

FOR RELEASE 08-302
November 28, 2008

NATIONAL MAGAZINE CELEBRATES NI'IINLII NJIK GRIZZLY BEARS

WHITEHORSE – *Canadian Geographic's* choice of the Ni'iinlii Njik (Fishing Branch) Ecological Reserve grizzly-bear-viewing experience as the cover feature in its annual 'Wildlife Stories of the Year' issue reflects well on the many individuals and organizations involved with this unique venture, Environment Minister Elaine Taylor announced today.

"I am delighted that the magazine chose to celebrate this very special place, and in doing so will raise awareness, appreciation and support for Yukon parks across Canada and around the world," Taylor said. "This story shows how Yukoners, by working together, can protect the environment, promote tourism, and provide economic opportunities."

The December issue of *Canadian Geographic* will hit newsstands at the end of the month. The cover features a Ni'iinlii Njik bear and inside are 12 pages of story and photographs by Canadian Stephen J. Krasemann. The award-winning magazine has a circulation of 210,000.

"The Fishing Branch Ecological Reserve is a unique national story," Editor-in-Chief Rick Boychuk said. "It's a very smart idea that's been executed with great care, and it reflects well on government to have worked so hard to ensure that the bears are protected."

The eco-tourism venture involves the Vuntut Gwitchin Limited Partnership and Yukon bear specialist Phil Timpany. It brings visitors to a site on the Fishing Branch River, south of Old Crow, to witness grizzly bears feasting on a late fall run of chum salmon before denning for the winter. Careful research and planning means small numbers of visitors can experience this awesome sight up close with minimal disturbance to the bears and other wildlife species in the area.

"Ni'iinlii Njik is a special place for Vuntut Gwitchin and Yukoners and recognition by *Canadian Geographic* magazine shows that it is equally a national and international treasure," Steve Mills, partnership president, said. "Our goal remains to educate people on the importance of this ecosystem and its cultural history without impacting on the bears. Our operation allows visitors, although small in numbers, to carry the message of Ni'iinlii Njik to a much wider audience."

"Ni'iinlii Njik is but one of the many protected areas and parks we have in Yukon to maintain the diversity of our wildlife, nurture our physical and spiritual health, and share our cultural and historical values," Taylor said. "I commend the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, Bear Cave Mountain Eco Adventures, and the many others involved in developing this wildlife viewing opportunity for making it possible for people to experience a rare and wonderful part of our environment."

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