

GNWT Review Comments on the April 2015 SLUPB Background Report to Amending the SLUP Following the Creation of the Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve

This document is a summary of the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) comments and recommendations on the April 2015 Sahtu Land Use Planning Board (the Board) Background Report to amending the Sahtu Land Use Plan (SLUP) following the creation of the Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve (NANPR). The comments and recommendations provided below are based on a GNWT review of the Background Report.

Comments on Current Status and Land Use Planning Considerations

The NANPR Land Selection Process

The land selection process for the NANPR provides guidance on the rezoning of Zone 41 lands. Zone 41 lands were set outside the NANPR to allow the pursuit of economic development in the area. The Sahtu vision identified in the SLUP supports the notion of a balance between conservation and development, and one of the SLUP's goals is to increase the economic self-sufficiency of the region through sustainable development by addressing barriers to industry involvement and increasing non-renewable resource development in the region (SLUP 2013, p. 12 and 14). The GNWT's support for the NANPR land selection process was guided by the Land Use and Sustainability Framework, which supports a balanced approach to land use with regard for ecological, cultural and economic values, needs and interests.

Mineral Potential of Zone 41 Lands

Trade-offs occurred through the process of establishing NANPR. Most recently, the Mineral and Energy Resource Assessment (MERA) process and consultation boundaries for NANPR identified significant losses of mineral potential (carlin-type gold deposits, carbonate fault related deposits, intrusion-related deposits containing tungsten, and SEDEX deposits) resulting from establishment of the NANPR. The Final NANPR land selection was based on consideration of ecological, cultural and economic values and interests. Nine percent of the Greater Nahanni Ecosystem (approximately 2,700 km² of Zone 41 lands) was excluded from the NANPR boundary due to its mineral or other economic development potential (Parks Canada Backgrounder; [Parks Canada Nahanni NPR Backgrounder](#)).

The SLUP's Zone 41 Proposed Conservation Initiative (PCI) designation notes the economic importance of the area for its mineral exploration and development potential (SLUP 2013; p.140). An important consideration for the Board is that access to high mineral potential areas, such as Zone 41, is essential to enable future economic

development. High mineral potential lands are rarely found, and economic mineral deposits are even less common.

Another important factor is that some companies operating in or near the Zone 41 lands have established economic agreements with Sahtu communities. Closure of the area to resource development opportunities would impede additional economic growth in nearby Sahtu communities.

Oil and Gas Potential of Zone 41 Lands

There is minimal oil and gas potential in Zone 41 lands, therefore petroleum interests/potential are not a significant factor to be considered as part of the Zone 41 SLUP amendment.

Tourism Potential in Zone 41 Lands

Tourism development potential remains a strong possibility in the Zone 41 region, and it is important that transportation corridors remain accessible to encourage possible future tourism development initiatives. The final NANPR boundary does maintain parts of O'Grady Lake outside the Park to provide flight access, and road access through Zone 41 lands is also key to ensuring that the newly established NANPR is accessible for public/tourist use.

Ecological Representation

The GNWT considered SLUP Zone 41 for values that would contribute to ecological representation. With the creation of the NANPR, the Boreal Cordillera Highlands MB ecoregion, which makes up the majority of what remains of SLUP Zone 41, has a very high degree of ecological representation in core protected areas. The Taiga Cordillera Highlands LS ecoregion, which makes up the eastern portion of what remains of SLUP Zone 41, has a low degree of ecological representation in core protected areas. Please see Appendix A – Ecological Representation Map.

Wildlife

The GNWT will evaluate the implications of re-zoning lands in Zone 41 for territorially-managed wildlife species, wildlife habitat, species at risk, and biodiversity, and provide recommendations to the Board during later steps in the amendment process.

Comments on the Amendment Process

Following the Planning Partner Input phase the GNWT recommends that, if so required, the Board engages planning partners in further discussions regarding rezoning options for Zone 41, to build consensus on future zoning prior to the amendment application stage.

Specific Comments

Map 6 – Grizzly Bear Important Wildlife Areas Density – the GNWT recommends that the map be amended to clarify that the original source of the Grizzly Bear density data is from: Weaver, J.L. 2006. Big Animals and Small Parks: Implications of Wildlife Distribution and Movements for Expansion of Nahanni National Park Reserve. Wildlife Conservation Society Canada Conservation Report No. 1. Toronto, Ontario

Third Party Interests - The GNWT recommends providing more detail and clarity on what third party interests exist in Zone 41. It is unclear whether the road identified on the Map 9 (Infrastructure) is the only interest. Please list and map any other third party interests.

Map 9 – Infrastructure – It is not clear whether the runway is located in the NWT or the Yukon. A larger scale map is recommended for future documents.

Legacy Issues – the GNWT recommends the Board includes a discussion of legacy uses in the next set of public documents.

Editorial Comments

Replace "Sahtu" with "Sahtu Settlement Area" throughout the document.

Consistent use of acronyms - particularly with respect to the Sahtu Land Use Plan, the Sahtu Land Use Planning Board and Sahtu Secretariat Incorporated.