The study area for the proposed Thaidene Nënë national park reserve, with its dramatic transition from the boreal forest of the Taiga Shield to above tree-line in the southern Arctic tundra, is considered an outstanding example of the Northwestern Boreal Uplands Natural Region, one of the 39 terrestrial natural regions that constitute Canada’s world-class National Park System Plan.

A national park reserve provides opportunities for quality visitor experiences, such as recreational activities and the presentation of cultural heritage. Thaidene Nënë’s spectacular wilderness characteristics already attract many visitors and local residents each year. While remote, the area’s proximity to the City of Yellowknife allows for a degree of access that is less common in other northern national parks. The proposed Thaidene Nënë national park reserve will also be easily accessed through the gateway community of Łutsël K’ée, whether by water or by air.

The Government of Canada is committed to working with Canadians to conserve and restore Canada’s rich natural heritage for present and future generations. Launched in May 2014, Canada’s National Conservation Plan provides a vision to advance conservation efforts across the country in three priority areas including: conserving lands and waters, restoring ecosystems and connecting Canadians to nature. The proposed Thaidene Nënë national park reserve would fulfill all of these priorities.

Why does Parks Canada want to establish a national park reserve in Thaidene Nënë?

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How does devolution affect the establishment of a national park reserve?

As a result of the Northwest Territories Devolution Act of 2014, the Government of the Northwest Territories is now responsible for the administration and management of the lands known as Thaidene Nënë. The proposed boundary for the national park reserve meets a federal – territorial commitment to a “significantly smaller” national park reserve – it is 58 percent smaller than the 33,690 km² interim land withdrawal.

Why is this proposal called a national park reserve, rather than a national park?

A national park reserve designation under the Canada National Parks Act applies to an area subject to an Aboriginal claim, or claims that have been accepted for negotiation by the Government of Canada. Aboriginal people can continue hunting, fishing, trapping, gathering and spiritual activities, and may be involved in cooperative management of a national park reserve with Parks Canada. Once the land claims are settled and agreements are reached, that among other things, address cooperative management and harvesting, cultural and spiritual activities, the national park reserve designation is then brought under the Canada National Parks Act as a national park. Until then, a national park reserve is managed like a national park.
Who is involved in discussions about the proposed Thaidene Nëné national park reserve?

Parks Canada continues to collaborate with the Government of the Northwest Territories. Negotiations are on-going with Łutsël K’e Dene First Nation and Northwest Territory Métis Nation and consultations will be scheduled with other Aboriginal groups. The views and input of third parties, stakeholders, local residents and other interested parties are also an essential part of the park establishment process and opportunities for input will be provided.

What factors were considered in determining the proposed boundary for a national park reserve?

The proposed boundary for Thaidene Nëné national park reserve was informed by a number of technical studies, including: Preliminary Area of Interest for a National Park in the East Arm of Great Slave Lake; Migratory Tundra Caribou Seasonal and Annual Distribution; Mineral and Energy Resource Assessment of the proposed Thaidene Nëné National Park Reserve; and the State of Knowledge Report for Thaidene Nëné. These studies helped to identify key areas to ensure that the proposed boundary not only represents the Northwestern Boreal Uplands Natural Region, but also:

- has a configuration that will maintain ecological integrity;
- includes some of the most significant cultural and spiritual sites in the Thaidene Nëné area;
- includes areas that will provide iconic visitor experiences;
- will allow for tourism investments that benefit communities;
- excludes all areas of high mineral potential; and
- is a significant contribution to the National Conservation Plan.
Recreational fishing is allowed within national parks under the Canada National Parks Act. Traditional harvesting by Aboriginal peoples with a historical relationship to the region will continue. Recreational hunting and guided outfitted hunting would not be permitted.

Fees in national parks vary depending on the services, facilities and programs provided. For Thaidene Nëné national park reserve, there will be no entrance fee, but there would be charges for the use of park facilities and services.

Parks Canada will be undertaking consultation with Aboriginal groups and communities as well as third-party interests, stakeholders and the public during the summer and fall of 2015. During the winter of 2016, Parks Canada will report the results of the consultations to the Minister of the Environment and Minister Responsible for Parks Canada. Should the governments of the Northwest Territories and Canada agree to proceed, Parks Canada and the GNWT would then launch the negotiation of a national park reserve establishment agreement. Also during this time, Parks Canada would complete negotiations with the Łutsël K’e Dene First Nation and Northwest Territory Métis Nation.