

Alistair MacDonald

From: Justina Ray [jray@wcs.org]
Sent: October 14, 2008 8:18 AM
To: Alistair MacDonald
Subject: WCS Canada comment re EA for Prairie Creek mine proposal

October 14, 2008

Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board
200 Scotia Centre
Box 938, 5102-50th Ave
Yellowknife, NT X1A 2N7
Attn: Alistair MacDonald, Environmental Assessment Officer

Dear Mr. MacDonald:

Nahanni National Park Reserve in the Northwest Territories was established in 1972 and declared a World Heritage Site in 1978. Such designations attest to the significant values that this area provides to Canadians and to the world. Under these designations, Canada has legal and international obligations to protect the ecological integrity of the Park. In addition, the Dehcho First Nations identified their portion of the South Nahanni River watershed and adjacent karstlands as a Conservation Zone in the draft Dehcho Land Use Plan, which further signifies the high cultural and ecological importance of the area.

Canadian Zinc Corporation has applied for permits to conduct mining operations at the Prairie Creek mine about 13 km from the present boundary of Nahanni National Park Reserve (EA0809-002). At present, access would be provided by a winter road that extends all the way to the Liard Highway. Earlier this year, Parks Canada completed a public process regarding Park expansion and recommended new boundaries that would surround the Prairie Creek mining site.

Wildlife Conservation Society Canada (WCS Canada) is a science-based conservation organization whose mission is to save wildlife and wildlands by conducting comprehensive field studies and then applying that scientific information to resolving key conservation problems. One of our senior scientists, Dr. John Weaver, has conducted 5 years of field research on wildlife throughout the South Nahanni River watershed and adjacent karstlands (including the Prairie Creek basin). We suggest that his 2006 report Big Animals and Small Parks: Implications of Wildlife Distribution and Movements for Expansion of Nahanni National Park Reserve (WCS Canada Conservation Report No. 1) be consulted for this environmental assessment.

WCS Canada is concerned about the potential for significant long-term impact from the proposed Prairie Creek mine (including the winter access road) on wildlife and wilderness values of Nahanni National Park Reserve and adjacent karstlands. We urge that the entire project (including access road) be subject to the most comprehensive and rigorous level of environmental assessment available that incorporates the latest scientific information.

Sincerely,

Justina C. Ray, Ph.D.,

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Wildlife Conservation Society Canada

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