



# **\*\*NEWS RELEASE\*\***

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## **NEW REPORT SAYS CANADA'S LEGENDARY NAHANNI PARK IS TOO SMALL FOR WILDLIFE**

**Park boundaries must be expanded to safeguard grizzlies, caribou and Dall's sheep**

**TORONTO (July 5)** – A new scientific report by the Wildlife Conservation Society, a 110-year-old science-based conservation organization, says that Northwest Territories' Nahanni National Park Reserve – one of Canada's most beloved and storied national parks – is too small to maintain its nearly pristine population of grizzly bears, caribou and Dall's sheep.

According to the report, which looked at more than four years of WCS field data, the park needs to expand from its current size of under 5,000 square kilometers, to include the entire South Nahanni River watershed and the adjacent Nahanni Karstlands, an area totaling more than 38,000 square kilometers – four times larger than Yellowstone National Park.

The report's author, Dr. John Weaver of the Wildlife Conservation Society, said that the park's current narrow boundaries are too small to contain grizzlies, caribou and Dall's sheep, all of which occupy much larger ranges than the park currently provides. He cautions that without expanding the boundaries, these species will decline due to development pressures looming outside of the park.

"Unfortunately, wildlife do not recognize park boundaries, and this is particularly true in the case of Nahanni National Park Reserve" said Weaver, who has studied North American wildlife for more than three decades. "If we don't protect the full range of Nahanni's populations of grizzlies, caribou, and Dall's sheep, then those species are in trouble."

Weaver's research showed that the Nahanni's woodland caribou, for example, frequently travel over long distances outside of the park, and need unbroken boreal wilderness to survive. Currently, key seasonal areas for caribou lie outside of the park.

Nahanni's grizzly bear population, according to the report, contains some of the highest genetic diversity of any other grizzly population in North America, revealing a nearly pristine population of these large carnivores. Weaver also discovered new populations of Dall's sheep during his field research that feed in a unique habitat – lush grasses outside of a concentration of karst caves found no where else on the continent. But again, the area lies outside of the current national park. (more)

“We welcome the release of this study by John Weaver who is internationally respected as a wildlife biologist,” says Daryl Sexsmith, executive director of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society’s (CPAWS) NWT chapter. CPAWS has been advocating for expansion of the Nahanni National Park Reserve to protect the entire South Nahanni watershed for the past five years, working closely with the local Dehcho First Nations.

Besides the unique concentration of karst caves, the region also contains the deepest river canyons anywhere in Canada, which resemble sections of the Grand Canyon. It also contains large hot-springs mounds that are similar to Mammoth Hot Springs in Yellowstone National Park. And Virginia Falls in the center of the Park Reserve are twice as high as Niagara Falls. The United Nations (UNESCO) recognized Nahanni National Park Reserve as the first World Heritage Site.

Yet, according to the report, major industrial developments across the Mackenzie River basin, including oil and gas development and mining, are imminent, so the need to address the problem of the Park’s inadequate boundaries is now.

“Canada has a unique opportunity to create one of the largest and most wild national parks in the world,” said Weaver.

WCS Canada was incorporated as a conservation organization in Canada in July 2004. Its mission is to save wildlife and wild lands by improving our understanding of and seeking solutions to critical problems that threaten key species and large wild ecosystems throughout Canada.

The Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) saves wildlife and wild lands. WCS does so through careful science, international conservation, education, and the management of the world's largest system of urban wildlife parks, led by the flagship Bronx Zoo. Together, these activities change individual attitudes toward nature and help people imagine wildlife and humans living in sustainable interaction on both a local and a global scale. WCS is committed to this work because we believe it essential to the integrity of life on Earth. To learn more about WCS, visit [www.wcs.org](http://www.wcs.org).

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