



JANUARY 2010

# NAHANNI

NATIONAL PARK RESERVE OF CANADA

## NAH?A DEHÉ

*Management Planning*

*Help shape the future of Nah?a Dehé*

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### Superintendent's Message

Last spring, Nahanni National Park Reserve (NNPR) was expanded, making the park the third largest in Canada, and the sixth largest in the world. The 2010 management plan will be the first to provide strategic direction for the entire park (approximately 30,000km<sup>2</sup>). As part of the planning process we are continuing to build ties with long-term partners, while also developing relationships with new partners and stakeholders. In December, we hosted two community information sessions in the Dehcho, as well as meetings with Chief and Councils to seek input on the draft vision, issues, key strategies and area approaches. I'd like to personally extend my thanks to everyone who has so far contributed comments and information to help guide the future direction for the park.



January will be another busy month for us as we host another series of community meetings in the Dehcho, meet with key partners and stakeholder groups, and work on the management plan. Your input is valued; please continue to participate in the planning program. Join us at a community meeting or share your input, by phone, fax, e-mail, or via our on-line forum at [www.nahanniplan.ca](http://www.nahanniplan.ca).



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## A Note from the Planning Team

Comments from Chief and Councils, Elders, stakeholders, community members, visitors and Canadians have helped shape the development of the first draft of the management plan. We are listening to what is important to you. We have heard your feedback on the protection of ecological integrity, the provision of visitor opportunities which are in harmony with the environment, and the importance of continued communication about the cultural ties to the land.

Throughout the month of January 2010, the Planning Team will continue to listen to your comments to further shape the draft plan. At the beginning of February, members of the Nahʔa Dehé Consensus Team (NDCT) will present the final draft to leadership within Parks Canada and Dehcho First Nations for approval. Final submission of the plan will occur in March, as the CEO of Parks Canada hands the plan to the Minister of Environment to be tabled in Parliament.

### Park Vision Statement – Revised

*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 in this place of mystery, spirituality and healing. The life sustaining waters of Nahʔa Dehé flow freely, protected through the wisdom and guidance of the Dehcho elders, and traditional subsistence harvesting continues as an integral and sustainable part of the ecosystem, occurring in accordance with Dene laws and principles. Dene are inseparable from the land.*

*NNPR protects a wilderness watershed in the Mackenzie Mountains, where fires and floods shape the land, and naturally-occurring plant and animal species thrive. The park is a model of cooperative management, where cultural resources are treated with care and excellence in the conduct of science is promoted. Communities, volunteers and stakeholders are involved in the stewardship of Nahʔa Dehé, ensuring respect for the land continues into future generations.*

*Flying into the park, range after range of rocky peaks, vast plateaux and canyons hundreds of metres deep unfold below the wings. Watchful eyes may catch a glimpse of a grizzly passing in the bush or Dall's sheep leaping nimbly on rocky hillsides. On the river, a moment of solitude brings a humbling realization of size, feeling the thundering power of Náíłıcho. World-class opportunities abound to experience wilderness and learn about the natural and cultural heritage of Nahʔa Dehé.*

*Nahʔa Dehé, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, touches and inspires 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. Nahʔa Dehé resonates in the hearts and minds of all Canadians.*





Key strategies describe an integrated, focused approach of how the park will be managed in the coming years. Here, the three draft key strategies are presented along with an overview of how they will be implemented. These will guide park management priorities for the next five years.

### Key Strategy #1: Taking Care of Nahʔą Dehé

Understanding the park is a big task which is best undertaken through monitoring and research conducted cooperatively. Parks Canada works in partnership with Dehcho First Nations, traditional users, academic institutions, other government agencies and independent researchers to fulfill this task. The scientific work conducted in Nahʔą Dehé presents exciting opportunities to enhance management, education and visitor programs.



*Staff conduct survey of Dall's sheep*

- A cooperative management approach is used to guide decision-making, and protect the ecological integrity of the entire Nahʔą Dehé watershed.
  - Major resource management decisions are made by the Nahʔą Dehé Consensus Team.
  - The park participates in major regional land and resource management initiatives, which may have an impact on the management or ecological integrity of Nahʔą Dehé.
- Natural ecological processes remain the primary forces shaping the ecosystem.
  - Wildfires are permitted to burn naturally in the majority of the park area.
- NNPR is a centre for northern mountain research, where science and traditional knowledge contribute to the protection of the park and enhance public understanding of its ecosystems.
  - Parks Canada research projects include at least one other organization as an active partner, or in a consultation or review role.
  - Research in NNPR incorporates traditional knowledge where appropriate and feasible.
  - Research is well communicated.
  - Hands-on stewardship opportunities are increased by 2012.
- The high level of biodiversity in Nahʔą Dehé is retained, including naturally occurring plant and animal species. Unique and sensitive landscape features are protected.
  - Species composition and distribution remains representative of the Mackenzie Mountains Natural Region.
  - The park's Ecological Integrity Monitoring Program is fully implemented by 2014, and includes appropriate biodiversity measures for each indicator.

- Improve understanding and documentation of rare species and habitats.
- Protect sensitive terrain features in the park.
- Cooperative research and partnerships lead to maintaining and improving caribou populations by 2014.
- Nahʔą Dehé serves as a regional model for cultural resource management (CRM), respecting traditional users and interests while complying with Parks Canada's CRM Policy and Directives.
  - Cultural resource management meets or exceeds Parks Canada guidelines.



*The rare Nahanni Aster is associated with thermal springs*

### Key Strategy #2: Nahʔą Dehé, A Gift to be Shared

For many visitors the cultural connections are the highlight of their trip. Park expansion brings new opportunities for visitor experiences, which will be developed with partners. All current and future visitor experience opportunities will aim to protect the wilderness qualities of the park and have no detrimental impacts on ecological integrity or cultural resources. In addition, backcountry visitors require comprehensive and reliable information to plan a safe, enjoyable, low-impact trip.

- Provide authentic learning opportunities to create meaningful connections with Nahʔą Dehé.
  - Guidance provided by NDCT will ensure that 100% of visitor programs and products incorporate First Nations and Métis cultural heritage messages.
- Extend the reach of visitor experience opportunities and outreach education, touching the hearts and minds of more Canadians.
  - Create a new suite of visitor opportunities by 2012.
  - All new visitor experience opportunities are assessed for public safety and minimize potential impacts to ecological integrity and cultural resources.
  - NNPR will increase visitation by 6% to 860 visitors by 2012.
  - Visitor demographic information, motivations, interests and needs are understood and used to enhance the visitor offer.
- Take a strategic leadership and partnering approach to delivering visitor experience and external relations.
  - 100% of partners will indicate that they support the protection and presentation of NNPR and will have opportunities to influence and contribute to park activities.



*An interpreter at Náįłıcho (Virginia Falls)*

### Key Strategy #3: Waters for Life

Water quality will continue to be important for park management, given that the primary recreational experience is travelling the South Nahanni River and industrial development exists in close proximity to the park.

- The waters of Nahʔą Dehé are high quality and unimpaired by activities outside park boundaries.

- Water quality meets or exceeds federal and local site-specific guidelines.
- Upstream industrial activity has no detectable effect on park waters.
- The park's Ecological Integrity Monitoring Program is fully implemented, including all water-related indicators, by 2014.
- The condition of all water-related indicators reported in 2009 *State of the Park Report* have been maintained or improved by 2014.
- Local communities understand and are involved in water quality issues and management and are aware of water quality monitoring results.
- The South Nahanni River continues to be the primary multi-day recreational experience for park visitors.
  - The river corridor remains an exceptional backcountry experience for visitors.
  - Human waste management in the park is improved to reduce the risk of water contamination, as well as the environmental footprint and cost of waste removal.



*False Canyon, along the South Nahanni River*

## Area Management Approaches

While key strategies focus on management approaches that affect the park as a whole, there are certain places within the park that merit a special focused approach. In NNPR, three areas have been identified for area management approaches (AMAs).

### **Key future directions for Gahnjthah (Rabbitkettle Area):**

The management approach for this area focuses primarily on personal interpretation, visitor safety and an assessment of carrying capacity for the area. The park plans to enhance the interpretation experience, recognizing the interpretive potential, and natural and cultural resource management needs in the area.

- The on-site interpretation and public outreach education programs about the natural history and cultural significance of Gahnjthah inspire Canadians and visitors to learn more about NNPR and the local Dene culture.
  - Ensure as many people as possible learn about the natural and cultural significance of the area.
- Access to the north mound is monitored to ensure there are no unacceptable levels of change in the structure of the tufa mound.
  - Improve the current tufa monitoring program to create a more scientifically defensible program.
- Ensure the continuation of a low-impact, overnight visitor experience.

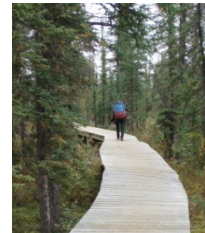


*Tufa mounds at Gahnjthah*

- Improve understanding of visitor capacity in regards to ecological impacts, public safety and the visitor experience by 2014, resulting in the development of a site plan for Gahnįthah by 2015.

**Key future directions for Nájįcho (Virginia Falls):**

Day visitors and river users intersect at Nájįcho (Virginia Falls). It is one of two designated floatplane landing sites in the original park. As a result, coordinating and meeting expectations of river users, day use visitors and fly-in campers can be quite complex. The majority of interpretation programming for the park takes place at Nájįcho. Designed to protect the fragile environment this infrastructure requires significant on-going maintenance due to damage from frost heave and general wear and tear. There are several kilometres of boardwalk for the campground and associated trails



*Nájįcho boardwalk*

- The interpretive programs at Nájįcho provide visitors with a connection to Nah?ą Dehé and an understanding of the interconnectedness of traditional users and the ecosystem.
  - The importance and history of traditional use is communicated to visitors by staff and community cultural demonstrators who share their personal histories.
  - Through interpretation programming and outreach education, develop realistic expectations about the visitor experience at Nájįcho.
- Develop a comprehensive infrastructure assessment and maintenance plan.

**Key future directions for the Expansion Area:**

The management approach for the Expansion Area 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.



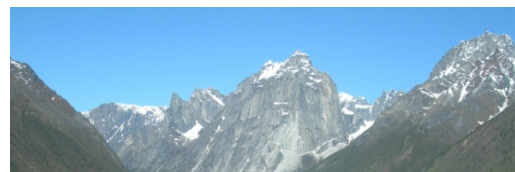
*The Ram Plateau in the expansion area*

- Build greater understanding of the expansion area, so as to include detailed management direction in the 2015 management plan. Base any decisions in the interim on the precautionary principle and through adaptive management.
  - Baseline information is gathered and assessed over the next five years.
  - Park guidance documents are updated to include the expansion area.
  - A thorough pre-trip information program per activity/user group is developed before a new visitor experience is promoted.
  - All backcountry users will understand the extent of services provided by NNPR and have an accessible system for registration, de-registration and backcountry fee payment.
  - Assess the need for infrastructure to support visitor experience, public safety and other park management needs by 2014.
- All impacted sites in the expansion area are returned to a natural state.

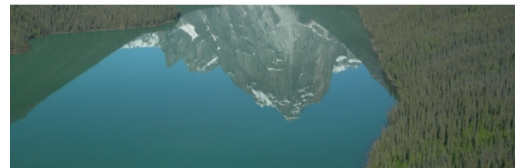
- Clean-up of identified sites is complete by September 2014.
- All fuel caches which are used for operations by Parks Canada or business licence holders in the park have secondary containment by 2011.
- Expand recognition of Canadian Heritage River and World Heritage Site to include the expansion area, and that of the proposed park in the upper watershed.
  - If a national park in upper watershed of Nahʔa Dehé is established, work with the cooperative management boards and appropriate organizations to expand recognition of both programs to the entire Nahʔa Dehé watershed.

## Discussion on the Nahanni Forum

In recognition of the importance of Nahanni to people across Canada, we launched [www.nahanniplan.ca](http://www.nahanniplan.ca). This on-line forum is one of Parks Canada's first ventures into the realm of on-line consultation. As of January 1, 2010 over 800 unique people have visited the Nahanni Forum. Many have read background material, some have posted comments and others have participated by voting or agreeing/disagreeing with comments. Great discussion has been generated and we thank everyone who has participated. Feedback received was very helpful in creating the first draft of the management plan.



**It's not too late to join the forum and have your say! Visit [www.nahanniplan.ca](http://www.nahanniplan.ca)**



Key components of the draft plan have been posted on the forum, along with new discussion topics. Even though consultations on the management plan will wrap-up at the end of January, we will keep our on-line forum active beyond this date, to help us get a head start on actions proposed in the plan.

## We Want to Hear From You!

### *Have the key strategies and area management approaches captured the park priorities?*

The planning team has developed a draft for the key strategies and area management approaches, each of which contains objectives, targets and actions. Highlights for each are listed in this newsletter and the full drafts are available at [www.nahanniplan.ca](http://www.nahanniplan.ca).

- Do the objectives reflect the key challenges and opportunities facing the park?
- Will they lead to achieving the park vision?
- Are the targets and actions feasible?
- Do you have feedback or suggestions for any of the objectives, targets, and actions for any of the key strategies or area management approaches?

### *Are there locations in the expansion area that merit special consideration for zoning?*

The draft management plan proposes that zoning will be developed for the expansion area during the next 5-10 years as a better understanding of the region is developed through research. It is anticipated that much of the expansion area will be designated wilderness (Zone 2), as with most of the original park, with some areas to be designated as natural environment (Zone 3) to allow for enhanced visitor access. Special preservation areas (Zone 1) may also be applied in areas that contain unique, threatened or endangered natural or cultural features and require strictly controlled access.

- Are there areas in the expansion area that should be considered for Zone 1 or Zone 3 designation?
- Do you have general comments regarding what should be considered in developing the zoning plan for the expansion area?

**Zone 1:** Areas which contain unique or threatened natural or cultural features. Public access is strictly controlled.

**Zone 2:** Conserved in a wilderness state, visitors can experience the park's ecosystems. Minimal services and limited air access.

**Zone 3:** Visitors may experience the park through outdoor recreation activities requiring minimal services and rustic facilities.

### *What infrastructure is appropriate at the designated camping areas?*

The draft management plan proposes designating four additional camping areas: The Gate, Lafferty Creek, Glacier Lake and Fairy Meadows. To ensure that the camping areas are compatible with the park's wilderness qualities, they must be primitive in nature. Potential infrastructure is limited to tent pads or cleared tent sites, food caches, fire rings, and outdoor privies.

- Do you have suggestions for appropriate infrastructure at each of the four proposed areas that would provide a quality camping experience, while minimizing environmental impacts?
- What infrastructure is particularly important at one or more of the camping areas?

### *What are best practices for rock climbing in the Cirque of the Unclimbables and other climbing locations in the park?*

The Cirque of the Unclimbables has seen much use over the decades and is an internationally renowned climbing destination. The draft management plan proposes that the development of climbing best practices will be identified as an action.

- What suggestions do you have to ensure a memorable climbing experience with minimal environmental impact in Nahanni?

## **Contact Info**

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**Please send comments and suggestions by  
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