



DEHCHO FIRST NATIONS

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Dehcho First Nations Accuse Canada of Bad Faith

The Dehcho First Nations are a tribal council representing nine Dene communities and two Metis communities in the south-west part of the NWT.

The Edehzhie (also known as Horn Plateau) is the jewel of the Dehcho. In the Dene language Edézhíe means “source waters”. It contains the source waters of three major drainage basins. The Edézhíe has traditionally been an area that could be relied upon during times of food scarcity in the Mackenzie Valley. We Dene continue to rely upon the Edézhíe for hunting, trapping and harvesting.

In 1998 we began working through the Protected Areas Strategy to achieve permanent protection for Edehzhie. The PAS is a joint program in which Canada, the government of the NWT, and First Nations work cooperatively to identify and protect ecologically important areas in the NWT. Since 2002 Edehzhie has been a Candidate Protected Area, protected from development through a series of interim land withdrawals. It had been understood that at least part of the Candidate Area would be permanently protected as a National Wildlife Area.

However, on November 1, 2010, Canada unilaterally terminated the protection of Edehzhie, in order to make the valuable minerals in the area available for prospecting and mining. We had no warning and we were not consulted. The federal government opened Edehzhie to exploration and mining after making a publicly funded mineral assessment of the area available to the mining industry.

Grand Chief Gargan said: “In our view, the federal government’s unilateral decision to open Edehzhie to mining represents a very large betrayal of trust, and it leaves the PAS in tatters. Instead of protecting land, Canada has cynically used the PAS to subsidize the mining industry.”

The Dehcho First Nations have filed an Application for Judicial Review in Federal Court seeking an order re-instating the protection of Edehzhie.

-Ends-

Further Info contact: Grand Chief Samuel Gargan - 867.695.2355
Or: DFN legal counsel, Chris Reid – 416-909-4531.

Additional Information:

The proposed Edézhíe National Wildlife area is awaiting final designation. The negotiations around boundaries concluded in 2009 and the formal request to protect over 14,250 square kilometers were submitted to government in June 2010. The interim withdrawal expired October 31, 2010 before the national wildlife area could be designated officially.

Edézhíe, also known as the Horn Plateau, is an undulating plateau rising over 400 m over the surrounding boreal plains and lowlands. West of Great Slave Lake, it is one of the natural jewels in the Mackenzie Valley of the Northwest Territories. An area of cultural and ecological significance for the Dehcho and Tłı̄ch'o peoples, this area figures prominently in Dene legends. Wildlife such as caribou and moose are abundant, it has rich wetlands and is a continental bird flyway.

The NWT Protected Areas Strategy (PAS) is a process where Aboriginal communities propose new protected areas of ecological and cultural significance, with the participation of conservation organizations and industry. It is supported and enabled by both the federal and territorial governments. Since 2006, over 31 million acres in the NWT have been slated for protection through either the PAS or Parks Canada processes.