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Environmental Assessment

General Management Plan Amendment #3 and

Development Concept Plans for

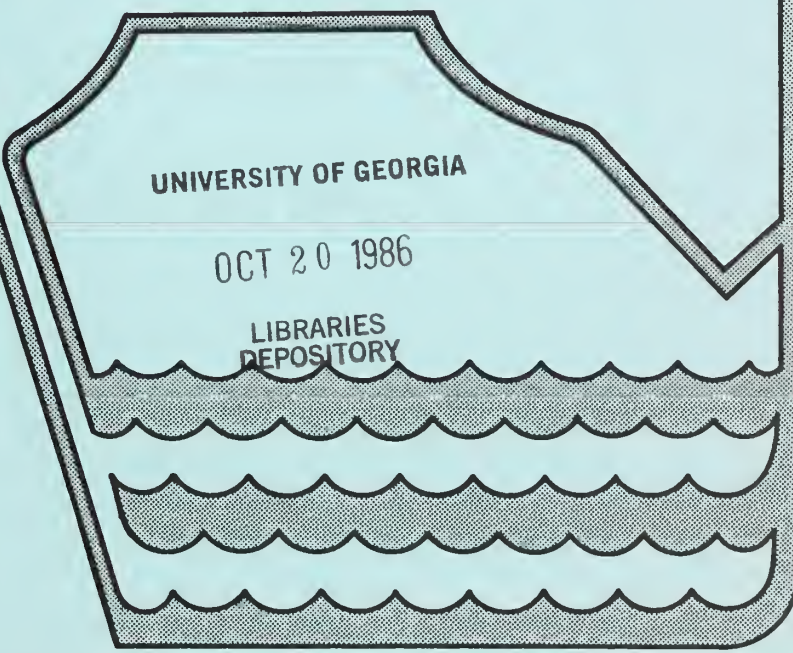
Bay of Chickens and Elk Creek Boneyard



**Curecanti
National
Recreation
Area**

**U.S. Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

July 1986



UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

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DRAFT
AMENDMENT NUMBER THREE
to the
GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN
including
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
and
DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT PLANS
for
BAY OF CHICKENS
and
ELK CREEK BONEYARD
CURECANTI NATIONAL RECREATION AREA
COLORADO

Prepared by
CURECANTI NATIONAL RECREATION AREA
and
ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGIONAL OFFICE

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
JULY 1986

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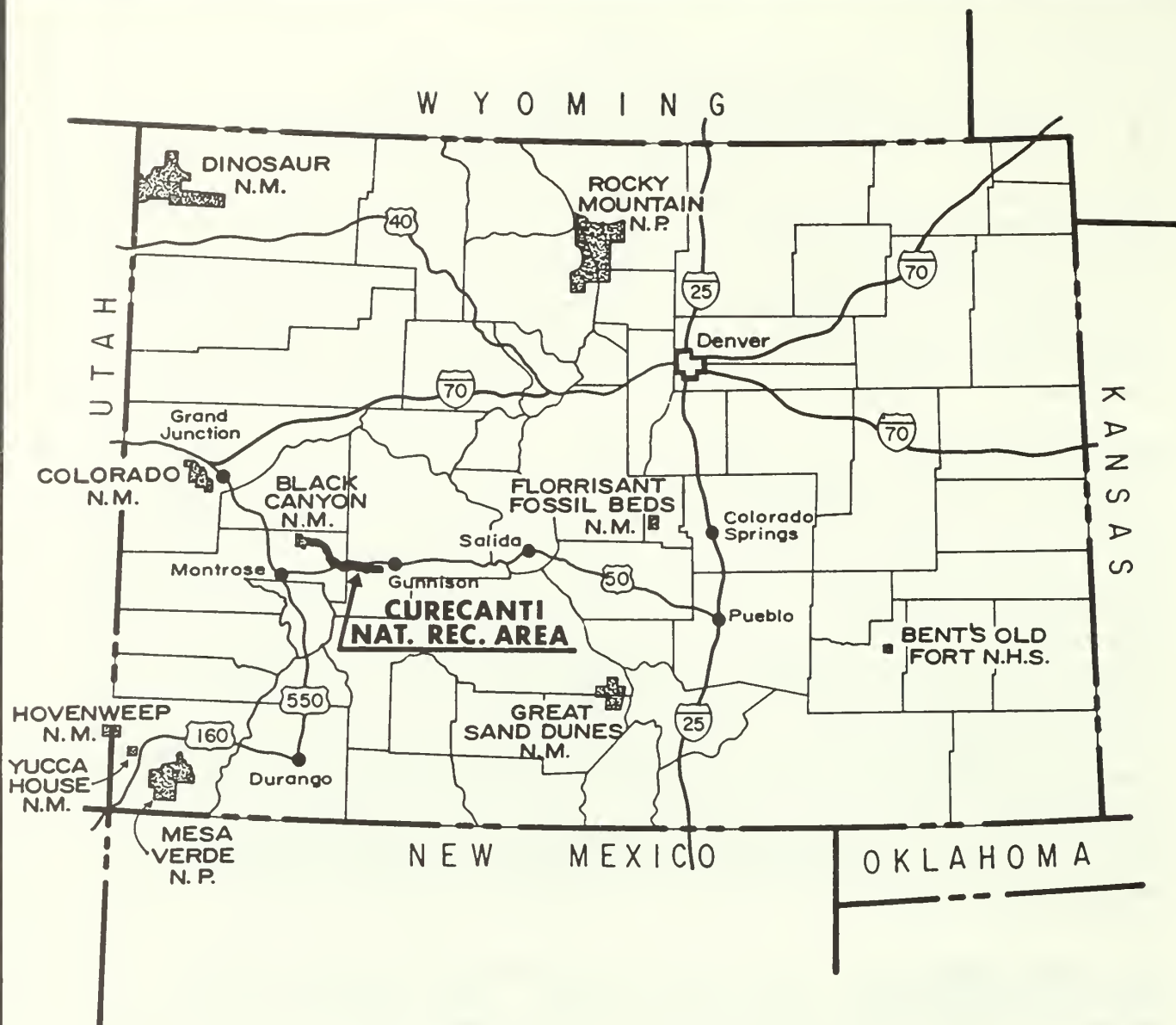
SUMMARY

Draft Amendment Number 3 to the Curecanti National Recreation Area General Management Plan Environmental Assessment and Development Concepts

This document assesses development alternatives and the associated environmental consequences for the Bay of Chickens site and documents proposed actions at the Boneyard (open storage area). Both sites are located in the Elk Creek area and were not fully considered in the 1980 General Management Plan for Curecanti. This effort reflects the needs generated by changes in visitor demand and uses, National Park Service management concerns, concessioner interests, and land use commitments.

Bay of Chickens. For several years, 10 acres of this site, located west of the Elk Creek complex, were used as a source of gravel by the Colorado Department of Highways. In the last few years, visitation to the site for water recreation increased in spite of its usage as a gravel quarry. In December 1984, because of increasing conflicts between uses, the Park Service cancelled the special use permit for the gravel operation. Several development alternatives are being considered for the site and are described in the document. The preferred alternative would provide drinking water, vault toilets, picnic facilities, limited concession facilities, structured parking and circulation, and some site rehabilitation. These facilities would be provided in two phases with the initial phase costing \$198,000, of which the concessioner would bear \$74,000. The total development cost for the site would be \$576,000. This alternative would enhance the health, safety, and enjoyment of visitors, protect currently undisturbed natural and cultural resources and provide for site rehabilitation.

Elk Creek Boneyard. This site is located on a hill on the southern edge of the Elk Creek complex. The 1980 GMP shows a water storage tank unobtrusively placed and an area used for open storage by both the concessioner and the National Park Service. Since that time, higher profile items have been stored and constructed on site which are clearly visible for a considerable distance; e.g., the concessioner's gasoline storage tank and a NPS storage building. The concessioner has suggested that additional buildings be constructed for use as covered boat storage. Three alternatives were considered as noted in the body of the document. The proposed action would minimize the visual impact of items located in the Boneyard by concealing the gasoline storage tank, eventually remove or relocate the NPS storage building to eliminate the permanently placed higher profile items, and provide for berming to minimize the visual impact of lower profile items. The initial cost would be \$22,000, of which the concessioner's portion would be \$9,000. This action is categorically excluded from provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 pursuant to the Department of Interior's Departmental Manual, Part 516, Chapter 6, Appendix 7.4c (11), (17), (18), and (19).

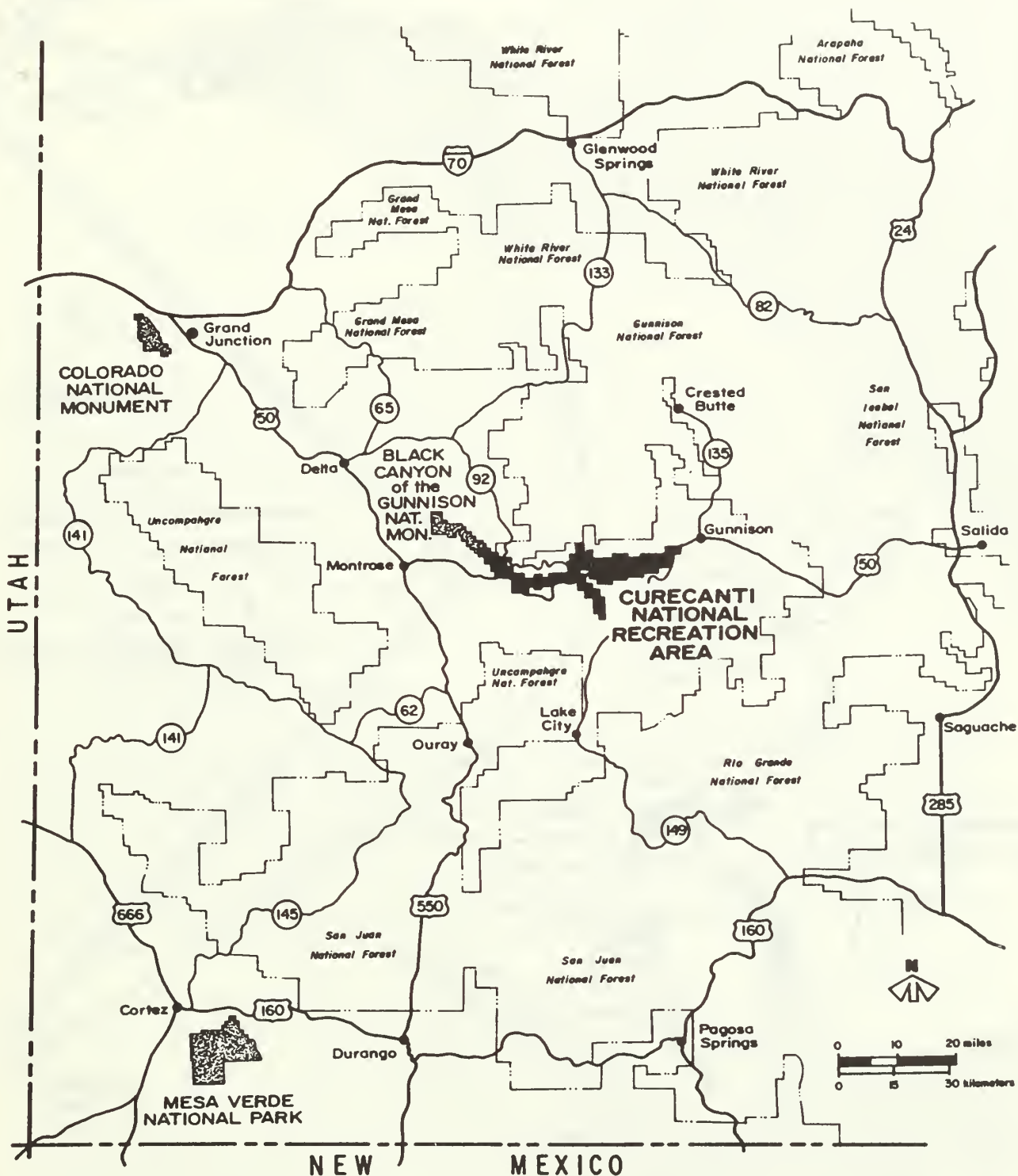


REGIONAL MAP

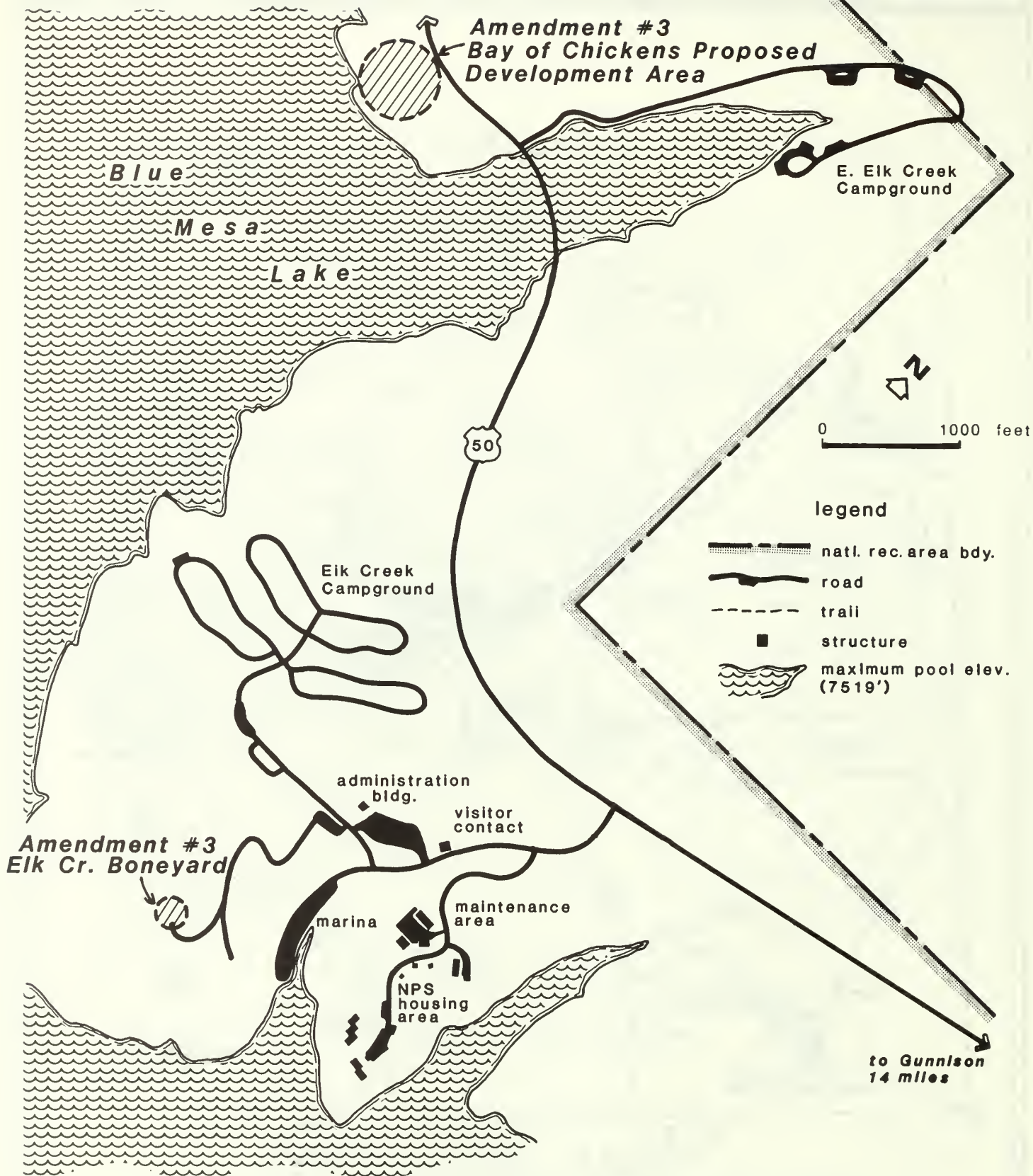
CURECANTI NATIONAL RECREATION AREA

GUNNISON AND MONTROSE COUNTIES, COLORADO

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR · NATIONAL PARK SERVICE



VICINITY MAP **CURECANTI NATIONAL RECREATION AREA** **GUNNISON AND MONTROSE COUNTIES, COLORADO** UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE



**Site Location Map
Elk Creek
Developed Area**

**Amendment #3
General Management Plan/Development Concept Plans
Bay of Chickens - Elk Creek Boneyard
Curecanti National Recreation Area**

Draft Amendment Number 3 to the
Curecanti National Recreation Area General Management Plan

Environmental Assessment
and
Development Concepts
for
Bay of Chickens and Elk Creek Boneyard

This document addresses actions proposed for two sites in the Elk Creek area of Curecanti National Recreation Area. It is primarily an environmental assessment describing the development alternatives and evaluation of impacts for the Bay of Chickens site. It also provides an avenue for the documentation of proposed actions in the boneyard (open storage area) at Elk Creek. These sites were not fully considered during the preparation of the current general management plan, approved in July 1980. Since that time, variation in visitor demand and uses, National Park Service management needs, concessioner interest, and land use commitments have indicated a need for considering the following changes in services and facilities.

I. BAY OF CHICKENS

A. Purpose and Need

The Bay of Chickens site is located immediately west of the Elk Creek complex, across the East Elk Creek inlet and adjacent to the south side of U.S. Highway 50. At the time the current general management plan was being developed, this site was under permit to the Colorado Department of Highways for the quarrying, crushing, and stockpiling of gravel. This permit was cancelled by the Superintendent of Curecanti National Recreation Area in December 1984 (1 year early) because of conflicts related to the increase in recreational use of the site.

Although the Bay of Chickens site was not recognized as a visitor use area in the 1980 General Management Plan, visitation to the site has risen to over 28,000 visitors annually. Visitors on this site are predominately engaged in non-motorized water-related recreational activities. The reliable westerly winds and the shelter provided by a jetty, constructed early in the history of the recreation area to protect the Bay and U.S. Highway 50, combine to make it extremely popular for sailing and sailboarding by visitors with varying levels of experience. The protected bay has been used by the Concessioner to moor sailboats in the past. There is a need to provide at least the basic day-use facilities (such as toilets and drinking water) on this site to be consistent with those facilities found in other day-use areas at Curecanti and provide for the health, safety,

and enjoyment of visitors in this area. Additionally, the Concessioner has expressed an interest in providing a limited number of services which would enhance the visitor experience on site.

B. Description of the Area

A description of general environmental conditions and visitor use patterns at Curecanti National Recreation Area can be found in the area's 1980 General Management Plan, pages 6 through 26 and page 38. Additional site specific information is provided below.

Approximately 10 of the 16 acres comprising this site have been severely disturbed by the former operation of the gravel quarry. The disturbed portion has been graded to a gently sloping graveled area with few landforms and little vegetation. A jetty has been constructed to shelter U.S. Highway 50 from wave action as it crosses the bay where East Elk Creek enters Blue Mesa Reservoir.

The soils in the undisturbed areas are composed of a sandy alluvium with scattered gradation of rock. The vegetation found in these areas is made up largely of sage, rabbit brush, and bunch grasses. Because of the disturbed nature of much of the site, it is very poor wildlife habitat. Prairie dogs (Cynomys gunnisoni) have colonized the borders of the disturbed areas and are being managed to reduce the plague potential associated with prairie dogs in the Gunnison valley. The site was surveyed by National Park Service and Soil Conservation Service personnel during July of 1985. No rare or endangered flora or fauna species were found on this site.

East Elk Creek has been one of the sampling points for gathering baseline water quality data on Blue Mesa Reservoir since 1982. Additional sampling in the Bay of Chickens area was conducted during both 1984 and 1985. While the level of fecal coliform bacteria exceeded Colorado Health Department recommended levels for recreational waters during a two week period in August of 1984, no chemical or physical anomalies or major health hazards have been observed to date.

Archeological site number 5GN52 of the Curecanti National Archeological District makes up approximately 7 1/2 acres of the Bay of Chickens site. While no extensive archeological research has been conducted, the National Park Service had personnel of the Midwest Archeological Center survey the site in 1977. Lithic debitage and a mano were collected at that time but no other artifacts or indications of habitation were observed. The Colorado Department of Highways conducted several additional archeological tests in 1978. They concluded that the site exhibited no depth of occupation after conducting two subsurface

test excavations. About 70 percent of this archeological site has been severely disturbed or obliterated by the gravel operation. There are currently two stockpiles of gravel left on the site.

C. Alternatives -- Including the Preferred Alternative

A no-action alternative and several action alternatives were considered for the need expressed in Part A of this section. A preferred alternative (proposal) is identified based on an evaluation of public access, effect on the environment, enhancement of the visitor's recreational experience (including health and safety issues, and the economic feasibility of each alternative. The preferred alternative (proposal) is subject to modification as additional information is gathered during each stage of the planning process. The alternatives, their impacts, costs and mitigating measures are described below.

1. Site Closure Alternative

Closing this site would allow for full site rehabilitation as funding becomes available. However, eliminating access at this site would not eliminate established uses. For the past few years this site has been receiving increasing levels of use by visitors with sailboards in spite of other conflicting uses. The site has provided for recreational opportunity which is not being met elsewhere in the NRA. Site closure may create an unacceptable parking and safety situation along U.S. Highway 50 for those visitors who continue to utilize the Bay of Chickens site. Closure may also result in some decrease in visitor safety for those users who move to other locations within the NRA, as the activities once centralized to some extent, become increasingly difficult to monitor. Because of the safety considerations noted above, the "closure" of the Bay of Chickens site is an alternative which has been considered but rejected.

2. No Action Alternative

The "no action" alternative maintains current access and provides for some reduction of adverse impact on water quality and public health by providing portable public toilet facilities on a seasonal basis. (See foldout entitled Bay of Chickens Alternatives.) Unlimited vehicle access to the water would continue. The "no action" alternative would not be consistent with the standard of development at other day-use areas at Curecanti. Presently undisturbed natural and archeological resources in the area would remain subject to possible impact by unrestrained vehicular traffic. Continued indiscriminate use of the area would deter natural plant succession from occurring. No reclamation of the site would

occur under this alternative. The safety of the public using the area would be monitored only by random ranger patrol. However, the current tendency of non-motorized, water related activities to be somewhat concentrated in this area would be expected to continue allowing for closer monitoring of the activity by existing ranger patrols. Access from the site on to the highway would remain graveled. The portable toilets located on site would be visible from both U.S. Highway 50 and Blue Mesa Lake. The experimental concession facilities which have been temporarily located on the site would be removed.

3. Minimum Development Alternative

This alternative reduces the adverse impact on water quality and public health by providing a permanent vault toilet. (See foldout entitled Bay of Chickens Alternatives.) Water quality may also be slightly increased in one area where vehicle access to the water's edge would be restricted. The "minimum development" alternative, while also providing for area signing and an entrance gate, would not be consistent with the standard of development at other day-use areas at Curecanti. As with the "no action" alternative, presently undisturbed natural and archeological resources in the area would remain subject to possible impact by unrestrained vehicular traffic. An "Assessment of Effect" and subsurface testing would be accomplished on the site where the vault toilet would be located. In the event that subsurface cultural resources were discovered, excavation and site salvage would be necessary.

Continued indiscriminate use of the area would deter natural plant succession from occurring. Little reclamation of the site would occur as part of this alternative. The safety of the public using the area would continue to be monitored only by random ranger patrol, based on the level of visitor use. Access from the site on to the highway would remain graveled. The vault toilets located on the site would be visible from both U.S. Highway 50 and Blue Mesa Lake. The concession facilities temporarily located on this site as an experiment would be removed.

4. Moderate Development Alternative (Preferred Alternative)

This alternative would provide for the phased construction of permanent day-use facilities and services consistent with other developments within Curecanti NRA in order to enhance the experience of visitors engaging largely in non-motorized, water-based recreation activities. The alternative would provide for a well and hand pump for drinking water, two four-stall vault toilets with changing areas, two picnic shelters, picnic tables, limited concession facilities, structured parking which would accommodate over 200 vehicles,

landscaping, appropriate signing of the area, and a gate to limit access to the area as needed. (See foldout entitled Bay of Chickens Proposal.) Concession facilities would consist of a 1200 square foot building designed (subject to NPS approval) to match other concession and park structures in the Elk Creek area. Services to be provided would include recreational equipment rentals, accessory sales, sailing instruction, sailboard storage and prepackaged food and non-alcoholic beverage sales. The construction of this facility and provision of 110-volt power would be accomplished only through funding by the Concessioner. Neither water nor sewer would be provided in the concession facility. Only prepackaged foods and beverages which do not require those utilities would be authorized. Installation of a small concrete boat ramp and paving of the parking area would be lower priority items provided as a later phase should visitor use and park priorities indicate the need.

All proposed facilities would be located within the area which was previously disturbed and would be visible from both U.S. Highway 50 and Blue Mesa Reservoir. Adverse impacts to the natural and archeological resources in undisturbed areas of the site would be reduced by structuring vehicle access and traffic patterns, providing permanent toilet facilities, and conducting minor site rehabilitation. Scarifying and adding topsoil to some previously disturbed areas would also be accomplished. The structuring of the traffic flow would allow pioneer species of vegetation to become established in the currently disturbed areas. Some additional seeding with native grasses would also take place. For the short term these measures would increase the amount of suitable prairie dog habitat which could result in increased populations. Over the long term, however, once the natural revegetation is established, the prairie dog colony on this location, along with the associated plague potential, would probably return to near current levels since prairie dogs prefer disturbed areas.

An "Assessment of Effect" and archeological site survey would be completed for the entire Bay of Chickens site. In the event that subsurface cultural resources were discovered, the measures necessary to mitigate impacts on the archeological resources, such as excavation and site salvage, would be identified. Since the area has previously been disturbed below the soil horizon and any suspected living surface, few mitigative measures are expected in the areas where facilities are to be located.

Additional vegetation and the minor structuring of drainage patterns may reduce runoff and could result in improved shoreline water quality during heavy rains. Availability of toilet facilities and restricted vehicular access to the waters edge would minimize adverse impacts on water quality. Lake elevations vary with the precipitation the area receives and the

water demands and management practices of the Bureau of Reclamation. While the average lake level was 54 feet below high pool during June through September of 1981, for that same four month period during which the area receives most of the visitation, the average lake level for the other four of the past five years was at seven feet below high pool. The proposed design would allow for complete utilization of all facilities at 20 feet below high pool. Below that level, all facilities except for the boat trailer access would be usable, but access to the water would require an additional amount of walking and the beach surface becomes somewhat less desirable.

The provision of the proposed facilities and services would result in increased quantity, quality and diversity of recreational experience at Curecanti by providing a recreational opportunity for specific non-motorized uses. Paving the entryway from the highway would improve public access and increase visitor safety. Visitor safety would also be enhanced by the presence of the concessioner who would be in communication with park rangers and could provide initial visitor assistance. Public use of this site could be expected to continue to increase, perhaps at a faster rate than at present. Monitoring would be done as the area is developed and used. Should conflicts arise, increased structuring and management of the recreational use, such as regulative buoy placement, would be considered. The preliminary review of experimental concession operations conducted during the summer of 1985 (sailboat and sailboard rentals, sales and instruction) indicates that concession activities would be marginally profitable, as the concessioner is aware.

This action would result in no irreversible or irretrievable commitments of resources. Additional site planning, including a survey of the site producing a topographic map with two foot contour intervals would be necessary prior to extensive grading or the paving of the parking area.

5. Extensive Development Alternative

An "extensive development" alternative including water and sewer systems, a campground, public showers and a food service facility was considered. All these facilities are available at the Elk Creek complex one mile east. The cost of water and sewer systems would increase the initial cost of the project by over \$125,000 and could require the use of land areas which are currently undisturbed, resulting in additional ecological and archeological impacts. Because of the duplication of existing facilities and the lack of economic feasibility, this alternative was considered but rejected.

COMPARISON OF IMPACTS -- BAY OF CHICKENS

No Action	Minimum Development	Moderate Development (Proposal)
<u>1. Water Resources</u>		
Fecal Contamination of Water Reduced During High Use Periods	Fecal Contamination of Water Minimized All Year	Same as the Minimum Development Alternative
Unlimited Vehicular Access to Water	Limited Vehicular Access to Water in One Area	Restricted Vehicular Access to Water
<u>2. Vegetative Resources</u>		
Allows Indiscriminate Vehicle Access to the Area Detering Natural Plant Succession and Possibly Impacting Some Vegetation on the Edge of the Area Currently Traveled	Same as the No Action Alternative	Structured Vehicle Access and Circulation Would Result in Reduced Adverse Impacts on Natural Resources and Allow Natural Plant Succession to Occur
Provides for No Site Rehabilitation	Same as the No Action Alternative	Provides for Minor Site Rehabilitation Including Seeding and Adding Topsoil to Some Areas Previously Disturbed
<u>3. Wildlife Resources</u>		
Chance of Direct Public Contact with Plague Carrying Prairie Dogs	Same as the No Action Alternative	Increased Suitable Prairie Dog Habitat, Possible Population Increase for Short Term. Public Risk Same as the No Action Alternative for Long Term

COMPARISON OF IMPACTS -- BAY OF CHICKENS (Cont'd)

No Action	Minimum Development	Moderate Development (Proposal)
<u>4. Archeological Resources</u>		
Allows Indiscriminate Vehicle Access to the Area. Adverse Impact on Remaining Cultural Resources May Continue	Archeological Site Clearance May Require Mitigation / Salvage for a Small Area but Adverse Impact on Remaining Cultural Resources May Continue	Archeological Site Clearance May Require Mitigation / Site Salvage. Impacts on Remaining Cultural Resources Would be Reduced
<u>5. Visitor Use</u>		
Unmanaged, Random Recreational Use	Minor Structuring of Recreational Use (Sunbathing Area)	Increased Structuring and Management of Recreational Uses (Sunbathing Area, Water Access, Buoys)
Generally a Single Focus Experience for Self-Contained Visitors	Same as the No Action Alternative	Increased Opportunity for Quantity, Quality, and Diversity of Recreational Experience in the NRA
Safety of Visitors Monitored only by Random Ranger Patrol	Same as the No Action Alternative	Safety of Visitors Increased by Concession Presence in Communication with Ranger Patrols
Unimproved Public Access to Area from Highway	Same as the No Action Alternative	Improved and Safer Public Access from Highway
Expect Public Use to Continue to Increase at Current Rate	Same as the No Action Alternative	Expect Public Use to Increase at Faster Rate

COMPARISON OF IMPACTS -- BAY OF CHICKENS (Cont'd)

No Action	Minimum Development	Moderate Development (Proposal)
6. <u>Visual Resources</u>		
No Alteration of Existing Abandoned Gravel Pit	Little Alteration of Existing Abandoned Gravel Pit	Improve the Visual Quality through Minor Site Rehabilitation and Site Organization and Structuring
Portable Toilets Visible From Both the Highway and the Lake	Vault Toilet Visible From Both the Highway and the Lake	All Structures Visible From Both the Highway and the Lake

COST ESTIMATE

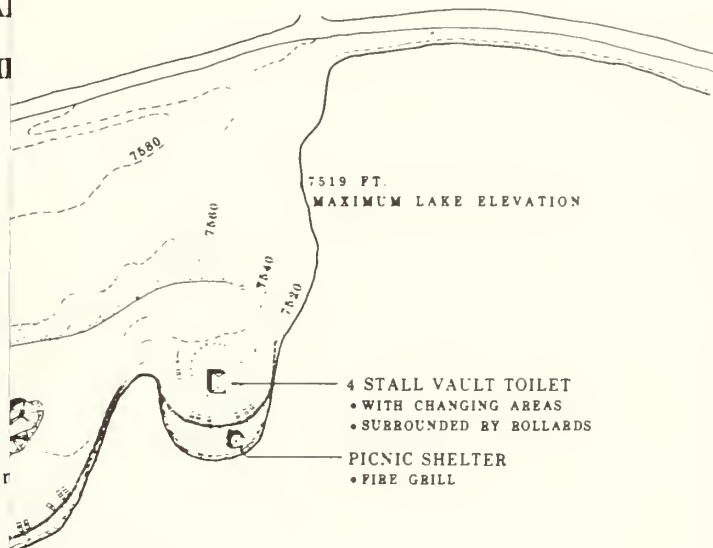
MODERATE DEVELOPMENT - PROPOSAL

	DEVELOPMENT COSTS
4 stall vault toilets, 2 with changing area	\$ 60,000
- Off season operation	0
Tables, 10	0
Garbage cans, 12	0
Signing	2,400
Interpretive Panel	1,500
Wheel Stops and Bollards	7,280
Land contouring ,above and below high water (includes road work ar	5,000
Rip Rap (150 ft.)	1,000
Site Rehabilitation (topsoil, site preparation, and seeding with	24,000
Drill well, 4" casing (80 ft.)	3,500
Drinking fountain, hand pump type	1,500
Paved access, asphalt	3,500
Picnic shelters, 2	24,000
Pedestrian access from picnic shelter to water	300
Standard metal gate	2,000
Buoys, 8	1,300
Fire grates, 2	800
Concession Building (1200 sq. ft.) w/ Boardwalk or Decking (200	35,000
Electrical power, underground	24,800
Prarie dog management and Water quality monitoring	0
Visitor Protection	0

Subtotal \$ 197,880

Construction Detailing (surveying, grading plan and design)	3,000
Concrete Boat Ramp	10,000
Asphalt Paving	361,000
Striping	4,000
TOTAL	\$ 575,880

USE SITE
MENT
AREA



NOTE:

PICNIC TABLES & TRASH CANS LOCATED IN SELECTED AREAS ALONG WATER FRONT

HANDICAP ACCESS PROVIDED TO RESTROOMS, PICNIC SHELTERS, & CONCESSION BUILDING



0' 50' 100' 200' 300'

AMENDMENT #3 TO THE GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN DEVELOPMENT CONCEPTS BAY OF CHICKENS PROPOSAL

CURECANTI NATIONAL RECREATION AREA

GUNNISON AND MONTROSE COUNTIES, COLORADO
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

- (a*) Operating & Maintenance Costs, May thro cyclic maintenance for NPS operations o
(b*) Annual rip-rap maintenance included in
(c*) Items would be accomplished only by Con
(d*) These items accomplished in a later pha on need and funding. (Not shown on pla

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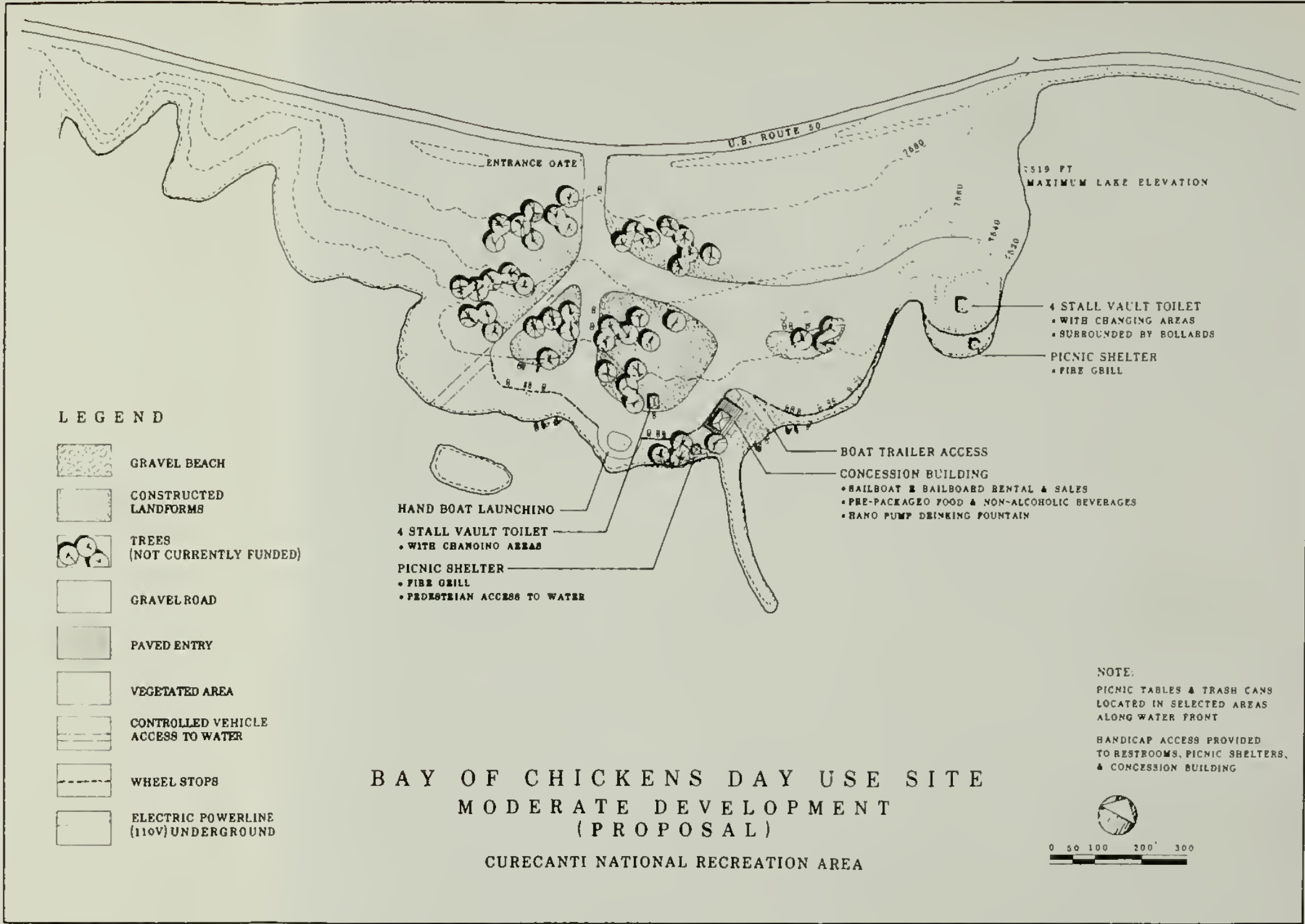
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COST ESTIMATE
MODERATE DEVELOPMENT - PROPOSAL

	DEVELOPMENT COSTS	O & M (a*) COSTS
4 stall vault toilets, 2 with changing area - Off season operation	\$ 60,000	\$ 1,800
Tables, 10	0	700
Garbage cans, 12	0	1,000
Signing	2,400	50
Interpretive Panel	1,500	25
Wheel Stops and Bollards	7,280	500
Land contouring ,above and below high water (includes road work and berming)	5,000	400
Rip Rap (150 ft.)	1,000	0 (b*)
Site Rehabilitation (topsoil, site preparation, and seeding with native grasses)	24,000	0
Drill well, 4" casing (80 ft.)	3,500	0
Drinking fountain, hand pump type	1,500	25
Paved access, asphalt	3,500	50
Picnic shelters, 2	24,000	120
Pedestrian access from picnic shelter to water	300	10
Standard metal gate	2,000	10
Buoys, 8	1,300	300
Fire grates, 2	800	70
Concession Building (1200 sq. ft.) w/ Boardwalk or Decking (2000 sq.ft.)	35,000 (c*)	0
Electrical power, underground	24,800 (c*)	0
Prarie dog management and Water quality monitoring	0	300
Visitor Protection	0	4,600
Subtotal	\$ 197,880	\$ 10,960

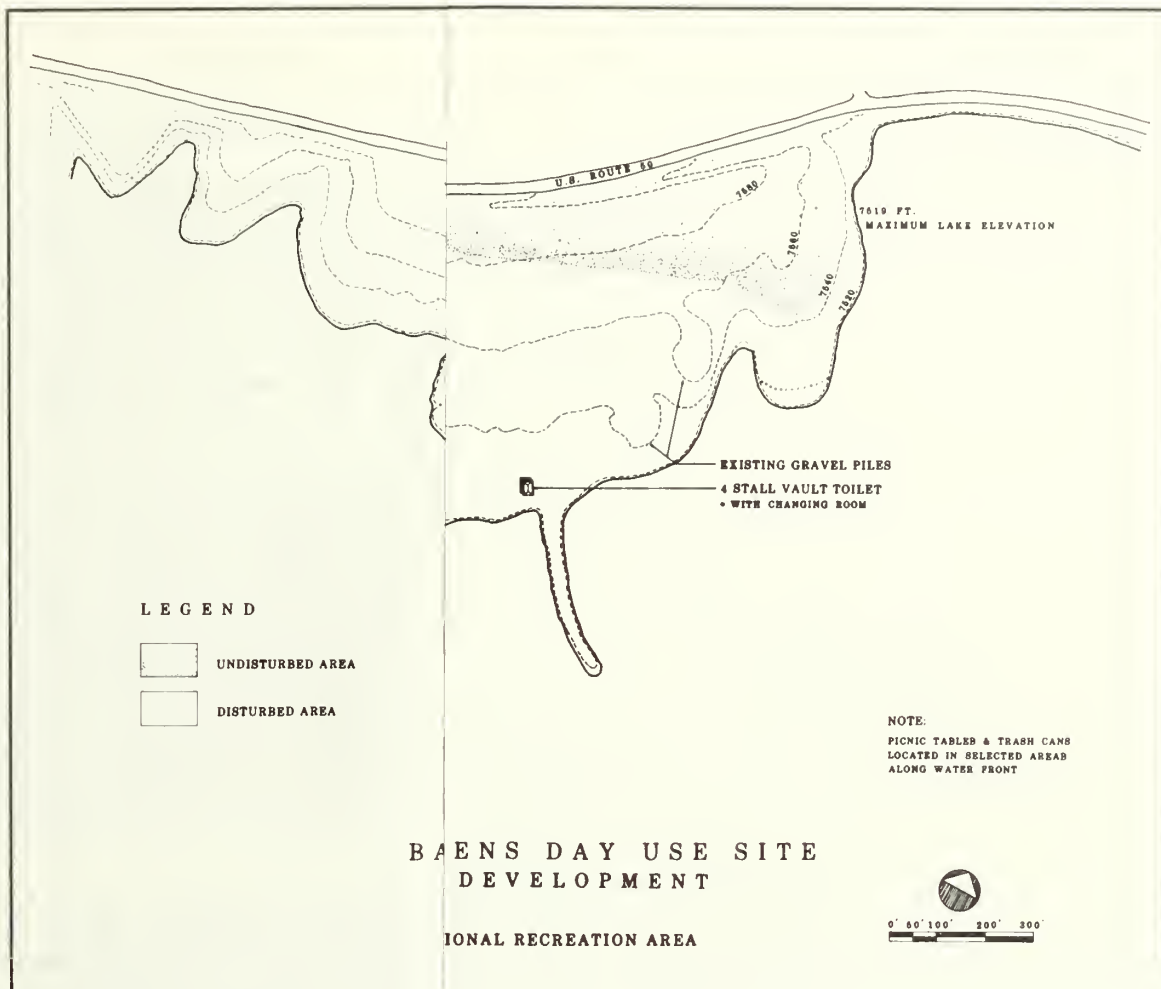
Construction Detailing (surveying, grading plan and design)	3,000 (d*)	0
Concrete Boat Ramp	10,000 (d*)	100
Asphalt Paving	361,000 (d*)	3,000
Striping	4,000 (d*)	1,000
TOTAL	\$ 575,880	\$ 15,060

(a*) Operating & Maintenance Costs, May through October,including cyclic maintenance for NPS operations only.
(b*) Annual rip-rap maintenance included in annual land contouring costs.
(c*) Items would be accomplished only by Concessioner funding.
(d*) These items accomplished in a later phase of development depending on need and funding. (Not shown on plan)



AMENDMENT #3 TO THE
GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN
DEVELOPMENT CONCEPTS
BAY OF CHICKENS
PROPOSAL

CURECANTI NATIONAL RECREATION AREA
GUNNISON AND MONTROSE COUNTIES, COLORADO
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE



COST ESTIMATE

NO ACTION

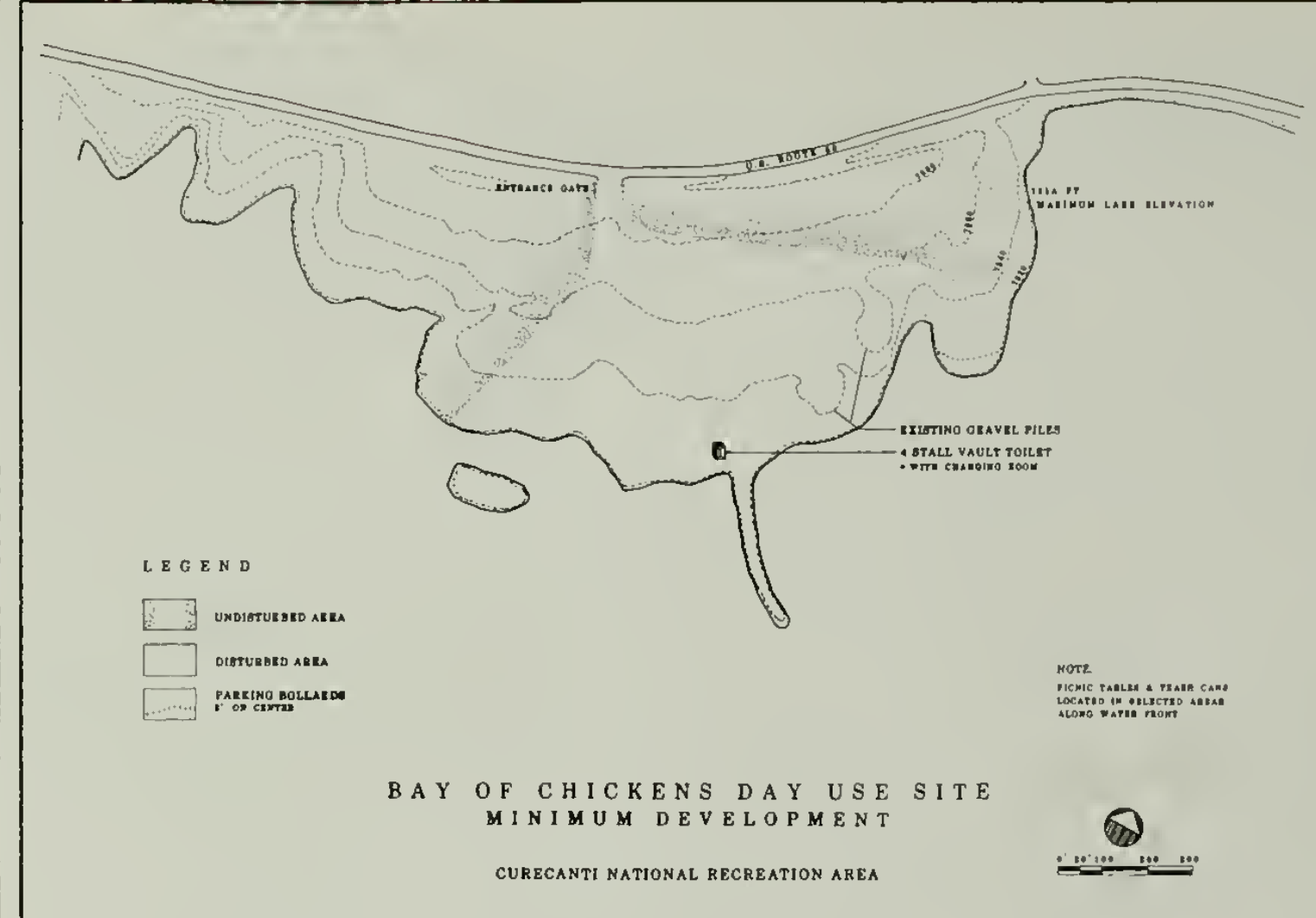
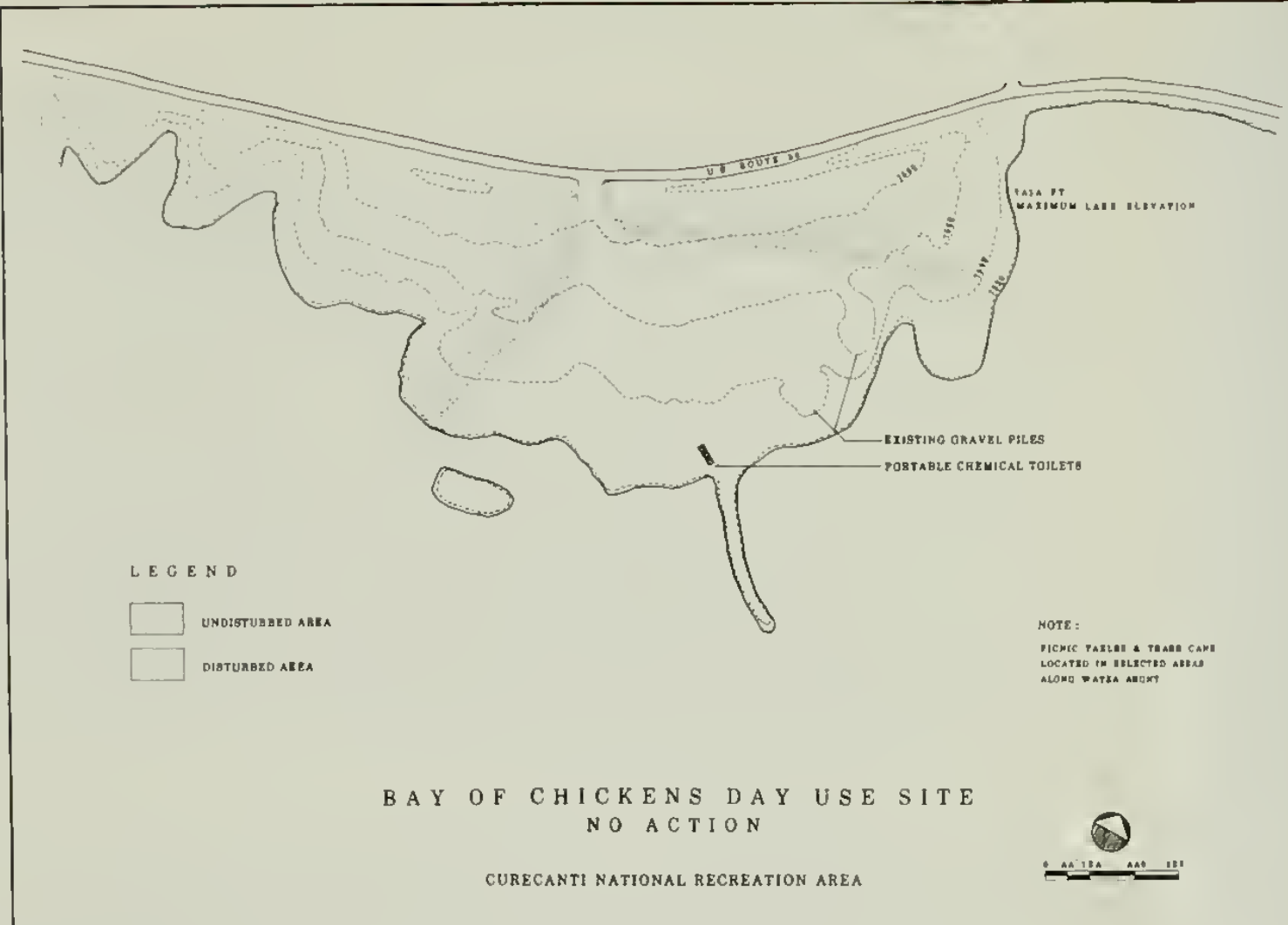
Portable chemical toilets, 3	
Tables, 10	
Garbage cans, 12	
Prarie dog management and Water quality monitoring	
Visitor Protection	
TOTAL	

(a*) Operating & Maintenance Co
cyclic maintenance for NPS

AMENDMENT #3 TO THE GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN DEVELOPMENT CONCEPTS BAY OF CHICKENS ALTERNATIVES

CURECANTI NATIONAL RECREATION AREA
GUNNISON AND MONTROSE COUNTIES, COLORADO
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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COST ESTIMATE

NO ACTION

	DEVELOPMENT COSTS	O & M (a*) COSTS
Portable chemical toilets, 3	\$ 0	\$ 1,800
Tables, 10	0	700
Garbage cans, 12	0	1,000
Prarie dog management and water quality monitoring	0	200
Visitor Protection	0	4,600
TOTAL	\$ 0	\$ 8,300

(a*) Operating & Maintenance Costs, May through October, including cyclic maintenance for NPS operations only.

MINIMUM DEVELOPMENT

	DEVELOPMENT COSTS	O & M (a*) COSTS
4 stall vault toilet with changing area - Off season operation	\$ 30,000	\$ 900
Tables, 10	0	1,000
Garbage cans, 12	0	700
Signing	0	1,000
Signing	2,000	40
Parking bollards, 5' o.c.	2,000	100
Standard metal gate	2,000	10
Prarie dog management and water quality monitoring	0	200
Visitor Protection	0	4,600
TOTAL	\$ 35,200	\$ 8,550

AMENDMENT #3 TO THE GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN DEVELOPMENT CONCEPTS BAY OF CHICKENS ALTERNATIVES

CURECANTI NATIONAL RECREATION AREA
GUNNISON AND MONTROSE COUNTIES, COLORADO
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

II. ELK CREEK BONEYARD

The decision making reflected in this portion of the document is deemed to be categorically excluded from provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 pursuant to the Department of the Interior's Departmental Manual, Part 516, Chapter 6, Appendix 7.4c (11), (17), (18), and (19). The purpose for the inclusion in this document is to provide a record of that decision and provide for its inclusion in the General Management Plan for Curecanti National Recreation Area.

A. Area Description and Background

The Elk Creek Boneyard is a four acre area located on a hill on the southern edge of the Elk Creek complex. It is located east of archeological site number 5GN201 of the Curecanti National Archeological District and has received archeological clearance for surface use. At the time the current GMP was being developed, a water storage tank had been unobtrusively placed on the hill and the site was identified for use as open storage by both the National Park Service and the Concessioner as the site least visible for storage of lower profile items.

Since that time, the needs of both the National Park Service and the Concessioner have changed. Higher profile items have been stored and constructed on the site. Most prominent of these are a concessioner-owned gasoline storage tank and a metal warehouse building owned by the National Park Service. Both are clearly visible two and one half miles to the east of Elk Creek on U.S. Highway 50. Some of the boats and boat trailers being stored on this location are also visible. Most of the other facilities in the Elk Creek complex (administration building, visitor center, housing, maintenance complex, 175 unit campground, and sewage lagoons), are also visible from U.S. Highway 50. However, most are architecturally designed and painted for lower visual impact. Due to the lay of the land, most facilities are also visible when viewed from the west on U.S. Highway 50 or Blue Mesa Reservoir. The National Park Service wishes to reduce the visual impact of those items which are located or stored on the boneyard hill and highly visible from the east.

At about the same time, the Concessioner requested that he be allowed to construct buildings in the Elk Creek boneyard to be used for covered boat storage in the winter and double as a boat maintenance facility during the summer. The Concessioner currently provides limited boat maintenance services at the Elk Creek Marina, and offers covered boat storage to visitors by transporting the boats to the nearest storage area located 16 miles away in Gunnison. Visitors who find they need major repairs are forced to leave the park to obtain those services.

B. Alternatives

1. No Action

The "no action" alternative would allow a high level of visual impact to continue while not providing for the covered boat storage or full range of repair capability needs identified by the Concessioner. (See foldout entitled Elk Creek Boneyard Alternatives.)

2. Minimize Visual Impacts

This alternative would reduce the visual impact of objects located in the boneyard by: 1) placing approximately 200 feet of berm seeded with natural vegetation along the crest of the northeast side of the hill, which will help screen seasonal boat and boat trailer storage, 2) concealing the Concessioner's gasoline storage tank by horizontally placing and screening the existing tank or burying a new tank in the same or a different location, and 3) for an interim period, painting the National Park Service building to blend in with the surrounding landscape with the intention of eventually removing or relocating the storage building. (See foldout entitled Elk Creek Boneyard Proposal.) The water tank would remain as currently provided under the existing General Management Plan for Curecanti.

Costs involved with the berming would be the responsibility of the National Park Service as would the costs involved in removing or relocating the storage building. There would also be costs involved with initially relocating items currently stored in the building and possibly additional annual costs to access those items moved to a more remote location. The Concessioner would bear the cost of relocating or replacing the gasoline storage tank.

If burying the gasoline tank on the same site is to be explored, subsurface archeological testing would be necessary and an "Assessment of Effect" on the archeological resources would be completed. Mitigative efforts could be necessary.

3. Moderate Development

A "moderate development" alternative would authorize the construction of up to three buildings for covered boat storage. (See foldout entitled Elk Creek Boneyard Alternatives.) Service to the park visitor and capital investment of the Concessioner would be increased. A fifteen percent decrease in the space available for Park Service and Concessioner external storage would result. Subsurface archeological testing would be necessary during the design phase. An "Assessment of Effect" on the archeological resources would then be completed. Depending on the findings of the subsurface testing, additional measures could be required to mitigate impacts on the archeological resources. The visual

impact of structures and other objects on the boneyard hill would be increased. Visual impacts could be at least partially mitigated through extensive berming, the planting of screening vegetation and by painting the buildings in a manner so as to blend in with the surrounding landscape for at least part of the year.

C. Proposed Action / Decision

At this time, the National Park Service considers the boat storage buildings neither necessary nor appropriate and feels that there is ample opportunity for those services to be provided outside the park boundary. The National Park Service therefore proposes that no buildings be constructed for those purposes at Elk Creek. Further the National Park Service wishes to reduce the existing visual impact of the boneyard. Actions deliniated in the alternative titled "Minimizing Visual Impacts" are proposed.

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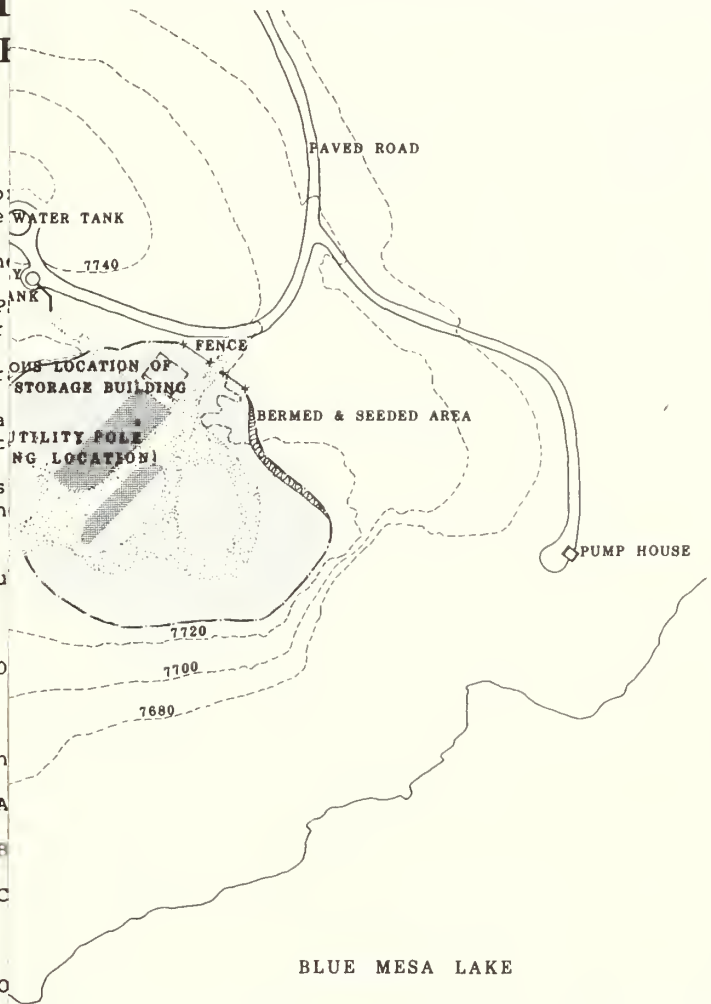
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RECREATION AREA**



AMENDMENT #3 TO THE GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN DEVELOPMENT CONCEPTS ELK CREEK BONEYARD PROPOSAL

CURECANTI NATIONAL RECREATION AREA
GUNNISON AND MONTROSE COUNTIES, COLORADO
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

COST ESTIMATE **MINIMUM DEVELOPMENT - PROPOSAL**

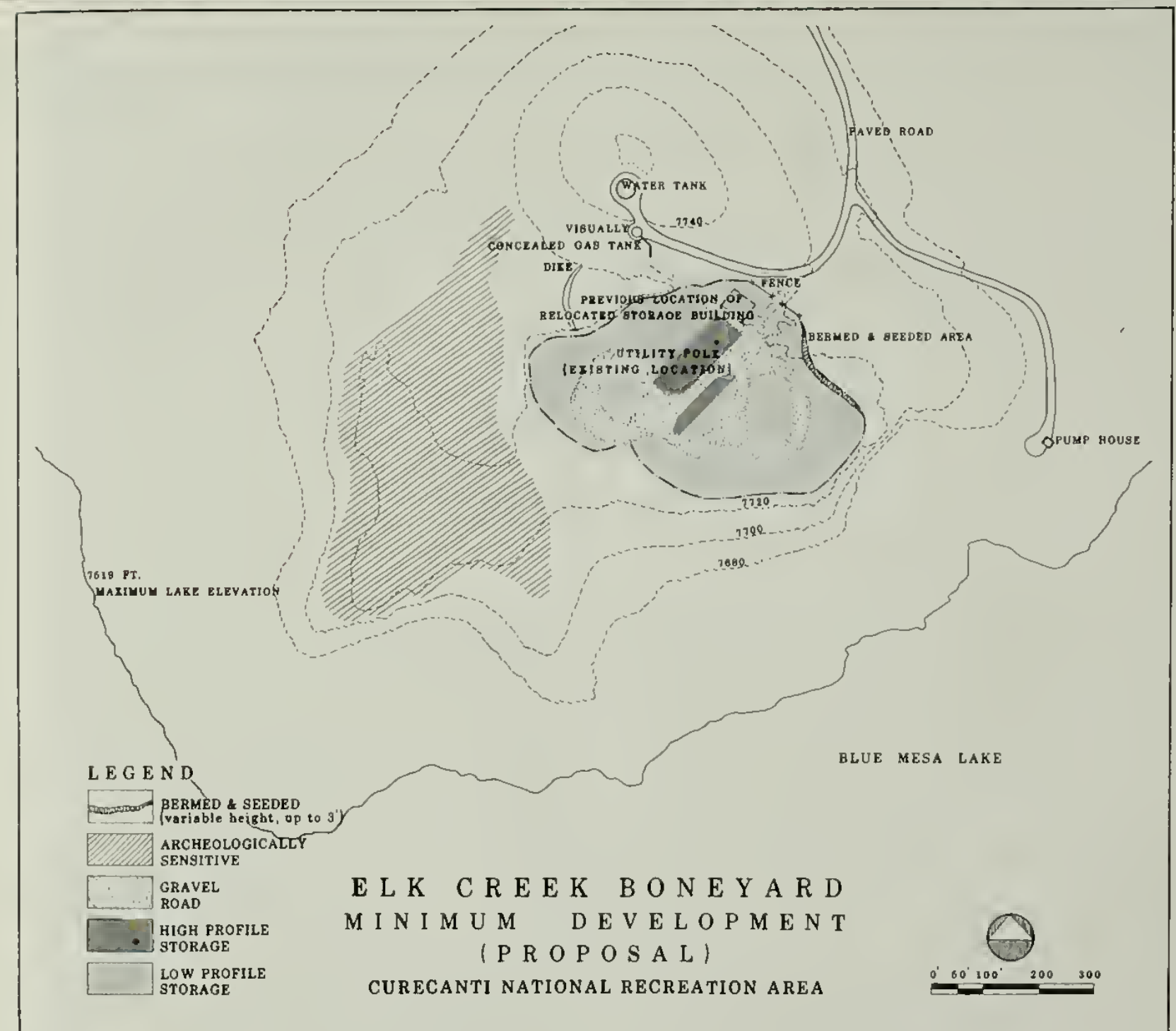
	DEVELOPMENT COSTS	O & M (a*) COSTS
Berming, approx. 200 ft. (variable height, up to 3 ft.)	\$ 2,000	\$ 0
Buried Gasoline Tank with pump	8,700 (b*)	0
Painting of NPS storage building for interim period	2,600	650
Dismantle storage building	5,500	0
Cost of initial movement of materials stored	3,000	0
Additional cost of accessing materials once moved	0	3,370
Subtotal	\$ 21,800	\$ 4,020

TOTAL (dependent on future storage needs and specific
relocation site, if selected, as shown below)

Preparation and Relocation at:

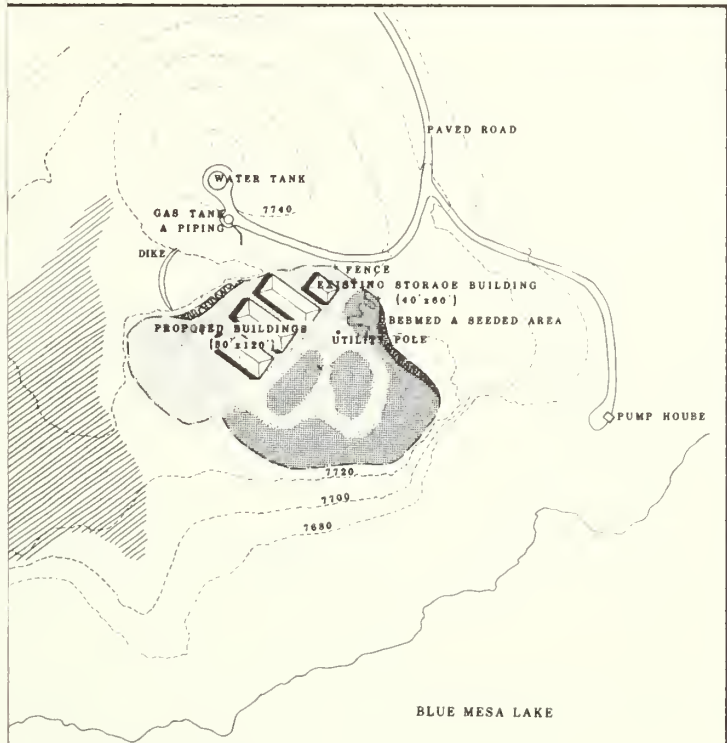
Site "A" - Cimarron	\$ 20,000 (c*)
Site "B" - Cimarron	\$ 10,500 (c*)
Site "C" - Lake Fork	\$ 26,900 (c*)

- (a*) Annual Operating and Maintenance Costs for NPS Operations Only.
 (b*) Includes the cost of a new tank. Should horizontal placement
 of the existing tank prove feasible, the costs involved are
 estimated at \$1,500.
 (c*) See the plans entitled "Relocation Options" for detailed cost
 breakdown regarding site preparation and building relocation.



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CURECANTI NATIONAL RECREATION AREA
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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE



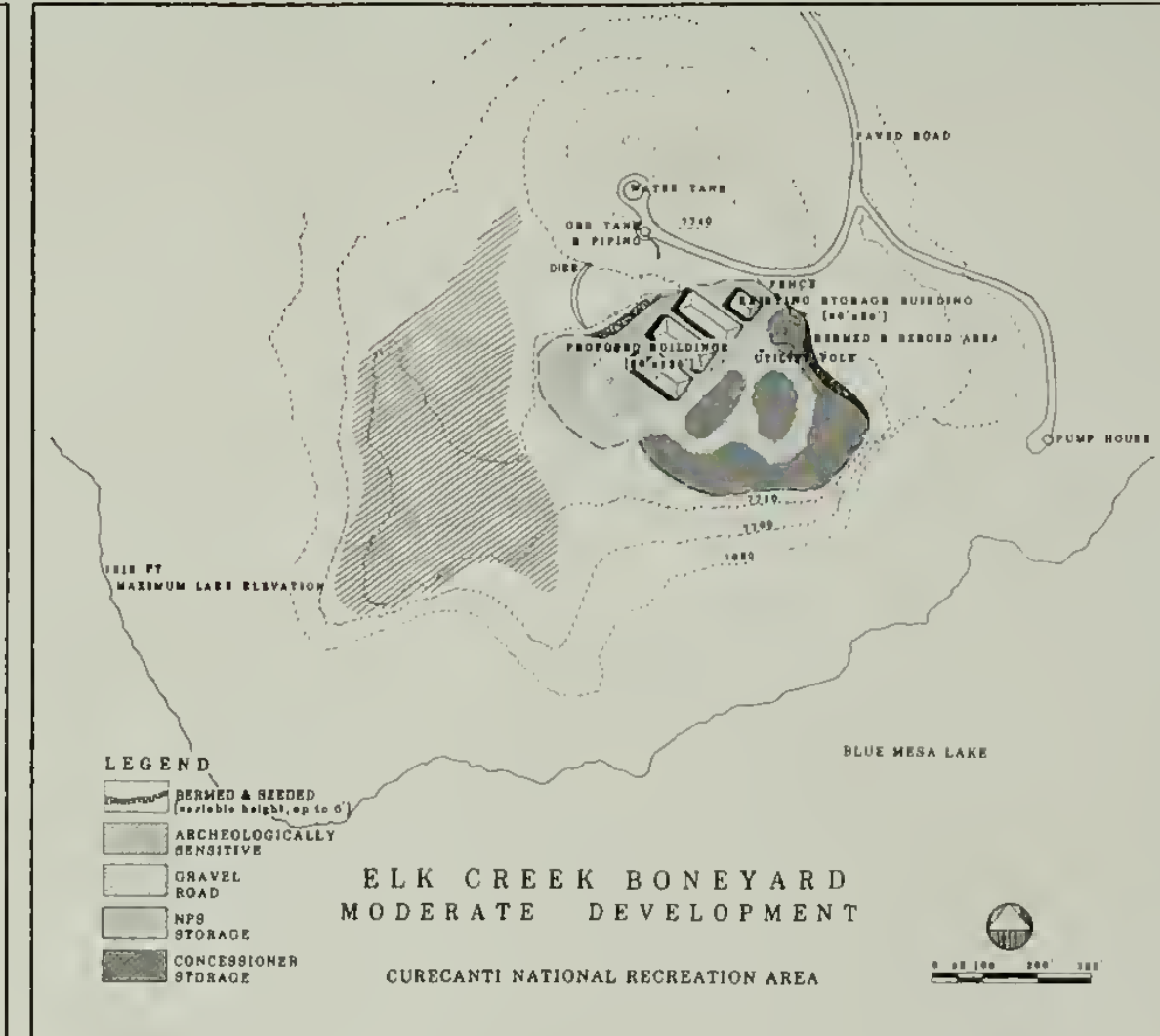
ELK CREEK BONEYARD
DEVELOPMENT

CURECANTI NATIONAL RECREATION AREA



AMENDMENT #3 TO THE GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN DEVELOPMENT CONCEPTS ELK CREEK BONEYARD ALTERNATIVES

CURECANTI NATIONAL RECREATION AREA
GUNNISON AND MONTROSE COUNTIES, COLORADO
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE



COST ESTIMATE

NO ACTION

	DEVELOPMENT COSTS	O & M (a*) COSTS
TOTAL	\$ 0	\$ 0

MODERATE DEVELOPMENT

Metal pole buildings, 3 w/ dirt floors (6,000 sq.ft.)	\$ 75,000 (b*)	\$ 0
Mitigation and clearance	1,600 (b*)	0
Utility pole relocation	600 (b*)	0
Berming, approx. 400 ft. (variable height, up to 6 ft.)	16,000 (c*)	0
Painting the NPS storage building	2,600	650
Painting the Concessioner's gasoline storage tank	600 (b*)	0
TOTAL	\$ 96,400	\$ 650

- (a*) Annual Operating and Maintenance Costs for NPS operations only.
 (b*) Items would be accomplished only by Concessioner funding.
 (c*) Berming would be provided on a shared cost basis.

AMENDMENT #3 TO THE GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN DEVELOPMENT CONCEPTS ELK CREEK BONEYARD ALTERNATIVES

CURECANTI NATIONAL RECREATION AREA
GUNNISON AND MONTROSE COUNTIES, COLORADO
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

III. LIST OF PREPARERS

This general management plan amendment / environmental assessment / development concept plan was prepared as a cooperative effort between the staffs of Curecanti National Recreation Area and the National Park Service Rocky Mountain Regional Office as listed below:

Martin L. Nielson, Concessions Management Specialist, Curecanti National Recreation Area -- Planning Team Captain

Joseph F. Alston, Superintendent, Curecanti National Recreation Area

Jeffrey E. Heywood, Facility Manager, Curecanti National Recreation Area

Donald C. Hill, Chief of Interpretation, Curecanti National Recreation Area

James M. O'Shea, Jr., Regional Park Planner, Rocky Mountain Regional Office

Karen Vaage, Landscape Architect, Curecanti National Recreation Area

Don R. Hickman, Seasonal Resource Management Technician, Curecanti National Recreation Area

James C. Loken, President, Elk Creek Marina, Inc. -- Consultant

IV. CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION WITH OTHERS

During the preparation of this general management plan amendment, environmental assessment / development concept plan, appropriate personnel, as noted below, were consulted or had opportunity to review the draft document. Their comments and concerns have been incorporated.

Washington Office Planners, Environmental Compliance Officers, Budget Office, and Specialists in Biological Resources, Air Quality, Water Quality, Engineering and Safety, Visitor Services, and Concessions Management; the Midwest Archeological Center; Regional Planners, the Regional Compliance Officer, the Regional Archeologist, and Specialists in Resource Management, Construction and Maintenance, Interpretation and Concessions Management; the park's Superintendent, Facility Manager, Landscape Architect, Resource Management Technician, Chief Naturalist, Chief Ranger and Concessions Specialist; and the Concessioner.

Copies of the draft assessment were also provided to the following entities. A summation of their comments with the park response (NPS) follows:

Colorado Historical Society

Request the opportunity to review the Assessment of Effect forms for the two projects.

- NPS -- Opportunity will be given.

Request information on the status of a fence which was suggested to restrict access to site 5GN201.

- NPS -- A light fence will be placed to restrict access during the summer of 1986.

Advisory Council On Historic Preservation

Suggest the clarification of conflicting statements regarding the appearance that site 5GN52 has no depth of occupation yet lacks subsurface testing and may require archeological mitigation/excavation.

- NPS -- Additional information has been incorporated into the document to clarify. There has been very limited testing done but a complete site survey will be completed prior to development to identify any potential which may exist.

Presumably there are no problems regarding archeological materials at the Boneyard location.

- NPS -- No concern given the proposed action.



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