



## **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 Business Regulations* s 4.1)
- Does not require permit, licence or authorization and is proposed by PCA

### **1. DEVELOPMENT TITLE & LOCATION**

Guided motorized boat tours and expediting services on the lower Nah?ą Dehé (South Nahanni River)

### **2. PROPONENT INFORMATION**

Nahanni River Expediting  
Address: PO Box 27, Nahanni Butte, NT X0E 2N0  
Phone: 867-602-2382 / 867-364-0004  
Email: jmkonisenta@gmail.com

### **3. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT DATES**

Planned commencement: 2025-08-01  
Planned completion: 2025-09-30

### **4. INTERNAL FILE #**

NAH2025-001

### **5. DEVELOPMENT DESCRIPTION**

Access to Nahanni National Park Reserve by motorized watercraft is currently restricted to Parks Canada operational activities and Indigenous persons engaging in traditional renewable resource harvesting activities. In the spirit of the Ndahecho Gondié Gháádé Agreement, Parks Canada is considering modifying the Superintendent's Orders for Nahanni National Park Reserve to allow motorized watercraft access for one Nah?ą Dehé Business, Nahanni River Expediting, to conduct motorized boat tours and expediting services on the lower Nah?ą Dehé (South Nahanni River). Nahanni River Expediting must obtain a Parks Canada business licence to operate in the park reserve; according to the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act their activities must undergo preliminary screening before the licence can be issued.



Nahanni River Expediting's primary activities would be guided day tours up the lower Nahʔą Dehé from Tthenáágó (Nahanni Butte) to Tułetşęę (Kraus Hot Springs). Day tours would occur up to five times throughout the summer, subject to water levels; tours would only operate when water levels are high enough to permit safe access for outboard motors with propellers. Each tour would include up to three visitors, two boat operators, and two 18-20 ft motorized boats – a primary tour boat and a backup safety boat. Nahanni River Expediting would also conduct one annual scouting trip, prior to the start of tour operations, to verify river channels and identify the best route.

Additional proposed motorized watercraft activities between Tthenáágó and Dahaethth'į (Deadman Valley) include:

- Transport of Parks Canada and Nahʔą Dehé Park Corporation personnel, equipment, and supplies in support of general park operations
- Emergency transport of Parks Canada personnel and visitors in support of rescue operations
- Commercial transport of researchers

**Locations** (See map Appendix 1)

## 6. VALUED COMPONENTS

Note: Outfitting companies have utilized the same locations in both parks 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 is located within the Taiga and Boreal Cordillera Ecological regions of the Northwest Territories. These regions 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 Nahanni park boundary 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 relevant formal observations of air/noise quality have occurred in the park; however, it is expected that these valued components are excellent and representative of their



natural state. The majority of the park 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 and limited motorized boat 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 the parks 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).
- Seven 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*), Hoary Bat (*Lasiurus cinereus*), Long-eared Myotis (*Myotis evotis*) and Eastern Red Bat (*Lasiurus borealis*) – have been recorded in the park (Lausen et al., 2014; EDI, 2019). As of 2019, two cave sites within Nahanni, including Grotte Valerie, have been confirmed as hibernacula for Myotis bat species and two additional sites are suspected (Horne and Critchley, 2020). Current evidence suggests that Grotte Valerie 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 reserve are off-limits to visitors.
- Grizzly Bear (*Ursus arctos* – Western population) have a widespread distribution throughout the park (Weaver, 2006). However, grizzly bear encounters in the park are relatively uncommon with between 0 and 10 sightings reported annually by visitors and park staff in Nahanni from 2010 to (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. Additionally, 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 park – 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). There is potential for terrestrial invasive plants at human-use areas, limiting upstream travel from known locations of invasives. Play, Clean, Go practices will be followed.

#### *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 Sahtu Métis (Parks Canada, 2017 & 2020).
- Public access to Zone I special preservation areas with significant cultural importance, including Chitú (Yohin Lake), is not allowed (Parks Canada, 2017 & 2020). Traditional use by local First Nations and Sahtu 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 the park. 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 the park.

## **7. EFFECTS ANALYSIS**

See "*Parks Canada Best Management Practice (BMP) for Commercially Guided Eco-tourism Activities in Nahanni and Nááts'jìhch'oh National Park Reserves of Canada*" (Appendix 2).

## **8. MITIGATION MEASURES**

Nahanni River Expediting will follow play, clean, go principles, a leave-no-trace 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'jìhch'oh National Park Reserves of Canada. The low number of trips associated with this development are part of key mitigations.



## 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 &amp; 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 &amp; 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)	



<p><i>Departments:</i> Wildlife Conservation Society Canada  Parks Canada / Government of Canada</p>	<p><i>Date of Request:</i> November 2017</p>
<p><i>Experts Names &amp; 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</p>	<p><i>Titles:</i> Associate Conservation Scientist   Resource Management Officer II</p>
<p><i>Expertise Requested:</i> Information on bat species potentially using Grotte Valerie as a hibernaculum</p>	
<p><i>Response:</i> See information in section 6 (Valued Components)</p>	
<p><i>Department:</i> Parks Canada / Government of Canada</p>	<p><i>Date of Request:</i> February 21, 2020</p>
<p><i>Expert's Name &amp; Contact Information:</i> Sarah Arnold PO Box 348, Fort Simpson, NT X0E 0N0 sarah.arnold@canada.ca / Tel: 867-695-7768</p>	<p><i>Title:</i> Ecologist Team Lead, Nahanni National Park Reserve</p>
<p><i>Expertise Requested:</i> Information on Common Nighthawk nesting locations</p>	
<p><i>Response:</i> See information in section 6 (Valued Components)</p>	

### 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](http://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](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.

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 Nahᓃq 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-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 SocietyCanada. 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 June 30, 2025. Anyone from the public could provide comments on or before July 21, 2025.


## 13. DECISION

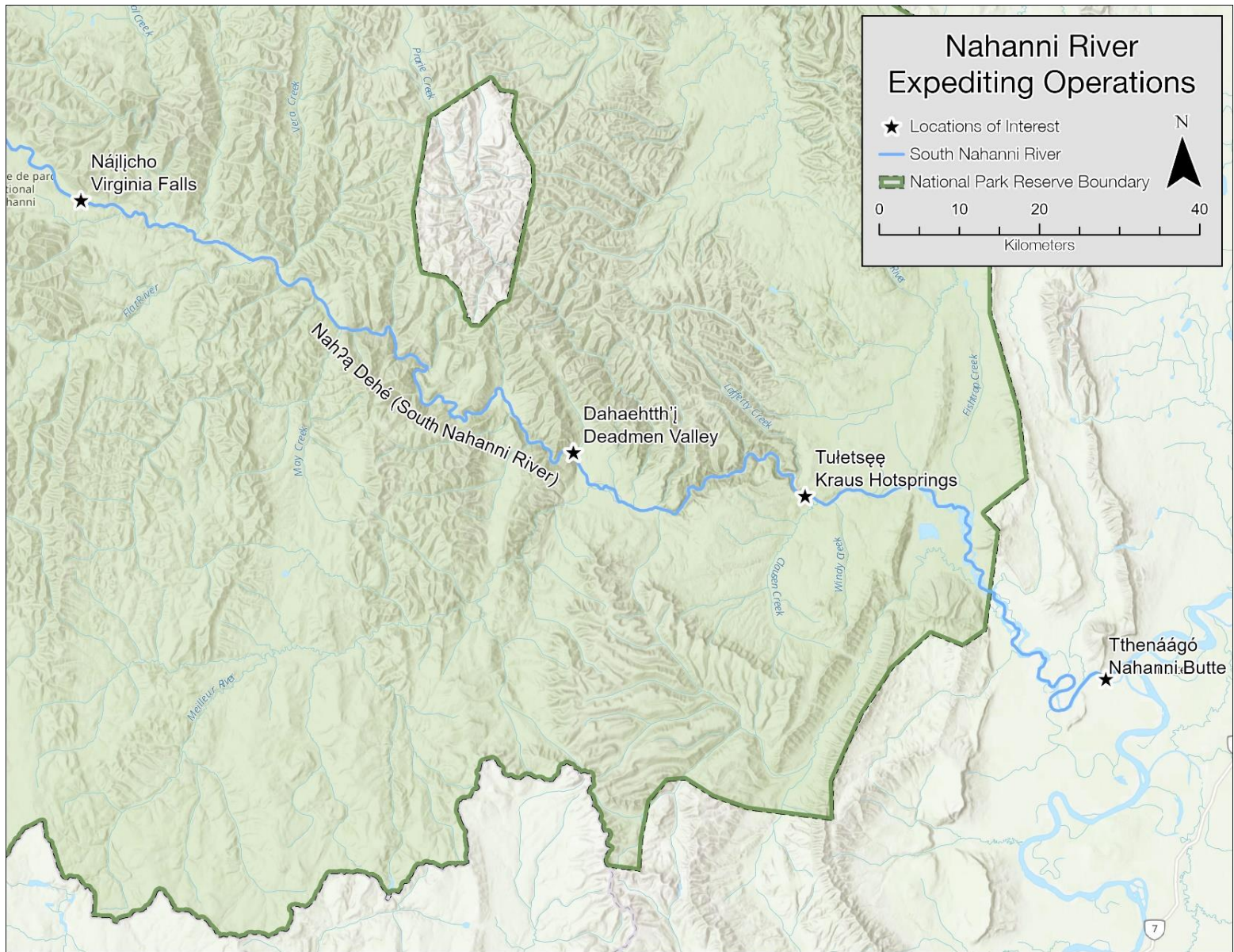
Taking into account the analysis and implementation of mitigation measures outlined in the analysis, the development:

- 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

<b>Prepared by:</b> <i>Jesse Binnersley</i> Geomatics Technician, Nahanni National Park Reserve	Date: July 22, 2025
<b>Recommended by:</b> <i>Kaitlyn Bélanger</i> A/ Resource Conservation Manager, Nahanni National Park Reserve	Date: July 22, 2025
<b>Approved by:</b>  <i>Jennifer Carpenter</i> Superintendent, Nahanni National Park Reserve	Date: July 22, 2025





**APPENDIX 2:** *Parks Canada Best Management Practice (BMP) for Commercially Guided Ecotourism Activities in Nahanni and Nááts'ihch'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	<a href="mailto:jpotten@mvlwb.com">jpotten@mvlwb.com</a> ; <a href="mailto:tyree@mvlwb.com">tyree@mvlwb.com</a>
Grand Chief Herb Norwegian Dehcho First Nations	<a href="mailto:herb_norwegian@dehcho.org">herb_norwegian@dehcho.org</a>
Executive Director Dehcho First Nations	<a href="mailto:Executivedirector@dehcho.org">Executivedirector@dehcho.org</a>
Chief Steve Vital Nahanni Butte Dene Band	<a href="mailto:chiefsteve.nbdb@gmail.com">chiefsteve.nbdb@gmail.com</a>
Band Manager Soham Srimani Nahanni Butte Dene Band	<a href="mailto:manager@nahadehe.ca">manager@nahadehe.ca</a>
Chief Kele Antoine łíídlı́ Kúé First Nation	<a href="mailto:chief@liidliikue.com">chief@liidliikue.com</a>
Interim Executive Director Derek Squirrel łíídlı́ Kúé First Nation	<a href="mailto:exdir@liidliikue.com">exdir@liidliikue.com</a>
Chief Melanie Norwegian Menacho Tthets'éhk'edélí First Nation	<a href="mailto:chief@jmrfn.com">chief@jmrfn.com</a>
Chief Michael Vandell Deh Gáh Got'ı́ę First Nation	<a href="mailto:chief@dehgahgotie.ca">chief@dehgahgotie.ca</a>
Chief Lloyd Chicot Ka'a'gee Tu First Nation	<a href="mailto:kaageetu_chief@northwestel.net">kaageetu_chief@northwestel.net</a>
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Canoe North Adventures	<a href="mailto:info@canoenorthadventures.com">info@canoenorthadventures.com</a>
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