

# PROPOSED ESTABLISHMENT OF NÁÁTS'IHCH'OH NATIONAL PARK RESERVE

## FINAL CONSULTATION REPORT



Photo: Christian Bucher, Parks Canada, 2009

**FINAL REPORT AUGUST 30, 2010**

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Parks  
Canada

Parcs  
Canada

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Introduction and Context

The proposed Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve (pronounced Naa tseen ch-o) is located in the northern one-sixth of the South Nahanni River watershed in the Northwest Territories (NWT). The interim land withdrawal for the park reserve covers an area of approximately 7,600 square kilometres (2,934 sq mi). The proposed park reserve is situated entirely in the Tulita District of the Sahtu Settlement Area.

The area proposed for the Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve has long been recommended for conservation in land use processes by the Sahtu Dene and Métis. Such conservation would also align with the Government of Canada's commitment to conserve the Greater Nahanni Ecosystem and ecological integrity of the area.

Section 16.2 of the Sahtu Dene and Métis Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement states that before a national park is established in the settlement area, a Sahtu Impact and Benefit Plan is required. The Impact and Benefit Plan will describe the relationship between Parks Canada (PCA) and the First Nations and Métis communities of Norman Wells and Tulita, if the park reserve is created.

### The Proposed Boundary Options

The Mineral and Energy Resource Assessment (MERA) process is the primary means by which Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Parks Canada Agency (PCA), Natural Resources Canada and the governments of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut cooperate in conducting mineral and energy resource assessments and considering mineral potential prior to creating new national parks in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. Park reserve boundary options were developed by the MERA Working Group and proposed for public and stakeholder consultation:

Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
<p>With a total area of 6,450 square kilometres, the option was developed to best protect conservation values within the proposed national park reserve while providing an open area around the existing third party mineral interests. This option protects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 94% of the upper watershed of the South Nahanni River</li> <li>• Habitat for an estimated 95% of the grizzly bear population</li> <li>• 81% of the summer habitat for Upper Nahanni woodland caribou herd.</li> </ul> <p>This option leaves 20% of overall high mineral potential outside the park</p>	<p>With a total area of 5,770 square kilometres, the option diminishes the achievement of conservation goals and allows more mineral potential to be available. This option protects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 84% of the upper watershed of the South Nahanni River</li> <li>• Habitat for an estimated 85% of the grizzly bear population</li> <li>• 72% of the summer habitat for Upper Nahanni woodland caribou herd.</li> </ul> <p>This option leaves 43% of the overall high mineral potential outside the park</p>	<p>With a total area of 4,840 square kilometres, this option takes advantage of the mineral potential within the proposed park reserve while providing some protection to key values. This option protects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 70% of the upper watershed of the South Nahanni River</li> <li>• Habitat for 70% of the grizzly population</li> <li>• 44% of the summer habitat for Upper Nahanni woodland caribou herd.</li> </ul> <p>This option leaves 70% of the overall high mineral potential outside the park.</p>

Maps of the proposed boundary options are provided on Pages 7 to 9 in the report.

The three potential boundary options were presented by PCA for review and comment during the consultation program, with an invitation to participants to develop modified boundaries or propose new ones for the park reserve. This consultation report presents the results of the consultations.

### **The Consultation Program**

The consultation activities related to the creation of the Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve included leadership and community meetings with Aboriginal organizations and collective bodies, land claim participants throughout the Sahtu Settlement Area as well as in the neighbouring traditional territories with Aboriginal groups who assert rights in the area proposed for establishment of the park reserve. The general public's input was invited through a call for written submissions on Parks Canada's website and open houses held at the local, regional and national level. PCA also met with third party interests and stakeholders to brief them on the park reserve process, studies and boundary options while giving them an opportunity to discuss any concerns they had.

Key elements of the consultation program included:

- Public open houses (7) held in Norman Wells, Tulita, Yellowknife, Whitehorse, Calgary, Ottawa and Fort Simpson;
- Meetings with Aboriginal leadership and communities (9); and
- Meetings with third party stakeholders (e.g. outfitter associations, mining industry representatives, environmental groups) (17).

### **Overview of Public Comments**

In the consultation on the proposed Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve, a total of 1603 people provided written comments, as follows:

- Comments submitted by e-mail, phone, fax and mail: 1509
- Public comment forms collected at meetings: 57
- Public comment forms e-mailed or mailed: 37

In addition to the written letters and comment sheets, a total of 13 formal submissions were received from stakeholders representing mining, outfitting, tourism, and environmental organization interests.

Oral comments were also provided in leadership/community meetings and at open houses (including comments from the floor after the presentation and one-on one discussions with staff at open house displays). The oral comments have also been taken into account in the analysis of consultation results.

### **Consultation Findings**

The findings from all consultation events and activities are summarized in this report, according to the sources of the comments:

- Aboriginal interests (Sahtu Region, Dehcho Region and Yukon);
- Third party stakeholder interests (environmental organizations, mining interests, outfitting organizations); and
- Comments from the public at large (open houses and written submissions).

The input from all consultations was analyzed and is described in this report.

## Themes and Considerations

A number of themes and considerations emerged in the consultation program. Each of these is 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 to/through Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve;

## Comments on the Public Consultation Program

The consultation program for the Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve was generally well received by participants. Participants indicated that they appreciated having knowledgeable people at public meetings to answer questions. To improve awareness and attendance at meetings and open houses, it was suggested that additional promotion be undertaken in various media, such as local radio and additional poster distribution. The suggestion was made for PCA to go into local area schools to inform the youth of the proposal and obtain their input.

## Next Steps

During and continuing after the consultation program, PCA will work with the Tulita District Nááts'ihch'oh Working Group towards the finalization of an Impact and Benefit Plan to allow for the establishment of the national park reserve.

The findings described in this consultation report will provide the governments of Canada and Northwest Territories with the views and perspectives of all people who participated in the consultation activities, to allow governments to develop a recommendation for a final boundary.

## Conclusions

The proposal to create the Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve generated considerable support among Canadians. Over 96% of participants who provided written comments on the proposal expressed their support for this initiative.

A majority of consultation participants who provided written comments (69.9%) preferred protecting the entire South Nahanni River watershed, with a preference for activities related to mining being limited or restricted to areas outside of the watershed stated by 15.7%. Of importance to participants was preserving the habitats of important wildlife species such as grizzly bears, caribou, Dall's sheep and mountain goats (61.3%) and protecting the ecological integrity of the complete South Nahanni watershed (10%).

Among the few participants (65) stating a preference for one of the boundary options proposed by PCA, Option 1 was the preferred boundary for sixty participants (92.3%), due to the capacity of this option to provide for the most protection of the watershed wildlife habitat while accommodating some mineral resource potential. Three participants selected Option 2 (4.6%), while Option 3 was preferred by 2 participants (3.1%) for further economic development potential to be realized in environmentally responsible ways.

Potential road access was identified as an issue requiring further discussion among PCA, area First Nations and Métis people, and mining industry representatives. Road access would impact mineral exploration and mining, river outfitting, First Nations and Métis traditional use and activities and infrastructure for tourism

The potential use of the park reserve for tourism and eco-tourism was seen as beneficial from the perspectives of 30 participants out of 1603 (1.9%) valuing conservation and long-term sustainable economic benefits from a world class wilderness heritage park reserve. The many economic benefits of present and future mineral potential in the park reserve were also documented by 17 participants out of 1603 (1.1%).

The analysis indicated that respecting First Nation and Métis rights and traditional values was important for 28 or 1.7% of participants providing written comments across Canada. They emphasized that a cooperative, integrated management approach between Sahtu First Nations and Métis and PCA was important for management of the Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve and for the preservation of the ecological, cultural, economic, and spiritual values associated with the park reserve.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>I</b>
<b>1.0 INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE CONSULTATION .....	2
1.2 PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVE OF THE REPORT .....	3
1.3 STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT .....	3
<b>2.0 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT .....</b>	<b>4</b>
2.1 STEPS IN THE NÁÁTS'IHCH'OH NATIONAL PARK RESERVE ESTABLISHMENT PROCESS .....	4
2.2 THE IMPACT AND BENEFIT PLAN .....	4
2.3 THE FEASIBILITY STUDIES .....	5
2.4 THE PROPOSED BOUNDARY OPTIONS .....	5
<b>3.0 CONSULTATION PROGRAM DESCRIPTION .....</b>	<b>10</b>
3.1 PUBLIC OPEN HOUSES .....	10
3.1.1 Open House Materials .....	11
3.1.2 Open House Notification .....	11
3.2 MEETINGS WITH ABORIGINAL LEADERSHIP & COMMUNITIES .....	14
3.3 MEETING WITH THIRD PARTY STAKEHOLDERS .....	19
3.4 INFORMATION DISTRIBUTION .....	26
3.4.1 Mailing List .....	26
3.4.2 Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve Web Page .....	27
3.4.3 Co-Promotion by Other Organizations .....	28
<b>4.0 SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESULTS .....</b>	<b>29</b>
4.1 OVERVIEW OF PUBLIC COMMENTS RECEIVED .....	29
4.1.1 Consultation Program Information .....	29
4.1.2 Participant Affiliation .....	30
4.1.3 Participant Information Sources .....	31
4.2 THEMES IN PUBLIC WRITTEN COMMENTS .....	32
4.3 OVERALL FINDINGS .....	33
4.3.1 Comments from Aboriginal Communities and Organizations .....	33
4.3.2 Third Party Stakeholder Interests .....	36
4.3.3 Comments from the Public .....	39
4.4 ANALYSIS OF THE PROPOSED OPTIONS .....	41
4.5 THEMES AND CONSIDERATIONS .....	42
4.5.1 Theme 1: Protect the Watershed and Ecosystem .....	42
4.5.2 Theme 2: Protect the Wildlife Habitat .....	42
4.5.3 Theme 3: Resource Development in the Watershed .....	43
4.5.4 Theme 4: Tourism in the Park Reserve .....	43
4.5.5 Theme 5: Co-operative Management .....	43
4.5.6 Theme 6: Road Access to and through Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve .....	44
4.6 COMMENTS ON THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION PROGRAM .....	44
<b>5.0 NEXT STEPS .....</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>6.0 CONCLUSIONS .....</b>	<b>46</b>

## List of Appendices

Appendix A: News Release and Backgrounder on the Launch of the Public Consultations

Appendix B: Copy of Open House Materials  
Appendix C: Samples of Newspaper Notices  
Appendix D: Sample of Public Service Radio Announcements  
Appendix E: Samples of Community Posters  
Appendix F: Sample of Invitation Letter  
Appendix G: Submissions by NGOs and Third Party Stakeholders

## Acronyms

AMMO – Association of Mackenzie Mountain Outfitters

ATV – All Terrain Vehicle

CBI – Canadian Boreal Initiative

CPAWS – Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society

ENGO – Environmental Non-Government Organizations

GNWT – Government of the Northwest Territories

INAC – Indian and Northern Affairs Canada

MERA – Mineral and Energy Resource Assessment

MOU – Memorandum of Understanding

NRCan – Natural Resources Canada

NROA – Nahanni River Outfitter Association

NWT – Northwest Territories

PAS – NWT Protected Area Strategy

PCA – Parks Canada Agency

TDNWG – Tulita District Nááts'ihch'oh Working Group

WCS – Wildlife Conservation Society Canada

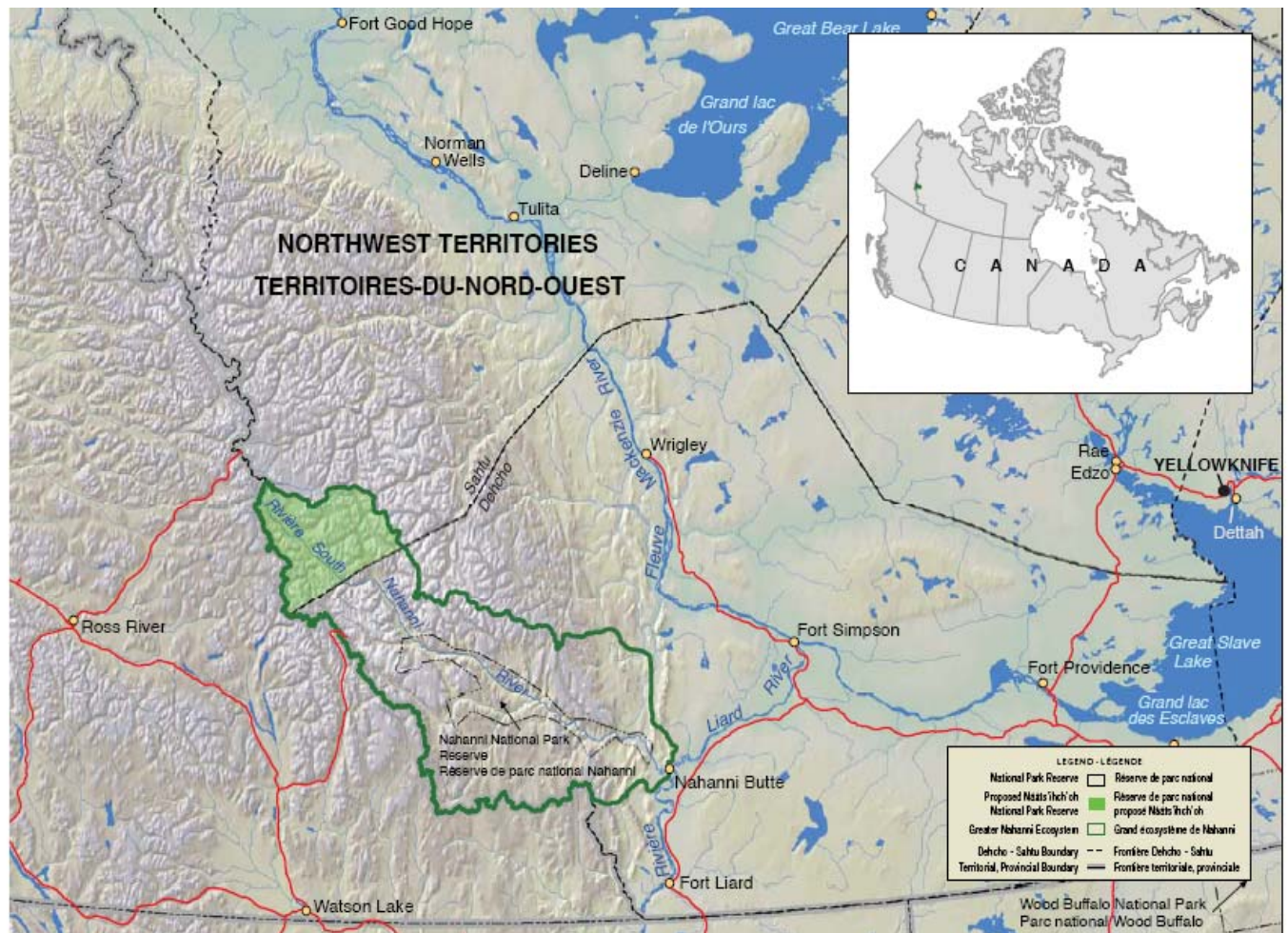
WWF – World Wildlife Fund



## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The proposed Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve (pronounced Naa tseen ch-o) is located in the northern one-sixth of the South Nahanni River watershed in the Northwest Territories (NWT). The proposed park reserve takes its name from the iconic mountain standing at the South Nahanni headwaters. Nááts'ihch'oh is the Shúhtagot'ine (Mountain Dene) language description of the mountain, referring to its unique shape, which is sharp and pointed on the top like a porcupine quill. The interim land withdrawal for the park reserve covers an area of approximately 7,600 square kilometres (2,934 sq mi). The proposed park reserve is situated entirely in the Tulita District of the Sahtu Settlement Area.

**Figure 1: Interim Land Withdrawal for the Proposed Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve**



Source: "Proposed Creation of Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve: Sahtu Community Update #1: Working Together to Create Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve". February 2009

The Greater Nahanni Ecosystem – known as Tuchjít'á in the Shúhtagot'ine language of the Tulita District of the Sahtu Settlement Area or Nah?'á Dehé in the language of the Dehcho people, includes the entire watershed of the South Nahanni River. First Nations and Métis peoples of the Sahtu Settlement Area, Dehcho Region and eastern Yukon view the South Nahanni River watershed as an important cultural, spiritual and natural area. The South Nahanni watershed is home to several

important species, including grizzly bears and woodland caribou. The area is also known for its Dall's sheep and Canada's northernmost range for populations of mountain goat and hoary marmot.

The proposed Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve is located adjacent to and north of the Nahanni National Park Reserve (see Figure 1). The expansion of the Nahanni National Park Reserve, announced in June 2009, saw the park reserve area increased to six times its former size, enlarging the protected area of the South Nahanni and its tributaries to some 30,000 square kilometres. Nahanni National Park Reserve has become the third largest national park in Canada, covering an area almost the size of Vancouver Island.

The area proposed for the Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve has long been recommended for conservation in land use processes by the Sahtu Dene and Métis. Such conservation would also align with the Government of Canada's commitment to conserve the Greater Nahanni Ecosystem and ecological integrity of the area. If the park reserve is created, Parks Canada Agency (PCA) and the Sahtu Dene and Métis would be working with other land managers and resource users in the area to meet conservation objectives while respecting other land uses in the area and existing third party interests (e.g., existing mineral claims and land leases).

The Senior Mineral and Energy Resource Assessment (MERA) Committee — a committee composed of senior officials from Government of Canada departments (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada [INAC], Natural Resources Canada [NRCan] and PCA) and, for projects in the Northwest Territories the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT), approved three boundary options for public and stakeholder consultations. The development of these boundaries took into consideration mineral potential and conservation value research. PCA is required to consult extensively on any proposal to establish a new national park. Groups consulted include Aboriginal people, third party stakeholder groups (mining, tourism, hunting and river outfitters, environmental organizations) and the Canadian public. The Government of Canada and the Northwest Territories will use the viewpoints gathered in the consultations to inform deliberations on a final boundary for the proposed national park reserve.

## 1.1 PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE CONSULTATION

In accord with legal requirements for public and Aboriginal consultation prior to park establishment under S.12.1 of the *Canada National Parks Act* and Land Claims Agreement obligations, the purpose of the consultation was to engage Aboriginal people, third party stakeholder groups, and the Canadian public in a dialogue regarding the proposal to establish the Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve.

The objectives for the consultation were as follows:

- To provide all interested parties and the Canadian public with information on the proposed Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve and the three proposed boundary options;
- To offer a variety of opportunities for participants in the consultation program to present and discuss their views on the proposal and the options;
- To request input on the proposed boundary options, provide public suggestions for modifications or changes and/or propose additional boundary options;
- To conduct the consultations in a process that is inclusive, transparent, accessible, accountable and supported by factual information; and
- To ensure objectivity in the compilation, analysis and synthesis of the input from the public, the firm, Terriplan Consultants was retained to produce this report.

A News Release and associated Backgrounder announced the launch of public consultations for the proposed Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve on January 21, 2010. The News Release and Backgrounder are provided in Appendix A.

## 1.2 PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVE OF THE REPORT

### **Purpose:**

This report presents a comprehensive account of the PCA consultations and people's views and preferences regarding the proposed boundary options for the creation of the Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve.

### **Objective:**

The objective of the report is to document the objectives, methodology, analysis and conclusion of the consultations conducted on the proposed creation of the Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve, specifically the views and perspectives of the following groups:

- Aboriginal peoples, including Sahtu Dene and Métis, Dehcho Region First Nations and Métis and Kaska;
- Third party interest holders (e.g., mining organizations, tourism, big game and river outfitters, and environmental non-governmental organizations [ENGOS]); and
- The Canadian public representing local, regional and national interests.

The information provided in this consultation report, as well as results of discussions with the Tulita District Nááts'ihch'oh Working Group (TDNWG) (including representatives of the Land Corporations and Renewable Resources Councils of the Tulita District) will be used to inform the deliberations of the Government of Canada and Northwest Territories on a final boundary for the proposed national park reserve.

More information on the Tulita District Nááts'ihch'oh Working Group is provided in Section 2; activities to be conducted following the completion and distribution of the consultation report are described in Section 5.

## 1.3 STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

The report is structured as follows:

- Section 1: Introduction
- Section 2: Background and Context
- Section 3: Consultation Program Description
- Section 4: Summary of Consultation Results
- Section 5: Next Steps
- Section 6: Conclusions

## 2.0 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

### 2.1 STEPS IN THE NÁÁTS'IHCH'OH NATIONAL PARK RESERVE ESTABLISHMENT PROCESS

Over the past three years, PCA with the support of the Sahtu Dene and Métis of the Tulita District have undertaken a series of activities aimed at creating the Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve. In Table 1 below is a summary of the activities that have taken place since 2007:

**Table 1: Schedule of Park Establishment Activities/Events**

Date	Park Establishment Activities / Events
Jun. 2007	PCA seeks the support of the Sahtu Dene and Métis of the Tulita District for an interim land withdrawal for the proposed Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve.
Oct. 2007	A resolution supporting interim land withdrawal is passed by the Land Corporations of the Tulita District.
Nov. 2007	Nááts'ihch'oh is chosen as the proposed park reserve's name by Sahtu Elders from the Tulita District.
Jan. 2008	Government of the Northwest Territories agrees not to object to the interim land withdrawal
Feb. 2008	A land withdrawal order is passed through Order-in-Council which provides interim protection to 7,600 sq. km. of land in the headwaters of the South Nahanni River. Existing third party interests are not affected but no new leases or mining rights can be granted.
Apr. 2008	The Government of Canada announces a temporary land withdrawal for the proposed Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve
Apr. 2008	PCA and Sahtu Dene and Métis of the Tulita District sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for negotiation of an Impact and Benefit Plan.
Jun. 2009	Government of Canada announces the expansion of Nahanni National Park Reserve.
Nov. 2009	Informed by studies on mineral and conservation values in the area of the proposed park reserve, Senior MERA Committee approves three boundary options for consideration during public and stakeholder consultations. These options were reviewed by the Tulita District Nááts'ihch'oh Working Group prior to general consultations.
Jan. 2010	Three months of consultations are announced by The Honourable Jim Prentice, Canada's Environment Minister responsible for PCA.
Apr. 2010	Aboriginal, third party and public consultation meetings are completed.

### 2.2 THE IMPACT AND BENEFIT PLAN

The process and requirements for creating a new national park or national park reserve within the Sahtu Settlement Area are defined in Chapter 16 of the Sahtu Dene and Métis Comprehensive Agreement (1993).

Section 16.2 of the Sahtu Dene and Métis Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement states that before a national park is established in the settlement area, an Impact and Benefit Plan is required. The Impact



and Benefit Plan will describe the relationship between Parks Canada and the First Nations and Métis communities of Norman Wells and Tulita, if the park reserve is created. The Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement indicates that rights can be assigned to designated Sahtu organizations. In this case, the Tulita, Fort Norman Métis and Norman Wells Land Corporations are the designated Sahtu organizations for the purposes of this national park reserve within the boundaries of the Tulita District.

In April 2008, the designated Sahtu organizations signed a contribution agreement with PCA to complete an Impact and Benefit Plan. Negotiations for the Impact and Benefit Plan involve the TDNWG which includes representatives from Fort Norman Métis Land Corporation, Tulita Dene Band, Tulita and Norman Wells Renewable Resource Councils, youth and elders from both communities. The Plan seeks to address the following:

- Continuation of harvesting rights;
- Wildlife Management;
- Economic and employment opportunities;
- Cooperative management committee operations; and
- Coordination with Nahanni National Park Reserve.



Photo: Christian Boucher, Parks Canada. 2009

## 2.3 THE FEASIBILITY STUDIES

In order to make informed decisions, a number of studies have been undertaken on wildlife and conservation values, and mineral potential within the Greater Nahanni Ecosystem which includes the proposed Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve. These include studies on:

- |                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| • Woodland Caribou          | • Forest Fire Regime                                |
| • Grizzly Bears             | • Glaciers  |
| • Dall's Sheep              | • Hot springs and Wetlands                          |
| • Trumpeter Swans           | • Third Party Interests and existing infrastructure |
| • Watershed mapping         | • Mineral and Energy Resource Assessment (MERA)     |
| • Digital Elevation Model   |   |
| • Land Cover Classification |   |

## 2.4 THE PROPOSED BOUNDARY OPTIONS

The Mineral and Energy Resource Assessment (MERA) process is the primary means by which INAC, PCA, NRCan and the governments of the NWT and Nunavut cooperate in conducting mineral and energy resource assessments. The member organizations use the assessments to consider mineral potential prior to creating new national parks in Canada's north. This process was established in 1980.

Park reserve boundary options were developed by the MERA Working Group and approved for consultations by the Senior MERA Committee – a committee composed of senior officials from the above federal departments and territorial Governments.

All three boundary options demonstrate underlying similarities. All the options:

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

- Recognize existing third party mineral rights;
- Provide access to specific mineral development areas across park lands;
- Achieve protection of key conservation values;
- Represent a balance between conservation value and mineral resources; and
- Allow for both park creation and mineral development within the upper watershed.

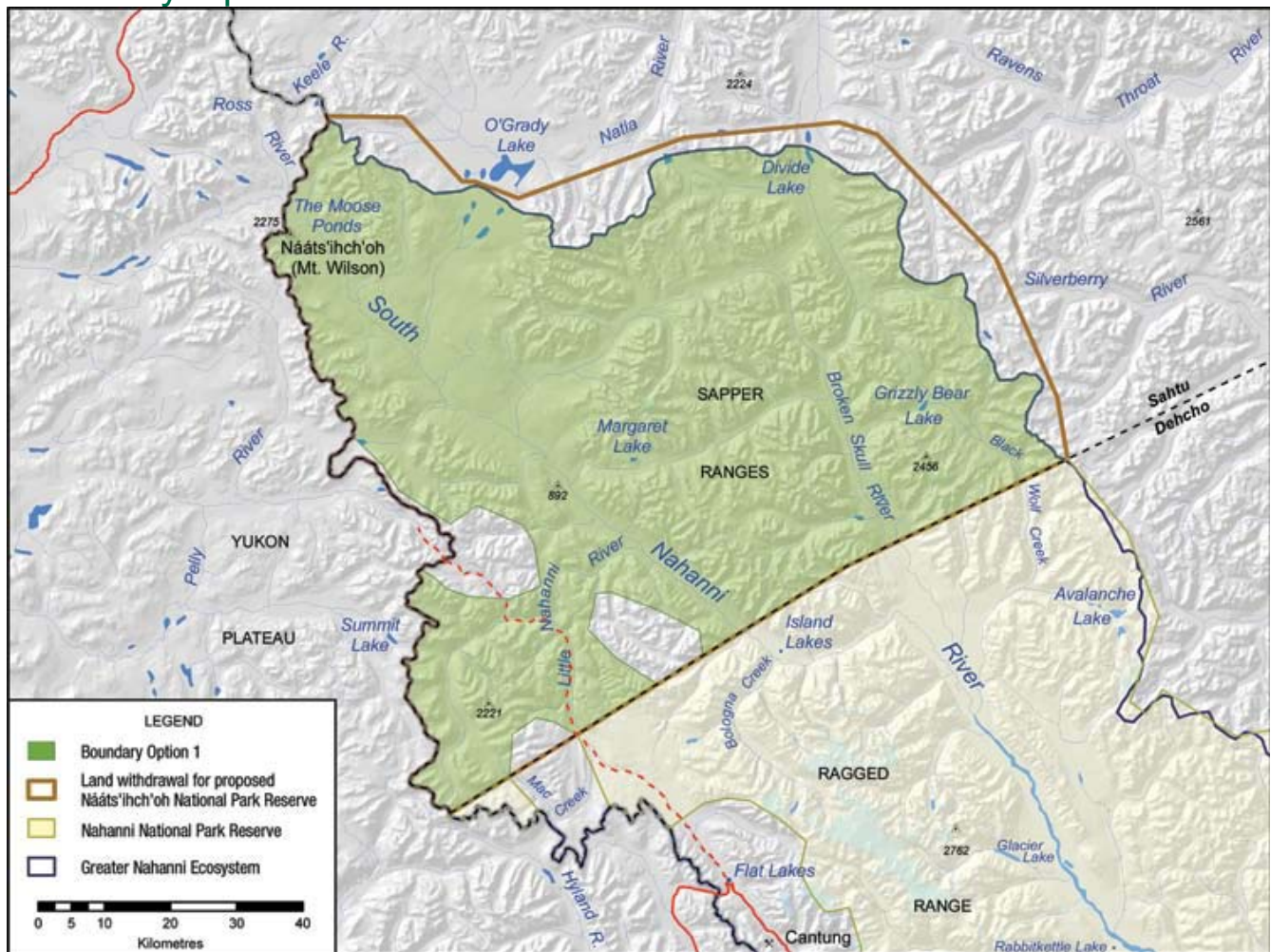
The options are summarized in Table 2 below.

**Table 2: Boundary Options Proposed for Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve**

Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
<p>With a total area of 6,450 square kilometres, the option was developed to best protect conservation values within the proposed national park reserve while providing an open area around the existing third party mineral interests. This option protects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 94% of the upper watershed of South Nahanni River</li> <li>• Habitat for an estimated 95% of the grizzly bear population</li> <li>• 81% of the summer habitat for Upper Nahanni woodland caribou herd.</li> </ul> <p>This option leaves 20% of overall high mineral potential outside the park</p>	<p>With a total area of 5,770 square kilometres, the option diminishes the achievement of conservation goals and allows more mineral potential to be available. This option protects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 84% of the upper watershed of the South Nahanni River</li> <li>• Habitat for an estimated 85% of the grizzly bear population</li> <li>• 72% of the summer habitat for Upper Nahanni woodland caribou herd.</li> </ul> <p>This option leaves 43% of the overall high mineral potential outside the park</p>	<p>With a total area of 4,840 square kilometres, this option takes advantage of the mineral potential within the proposed park reserve while providing some protection to key values. This option protects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 70% of the upper watershed of the South Nahanni River</li> <li>• Habitat for 70% of the grizzly population</li> <li>• 44% of the summer habitat for Upper Nahanni woodland caribou herd.</li> </ul> <p>This option leaves 70% of the overall high mineral potential outside the park.</p>

Maps of the three boundary options are provided below:

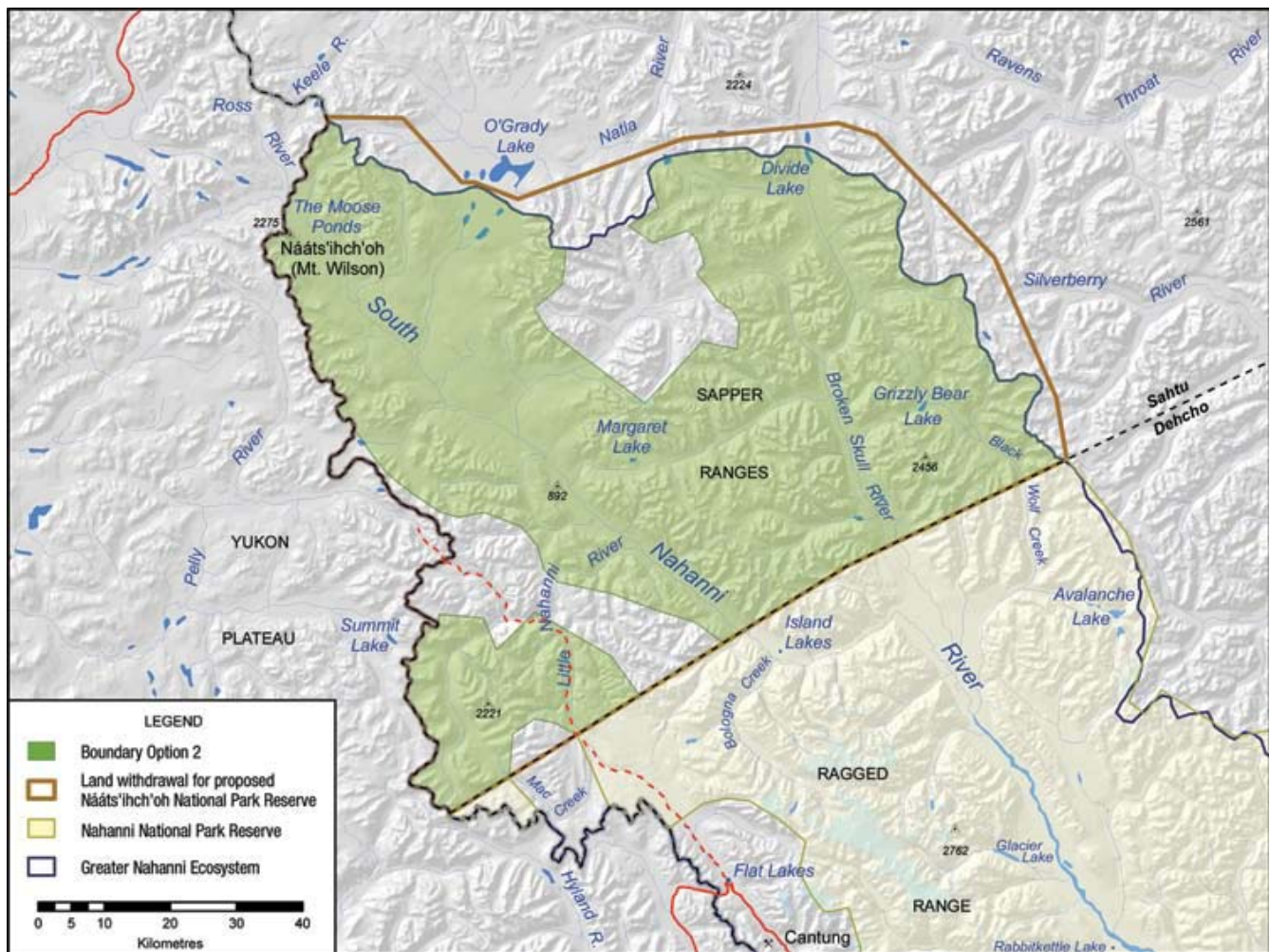
## Boundary Option 1



Source: Parks Canada Agency: Fact Sheet: Proposed Establishment of Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve – Boundary Options. Accessed at <http://www.pc.gc.ca/progs/np-pn/cnnp-cnnp/naatsihchoh/apprendre-learn.aspx>



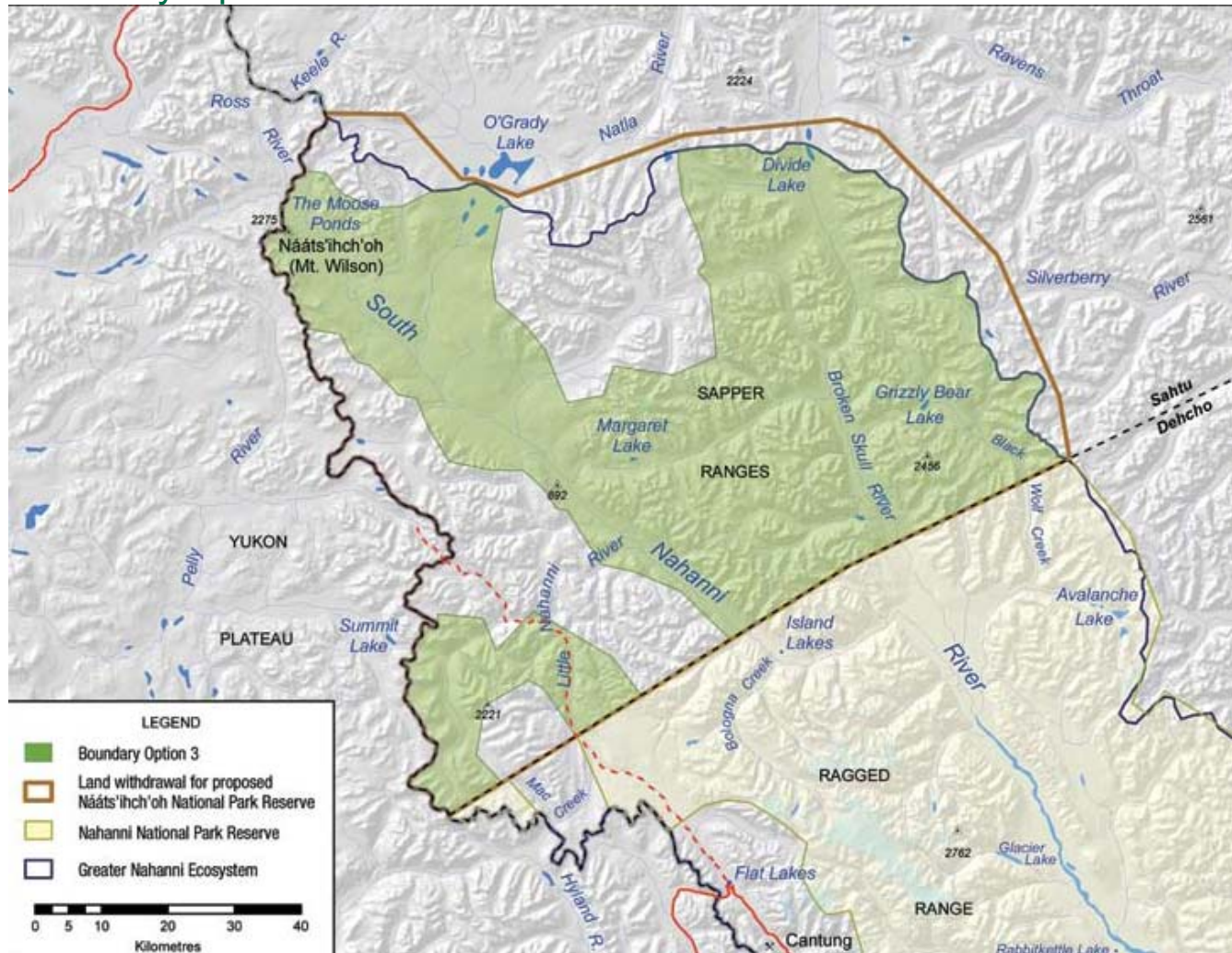
## Boundary Option 2



Source: Parks Canada Agency: Fact Sheet: Proposed Establishment of Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve – Boundary Options. Accessed at <http://www.pc.gc.ca/progs/np-pn/cnpn-cnpn/naatsihchoh/apprendre-learn.aspx>



## Boundary Option 3



Source: Parks Canada Agency: Fact Sheet: Proposed Establishment of Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve – Boundary Options. Accessed at <http://www.pc.gc.ca/progs/np-pn/cnnp-cnpn/naatsihchoh/apprendre-learn.aspx>

The three potential boundary options were presented by PCA for review and comment during the consultation program, with an invitation to participants to develop modified boundaries or propose new ones for the park reserve.

The comments received on the proposed boundary options are not tallied as “votes”. The intent is to obtain the perspectives and suggestions of all interested parties and understand the reasons behind the choices and suggestions, in order to be able to make informed decisions about a final boundary for the national park reserve. The final park reserve boundary may be any one of the three proposed options, or may represent a completely different boundary.

### 3.0 CONSULTATION PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The consultation activities related to the creation of the Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve included leadership and community meetings with Aboriginal governing bodies, land claim participants throughout the Sahtu Settlement Area as well as in the neighbouring traditional territories with Aboriginal groups who assert rights in the area proposed for establishment of the park reserve. The general public's input was invited through a call for written submissions on Parks Canada's website and open houses held at the local, regional and national level. PCA also met with third party interests and stakeholders to brief them on the park reserve process, studies and boundary options while giving them an opportunity to discuss any concerns they may have.



Photo: D. Wright, Natural Resources Canada, 2010

#### 3.1 PUBLIC OPEN HOUSES

Public open houses were held in various regional and national centres to develop awareness of the proposed establishment of the Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve and encourage dialogue related to the creation of the national park reserve, in particular to the proposed boundary options. Seven open houses were held, as shown in Table 3<sup>1</sup>:

**Table 3: Public Open Houses**

Public Open Houses				
Location	Date	Time	Presentation Time(s)	Attendees (signed in)
Norman Wells, NT	February 23, 2010	6 to 10 pm	7:00 pm	18
Tulita, NT	February 24, 2010	6 to 10 pm	7:00 pm	25
Yellowknife, NT	March 22, 2010	6 to 9 pm	7:00 pm	18
Whitehorse, YT	March 24, 2010	6 to 9 pm	7:00 pm	11
Calgary, AB	March 29, 2010	3 to 9 pm	4:00 pm and 7:00 pm	20
Ottawa, ON	March 31, 2010	3:30 to 8:30 pm	4:30 pm and 6:30 pm	21
Fort Simpson, NT	April 14, 2010	6 to 9 pm	7:00 pm	13

<sup>1</sup> The open houses held in Calgary and Ottawa consisted of afternoon and evening sessions. The findings for these two sessions in each of these locations were combined for the analysis.

At the open houses attendees were invited to view the maps and displays, pick up background information handouts, and speak with representatives of PCA, local First Nations/Métis leaders, and NRCan officials. A presentation was made on the background and context for the proposed creation of Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve, conservation values, mineral resources and boundary options.

In total, 126 people signed in the public open houses<sup>2</sup>.

### ***3.1.1 OPEN HOUSE MATERIALS***

Open house displays available for public review before and after scheduled open house presentations included:

- Regional overview maps;
- Posters featuring maps of three boundary options and a comparison of features; and
- Poster showing conservation and mineral resource values.

Staff were present at displays between formal presentations to answer questions. One-on-one input received during these discussions was captured for inclusion in the consultation record.

Public information handouts at the open houses consisted of the following (provided in French and English):

- Fact Sheet: Proposed Establishment of Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve – Another Key Step in the Protection of the Greater Nahanni Ecosystem;
- Sahtu Community Update #1: Proposed Creation of Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve (February 2009);
- Fact Sheet: Proposed Establishment of Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve – Boundary Options;
- Area of Interest Atlas - Proposed Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve (February 2010);
- Display copies of MERA Report entitled: Mineral and energy resource assessment of the Greater Nahanni Ecosystem under consideration for the expansion of the Nahanni National Park Reserve, Northwest Territories, Wright, D. F; Lemkow, D; Harris, J. R. Geological Survey of Canada, Open File 5344, 2007; and
- Open House Comment Form.

Copies of the open house materials (except the atlas and the MERA Report) are provided in Appendix B. These materials (including the atlas and the MERA Report) are also available through the PCA website at: <http://www.pc.gc.ca/progs/np-pn/cnpn-cnnp/naatsihchoh/apprendre-learn.aspx>.

### ***3.1.2 OPEN HOUSE NOTIFICATION***

Notification of the open houses was provided through newspaper advertisements, radio public service announcements, community posters, direct mail/e-mail/fax notification and/or mail drops.

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<sup>2</sup> The number represents those persons who signed in at the registration desk. Some people attended without signing in.

## Newspaper Advertisements

Newspaper notices in English and French were used to advertise the open houses, as shown in Table 4 below:

**Table 4: Newspaper Notices for Open Houses**

Open House Location	English Language Notices	French Language Notices	Dates
Yellowknife	The Yellowknifer, News North (NWT Edition)	The Yellowknifer, News North (NWT Edition)	Mar. 17, 19 & 22, 2010
Yellowknife	N/A	L'Aquilon (weekly)	Mar. 19, 2010
Whitehorse	The Yukon News	The Yukon News	Mar. 24, 2010
Whitehorse	The Whitehorse Star	The Whitehorse Star	Mar. 22 & 23, 2010
Calgary	The Calgary Herald	The Calgary Herald	Mar. 26 & 29, 2010
Calgary	Metro News Calgary	Metro News Calgary	Mar. 26 & 29, 2010
Ottawa	The Ottawa Citizen	The Ottawa Citizen	Mar. 29 & 31, 2010
Ottawa	Metro News Ottawa	Metro News Ottawa	Mar. 29 & 31, 2010
Ottawa	N/A	Le Droit	Mar. 29 & 31, 2010

Samples of the newspaper notices are provided in Appendix C.

## Radio Public Service Announcements

Radio public service announcements were made in French and English for open houses, as shown in Table 5. In addition, for open houses in Tulita and Norman Wells, announcements were also made in the North Slavey language during CBC Radio's afternoon Aboriginal languages programming.

**Table 5: Radio Public Service Announcements for Open Houses**

Radio Public Service Announcements	
Open Houses	Radio Station
Tulita , NT	CBC Radio North (North Slavey & English) CIVR – Radio Taiga Yellowknife (French)
Norman Wells, NT	CBC Radio North (North Slavey & English) CIVR – Radio Taiga Yellowknife (French)
Yellowknife, NT	CBC Radio North (English) CIVR – Radio Taiga Yellowknife (French)
Whitehorse, YT	CBC Radio Yukon (English)
Calgary, AB	CBC Radio Calgary (French & English) CJSW Radio, University of Calgary (English)
Ottawa, ON	CBC Radio Ottawa (French & English) CHUO Radio, University of Ottawa (French & English) CKCU, Carleton University (English)
Fort Simpson, NT	CBC Radio North (South Slavey & English) CIVR – Radio Taiga Yellowknife (French)

A sample public service radio announcement (in English and French) is provided in Appendix D.

### Community Posters

Community posters were developed and placed in key locations in Tulita, Norman Wells, Yellowknife, Fort Liard and Fort Simpson advertising the public open houses.

A sample community poster is provided in Appendix E.

### Direct Notification

For the open houses in Tulita and Norman Wells, direct notification was also used to build awareness related to the open houses. Letters of invitation to arrange for a leadership meeting, attend a scheduled open house and provide written submissions were sent by mail and e-mail or fax to 67 individuals, including representation from Sahtu leaders and organizations, Sahtu land claim umbrella groups, and municipal, territorial and federal governments. The letters also described the history and context of the proposed establishment of the Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve and details on the consultation program activities and timing.

Prior to open house meetings in large urban centres (Yellowknife, Whitehorse, Calgary, and Ottawa), an e-mail notice was sent on March 16, 2010 to 2134 persons on the PCA mailing list to develop awareness, provide information on the consultation process and upcoming open house dates, and generate interest in the proposed establishment of the Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve. See Section 3.4.1 for more details.

In Fort Simpson the community poster was also distributed through a Canada Post mail drop.



A sample invitation letter is provided in Appendix F.

### **3.2 MEETINGS WITH ABORIGINAL LEADERSHIP & COMMUNITIES**

Meetings to discuss the proposed creation of the Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve were convened between PCA/NRCan officials and leadership from the Sahtu Dene & Métis, Dehcho First Nations and Kaska Dena First Nations. The meetings involved presentations by PCA and, for all of the public open houses and community and mining related meetings, NRCan, followed by general discussions. The schedule of meetings is shown in Table 6. Attendance at the meetings does not include the delegation of presenters.

**Table 6: Schedule of Meetings with Aboriginal Leadership and Communities**

Meetings with Aboriginal Leadership and Communities				
Organization	Dates	Location	Attendance	Key Topics Discussed by Participants
Norman Wells Land Corporation and Renewable Resources Council (including executive and board of directors)	January 12, 2010	Norman Wells, NT	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The need to protect the headwaters of this beautiful and unique area</li> <li>• Having a balance of protecting the water and allowing economic development in the region is important</li> <li>• Concern about potential poaching and law enforcement if public access is allowed on the Howard's Pass road</li> <li>• Concern about the accommodation of mining interests in Options 2 and 3</li> <li>• Use of buffer area around mining interests</li> <li>• Concern about impacts on caribou movement corridors with Options 2 and 3</li> <li>• Impact of mining activity on watersheds and animal movement corridors</li> <li>• Strategy for dealing with big game outfitters in the Sahtu</li> <li>• Timeframe and responsibility for the decision on a boundary</li> </ul>

Meetings with Aboriginal Leadership and Communities				
Organization	Dates	Location	Attendance	Key Topics Discussed by Participants
Tulita District Sahtu Dene and Métis Leadership (including executive and board of directors / councillors for Land Corporations, Renewable Resources Council, and Tulita Band)	January 13, 2010	Tulita, NT	18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Importance of the Nááts'ihch'oh area to people for a long time; possesses spiritual and medicine power</li> <li>Respecting third party rights in the area</li> <li>Timing of decision on the Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve in relation to the land withdrawal schedule</li> <li>Use of the Howard's Pass road by Sahtu Dene and Métis</li> <li>Use of the park reserve by other First Nations with treaty rights</li> <li>Value of protecting the watershed</li> <li>Option 3 does not achieve the purpose of protecting the watershed</li> <li>Protecting Sahtu Dene and Métis rights to hunt, fish and trap in the park reserve</li> <li>Sahtu Dene and Métis Traditional Knowledge studies indicated the importance of land and water; water is more important than money from mines</li> <li>Learning from the Nahanni experience</li> </ul>
Sahtu Renewable Resources Board Leadership	February 4, 2010	Norman Wells, NT	30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Preference for having no mining in the watershed</li> <li>Mining interests are talking about a hydro project and seeking a corridor between Selwyn and Lened</li> <li>Mines leave waste, and encroach on wildlife habitat.</li> <li>Do mines have environmental clean-up requirements?</li> <li>Land Corporations benefit only minimally from mines</li> <li>Discussion on the meanings of the name Nááts'ihch'oh</li> </ul>



Meetings with Aboriginal Leadership and Communities				
Organization	Dates	Location	Attendance	Key Topics Discussed by Participants
Dehcho Leadership Meeting	February 11, 2010	Fort Simpson, NT	30-50	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It appears as though the goal in establishing the park is mining</li> <li>What say do Dehcho people have in influencing decisions in the Sahtu?</li> <li>Request for the presentation to be given in Nahanni Butte</li> </ul>
Ross River Dena Leadership	March 25, 2010	Whitehorse, YT	2 <sup>3</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Effect of the land withdrawal on existing claims and leases</li> <li>Compensation for big game outfitters</li> <li>Range of the caribou herd</li> <li>Use of the mining road (e.g., exploration, mine construction, support/supply, ore haul) and decisions on use of the road in the park</li> <li>Access across the park and via air to mining claims</li> <li>Scope of the MERA assessment to the watershed boundary and not the entire withdrawal area</li> <li>Before deciding on final boundary, the government must seriously consider what the Sahtu Dene and Métis want, considering this park is proposed in their land claim</li> <li>Value of existing mining claims / leases if surrounded by a future park?</li> <li>Reason for the decision to expand the corridor in Option 2 between Selwyn and Playfair leases</li> <li>Why would you even consider Option 3 and give up conservation values?</li> <li>Consideration of cultural/heritage and traditional use values in the boundary decision. How were findings from the TEK Study done in Tulita District incorporated into coming up with the 3 proposed boundary options?</li> <li>Use of the current road after mining ends</li> <li>Liability for remediation of the mining road lands</li> </ul>

<sup>3</sup> This meeting was originally scheduled to be with Ross River Dena Chief and Council. However due to a death in the community, the First Nation agreed that the meeting could continue but could only sent two representatives from their First Nation.

Meetings with Aboriginal Leadership and Communities				
Organization	Dates	Location	Attendance	Key Topics Discussed by Participants
Liard First Nation Leadership	March 26, 2010	Whitehorse, YT	3 <sup>4</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Liard First Nation confirmed that they did not accept the Yukon Umbrella Final Agreement</li> <li>Discussion on Howard's Pass road</li> <li>The important area for Dall's sheep coincides with the Lened claim area</li> <li>Need for a contribution agreement to come to the table for consultations; they don't receive funding as a treaty First Nation does</li> <li>PCA actions to promote visitation</li> <li>Liard First Nation had tried to get Francis Lake and Col River Spring (large ecosystem) put on a map as a special management area but their negotiations ended</li> <li>Concern that the Nahanni boundary along the Yukon border is set back</li> <li>Some interest in a national park in their area</li> </ul>
Nahanni Butte Dene Band/Community	April 13, 2010: 11 am to 1 pm	Nahanni Butte	23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Protecting the water to have cleaner water for future generations to survive is the most important thing – Option 1 is preferred for protection of animals and water</li> <li>Coordination of management of the two parks and park offices</li> <li>Beauty of the mountain and traditional use of the area</li> <li>For Nahanni Butte, the watershed is the most important thing and should be the priority.</li> </ul>

<sup>4</sup>The meeting was intended to be with the Liard First Nation Chief, Council and/or community but scheduling conflicts permitted only three representatives to be in attendance.

Meetings with Aboriginal Leadership and Communities				
Organization	Dates	Location	Attendance	Key Topics Discussed by Participants
Acho Dene Koe First Nation/Community (Fort Liard, NT)	April 15, 2010: 11 am to 1 pm	Fort Liard, NT	31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regulatory jurisdiction in the park</li> <li>Potential for mineral claim areas to be expanded later</li> <li>Concern about impact on people from potential mining catastrophe</li> <li>Importance of protecting calving grounds for caribou</li> <li>Remove the Playfair claim out of the park to have an option larger than Option 1</li> </ul>
Yamoga Land Corporation	April 19, 2010	Fort Good Hope, NT	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We are interested in protecting the Ramparts; hope to learn from the Nááts'ihch'oh example. A future generation may protect the Ramparts</li> <li>What happens to interests already in the proposed park area?</li> <li>If either Option 2 or 3 is chosen, there is no sense to have a park</li> <li>The Sahtu Land Use Plan is faced with making decisions on issues of conservation</li> <li>At a minimum we support Option 1</li> <li>Who has jurisdiction over and funding for the park?</li> </ul>

### 3.3 MEETING WITH THIRD PARTY STAKEHOLDERS

The interests of third party stakeholders related to the proposed creation of the Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve were discussed at a series of meetings held with PCA, and for some meetings, also NRCan officials. The summary record of the meetings is provided in Table 7. Many of the organizations also submitted their group's views in independent written submissions (see Appendix G).

**Table 7: Meetings with Third Party Stakeholders**

Meetings with Third Party Stakeholders <sup>5</sup>					
Organization	Dates	Sector	Location	Attendance	Key Topics Discussed
Nahanni River Outfitter Association (NROA) <sup>6</sup>	Jan. 12, 2010	River Outfitters	Conference call	7+ <sup>7</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The NROA offered to help promote the proposal and consultation program through their mailing lists and e-newsletters</li> <li>The best way to engage the NROA in upcoming formal consultations is through a conference call approach where all 3 companies can meet together with PCA to discuss these issues;</li> <li>During the formal consultations the outfitters want to discuss other issues, such as how business licensing will work for river outfitting operations on the Nahanni River that span the two neighbouring parks (Nahanni and Nááts'ihch'oh);</li> <li>Plans for further meetings with NROA</li> </ul>

<sup>5</sup> PCA extended a written offer to the Association of Mackenzie Mountain Outfitters and membership to meet as a group or individually to discuss the proposal. The Association was unable to meet within PCA's consultation process timelines but sent representatives to the Calgary open house and provided comments in writing (see Appendix G).

<sup>6</sup> Boundary options not presented as this meeting was conducted by conference call.

<sup>7</sup> Other people were present but did not identify themselves.

Meetings with Third Party Stakeholders <sup>5</sup>					
Organization	Dates	Sector	Location	Attendance	Key Topics Discussed
GNWT Environment and Natural Resources (Sahtu Region)	Jan. 12 & 14, 2010	Government	Norman Wells, NT	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identified hot springs not in PCA's atlas</li> <li>GNWT can provide data on mountain goats to PCA</li> <li>Hoary marmots along the Yukon border should be included in the conservation values</li> <li>Other species in the area are bat (new recorded species) and Parnassius butterfly</li> <li>PCA is to consider the rare Nahanni Aster; waterfowl and birds on the Canadian Wildlife Service checklist; moose, Dolly Varden, and Bull Trout</li> <li>O'Grady Lake is important habitat and should be included within the boundary</li> <li>Protect key mineral licks for caribou, mountain goats, moose and sheep</li> <li>Access for industry through the park to existing mineral claims</li> <li>Public use of the mining access road</li> <li>Concerned about impacts of 'All Terrain Vehicle (ATV) friendly' access to the area</li> </ul>
Mineral Exploration Round-Up <sup>8</sup>	Jan. 18-21, 2010	Mining	Vancouver, BC	N/A <sup>9</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All comments received indicated that Options 2 or 3 were preferred</li> <li>Recognition by most of the importance of protecting the water and ecosystem but also the need for economic development opportunities in the NWT</li> <li>Common view: mining and a national park can co-exist in the same area by using best mining practices and effective use of environmental assessments to monitor mining</li> </ul>

<sup>8</sup> The Mineral Exploration Round-up is a large international convention focused on issues related to the mineral exploration and mining sector. A poster presentation was provided by Danny Wright, Geological Survey of Canada on the proposed boundary options for the Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve.

<sup>9</sup> Approximately 6000 people attended the convention; many attended the poster session.

Meetings with Third Party Stakeholders <sup>5</sup>					
Organization	Dates	Sector	Location	Attendance	Key Topics Discussed
Playfair Mining Ltd.	Jan. 25, 2010	Mining	Vancouver, BC	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Playfair's preferred exclusion area is described and discussed</li> <li>People in the mining industry are environmentally oriented and support conservation values</li> <li>The focus of the company is now on copper and silver, less on tungsten</li> <li>Anticipated access for people and machinery would be by helicopter; possibility of a road to the claim</li> <li>Open to an arrangement with Selwyn for road use</li> <li>Avoid the claim being an island; harder to attract investment</li> <li>Playfair Mining Ltd. also sent a formal submission.</li> </ul>
Selwyn Resources Ltd.	Jan. 25, 2010	Mining	Vancouver, BC	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interested in the grizzlies and recreation potential</li> <li>Discussed the timeframe for the permit for the Nahanni road</li> <li>Interested in pursuing more deposits in the area; disposed towards the widest non-park lands (buffer) around their claim</li> <li>Support the idea of a hydroelectric plant to provide power to mines in the area (if access to power were available)</li> <li>Selwyn Resources Ltd. also sent a formal submission.</li> </ul>
War Eagle Mining Company Inc.	Jan. 27, 2010	Mining	Vancouver, BC	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Concern about keeping a buffer around their claims</li> <li>Sought assurance of access to their claims from the Howards Pass road</li> <li>Option 2 or 3 is preferred to allow future economic development</li> </ul>
Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS)	Feb. 18, 2010	ENGO	Ottawa, ON	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discussed the park reserve establishment process</li> <li>Concern about connectivity in the options.</li> <li>Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society also sent a formal submission.</li> </ul>

Meetings with Third Party Stakeholders <sup>5</sup>					
Organization	Dates	Sector	Location	Attendance	Key Topics Discussed
Nature Canada	Feb. 19, 2010	ENGO	Ottawa, ON	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nature Canada presented PCA with maps of Important Bird Areas</li> <li>Nature Canada also sent a formal submission.</li> </ul>
NWT Protected Area Strategy (PAS) <sup>10</sup>	Feb. 25, 2010	Multiple organizations	Yellowknife, NT	6+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Involvement of First Nations in developing the boundary</li> <li>The border needs to be up to the proposed Shútagot'ine Nene protected area</li> <li>Need for a natural resources assessment</li> <li>First order streams and water quality are the best you get</li> <li>Short timing for the consultations</li> </ul>
Nunavut & NWT Chamber of Mines	Feb. 26, 2010	Mining	Yellowknife, NT	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are there other roads besides Howard's Pass?</li> <li>Logistically it is impractical to have access over the South Nahanni River</li> <li>It is helpful for investors to have a Memorandum of Understanding with government</li> <li>Mount Wilson (Nááts'ihch'oh) has pluton, elevated tungsten and gold</li> <li>Location of Mount Christie</li> <li>Legislation for access to mining interests</li> <li>Nunavut &amp; NWT Chamber of Mines also sent a formal submission</li> </ul>
Wildlife Conservation Society Canada (WCS)	March 18, 2010	ENGO	Telephone Call	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discussion on the park reserve proposal, the boundary options, the public meeting schedule and the next steps</li> <li>Wildlife Conservation Society Canada also sent a formal submission</li> </ul>
World Wildlife Fund (WWF)	March 18, 2010	ENGO	Ottawa, ON	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discussion on the park reserve proposal, the boundary options and the next steps</li> <li>WWF indicated a formal response would be sent later<sup>11</sup></li> </ul>

<sup>10</sup> PAS has 14 member organizations. This meeting included only environmental groups and government attendees. No industry attendees.

<sup>11</sup> No formal submission was received by PCA.

Meetings with Third Party Stakeholders <sup>5</sup>					
Organization	Dates	Sector	Location	Attendance	Key Topics Discussed
NWT and Nunavut Chamber of Mines and Mining Industry	Mar. 22, 2010	Mining	Yellowknife, NT	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Definition of and responsibility for harvesting rights in the park</li> <li>• Differences between a park and reserve</li> <li>• The permit application process</li> <li>• Outfitter's rights in parks and reserves</li> <li>• Road restrictions to non-mine users</li> <li>• Economic impact of a park</li> <li>• Range of boundary options</li> <li>• Significance of caribou habitat</li> <li>• Relationship of Sahtu Land Use Plan to Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve</li> <li>• Timeline for MERA report</li> </ul>
War Eagle Mining Company Inc.	March 23, 2010	Mining	Vancouver, BC	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The MAC claims have been optioned to VM Exploration and the information on the Nááts'ihch'oh proposal will be sent to them</li> <li>• No comments were made on the Nááts'ihch'oh proposal at this time</li> </ul>
Yukon Territorial Government, Yukon Parks	March 25, 2010	Government	Whitehorse, YT	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Location of the park office for Nááts'ihch'oh</li> <li>• Will there be a superintendent?</li> <li>• Leases and compensation for big game outfitters</li> <li>• Is compensation for big game outfitters part of the Sahtu land claim?</li> <li>• Coordination of management of Nahanni and Nááts'ihch'oh</li> <li>• Mining industry use of the road that traverses both park reserves</li> <li>• Would PCA consider encouraging the mining industry to move their road to land outside the park?</li> <li>• Potential for making Howard's Pass road open to the public</li> <li>• Consideration of Yukoners who hunt the Range Road and have cabins in the area</li> <li>• Favorability scoring of mineral potential</li> <li>• Regarding boundary Option 1, is there a perception from junior mining companies that the proposal has impacted the value of mining claims and leases?</li> <li>• Timeframe for mining industry to develop the claims/leases</li> <li>• Priority of Yukon Parks is the Peel River</li> </ul>



Meetings with Third Party Stakeholders <sup>5</sup>					
Organization	Dates	Sector	Location	Attendance	Key Topics Discussed
Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) (Yukon)	Mar. 25, 2010	ENGO	Whitehorse, YT	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion on the park reserve proposal, the boundary options and the next steps</li> <li>• Interested in the Peel River area</li> <li>• Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society also sent a formal submission.</li> </ul>
Yukon Government, Energy Mines and Resources	Mar. 25, 2010	Government	Whitehorse, YT	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion on the park reserve proposal, the boundary options and the next steps</li> <li>• Appreciated the visit and the process</li> <li>• Nahanni expansion process went well</li> <li>• Expects to be kept informed as Nááts'ihch'oh moves forward</li> </ul>

A number of third party stakeholders provided comments in the form of written submissions to PCA, as follows:

- Wildlife Conservation Society Canada (WCS)
- Dr. John Weaver, WCS
- Dr. Justina Ray, WCS
- Playfair Mining Ltd.
- Selwyn Resources Ltd.
- De Beers Canada
- GGL Resources Corporation
- Association of Mackenzie Mountain Outfitters (AMMO)
- Nature Canada
- Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS)
- Canadian Boreal Initiative (CBI)
- NWT & Nunavut Chamber of Mines
- Nahanni Wilderness Adventures

The submissions received from third party stakeholders are provided in Appendix G.

### 3.4 INFORMATION DISTRIBUTION

#### 3.4.1 MAILING LIST

PCA assembled a database of 2134 contacts to support notifications and information distribution during consultations. The contact database was built on the mailing list recently used for the 2009 Nahanni National Park Reserve expansion and further supplemented with new contact details for Aboriginal peoples, third party stakeholder groups, government, researchers and Canadians with interests in this region. Table 8 shows the breakdown for the database contacts

**Table 8: Database Contacts**

Database Contacts	
Organization	Number of Contacts
Sahtu Dene and Métis Land Claim Umbrella and Cooperative Management Groups <sup>12</sup>	9
Organizations comprising the Tulita District Nááts'ihch'oh Working Group(TDNWG)	5
Mining	13
River Outfitters	3
Environmental Organizations	26
Air Charter Companies	15
Tourism / Recreation Associations	9
Government (federal & territorial public service and politicians)	48
Government (municipal)	5
Senior MERA Committee	6
MERA Working Group	14
Scientists	40
Archaeologists	4
General Public - Nahanni Expansion List Subscriber	1928
Naats'ihch'oh Comment Form Subscriber	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>2134</b>

For the open houses in Tulita and Norman Wells, on February 23 and 24, 2010, direct notification was also used to build awareness related to the open houses. Letters of invitation to attend the open houses and to provide written submissions were sent by mail and e-mail or fax to 67 individuals, including representation from Sahtu leaders and organizations, Sahtu umbrella groups, and municipal, territorial and federal governments. The letters also described the history and context of the proposed establishment of the Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve and details on the consultation program activities and timing.

<sup>12</sup> These include groups such as Renewable Resources Boards, Land and Water Boards, Land Use Planning Boards, and Land Corporations, affecting decisions outside the Tulita District.

Prior to urban centre open houses, another e-mail notice was sent on March 16, 2010 to all 2134 persons and organizations on the PCA mailing list to develop awareness, provide information on the consultation process and upcoming open house dates, and generate interest in the proposed establishment of the Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve. The notice provided information (in English and French) related to:

- An introduction to Nááts'ihch'oh;
- A description of the area, including Nahanni;
- Activities underway towards creation of the Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve;
- An invitation to become involved (e.g. in open houses, through written submissions);
- Dates, times and locations of open houses in Yellowknife, Whitehorse, Calgary and Ottawa; and
- Contact information and a link to the PCA website for additional information.

Attached to the e-mail notice were the following:

- Fact Sheet: Proposed Establishment of Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve – Boundary Options;
- Sahtu Community Update #1: Proposed Creation of Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve (February 2009); and
- A general Comment Form.

### ***3.4.2 NÁÁTS'IHCH'OH NATIONAL PARK RESERVE WEB PAGE***

The PCA website page on the Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve proposal included information on the background to the process, key players involved, schedule of events and activities, and an invitation for people to participate in the consultation process. The following items are also available on the Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve webpage (at: <http://www.pc.gc.ca/progs/np-pn/cnnp-cnnp/naatsihchoh/apprendre-learn.aspx>):

- News Release on Minister Prentice's announcement of the launch of public consultations for the proposed Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve January 21, 2010
- Backgrounder associated with the News Release
- Fact Sheet: Proposed Establishment of Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve – Another Key Step in the Protection of the Greater Nahanni Ecosystem;
- Sahtu Community Update #1: Proposed Creation of Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve (February 2009);
- Fact Sheet: Proposed Establishment of Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve – Boundary Options;
- Area of Interest Atlas - Proposed Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve (February 2010);
- Consultation schedule;
- Comment Form;
- News releases and backgrounders;
- MERA Terms of Reference - Mineral and Energy Resources Assessment of proposed National Parks in Northern Canada; and
- Memorandum of Understanding between Tulita District Land Corporations and Parks Canada Agency with Regard to the Feasibility of Establishing a National Park Reserve in the Southwest Corner of the Sahtu (2008).

The website for the proposed establishment of the Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve attracted 7,229 visits during the consultation period from March 22 to May 7, 2010. The total number of pages viewed on the site during this time period was 8,576.

### ***3.4.3 Co-PROMOTION BY OTHER ORGANIZATIONS***

PCA'S formal consultation efforts were co-promoted by national environmental organizations, river outfitters, and the NWT and Nunavut Chamber of Mines. Key organizations involved in supporting the consultation program included:

- Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) ran a campaign that included a dedicated website with information on the proposed Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve <http://www.cpaws.org/programs/nahanni/> (with links to the PCA website). CPAWS also distributed information on the proposed park reserve and extended an invitation to provide comments by "Action Alert" e-mails to its members across Canada to encourage support and involvement throughout the consultation process.
- Black Feather, a wilderness adventure company operating in the Greater Nahanni region, sent a newsletter (Black Feather Wilderness Adventure News) to its membership encouraging people to provide their comments on the proposed Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve.
- The NWT and Nunavut Chamber of Mines Newsletter, "Northern Mining News" (April 2010) included a section on the Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve proposal which described the proposed park area and process, and expressed support for the consultation being undertaken by PCA.

## 4.0 SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESULTS

The consultation results discussed in this section were obtained from all consultation events and activities:

- Open house meeting notes, verbal comments and comment sheets;
- Notes from meetings with Aboriginal leaders and communities, and comment sheets;
- Public comments sheets;
- Notes from meetings with third party stakeholders;
- Formal submissions by third party groups; and
- Written comments from the public at large sent by fax, mail or e-mail.

The results are provided in the sections below.

### 4.1 OVERVIEW OF PUBLIC COMMENTS RECEIVED

In the consultation on the proposed Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve, a total of 1603 people provided written comments, as follows:

- Comments submitted by e-mail, phone, fax and mail: 1509
- Public comment forms collected at meetings: 57
- Public comment forms e-mailed or mailed: 37

In addition to the written letters and comment sheets, a total of 13 formal submissions were received from stakeholders representing mining, outfitting, tourism, and environmental organization interests.

Oral comments were also provided in leadership/community meetings and at open houses (including comments from the floor after the presentation and one-on one discussions with staff at open house displays). The oral comments have also been taken into account in the analysis of consultation results.

#### 4.1.1 CONSULTATION PROGRAM INFORMATION

On the comment sheets for the creation of the Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve, participants were asked to respond to specific questions related to public consultation.<sup>13</sup> Table 9 below illustrates the level of agreement participants had on statements related to information provided to the public in the consultation program.

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<sup>13</sup> This section provides results related to the consultation program only. Comment sheet findings on the proposed boundary options are reported in Section 4.3.

**Table 9: Level of Agreement on Information in Consultation Program**

Statement	Level of Agreement <sup>14</sup>				
	Disagree				Agree
Based on the information I have heard and/or read:	1	2	3	4	5
a) I have a better general understanding of Parks Canada's Proposal.	1.1%	1.1%	12.4%	38.2%	47.2%
b) I understand why it is important to create this national park reserve.	0.0%	4.4%	14.3%	15.4%	65.9%
c) I know about the three boundary options proposed.	0.0%	0.0%	8.9%	18.9%	72.2%
d) I know how I can get involved to share my thoughts and views.	0.0%	2.2%	21.1%	20.0%	56.7%
e) I have learned enough to give my thoughts and views to this proposal.	1.1%	3.3%	11.1%	22.2%	62.2%

Individuals who submitted comment forms on which these questions were answered (n=91) indicated the degree to which they agreed with the statements. Over 91% (rank of 4 plus rank of 5) agreed that they know about the three boundary options. Over 85% of the public agreed that they had a better general understanding of the PCA proposal; while 81.3% said they understood why it is important to create this national park reserve. Three out of four participants said they knew how to get involved to share their thoughts and views. Finally, close to 85% indicated that they had learned enough to give their thoughts and informed views on this proposal.

#### **4.1.2 PARTICIPANT AFFILIATION**

On the comment sheets, participants in the consultation program were asked about their affiliation. Table 10 provides the result.

<sup>14</sup> The percentages in Table 10 refer to the 91 comment sheets on which questions a) to e) were answered. Three people (3.2%) did not answer any of these questions. In addition, no responses were provided on some of the questions: 2 people Q. a) and 1 person each on Q. c); Q. d) and Q. e).

**Table 10: Category of Participant Affiliation on Comment Sheets**

Category of Participant Affiliation on Comment Sheets	
Affiliation	Number
Aboriginal group	8
Business	6
Environmental group (ENGO)	3
Government department	5
Interested member of the public	67
Other (not specified)	3
No Response	2
<b>Total Comment Sheets</b>	<b>94</b>

#### 4.1.3 PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SOURCES

Participants who completed comment forms also indicated how they learned of the proposal to establish the Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve and about the public meetings. The results from the completed forms are provided in Table 11.<sup>15</sup>

**Table 11: Participant Information Sources**

Participant Information Sources	
Information Source	Number
Parks Canada public meeting	2
Parks Canada website	6
Letter from Parks Canada	6
Parks Canada fact sheet on boundary options	2
From a friend or family member	13
From work	13
Environmental group website/email/newsletter	24
Other: Newspaper notice	7
Other: Poster on a community message board	6
Other - from CPAWS	5
Other - from Hiking Organization	1
Other (not specified)	5
No response	4
<b>Total Comment Sheets</b>	<b>94</b>

<sup>15</sup>Two versions of the comment form were developed. One form asked about how individuals learned about the proposal, the other (distributed at the meetings) asked how they learned about the public meetings. The results are combined from both forms.

## 4.2 THEMES IN PUBLIC WRITTEN COMMENTS

Table 12 below provides a summary of the most common themes among the public comments received on comment sheets, by e-mail, fax and mail (n=1603).

**Table12: Common Themes in Written Comments**

Top 10 Themes in Written Comments <sup>16</sup>		
Topic	Number of Participants	Percentage of Participants
1. Support the creation of Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve	1545	96.4%
2. Protect the entire South Nahanni Headwaters in the proposed Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve	1121	69.9%
3. Protect and preserve wildlife habitat for grizzly bears, Dall's sheep and caribou	983	61.3%
4. No mining / resource development within the watershed	251	15.7%
5. Protect and preserve the integrity of the complete ecosystem	161	10.0%
6. The proposed park reserve be used for Eco-tourism	30	1.9%
7. Cooperation/Co-management with First Nations	28	1.7%
8. Need to balance park creation with potential resource development	17	1.1%
9. Mineral claims be bought out	16	1.0%

<sup>16</sup> The numbers do not include formal submissions by stakeholder groups.



Table 13 provides numbers and percentages of participants expressing a preference for one of the boundary options proposed by PCA (n=65).

**Table13: Preferences among Proposed Boundary Options**

Preferences Among the Proposed Boundary Options <sup>17</sup>		
Options	Number of Participants	Percentage of Participants
Option 1 <sup>18</sup>	60	92.3%
Option 2	3	4.6%
Option 3	2	3.1%

## 4.3 OVERALL FINDINGS

The findings from all consultation events and activities are summarized below, according to the sources of the comments: Aboriginal interests, third party stakeholder interests and comments from the public at large. Section 4.4 provides an analysis of comments on the proposed boundary options; Section 4.5 presents the analysis of the overall findings according to key themes.

### 4.3.1 COMMENTS FROM ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

The findings from the consultations with Aboriginal Peoples are drawn from leadership meetings and community meetings in the Sahtu and Dehcho regions in the NWT and the south-east area of Yukon Territory (Ross River Dena Council and Liard First Nation). The consultation results are provided separately for each of these.

#### Findings from the Consultations with Aboriginal Peoples in the Sahtu Region

A frequently expressed comment in the Sahtu region consultations was that it does not make sense to have a national park reserve if you also allow mining to exist in the watershed. Participants stated their distrust of the mining industry and environmental assessments to protect the natural environment, concerned that the impacts of mining would be harmful to the watershed downstream. It was suggested by participants that protecting the water should be a higher priority than obtaining the employment and financial benefits of mining (seen as small benefits). While some participants saw a balance of economic and conservation values as beneficial (e.g. Option 1 was seen to accommodate miners to keep their leases and Sahtu to protect the watershed and animals), many others felt that mining should not be allowed at all in the watershed. It was suggested that the key concern in deciding on the boundary should be the conservation of wildlife and water.

<sup>17</sup> The numbers do not include formal submissions by stakeholder groups.

<sup>18</sup> The preference for Option 1 includes various modifications suggested by participants.

The beauty and importance of the Nááts'ihch'oh area was highlighted by many consultation participants in the Sahtu. They stated that the area was very important to peoples of the Sahtu, Dehcho and Kaska (Ross River Dena Council and Liard First Nation, Yukon). One Tulita Elder described the mountain itself (Nááts'ihch'oh) as sacred to these peoples; it has been used to teach and to heal. "This area has power...powerful medicine. The area is so powerful that it will heal you...used in the past to heal people before white medicine. For these reasons we don't want to lose this area to development and it should become a park."

Issues of access to and use of the Howard's Pass road were discussed at meetings in the Sahtu.



Photo: Christian Bucher, Parks Canada, 2009

Howard's Pass was reported to be part of a traditional Sahtu Dene trail system and participants wanted assurance of access and use of the road by Sahtu Dene and Métis. Concern was also expressed about public access to the road. Some participants were concerned about possible poaching of wildlife and the responsibility for monitoring the public use of the road and enforcing the laws. Some participants noted that the caribou migrate right up along the mining road to the south-west corner of the proposed park reserve. Participants requested PCA to clarify the operational and regulatory issues related to access to this road.

A concern was raised regarding the size of the buffer zones around the existing mining claims and leases within the park reserve; participants questioned why these were "so large". Some participants indicated that the term "buffer" should be renamed to reflect the potential for development in these zones. It was noted, with concern, that big game hunting could still occur in the areas left open for commercial development activities in Options 2 and 3, in which PCA would have no authority.

In the Sahtu, meeting participants wanted to ensure that the right to carry on traditional activities such as hunting, trapping and fishing would be protected for the Sahtu Dene and Métis in the national park reserve.

During the consultation process, no formal written submission was received from any local or umbrella land claim organization within the Tulita District or larger Sahtu Settlement Region that stated the official position(s) of a given organization.

### **Findings from the Consultations with Aboriginal Peoples in Dehcho Region**



Photo: Christian Bucher, Parks Canada, 2009

In the Dehcho Region consultation participants stressed the importance of the greatest protection for animals and the ecosystem, with minimal potential for mining. Participants spoke of maintaining the beauty of the area; mentioned the spiritual impact of the mountain on people; and described use of the area for past generations e.g., for hunting. Protecting the watershed was identified as the most important consideration in determining the boundary for the proposed Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve. Participants preferred boundary Option 1 or wanted to protect an area larger than that in Option 1. Mentioned by participants as important for the boundary was protecting the watershed and habitat of the trumpeter swan, grizzly bear, Dall's sheep, and mountain goats. Participants also stated the desire for protection of the caribou calving grounds.

Some people felt that the Playfair mining claim area should be removed from the park; others wanted all potential mining removed: "it appears like the goal in establishing the park is mining." Concern was expressed regarding potential impacts on people and responsibilities/liabilities should a mining catastrophe occur.

Attendees at the consultation meetings in Dehcho stressed that good management of the two park reserves and the two park offices was important. They also inquired about regulatory jurisdiction in the two park reserves.

During the consultation process, no formal written submission was received from any Dehcho organization that stated the official position(s) of a given organization.

### **Findings from the Consultations with Aboriginal Peoples in the Yukon**

Interest was expressed in the Yukon consultations for having a national park reserve in the area. Participants felt that Option 3 should not be considered, since this option does not support conservation values and would not be well received. It was suggested that higher conservation values would be achieved for the Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve if mining operations were restricted to areas outside of the watershed. Consultation meeting participants asked for the reasoning behind the decision to expand the corridor in Option 2 between the Selwyn and Playfair leases. It was noted by participants that an important area for Dall's sheep coincides with the Lened claim area.

Access across the park reserve (including via air) to mining claims surrounded by the park was of concern to meeting attendees. They questioned what the planned uses would be for the mining road (e.g., exploration, mine construction, support/supply, ore haul) and who would have the responsibility for decisions on use of the road in the park reserve. Participants also wondered what would happen to the road once mining ends, i.e., whether the road would be reclaimed into the park. Concern was expressed over liability for remediation of the mining road.

Participants inquired to what extent cultural/heritage and traditional use values are considered in the boundary decision and how findings from the Traditional Ecological Knowledge Study done in Tulita District were incorporated into the development of the 3 boundary options proposed. Questions were also asked by attendees about whether the caribou range in the area included rutting as well as calving and summering in regard to development of the boundary options. Participants inquired whether the PCA research showed that the Finlayson caribou herd range extends into Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve, as suggested by Ross River Dena Elders.

The issue of potential over-harvesting by big game outfitters was raised by participants. The concern was that, "with their days numbered," outfitters may over-harvest to enhance compensation for buy-outs, if calculations for buy-outs are based on the last 2-3 years of operations (as is done in the Yukon).

During the consultation process, no formal written submission was received from any Ross River Dena or Liard First Nation organization that stated the official position(s) of a given organization.

#### 4.3.2 THIRD PARTY STAKEHOLDER INTERESTS

### Comments from Environmental Organizations

#### *The Proposed Boundary Options*

Almost all of the environmental organizations indicated that PCA should go beyond the three boundary options and protect the entire headwaters region in order to maintain the ecological integrity of the proposed park reserve. They suggested that all three boundary options would result in significant impacts to the very ecological values that the government is committed to protect. In their assessment, a couple of environmental organizations indicated that the three options do not specifically outline a plan to protect nationally recognized species at risk by designating as large an area as possible for protection. While all three options offer protection of key species to varying degrees, most environmental organizations found that the options leave corridors for mineral exploration or fragment important migratory routes which would result in negative impacts to key species. Several environmental organizations agreed that while Option 1 comes closest to protecting the entire upper watershed, it too leaves critical areas of the watershed unprotected. One environmental organization stated that the criteria that were used to determine the park reserve's boundary options were insufficient in terms of the ecological impact and subsequent risk to park values.



Photo: Christian Bucher,  
Parks Canada, 2009

The issue of mineral resource development in the watershed was raised in several comments received. A number of environmental organizations found that mining would result in, among other impacts, fragmentation which would negatively impact key species by affecting their calving and migratory routes.

Several environmental organizations researchers identified that the proposed park reserve boundaries covered an area that was very rich in both caribou and grizzly bears. A couple of environmental organizations suggested that PCA should consider including the O'Grady Lake (described in one comment as a "moose factory") and Divide Lake areas within the park reserve boundaries as both lakes play an important role in safeguarding wildlife interests. Two environmental organizations also recommended that PCA should include Lened Ridge within the park reserve.

#### *Other Issues*

Access routes into the proposed park reserve were mentioned in almost all comments received from the environmental organizations. Most environmental organizations' comments indicated that human activities such as associated with road access would negatively impact woodland caribou, grizzly bear and Dall's sheep which are vulnerable to such activities. There was concern that expanded road access to remote areas was not adequately discussed for each option. Specifically, environmental organizations raised concern about Howard's Pass suggesting that impacts from the use of this road should be mitigated in full.

It was also suggested that the development of mining would hinder the "visitor experience" associated with "experiencing a pristine wilderness environment; instead development would expose visitors to mining operations".

## Comments from Mining Interests

### *The Proposed Boundary Options*

Mining interest representatives stated that all three options would result in the alienation of areas of high mineral potential from development; would limit access corridors; and reduce the potential for sustainable economic development in the region. The proposed boundary options were also seen by representatives to not allow access from the NWT to the rich mineral deposits near the Yukon/NWT border. For most of these interests, Option 3 was seen to offer the best boundary option in terms of balancing continued mineral development while maximizing the park reserve boundaries. Several representatives developed their own boundary options or segments with the following features:

- Focused on improved access to mineral resources (e.g., the Lened mineral claim area);
- Based on watershed boundaries;
- Exclusion of Howard's Pass road from the park reserve;
- Establishment of alternative corridor infrastructure options;
- Including access from the NWT to rich mineral areas near the Yukon/NWT border
- Establishing a corridor for potential road access eventually connecting to Canol Road (in the Yukon)<sup>19</sup>.



Photo: Douglas Tate, Parks Canada, 2002

### *Other Issues*

The issue of access roads to mineral deposits was a frequently expressed concern by representatives of mining companies. Most representatives indicated that all three options would limit access to their organization's deposits. They sought clarification on potential road access to present and future mineral resources identified in the three options, in particular to be able to access mineral resources via the Howard's Pass Road.

The continued opportunity to access existing mineral resources and explore new ones was highlighted as important by a majority of mining interest representatives. The value of mineral development to people of the NWT was described in detail by some mining representatives. They noted that millions of dollars from mining investments have benefitted Aboriginal businesses, local employment, Impact Benefit Agreements, environmental monitoring scholarships, and in-kind investments in education, youth, literacy and capacity building.

Some mining industry representatives recommended a rigorous socio-economic impact assessment be conducted for the area of the proposed Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve to illustrate the economic consequences of establishing the park reserve. Such a study should be informed by the MERA study, and include input from potentially impacted businesses, communities and local governments. The representatives suggested that this study should be released to the public and the information taken into account before a final decision is made on the boundaries for the park reserve.

## Comments from Outfitters

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<sup>19</sup> The Canol Trail in the Northwest Territories which connects to the Yukon's Canol Road is well north of the proposed Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve.



### *Big Game Outfitters*

Comments provided by some big game outfitter organizations indicated that they felt that the consultation with outfitters to date had been insufficient to address their concerns. Big game outfitter representatives stated that they had been provided information only recently with no real discussion of options (e.g. the potential for the boundary to be re-drawn to have the outfitting cabin at Divide Lake be excluded from the park area). The issue was raised by one outfitters' organization that their tight schedule and the short time frame for the consultations did not allow sufficient opportunity to consult on issues of concern.

Representatives of big game outfitter interests stated that PCA has not considered the wishes of outfitters throughout the boundary options consultation process. They believed that PCA is ignoring the important economic contributions the outfitting industry has made to the region since the early 1960's, supporting local hotels, airlines and other businesses in the region. The representatives noted that over the past 45 years, the outfitting industry has maintained sustainable harvest levels and an unsurpassed hunting experience.

Big game outfitters noted that under the terms of the Sahtu Comprehensive Land Claim, the people of Sahtu have the right of first refusal on the sale of any of the outfitting businesses in the Sahtu Region. They stated that if the outfitting businesses are closed due to the creation of Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve, the opportunity would be lost for potential joint-venture opportunities in the outfitting industry for the beneficiaries of the land claim.



Photo: Douglas Tate, Parks Canada, 2002

### *River Outfitters*

A representative of a river outfitting business who has been exploring the Nahanni headwaters with guides and small client groups for two decades expressed support for having minimal mineral development within the headwaters of the Little Nahanni River. The representative stated the preference for a proposed boundary that allows for the mining potential to be explored at the Howard's Pass site and for the Outfitter's camp on Divide Lake to remain, since these are "existing developments on the borders of the watershed. They are set back from the critical waterways and wildlife habitat." The outfitter representative indicated that the Lened mine should not exist within the watershed.

The representative recommended that all activity to the Howard's Pass minerals area proceed from the Yukon along Howard's Pass road, and that no development take place next to the Little Nahanni River.

Another river outfitter representative sought clarification on how business licensing on the South Nahanni River would work for river outfitting operations that span the two park reserves.



#### **4.3.3 COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC**

##### **Comments from Open House Participants**

###### *The Proposed Boundary Options*

At the public open houses, attendees stressed the importance of protecting the entire South Nahanni River watershed, with no mineral land set-asides. Participants stated that none of the three proposed boundary options fully protects the natural values and ecological integrity of the headwaters of the entire watershed. A number of attendees emphasized the role of headwaters for downstream ecological and wildlife health, especially with respect to grizzly bear and caribou which have high requirements for space. Some attendees suggested that mineral rights could be bought out by PCA, or compensated through mineral resources available outside of the park area.

The preference among meeting attendees was for a fourth option not presented, with boundaries that protect the entire watershed (with reduced mining or no mining allowed).

Boundary Option 1 was the second preference among attendees, to serve both economic and conservation values. Concern was expressed with Option 1 about potential impacts of mining on lands, water and wildlife habitat; attendees wanted assurance that environmental assessments and appropriate regulations would be in place. Some participants felt that the social and cultural impacts of mining activities would be least with Option 1. The suggestion was made by several participants to enlarge Option 1 by including O'Grady Lake Lowlands in the park reserve, indicating the area is rich in biodiversity (e.g. bull trout, caribou, grizzlies, moose, waterfowl) and is an excellent start/end site for park visits. Several participants at open houses stated that mining could co-exist within the park

reserve, but preferred that mineral claims and leases would expire after a specified time period, at which time the lands would be reclaimed into the park reserve.



Photo: Christian Bucher, Parks Canada, 2009

It was noted that with Options 2 and 3, mineral claim lands cross the Little Nahanni River. A concern was expressed regarding the possibility that, with development of a mine, mining owners may have the right to deny access to people canoeing on the Little Nahanni River. Among some open house attendees there was also a stated preference for Option 3.

###### *The Process for Creating a National Park Reserve*

Open house participants generally supported the establishment of the national park reserve and expressed appreciation over the opportunity for providing input.

In describing the issues to consider in creating a national park reserve, open house attendees indicated that preserving as much of the South Nahanni River watershed as possible was the most important consideration. Participants emphasized the importance of “putting value on water and protecting it for future generations”. Many people felt that mining should not be protected in the watershed, that mining interests should be bought out, limited in scope or limited to expiration dates.

Some open house attendees suggested that an ecosystem approach should be taken in developing the park reserve.



Photo: Christian Bucher, Parks Canada, 2009

The second item of importance identified by open house participants was the role Sahtu Dene and Métis and communities in the Tulita District would play in creation and management of the park reserve. Attendees stated that support from Sahtu people was essential and they should be fully informed and involved in the final decision on the park reserve boundary. Participants indicated that priorities of Aboriginal peoples, sustainability of area communities and local harvesting rights for First Nations and Métis should be of prime importance.

### *Other Issues*

Big game outfitters in attendance at the open houses indicated that their interests had not been addressed in this consultation process, since they would no longer be allowed to continue their commercial hunting activities in a national park reserve.

A key issue for open house participants was the use of Howard's Pass road as a potential means of access to the Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve. Open house participants expressed concern over potential public access to the road, indicating such access may impact animal safety and wildlife migration patterns. It was suggested that co-management of the road with Sahtu Dene and Métis would be a means of managing access, possibly in combination with a wildlife management plan. Access to the park reserve was also mentioned as a consideration in the context of potential tourism opportunities (e.g., visitor and tourist access, tourism infrastructure [e.g. cabins]).



Photo: Government of the Northwest Territories

Another topic of discussion among a few attendees at the open houses was the potential for transportation corridors for energy to supply future resource development (e.g., natural gas, electric power, hydro development). These participants suggested that the energy requirements need to be considered in planning for the park reserve.

## **Comments from the General Public Providing Written Comments<sup>20</sup>**

### *The Proposed Boundary Options*

Most of the public participants (69.9%) preferred a boundary that preserved as much as possible of the upper South Nahanni Watershed; that is, an area larger than proposed in Option 1. Creating a park reserve protecting the entire watershed was seen as supporting the integrity of the complete ecosystem, protecting biodiversity and preserving the critical wildlife habitat, as well as leaving a valuable legacy for future generations. Many participants believed that to achieve the conservation values, and avoid the impacts of mining on animals, plants and the ecosystem, there should be no mining when protecting the entire watershed.

<sup>20</sup> These include comments on comment sheets and in separate written submissions.

Among the 65 public participants in the consultation program who indicated a preference for one of the boundary options proposed by PCA, Option 1 was most preferred by 60 people (92.3%). It was felt that this option provided the best balance of maximizing conservation while accommodating resource potential. However, a number of these participants qualified their choice by indicating they prefer Option 1 but without any mining activity. Several people felt that the economic situation of people around the park should be considered and indicated their preference for Option 2 or 3. Option 2 was selected by 3 people (4.6%) and Option 3 by 2 people (3.1%).

### *The Process for Creating a National Park Reserve*

Widespread support was expressed among the public for the creation of Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve. Protection of the entire South Nahanni River watershed was seen as a desired objective, essential for maintaining ecological, heritage, legacy and cultural values. For many, protection of the entire watershed is seen to preserve the integrity of the ecosystem and support the habitat of the important species located in the area (caribou, grizzly bears, Dall's sheep, mountain goats, fish).

Many participants felt that mining interests do not belong in the vicinity of the park reserve and should be pursued in other areas<sup>21</sup>. They indicated that the impacts of mining can affect the quality of the air and water and may include tailings ponds and roads which are not compatible with preservation of the natural areas and wildlife habitat.



Photo: Government of the Northwest Territories

The public participants emphasized the importance of protecting the interests of Aboriginal peoples. They wanted to ensure that the rights of regional First Nations and Métis would be protected and local interests (e.g. economic well-being, leadership, decision-making oversight) are accommodated.

## **4.4 ANALYSIS OF THE PROPOSED OPTIONS**

Among the 65 participants expressing a preference for one of the three boundary options proposed in the consultation process, a large majority (92.3%) stated a clear preference for Option 1. Option 1 was seen as the best way to facilitate maximum protection of the watershed and habitat of the important species, while also accommodating resource potential in the park. A number of the participants who preferred Option 1 qualified this choice by indicating that Option 1 represented the next best approach to protection of the entire South Nahanni River watershed and preferred that mining leases be bought out. They also indicated that if mining activities are allowed in the vicinity of the park reserve in the upper watershed of the South Nahanni River, the most stringent environmental controls and management should be applied.

The three participants (among those indicating a preferred option) who preferred Option 2 (4.6%) indicated that this option was “a good compromise towards the preservation of habitat for different species and still allow[ing] for the majority of any minerals to be extracted after due process.” It was

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<sup>21</sup> Many of the comments about mining in the park were referring to mining in the proposal area – not necessarily within the eventual park itself – generally the area of the land withdrawal was often called “the park” or “Nááts'ihch'oh” – so comments about “mining in the park” usually meant “mining in the watershed”

noted that Option 2 opened the door for more road access to the park in order that more Canadians could benefit from the park experience.

Option 3 was preferred by two participants (3.1% of those selecting an option). They indicated that with this option the water can be safeguarded through regulatory oversight (e.g. the Fisheries Act); there will be economic benefits from mineral extraction; and the rights of Aboriginal people in the area to hunt in the park reserve are secured.

## **4.5 THEMES AND CONSIDERATIONS**

A number of themes and considerations emerged in the consultation program. The following themes reflect the discussions from all consultation participants in all forums and formats. Where percentages are reported, they refer to the percentage of persons providing written comments in e-mails or on comment sheets.

- 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 to Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve;

### ***4.5.1 THEME 1: PROTECT THE WATERSHED AND ECOSYSTEM***

The most common theme in the consultation process was that of protecting the entire South Nahanni River watershed in the creation of Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve. Over two-thirds of participants who submitted written comments (1121 participants or 69.9%) felt that this level of protection was required to protect the land and water from development; avoid potential fragmentation due to resource development; ensure ecosystem integrity; and support the habitat and migration patterns of key species within the park reserve. Protecting as much land as possible in Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve was viewed by participants as “a unique opportunity to provide a lasting legacy for many future generations.”

### ***4.5.2 THEME 2: PROTECT THE WILDLIFE HABITAT***

Ensuring the preservation of the habitat of key wildlife species such as caribou, Dall's sheep, grizzly bears, trumpeter swan and mountain goat was seen to be of prime importance by 61.3% (983 persons) who submitted written comments. These individuals preferred to have no resource development, or as little as possible, to avoid disturbance to animal movement and potential impacts to land and water on which they rely. It was viewed as particularly important to protect the habitat, migration routes and calving areas of the caribou due to this species' value to the Sahtu peoples. Participants expressed concern about disturbance to caribou from the development of Howard's Pass road and the area of the Lened mineral claim which intersects with the caribou migration route and calving area.



#### ***4.5.3 THEME 3: RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT IN THE WATERSHED***

During the consultation program, varied views were expressed on the issues related to resource development in the watershed. Many environmental organizations and other Canadians providing written comments (15.7% or 251 participants who submitted written comments) believe that there should be no resource extraction activity in the Upper Nahanni River Watershed. They stated that mining activities are incompatible with the Government of Canada's conservation values and should be conducted in areas located outside of the watershed. These participants indicated that the impacts of resource extraction in the vicinity of the park reserve are many: (e.g. construction disturbance, road impacts on wildlife, demands for water for construction, operation and transport of minerals, discharges into waterways, contamination from spills); therefore mining activity should not be allowed in this wilderness setting.

The views expressed by some Canadians as well as representatives of the mining industry focused on the need for local area development of mineral resources for the benefit of Sahtu people and the economy of the Northwest Territories into the future. These participants (17 or 1.1% of people submitting written comments) stated that resource development activities could be carried out in environmentally conscious ways, with appropriate regulation and oversight so that economic and conservation values can be balanced in a park reserve setting.

#### ***4.5.4 THEME 4: TOURISM IN THE PARK RESERVE***

A number of participants submitting written comments (30 individuals or 1.9%) promoted the idea of using tourism or eco-tourism in the park reserve as a steady long-term source of employment and revenue that could be developed over time. These participants indicated that people come from all over the world to see this world heritage region. One participant stated: "ecotourism is an increasingly important part of the northern economy, and the great appeal of your northern country relies upon its expansive protection of the habitats of magnificent wild animals such as the woodland caribou." Tourism advocates noted that mining provides temporary instant income, whereas tourism to pristine wilderness can provide continuing revenue streams into Canada long after mining operations have faded out – and with none of the impacts associated with mining activities.

#### ***4.5.5 THEME 5: CO-OPERATIVE MANAGEMENT***

Ensuring that the interests of local First Nations and Métis people are addressed in creating the Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve was seen as a priority by 28 or 1.7% of participants providing written comments and by individuals providing verbal comments at meetings and open houses with Aboriginal peoples. The importance of coordinating management and services between Nahanni National Park Reserve and the proposed Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve was highlighted in meetings with Aboriginal peoples. Participants across Canada also wanted to ensure that Sahtu rights are upheld; economic and employment benefits are identified; and traditional activities such as hunting would be continued in the park reserve. These participants stressed the importance of PCA working cooperatively with Sahtu First Nations and Métis people on decision making and management of the park reserve. Mention was made of the need to partner with First Nations and Métis to protect the ecological and cultural values for future generations. One participant stated: "I am pleased to see that the proposed name, Nááts'ihch'oh, will honour the indigenous peoples who have protected these areas since time immemorial."

#### ***4.5.6 THEME 6: ROAD ACCESS TO AND THROUGH NÁÁTS'IHCH'OH NATIONAL PARK RESERVE***

This theme was not raised by many participants providing written comments; however it was a common topic in verbal comments at meetings, in formal submissions and at open houses. Potential road access to Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve was of concern from a variety of perspectives. From the mining perspective, participants sought further information on road access to the mineral claim areas within the park reserve (e.g., the Lened area claim, Mac Creek area, access to the mineral claim area in the north-east of the park reserve). Environmental organization participants, with consideration of conservation values, favoured no access to the mineral areas, with the possible exception of Howard's Pass road.

The potential for Howard's Pass road (presently undeveloped) to be open to the public was of concern to many of these participants. They believed that public access on this road could be dangerous (e.g. if shared with mining trucks); may invite poaching of wildlife; and would be deleterious to caribou, grizzly bear and Dall's sheep, all reported to be vulnerable to human activities. Visitor/tourist access was also suggested as a potential future use of the road. Sahtu Dene and Métis expressed their wish to have the road accessible for use by their people. Participants emphasized that sound planning and management among PCA and the Sahtu Dene and Métis, working with mining industry representatives, was needed to manage and monitor the use of Howard's Pass road.

#### **4.6 COMMENTS ON THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION PROGRAM**

The consultation program for the Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve was generally well received by participants. A number of people stated that they appreciated the meetings, informative presentations and the opportunity for discussion and comment; in particular they liked having the various parties present information or provide opening comments from their own perspective (e.g., PCA, NRCan, representatives from the TDNWG, GNWT). Participants indicated that they appreciated having knowledgeable people at public meetings to answer questions.

To improve awareness and attendance at meetings and open houses, it was suggested that additional promotion be undertaken in various media, such as local radio and additional poster distribution. The suggestion was made for PCA to go into local area schools to inform the youth of the proposal and obtain their input. Some participants indicated their preference to have meetings geared to a specific organization (e.g. Land Corporation, Renewable Resource Council) in addition to the public meetings.



## 5.0 NEXT STEPS

During and directly following the consultation program, PCA will continue working with the Tulita District Nááts'ihch'oh Working Group towards the finalization of an Impact and Benefit Plan to allow for the establishment of the national park reserve.

The findings described in this consultation report will provide the governments of Canada and Northwest Territories with the views and perspectives of all people who participated in the consultation activities, to allow them to develop a recommendation for a final boundary.

Once the Sahtu Dene and Métis have their Impact and Benefit Plan in place and the final boundary has been determined by the federal government in consultation with the Government of the Northwest Territories, Canada's Environment Minister, who is the Minister responsible for PCA, will be able to recommend to Parliament that Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve be established under the *Canada National Parks Act*.

The *Canada National Parks Act*, the Impact and Benefit Plan, the Sahtu Dene and Métis Final Agreement and a yet to be established co-operative management board will govern Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve if it is established in the Sahtu.

## 6.0 CONCLUSIONS

This report documented the objectives of the consultation program and described methods employed to generate awareness, interest and participation among Canadians and, in particular Aboriginal people in the area, including Sahtu Dene and Métis, Dehcho First Nations and Kaska, on the proposal to create the Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve.

Three potential boundary options were presented by PCA for review and comment during the consultation program, with an invitation to participants to develop modified boundaries or propose new ones for the park reserve. The consultation report presented the findings of the results of the consultations.

The proposal to create the Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve generated considerable support among Canadians. Over 96% of participants who provided written comments on the proposal expressed their support for this initiative.

For the majority of consultation participants providing written comments (69.9%)<sup>22</sup>, the preferred option was protection of the entire South Nahanni River watershed, with activities related to mining being limited or restricted to areas outside of the watershed (15.7%)<sup>23</sup>. Of importance to participants was preserving the habitats of important wildlife species such as grizzly bears, caribou, Dall's sheep and mountain goats (61.3%) and protecting the ecological integrity of the complete South Nahanni watershed (10%).

Among the few participants (65) stating a preference for one of the boundary options proposed by PCA, Option 1 was the preferred boundary for sixty participants (92.3%), due to the capacity of this option to provide for the most protection of the watershed wildlife habitat while accommodating some mineral resource potential. Three participants selected Option 2 (4.6%), while Option 3 was preferred by 2 participants (3.1%) for further economic development potential to be realized in environmentally responsible ways.

The analysis indicated that potential road access, for mineral exploration and mining, river outfitting, First Nations and Métis traditional activities and potential tourism activities and infrastructure was identified as an issue requiring further discussion among PCA, area First Nations and Métis people, and mining industry representatives.

The potential use of the park reserve for tourism and eco-tourism was seen as beneficial from the perspectives of 30 participants (1.9%) who valued conservation and long-term sustainable economic benefits from a world class wilderness heritage park reserve. The many economic benefits of present and future mineral potential in the park reserve were also documented by 17 participants (1.1%).

The analysis indicated that respecting First Nation and Métis rights and traditional values was important for many people across Canada. They emphasized that a cooperative, integrated management approach between Sahtu First Nations and Métis and PCA was important for management of the Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve and for the preservation of the ecological, cultural, economic, and spiritual values associated with the park reserve.

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<sup>22</sup> The percentages in this section all refer to participants who had sent in written comments (n=1603)

<sup>23</sup> The "preferred option" referred to in this sentence was not one of the three boundary options proposed in the consultation program.