



Proposed Establishment of Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve

Boundary Options

Why Here?

In Canada's Northwest Territories the South Nahanni River watershed, or Tuchít'á, as it is called in the North Slavey language, straddles the Sahtu Settlement Area to the north and the Dehcho territory to the south.

The South Nahanni River watershed is an incredibly beautiful area with great ecological and cultural importance. The upper part of the watershed accounts for about 1/6th of Tuchít'á, and it is important as the source of the river and as habitat for grizzly bear, Dall's sheep, mountain goats and woodland caribou.

It has been an important area for generations of Aboriginal peoples from the Northwest Territories and Yukon whose living traditional culture still remains tied to these lands and waters. Within the Sahtu Settlement Area, the Shuhtagot'ine (Mountain Dene) and Sahtu Métis have particular cultural and spiritual relationships to this area.

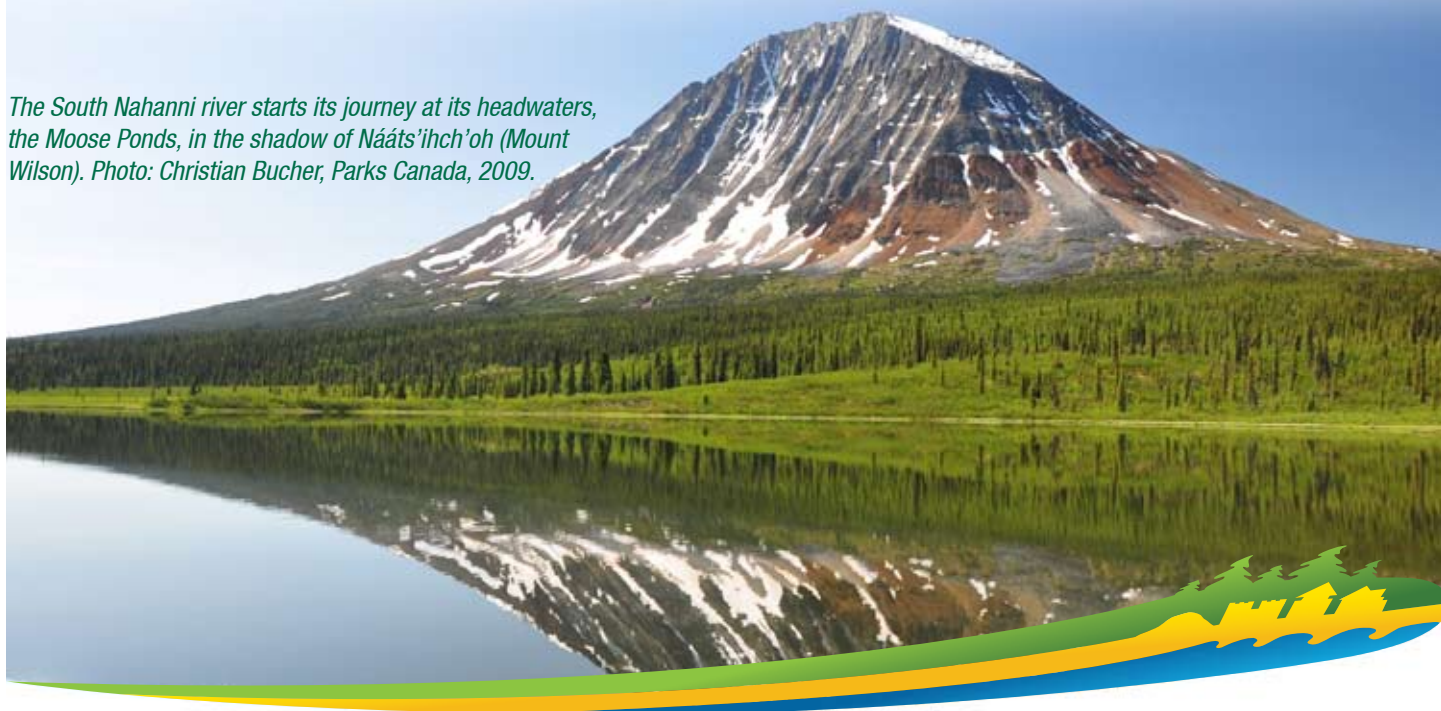
Today the area is often a launching point for adventurous visitors to this wilderness.

Visitors from the rest of Canada and the world come to see and experience the spectacular landscapes of Nááts'ihch'oh and to canoe the South Nahanni River from its headwaters.

In June 2009, the Government of Canada achieved a massive expansion of Nahanni National Park Reserve within the Dehcho territory of the NWT when legislation was passed adding over 25,000 sq km of land to the existing park reserve.

The additional protection of the South Nahanni River headwaters in the proposed Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve will complement the expanded Nahanni and together they will stand side by side for all time - a final key step in the protection and celebration of the Greater Nahanni Ecosystem.

The South Nahanni river starts its journey at its headwaters, the Moose Ponds, in the shadow of Nááts'ihch'oh (Mount Wilson). Photo: Christian Bucher, Parks Canada, 2009.



How were the boundary options developed?

Considerable research on wildlife and conservation values within the Greater Nahanni Ecosystem (including the proposed Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve), as well as work on traditional knowledge and visitor experience potential, has been completed as part of the recent process to expand the neighbouring Nahanni National Park Reserve.

A Mineral and Energy Resource Assessment (MERA) of the Greater Nahanni Ecosystem was also completed by Natural Resources Canada as part of this proposal (Geological Survey of Canada Open File 5344).

The MERA Process is how the federal and the territorial governments cooperate to complete mineral and energy resource assessments prior to creating new national parks and national park reserves in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut.

The Senior MERA Committee has representatives from Parks Canada, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Natural Resources Canada and the Government of the Northwest Territories.

The Senior MERA Committee used the results of the conservation value research and the MERA assessments to develop three proposed boundary options for consideration by Aboriginal groups, third parties and the Canadian public.



Some of the wildlife species in Nááts'ihch'oh, such as the grizzly bear and the woodland caribou, are listed as Species of Special Concern. Others, such as Dall's sheep and mountain goats, are sensitive to human disturbance. Hoary Marmots are near the northernmost limit of their range. Photos: property of the Government of the Northwest Territories.

Parks Canada and the Sahtu Dene and Métis

The proposed Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve is located within the Sahtu Settlement Area of the Northwest Territories. The Sahtu Settlement Area was designated in 1993 under the Sahtu Dene & Métis Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement.

Chapter 16 of this Agreement deals with national parks. It sets out a process and requirements for the establishment of a national park or national park reserve within the Sahtu Settlement Area, including negotiation of an Impact and Benefit Plan.

A national park or reserve cannot be established in the Settlement Area until an Impact and Benefit Plan has been completed.

The Impact and Benefit Plan will, among other things, address the cooperative management of the park, the continuation of Sahtu Dene and Métis harvesting rights, and economic and employment opportunities for Sahtu Dene and Métis of the Tulita District. Negotiations are in progress and the Plan is nearing completion.

All of the boundary options:

Are limited to the Sahtu part of the Greater Nahanni Ecosystem;

Recognise existing third party mineral interests (mineral claims and leases);

Provide for access to specific mineral development areas across park lands;

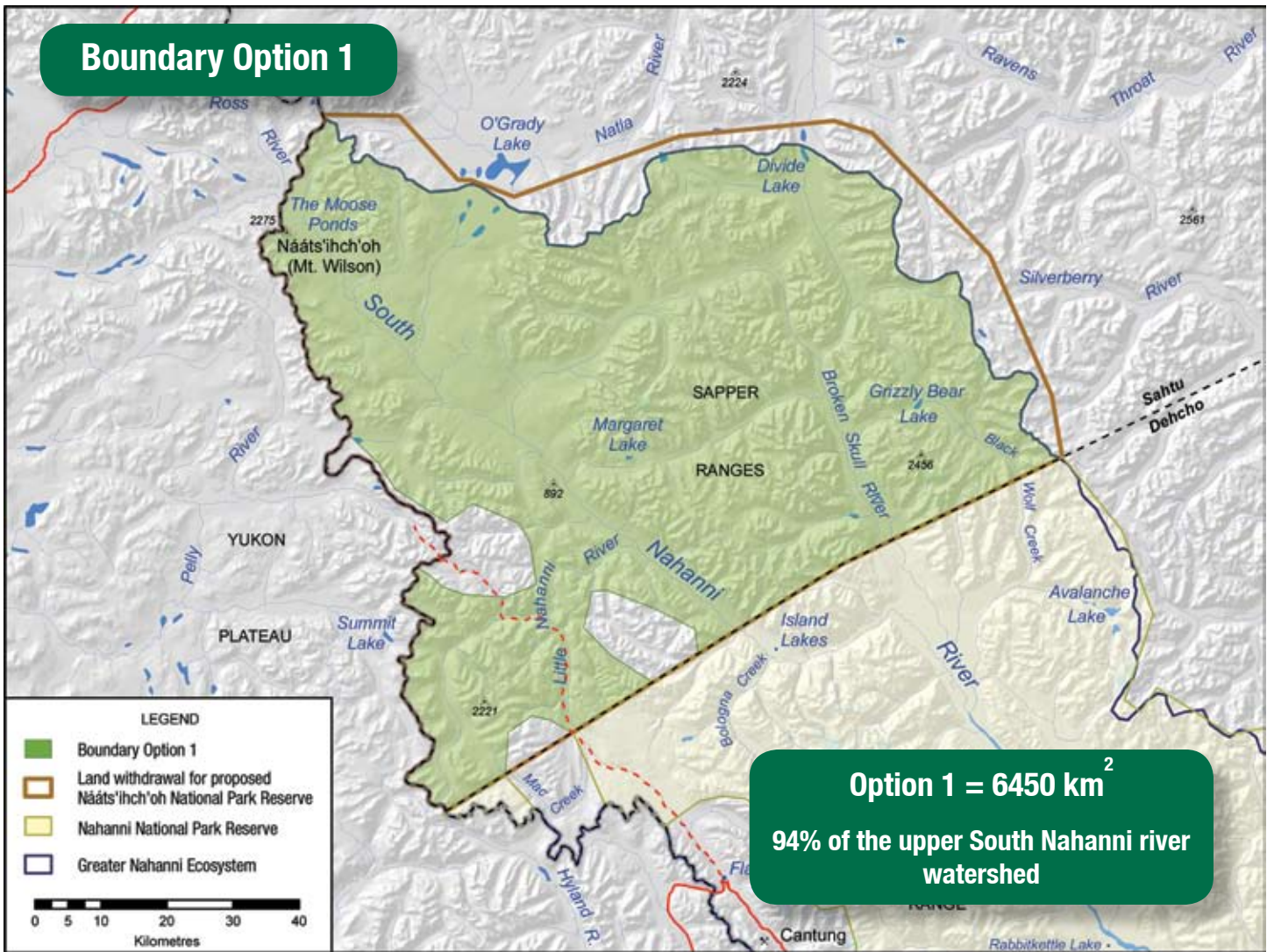
Achieve protection of some key conservation values;

Represent a spectrum - balancing conservation values and mineral resources;

Allow for both creation of a park and mineral development outside the park.



Boundary Option 1



Boundary Option 1

It's not a vote - it's a discussion...

The three boundary options being presented are not formal proposals and it is unlikely that the final park boundary will look exactly like any of them.

We are seeking your feedback on what you think this proposed park reserve should look like.

The Governments of Canada and the NWT need to know what people think and if there are other issues not identified here that need to be considered before a final park boundary is recommended to Parliament.

Option 1 was developed to best protect conservation values within the proposed national park reserve while still providing open area around existing third party mineral interests (mineral claims, leases).

This option covers 94% of the upper watershed.

Habitat for an estimated 95% of the grizzly bear population (about 108 grizzlies).

About 81% of the Upper Nahanni woodland caribou herd summer habitat is protected.

The 6% of the watershed not within the proposal accounts for 20% of the highest mineral potential areas as identified in the MERA study.

It excludes the three main areas of mineral claims and leases.

Boundary Option 2

Option 2 provides a larger open area around existing mineral claims and leases and thus allows more mineral potential to be available. The option also leaves an open area for possible future staking and development in the northern and western parts of the watershed, particularly in the area between Lened Creek and Howard's Pass.

This park option would protect 84% of the upper watershed of the South Nahanni River.

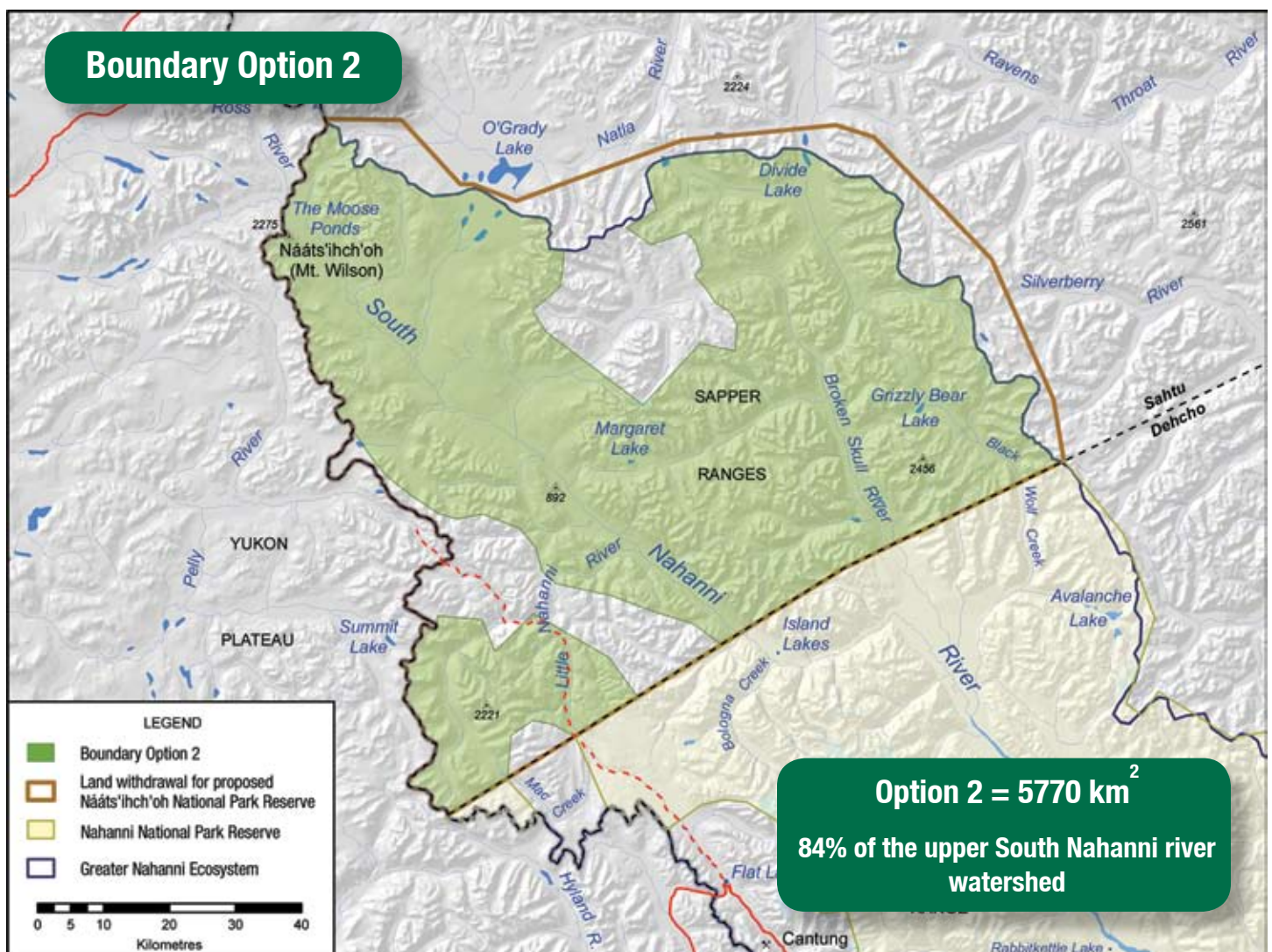
It would include habitat for an estimated 85% of the grizzly bear population (about 96 grizzlies) and 72% of the Upper Nahanni woodland caribou herd's summer habitat.

The 16% of the area not within the proposal accounts for 43% of the highest mineral potential.

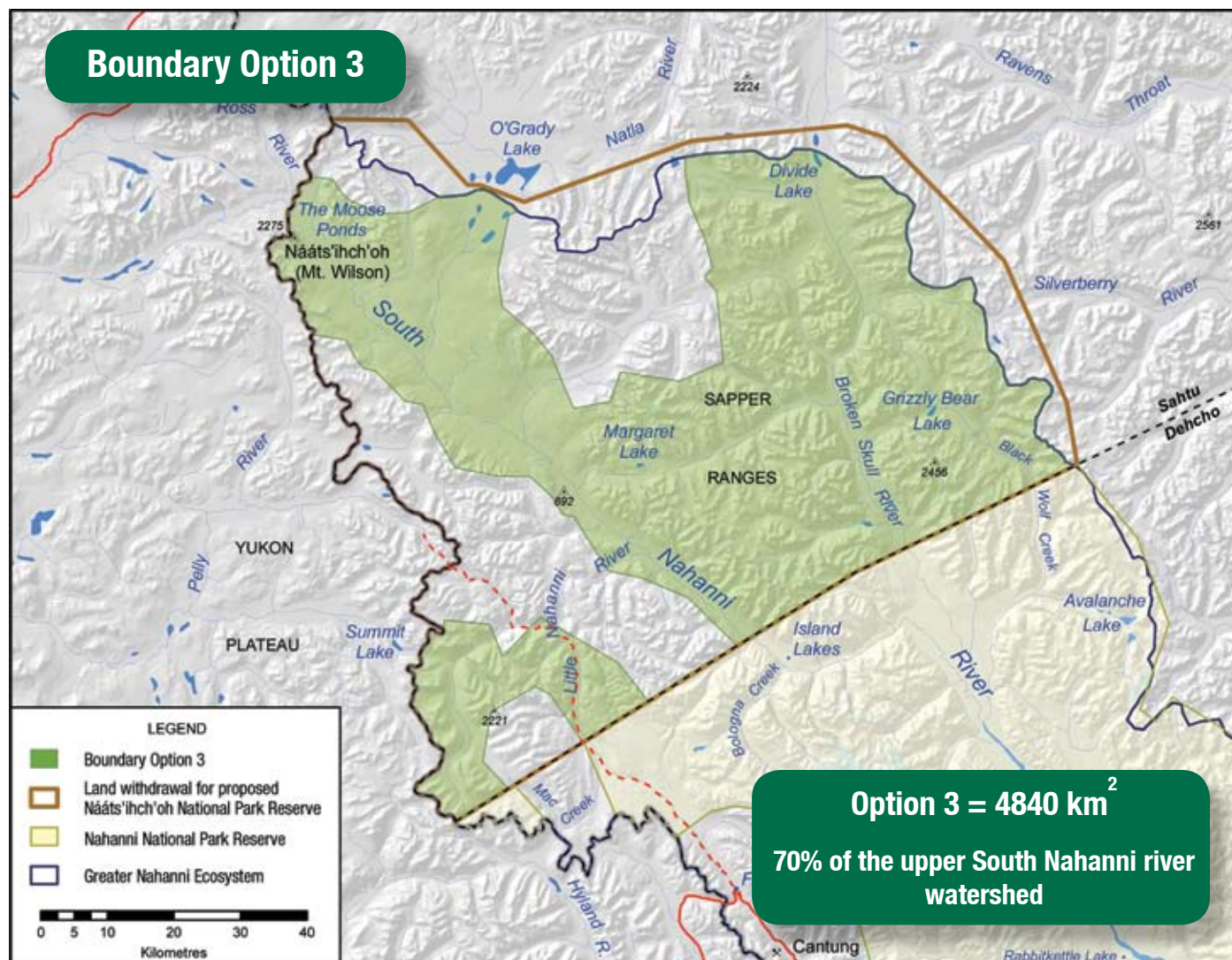
This option, while protecting certain key conservation values, will result in less protection of other important conservation values such as the Upper Nahanni woodland caribou herd's summer habitat.



Evidence of mineral exploration near Howard's Pass in the upper watershed speaks to the potential for future development of mineral resources. Photo: Claude Mondor, Parks Canada, 2002.



Boundary Option 3



Boundary Option 3

Option 3 was developed to take full advantage of mineral potential availability within the proposed national park reserve while still providing minimal protection of conservation values.

It provides a significantly larger open area around existing mineral claims and leases. It leaves open a much larger area for possible future staking and development in the northern and western parts of the watershed, particularly in the areas between Lened Creek and Howard's Pass, along the Yukon border and at the top of the South Nahanni River.

This park option covers 70% of the upper watershed.

It includes habitat for an estimated 70% of the grizzly bear population (about 71 grizzlies).

Only 44% of the Upper Nahanni woodland caribou herd summer habitat would be in the park.

The 30% not within the proposed national park reserve accounts for 70% of the highest areas of mineral potential.

This option offers minimal protection to important conservation values.



*The upper watershed is critical calving, summer and rutting habitat for the Upper Nahanni woodland caribou herd.
Photo: Property of the Government of the Northwest Territories.*



Just one of many spectacular spots within the proposed Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve: Grizzly Bear Lake, surrounded by the peaks of the Sapper Range of the Mackenzie Mountains. Photo: Christian Bucher, Parks Canada, 2009.

What happens next?

Over the winter of 2010, Parks Canada will be discussing boundary considerations and gathering input from Sahtu Dene and Métis leadership, leadership from neighbouring Aboriginal communities, third party interest holders and stakeholder groups (including mining, big game outfitters, wilderness adventure outfitter, and environmental non-governmental organizations) and the Canadian public.

At the end of the comment period, a consultation report summarizing all the input received will be submitted to Parks Canada for inclusion in the governmental decision making process.

Get involved! Have your say!

What do you think is important? What issues should be considered when thinking about a final boundary for this new national park reserve?

Do you have questions? Tell us what you think!

Please contact us! Your questions, views and opinions are very important. Your voice will be heard.

You can reach us in person at open houses (contact below for schedule) and in writing by mail or email.

Attention: Nááts'ihch'oh Proposal

C/O Park Establishment Branch

Parks Canada Agency

PO Box 1166, Yellowknife, NT, X1A 2N8

Phone: 867.766.8460

Fax: 867.766.8466

Email: npn@pc.gc.ca

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