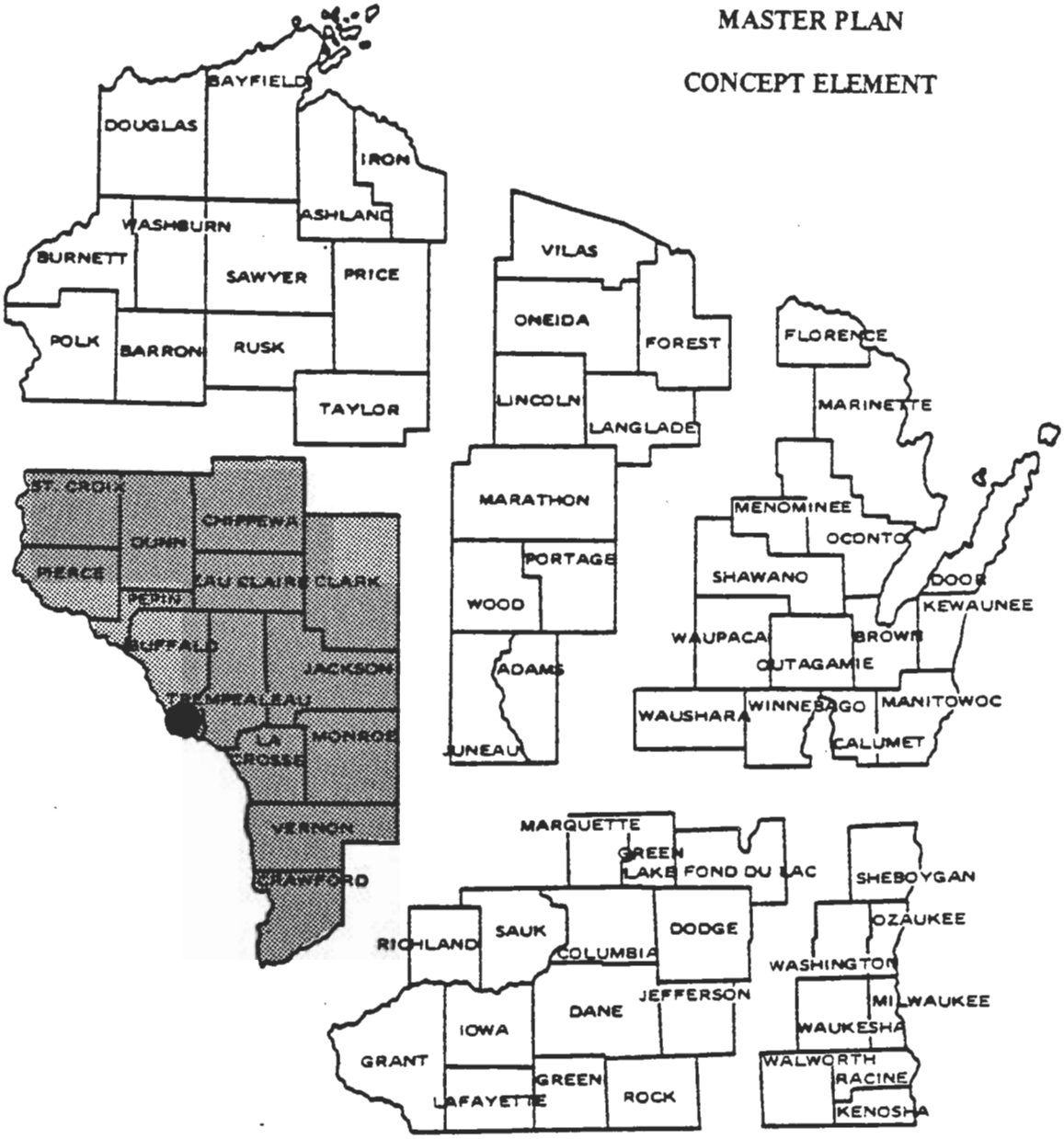
MERRICK STATE PARK

MASTER PLAN

CONCEPT ELEMENT



Property Task Force

Leader: Mike Ries, Park Planner
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Dick Mertig, Real Estate
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Approved By: Natural Resources Board

Date: 4/24/86

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
MADISON, WISCONSIN

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SECTION I - ACTIONS

A. GOAL, OBJECTIVES, AND ADDITIONAL BENEFITS

Goal

To provide a scenic state park which will serve the recreational, educational, and nature experience needs of the park visitor, while preserving and protecting the resource for present and future generations.

Annual Objectives

1. Provide and maintain day use recreational facilities to accommodate 140,000 picnickers and beach users.

2. Provide a quality recreational experience for 27,500 campers by maintaining family camping facilities.

3. Provide and maintain trails to accommodate 25,000 hikers, nature trail users, and cross-country skiers.

4. Provide boat and canoe access to Fountain City Bay and the Mississippi River for 20,000 users, including those pursuing the sport of fishing and waterfowl hunting.

Additional Benefits

Accommodate individuals who are handicapped or otherwise disadvantaged through the proper design, construction, maintenance, and operation of the property and its facilities.

B. RECOMMENDED MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

The management and development alternative selected for Merrick State Park allows for moderate increase in use and development. It is anticipated that use will increase an estimated 10 to 15 percent during the next 10-year period from the date the master plan is approved.

All areas proposed for development will be examined for the presence of endangered or threatened animals and plants. If such species are found, development will be suspended until the District Endangered and Nongame Species Coordinator is consulted, the site evaluated, and appropriate protective measures taken. In addition, prior to any major ground disturbing activities within the park, the Department will consult with the State Historical Society to determine whether archaeological or historical testing is necessary.

1. Development (Figure 3)

Over the next 10 years, the following development and major building maintenance items are proposed for Merrick State Park.

Phase I development includes a proposal to increase the campsite spacing in the South Campground to 100 feet from an existing 50 to 65 feet to meet the design standards of a quality facility. The respaced campsites in the South Campground will have standard graveled spurs, tent pads, and fire rings. This high priority project will also include expansion of the North Campground to compensate for the sites lost in the South Campground.

A group tent camping area is proposed and will be located near the North Campground where existing toilets and water are to be shared. There is increasing demand from church, civic, and scouting groups for this type of facility at Merrick. The proposed group camp will serve these types of users. If camper use justifies, the group area will be moved north of the North Campground when the expansion project takes place.

A vault-type toilet adhering to the flood plain zoning regulations will replace a set of vault toilets located in the northwest corner of the South Campground that have reached a state of obsolescence. The new toilets will accommodate campers as well as day users in this area.

The existing nature trail will be upgraded for nature interpretation purposes. Screen panels will be added to the shelter building, located across from the service drive, and serve as an interpretive-education facility. This will provide an enclosed space for evening programs and should eliminate the mosquito problem which exists at the open shelter building during the evening hours.

Various alternatives for correcting the beach problems involving floating organic matter and siltation will be studied. Possible alternatives are relocating the beach, dredging, or regrading the shoreline above the existing beach.

Shoreline fishing access will be maximized by the construction of a handicap-accessible fishing pier. The property receives intensive shoreline fishing by the senior citizens living in the area and such a pier will greatly aid in their access to fishing on the backwater bays within the park.

Miscellaneous actions will include the renovation of retaining walls adjacent to bay inlets and along park roadways. Picnic tables, grills, fire rings, and garbage cans also will be purchased to replace existing obsolete furnishings. Vegetative management will include prairie/grassland maintenance, landscape planting in the intensive and extensive areas, and cutting of vista openings along Fountain City Bay adjacent to the shelter/nature program building. A boat mooring area will be designated on the parcel of land east of the beach and old boat launch ramp.

Wildlife management has indicated an interest in establishing a canoe route within the Whitman Dam Wildlife Area, which could be accessible from the park. They are also interested in using the dike on the north side of the wildlife area near the Village of Buffalo for hiking and wildlife observation. In both instances, park personnel could provide technical assistance in design and layout of the facility. Maps and other information concerning the facilities could be distributed at the park office.

The last item under Phase 1 would include the renovation of the barn located in the service area which is used for storage. This construction may be covered under a Major Building Maintenance project.

Phase 2 will include the construction of a 4-unit combination vault toilet in the north campground to replace 2 single unit pit toilets. Picnic tables, grills, fire rings, and trash cans will also be replaced as warranted. Landscape planting in the intensive and extensive use areas will continue as needed.

The park road system and parking lots will be seal-coated during phase 3. In addition, picnic tables, grills, fire rings, and garbage cans will be replaced as conditions warrant. Phase 3 will also see the continuation of extensive and intensive area planting and the renovation or replacement of various recreational facilities.

Total estimated development cost, based on 1985 cost figures, is $278,000. All proposed development will be dependent upon available funds and statewide priorities. Additional and/or up-to-date justification will also be required.

2. Management

a. Facility

The park has a permanent manager and is operated as part of the Perrot Work Unit. Personnel include 2 permanent and 5 LTE's whose duties range from sticker sales to maintenance to lifeguarding. In the future, additional LTE labor may be needed with emphasis on naturalist programs for the summer use months.

As a unit of the Wisconsin state park system, Merrick has been developed and managed under s.s. 27.01 which governs state parks. The property is also managed under the provisions of Wisconsin Administrative Code 45.

b. Vegetative Management (Figure 4)

Present forest cover includes lowland hardwoods along waterways and about 8 acres of pine plantations established approximately 35 years ago. Forestry practices will not be applied on the bottomland hardwood types, however, high risk, diseased, or defective trees will be removed when identified to insure visitor safety. The small pine plantation will be managed for future big trees. By maintaining them in a vigorous condition, final rotation could probably be extended to 200+ years. Thinning, which favors the healthiest trees, should be scheduled at 10-year intervals. The first thinning was completed commercially in April of 1980.

Planting in the intensive use areas should be of species native to the area; however, because of sandy soils, success in growing hardwoods has been marginal. Norway pine is suited to this type of soil and could be utilized for screen planting near the railroad track and Highway 35 to reduce the visual and noise impact these transportation corridors have on the park. Open grasslands and prairie should be maintained to maximize vegetative diversity within the property.

A cooperative agreement for fire control is in effect with the Fountain City fire department. A small amount of Department fire control equipment is on the property and can be used for suppression of small fires.

Since a complete biological inventory of the property does not exist, an inventory should be conducted as funds permit or be undertaken through the voluntary efforts of the local university system.

c. Wildlife Management

Wildlife in the park and the nearby Whitman Dam Wildlife Area provides the opportunity for wildlife observation by the park visitor. A dozen wood duck houses will be erected along the backwater slough to help provide wood duck nesting habitat. Park visitors would enjoy viewing these birds. Many people who use the Whitman Dam Wildlife Area camp in the park during the fall hunting season. Appendix A lists area bird species.

d. Fish Management

Fountain City Bay and the sloughs surrounding the park and adjacent wildlife area contain a diversity of fish habitat and a productive fishery where spawning, rearing, dwelling, and overwintering occur. Fish management personnel will periodically inventory fish populations and commercial and sport

fishing harvest. Water quality will also be monitored. When conditions warrant, management activities including water flow manipulation, bank stabilization, and development of instream structures that improve and protect fish habitat will be implemented. Resource management personnel are addressing the need for waterflow regulation that will benefit fish and wildlife in the area as well as park visitors utilizing the beach. Park personnel are also working with fish management to help find the best location for a fishing pier. The pier will be designed to maximize fishing opportunity for individuals who are handicapped or who have limited mobility and stamina. Fishing draws a large number of fall campers who enjoy sport fishing in Fountain City Bay and adjacent waterways.

e. Revenue Potential

The 1985-86 operations budget for Merrick was $65,974. With 1985 revenue at $46,737, the percent of revenue to operations cost is about 71 percent.

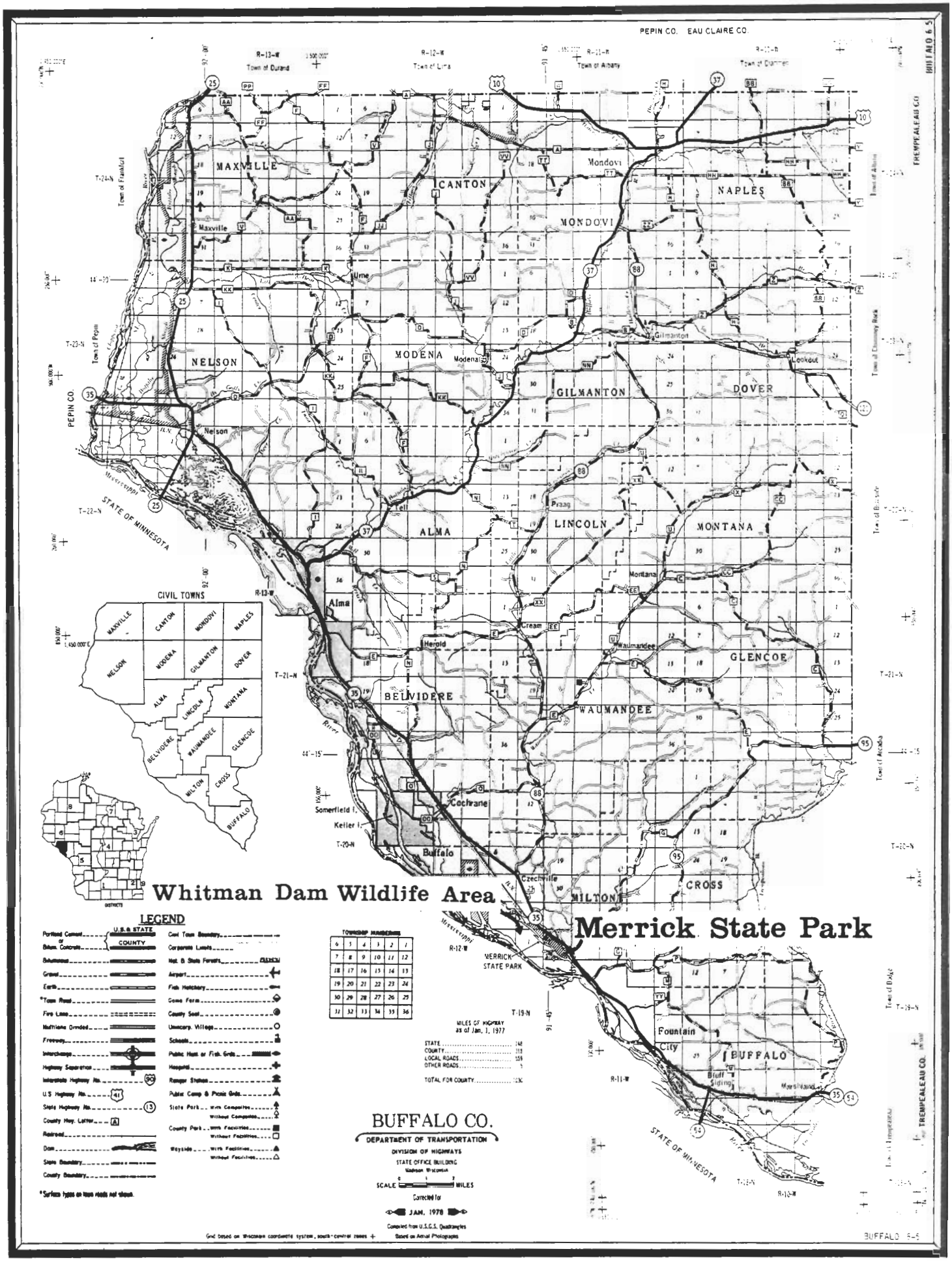
f. Roads, Entrances and Private Inholdings

Merrick is a one entrance park with a park entrance/visitor station. This facility provides service to the visiting public in the form of efficient collection of the vehicle admission sticker fees, enforcement of the sticker regulation, registration of campers, and dispensing of useful park information to the visitor.

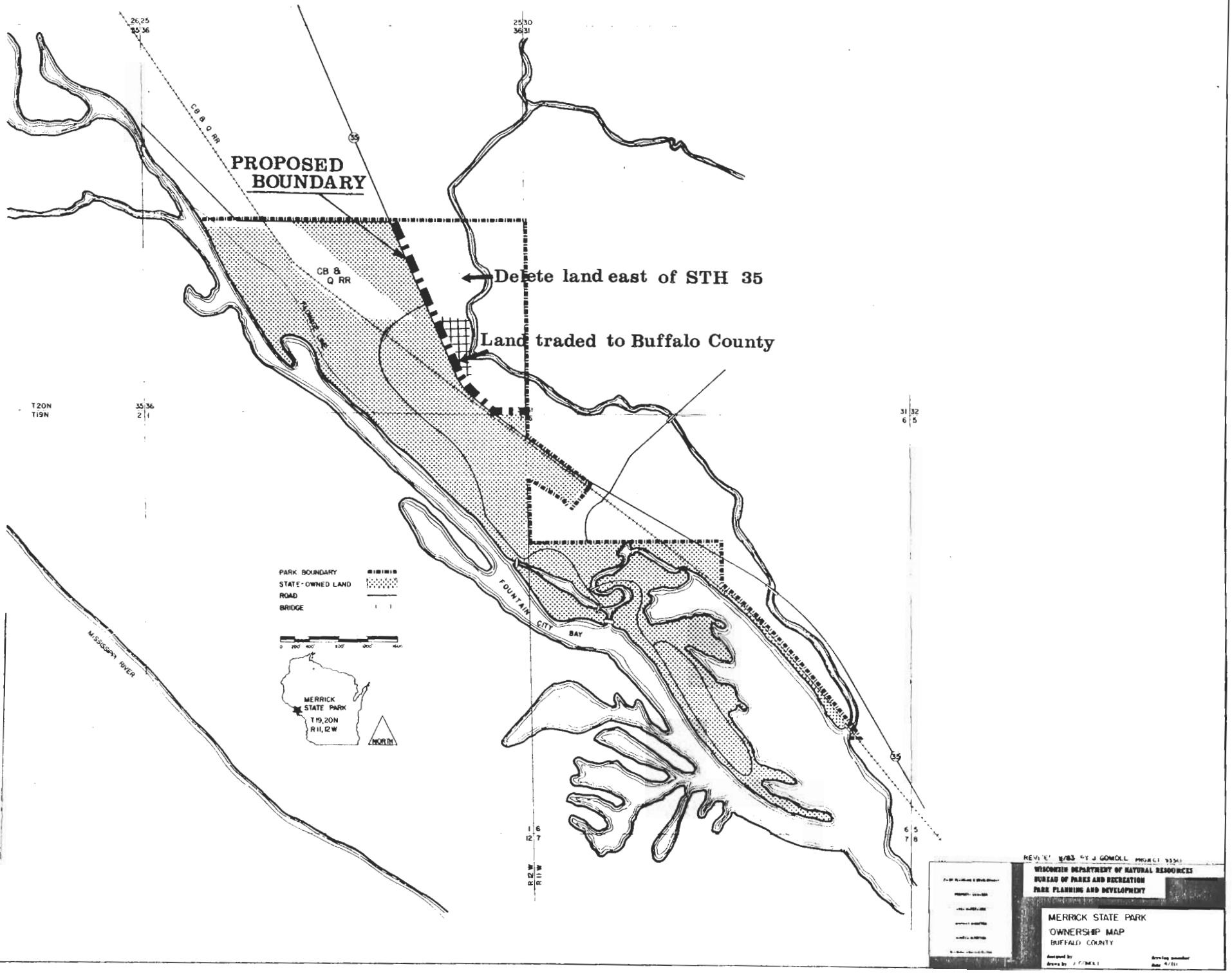
There are no private inholdings or public highways within the park boundaries which affect the Department's ability to operate the property.

3. Land Acquisition (Figure 2)

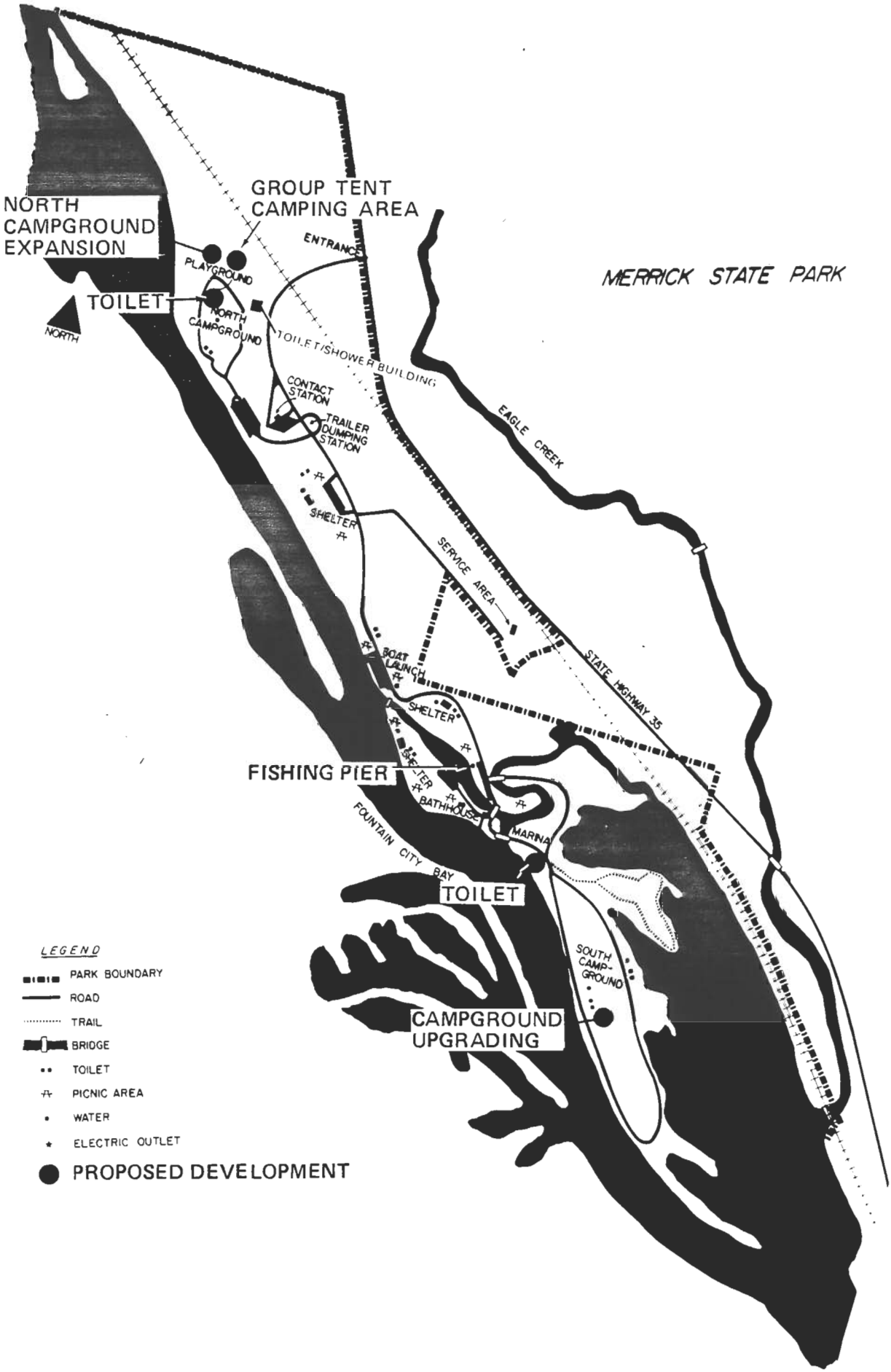
As of December 31, 1985, state ownership at Merrick State Park was 321.5 acres. It is recommended the current park boundary be modified to exclude approximately 75 acres of land east of Highway 35. 41.5 acres of privately owned lands remain to be purchased within the proposed property boundary. The present acreage goal will be reduced by 75 acres for a new goal of 363 acres.



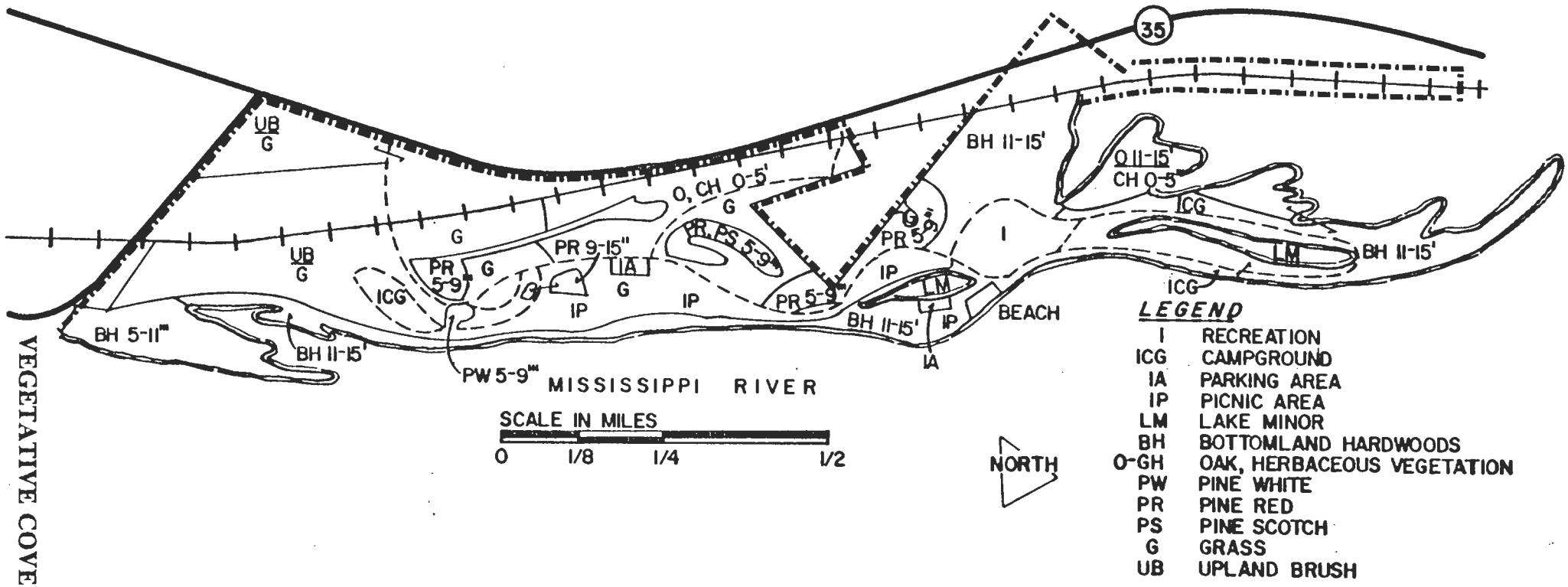
COUNTY LOCATOR MAP FIGURE 1



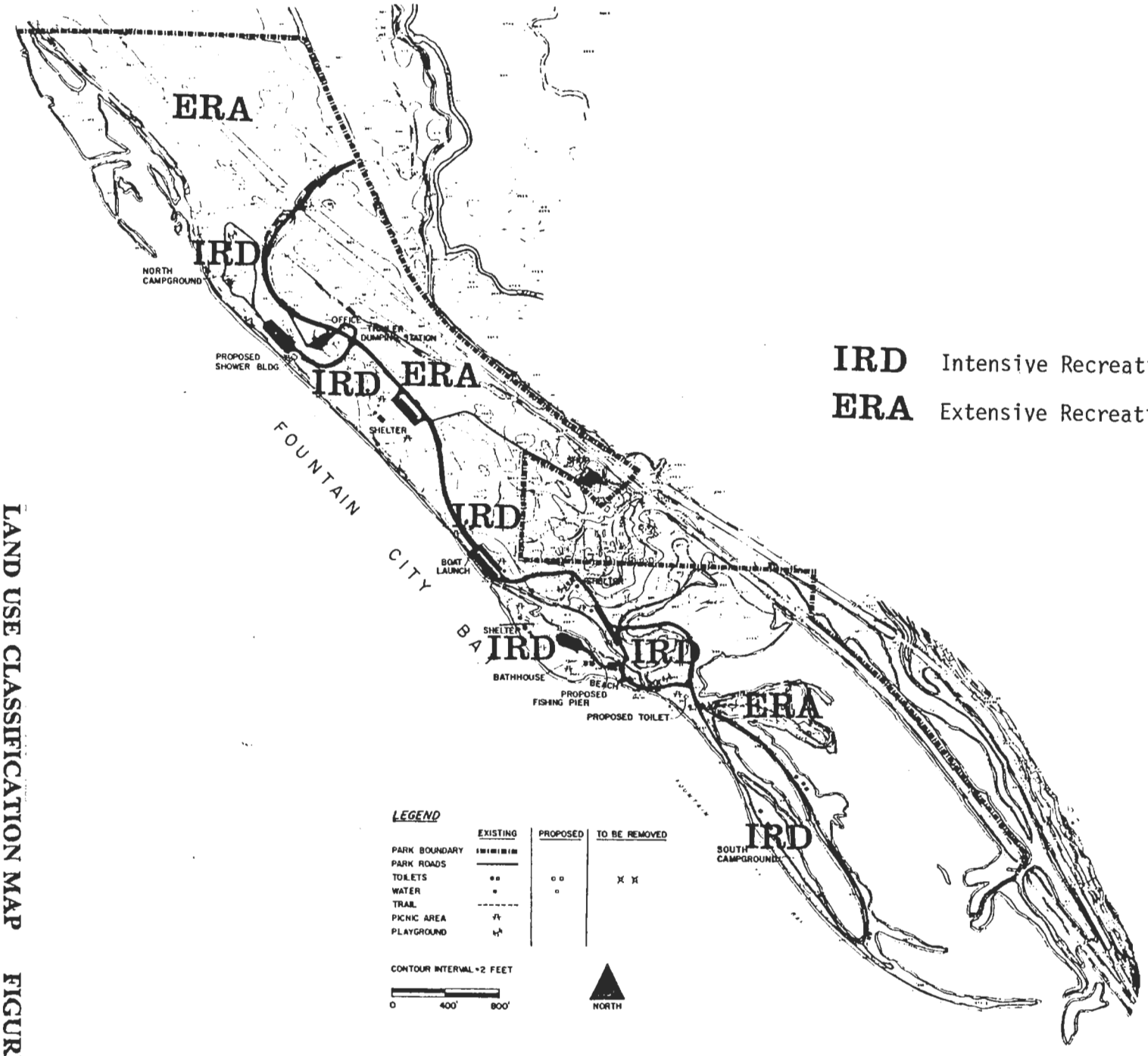
OWNERSHIP MAP FIGURE 2



DEVELOPMENT MAP—PRESENT & PROPOSED FIGURE 3



VEGETATIVE COVER MAP FIGURE 4



WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
BUREAU OF PARKS AND RECREATION
PARK PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Merrick State Park
DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Designed by M. RIES
Drawn by J. GOHOLL
Drawing number
Date 1/83

LAND USE CLASSIFICATION MAP FIGURE 5

SECTION II - SUPPORT DATA

A. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Located within the Mississippi River Valley, Merrick is surrounded by high bluffs, some which rise over 500 feet above the river level. The park and its immediate environs consist of the lush growth of aquatic, marsh, and swamp vegetation. The great variety and quantity of plant growth attracts large numbers of ducks, geese, shore, wading, and many other birds, especially during the spring and fall migrations. Dozens of bird species spend the entire summer on the bottomlands in and near the park.

1. Location (Figure 1)

Merrick State Park is located within Milton Township, Buffalo County. It is about 40 miles from the metropolitan La Crosse area and about a 2-hour drive from the heavily populated Minneapolis/St. Paul metropolitan area. Primary access to the park is provided by State Trunk Highway "35" (the Great River Road).

2. History of the Area

Buffalo County was created in 1854. Fountain City was the original County Seat, but it was moved to Alma in 1860, which had a majority of the voting population.

Indian trade was the major incentive for settlement of Buffalo County. In 1839 and perhaps as early as 1826, a Mr. Holmes located near the present site of Fountain City. He traded with the Indians and cut cord-wood fuel for the Mississippi River boats. In 1842, a group of men from Galena, Illinois, formed the nucleus of the first white settlement in the county, and they also settled at Fountain City, then known as Holmes Landing. This small community became a trading point for supplies and a stopping point for boats which were making monthly trips during the open-water season between Galena and Fort Snelling. For several years, Holmes Landing was the only settlement in the area with the rest of the county remaining in the hands of the Indians.

3. Chronology of Property's Establishment and Development

The park was established in 1932. Approximately 265 acres of the park's land was purchased in the late 1920's by Mr. John A. Latch of Winona, Minnesota, and was donated to the Department in 1932 so that all might enjoy this picturesque area. The park was named after George Merrick, a well-known steamboat pilot, from Prescott, Wisconsin. George Merrick was also a renowned historian of the bygone days of the heavy steamboat traffic on the upper Mississippi. The remaining lands within the park boundary were purchased from private landowners.

4. Past and Present Management Activities

Since its inception, the property has been managed for camping, picnicking, hiking, swimming, fishing, and general nature education, as well as a variety of other related activities. Presently, Merrick has 71 acres of land developed for intensive recreation. It has 20.8 acres of picnic area, 144 picnic tables, 28 grills, 3 shelters, a 300-foot beach encompassing 1.88 acres, 275 parking stalls, a half-mile long nature trail, .8 miles of snowmobile trail, 76 campsites, and 3.4 miles of road. Annual visitation for day-use is approximately 115,000 and camper days is approximately 22,200.

B. RESOURCE CAPABILITIES AND INVENTORY

1. Geology

The oldest underlying rock formation in Buffalo County is Pre-Cambrian granite. Proceeding upward from the granite, the deposits become younger and are sedimentary formations formed in a marine environment and consist of three Cambrian sandstones and of Prairie du Chien dolomite (Lower Magnesian limestone). These make most of the bedrock underlying the county. Because it is harder and more resistant than sandstone, the dolomite is the principal bedrock making up the ridges (Thomas, 1962). Erosion of the dolomite and sandstone bedrock has been carried on over a long period of time and as a result, deep valleys were formed. The Franconia sandstone forms narrow, steep, intermediate ridges and is probably the single most important determiner of Buffalo County's topography. Prairie du Chien dolomite is the second most important.

2. Soils

Loess, Alluvium, and Colluvium are the uppermost deposits. They are the parent materials for many of the soils in Buffalo County (Thomas, 1962). Soils within Merrick State Park include Hubbard, loamy Alluvial land, Plainfield loamy fine sand, sandy Alluvial land, Sparta loamy fine sand, and loamy and sandy Terrace escarpments. Most of these soils are somewhat excessively drained, deep, sandy soils on nearly level terraces along streams and can be considered dune land. The Plainfield and Sparta loamy sands are susceptible to wind and water erosion and are highly susceptible to gullying if they are not protected from runoff from adjacent areas. The supply of plant nutrients is naturally low in the soils.

The loamy Alluvial land, located in the area between the boat launch and south campground, consists of highly variable, medium-textured materials. The sediments from which formed were transported by water.

3. Climate

The climate of Buffalo County is humid continental. It is characterized by moderately long, cold winters, and by short summers that are warm and humid. The last killing frost in spring is about April 27 and first killing frost in fall is approximately October 1. The average annual precipitation is approximately 29 inches. Approximately 19.5 inches or about 62% of the precipitation falls during the growing season. The wettest month is June. Only about 3 inches of the annual average precipitation falls during the dry, cold months of December, January, and February. However, approximately 58% of the average annual snowfall, which is about 50 inches, fall during that period. Prevailing winds are westerly. Winds from the southwest bring most of the rain in spring, summer, and fall. In winter, however, stronger winds blow in from the northwest, often bringing low temperatures with them.

4. Water Resources

Waters in and adjacent to Merrick State Park contain a diversity of fish habitat and productive fisheries where significant spawning, rearing, dwelling, and overwintering occur. During the 1975-79 GREAT sponsored fishery inventory, 62 fish species were collected in the area (Appendix B). These communities consist of a well-balanced mixture of commercial, sport, and forage fish species, typical cf other high quality Mississippi River backwaters. Bluegill, black crappie, white crappie, largemouth bass, walleye, yellow perch, northern pike, and white bass dominate the game fish species. Commercial fish are abundant and collections include channel catfish, carp, largemouth buffalo, and freshwater drum. Fish species listed as endangered or threatened in Wisconsin that were collected include the river redhorse, mud darter, and pugnosed shiner The occurrence of long-eared sunfish near the park was recorded in 1980.

5. Vegetative Cover (Figure 4)

Originally, most of the park was prairieland with an occasional burr oak being present. Swamp hardwoods exist in the lower campground area. Forest cover consists of lowland hardwoods along waterways and about 8 acres of pine plantations which were established approximately 35 years ago. Non-timber types are located in the day-use areas. Because of the droughty, sandy soils, hardwood propagation has been limited and therefore there is sizable grassland acreage within the park. There are no known rare, unique, endangered plant communities or species present within the property boundary. However, as time and funds permit, a total inventory should be undertaken.

6. Wildlife

Common wildlife includes white-tailed deer, gray squirrels, red foxes, raccoons, muskrats, mink, beaver, mallards, and wood ducks (Appendix A).

7. Site Inventory (Figure 4)

The vegetative cover map indicates the various cover types as-follows: buildings - 3 acres; upland brush - 38 acres; bottom land land hardwoods - 105 acres; oak and central hardwoods - 15 acres; grass - 65.8 acres; pine - 15 acres; water - 73 acres; and various transportation right-of-way corridors - 10 acres. The grass area includes the campgrounds and picnic areas. Upland brush includes some areas where scattered hardwoods have been planted.

8. Land Use Inventory (Figure 5)

Lands within the park are classified as intensive recreation development (IRD) and extensive recreation areas (ERA). The IRD land presently encompasses 71 acres. The remaining acreage is classified as ERA.

9. Historical and Archaeological Features

The State Historical Society has investigated the "Indian Mounds" located near the north end of the south campground. It is their belief that the "Original Indian Mounds" were excavated possibly in the 1920's, prior to State ownership. There was at that time, nothing found indicating a burial site. There are no other known historical and/or archaeological sites located within Merrick State Park.

C. MANAGEMENT PROBLEMS

1. South Campground

The entire 51-unit south campground including the toilet facilities is located in the flood plain and is subject to spring flooding. Campsites located on the shore of Fountain City Bay are 50 to 65 feet apart and very congested. The Department standard for distance separating campsites is 100 feet.

2. South Campground Shoreline Erosion

The south campground shoreline has a history of erosion created by people who removed rock from the shoreline to expose underlying sand in order to moor boats near their campsites. This rock was placed on the shoreline to guard against erosion of the soils due to high, flood waters in the spring and occasional high waters during the remainder of the year. Historically, the displaced rock was put back in place during the fall of the year by the use of a backhoe. However, the backhoe is no longer stationed on the property and therefore, this yearly maintenance no longer occurs. Most recently, a $9,000 riprap project to repair and replace rock that had been moved by the campsite occupants was completed.

In order to eliminate this recurring rock displacement, a policy of no on-shore boat mooring adjacent to the campsites should be initiated. A mooring post will be located at the toe of the riprap. All posts will be numbered to correspond to the site registration post. Boats will only be allowed to tie up to the post and no on-shore boat mooring will be permitted. If more than one boat would be at a campsite, the option would be multiple tie-up, moor at the designated mooring site east of the old boat launch or trailer the boat.

Boat mooring adjacent to the campsites will be monitored closely. If campers move the riprap rock they can expect to lose future mooring adjacent to the south campground sites as well as be cited for destruction of park property. The alternative boat mooring site will be that area east of the old boat launch and site 1 of the south campground.

3. Boat Congestion on Fountain City Bay

Boat use on Fountain City Bay, between the south campground and west end of the beach, is very heavy. Boating use includes fishing, canoeing, sightseeing, and waterskiing. The greatest potential conflict results from high speed associated with general sightseeing and waterskiing, and slow-moving boats such as canoes. Waterskiing, which quite often originates from the campsite, adds to the congestion due to the narrowness of Fountain City Bay, trailing ski ropes and the direction of travel which is usually perpendicular to the shoreline. It is suggested that this boat use be monitored and, if needed, a slow-no-wake speed zone should be implemented between the southern end of the south campground and the west end of the beach. Such action would have to be a combined effort between the Department's interest and local units of government.

4. Poor Beach Conditions

There is a reoccurring problem of large volumes of floating organic matter and silt deposits in the beach area. Alternatives for correcting the problem should be studied.

D. RECREATIONAL NEEDS AND JUSTIFICATIONS

The 1981 State Outdoor Recreation Plan for Region 7 which includes Pepin, Buffalo, Trempealeau, Jackson, Monroe, La Crosse, Vernon, and Crawford Counties, notes that there is a need for developed campsites, primitive campsites, and pleasure walking trails. The study further indicates that there is no need for additional cross-country ski trails and snowmobile trails. At the present time, campsite occupancy figures at Merrick are not high enough to justify campground expansion. Similarly, picnic area is sufficient to meet demand based on the use annual visitation figures.

E. ANALYSIS OF ALTERNATIVES

1. No Additional Acquisition and no Additional Development

This alternative would provide for no further acquisition or development. The Department would merely retain and manage the existing resource and its recreational facilities. This alternative is not desirable since the property was acquired for recreational purposes in order to meet the needs of the recreating public. No additional acquisition within the property boundary could lead to encroachment of undesirable land uses as well as create potential safety problems. Similarly, no additional development could lead to degradation of the resource, its facilities, and could lead to safety problems.

2. Reduce and Alter Acquisition Boundary

This recommended alternative would provide for the elimination of all lands east of State Trunk Highway 35. In addition, a small strip of land paralleling the north boundary and adjacent to a township road would be included within the boundary. The property north and east of State Trunk Highway "35" could be eliminated from the park boundary with little or no impact to the park as it presently exists and therefore could be considered surplus. The area to be acquired on the north property boundary would give us access to the township road and eliminate any future potential conflict which would be created by campground expansion adjacent to this narrow site which could be developed for residential or commercial interest.

3. Moderate Development and Improvement of Park Facilities

This alternative would call for upgrading the South Campground and constructing replacement campsites near the North Campground. The beach problems would be corrected as feasible and in accordance with Department regulations. A small, temporary group tent camping area would be located near the North Campground. Other existing recreation facilities would be upgraded or replaced. This alternative is recommended because it will ensure the maintenance of a high quality recreational facility, maximize user enjoyment, and eliminate any potential safety problems.

4. Additional Large Scale Development on Lands Within the Park Boundary

This alternative would include all actions listed under #3 although the size of the North Campground project would be greatly increased to provide more sites than presently available in the park. A new bathhouse and beach curb would also be constructed under this alternative. Due to supply and demand data within the Outdoor Recreation Plan and specific park-use data, this alternative is not feasible at this time.

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APPENDIX A

Common Names of Birds Observed in the
Fountain City Bay Area, 1975-1978.

Pied-bellied grebe
Double-crested cormorant
Great blue heron
Green heron
Great egret
Black-crowned night heron
Yellow-crowned night heron
Least bittern
American bittern
Whistling swan
Canada goose
Mallard
Black duck
Pintail
Green-winged teal
Blue-winged teal
American wigeon
Northern shoveler
Wood duck
Ring-necked duck
Canvasback
Scaup
Common goldeneye
Bufflehead
Hooded merganser
Turkey vulture
Sharp-shinned hawk
Cooper's hawk
Red-tailed hawk
Red-shoulder hawk
Bald eagle
Marsh hawk
Osprey
Peregrine falcon
American kestrel
Ruffed grouse
Virginia rail
Sora
American coot
Killdeer
American woodcock

Rock dove
Mourning Dove
Yellow-billed cuckoo
Black-billed cuckoo
Great horned owl
Barred owl
Whip-poor-will
Common nighthawk
Chimney swift
Ruby-throated hummingbird
Belted kingfisher
Common flicker
Pileated woodpecker
Red-bellied woodpecker
Red-headed woodpecker
Yellow-bellied sapsucker
Hairy woodpecker
Downy woodpecker
Eastern kingbird
Western kingbird
Great crested flycatcher
Eastern phoebe
Eastern wood pewee
Tree swallow
Bank swallow
Rough-winged swallow
Barn swallow
Common snipe
Spotted sandpiper
Solitary sandpiper
Herring gull
Ring-billed gull
Forster's tern
Common tern
Black tern
Dark-eyed junco
Tree sparrow
Chipping sparrow
Swamp sparrow
Song sparrow
Snow bunting

Purple martin
Blue jay
Common crow
Black-capped chickadee
White-breasted nuthatch
Brown creeper
House wren
Long-billed marsh wren
Grey catbird
Brown thrasher
American robin
Wood thrush
Veery
Eastern bluebird
Blue-gray-gnatcatcher
Cedar waxwing
Starling
Red-eyed vireo
Philadelphia vireo
Warbling vireo
Prothonotary warbler
Blue-winged warbler
Tennessee warbler
Yellow warbler
Yellow-rumped warbler
Palm warbler
Common yellowthroat
American redstart
House sparrow
Eastern meadowlark
Western meadowlark
Yellow-headed blackbird
Red-winged blackbird
Northern oriole
Rusty blackbird
Common grackle
Brown-headed cowbird
Cardinal
Rose-breasted grosbeak
Indigo bunting
Evening grosbeak
American goldfinch

APPENDIX B

Fish Species Checklist for Fish Collected by Electro-shocking and Trapnetting in the Fountain City Bay Area During the Summers of 1975, 1976, 1977, and 1978.

SPECIES	1975	1976	1977	1978
Bluegill sunfish	X	X	X	X
Black crappie	X	X	X	X
White crappie	X	X	X	X
Largemouth bass	X	X	X	X
Yellow perch	X		X	X
Walleye	X	X	X	X
Northern pike	X	X	X	X
Rock bass	X	X	X	X
Channel catfish	X		X	X
Pumpkinseed sunfish	X	X	X	X
Orange spotted sunfish	X			X
Black bullhead				X
White bass	X	X	X	X
Smallmouth bass	X			X
Muskellunge				X
Flathead catfish	X	X	X	X
Green sunfish				X
Warmouth				X
Brown bullhead	X		X	
Carp	X	X	X	X
Shorthead redhorse	X	X	X	X
Largemouth buffalo	X	X	X	X
Spotted sucker	X	X	X	X
Silver redhorse	X	X	X	X
Freshwater drum	X	X	X	X
Bowfin	X	X	X	X
Smallmouth buffalo	X			X
Shortnose gar	X	X	X	X
White sucker	X	X	X	X
Quillback carpsucker	X	X	X	X
Mooneye	X	X	X	X
Gizzard shad				X
Longnose gar				X
River redhorse	X			X
River carpsucker	X	X		
Mirror carp	X			
Chestnut lamprey	X			
Highfin carpsucker			X	
American eel			X	
Golden redhorse	X			
Smallmouth bass		X		
Largemouth bass		X	X	X
Sauger			X	
Western sand darter				X
Rainbow darter	X			
Iowa darter				X
Johnny darter	X	X		X
Mud darter				X
Spottail darter		X		
Log perch		X		
Tadpole madtom				X
Blacknose dace				X
Buntnose minnow				X
Fathead minnow				X
Bullhead minnow	X	X		
Pugnose minnow				X
Golden shiner	X		X	X
Spotfin shiner	X	X		
Common shiner	X			
Emerald shiner	X			
Weed shiner		X		
Spottail shiner		X		
Pugnose shiner		X		
Mimic shiner		X		
Brook silverside				X

The State of Wisconsin

SCIENTIFIC AREAS PRESERVATION COUNCIL
Box 7921
Madison, Wisconsin 53707

IN REPLY REFER TO: 2100

November 8, 1983

Mr. David Weizenicker
Bureau of Parks & Recreation
Department of Natural Resources
P.O. Box 7921
Madison, WI 53707

Dear Dave:

We have reviewed the Merrick State Park Concept Master Plan and find that the plan adequately covers the interests of the Scientific Areas Preservation Council.

Thank you for providing the opportunity to comment.

Cordially,

Forest Stearns
Chairman

CORRESPONDENCE/MEMORANDUM

STATE OF WISCONSIN

Date: October 3, 1983 *File Ref:* 1430

To: Dave Weizenicker - P&R/4

From: Dick Lindberg

Subject: Merrick State Park Master Plan

The Wild Resources Advisory Council has no comments to make on the plan for this property.

DL:jn

Form 1600-1

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

District or Bureau: WCD
Docket Number: 1392
Type List Designation(s):

SEP 9 1983

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Applicant: Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

Title of Proposal: Master Plan - Merrick State Park

Location: Buffalo County
Township 19 & 20 North, Range 11 & 12 West
Sections 6 and 36
Political Town: Milton

PROJECT SUMMARY

1. General Description (brief overview)

Merrick is classified a scenic state park and shall remain thus. The management and development alternative selected for Merrick allows for moderate increase in use and development. It is anticipated that use will increase 10 to 15 percent during the next 10-year period from the date the master plan is approved. A wide range of traditional activities is offered including camping, swimming, boating, fishing, picnicking, hiking, and related day-use activities.

Three basic categories of action are involved: development, management, and land control.

Development

Over the next 10 years, minimal new development and a number of major building maintenance items is proposed for Merrick. New development during the first phase will provide for the construction of a toilet/shower building located near the north campground. This facility will serve campers from both the north and south campgrounds. A new four-unit, combination vault toilet should be located on the northwest corner of the south campground to accommodate campers, as well as day-users in that area.

The existing nature trail will be upgraded for nature interpretation purposes. Screen panels will be added to the shelter building, located across from the service drive, and serve as an interpretive/education facility. This will provide an enclosed space for evening programs and eliminate the pesky mosquito problem which exists at the open-shelter building during the evening hours.

Shoreline fishing access will be maximized by the construction of a handicap-accessible fishing pier. The property receives intensive shoreline fishing by senior citizens living in the area and such a pier will greatly aid in their access to backwater bays within the park.

Miscellaneous actions will include the renovation of retaining walls on adjacent inlets and along park roads. Picnic tables, grills, fire rings, and garbage cans will also be purchased to replace existing, obsolete furnishings. Vegetative management will include prairie/grassland maintenance, landscape planting in the intensive and extensive areas, and cutting of vista openings along Fountain City Bay adjacent to the shelter/nature center building. A boat mooring area will be designated on a parcel of land east of the beach (and old boat launch ramp).

Wildlife Management has indicated an interest in establishing a canoe route adjacent to the park within the Whitman Dam Wildlife Area. They are also interested in maximizing utilization of the dike on the north side of the wildlife area near the Village of Buffalo for hiking and wildlife observation. In both instances, park personnel could provide technical assistance in design and layout of the facility. Maps and other information concerning the facilities could be distributed at the park office and thereby promote increased utilization and recreational enjoyment of the property.

The last item under phase 1 would include the renovation of the barn located in the service area. This construction may be covered under a major building maintenance project.

Phase 2 will include the construction of a four-unit combination vault toilet in the north campground to replace two single unit, vault pit toilets. Picnic tables, grills, fire rings, and trash cans will also be replaced as warranted. Landscape planting in the intensive and extensive use areas will continue as needed.

The park road system and parking lots will be seal-coated during phase 3. In addition, picnic tables, grills, fire rings, and garbage cans will be replaced as conditions indicate. If necessary, a beach curb and bathhouse will be constructed. Phase 3 will also see the continuation of extensive and intensive area planting and renovation or replacement of various recreational facilities.

In addition to the preceding man-made structures, land restoration will be undertaken to complete the development and management of the property. Trees and shrubs will be planted to add additional buffer and canopy in the picnic area and campgrounds. Grasslands and prairie vegetation will be maintained to add diversity of cover type. Mowing and burning will be utilized as appropriate to maintain desired grass and turf cover.

Management

The park has a permanent manager and is operated as part of the Perrot Work Unit. Personnel include two permanent and five LTE's, whose duties range from sticker sales to maintenance to lifeguarding. In the future, additional LTE labor may be needed, with emphasis on naturalist training for the summer-use months. As a unit of the Wisconsin State Park system, Merrick has been developed and managed under Chapter 27, Laws of

Wisconsin; specifically, Section 27.01, which governs state parks. The property is also managed under the provisions of Wisconsin Administrative Code 45, which contains the rules of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources pertaining to the conduct of visitors at state parks, state forests, and other property under the jurisdiction of the Department.

Lands within the park area are classified as intensive recreational development and extensive recreation area. Presently, Merrick has 71 acres of land developed for intensive recreational use. Future development will occur within this area and therefore not add to the intensive recreation area development classification. The remaining 294 acres would be classified extensive recreation area.

Land Control

As of December 31, 1982, state ownership at Merrick State Park was 324.77 acres. It is recommended that the current park boundary be revised to exclude approximately 75 acres of land east of Highway 35 and include a privately owned, undeveloped, four-acre parcel located on the north end of the property. Thus, 41.45 acres of privately owned lands remained to be purchased within the revised property boundary. The new acreage goal for Merrick State Park is 366.22 acres.

2. Purpose and Need (include history and background as appropriate).

Merrick State Park was established in 1932. Approximately 265 acres of the park's land was purchased in the late 1920's by Mr. John A. Latch of Winona, Minnesota. It was donated to the Department so that all might enjoy this picturesque area. Additional land was acquired from private landowners to complement this intitial donation and to provide a large enough resource base to develop needed recreational facilities.

This master plan narrative is being prepared in accord with Natural Resources Board and Department policy. The primary purpose of this master plan is to guide the development, operations, and maintenance of the property for the next 10 years and provide recreational facilities to accommodate approximately 121,000 annual visitations for day use and 22,500 camper days. Activities offered at this property include camping, picnicking, hiking, swimming, fishing, and general nature education, as well as a variety of other related activities.

The 1981 State Outdoor Recreation Plan for Region 7, which includes Pepin, Buffalo, Trempealeau, Jackson, Monroe, La Crosse, Vernon, and Crawford Counties, notes that there is a need for developed camping, primitive campsites, and pleasure walking trails. The study further indicates there is no need for additional cross-country ski trails or snowmobile trails. At the present time, campsite occupancy figures are not high enough at Merrick to justify campground expansion. Similarly, picnic area and related facilities are sufficient to meet demand, based on the annual visitation figures. Therefore, most of the proposed development for Merrick State Park is centered around replacement facilities. The major new facility, the shower/flush-toilet building, is proposed due to camper demand as identified in the 1980 Wisconsin Camper Survey initiated by the Recreational Resources Center, University of

Wisconsin Extension, and done in cooperation with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Wisconsin Association of Campground Owners, Woodall's Publishing Company, Trailer Life Enterprises, and Rand McNally & Company. This study indicated that nearly 71% of all campers indicated a desire to have hot showers available.

3. Authorities and Approvals (list statutory authority and other relevant local, state and federal permits or approvals required)

Statutory authority to initiate Section 27.01 of Wisconsin Statutes.

Permits or approvals required: Natural Resources Board and Governor, pursuant to Section 30.12.

Participants notified of above requirements - yes

Does this proposal comply with floodplain and local zoning requirements - Yes. More specifically, the boat mooring post located adjacent to the campsites in the south campground will be placed and approved in accord with Manual Code 3565.1. In addition, the proposed handicapped-accessible fishing dock will be constructed in accord with Section 30.13 which allow riparian landowners to construct docks. Finally, the proposed replacement of sealed-vault pit toilets will be constructed in accord with H63, which covers private sewer systems and all Buffalo County sanitary zoning ordinances will be complied with.

4. Estimated Cost and Funding Source

The total estimated development cost, based on 1982 figures, is $278,000. ORAP, LAWCON, and other funds will be used as they become available.

PROPOSED PHYSICAL CHANGES

5. Manipulation of Terrestrial Resources (include relevant quantities - sq. ft., cu. yds., etc.)

The shower/toilet building will encompass approximately 800 square feet. The septic system will include a 1600- to 2000-gallon capacity septic tank and an approximately 2500 square foot septic field. Excavation of the foundation, septic tank, and drain field should be around 50 cubic yards. That material will be spread on-site and graded and landscaped to improve surface drainage and eliminate hauling of the surplus soil. The proposed four-unit combination vault pit toilet, located near the south campground, will call for the excavation of approximately 40 cubic yards of soil. Similar to the shower building site, the excavated material will be used for landscaping the site adjacent to the building. Renovation of the retaining walls near the boat launch and beach area will entail the replacement of approximately 100 square feet of rock. Similar to the south campground toilet, the north campground will have a four-unit combination vault toilet constructed to replace two existing single unit vault toilets. It is anticipated that 40 cubic yards of material will be excavated and worked into the site and landscaped. The new shelter house and bathhouse proposed under phase 3 will be

constructed on a floating concrete slab and calls for very little excavation. As the existing shelter and bathhouse structures are in relatively good condition, new structures may not be erected within the 10-year period covered by this master plan proposal. The remaining development items include slight modification of existing buildings or the replacement of such facilities as picnic tables, grills, fire rings, garbage cans, and the like and, therefore should have no major impact on terrestrial resources. Some tree removal may take place as needed for the health, safety, and welfare of the park visitor and some tree and shrub planting will occur to provide shade and screening in the various campground use areas. In addition, some vegetative clearing and pruning will occur to create vistas along Fountain City Bay, as seen from various use areas and campgrounds.

6. Manipulation of Aquatic Resources (include relevant quantities - cfs., acre feet, MGD, etc.)

It is proposed that 41 boat mooring posts will be located at the toe of the riprap adjacent to the south campground campsites. Manual Code 3565.1 and any appropriate Buffalo County zoning ordinances will be adhered. The posts should be about 6 x 6 x 10 foot so that at least 5-6 feet of posts can be driven into the material at the toe of the riprap. In addition, the proposed fishing pier will entail the construction of a wooden deck located on 12, 6 x 6 x 16 foot long, wood pilings. The fishing pier will be located on the lagoon just north of the existing bathhouse. Any water flow manipulation or instream structures done by Fish and Wildlife Management will consider park interests and concerns.

7. Buildings, Treatment Units, Roads and Other Structures

There is one shower/toilet building proposed which will cover approximately 800 square feet. This structure will call for a 2500 square foot septic field and a 1600- to 2000-gallon septic tank. In addition, it is proposed that two four-unit combination vault pit toilets be constructed: one each in the north and south campground. Each structure is approximately 11 x 19 feet and would call for the excavation of approximately 40 cubic yards of soil for the vault holding tank. The barn renovation would entail removal of the upper portion of the barn and replacement with a gable roof over the lower stone and masonary portion of the structure. The modification to the existing shelter building (opposite the service road) would call for the construction of screens to enclose the existing open area for evening programs. The proposed new shelter building would be 600 square feet and will be comprised of a concrete slab, post and truss roof. The beach curb, if constructed, would be approximately 150 feet long and 1-2 feet in height. It would be used to separate the sand area from the grass area at the existing beach. The bathhouse, if needed, will be approximately 20 x 20, or 400 square feet, and include change stalls and toilet similar to the existing building.

8. Emissions and Discharges

Proposed additional development and subsequent use of the property is not expected to significantly affect Wisconsin's air quality. However, some local noise and air pollution might be expected during construction due to some heavy equipment operation and disruption of surface conditions. Vehicular traffic is expected to increase 3-5% into and through the area within the next 10 years and will add some to the noise and potential air pollution. These emissions, however, are not expected to significantly affect the ambient air quality. Fossil fuels and lubricants consumed by construction equipment and that used for labor and materials will be consumed and will result in some CO_2 emissions. Secondary emissions and discharges will be created through fuel and electricity needed to operate the facility. Up to 7600 gallons of water and effluent could be discharged per day into the septic system associated with the proposed shower/toilet building.

9. Other Changes

Minor work on the existing nature trail will be undertaken to better interpret natural features. Renovation will center on the replacement and addition of nature interpretation labels and posts. In addition, some nature trail surfacing with limestone screenings or similar material ill be undertaken to upgrade the trail tread. The replacement of picnic tables, grills, fire rings, garbage cans, and so forth should have little, if any, additional impact on the natural resource but have positive value for the park visitor. The vista cutting and landscape planting will be done to maximize user enjoyment in the way of providing shade, privacy and views of the surrounding bluffs and river valley features.

10. Attach Maps, Plans and Other Descriptive Material as Appropriate (list)

1. Locator Map
2. Development Map
3. Ownership Map

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

Information Based On (check all that apply):

X Literature/correspondence
X Personal Contacts (list in item 31)
Field Analysis By: X Author, X Other (list in item 31)
Past Experience With Site By: X Author,
X Other (list in item 31)

11. Physical (topography - soils - water - air - wetland amounts and types)

The oldest underlying rock formation in Buffalo County is Pre-Cambrian granite. Proceeding upward from the granite, the deposits become younger and are sedimentary formations formed in a marine environment and consist of Pre-Cambrian sandstone and of Prairie du Chien dolomite. These make up most of the bedrock underlying the county. Because it is harder and more resistent than sandstone, the dolomite is the principle rock making up the ridges. Erosion of the dolomite and sandstone bedrock has been carried on over a long period of time and, as a result, deep valleys were formed. The Franconia sandstone forms narrow, steep, intermediate ridges and is probably the single most important determiner of Buffalo County's topography. Prairie du Chien dolomite is the second most important. Loess, Alluvium, and Colluvium are the uppermost deposits. They are the parent materials for many of the soils in Buffalo County. Soils within Merrick State Park include Hubbard, Loamy Alluvial land, Plainfield loamy fine sand, sandy Alluvial land, Sparta loamy fine sand, and loamy and sandy Terrace Escarpments. Most of these soils are somewhat excessively drained, deep, sandy soils on the nearly level terraces along streams and can be considered dune land. The Plainfield and Sparta soils are susceptible to wind and water erosion and are highly susceptible to gullying if they are not protected from runoff from adjacent areas. The supply of plant nutrients is naturally low in these soils. The loamy alluvial land, located in the area between the boat launch and south campground, consists of highly variable, medium-textured material. The sediments from which it forms were transported by water.

Waters in, and adjacent to, the park contain a diversity of fish habitat and productive fisheries where significant spawning, rearing, dwelling, and overwintering occur. During the 1975-79 GREAT sponsored fishery inventory, 62 fish species were collected in the area adjacent to the park. These communities consisted of a well-balanced mixture of commercial, sport, and forage fish species typical of other high-quality Mississippi River backwaters. Prevailing winds are westerly. Winds from the southwest bring most of the rain in spring, summer, and fall. In winter, however, stronger winds blow in from the northwest, often bringing low temperatures with them. The air quality is clean, reflecting a lack of point sources of pollution in the immediate vicinity.

12. Biological

a) Flora

Originally, most of the park was prairie land with an occasional bur oak being present. Swamp hardwoods exist in the lower campground in the area. Forest cover consists of lowland hardwoods along waterways and about eight acres of pine plantations which were established approximately 35 years ago. Non-timber types are located in the day-use areas. Because of the droughty, sandy soils, hardwood propagation has been limited and therefore there is sizable grassland acreage within the park. There are no known rare, unique, or endangered plant communities present within the property boundary. However, as time and funds permit, a total inventory should be taken.

b) Fauna

Common game species and furbearers include whitetail deer, gray squirrel, red fox, raccoon, muskrat, mink, and beaver. Waterfowl include mallards and wood ducks. A list of birds compiled for the Whitman Dam Wildlife Area master plan, which is adjacent to Merrick State Park, can be reviewed for a further list of species.

13. Social/Economic (include ethnic and cultural groups, and zoning if applicable)

The property is situated in the area predominantly rural in nature. Surrounding lands are used for crops, pasture, woodland, and scattered, rural residental development. It is about 40 miles from the metropolitan La Crosse area and about a two-hour drive from the heavily populated Minneapolis/St. Paul metropolitan area. Primary access to the park is provided by State Trunk Highway "35" (the Great River Road).

All revenues collected from the sales of admission stickers and campground registration are remitted to a segregated fund from which operation and maintenance are partially subsidized.

14. Other Special Resources (e.g., archaeological, historical, endangered/ threatened species, scientific areas, natural areas)

The State Historical Society has investigated the "Indian Mounds" located near the north end of the south campground. It is their belief that the "Original Indian Mounds" were excavated possibly in the 1920's, prior to state ownership. There was at that time, nothing found indicating a burial site. There are no other known historical and/or archeaological sites located within Merrick State Park. There are no known endangered or threatened species of mammal or bird inhabiting the park; however, a variety of birds such as the Bald Eagle and Osprey do migrate through the area. Fish species listed as endangered or threatened in Wisconsin that were collected during the GREAT-sponsored fishery inventory (1975-79) for the Whitman Dam Wildlife Area included the river redhorse, mud darter, and pugnose shiner. As Merrick State Park abuts the same water as the Whitman Dam Wildlife Area, it is anticipated that these same species of fish are present. There are no known rare, unique, or endangered plant communities or species present within the boundary.

<u>ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES (probable adverse and beneficial impacts including indirect and secondary impacts)</u>

15. Physical (include visual if applicable)

Limited new development and major building maintenance of recreational facilities within the existing intensive recreation area will have little impact on the property and its surrounding area. Use is expected to increase 10-15% over the next 10-year period. However, based on the

facilities available and existing use figures, this increase should not overtax the recreational resource. If anything, it should make the day-use area and especially the campground more efficient due to increased occupancy. Maintenance of the resource, its man-made features, and vegetative diversity should maximize user enjoyment and perceptions as well as provide some diversity of habitat. The resulting diversity and numbers of wildlife will have its primary benefit associated with viewing by the park visitor.

Development and use of the property is not expected to significantly affect Wisconsin's air quality. However, some local noise and air pollution might be expected during construction due to heavy equipment operation and disrupted surface conditions. Some increase in vehicular traffic into and through the area will add to noise and potential air pollution. These emissions, however, are not expected to significantly affect the ambient air quality.

Highway "35" provides immediate access to the property. The highway should easily accommodate the expected 3%-5% traffic volume increase (5,880 vehicles annually) by the end of the 10-year period. Construction of the two pit toilets, shower/toilet/shelter building and possibly replacement of the existing bath house should entail the excavation of 150-200 cubic yards of material.

16. Biological

The number and type of plant species at Merrick State Park will change somewhat due to natural succession, interuption of succession, and planting of various plant stock. Removal of dead and dying trees will occur to ensure a healthy timber stand and ensure visitor safety. Some vegetative clearing and brushing will occur to create vistas along Fountain City Bay. This would include some tree removal, limb cutting, and occasional mowing to keep down woody growth. Timber harvest will occur on the small pine plantations as called for by the area forester. Disrupted land near construction sites will be reseeded and planted with native tree and shrub species, as well as various ground covers.

17. Social/Economic (include ethnic and cultural groups and zoning if applicable)

Improvement of park facilities will result in better service to the public. Providing hot showers will increase campsite utilization and duration of stay and therefore should increase campsite registration revenue. Remodeling and, in some instances, replacement of some obsolete facilities should also increase park user satisfaction and lead to increased use and duration of stay. This, in turn, would provide economic benefits through increased park admission sticker sales as well. It is expected that the park will continue to generate local commercial sale for such things as gasoline, picnic and camping supplies, and related items. If the listed development projects are implemented, at least $278,000 will be put into the regional economy.

There are two management problems worthy of discussion. The first relates to the south campground shoreline, and its history of erosion caused by people who removed riprap rock to expose the underlying sand in order to moor boats near their campsites. This rock was placed on the shoreline to guard against soil erosion due to floodwaters and occasional high waters during the remainder of the year. Historically, the displaced rock was put back in place during the fall of the year through the use of a backhoe. However, the backhoe is no longer stationed on the property and therefore, this yearly maintenance no longer occurs. Most recently, a $9,000 riprap project was undertaken to repair and replace rock that had been removed by campsite occupants.

In order to eliminate this recurring rock displacement, a policy of no onshore boat mooring adjacent to the campsites should be initiated. A mooring post will be located at the toe of the riprap. All posts will be numbered to correspond to the site registration post. Boats will only be allowed to tie up to the post and no onshore boat mooring will be permitted. If more than one boat would be at a campsite, the option would be multiple tie-up, moor at a designed mooring site east of the old boat lauch, or trailer the boat.

Boat mooring adjacent to the campsite will be monitored closely. If campers move the riprap, they can expect to lose mooring privileges adjacent to the south campground sites, as well as be cited for destruction of park property. The alternative boat mooring site will be that area east of the old boat launch and site 1 of the south campground.

A second management problem concerns boat congestion on Fountain City Bay. Boat use on the Bay between the south campground and west end of the beach is very heavy. Boat use includes fishing, canoeing, sightseeing, and waterskiing. The greatest potential conflict results from high speed associated with general sight-seeing and waterskiing, and slow-moving boats such as canoes. Waterskiing, which quite often originates from the campsite, adds to the congestion due to the narrowness of Fountain City Bay, trailing ski ropes, and the direction of travel, which is usually perpendicular to the shoreline. Due to this condition and the anticipated increase in use of the park and campsites, it is suggested that boat use be monitored and, if needed, a slow no-wake speed zone be implemented between the south end of the south campground and the west end of the beach. Such action would have to be a combined effort between the Department and local unit of government.

18. Other Special Resources (e.g., archaeological, historical, endangered/threatened species, scientific areas, natural areas)

Based on past use of the property, proposed development, operations, and information regarding the resource, it is not anticipated that actions called for within this master plan will have any adverse environmental consequences.

19. Probable Adverse Impacts That Cannot be Avoided

Increased presence of man within the park may mean some interference with wildlife habitat and plant damage. The construction stage would expose some soil to water and wind erosion. Some dirt and noise would also be created during construction. Air pollution emissions to the atmosphere would increase slightly due to increased auto traffic into and out of the area. Some minor grading will take place around construction sites, however; this will only minimally alter existing topography and drainage patterns. Some soil erosion could occur at construction sites; however, this would be minimized through the use of appropriate erosion control techniques. Increased use could possibly increase the need for public services such as police and fire protection, as well as medical attention. Gasoline and other fuels will be consumed by people coming to the park, as well as by maintenance vehicles. Traffic will increase on the state highway leading to the property; however, this increase is so minimal, it is not expected to have any great effect on traffic volume.

ALTERNATIVES (no action - enlarge - reduce - modify - other locations and/or methods)

20. Identify, describe and discuss feasible alternatives to the proposed action and their impacts. Give particular attention to alternatives which might avoid some or all adverse environmental effects.

No Additional Acquisition and No Additional Development

This alternative would provide for no further acquisition or development. The Department would merely retain and manage the existing resource and its recreational facilities. This alternative is not desirable since the property was acquired for recreational purposes in order to meet the needs of the recreating public. No additional acquisition within the park boundary could lead to encroachment of undesirable land uses, as well as create potential safety problems. Similarly, no additional development could lead to degredation of the resource along with its facilities, and could lead to safety problems.

Reduce and Alter Acquisition Boundary

This alternative would provide for the elimination of all land east of State Trunk Highway "35." In addition, a small strip of land paralleling the north boundary and adjacent to a township road would be included within the boundary. The property north and east of State Trunk "35" could be eliminated from the park boundary with little or no impact to the park as it presently exists and therefore could be considered surplus. The area to be acquired on the north property boundary would give us access to the township road and eliminate any potential future conflict which would be created by campground expansion adjacent to this site. It is anticipated that this privately owned parcel could be developed for residential or commercial use.

Moderate Additional Development on Existing Stateowned Land

This alternative would call for providing additional facilities such as a shower building, modification of a shelter building to be used as an interpretive center and upgrading and replacement of existing recreational facilities. This alternative is desirable in that it will ensure the maintenance of a high quality recreational facility, maximize user enjoyment, and eliminate any potential safety problems.

Additional Large Scale Development on Lands Within the Park Boundary

This alternative would include all actions under #3 and would provide for the development of additional campsites adjacent to the north campground. Campground expansion to the north may become necessary after the shower and flush toilet building is constructed. A new bathhouse and beach curb would also be constructed under this alternative. However, due to the supply and demand data within the Outdoor Recreation Plan, specific park use data, and condition of existing facilities such as the bathhouse, this alternative does not appear feasible at the present time.

EVALUATION (discuss each category. Attach additional sheets and other pertinent information if necessary.)

21. Secondary Effects: As a result of this action, is it likely that other events or actions will happen that may significantly affect the environment? If so, list here and reference their discussion in items 15-18 as appropriate.

    Future development generally provides for the replacement of deteriorating recreational facilities. Such development is anticipated to generate additional use and, therefore, traffic into the area. The area economy may realize some minimal growth due to commercial sales.

22. New Environmental Effect: Does the action alter the environment so a new physical, biological or socio-economic environment would exist? If so, list here and reference their discussion in items 5-10 or 15-18 as appropriate.

    The proposed development action will not result in significant change to the social, physical, or biological environment of the property because similar facilities and recreational activities have been provided for since 1932.

23. Geographically Scarce: Are the existing environmental features that would be affected by the proposed action scarce, either locally or statewide? If so, list here and reference their discussion in items 15-18 as appropriate.

Merrick State Park is one of six state parks located on the Mississippi and St. Croix river systems and therefore would probably not be considered scarce on a statewide basis. However, the park is heavily used by the local citizenry from Minnesota, as well as Wisconsin, and therefore would have a detrimental impact if it were removed from the Wisconsin State Park System.

24. Precedent: Does the action and its effect(s) require a decision which would result in influencing future decisions? Describe.

One development item (the shower/flush toilet building) may in fact set a precedent for the construction of a similar facility at other properties which do not presently have showers. Because of the high demand identified in the 1980 Campground User Survey for hot showers, it is anticipated that campground visitation and duration of stay will increase due to this added amenity. The Department will also be able to charge a higher campsite registration fee which may add additional operation revenue to the park systems's segregated account.

25. Controversy: Discuss and describe concerns which indicate a serious controversy or unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources.

Mooring of boats adjacent to campsites in the south campground could become controversial. As stated earlier, if the campers do not use the mooring posts and in fact move rock on the shoreline to moor their boats, they will lose this privilege which they had for the past 40 some years. Therefore, a public education and awareness program will be initiated at the property this next use season. The alternative is to lose all mooring rights adjacent to the campsites with an alternative mooring area established to the north and west of the south campground near the old boat launch.

A second point of controversy may arise as a result of the boating congestion on Fountain City Bay. If it is found that the congestion and varied use create hazardous conditions, a slow no-wake zone may be established adjacent to the park. This, however, would have to be a combined effort of local units of government and the state as only they have the authority to initiate such an ordinance.

26. Consistency With Plans: Does the action conflict with local or agency zoning or with official agency plans or policy of local, state or federal government (e.g., NR 1.95)? If so, how? Refer to applicable comments in item 31.

No conflicts are known or became evident during the review process. This project is in accord with local, county, and state outdoor recreation plans. The project will not negatively affect adjacent lands.

27. Cumulative Impacts: While the action by itself may be limited in scope, would repeated actions of this type result in major or significant impacts to the environment?

Additional actions of this type would generally upgrade existing state park properties. Due to the location of the proposed development and major building maintenance items on existing intensive recreation development areas, there should be little significant impact to the natural environment. However, there should be a significant impact on the recreation environment and park user due to more modern, clean, and convenient facilities.

28. Foreclose Future Options: Is the action irreversible? Will it commit a resource (e.g., energy, habitat, historical features) for the foreseeable future?

Some fuel, wear and tear on the machinery, and depletion of resource materials in non-recoverable as is the manpower utilized in the planning, construction, and operation of the park. Fuel and other energy sources used to power vehicles to and from the park would be irretrievable. Similarly, energy used to maintain the property would be permanently committed. Funds used to develop the area will be irretrievably committed as well. For all practical purposes, roads, parking lots, and buildings will be permanently committed and the materials will basically be unsalvageable due to salvage costs. However, land covered by these facilities could retrievable as roads are often obliterated, regraded, and revegetated. Abandoned building foundations are also often removed and the resulting site is often regraded and revegetated.

29. Socio-cultural Impacts: Will action result in direct or indirect impacts on ethnic or cultural groups or alter social patterns?

Yes, as indicated earlier, there may be a change in use patterns as regards boat mooring at the south campground. There are many long-time users of that campground that are accustomed to mooring their boats on shore and they'll have to be informed and educated as to why the policy has been changed due to the cost involved with reoccurring replacement of riprap and erosion control. The mooring post is a compromise which we feel should allow for mooring near the campsite yet safeguard the riprap against displacement for mooring purposes.

30) Other: None

LIST OF AGENCIES, GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED REGARDING THE PROJECT (Include DNR personnel and title)

31.	Date	Contact	Comments
1.	9-78	William Green, Archeologist, State Historical Society	Contacted by Kermit Traska, Manager Merrick State Park "Indian Mound" inspection and findings. Their files do not contain any specific information on the extent of excavation of the mounds at Merrick and they question their authenticity.

2.	1-82	Jim Lissack	Contacted by Ron Nicotera. Establish Merrick State Park Master Plan Task force. Members include Mike Ries, Chairman; Ralph Duellman, Property Manager; Ed Godel, Forest Manager; Jim Everson, Law Enforcement; Dave Linderud, Wildlife Management; Mike Talbot, Fish Management; Dick Mertig, Land Agent.
3.	3-82	Dennis Konkol Bureau of Parks & Rec.	Contacted by Mike Ries, West Central District Park Planner. Land Acquisition goal and boundary for Merrick State Park sent to Planner from Central Office.
4.	3-22-82	Cliff Germain Research	Contacted by Mike Ries. Scientific Area input into Merrick State Park. Findings: No suitable areas for scientific, natural, or wild area due to limited land base and resource.
5.	3-22-82	Master Planning Task Force	Contacted by Mike Ries. Initial Task Force meeting to discuss resource topics, work assignments, goal and objective statements and general master plan time table.
6.	4-23-82	Master Planning Task Force	Contacted by Mike Ries. Initial Task Force meeting summary and work assignment memo.
7.	4-21-82	Dave Weizenicker Bureau of Parks & Rec.	Contacted by Mike Ries. Task Force recommendation for preliminary goal and objective statement.
8.	6-30-82	Park Manager & Park Planner Inspection of Merrick State Park	Discussion of operations, maintenance, and development topics and property inspections for master plan.
9.	Mar-May	Task Force Members	Contacted by Mike Ries. Resource data need and input submitted for master plan covering recreation, wildlife, forestry, fisheries, land acquisition, parks management.
10.	5-24-82	Jim Huntoon - ADM/5	Contacted by Dave Weizenicker. Goal and objectives for Merrick State Park approved by District Director, Bureau Director, and Division Administrator end of May, 1982 and resubmitted to Master Planning Task Force for action and implementation.

11.	7-22-82	Task Force Meeting Alma	Review of Task force report goal and objectives, and plan of action discussed.
12.	9-7-82	Dick Mertig	Contacted by Mike Ries. Acquisition and boundary review and clarification and inclusion in master plan document.
13.	8-26-82	Task Force	Contacted by Mike Ries. Summary of of second task force meeting and work assignments.
14.	9-13-82	Mike Ries	Contacted by Ralph Duellman and Alan Middendorp. Personnel needs and LTE conversion proposal.
15.	Sep-Nov 19, 1982	Master Planning Task Work Unit Manager Various Area functions	Review and comment on conceptual master plan for Merrick State Park
16.	11-82	Ed Bourget, District Water Management Coordinator	Contacted by Mike Ries. Permits needed for mooring posts adjacent to south campground shoreline riprap; need to comply with Manual Code 3565.1.
17.	12-7-82	Ed Bourget; Gary Lepak	Fishing access pier can be built by riparian landowner is exempt from permit requirement under 30.13.
18.	12-7-82	Gary Lepak	Permits needed or codes required for replacement of vault toilet structure to conform with H63, covering private sewage systems and also contact with Mike Hassett, Buffalo County Zoning Administrator regarding county sanitary zoning, which would cover the placement of that structure.

Project Name: Merrick State Park Master Plan County: Buffalo

RECOMMENDATION

EIS Not Required X

Analysis of the expected impacts of this proposal is of sufficient scope and detail to conclude that this is not a major action which would significantly affect the quality of the human environment. In my opinion, therefore, an environmental impact statement is not required prior to final action by the Department on this project.

#1392

Refer to Office of the Secretary . . . . . .

Major and Significant Action: Prepare EIS . . . . . .

Request EIR . . . . . .

Additional factors, if any, affecting the evaluator's recommendation:

Signature of Evalutor Date

Michael F. Rice 12-20-82

Noted: Area Director or Bureau Director Date

James Nuerdel for D. Weizenicker 6/27/83

Number of responses to public notice 0

Public response log attached?.....

CERTIFIED TO BE IN COMPLIANCE WITH WEPA

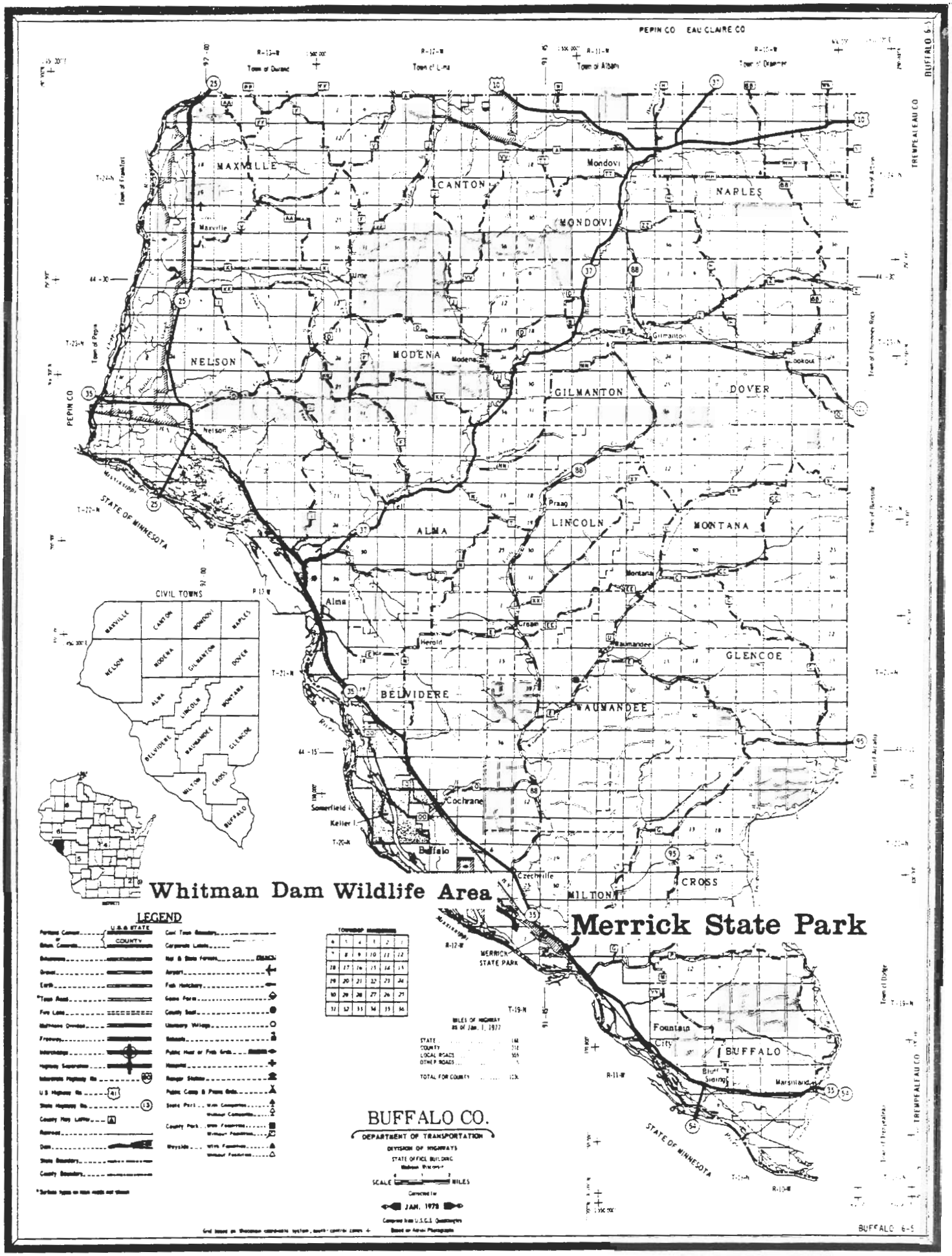
District Director or Director of BEI (or Designee) Date

Lewis Posekany 10/18/83

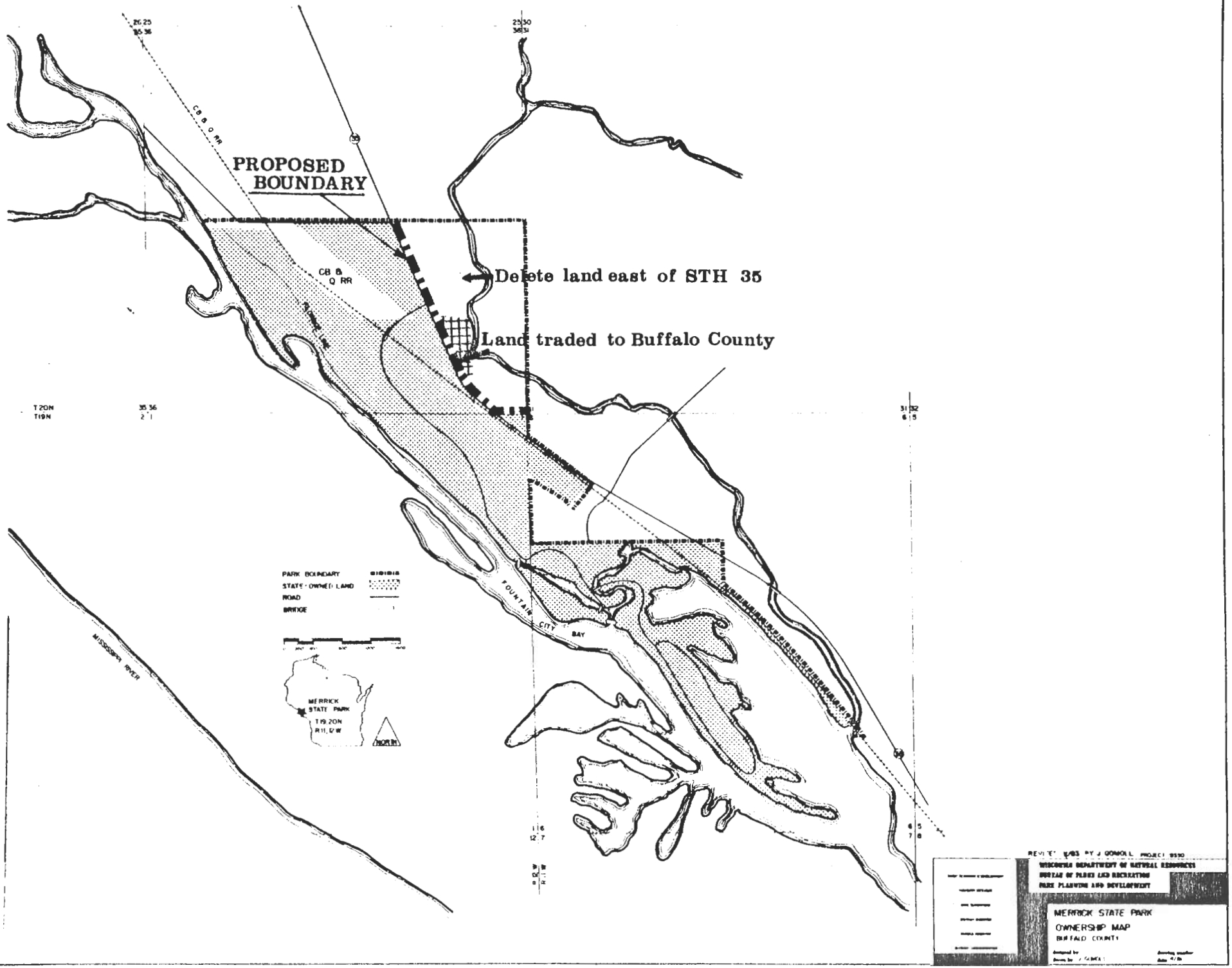
DS 12/20/82

This decision is not final until certified by the appropriate District Director or the Director of BEI. If you believe you have a right to challenge this decision, you should know that Wisconsin Statutes and Administrative Codes establish time periods within which requests to review Department decisions must be filed. For judicial review of a decision pursuant to ss. 227.15 and 227.16, Stats., you have 30 days after service of the decision to file your petition for review. The respondent in an action for judicial review is the Department of Natural Resources. You may wish to seek legal counsel to determine your specific legal rights to challenge a decision. This notice is provided pursuant to s. 227.11(2), Stats.

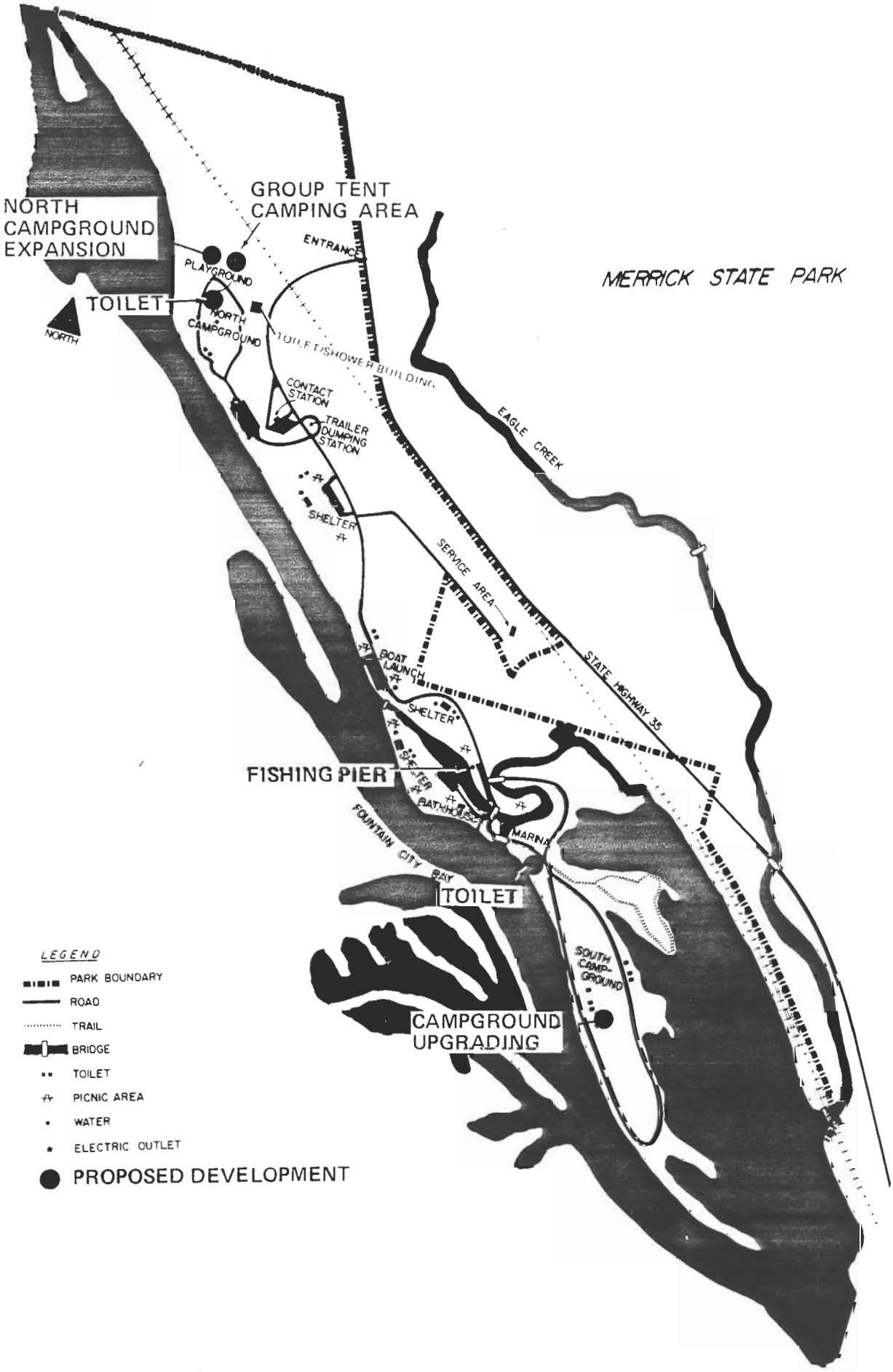
MRT036



COUNTY LOCATOR MAP FIGURE 1



OWNERSHIP MAP FIGURE 2



DEVELOPMENT MAP—PRESENT & PROPOSED FIGURE 3