

INFORMATION SHEET: Cantung Mine

Nahanni National Park Reserve includes 91% of the South Nahanni River Watershed: as of 2009, it is over six times its original size!

Cantung Mine in Relation to the South Nahanni Watershed



Photo 1: The Flat River, which drains into the South Nahanni River (Heather Passmore).

Photo 2: The Cantung mine site and the Flat River.

Overview

The Cantung Mine is located just outside the expanded Nahanni National Park Reserve and World Heritage Site, and is accessed by road from the Yukon Territory. Mining is done underground and in a small open pit. The mine is currently owned by North American Tungsten Corporation Ltd., and has periodically closed since its opening in 1962; the last closure was in October 2009 due to low market prices for tungsten.

In 2011, the company obtained an extension for its water license until 2016. On-site exploration for additional reserves continues to date, but the company has a long history of struggling to meet critical requirements for its water license, especially concerning abandonment and reclamation planning. A Final Closure and Reclamation Plan remains in development. Concerns have stemmed from the proximity of Cantung's tailings ponds to the Flat River; changes to operations are attempting to decrease risk by using dry-sack tailings instead of tailings ponds.

Mine Facts

- Tungsten is used in manufacturing bullets, light bulb filaments, electronic circuitry, surgical instruments and lightweight metal alloys.
- The majority of the world's tungsten is supplied by China.
- North American Tungsten has received initial approval by the Yukon Environment and Socio-Economic Board for their feasibility study for a second, undeveloped mine site also close to Nahanni called Mactung.



CPAWS supported protection of the entire South Nahanni Watershed in an expanded national park and World Heritage Site for years, and is thrilled to have played an important role in the 2009 Park Reserve Expansion.

CPAWS-NWT continues to participate in regulatory processes for industrial developments within the watershed.

Please consider donating to the CPAWS-NWT to support our ongoing work to increase public awareness of the value of the NWT's wild places, and to help maintain the ecological integrity of Nahanni National Park Reserve.

For more information, visit www.cpawsnwt.org.

Site History

Date	Event
2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Company applies to increase wastewater discharge rates through its new, permanent wastewater treatment facility. The territorial Minister of Environment and Natural Resources approves the amendments. Company applies to amend their water license to build a new, dry-stack tailings storage facility.
2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Water License Amendment for permanent wastewater treatment facility on site approved. March 2013: Annual Water License Report is released for 2012 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - reports 6 recorded spills of oil, fuel, and mill slurry over the course of 2012 - most incidents were small and resulted from equipment and power failures
December 2011	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development extends Cantung's Water License until 2016.
May 2011	Five-year Land Use Plan is issued for mineral exploration around the Cantung Mine properties.
October 2010	Mine reopened.
October 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mine is closed due to low global market value of tungsten. The Yukon Environment and Socio-Economic Board approves North American Tungsten's feasibility study for Mactung Mine, located in the Yukon in the Selwyn Mountain Range (on the boundary of Nahanni).
July 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board renews the Company's water license for 5 years, with an incremental security deposit of \$1.2M and specific conditions for monitoring and managing the site and developing a comprehensive Abandonment and Restoration Plan. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada deems adequate consultation was conducted for the Rifle Range exploration project, and a Land Use Permit is issued.
December 2007	Company submits an incomplete Abandonment and Restoration Plan and water license renewal application.
Spring 2006	Company applies for a permit to carry out mineral exploration beneath a glacier on their property (Rifle Range project), north of the mine site. Many parties recommend the project be referred to environmental assessment. Consultation and infringement of Aboriginal treaty rights remain outstanding issues, and the review of this proposed project is on hold.
July 2006	After a series of issues in the spring of 2006, Indian and Northern Affairs Inspector issues a stop work order to the Company as "mine water is being diverted through a series of ditches, weirs, culverts and a lagoon to finally report directly to the Flat River through 2 discharge pipes." Company works to remedy situation (both short-term and through other geotechnical and engineering planning).
December 2005	Company is required to pay \$1.5 million towards their security deposit (total of \$5.4 million), however official confirmation by the federal government of the payment is not provided.
Fall 2005	Mine is reopened.
Early-mid 2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Company recovers from bankruptcy protection, begins consultations with the regulatory authorities and federal government, and initiates preparatory work to re-open mine. Company enters private negotiations with Indian and Northern Affairs representatives to complete a 'Reclamation Security Agreement' which outlines payments, scheduling and liability. No disclosure or consultation with the public or Aboriginal organizations.
December 2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Company enters into bankruptcy protection, owing roughly \$11 million to creditors. A new water license is issued after the Company's bankruptcy announcement, but no payments are made towards the security deposit and other conditions are not met. The Land and Water Board sets a required security deposit for new the water license at \$7.9 million divided into payments over 5 years.
2001 - 02	Mine re-opened and within first month of operation, 20,000 L of diesel fuel spilled.
1997	Mine purchased from Aur Resources by North American Tungsten Corporation Ltd. (NATCL)
1985-2001	Mine closed, placed on care and maintenance.
Early 1960s	Mineral exploration, mine opened.