



NOVEMBER 2009

# NAHANNI

NATIONAL PARK RESERVE OF CANADA

# NAH?A DEHÉ

## *Management Planning*

*Help shape the future of Nah?a Dehé*

### Introduction

You are invited to help guide the future management of the Nahanni National Park Reserve of Canada!

Every national park in Canada has a management plan that provides a long-term vision and strategic direction for the park. Management plans are reviewed every five years, with input and involvement from partners, stakeholders and the public, to ensure that the plan remains valid and effective.

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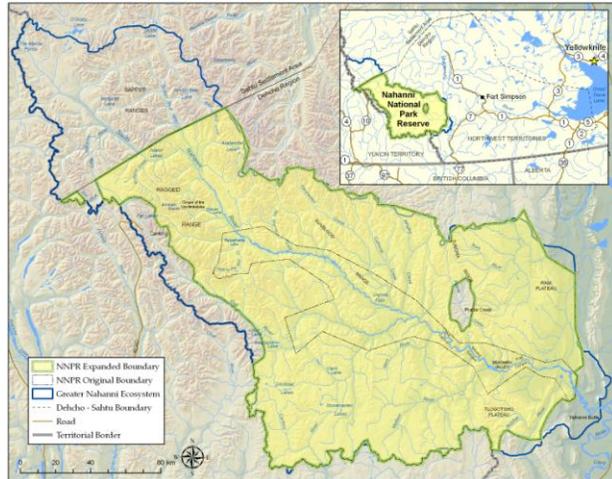
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Nahanni National Park Reserve (NNPR) was expanded in June 2009, and the new management plan will give direction to the management of both the original park and the expansion area. The new plan will build on the sound direction and implementation actions of the 2004 plan and will focus on integrating the three elements of Parks Canada’s mandate – the protection of heritage resources, the facilitation of visitor experiences, and public education and outreach. The new management plan defines key strategies and area concepts to achieve the park vision and identifies objectives and actions that can be measured to demonstrate success.



*Nahanni National Park Reserve of Canada*

The Nahʔą Dehé Consensus Team (Parks Canada and Dehcho First Nations) is working on the management planning program. The Consensus Team is the mechanism which allows Parks Canada (PC) and Dehcho First Nations (DFN) to cooperatively manage the park. For the planning program, experts are brought in as needed and a planner is coordinating the process.

During December 2009 and January 2010, Parks Canada staff and the Consensus Team will be hosting a series of meetings in Dehcho communities and talking with community members. Meetings will also be held with key stakeholder groups. NNPR is an iconic park, and many people across Canada supported the recent expansion of the park. An on-line forum is available to all Canadians to participate in the management planning program ([www.nahanniplan.ca](http://www.nahanniplan.ca)).



*Nah ʔą Dehé is the traditional name for the park, reflecting its Dene heritage. Depending on context, Nah ʔą Dehé can refer to the South Nahanni River and its watershed, the 2009 park boundary, and/or the Greater Nahanni Ecosystem. In this document, Nah ʔą Dehé refers to the 2009 park boundary.*



**We invite your ideas, comments and suggestions throughout the planning process.**

## The Management Planning Process

The management planning process has a focused timeline in order to ensure that the new management plan is completed by the required deadline of March 2010. The key steps from now until March are outlined below.

**COMPLETED** → Assess the implementation of 2004 management plan. Complete State of the Park Report to assess park performance achieving goals. Identify issues to be addressed in new management plan. Begin drafting elements of the management plan.

*Fall 2009*

**WE ARE HERE** → Community and stakeholder meetings and launch of the on-line Nahanni Forum. Introduce the planning process, outlining key issues to be addressed and presenting the draft vision and proposed key strategies and area management approaches. Invite public participation and request feedback.

*Winter 2010*

Develop draft plan, incorporating public input. Present draft for public review through community open houses, stakeholder meetings, second newsletter, and on-line forum. Invite further feedback.

*Spring 2010*

Incorporate public input and finalise the draft management plan. After final review, and recommendation by Parks Canada and Dehcho First Nations, the plan is submitted to the federal Minister of the Environment for approval.

## Accomplishments from 2004 Management Plan

The past five years have been very busy for NNPR. Major accomplishments include:

- ✓ Expansion of NNPR to 30,000 km<sup>2</sup>
- ✓ Creation of harvest protocols with Dehcho First Nations (DFN)
- ✓ Groundbreaking animal studies on caribou, grizzly and bats
- ✓ Protecting the Deadmen Valley (DMV) forestry cabin
- ✓ Enhanced co-operative park management through Consensus Team
- ✓ Career development opportunities for DFN members through the summer student program
- ✓ Interpretation programs featuring local Aboriginal culture

## Park Vision

A vision for Nahanni National Park Reserve is a key element of the management plan. The vision should paint an inspiring picture of the future desired state of the park. The planning team has developed a draft vision statement.

**Does the vision describe the desired future state for Nahanni?  
 Do you see yourself in this vision?  
 Do you have any suggestions?**

*Travelling through the land of the Nahʔa Dene, who have lived on this land since time immemorial, local legends excite the imagination. Dene culture, so intimately linked to the ecology of Nahʔa Dehé, is respected. A moment of solitude brings a humbling realization of size amongst the immense walls of First Canyon and the thundering power of Nájłjcho.*



*The Creator of the Dene blessed Dehcho elders with the foresight to protect the life sustaining waters of Nahʔa Dehé, a place of mystery, spirituality and healing. Protecting the flowing water, rhythms of the earth and the way of animals respects equality with the land and all living things. Dene are inseparable from the land. Cultural practices and traditional subsistence harvesting are integral and sustainable parts of the ecosystem, occurring in accordance with Dene laws and principles.*

*Nahʔa Dehé protects a wilderness watershed in the Mackenzie Mountains where natural processes such as fires and floods are the dominant forces shaping the land. Special features of the park, and cultural and spiritual sites are preserved. Naturally-occurring plant communities flourish and native animal species, including woodland caribou and grizzly bears thrive.*



*Nahanni National Park Reserve, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is a model of cooperative management with Dehcho First Nations where ecological and cultural integrity are protected, wilderness experiences and enjoyment are encouraged. Nahʔa Dehé serves as a national long-term ecological research and monitoring site, and promotes excellence in the conduct of science and cooperative resource protection.*

*Communities, volunteers and stakeholders continue to be actively engaged in the collaborative protection and presentation of Nah ʔa Dehé, ensuring respect for the land continues into future generations.*

*Visitors have diverse, world-class opportunities to experience and learn about the natural and cultural heritage of Nah ʔa Dehé. Flying into the park, range after range of rocky peaks, vast plateaux and canyons hundreds of metres deep unfold below the wings. Once on the ground, watchful eyes may catch a glimpse of wildlife: a bear passing in the bush, moose browsing at the side of pond, or Dall’s sheep leaping nimbly on rocky hillsides. Day after day, paddlers explore ever changing currents, rewarded near the end of their journey with hot springs to relax their aching muscles.*



*Nah ʔa Dehé will touch and inspire people who may never dip their paddles in the waters of this Canadian Heritage River, climb the rough granite rock walls or fly into this remote watershed. Nah ʔa Dehé is in the hearts and minds of all Canadians.*

## Issues

The new plan is intended to define where efforts should be focused over the next five years. The following are key issues and challenges currently facing the park.

*Maintaining Water Quality* - Present and future upstream industrial activity, long-range transported pollutants and climate change all have the potential to decrease water quality. There is a need to work with local communities and enhance water quality monitoring systems.

*Traditional Dene Names* - Traditional Dene names connect culture and the land, linking local legends with places and history. There is a need to enhance on-going efforts to incorporate Dene names throughout NNPR, foster an understanding of name changes and initiate the process to formally change names.

*Maintaining and Increasing Visitation* - Park expansion has brought new possibilities, including hiking, big wall rock climbing and other uses in areas such as Ram Plateau, Cirque of the Unclimbables and Glacier Lake. There is a need to diversify the visitor experience offer to maintain or increase visitation, while retaining the highly valued wilderness experience.



**How would you like to experience Nahanni? What ideas do you have for how Nahanni can be experienced?**

*Expanding Outreach Education* - Outreach education is very important to ensure Canadians, especially local communities, youth, urban and new Canadians, feel a strong sense of connection with Nahʔa Dehé. There is a need to further develop local community outreach and education opportunities as well as build on distance outreach education initiatives.

**How can Parks Canada build a sense of connection and understanding of Nahanni for people who may never have the chance to visit?  
What opportunities could be developed for “virtual visits”?**

*Establishing Monitoring Programs* - Ecological monitoring programs in NNPR have focused on forests and freshwater indicators; with the expansion, monitoring programs for alpine, wetlands and glaciers need to be enhanced or



developed. There is a need for improvements in cultural resource monitoring, as well as new monitoring and reporting protocols for visitor experience, outreach education and stakeholder relations.

*Infrastructure Supporting the Visitor Experience* - There is a need for improved human waste management facilities at

Nájljcho (Virginia Falls), The Gate, and Kraus Hot Springs, as well as



an analysis of visitor infrastructure requirements for the expanded area.

*Declining Northern Mountain Caribou Populations* - Decreasing populations of Northern Mountain Caribou is the result of several factors. There is a need to continue to monitor caribou populations within the park boundaries and participate in collaboration with others, including the Government of the Northwest Territories, the Yukon Territorial Government, Aboriginal

partners, sport hunting outfitters and industry, to develop regional management regimes.



**Does this list capture the key issues that require action in the next 5 years?**

## Key Strategies

Key strategies describe an integrated, focused approach of how the park will be managed in the coming years. Key strategies provide a framework for setting objectives, targets and actions. Three draft strategies follow, which try to achieve the park vision while addressing the park's challenges.

**Please share your comments and suggestions on the proposed key strategies.**

### **Key Strategy # 1:**

#### ***Taking Care of Nahʔa Dehé***

*Crucial habitat for grizzly bears, woodland caribou and Dall's sheep, the highest mountains and largest glaciers in the Northwest Territories and some of the deepest canyons in Canada are all found in Nahʔa Dehé. The original park includes a Canadian Heritage River and is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Wildlife species, such as the migratory caribou, do not stay within park boundaries; likewise, fire does not respect lines drawn on a map. World-renowned NNPR must work with others to help maintain the highest possible standards of quality for the waters, lands, air and wildlife of Nahʔa Dehé. Understanding this area is a big task which is best undertaken through monitoring and research conducted not only by PC, but in partnership with DFN, academic institutions, other government agencies, and independent researchers. The scientific work*

*conducted in Nahʔa Dehé presents exciting opportunities to enhance management, outreach education and visitor programs.*

### **Key Strategy #2:**

#### ***Nahʔa Dehé, a Gift to be Shared***

*For many, dreams of dipping a paddle in the waters of the South Nahanni River, listening to the roar of Náíl̄icho (Virginia Falls) or feeling the rough granite of Lotus Flower Tower in the Cirque of the Unclimbables may remain just a dream. Few people get the chance to visit the park due to its remoteness and ruggedness, the harshness of travel conditions and costs to get to the park, in addition to the skill level required for most activities. Ensuring that Nahʔa Dehé is in the hearts and minds of Canadians and people around the world is key for continued support.*

### **Key Strategy #3: Waters for Life**

*Communities in the Dehcho rely on the life sustaining waters of Nahʔa Dehé. Clean water has been a significant concern for DFN, serving as the impetus for park expansion. The South Nahanni River is the primary recreational experience for park visitors and the watershed supports important wildlife populations. Water is key to culture and interconnections. It is important for the people, wildlife and plants that live in and are connected to Nahʔa Dehé and for the people who visit the area. Water quality will continue to be important in the future for park management, given the regional industrial development in close proximity to the park and use along the river corridor.*

## Area Concepts

An area concept is as a management technique to be used for certain areas within a park that merit a special focus. Three area concepts are proposed, two within the linear river corridor to address unique concerns, and a large area concept for the expansion area.

### *Gahnįthah (Rabbitkettle)*

Due to the cultural, ecological and public safety concerns, and the excellent visitor experience opportunity, specific management direction will be developed for Gahnįthah (Rabbitkettle Hotsprings) and Gahnįthah Mie (Rabbitkettle Lake). Gahnįthah, the site of two tufa mounds (intricate terraces of calcium carbonate), is one of seven special preservation areas in the park. The two tufa mounds are the largest such structures known in Canada. Uncontrolled foot traffic poses an immediate danger to the mounds; as such, access is strictly limited to the guided-interpretation program which allows visitors to walk on the 'North' mound. The 'South' mound is of very important cultural and spiritual significance to the Dene and no visitor access is permitted. Gahnįthah Mie (Rabbitkettle Lake) is one of two designated floatplane landing sites in the original park, providing paddlers with access to the South Nahanni River.



### *Náįlıcho (Virginia Falls)*

As the intersection of river users and day visitors, Náįlıcho (Virginia Falls) is an iconic and popular location. Coordination of river users, day use visitors and fly-in campers can be complex. Náįlıcho (Virginia Falls) is one of two designated floatplane landing sites in the park. Boardwalks for the campground and associated trails, built to protect the fragile environment, require on-going maintenance. The interpretation potential is high at Náįlıcho (Virginia Falls).

### *Expansion Area*

The expansion area is a welcome addition to NNPR. The area concept approach is proposed for the expansion area to allow for focused management, research, relationship-building that will explore the new potential that the expansion area brings to the park. The "Expansion Area" concept is envisioned to have a life span of five years. This time period will enable management direction for the expansion area to be fully developed. The expansion of Nahanni National Park Reserve brings exciting opportunities, such as new partnerships and expanded recreation and visitor opportunities. There are many considerations, from maintaining cultural and ecological integrity, ensuring public safety, mitigating environmental hazards, and establishing appropriate zoning, to be considered in setting the management direction for the expansion area.

## How Do I Get Involved?

This newsletter outlines the planning team's current thinking about the issues and future direction for the management of NNPR. We are looking for your comments and suggestions.

- Does the draft vision evoke a future you support?
- Are there additional issues that should be considered during the review?
- Do you see the key strategies as paths forward to achieve the vision?
- What do you think of the proposed area concepts?
- Do you have any other comments or suggestions concerning NNPR?

Please send comments and suggestions to:

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Please send comments by: **DECEMBER 20, 2009**



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