



Gatineau, Quebec
K1A 0M5

MAY 06 2005

Ms. Heidi Wiebe
Executive Director:
Deh Cho Land Use Planning Committee
P.O. Box 199
Fort Providence, NT
X0E 0L0

RE: Parks Canada Support for a Conservation Zone Designation for the South Nahanni River Watershed

Since 1987, management plans for Nahanni National Park Reserve of Canada have identified the need to change the park's boundary to enhance representation of the Mackenzie Mountains Natural Region of the National Park System and to improve ecological integrity of the national park reserve. A key objective in the most recent park management plan is to establish an ecologically based national park area, and/or establish alternative adjacent protected areas to protect ecological integrity. The plan further states that Parks Canada will work cooperatively with others to manage and protect the entire watershed.

To that end, Parks Canada is working to expand Nahanni National Park Reserve within the Greater Nahanni Ecosystem to achieve sustainable boundaries for the ecological integrity of Nahanni National Park Reserve of Canada, and to work cooperatively to achieve compatible land use within the Greater Nahanni Ecosystem (see attached map). Work on the park expansion feasibility study is scheduled to be complete in 2006. A key element in this work is that Parks Canada is cooperating with the Dehcho First Nations through a Memorandum of Understanding respecting the expansion of Nahanni National Park Reserve.

The Memorandum of Understanding, signed by the Grand Chief of the Dehcho First Nations and the former Minister of Canadian Heritage responsible for Parks Canada, makes it clear that Parks Canada and Dehcho First Nations will identify potential lands for addition to Nahanni National Park Reserve within the land withdrawn under the Dehcho Process and within the Greater Nahanni Ecosystem.

For greater clarity, the Greater Nahanni Ecosystem is an area that encompasses the watershed of the South Nahanni River and the area known as the North Karst some of which drains to the South Nahanni River through subterranean channels and aquifers. The draft land use planning information map (Map #1) distributed by the Deh Cho Land Use Planning Committee in March 2005 shows two land use zones in the Greater Nahanni Ecosystem: a conservation zone (#6) and a special management zone (#18) that is in several parts. Parks Canada would support the expansion of conservation zone #6 to include the entire Greater Nahanni Ecosystem.

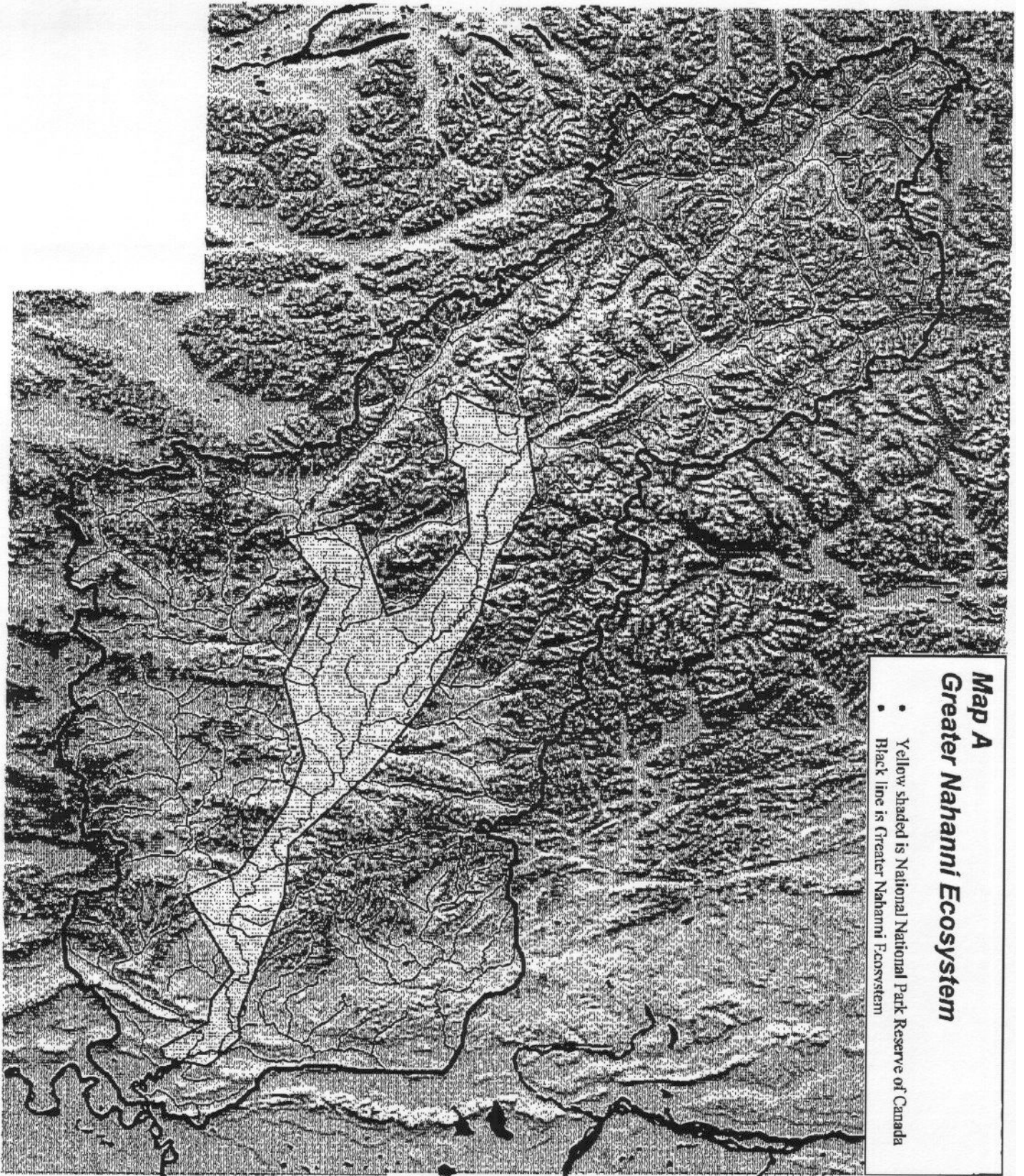


In the period before expanded boundaries are determined a conservation zone designation for the Greater Nahanni Ecosystem would be of assistance if it provides interim protection to ensure that conservation values are not lost and that certain boundary options, yet to be determined, are not foreclosed before decisions are made. In addition, a conservation zone designation would ensure that land use within the Greater Nahanni Ecosystem is managed so that the existing national park is not impaired. It is our contention, however, that the land use plan must recognize that the existing third party rights within the conservation zone be respected.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin McNamee". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'K' and 'M'.

Kevin McNamee
Director
Park Establishment Branch
National Parks Directorate



Map A
Greater Nahanni Ecosystem

- Yellow shaded is National Natural Park Reserve of Canada
- Black line is Greater Nahanni Ecosystem