

Background Report

Amending the Sahtu Land Use Plan following the creation
of the Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve



SAHTU LAND USE PLANNING BOARD

April 17, 2015

www.sahtulanduseplan.org

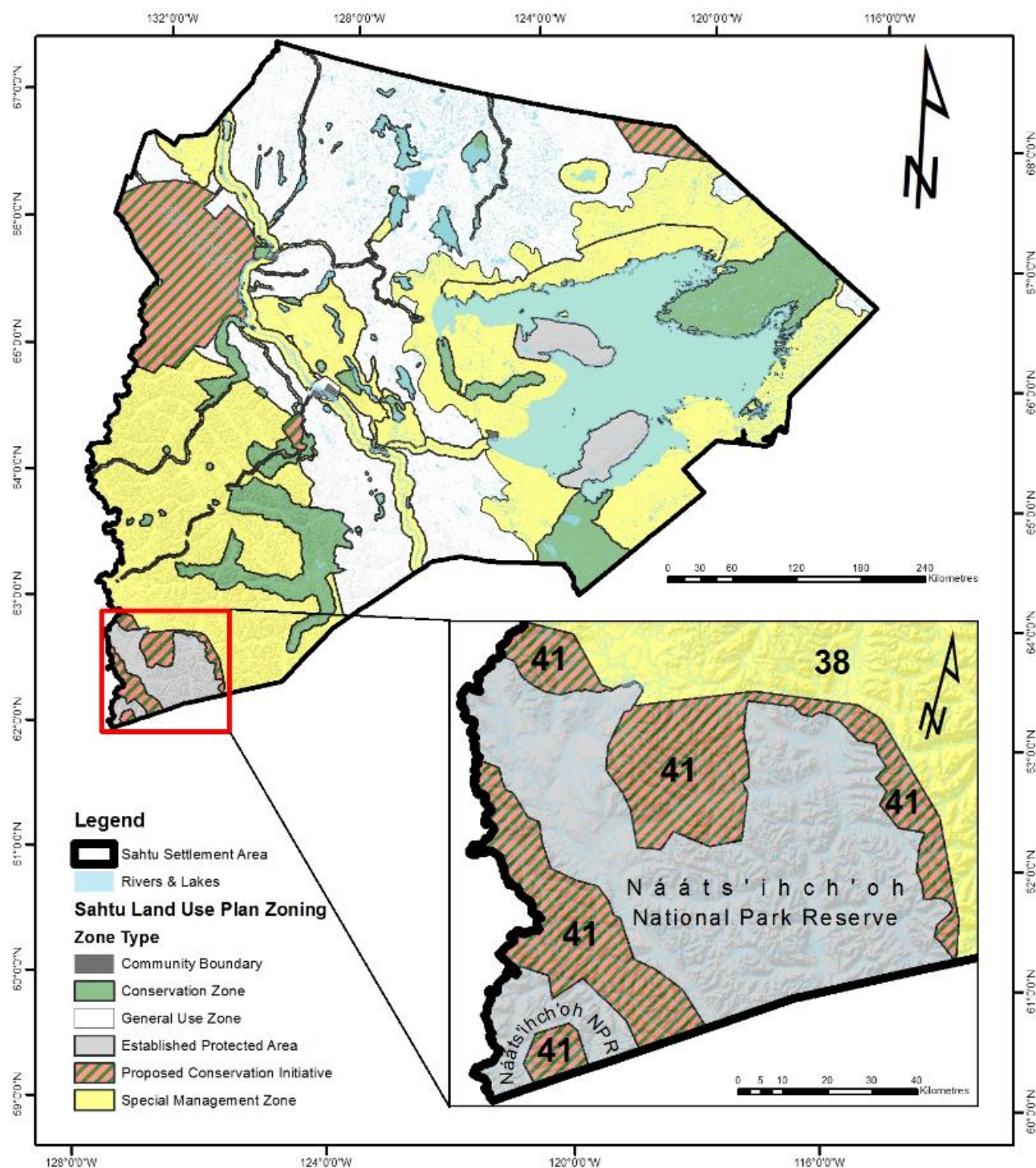
Executive Summary

The Sahtu Settlement Area is home to Canada's newest national park reserve. When the Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve was formally established in December 2014, it changed the zoning boundaries of the Sahtu Land Use Plan (SLUP or Plan). This change in the boundaries triggers the first proposed amending of the SLUP.

This report was prepared to provide information to planning partners regarding the areas affected in Proposed Conservation Initiative Zone 41 (Nááts'ihch'oh). It contains:

- Background information and history of the park reserve's development;
- Current status of Zone 41 and land use planning considerations; and
- Description of the SLUP amendment process.

The Sahtu Land Use Planning Board aims to prepare an amendment application by September 2015. As an initial step to gather public input, planning partners are invited to review and present written comments on this document to inform the process.



Map 1. Sahtu Land Use Plan Zoning with Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve

Source: Sahtu Land Use Planning Board, with data from: **Hydrology**, National Topographic Database (NTDB) 1:250,000, Natural Resources Canada; **Hillshade**, CDEM 1:250,000, Natural Resources Canada; **Nááts'ihch'oh NPR Boundaries**, Parks Canada, 2012; **Sahtu Settlement Area**, National Framework Canada Lands Administrative Boundary (CLAB), Natural Resources Canada, 2014.

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Acronyms

AANDC	Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada
Board	Sahtu Land Use Planning Board
CWS	Canadian Wildlife Service
DFO	Department of Fisheries and Oceans (now Fisheries and Oceans Canada)
ENR	Department of Environment and Natural Resources (GNWT)
EPA	Established Protected Area
GNWT	Government of the Northwest Territories
INAC	Indian and Northern Affairs Canada
MERA	Mineral and Energy Resource Assessment
MVRMA	Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act
NANPR	Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve of Canada
NWT	Northwest Territories
PAS	Protected Areas Strategy
PCA	Parks Canada Agency
PCI	Proposed Conservation Initiative
RRC	Renewable Resources Council
SDMCLCA	Sahtu Dene and Metis Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement
SLUP	Sahtu Land Use Plan
SLUPB	Sahtu Land Use Planning Board
SRRB	Sahtu Renewable Resources Board
SSI	Sahtu Secretariat Incorporated



History and Background

To the Shutagot'ine (Mountain) Dene and Metis of Tulita and Norman Wells, the South Nahanni River (also known as Tuchıt'á) is an important traditional area. The South Nahanni River is also a river system of great ecological importance to the Greater Nahanni Ecosystem. The upper part of the watershed contains habitat for grizzly bears, Dall's sheep, mountain goats and woodland caribou. Protecting these important traditional and ecological features was the primary reason the Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve ("NANPR") was created (Parks Canada, 2010).

Since the SLUPB's earliest planning work, the area has been recognised for its traditional and ecological significance. The Preliminary SLUP (2003) identified the area as the Nahanni River Headwaters Conservation Area or Begadeh, which was advanced through the Protected Area Strategy (PAS) process by the Tulita Conservation Initiative.

The Parks Canada Agency (PCA) expressed interest in protecting the Nahanni Headwaters as part of an expansion of the Nahanni National Park. As a result, representatives of PCA and the PAS met with the Tulita Dene Band in February 2006 to move forward with protection efforts (NWT PAS, 2005/2006). The Board's position was that it would allow the PAS process to run its course and then amend the SLUP to reflect the outcome. Interest in protecting the South Nahanni watershed was not only found on a local level, but internationally as well. In 2006, the UNESCO World Heritage Committee had recommended that the entire South Nahanni watershed be protected (UNESCO, 2006).

NANPR was first proposed to the land corporations that represent the Dene and Metis of Tulita and Norman Wells on June 15, 2007 by PCA. To make this possible, the local land corporations

(Tulita Land Corporation, Fort Norman Métis Land Corporation, Norman Wells Land Corporation) and the Tulita District Land Corporation passed a resolution in October 2007 to support an interim land withdrawal to facilitate the negotiations for the establishment of the NANPR. In November 2007, Tulita District elders chose the name “Nááts’ihch’oh” for the proposed park reserve, meaning “pointed like a porcupine quill.” This name refers to the mountain of the same name (aka Mount Wilson) located adjacent to the Moose ponds, the headwaters of the South Nahanni River (Parks Canada, 2010).

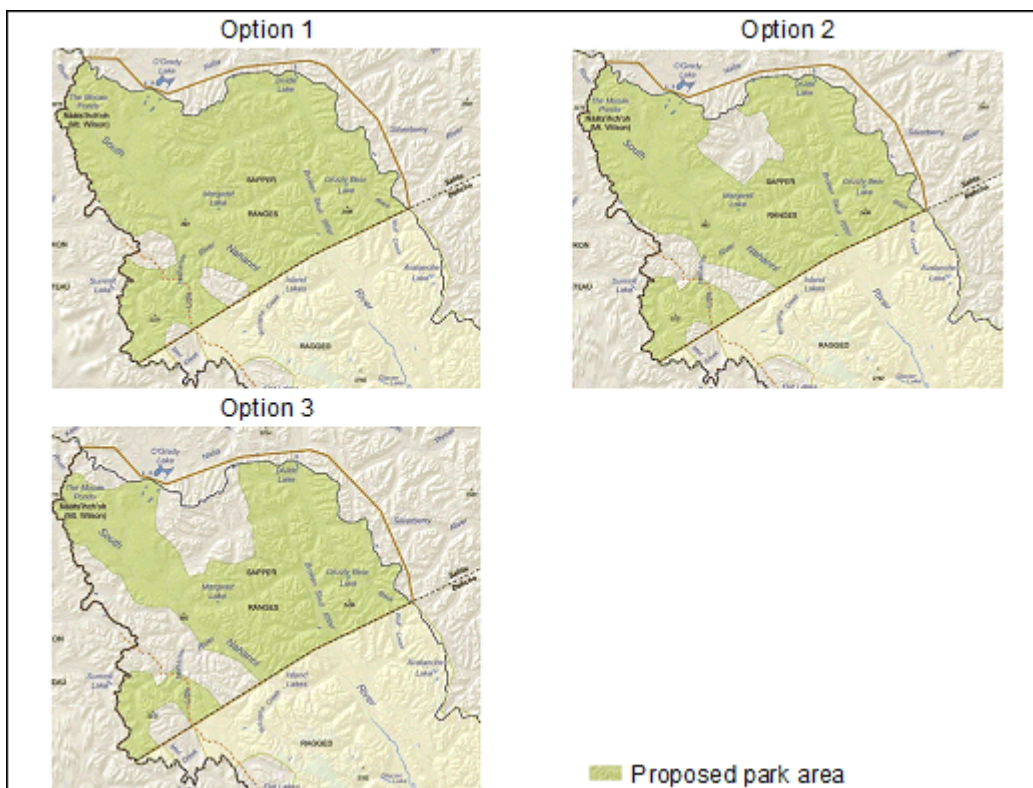
The interim land withdrawal order was passed through Order-in-Council in February 2008, which set aside approximately 7,600 square kilometres until March 31, 2012 (later extended until March 31, 2015). This allowed time for negotiations between the land corporations and PCA as well as community consultations to consider boundaries for the proposed national park reserve. The land withdrawal prohibited certain activities, such as new mineral staking or any other third party interest being registered on the land, but did not impact existing third party interests in the area, such as existing mineral claims and leases (Department of Justice Canada, 2008).

An Impact and Benefit Plan was negotiated with the local Dene and Metis, as required by Chapter 16 of the *Sahtu Dene and Metis Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement (SDMCLCA)*. The Impact and Benefit Plan addressed the continuation of harvesting rights, wildlife management, economic and employment opportunities, cooperative management committee operations, and coordination with Nahanni National Park Reserve (Parks Canada, 2010).

Mineral exploration in the area was an important factor considered during the planning of NANPR. The Mineral and Energy Resource Assessment (MERA) of the Greater Nahanni Ecosystem study was conducted and released in 2007. It covered an area over 39,000 square kilometres of the South Nahanni watershed. The study identified moderate to high mineral potential in approximately 12% of the study area, with restricted areas of very high potential. The Howards Pass deposits (Area A in the MERA study), is a high potential area, informally known as the “zinc corridor” (Wright, Lemkow, & Harris, 2007).

Independent of the negotiations between the land corporations and PCA, the Sahtu Land Use Plan development process continued. In May 2009, the Sahtu Land Use Plan Draft 2 was released. SLUP Draft 2 zoned the area of the Nááts’ihch’oh land withdrawal, as a Proposed Conservation Initiative (PCI). A PCI designation was intended to give the same level of protection as a conservation zone while the park reserve negotiation and planning process advanced. The zone remained a PCI in the SLUP Draft 3, released in July 2010.

In November 2009, informed by studies on mineral and conservation values, a Senior MERA Committee composed of officials from INAC (now Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada), Parks Canada Agency, Natural Resources Canada, and the GNWT developed and approved three (3) park reserve boundary options.



Map 2. Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve Boundary Options

Source: Legislative Summary of Bill S-5. Downloaded from Parliament of Canada Website. April 2, 2015.

http://www.parl.gc.ca/About/Parliament/LegislativeSummaries/bills_ls.asp?ls=s5&Parl=41&Ses=2&source=library_prb&Language=E

Adapted from Parks Canada, *Proposed Establishment of Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve: Final Consultation Report*, Prepared for Parks Canada by Terriplan Consultants, 30 August 2010.

In 2010, PCA conducted a consultation program to gather input on the boundary options. The program activities included leadership and community meetings in the Sahtu, as well as neighbouring traditional territories. The general public was invited to submit comments on the Parks Canada website and at open house events. Third party interests and stakeholders were also given the opportunity to meet with PCA to express any concerns. Consultation findings were published and made available in August 2010.

A number of themes and considerations emerged in the consultation process and are described in the Consultation Report:

- Protect the watershed and ecosystem;
- Protect the wildlife habitat;
- Resource development in the watershed;
- Tourism in the park reserve;
- Co-operative management; and
- Road access.

While it was not an option put forward, 70% of respondents supported protection of the entire South Nahanni Watershed. Only 65 of the 1,603 respondents expressed a preference for one of

the three options. Of those, sixty supported Option 1, three supported Option 2, and two supported Option 3 (Parks Canada, 2010).

In early 2012, negotiators for the land corporations and PCA reached an overall agreement for the establishment for NANPR. Part of this overall agreement were boundaries that were very similar to Option 1, with an extension to the southern shores of O’Grady Lake. The Tulita District Dene and Metis, with the support of the SSI, went to their members with what was called the February 17, 2012 Ratification Draft. The members approved the Ratification Draft and the leaders of the Tulita District Dene and Metis, with the Chairperson of the SSI, were ready to fly to Ottawa to execute this agreement when they were informed by PCA that Canada could not support the Ratification Draft.

Canada’s preference was for boundaries reflected by Option 3. Eventually the Tulita District Dene and Metis succumbed and executed a new agreement on March 28, 2012 that included boundaries that were the same as Option 3.

On August 22, 2012, Prime Minister Stephen Harper travelled to the Sahtu to officially announce the creation of the Nááts’ihch’oh National Park Reserve. The Prime Minister was informed that the Tulita District Dene and Metis were not happy with the boundaries in the agreement and the Prime Minister agreed to conduct a review of how the boundaries had been arrived at.

In September 2012, the SLUPB hosted a Tri-Partite meeting to consider outstanding issues toward finalising the SLUP. The Board heard from participants on the subject of the Nááts’ihch’oh boundaries as it related to the Plan’s application towards establishing protected areas. Representatives from the Sahtu Secretariat Incorporated (SSI) and Tulita District Land Corporation expressed their disappointment in the reduced size of the park reserve.

These discussions informed the final preparation of the Plan. While the park reserve was announced prior to these discussions, it was not legislated. As a result, the final SLUP maintained the PCI designation (Zone 41- Nááts’ihch’oh), and Section 2.2 was written to address the application of the Plan to newly Established Protected Areas (EPA). The SLUP was adopted by the Board in April 2013 and sequentially approved by the Sahtu Secretariat Incorporated, and Governments of the Northwest Territories and Canada. The Plan came into effect on August 8, 2013.

The review promised by the Prime Minister was eventually completed and the final boundaries for the NANPR were introduced as part of Senate Bill S-5 on May 14, 2014. There was one noted park boundary change from those announced by the Prime Minister in August of 2012. This was the inclusion of 20 square kilometres in the O’Grady Lakes area as well as some minor adjustments. The Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development heard from Tulita District and Sahtu Leaders on November 17, 2014, who supported the establishment for the park reserve.

In response to a question from a Member of Parliament regarding the boundaries a Sahtu leader said “I’ll go back to what we both said. We want more land. We want more land within the park. I think that’s basically it.” (House of Commons Canada, 2014)

Notwithstanding the expressed disappointment in the final boundary selection and the request that considerations be made to enlarge the park reserve boundaries, there were no boundary changes made during the legislative process and Bill S-5 passed, as introduced, and received Royal Assent on December 16, 2014.

Timeline of major events:

2003	SLUP Preliminary Draft 1 identifies area as Nahanni River Headwaters Conservation Area/ Begadeh
2006	UNESCO World Heritage Committee recommended that the entire South Nahanni watershed be protected
June 2007	National park reserve was first proposed by PCA, to land corporations that represent the Dene and Metis of Tulita and Norman Wells
Nov. 2007	Tulita district elders chose the name Nááts'ihch'oh meaning: "pointed like a porcupine quill."
2007	The Greater Nahanni Ecosystem MERA 2 study released
Feb. 2008	Initial Interim Land Withdrawal
May 2009	SLUP Draft 2 - Nááts'ihch'oh Proposed Conservation Initiative
July 2010	SLUP Draft 3 - Nááts'ihch'oh Proposed Conservation Initiative
March 2012	Interim Land Withdrawal renewed
Aug. 2012	Park reserve announced by the Prime Minister
Sept. 2012	SLUP Tri-Partite meeting
April 29 2013	SLUP adopted by SLUPB
July- Aug. 2013	SLUP approved by SSI, GNWT, and AANDC
Aug. 8, 2013	SLUP comes into effect
March 2014	Interim Land Withdrawal renewed
May 2014	Bill S-5 introduced to amend the <i>National Parks Act</i> (Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve of Canada)
Dec. 16, 2014	Bill S-5 receives Royal Assent establishing Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve
March 31, 2015	Interim Land Withdrawal expires
April 17, 2015	SLUPB releases Background Report

Current Status and Land Use Planning Considerations

The SLUP does not apply to lands in the Sahtu Settlement Area that comprise a park to which the *Canada National Parks Act* applies (MVRMA Section 34). Therefore, effective December 16, 2014, the SLUP no longer applies within the NANPR. The lands are now managed and administered by the PCA as per the *Canada National Parks Act*. The SLUPB has updated its mapping and GIS shape files to reflect the boundary changes.

It is the role of the SLUPB to consider rezoning options for the 2,702 square kilometres that were not included in the NANPR. Per Section 2.2 of the SLUP, a change of boundary requires an amendment. Absent an approved SLUP amendment, lands within Zone 41 that are not within the newly legislated park reserve remain zoned as a Proposed Conservation Initiative (PCI). Therefore, those lands are considered to have the same protection status as a conservation zone. This remains in effect until an amendment is approved.

The Board recognises that through the development of the NANPR, there are already years of data collection, study, and public discourse by stakeholders regarding these lands. The Board will review this body of work against land use planning issues raised since the final park boundaries were announced. The Board will also look at the values previously raised through the SLUP development process to develop the criteria that will be used to make rezoning decisions.

The SLUP has a zone description for PCI Zone 41 (Nááts'ihch'oh). It lists values to be protected, respected, and to take into account. Values to be protected include archaeological, burial and special cultural sites; its importance to the Greater Nahanni ecosystem; and habitat for large bodied wildlife species. The zone description also describes the economic importance of the area for its mineral resources and tourism potential.

Values to be Protected

Archaeological, Burial and Special Cultural Sites

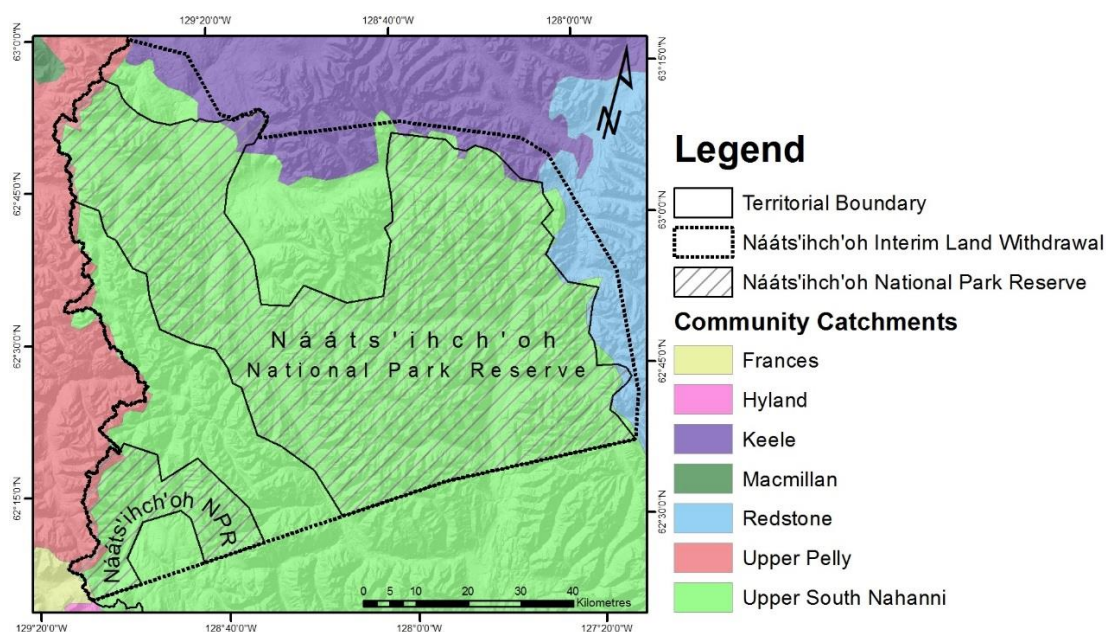
The Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre has provide the SLUP a proximity map of important sites within a 10 km² masked grid. To protect these sites, the SLUPB will continue to work with the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre and community traditional knowledge sources (such as the Tulita and Norman Wells RRCs) to ensure that the location of these sites remain confidential, yet receive an appropriate level of protection for zoning considerations.

Watershed and Ecosystem Protection

Protecting the headwaters of the Nahanni River was a key reason for establishing the NANPR. The Sahtu, neighbouring territories, general public, and third party support for protection of the watershed are documented in the Parks Canada Consultation Report. The Board will consider the impacts of potential land use activities for the remaining area of the South Nahanni Watershed not under permanent federal protection.

In addition to reviewing the Parks Canada Consultation Report, the Board has also collected information on ecosystem classification, fire history, forestry inventory, hot and warm springs,

mineral licks, ice patches, and may be at risk plants. The Board will review this information and consult resource professionals and locally recognised holders of traditional knowledge.



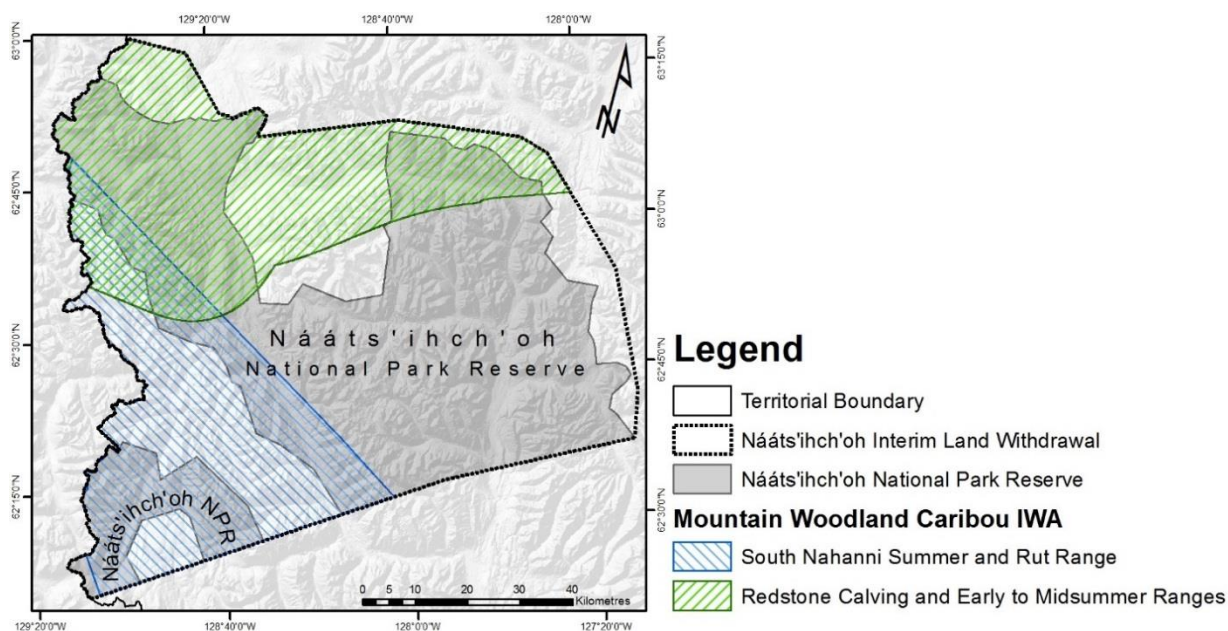
Map 3. Major Watersheds in the Vicinity of Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve

Source: Sahtu Land Use Planning Board, with data from: **Watersheds**, The Atlas of Canada, Natural Resources Canada, 2008; **Hillshade**, CDEM 1:250,000, Natural Resources Canada; **Nááts'ihch'oh NPR Boundaries**, Parks Canada, 2012; **Territorial Boundary**, Canada Geopolitical Boundaries, Natural Resources Canada, 2013.

Wildlife Habitat

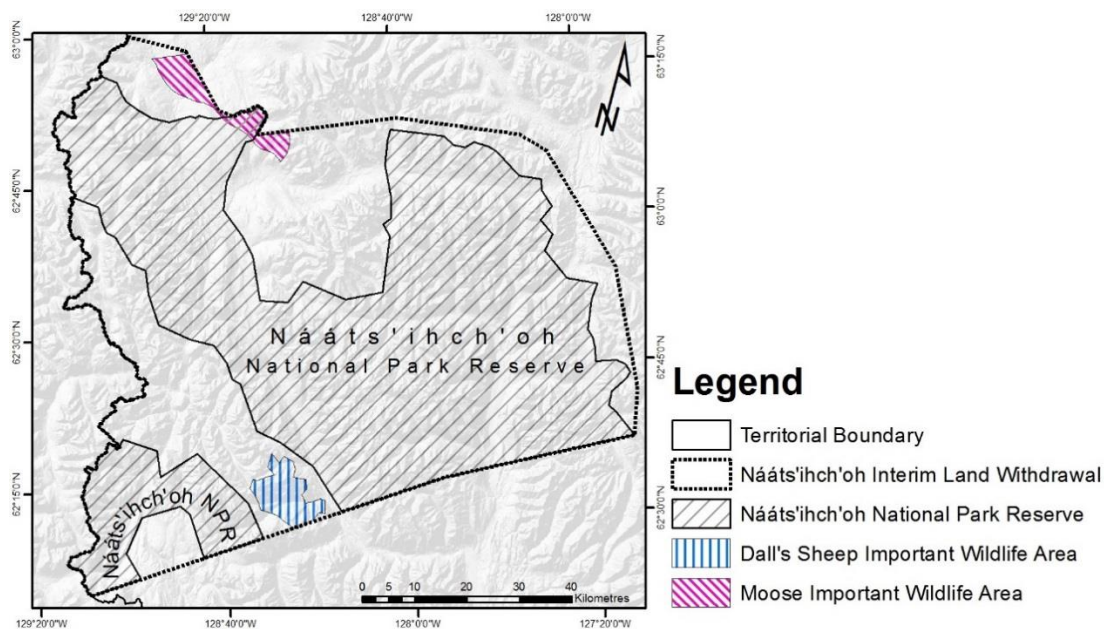
Through the development of the SLUP and park reserve, planning partners stressed the importance of maintaining healthy wildlife populations. In particular, the Board will be reviewing information provided by wildlife managers (local RRC's, SRRB, ENR, CWS, PCA, and DFO) regarding locations of critical habitat and migration patterns. While the Board does not have a wildlife management mandate, the link between land use and habitat was repeatedly acknowledged during the development of the SLUP.

Understanding the important large wildlife composition of the area, the Board has collected GIS data to map the important wildlife areas for Mountain Woodland Caribou (South Nahanni and Redstone Herds), Dall's sheep, Moose, Grizzly Bears, and Mountain Goats.



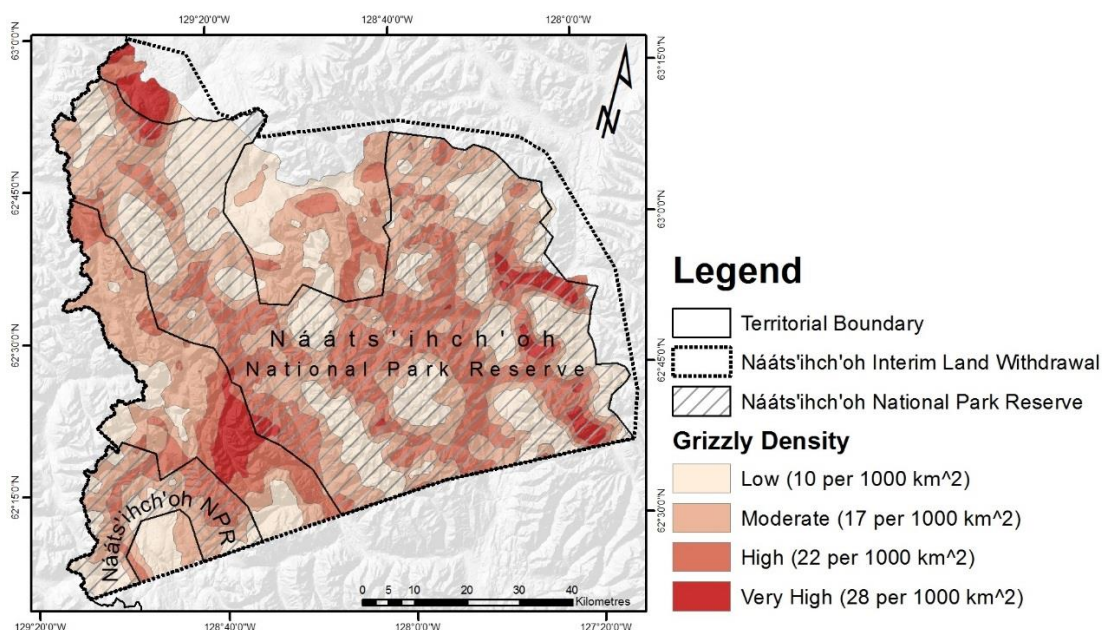
Map 4. Mountain Woodland Caribou Important Wildlife Areas

Source: Sahtu Land Use Planning Board, with data from: **Mountain Woodland Caribou IWA**, Important Wildlife Areas in the NWT, NWT Centre for Geomatics, 2012; **Hillshade**, CDEM 1:250,000, Natural Resources Canada; **Naáts'ihch'oh NPR Boundaries**, Parks Canada, 2012; **Territorial Boundary**, Canada Geopolitical Boundaries, Natural Resources Canada, 2013.



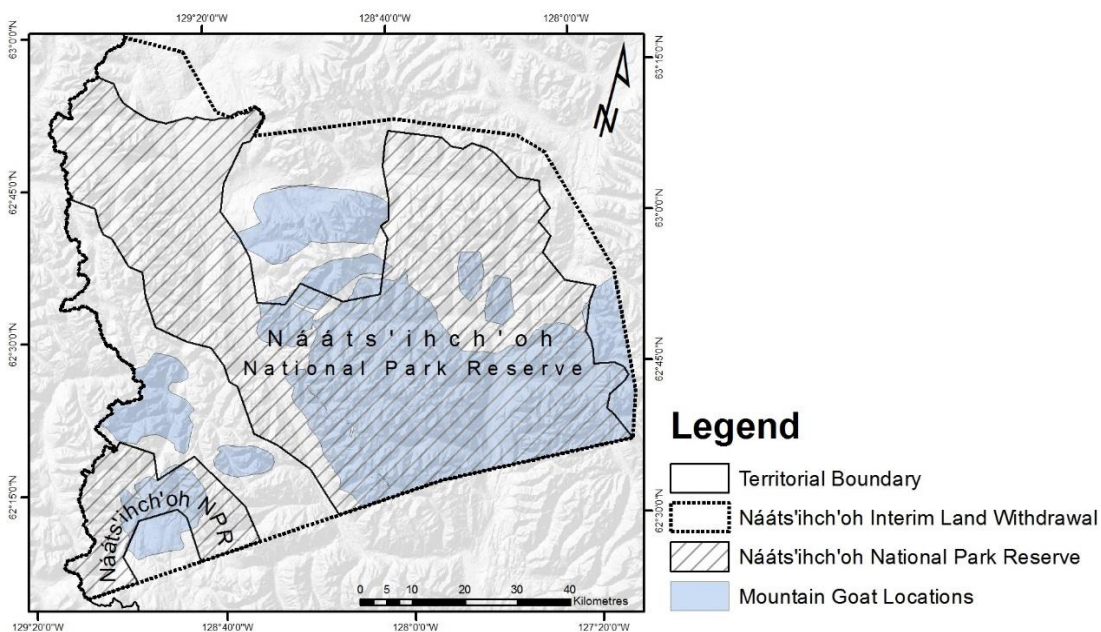
Map 5. Dall's Sheep and Moose Important Wildlife Areas

Source: Sahtu Land Use Planning Board, with data from: **Dall's Sheep and Moose IWA**, Important Wildlife Areas in the NWT, NWT Centre for Geomatics, 2012; **Hillshade**, CDEM 1:250,000, Natural Resources Canada; **Naáts'ihch'oh NPR Boundaries**, Parks Canada, 2012; **Territorial Boundary**, Canada Geopolitical Boundaries, Natural Resources Canada, 2013.



Map 6. Grizzly Bear Important Wildlife Areas' Density

Source: Sahtu Land Use Planning Board, with data from: **Grizzly Bear IWA Density**, Important Wildlife Areas in the NWT, NWT Centre for Geomatics, 2012; **Hillshade**, CDEM 1:250,000, Natural Resources Canada; **Naáts'ihch'oh NPR Boundaries**, Parks Canada, 2012; **Territorial Boundary**, Canada Geopolitical Boundaries, Natural Resources Canada, 2013.



Map 7. Mountain Goat Locations

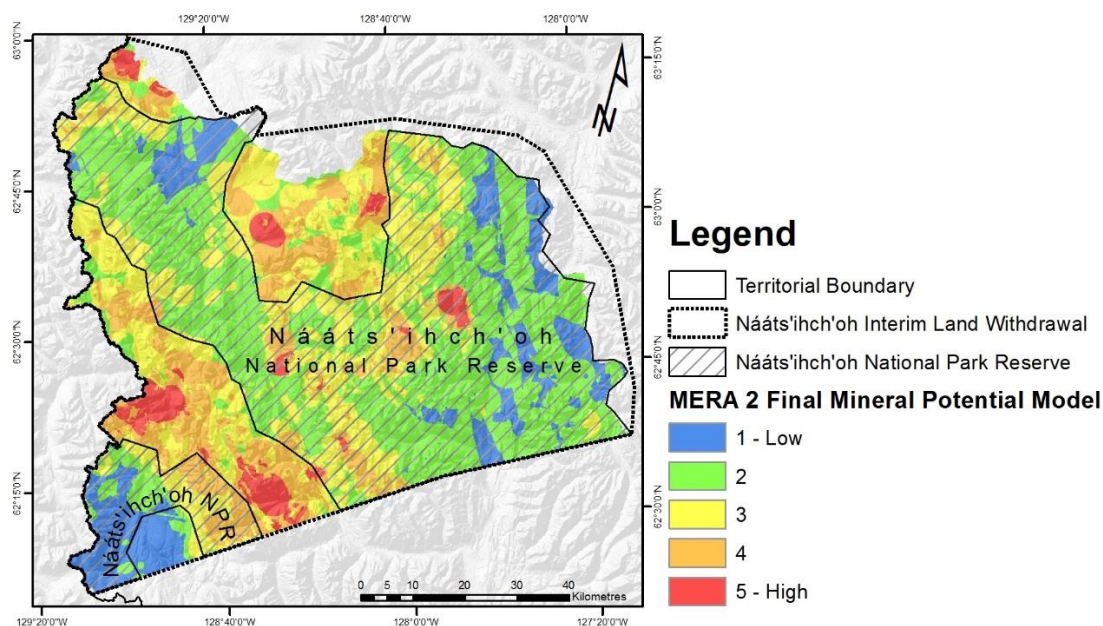
Source: Sahtu Land Use Planning Board, with data from: **Mountain Goat Locations**, Merged File based on Norm Simmon's observations (1968-74), outfitter data collected October 2000, DIAND data (1971/1974), Doug Tate data (1999-2000), Sahtu GIS Project; **Hillshade**, CDEM 1:250,000, Natural Resources Canada; **Naáts'ihch'oh NPR Boundaries**, Parks Canada, 2012; **Territorial Boundary**, Canada Geopolitical Boundaries, Natural Resources Canada, 2013.

Economic Importance

Development of the areas' resources are, and will continue to contribute to economic and employment benefits in the region. It is recognised that lands excluded from the NANPR hold the highest mineral resource potential. The Board will consider these factors while considering zoning options and special management conditions.

Mineral Resource Potential

The Board will take into account the MERA data, existing and previous claims and leases, and comments submitted during the development of the park reserve. Further input from industry, governments, and Designated Sahtu Organisations on resource development goals will be considered to optimise land use planning decision making that will lead to economic and employment benefits for the Sahtu.



Map 8. MERA 2 Final Mineral Potential Model

Source: Sahtu Land Use Planning Board, with data from: **MERA 2 Final Mineral Potential Model**, Mineral and Energy Resource Assessment of the Greater Nahanni Ecosystem Under Consideration for the Expansion of the Nahanni National Park Reserve, Northwest Territories, Open File 5344, Canada Centre for Mapping and Earth Observation, Natural Resources Canada, 2007; **Hillshade**, CDEM 1:250,000, Natural Resources Canada; **Naáts'ihch'oh NPR Boundaries**, Parks Canada, 2012; **Territorial Boundary**, Canada Geopolitical Boundaries, Natural Resources Canada, 2013.

Tourism and Outfitting

The Board recognises the new park reserve will bring new recreation and associated business opportunities. The Board will consider input from PCA, tour operators, and other planning partners, to understand how zoning decisions for lands adjacent to the park reserve may impact tourism development in the Sahtu.

Traditional Land Uses

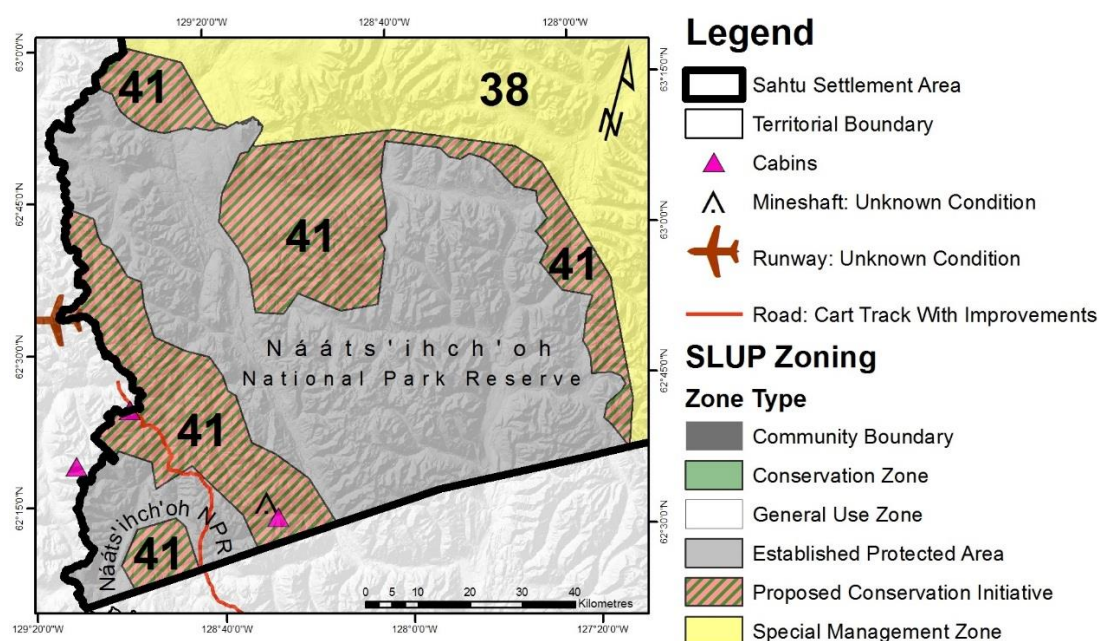
Land use planning does not change, impact, or affect harvesting or traditional rights of the Dene and Metis in the Sahtu Settlement Area. Land use planning reaffirms the traditional land uses

and harvesting rights protected under the land claim, and the Board must take this into account when making land use planning decisions.

Infrastructure

The Board has gathered information including GIS data on existing infrastructure, and acknowledges that there is an active land use permit and water licence for the rehabilitation of an existing road to Howards Pass. Nineteen kilometres of road are in this zone that connects the NANPR to the Yukon border.

The Board will seek to hear from planning partners on potential future infrastructure needs and consider how this may impact land use activities related to mineral exploration and development, tourism and outfitting, traditional uses, and other land use activities that may be raised through the amendment process.



Map 9. Infrastructure

Source: Sahtu Land Use Planning Board, with data from: **Infrastructure**, National Topographic Survey, 1:250,000, Natural Resources Canada, 1987; **Hillshade**, CDEM 1:250,000, Natural Resources Canada; **Naáts'ihch'oh NPR Boundaries**, Parks Canada, 2012; **Territorial Boundary**, Canada Geopolitical Boundaries, Natural Resources Canada, 2013.

Other Planning Partner Interests

The Board has identified these topics to frame the discussion leading to the development of zoning options. Other topics of planning partner interest may inform the process if they demonstrate in the Board's view, a consistency with the SLUP Vision (Section 1.5.1) and Goals (Section 1.5.2). It is the Board's intent to hear all points of view, and propose zoning alternatives that balance the cultural, ecological conservation, and economic development goals that protect and promote the existing and future wellbeing of the residents and communities of the Sahtu settlement area having the regard to the interests of all Canadians.

Amendment Process

This is the first endeavour to amend the Sahtu Land Use Plan. To ensure that the processes and procedures of the Board meet the requirements of fairness and natural justice, the Board is proposing a process that is consistent with the *SDMCLCA* (Section 25.2.7), *MVRMA* (Section 48), *SLUP* (Section 5.7), and *SLUP Rules of Procedure* (Part 6). This process will include: information gathering, planning partner input, and amendment preparation. Once the Board adopts an amendment, it will be submitted to the 3 approval parties.



Information Gathering (Current-August 2015)

As presented in this report, the Board has monitored the establishment of the NANPR and conducted its initial research on the area. Should additional information in the form of traditional knowledge reports, scientific studies, GIS data, maps, or other research be identified, it will be collected and evaluated by the Board.

As deemed fair and appropriate by the Board, it may augment its information gathering by engaging recognised experts who can provide or interpret traditional knowledge and/or scientific, economic, social or cultural data that further informs land use planning for the area.

Planning Partner Input (April-July 2015)

In addition to the existing body of information described in this report, the Board will seek input from all Planning Partners. Planning Partners will have the opportunity to comment in writing or at a public meeting.

The Board will accept written comments for 60-days addressing the content and approach of the amendment process described in this report.

This input will be used to develop the agenda for 3 scheduled public meetings to be held in July in Tulita, Norman Wells, and Yellowknife. The agenda for the public meetings will allow the Board to present the information collected with an overview of issues raised through written comments received on the Background Report. It will also be a forum for participants to provide further input into the process.

***Planning Partners-** means residents, communities, Designated Sahtu Organisations, departments and agencies of the territorial and federal government, co-management boards, industry, businesses, non-governmental organisations and members of the general public who are affected by or interested in participating in the planning process.*

-SLUP Definition

Amendment Preparation (August-September 2015)

The Board will meet following the public meetings to consider all information gathered and planning partner input to prepare an amendment application as per Part 6 of the SLUP Rules of Procedure.

Approval

For an amendment to come into effect, it must be approved by all three MVRMA approval parties: the Sahtu Secretariat Incorporated, Government of the Northwest Territories (Minister of Lands), and Government of Canada (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada).

Throughout the process, the Board will be coordinating with these 3 approval parties. If needed, the Board may structure a Tri-Partite consultation modelled after the approval of the SLUP to finalise an amendment that all three parties can agree to. Should there be challenges in arriving at a mutual agreement, the Board will revise its approach as needed.

Timeline and Communication

The Board will strive to bring an amendment to the approval parties in a timely manner. As learned through the SLUP development process, the time required is influenced by planning partners and approval parties. The Board is proposing a timeline to prepare an amendment application by September 2015. Through notices and postings to its webpage, the Board will keep planning partners apprised of progress and changes.

Additional Information and Questions

The SLUPB website has an on-line registry where it will post important documents throughout the process. The SLUPB website is:

www.sahtulanduseplan.org

Questions regarding the SLUP Amendment Process should be directed to Scott Paszkiewicz, Executive Director at exec_director@sahtulanduseplan.org or 867-598-2055.

Comment Submission

Anyone who would like to submit written comments on this Background Report may do so by email, post or fax. The deadline for submitting comments is **5:00 PM on Tuesday June 16, 2015**.

Comments should be addressed to:

Heather Bourassa, Chair
Sahtu Land Use Planning Board
PO Box 235
Fort Good Hope, NT X0E 0H0

email: info@sahtulanduseplan.org

fax: 867-598-2545

Resources

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