

NAHANNI PARK EXPANSION APPROVED BY DEHCHO FIRST NATIONS

KAKISA LAKE – June 25 – The expansion and protection of the South Nahanni watershed and national park reserve took a major step towards realization today when DFN Assembly delegates widely approved a resolution accepting the recommendation of the Nahanni Park Expansion Working Group (NEWG).

The DFN has consistently supported protection of the watershed through expansion of the park boundaries, along with a 50-50 joint management with Canada. It signed a memorandum of understanding with Parks Canada in 2003 and talks have continued until today.

The boundaries of the park will be expanded to protect more than 95 percent of the Greater Nahanni Ecosystem while leaving a small buffer of non-park land around Nahanni Butte and the existing interests of two mining companies – Canadian Zinc and Northern Tungsten – intact.

In passing the resolution the onus is now on the federal government through Parks Canada to sign an agreement. At a meeting in Ottawa in April, Grand Chief Gerald Antoine received indications from National Parks Minister John Baird that the recommendations of the NEWG will be quickly approved by Ottawa.

Twenty-five percent of the highest mineral potential of the Park remains open for development but are restricted to areas where there are existing mineral leases.

Jonas Antoine, a DFN representative on NEWG, told the Assembly the final boundary is the minimum expansion needed for sustainable ecological protection of the Nahanni National Park Reserve.

“We have achieved for DFN the directions set out by Leadership and Assembly resolutions since 2003 through this park expansion. It is the best deal for a n Aboriginal nation and a national park in Canada and the world,” he said.

The Assembly enthusiastically agreed.

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