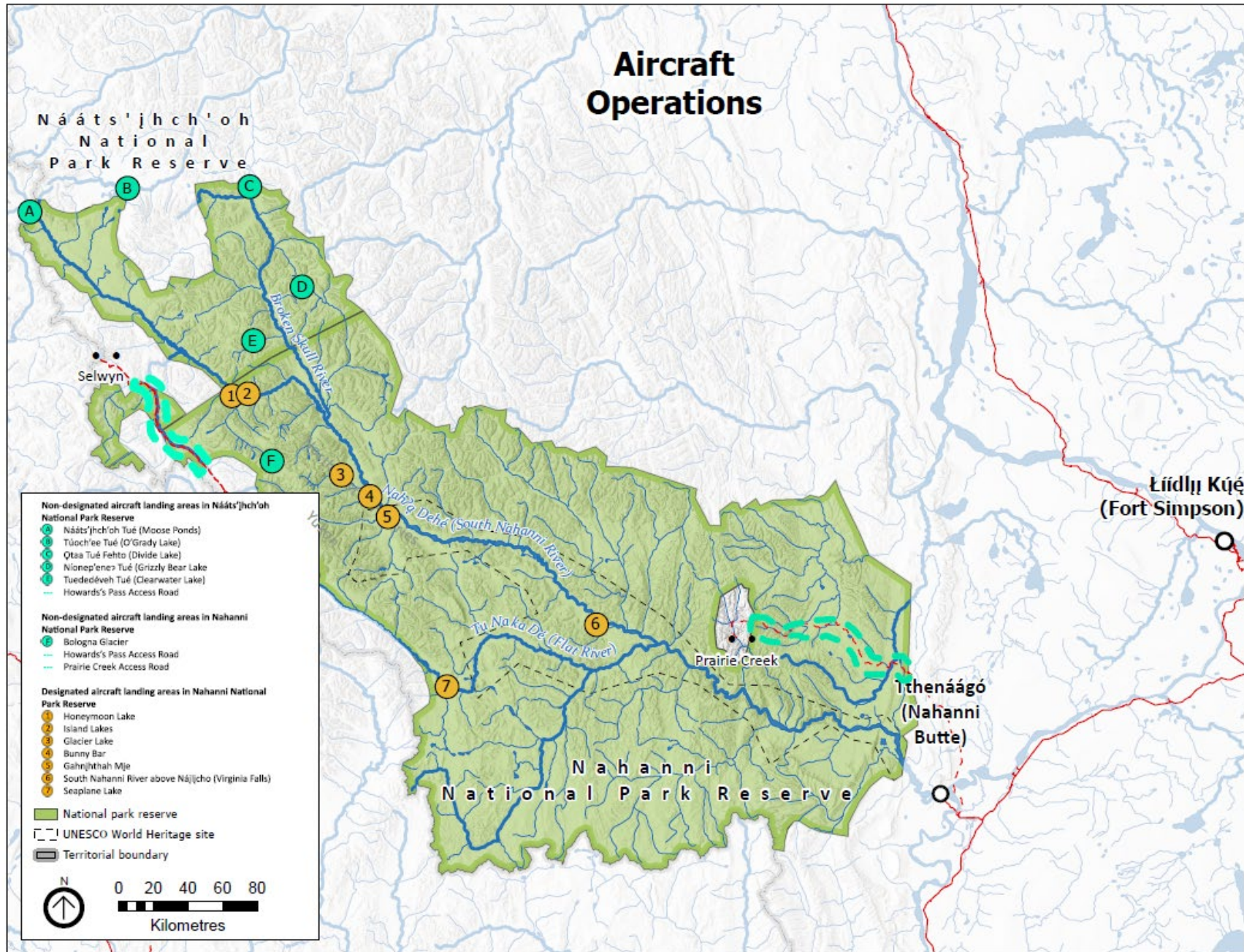
- Might have a significant adverse impact on the environment, and the proposal should be referred to the *Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board* for environmental assessment.
- ✓ Does not have a likelihood of causing significant adverse impact on the environment.
- Might be a cause for public 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

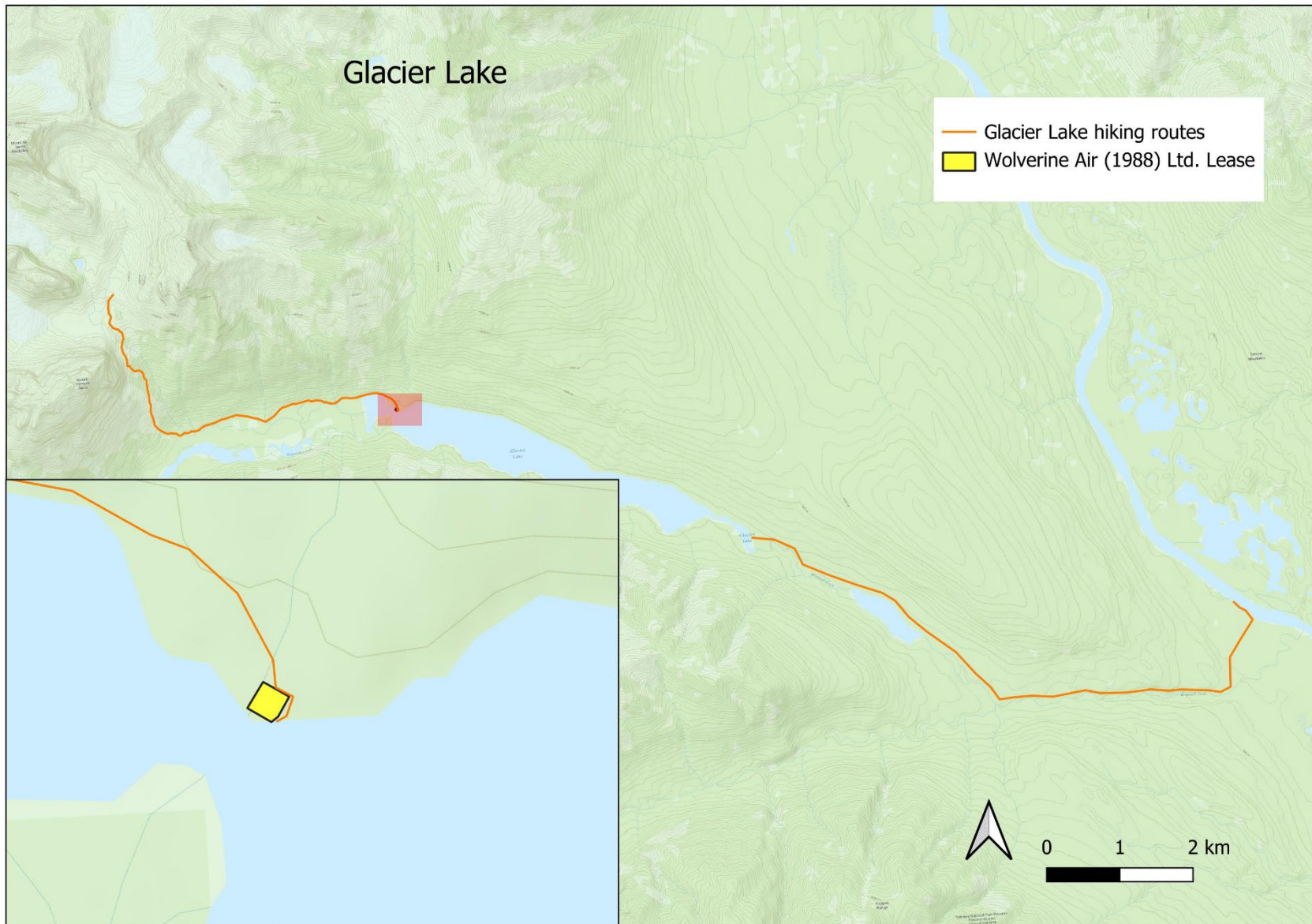
Prepared by: <i>Colleen Murchison</i> Ecologist Team Leader, Nahanni National Park Reserve	Date: June 8, 2026
Approved by:  <i>Jennifer Carpenter</i> Superintendent, Nahanni National Park Reserve	Date: June 8, 2026

APPENDIX 1

Note: all flight start/end locations are from designated airports/aerodromes outside of the parks.



APPENDIX 2
Glacier Lake





APPENDIX 3: Parks Canada Best Management Practice (BMP) for Aircraft Operations and Landings in Nahanni and Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserves of Canada

Note: see attachment in accompanying email



APPENDIX 4 - 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 Herb Norwegian Dehcho First Nations	herb_norwegian@dehcho.org
Executive Director Dora Tsetso Dehcho First Nations	Executivedirector@dehcho.org
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