

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 pursuant to the *National Parks of Canada Businesses Regulations* s 4.1)
- Does not require permit, licence or authorization and is proposed by PCA

1. DEVELOPMENT TITLE & LOCATION

Guided climbing activities, Cirque of the Unclimbables Trip Proposal

2. PROPONENT INFORMATION

Lionel Briand, Certified Mountain Guide
121 allée de Carlaveyron
Les Houches, France
74310

3. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT DATES

July 10th to 22nd, 2026

4. INTERNAL FILE #

NAH2026-002

5. DEVELOPMENT DESCRIPTION

Lionel Briand, a certified mountain guide with the International Federation of Mountain Guides Association, is proposing a remote wilderness experience and adventure tourism guided trip in Nahᓃᓴ Dehé (Nahanni) National Park Reserve (NNPR), specifically at the Cirque of the Unclimbables (see map, Appendix 1). The trip will include climbing the Lotus Flower Tower and is proposed for a 12-day period from July 10-22, 2026; exact timing of the trip will depend on weather. Maximum group size will be 2 people: 1 guide and 1 client.

The group will hire a float plane to deposit/pick up the group at Glacier Lake, using a charter company that has been issued a NNPR business licence. The group will hike to Fairy Meadows to camp, approximately 6 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 pick-up. Camping may take place at the established campsite at Glacier Lake (facilities include a shelter/cabin, bear-proof food lockers, and a privy) and will take place at Fairy Meadows (facilities include an outhouse and established 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. 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 requested visitation by Lionel Briand is included in the current capacity allotment of no more than 12 campers per night (based on capacity of 3 campsites, with 4 people per site) at the Cirque and 42 total (including campers) day visitors x 77 days in the season for an annual total potential of 3234 visitor days.

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 Commercially Guided Eco-Tourism Activities in Nahanni National Park Reserve of Canada*" (Appendix 2)

8. MITIGATION MEASURES

The group will follow best practices for leave-no-trace camping and will adhere to mitigations described in the "*Parks Canada Best Management Practice (BMP) for Commercially Guided Eco-Tourism Activities in Nahanni and Nááts'jch'oh National Park Reserves of Canada*" (Appendix 2)

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

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. 2020. *Nahanni National Park Reserve of Canada Nah?q Dehé Management Plan*.

Parks Canada. 2013. *Cultural Resource Management Policy*.

Parks Canada. 2019. Guidelines for Licensing of Guided River Outfitting in Nahanni and Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserves. Available online at: <https://www.pc.gc.ca/en/pn-np/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 24, 2026. A leaseholder requested that their lease area at Glacier Lake be recognized and avoided by other users and operators conducting activities in the area. The screening map was updated to include the lease area at Glacier Lake (Appendix 1) so that its 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 - Hiking route from Glacier Lake to Fairy Meadows



APPENDIX 2: *Parks Canada Best Management Practice (BMP) for Commercially Guided Eco-tourism Activities in Nahanni and Nááts'j'ch'oh National Park Reserves of Canada*

Note: see attachment in accompanying email

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
Grand Chief Herb Norwegian Dehcho First Nations	herb_norwegian@dehcho.org
Executive Director Dora Tsetso Dehcho First Nations	Executivedirector@dehcho.org
Chief Kele Antoine Łíídlıı Kúę First Nation	chief@liidliikue.com
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Chief Steve Vital Nah?ą Dehé Dene Band	chiefsteve.nbdb@gmail.com
Band Manager Soham Srimani Nah?ą Dehé Dene Band	manager@nahadehe.ca
Chief Michael Vandell Deh Gáh Got'ıę First Nation	chief@dehgahgotie.ca
Chief Lloyd Chicot Ka'a'gee Tu First Nation	kaageetu_chief@northwestel.net
Chief Dolphus Jumbo Sambaa K'e Dene Band	chief@sambaakefn.com
Chief Jamie Moses Pehdzeh Ki First Nation	info@pkfn.ca
Chief Devon Felker West Point First Nation	chief@wpfn.ca
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President Daniel Peterson Fort Simpson Métis Local	metisnation52@northwestel.net
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Liard Air Ltd	flights@liardair.com

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North-Wright Airways Ltd	info@north-wrightairways.com
Simpson Air 1981 Ltd	info@simpsonair.ca
South Nahanni Airways	info@southnahanniairways.ca; charters@southnahanniairways.ca
Summit Air and Summit Helicopters	info@summithelicopters.ca info@flysummitair.com
Tundra Helicopters	tundrahelicopters@hotmail.com
Villers Air Services Ltd.	fly@villersair.com
Black Feather The Wilderness Adventure Company	info@blackfeather.com
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