



Proposed Changes to Fishing Regulations

NAHANNI NATIONAL PARK RESERVE OF CANADA

DESCRIPTION OF CHANGES

Dolly Varden (*Salvelinus malma*) will be removed from the list of game fish found in Nahanni National Park Reserve Fishing Regulations and replaced by Bull Trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*). Nahanni National Park Reserve is proposing a zero catch and possession limit for Bull Trout.

Barbless hooks are also being recommended as a regulation amendment.

REASONS FOR THE CHANGES

Recent research on members of the salmon family (which includes trout and char) has led to a change in taxonomy. In 1984, the resource description for Nahanni National Park Reserve listed Dolly Varden as one of only two salmon family species found within the park, the other species being Lake Trout (*S. namaycush*). At that time experts had begun to divide the Dolly Varden complex into two species: *S. malma* and *S. confluentus* (Bull Trout). A number of specimens caught in Prairie Creek in 1981 were thought to be Bull but the taxonomic splitting had not yet gained wide acceptance so the specimens were not differentiated. Today, Dolly Varden and Bull Trout are accepted, without question, as being unique species.



Bull Trout



Bull trout parr

In 2002, Neil Mochnacz, with the University of Manitoba, completed a study on Nahanni's trout. The Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO), the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) and the Nahanni Butte Renewable Resource Council supported the project. This study found Bull Trout, not Dolly Varden, in the waters of Nahanni National Park Reserve. In fact, the distributions for Bull Trout and Dolly Varden do not appear to overlap in the NWT, and the trout in Nahanni may represent genetically distinct populations; more research is required to confirm this.

Bull Trout are listed as a species that "May Be at Risk" in the Northwest Territories. Bull trout prefer cold, pristine streams at high elevations, and are very susceptible to degradation of their habitat. They are slow-growing and late maturing fish. In some locations, bull trout spawn only once every two or three years. These characteristics may put bull trout at risk from overfishing. Bull trout have declined in Alberta, and have disappeared from some parts of their range in the United States likely due to over-fishing, habitat destruction and exotic species introduction. 🍁

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