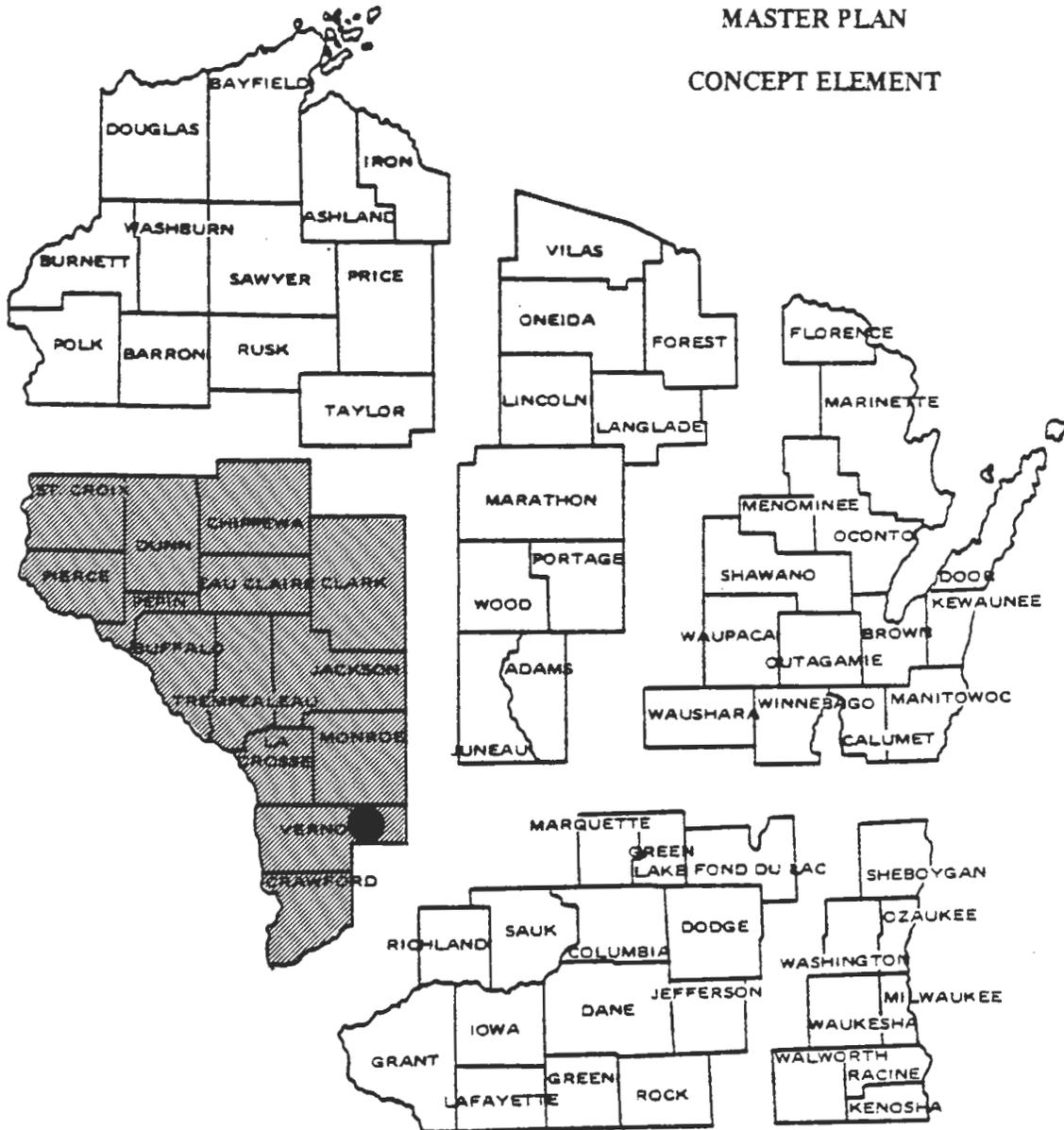


WILDCAT MOUNTAIN STATE PARK

MASTER PLAN

CONCEPT ELEMENT



Property Task Force

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Approved By: ~~Natural Resources Board~~

Date: ~~October, 1984~~

WILDCAT MOUNTAIN STATE PARK
CONCEPTUAL MASTER PLAN

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SECTION I - ACTION

A. GOAL, OBJECTIVES, AND ADDITIONAL BENEFITS

GOAL

To provide a scenic state park which will serve the recreational, educational, and nature experience needs of 175,000 visitors annually, while preserving, protecting, and conserving the resource for present and future generations.

ANNUAL OBJECTIVES

1. Provide and maintain recreational facilities to accommodate 120,000 picnickers and other day-users.
2. Provide a quality recreational experience for 30,000 campers by developing and maintaining camping facilities.
3. Provide and maintain trails to accommodate 25,000 hikers, nature trail users, horseback riders, and cross-country skiers.
4. Provide boat/canoe access to the Kickapoo River for 50,000 users.
5. Provide and maintain a recreational fishery on Billings Creek to accommodate 2,500 angler days.
6. To maintain the deer herd in balance with the carrying capacity of the range through the use of special hunting seasons; the need for which will be determined on a yearly basis.
7. To manage and maintain the property's scenic and natural qualities by restoring and maintaining a diversity of vegetative cover types for the life of the property.
8. To accommodate individuals who are handicapped through the proper design, construction, and management of the property and its facilities.
9. Expand the Mt. Pisgah Hemlock Hardwood Scientific Area by 35 acres and classify 130 acres as public use natural area.

ADDITIONAL BENEFITS

Provide for other recreational and educational uses, including: bird watching, wildlife observation, gathering of nuts, berries, and mushrooms, and photography.

B. RECOMMENDED MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

The recommended management development alternative is limited additional acquisition and development. This alternative will provide for a full

complement of recreational facilities, as well as provide for the protection and preservation of the natural environment. Use will increase approximately 25% during the next 10-year period following approval of the master plan and subsequent construction of new facilities as outlined in this plan.

1. Development

Development of the property will be phased in accordance with available funding. The first phase will focus on the construction at the horse trail camp. Development recommendations for this use area include the replacement of the present single-unit toilet with our standard 4-unit toilet. In addition, two group campsites, one toilet building, and a corral will be added to the existing facility. It is also proposed to construct an additional 3-4 mile long horse trail north of the horsemen's camp. Part of the trail will go through the 210-acre parcel of land which was donated to the park in the mid-1970's and includes a site where a memorial plaque would be erected to recognize this donor.

A second phase 1 project is the development of five canoe campsites adjacent to the Kickapoo River with tables, fire rings, and two - 4'x4' single-unit toilets.

A third item under phase 1 includes the construction of backpack campsites. This development project addresses the numerous requests the DNR has had for backpack camping by permit. The sites would be located within an 850-acre area east of County Trunk "F". Access will be from a parking lot located off of County Trunk "F", thus requiring the campers to hike approximately one mile into the campsites. Development will include two 4'x4' single-unit toilets, signing, fire rings, and well. Approximately five sites would be developed initially with more being considered as demand and need warranted.

Cross-country ski trails will be extended into the area east of County Trunk "F". These trails will also provide winter access to the backpack campsites located in this area. The existing five miles of snowmobile trail will be eliminated from this area; however, provision will be made for connector trails to link the local approved trails.

Miscellaneous developments to occur during phase 1 will include the seasonal enclosure of the existing octagon shelter building by installing insulated walls, windows, door, and fireplace so the structure can be used as a warming house for winter visitors involved in activities such as skiing, hiking, etc. Electricity would be required for interior lighting. Boundary fencing, vista and overlook clearing, replacement of one toilet building in the north picnic area, and construction of low earth berm water retention structures will be undertaken during phase 1.

Phase 2 development will include the construction of the new 75-unit family campground and subsequent removal of the existing 30-unit campground. The present campground is located near the steep entrance area. All vehicles going to the upper park area pass through this campground, making camper pedestrian-vehicular traffic a problem in addition to creating a lack of privacy and a less than quality camping experience for the campers. All registration is done at the office or on the grounds because of the steep entrance road. In addition to being poorly located, the family campground has too few sites for efficient operation. Seventy-five to 150 campsites is considered a management unit. On weekends, the campground always fills and a varying number of units are generally turned away from the middle of May through the middle of October. A private campground located within six miles of the park has helped somewhat with overflow camping accommodations.

One of the most requested items from campers is a shower facility. Most of the people visiting the park are participating in some form of physical activity such as hiking, biking, horseback riding, or canoeing, and feel a definite need to wash up with something other than a cold sponge bath. The new campground, to be located on a site northeast of the park office, should include a new well, toilets, shower, dumping station, and other facilities usually associated with family campgrounds.

The second phase 2 development project would also entail improving the existing group camp by upgrading the group camp road from a single lane to a two-lane, asphalt surface roadway. In addition, the existing shelter which is approximately 35-40 years old should be replaced sometime in the near future. The proposed road will service not only the group camp, but also the proposed new family campground.

A 6-10 stall parking lot is proposed to provide walk-in access to the ice cave trail and picnic area. This new parking area is needed to replace the existing narrow, single-lane road leading into the present parking lot and picnic area. Since the existing road passes between a 25-foot-high rock escarpment and Billings Creek, widening it would entail considerable expense. Proposed development of the parking lot between the roadway and County Trunk "F" would alleviate the need to widen the narrow roadway. The remaining road corridor leading into the picnic area will be gated, creating a walk-in site.

Upon completion of the new family campground development, the existing campground will be eliminated and the 9-acre site will be converted into a picnic area and visitor/nature center. This will involve the construction of a visitor contact station and offices for park personnel. Sticker sales, camper registration, and park administration will be handled out of this building during the summer use season. In addition, some space will be included for interpretive displays. Support facilities will include parking, toilet building, grills, and landscaping, including vista clearing

and railing construction along the ridge overlooking the scenic Kickapoo Valley.

Other phase 2 development will include boundary fencing, intensive and extensive area vegetative management, prairie restoration, construction of low earth berm water retention devices (as needed), and construction of an amphitheater.

The area west of the Kickapoo River is approximately 300 acres in size and has varied terrain including rock-out crops and vegetative cover. This makes the area an excellent site for the extension of the hemlock nature trail. Thus, phase 3 development calls for an additional 3-4 miles of trail and the construction of a pedestrian footbridge across the river.

Other development items include the construction of a new entrance sign, boundary fencing, vegetative management including vista and overlook clearing, and continuation of the extensive and intensive area planting as well as renovation and/or replacement of various support facilities.

Completion of the above development items, estimated to cost \$710,000, will be dependent upon available funds and statewide priorities. Additional and/or up-to-date justification will also be required.

All areas proposed for development will be examined for the presence of endangered or threatened wild animals and wild plants. If list species are found, development will be suspended until the District endangered and non-game species coordinator is consulted, the site evaluated, and appropriate protective measures taken.

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.

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 nearest university system.

2. Management

a) Property Management

Presently, the park is the responsibility of the Wildcat Mountain Work Unit Manager. Wildcat Mountain State Park is the main work unit property headquarters which consists of three other subunits including the Elroy-Sparta State Trail, Mill Bluff State Park, and LaCrosse River State Trail.

The park facilities are operated by two permanent positions (work unit supervisor and park ranger), a six-month seasonal

position, and 1,860 hours of limited-term employe (LTE) park personnel. The property has a Class C repair facility which includes a new 40' by 100' shop storage/office building and other cold storage buildings.

b) Vegetative Management

The goal of vegetative management will be to maintain the health, vigor, and diversity of the vegetation in or adjacent to the park's intensive use areas. This will be accomplished by removing individuals, clumps or stands of trees; pruning and planting. Under most circumstances, natural succession will continue to meet the objective of providing a diversity of tree species and age classes for multiple public resource values.

Forest health problems in the park include advanced age, oak wilt and, in the white pine, tip weevil and blister rust. In the park setting, these problems can best be controlled through approved vegetative management techniques.

Small group cuts of oak should be made to maintain the oak type on drier sites in or adjacent to intensive use areas. Without this type of vegetative management, the oak sites will be lost to other hardwoods, thereby reducing the diversity of the forest.

The plantations of red and white pine need thinning. Thinnings not only will improve tree health and vigor but can be designed to reduce the planted appearance and blend in with the natural-occurring conifer-hardwood forest.

Within the park are many abandoned fields which are ideal sites for scattered planting of various tree and shrub species. Such plantings would add color and variety to the landscape while, at the same time, provide wildlife with needed winter cover.

c. Wildlife Management

On February 8, 1974, 125 deer were counted in the 5.8 square mile state park (21.55 deer per square mile) by a helicopter survey. The park deer population is large and healthy. Park management will stress opening large portions of the park for gun and late bow deer hunting to keep the population in balance with the natural food supply. There is no "tight" yarding of deer in the park. In severe winters, deer are loosely yarded and damage to small trees and shrubs is noticeable. Thus, this plan recommends periodic winter deer surveys to monitor the yarding, determine deer populations, and minimize damage to the forest.

A large number and variety of songbirds are found in the park. Management will consist primarily of protecting and maintaining

a wide variety of cover types including grassy fields, sedge meadows, and upland forests. Under present management, songbirds are doing well. Additional planting of conifer trees and fruit-producing shrubs will increase the number and variety of songbirds. Maintenance of cropfields and grasslands will also enhance the songbird production and survival.

There is potential for some habitat management to favor wild turkey. Sharecropping via local farmers is recommended on about 300 acres presently cropped in the park. Park personnel should contact the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) to lay out contour strips on the cropland. Rotation recommended is a five to seven year corn, oats, and hay rotation utilizing a large portion of the area in either corn or legume cover crops. This will benefit wild turkeys as brood habitat in addition to providing winter food in the way of grain, also supporting deer and other wildlife species. It is important that the DNR not only share-crop corn, but also have a cover crop on the fields, as grassy cover will not yield the benefits that legume cover will provide.

Approximately 3.2 miles of the Kickapoo River and 2 miles of Billings Creek are located within the park. The river habitat with the associated wetlands and oxbows attracts a small number of breeding ducks (primarily wood ducks, blue-winged teal, and mallard), as well as migrant waterfowl in both spring and fall, with fall counts being higher.

Periodic spring and early summer flooding of area creeks and rivers often reduces waterfowl production. Placement of wood duck nesting boxes in trees and suitable aquatic habitat will greatly increase this species' production. No large scale waterfowl management project is recommended.

The park has a moderate population of furbearers. Predominant species are muskrat, beaver, mink, raccoon, and red and gray fox. Furbearer populations are limited by the periodic spring and early summer flooding of area rivers and creeks. Management will consist of complete protection of all furbearers within the park. However, beaver control (by DNR personnel or contract) may occasionally be needed to minimize damage to roads, trout streams, croplands, and valuable timber stands.

Current park management is preserving valuable wildlife habitats thus affording protection to a wide variety of wildlife, both game and nongame species. Closer monitoring of the deer populations and more liberal deer season will minimize the damage which is presently occurring to trees and shrubs within the property.

d. Fish Management

Billings Creek is presently listed as a Class II brown trout stream within the park boundary. Very little in-stream habitat work has been done on the park property, while a limited amount of work has been completed on the Earl Ferris property which lies within the acquisition boundary. Ten in-stream structures and 250 feet of riprap have been installed in this area. The entire portion of Billings Creek within the park acquisition boundary is scheduled for in-stream habitat improvement once public access is gained along the stream.

To gain such access, fee purchase or perpetual easement should be taken. This, in turn, would require that a boundary change be made to include all of Section 23 within the park acquisition area. Presently, just a small portion of Section 23 is within the approved acquisition boundary. Previous stream evaluations have indicated good water quality and excellent habitat for large trout in the lowest reaches of Section 23. Much of the land in this area is presently owned by the federal government. If the LaFarge Lake project is dropped in the future and the land becomes available, it would be in the public's interest to acquire this area. A small parcel in Section 22 between Highway 131 and Section 23 should also be included to simplify the new boundary lines. The area also could be used as a canoe put-in-and-take-out point for the Kickapoo River.

Extensive stream habitat work is planned in conjunction with the previously completed projects on Billings Creek. About 2.5 miles of stream will be improved at a cost of approximately \$30,000 per mile. Badly eroded banks will be sloped and riprapped. Vegetation control in the form of stream bank brushing will be undertaken in areas where structures are impractical. Specific sites for all stream improvements will be identified as soon as the stream course can be examined in greater detail. Funding for the projects will be derived from trout stamp money.

Approximately 3,600 fall fingerling and yearling brown trout are stocked in Billings Creek every spring and fall. Cheyenne Creek receives approximately 1,600 fish each year. No trout are stocked in the Kickapoo River.

The Kickapoo River is presently classed as non-trout water within the park boundary. No in-stream habitat work has been done or is planned. A comprehensive study of the Kickapoo River was done in 1973 for the evaluation of the then proposed Lake LaFarge. Portions of the park were included in that survey and a management procedure was written explaining the Department's plan if the proposed lake was completed. Currently, the Department has no projects concerning fisheries on the Kickapoo River.

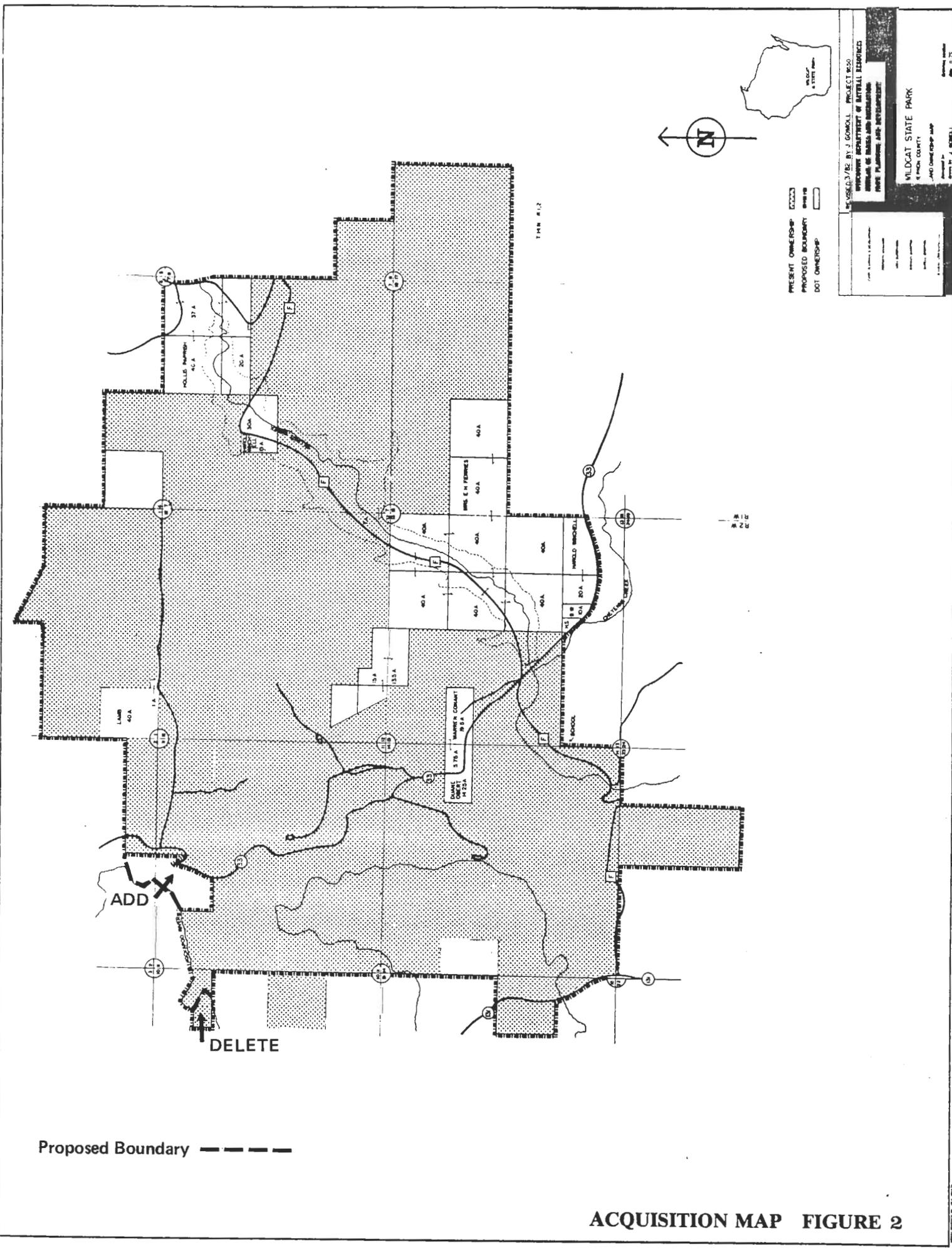
3. Land Acquisition (Figure 2)

As of June 30, 1984, state ownership at Wildcat Mountain State Park was 3,505 acres in fee title and 6 acres in easement. It is recommended that the current park boundary be revised to exclude a small parcel of land lying west of the Kickapoo River within the northwest of the northwest quarter, Section 10, Whitestown Township, and include a small section of property located east of the Kickapoo River within Sections 11 and 2, Forest Township. These proposed boundary modifications would not increase the acreage goal which is 3,975 acres. By excluding the small parcel the Kickapoo River will serve as the new boundary and make the park a more manageable unit.

In addition, the park boundary modifications do not propose any acquisition which would interfere with DOT's current plan for highway development.

Mitigation measures of the STH 33 and 131 relocation corridor officially adopted by the State Highway Commission in 1972 have not been resolved. Additional information will be needed to determine potential 4F and 6F conflicts.

As noted in the fish management section, it is highly desirable to control the lands surrounding Billings Creek and its confluence with the Kickapoo River. Any disposition of this land by the Corps of Engineers associated with the de-authorization of the LaFarge dam project should be closely monitored for the potential future inclusion of Section 23 and parts of Section 26, Whitestown Township, T14N, R2W, within the park boundary. The means of controlling these lands will be by securing easements. If this is not feasible, the alternative of fee title acquisition should be addressed. The park's acreage goal would need to be increased by 600 acres to 4,575 acres if the Corps does dispose of these lands.



Proposed Boundary - - - - -

ACQUISITION MAP FIGURE 2

PRESENT OWNERSHIP
 PROPOSED BOUNDARY
 DOT OWNERSHIP



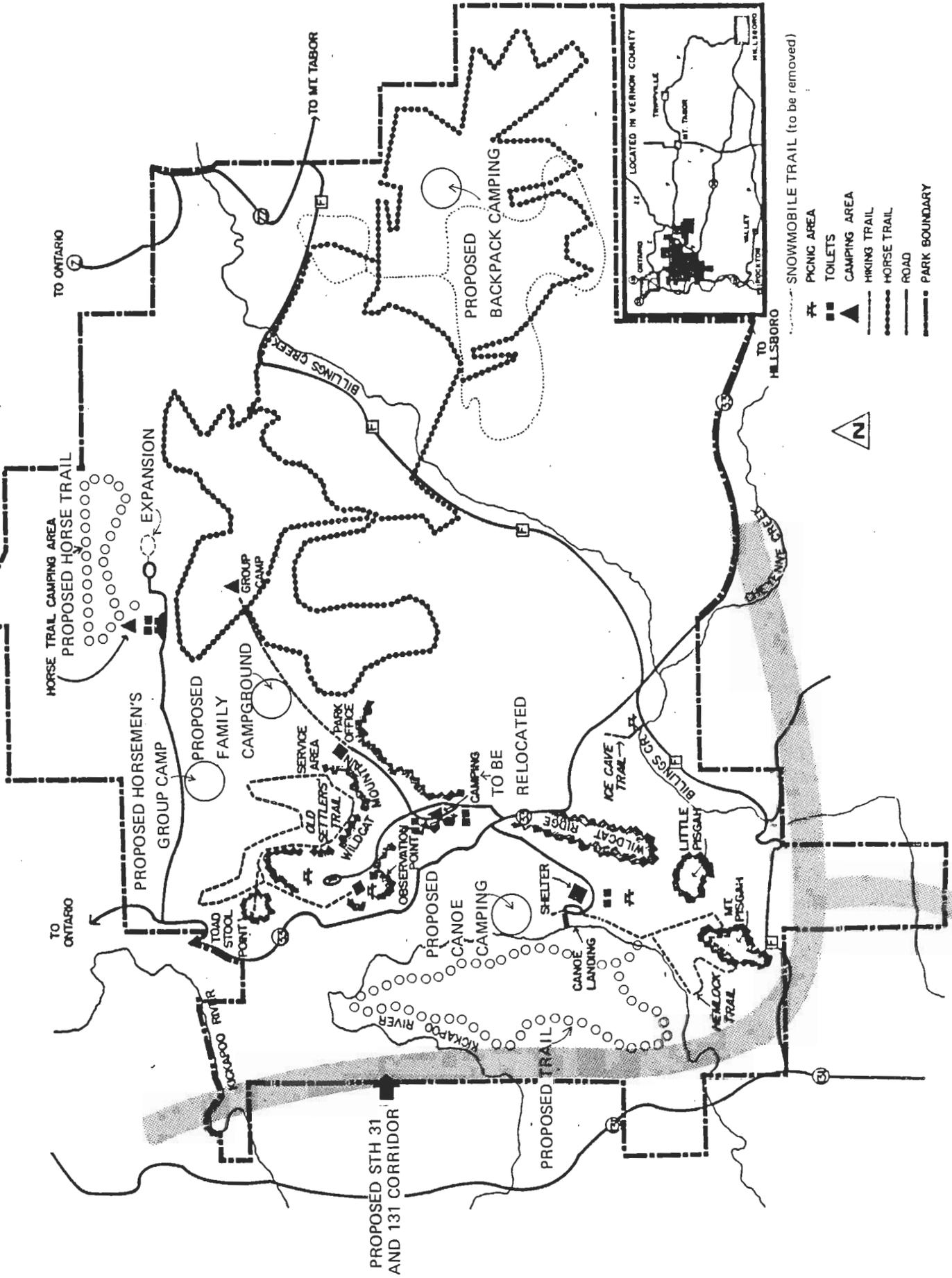
1" = 200'



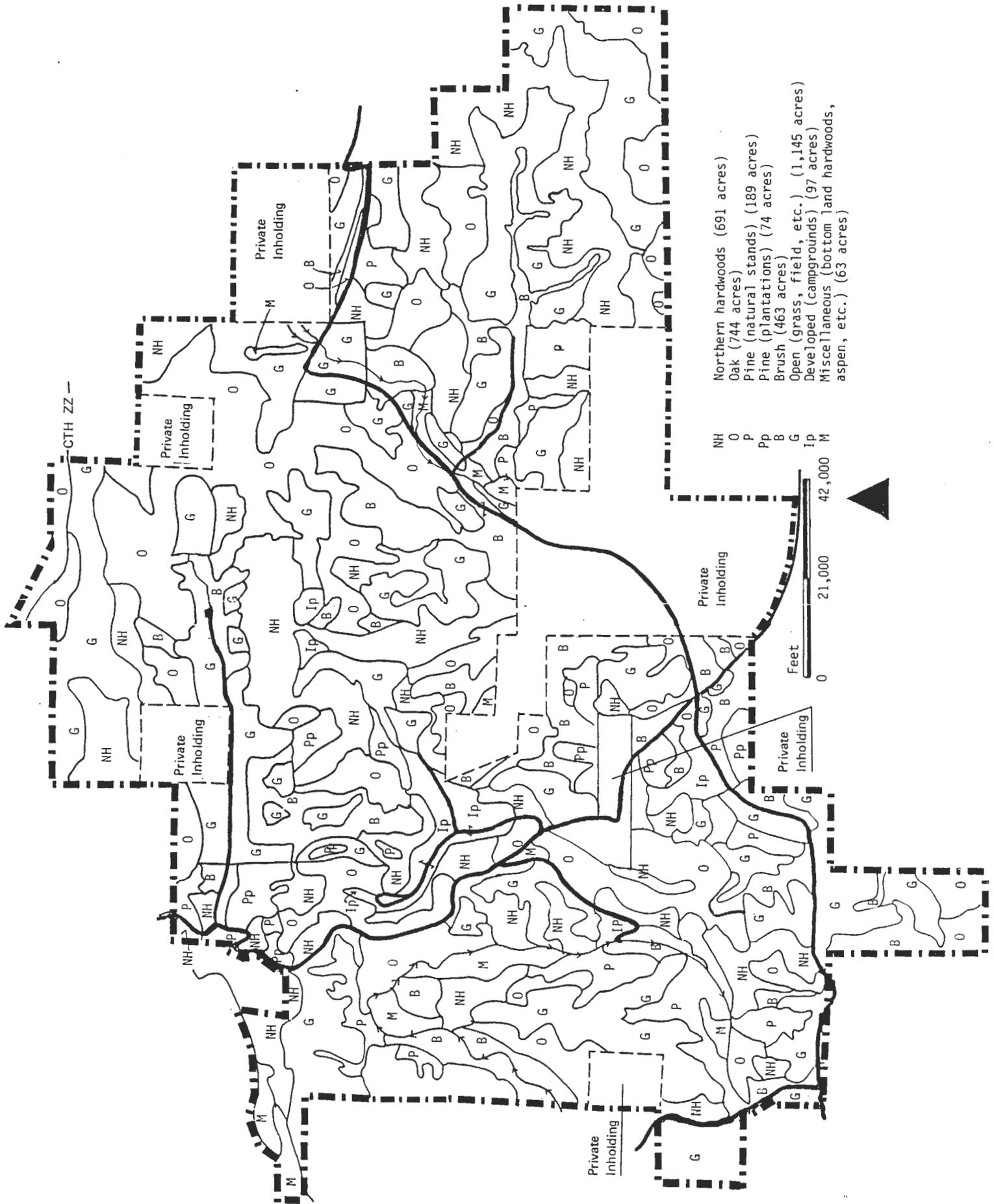
PROJECT 850 BY J. GOSKOL
 WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
 DIVISION OF LAND AND WATER
 LAND PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

WILDCAT STATE PARK
 WISCONSIN COUNTY
 LAND OWNERSHIP MAP
 PREPARED BY J. GOSKOL
 DATE 11/1/88

WILDCAT MOUNTAIN STATE PARK



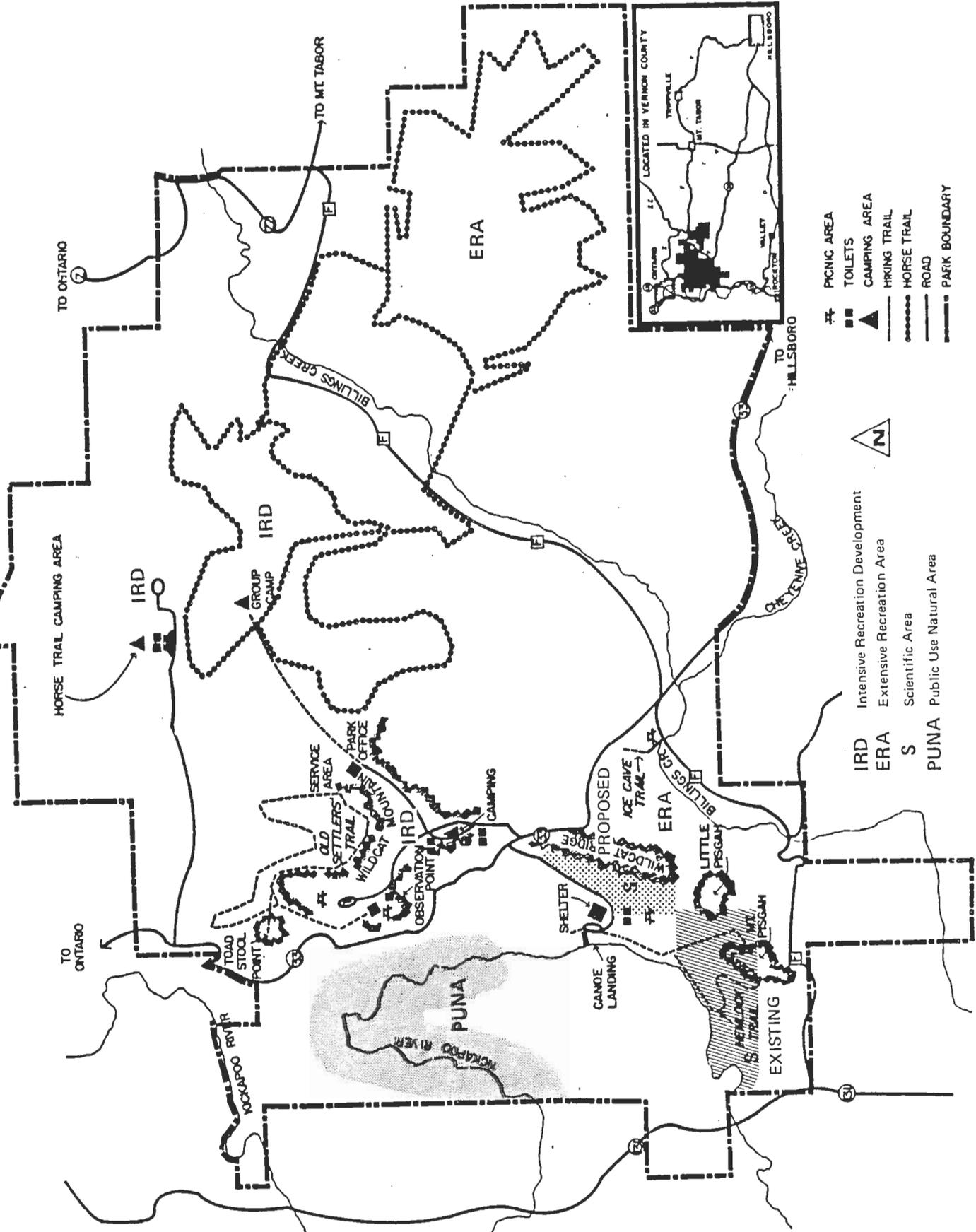
DEVELOPMENT MAP FIGURE 3



Northern hardwoods (691 acres)
 Oak (744 acres)
 Pine (natural stands) (189 acres)
 Pine (plantations) (74 acres)
 Brush (463 acres)
 Open (grass, field, etc.) (1,145 acres)
 Developed (campgrounds) (97 acres)
 Miscellaneous (bottom land hardwoods, aspen, etc.) (63 acres)

VEGETATIVE COVER MAP FIGURE 4

WILDCAT MOUNTAIN STATE PARK



- IRD Intensive Recreation Development
- ERA Extensive Recreation Area
- S Scientific Area
- PUNA Public Use Natural Area
- ⊕ PICNIC AREA
- TOILETS
- ▲ CAMPING AREA
- HIKING TRAIL
- - - HORSE TRAIL
- ROAD
- - - PARK BOUNDARY

LAND USE CLASSIFICATION MAP FIGURE 5

SECTION II - SUPPORT DATA

A. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Wildcat Mountain State Park in northeastern Vernon County was never touched by Wisconsin's four glaciers. The rugged limestone-capped bluffs and narrow valleys provide panoramic scenery from every vantage point as well as many recreational opportunities for visitors. The mixed hardwood forests exhibit brilliant colors in the fall thus attracting many visitors for hiking, canoeing, and picture-taking. An observation point on the mountain gives a spectacular view of the Kickapoo River as it winds its way through the park. The Kickapoo River is excellent for canoeing. The picnic area along the river has a landing and is a popular place to launch or pick up canoes, or to just stop for a rest. The main-use area of the park has been designated as a wildlife refuge.

Attractions within the park are 2 hiking trails, a self-guided nature trail, 12 miles of horse trail, 7 miles of cross-country ski trails, 3 picnic areas, a family campground, a group campground, and a horse trail campground. Wildcat Mountain is within easy driving distance of LaCrosse, Madison, and Milwaukee.

1. Location

Wildcat Mountain State Park is located within Whitestown and Forest townships, Vernon County. The nearest business area is in the Village of Ontario which serves the needs of the park visitor as well as the surrounding rural population. The closest metropolitan area is LaCrosse, approximately 45 miles to the west. The property is also about a two-hour drive of such cities as Eau Claire, Wausau, Marshfield, Stevens Point, Wisconsin Rapids, and Madison. Primary access to the park is provided by Highways 33 and 131.

2. History of the Area

The area was settled in the 1800's with these pioneers primarily interested in harvesting the large, white pine timber and using the Kickapoo River to float the logs down to the mills located along the Wisconsin River. Small agricultural ventures followed the logging. Most of the early settlers raised potatoes, corn, oats, and wheat. Although wheat was the major crop during the last half of the 19th century (it was estimated that 2 million bushels of wheat were raised in the county during 1873), the raising of dairy stock was increasing in importance. Eventually, dairying and its associated enterprises became the dominant agricultural activity.

3. Chronology of Property's Establishment and Development

The park was established in 1948 as a scenic park. A tract of land approximately 60 acres in size was given to the State of Wisconsin by Vernon County. Of this, an initial 20-acre tract has been donated in

1938 by a local resident and used as a county park until given to the State of Wisconsin. Since that time, the park has grown to its present size of approximately 3,400 acres.

4. Past and Present Management Activities

After establishment in 1948, initial park development centered around picnicking, hiking, and family camping. Subsequent development included facilities such as horseback riding trails and a horsemen's campground, canoe landing, a nature trail, scientific area, group camping facilities, and a new shop/office building and related support facilities. The park is now the work unit headquarters for Wildcat Mountain State Park, Elroy-Sparta State Trail, LaCrosse River Trail, and Mill Bluff State Park.

Wildcat Mountain State Park attracted 141,500 day-use visitors and approximately 14,800 camper visitations in 1983. Facilities offered at Wildcat Mountain State Park include 14.6 acres of picnic area, including 60 tables, 28 grills, and 2 shelter buildings. There are 152 parking stalls within these areas. The property has a 1.3 mile long nature trail, 5 miles of snowmobile trail, 2.7 miles of hiking trail, 12 miles of horse trail, and 7 miles of cross-country ski trail.

There are three separate camping areas within the property including a 30-unit family campground, an outdoor group camp which accommodates up to 75 people, and the 8-unit horse trail campground. Reservations are taken in both the family and group camp areas. In addition, there are approximately 2 1/2 miles of two-way roads located within the park.

5. Operations Cost and Revenue Potential

Total 1983-84 operations cost for Wildcat Mountain was \$71,000. With revenue for this same fiscal year amounting to \$26,229, the percent of revenue to operations cost is about 37 percent.

Revenue generated by the proposed 75-unit replacement campground could increase the revenue to operations percentage to about 59 percent if occupancy is the same as the current rate.

6. Roads, Entrances, and Private Inholdings

The park has four main-use area entrances. Three of these are located off Highway 33, which is routed in a north-south direction through the park. The other entrance is off County Trunk Highway F. This situation produces management problems in controlling access for sticker sales, park security, and efficient management of the use areas.

Hunting during the gun deer season on private inholdings near the park's service buildings and use areas is a potential safety hazard for park users and staff.

B. RESOURCE CAPABILITIES AND INVENTORY

1. Geology

Rocks and minerals have greatly influenced Vernon County's soil and topography. Dolomitic limestone and sandstone are the two basic bedrocks. The oldest underlying rock formation is Upper Cambrian sandstone. It is evident along the deepest valleys, including those of the Mississippi, Bad Axe, West Fork of the Kickapoo, Kickapoo, and Pine Rivers. Above the sandstone is the Prairie du Chien dolomite (lower magnesian limestone). It underlies the ridges throughout the county and is the most common outcrop. At higher elevations in the southwest part of the county, St. Peter sandstone overlies the dolomite. On the very highest peaks in the southwestern area, some Platteville limestone may be found lying above the St. Peter sandstone (Weidman and Schultz, 1915).

2. Soils

Wildcat Mountain State Park is covered predominately by the Norden-Fayette soil association. The parent material of the Norden soil series is formed in a loess mantle up to 3 feet thick over fine-grained sandstones containing glauconitic sandstone, silt-stone, and shale. It is found on valley slopes and bedrock benches. It is well-drained, infiltration rate is intermediate, and permeability is moderate. Runoff from higher areas is a hazard on valley slopes. Erosion hazard may be very severe. The Fayette soil series was formed in 42" or more of wind-deposited loess from the Mississippi floodplains. It is found on rolling upland ridges, on benches, and on valley slopes. It is well-drained, has intermediate infiltration rate, and has moderate permeability. Erosion is severe on steep slopes and moderate elsewhere.

A small section in the northeast corner of the park is composed of the Fayette-Stoney rock land - Dubuque association. It is stony rock land on nearly level to steep slopes, moderately deep to deep, well-drained soils on valley slopes and bedrock benches.

3. Climate

Vernon County has an average annual precipitation of about 32 inches with the majority occurring during the growing season (May through September). The average length of the growing season (the number of days between the last 32 degree freeze in spring and the first in the fall) is 150 days. Freeze-up of shallow lakes normally takes place in late November and ice cover remains until late March or early April. Runoff, that part of precipitation that appears in surface streams, averages about 9 inches per year. Because of the many hills and valleys in Vernon County, no one weather station can provide more than an approximation of county climatic conditions. Hilltops have more precipitations than valleys, and daily and annual temperature ranges there are not as wide as in the valleys. Although Viroqua's

average dates of 32 degree freeze are May 6 and October 5, killing frost has been recorded in the County as early as August 30 and September 13 and as late as June 1 and 12.

4. Water Resources

The Wildcat Mountain State Park boundary encompasses portions of Billings Creek, Cheyenne Creek, and the Kickapoo River.

Billings Creek is a Class II brown trout stream flowing through the park property boundary for approximately 2 miles. The water is cold, clear, carries a moderate silt load, is very hard, and moderately alkaline (pH-8.0).

Cheyenne Creek is a Class II brook and brown trout stream with the lower 300 feet flowing through the park boundary where it empties into Billings Creek. The water is cool, clear, carries a moderate silt load, and is hard and moderately alkaline.

The Kickapoo River is a warm-water stream which flows through a major portion of the park. Approximately 2.5 miles of river lies within the park boundary. The water temperatures are marginal for trout survival, there is a heavy silt load, and the River has a long history of severe flooding. At the present time, there is a flood-control dam partially completed at LaFarge, downstream from the park. Due to economic conditions and resource concerns, the project is presently at a standstill.

While most of the geological formations in Vernon County contain water, the principal water-bearing horizons are the upper Cambrian sandstone and Prairie du Chien dolomite in the uplands and Alluvial sands and gravels in the valleys. Upland wells are usually drilled 100 feet deep or lower but in the lowlands, water can usually be obtained at a depth of less than 50 feet. Flowing springs are common in the valleys, but several dry up during extended dry periods.

5. Vegetative Cover

Prior to white settlement, the area now comprising Wildcat Mountain State Park was a mosaic of diverse vegetation. This diversity was largely due to the wide range of aspects created by the hilly terrain. The ridges supported true prairie which were maintained through periodic burning by Indians. The hillside forests varied from scrub oak and hickory on the southern and western slopes to stands of red oak, sugar maple and basswood on the northern and eastern exposures. Dense forests of maple, basswood, elm, and ash stood on the bottomlands and relics of a more northern forest type including hemlock, yellow birch, and white pine flank the Kickapoo River and its tributaries.

Over a century of agriculture, livestock grazing, fire control, and timber harvesting has changed the vegetation. Still, representative

stands of all the presettlement vegetation types are present today. In addition to the original types, new types such as fruit orchards, abandoned fields and pine plantations now add diversity to the park. The vegetation types in the park were mapped in 1973. The compartment reconnaissance printout of that year contains information on acreage, condition, and management needs of each type. This information has been updated and is available at the DNR Forestry office in Viroqua.

The park contains one designated scientific area, the Mount Pisgah hemlock hardwoods. This 30-acre area is a stand of hemlock, white pine, and northern hardwoods. This forest type, native to northern Wisconsin, is unique in this part of the state. Also unique are the plant species Sullivantia renifolia, Adoxa moschatellina, and several varieties of spring ephemerals which flourish in the area.

The park has entered into a uniform fire suppression agreement with the Ontario fire department which covers all aspects of fire protection for the park.

6. Wildlife

A list of wildlife species known to be present within the park can be found in the Appendix. Major species found within that list include white-tailed deer, cottontail rabbit, gray and fox squirrel, raccoon, gray and red fox, muskrat, mink, beaver, striped skunk, river otter, opossum, weasel, and woodchuck. Birds would include a variety of ducks, Canada goose, coot, ruffed grouse, bobwhite quail, woodcock, as well as a variety of songbird species. There are no endangered species records in Department files covering the park and its environs. However, the following threatened species are found within the park:

Northern Monkshood (Aconitum noveboracens) - grows along the Kickapoo River cliffs in Section 11, T14N, R2W.

Moschatell (Odoxa moschatelliana) - recorded from hemlock trail in the park and along the river cliffs in the same general area as monkshood.

Coopers Hawk (Accipiter cooperii) - no nest locations on record, but August site records of adult hawks would indicate that they may be present; should be checked.

The vegetative cover type map (Figure 5) indicates specific land classification and acreage. Generally, there are 691 acres of northern hardwood, 744 acres of oak, 189 acres of natural pine, 74 acres of pine plantations, 463 acres of brush, 1,145 acres of open grasslands and fields, 157 acres of developed land for such things as campground and day-use areas, and 63 acres of miscellaneous plants such as bottomland hardwoods, aspen, etc. This list accounts for present state-owned lands.

8. Land Use Inventory

Lands within the park are classified as intensive recreation development (IRD), extensive recreation area (ERA), scientific area (S), and public use natural area (PUNA). The intensive recreation development will encompass an estimated 210 acres upon completion of the proposed family campground, group camp, rustic campsites, canoe campsites, additional trails, and expanded day-use facilities. Currently, there are 157 acres identified as intensive recreation development. Presently, the Mount Pisgah Hemlock Hardwoods Scientific Area encompasses 30 acres. It is proposed to expand that scientific area by 35 acres for a total of 65 acres. The public use natural area will encompass 130 acres. The PUNA will be located within the floodplain of the Kickapoo River as shown on the attached map. The remaining lands will be classified as extensive recreation area.

9. Historical and Archaeological Features

A survey of the park undertaken by the State Historical Society indicates that none of the buildings are historically or architecturally significant. However, seven prehistoric sites have been discovered in the park and it is felt the park is likely to contain many additional sites. Therefore, prior to any ground disturbing activities within the park, the Department will consult with the State Historical Society office to determine whether further archaeological testing is warranted.

C. MANAGEMENT PROBLEMS

1. Control of Access to Park

The park has four main-use area entrances. Three of these are located off of Highway 33, which travels in a north-south direction through the park. The other entrance is off of County Trunk Highway F. Approximately 10 years ago, as a part of the LaFarge dam project, Highway 33-131 was to be re-routed through the western edge of the park. Until this or similar realignment of the highway actually occurs, entrances will continue to be a management problem in controlling access for sticker sales, park security, and efficient management of the use areas. In the future, if Highways 33-131 are realigned, it would be very desirable to create a one- or two-entrance property. The Department will continue to work closely with the Department of Transportation in evaluating the feasibility of this action in conjunction with the relocation of Highway 131.

2. Highway 131 Relocation Proposal

In 1972, the State Highway Commission, as part of the original LaFarge dam project, adopted the Highway 131 corridor to be relocated in a north-south direction on the west side of the park. This new highway would then carry traffic from Highway 33 as well as 131,

thereby eliminating the need for the current Highway 33 road corridor. The proposed road corridor would have a negative impact on the scenic quality of the Kickapoo River Valley. The corridor would be visible in its entirety from the upland overlook areas in the park. DNR and DOT staff will begin informal discussions on alternatives which would alleviate DNR concerns while providing for a safe highway. These alternatives will include mitigation measures such as screening and grade modifications on the proposed corridor, as well as a re-evaluation of alternative corridors.

DOT will undertake an environmental review and prepare the necessary environmental analysis before proceeding with any construction associated with the relocation of STH 33 and 131.

3. Vehicular Traffic Through Existing Family Campground

The existing family campground at Wildcat Mountain State Park is located on both sides of the entrance road which leads up to the upper observation points, picnic area, and office. Approximately 80% of all park visitors use this popular overlook and picnic grounds. Thus, this amount of traffic passing through the center of the campground makes pedestrian movement a safety problem, as well as creates a lack of privacy and security, and creates a less than quality camping experience for the campers.

The present campground location also makes it difficult to manage and control the facility. First, in regards to camper registration, employees now must register everyone either at the park office or on the site due to the extremely steep entrance road. Second, traffic off of State Highway 33 can enter without being noticed by the registration personnel who are located approximately 1/4 mile away.

Insufficient room is available within this campground to adequately standardize the sites. The steep narrow ridge would require extensive grading and fill to meet present day departmental standards.

Heavy weekend traffic (sightseers and picnickers) cause numerous conflicts between campground occupants, pedestrians, and vehicles. The contact booth, which is manned on weekends, is located between the two use areas (campground and picnic area). On busy weekends, picnickers are sometimes confusing the campground (even though it is signed) with the picnic area. Traffic at the booth also backs up hindering campers from getting in and out of their sites. Campers come to the property to gain solitude, to get away from traffic and a lot of other people, and this is not possible under the present situation. Finally, maintenance personnel must use extra caution in maintaining the campground due to the constant park traffic on the main entrance road which bisects the campground.

D. RECREATIONAL NEEDS AND JUSTIFICATION

1. Current and Projected Needs Analyzed From State Plan

The 1981 State Outdoor Recreation Plan for Regional 7 which includes Pierce, Pepin, Buffalo, Trempealeau, Jackson, Monroe, LaCrosse, Vernon, and Crawford Counties notes that there is a need for developed family type campsites, primitive campsites, pleasure-walking trails, and horseback riding trails.

By 1984, there will be a need for 1,480 developed campsites, 250 primitive campsites, 23 miles of pleasure-walking trail, and 37 miles of horseback riding trail. Finally, the plan indicates a great need for a public boat access site. The plan indicated no additional need for hiking trails, cross-country ski trails, and snowmobile trails.

2. Current and Projected Needs as Defined in Local Plan

Participation data compiled for the Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan for Vernon County, dated 1980, indicates a need for 72 additional acres of picnic area and a need for an additional 144 tables. An additional 82 developed campsites will be needed by 1985. The plan goes on to state that there is a need for the construction of cross-country ski trails at various locations throughout the county park system. Hiking and nature study trails should be developed within the park system to meet the demand for this passive and self-fulfilling activity. Ample fishing opportunity and public boat-launching sites are available, according to the plan.

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 recreational facilities. This alternative is not desirable since the property was acquired for recreational purposes in order to meet the needs as identified in state, regional, and local outdoor recreation plans.

Since the property is at or near maximum user density as it applies to the campgrounds, trails, and other day-use facilities -- the lack of additional development could lead to safety problems, undesirable user experience, and degradation of the resource. Similarly, not acquiring existing in-holdings within the property boundary would lead to potential trespass, encroachment, and possible undesirable land use developments which would cause management problems. Also, in the future, this additional land may be needed for the development of trail systems and other facilities required to meet new recreational demands.

2. Limited Additional Acquisition and Development

This recommended alternative limits additional development of recreational facilities to a new family campground, horse camp, group camp, primitive campsites, horseback riding, and hiking trails. The property will be better able to meet the recreational and educational needs as identified in the state, regional, and outdoor recreation plans. In addition, the development of a new family campground will increase the revenue generating capabilities of the property, operational efficiency, and overall better meet the needs of the camping public.

The proposed acquisition lands remaining within the property will help protect fragile natural features, prevent encroachment, and provide better access to other presently owned Department lands. In addition, by reclassifying some of the lands to scientific area and public use natural area, management will be given another tool to safeguard the fragile and rather unique natural resources of the property.

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

This alternative would include all actions listed under #2 and would provide for the development of additional campground facilities, day-use areas, and a variety of trails. Although this action may be desirable at some time in the future, present supply and demand data within the outdoor recreation plans do not indicate a need for such action and, therefore, this alternative is not feasible at this time.

4. Modify Park Boundary

As indicated in the acquisition section, only minor modification of the park boundary is proposed in the northwest section of the property. This should result in very little or no change to the project acreage goal. However, there is interest in obtaining control of land around Billings Creek as it enters the Kickapoo River. This would entail either fee acquisition or easement on lands within Section 23 and a small portion of Section 26, Forest Township, T15N, R2W. At the present time, this land is controlled by the federal government as it is part of the LaFarge dam project. Assuming that the project is de-authorized, it is proposed that the state acquire these lands to protect Billings Creek and its immediate environs. Therefore, the option should be left available to increase the project acreage goal by about 600 acres and modify the boundary to include these lands when and if the federal government decides to declare them surplus and sell them.

WILDCAT MOUNTAIN STATE PARK MASTER PLAN

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

1. Wildlife species known to be present:

Big game

white-tailed deer (Odocoileus virginianus)

Small mammals

meadow vole (Microtus pennsylvanicus)

cinereous shrew (Sorex cinereus)

short-tailed shrew (Blarina brevicauda)

meadow jumping mouse (Zapus hudsonius)

prairie deer mouse (Peromyscus maniculatus)

northern white-footed mouse (Peromyscus leucopus)

chipmunk (Tamias striatus)

red squirrel (Tamiasciurus hudsonicus)

game mammals

cottontail rabbit (Sylvilagus floridanus)

fox squirrel (Sciurus niger rufiventer)

gray squirrel (Sciurus carolinensis hypophaeus)

raccoon (Procyon lotor hirtus)

coyote (Canis latrans)

fur bearers

red fox (Vulpus fulva)

gray fox (Urocyon cinereoargenteus)

muskrat (Ondatra zibethicus)

mink (Mustela vison)

striped skunk (Mephitis mephitis)

beaver (Castor canadensis)

river otter (Lutra canadensis)

opossum (Didelphis marsupialis virginiana)

weasel (Mustela frenata novemboracensis)

other mammals

woodchuck (Marmota monax)

bobcat (Lynx rufus superiorensis)

Wildlife species known to be present:

Birds

waterfowl

Blue-winged teal (Anas discors) *
Wood duck (Aix sponsa) *
Mallard (Anas platyrhynchos) *
Green-winged teal (Anas carolinensis)
Gadwall (Anas strepera)
Baldpate (Mareca americana)
Black duck (Anas rubripes)
Shoveler (Spatula clypeata)
Redhead (Aythya americana)
Lesser scaup (Aythya affinis)
Hooded merganser (Lophodytes cucullatus)
Canada goose (Branta canadensis canadensis)
Coot (Fulica americana)

* known to nest in park

Game birds

ruffed grouse (Bonasa umbellus)
bobwhite quail (Colinus virginianus)

woodcock (Philohela minor)
jacksnipe (Capella gallinago delicata)
Virginia rail (Rallus limicola)
sora rail (Porzana carolina)
common gallinule (Gallinula chloropus)

Fish Species for Billings Creek

Brown Trout
Brook Trout
Rainbow Trout
White Sucker
Blacknose Dace
Creek Chub
Shorthead Redhorse
Southern Redbelly Dace
Fantail Darter
Brook Stickleback
Johnny Darter
Bluegill
Northern Hogsucker
Stoneroller
Common Shiner

Fish Species for Cheyenne Creek

Brown Trout
Brook Trout
White Sucker
Hogsucker
Creek Chub
Shorthead Redhorse
Slimy Sculpin
Fantail Darter
Stoneroller
Johnny Darter
Common Shiner
Blacknose Dace
Southern Redbelly Dace

Kickapoo River Fish Species List

Brown trout, Salmo trutta Linnaeus
Rainbow trout, Salmo gairdneri Richardson
Northern pike, Esox lucius Linnaeus
Stoneroller, Campostoma anomalum (Rafinesque)
Redside dace, Clinostomus elongatus (Kirtland)
Carp, Cyprinus carpio Linnaeus
Golden shiner, Notemigonus crysoleucas (Mitchell)
Common shiner, Notropis cornutus (Mitchell)
Spotfin shiner, Notropis spilopterus (Cope)
Sand shiner, Notropis stramineus (Cope)
Suckermouth minnow, Phenacobius mirabilis (Girard)
Southern redbelly dace, Phoxinus erythrogaster (Rafinesque)
Bluntnose minnow, Pimephales notatus (Rafinesque)
Fathead minnow, Pimephales promelas (Rafinesque)
Blacknose dace, Rhinichthys atratulus (Hermann)
Creek chub, Semotilus atromaculatus (Mitchell)
White sucker, Catostomus commersoni (Lacepede)
Northern hog sucker, Hypentelium nigricans (Lesueur)
Bigmouth buffalo, Ictiobus cyprinellus (Valenciennes)
Golden redhorse, Moxostoma erythrurum (Rafinesque)
Shorthead redhorse, Moxostoma macrolepidotum (Lesueur)
Black bullhead, Ictalurus melas (Rafinesque)
Stonecat, Noturus flavus Rafinesque
Brook stickleback, Culaea inconstans (Kirtland)
Green sunfish, Lepomis cyanellus Rafinesque

Pumpkinseed, Lepomis gibbosus (Linnaeus)

Smallmouth bass, Micropterus dolomieu Lacepede

Largemouth bass, Micropterus salmoides (Lacepede)

Fantail darter, Etheostoma flabellare Rafinesque

Johnny darter, Etheostoma nigrum Rafinesque

Blackside darter, Percina maculata (Girard)

CORRESPONDENCE/MEMORANDUM

STATE OF WISCONSIN

Date: May 30, 1984

File Ref: 2100-1

MAY 1984

To: Dave Weizenicker - P&R/4

From: Dick Lindberg - FOR/4 *DL*

Subject: Wildcat Mt. Master Plan Review

The Wild Resources Advisory Council has visited the park and reviewed the master plan. The following three items reflect its major concerns for the plan and the park's future.

1. A special emphasis should be placed on acquiring the privately owned properties within the park's established boundaries.
2. The Department should resist efforts of the Department of Transportation to relocate State Highway 131 according to existing plans.
3. Erosion and vegetation losses caused by horse trail development and an increase in horseback riding activity are threats to the park's natural amenities and should be more strictly controlled than implied by the plan.

DL:dj



The State of Wisconsin

SCIENTIFIC AREAS PRESERVATION COUNCIL

Box 7921
Madison, Wisconsin 53707

MAY 2 1984

IN REPLY REFER TO: 2100

May 23, 1984

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

Dear Dave:

We have several comments on your Wildcat Mountain State Park Concept Master Plan. The section dealing with Forest Management on pages 6 and 7 is similar to forestry discussions contained in several other master plans that we reviewed during the past year (Wyalusing and Willow River State Parks). We question the need and emphasis given to management of "advanced age" forest types, especially in remote areas of the park.

We understand that the policy for tree cutting in state parks is under internal review, and therefore recommend that the plan be changed to reflect new policy direction or be put on hold until the tree cutting issue is resolved.

We are pleased that the plan recommends expansion of the existing Mt. Pisgah Scientific Area and establishment of a public use natural area including a portion of the Kickapoo River and adjoining floodplain forest.

The plan recommends rather extensive farming (300 acres) for wildlife, especially wild turkey and deer. Since soil erosion is a problem on steep slopes we suggest that the park is probably not the best place to practice intensive wildlife management. Also, with deer populations so large that damage is already occurring, food patches which encourage winter deer concentrations should be deemphasized.

Cordially,

Forest Stearns
Forest Stearns
Chairman

CORRESPONDENCE/MEMORANDUM

STATE OF WISCONSIN

Date: August ²⁰~~17~~, 1984

File Ref: 2510

To: R. Lindberg - FOR/4

From: D. Weizenicker *[Signature]*

Subject: WRAC Comments on Wildcat Mountain State Park Master Plan

This is in response to the Council's comments on the Wildcat Mountain Master Plan.

- 1. A special emphasis should be placed on acquiring the privately owned properties within the park's established boundaries.

Department Response:

Landowner contacts by property personnel will continue on a regular basis, as per standard Department procedure. Purchasing will proceed as willing sellers become available.

- 2. The Department should resist efforts of the Department of Transportation to relocate State Highway 131 according to existing plans.

Department Response:

DNR and DOT staff have agreed to begin informal discussions on alternatives which would alleviate DNR concerns while providing for a safe highway. These alternatives will include mitigation measures such as screening and grade modifications on the proposed corridor, as well as reevaluation of alternative corridors.

- 3. Erosion and vegetation losses caused by horse trail development and an increase in horseback riding activity are threats to the park's natural amenities and should be more strictly controlled than implied by the plan.

Department Response:

After having horse trails in this 3,511-acre park almost since its establishment in 1948, we feel the experience gained will enable us to develop and manage an additional three to four miles of trail with a minimum of environmental disturbance.

We thank the Council for its review of the master plan.

DJK:jks

cc: J. Treichel - P&R/4
J. Lissack - Eau Claire

D. Kulhanek - P&R/4 ←

CORRESPONDENCE/MEMORANDUM

STATE OF WISCONSIN

Date: September 4, 1984

File Ref: 2540

To: Cliff Germain - ER/4

From: D. Weizenicker *for D. Weizenicker*

Subject: SAPC Comments on Wildcat Mountain State Park Master Plan

This is in response to the Council's comments on the Wildcat Mountain Master Plan.

The vegetative management section of the master plan was revised to state that tree cutting for the purpose of maintaining the health, vigor, and diversity of the park's trees will be limited to areas in or adjacent to intensive use areas. As per our draft tree cutting policy, under most circumstances natural succession will continue to meet the objective of providing a diversity of tree species and age classes.

The other concern of the Council relates to the sharecropping proposal to improve habitat for wild turkey in the park. We have rewritten the wildlife management section to specify that no more than 300 acres presently sharecropped will continue to be cropped for wild turkey habitat. We feel that with the provision in the master plan that contour strip farming be practiced there should not be a soil erosion problem. Since additional acreage will not be cropped in the park there should not be a change in the available food supply for deer. The plan also recommends periodic monitoring of the deer population.

We thank the Council for reviewing the Wildcat Mountain Master Plan.

DJK:sbM60

cc: J. Treichel - P&R/4
→ D. Kulhanek - P&R/4
J. Lissack - Eau Claire

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Note: (This revision combines Form 1600-1 and 1600-2 into one form.)

West Central District

DISTRICT OR BUREAU

#1712

DOCKET NUMBER

d(4)

TYPE LIST DESIGNATION(S)

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
(Reference Information Sources Utilized)

Applicant: State of Wisconsin
Department of Natural Resources

Title of Proposal: Wildcat Mountain State Park Master Plan/Conceptual Element

Location: Vernon County

Township 14-15 North, Range 2 West, including portions of Sections 1, 2, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, and 23, Whitestown Township, and portions of Sections 6, 7, 8, 17, and 18, Forest Township,
Political Town: Forest and Whitestown

PROJECT SUMMARY

1. General Description (brief overview)

This environmental assessment discusses the provisions of the 1984 conceptual master plan prepared for Wildcat Mountain State Park. The plan identifies Wildcat Mountain as a scenic state park and it shall remain thus. The management and development alternatives selected for the property allow for moderate increased use and development. It is anticipated that use will increase approximately 25% during the next 10-year period following approval of the master plan and subsequent development of new facilities. A wide range of traditional activities is offered including: camping, boating, fishing, picnicking, hiking, nature study, horseback riding, and the related use activities.

The master plan identifies the proposed development, management, and land control (land acquisition) scheduled for the park.

Development

Over the next 10 years, limited new development and a number of major building maintenance items are proposed for Wildcat Mountain State Park. New recreational facilities include a 75-unit family campground to replace the existing 30-unit site, which will be eliminated and converted for the

development of an office/visitor contact and picnic area after the new campground is constructed. There will be an upgrading of the group campground, the improvement of the horse trail campground, the addition of a horseperson's group camp site, the addition of 10 rustic campsites in the extensive area of the park, and the provision for five canoe campsites. Additional use facilities include: a 6-10 vehicle parking lot at the Ice Cave Trail, improvement of existing hiking trails, extension of trails to areas west of the Kickapoo River (includes a pedestrian bridge), and improvement and possible extension of cross country ski trails into the area east of County Trunk Highway F. Furthermore, it is proposed to add a new 3-4 mile horseback riding trail north of the horse trail camping area, and upgrade other riding trails. The existing snowmobile trail will be eliminated; however, provision will be made for club or county-connector trails. Day use areas will also be upgraded. Miscellaneous development will include a new entrance sign, boundary fencing, vista and overlook development, replacement of toilets, tables and grills, construction of water retention structures, construction of a nature center and amphitheater, enclosing the existing octagon shelter building for winter use, provision of playground equipment, and general signing of the property as needed.

Vegetative management will include minimum prairie restoration (under 5 acres), landscape planting in the intensive use areas and extensive area planting. Miscellaneous action will include erosion control and use of agricultural lands for production of hay and limited corn crops within the property.

Management

The park is the responsibility of the Wildcat Mountain Work Unit manager. The park facilities are operated by two permanent positions (Work Unit Supervisor and Park Ranger), a six month seasonal position, and 1,860 hours of limited-term employee (LTE) park personnel. As a unit of the Wisconsin State Park system, Wildcat Mountain 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 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 properties within the jurisdiction of the Department.

Lands within the park are classified as intensive recreation development (IRD), extensive recreation area (ERA), scientific area (S), and public use natural area (PUNA). The intensive recreation development will encompass an estimated 210 acres upon completion of the proposed family campground, group camp, rustic campsites, canoe campsites, additional trails, and expanded day use facilities. Currently, there are 157 acres identified as intensive recreation development. The Mount Pisgah Hemlock Hardwood Scientific Area encompasses 30 acres. We propose to expand that scientific area by 35 acres for a total of 65 acres. The public use natural area located in the floodplain of the Kickapoo River will encompass 130 acres. The remaining lands will be classified as extensive recreation area. Lands classified as ERA are outside the IRA and have limited management and development. Basically, they are left in a natural state.

Land Control

As of June 30, 1983, state ownership at Wildcat Mountain State Park was 3,469.36 acres in fee title and 4 acres in easement. It is recommended that the current park boundary be revised to exclude approximately 9 acres of land lying west of the Kickapoo River within the northwest of the northwest quarter, Section 10, Whitestown Township, and include approximately 30 acres of land located east of the Kickapoo River within Section 11 and 2, Forest Township. These proposed boundary modifications would not increase the acreage goal which is 3,975.93 acres as there are hundreds of acres of private farmland within the park which we do not anticipate coming up for sale in the foreseeable future. Also, these boundary modifications do not call for any DNR acquisition which would interfere with DOT's current plan for highway development.

Mitigation measures of the S.T.H. 33 and 131 relocation corridor officially adopted by the State Highway Commission in 1972 have not been resolved. Additional information will be needed to determine potential 4F and 6F conflicts.

It is highly desirable to control land surrounding Billings Creek and its confluence with the Kickapoo River for fish management purposes. Any disposition of this land by the Corps of Engineers associated with the deauthorization of the La Farge dam project should be closely monitored for potential future inclusion of Section 23, and parts of Section 26, Whitestown Township, T14N, R2W, within the park boundary. The first means of controlling these lands will be by securing easements. If this is not feasible, the alternative of fee title acquisition should be addressed. The park's acreage goal would need to be increased by 600 acres to 4,575.93 acres if the corp does dispose of these lands.

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

Wildcat Mountain State Park was established in 1948. Initial park development centered on picnicking, hiking, and family camping. Subsequent development included facilities such as horseback riding trails and a horseperson's campground, canoe landing, a nature trail, scientific area, group camping facilities, and a new shop office building, with related support facilities. The park is now the work unit headquarters for Wildcat Mountain, Elroy-Sparta State Trail, La Crosse River Trail, and Mill Bluff State Park.

The master plan narrative is being prepared in accord with Natural Resources Board and Department policy. The primary purpose of this conceptual master plan is to guide the development, operations, and maintenance of the property for the next 10 years in order to provide recreational facilities which will accommodate approximately 175,000 annual visitations for day use and 30,000 camper days.

The 1981 State Outdoor Recreation Plan for Region 7 which includes: Pierce, Pepin, Buffalo, Trempealeau, Jackson, Monroe, La Crosse, Vernon, and Crawford Counties, notes that there is a need for developed family-type campsites, primitive campsites, pleasure walking trails, and horseback riding trails. By 1984, there will be need for 1,480 developed campsites, 250 primitive

campsites, 23 miles of pleasure walking trails, and 37 miles of horseback riding trail. Finally, the state plan indicates a great need for public boat access sites. This plan indicated no additional need for hiking trails, cross country ski trails, and snowmobile trails.

Participation data compiled for the comprehensive outdoor recreation plan for Vernon County, dated 1980, indicates a need for 72 additional acres of picnic area and a need for an additional 144 tables. In addition, 82 developed campsites will be needed by 1985. The county plan goes on to state that there is a need for the construction of cross country ski trails at various locations throughout the county park system. Ample fishing opportunity and boat launching sites are available, according to the county plan.

The proposed relocation of State Highways 33 and 131 is associated with the La Farge Lake project authorized by the 1962 Flood Control Act. The lake project provides for construction of a multiple purpose reservoir with a dam located 1.5 miles north of La Farge as well as channel improvement downstream and various other improvements.

With the appropriation of funds, construction began in 1971. It was suspended in 1975 due to alleged water quality problems and lack of support by the Governor and Congressmen of the State of Wisconsin.

In 1972, the State Highway Commission adopted the Highway 131 corridor to be located in a north-south direction on the west side of the park.

A six-year program for relocation of roads was begun in 1973. Before termination of work, 90 percent of design and 37 percent of road construction was completed.

The Corps was directed by Congress to perform a study of all alternatives for flood damage reduction and recreation in the Kickapoo River Valley. A public hearing was held in the project area, March 1977, as part of a review of ongoing water resources projects. The President recommended the project not be funded and be deauthorized. The project currently remains in a standby status.

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 State Statutes.

Permits or approvals required: Natural Resources Board and Governor.

All development as identified in the master plan will comply with applicable state and local zoning requirements. Bridges, erosion control structures, etc., will be constructed according to the provisions of NR 1.95, 30.10, and 31.23. The Department will contact the Corps of Engineers to determine if a permit or other approval is required. Construction of the rest room facilities (in the proposed family campground and group camp area) will be in accord with H63 and all other township or Vernon County zoning ordinances will be complied with.

4. Estimated Cost and Funding Source

The total estimated development cost, based on 1984 figures, is \$710,000. 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. yard., etc.)

The proposed family campground (75 units) will be constructed on a site which encompasses approximately 25 acres. The area is composed of old field grassland, abandoned apple orchard, and upland forest types.

The campground road system will entail the construction of approximately 1/2 mile of two-way road (24 feet wide) and approximately 3/4 mile of one-way road (12 feet wide). As the proposed site is relatively flat, only minor grading will be needed to construct this road system. In addition, an estimated 5 acres of trees will have to be cut to accommodate the road system and camp spur development (spurs 12 x 50 foot). The plan also calls for the construction of two toilet buildings (one with shower). Each structure will encompass approximately 800 square feet. These facilities will also have multi-thousand gallon capacity septic tanks and drainfields to accommodate the effluent generated by campground users. Excavation for the foundations, septic tank, and drainfield should be in the neighborhood of several hundred cubic yards. This material will be spread on-site, graded, and landscaped to improve surface drainage and eliminate hauling of surplus soil. Minor excavation will be needed to place waterlines for the water fountains and electric lines for electric service in the campground.

Improvements to the existing group camp include: two 4-unit pit toilets, upgrading the campground road from a single lane to a two-lane asphalt surface roadway, and providing water (either through a separate well or in conjunction with the one previously described in the family campground). The proposed road will service not only the group camp, but also the proposed new family campground. In addition, the existing shelter, which is approximately 35 to 40 years of age, should be replaced sometime in the near future. Approximately 90 cubic yards of material will be excavated and worked into the site and landscaped. Swales and existing drainage patterns will not be interrupted. This site and the family campground will be reseeded with turf grass and planted with a variety of deciduous native shrub and tree species.

Development at the horse trail camp will include replacement of the present single unit toilet with a standard 4-unit combination vault toilet. In addition, two group camp sites, including one toilet building, and a corral, will be added. Approximately 80 cubic yards of material will be excavated and graded into the site. A 3-4 mile long horse trail will also be constructed and will entail minor cutting of vegetation, clearing, grubbing, and surfacing with gravel in some areas.

The rustic canoe campsites and outpost campsites located adjacent to the Kickapoo River and east of County Trunk F will include 4 single unit pit toilets, fire rings, and tables. Approximately 20 cubic yards of material will be excavated for the vaults for the single unit toilets. A well will also be drilled and include a hand pump for the backpack campsites.

Upon completion of the new family campground development, the existing campground will be eliminated, and the area will be graded and seeded with turf grass. Gravel removed from the spurs will be used to repair existing graveled service roads. The 9-acre campground site will then be converted into a picnic area and visitor/nature center complex. This will involve the construction of a visitor contact station and offices for park personnel. The building size is not known at this time.

A 6-10 stall parking lot is proposed near CTH F and the single lane road leading to the Ice Cave Trail and picnic area. An area approximately 4,500 square feet will be needed and gravel 8-10 inches thick will be placed as a base for that parking facility.

Miscellaneous developments include installation of underground electrical line to the existing octagon shelter building in the upland day use area, and replacement of one toilet building in the north picnic area. Water diversion/retention structures will also be constructed according to DNR engineer or Soil Conservation Service recommendations. These will be constructed on various ridges to hold back surface water in order for it to soak into the soil or evaporate. This would reduce or eliminate sheet water runoff which can erode hiking and horseback riding trail surfaces.

Boundary fencing, intensive and extensive area vegetative management, and prairie restoration will also be undertaken. Some tree removal and planting will take place as needed for health, safety, and welfare of the park visitor and to provide shade, screening vistas, and overlooks at various campground and day use areas. Extensive Area vegetative management will be in accord with forest management recommendations. Basically, the plan calls for limited selective harvest, removal of dead, dying, and diseased trees, limited cutting, and harvest of pine plantations. As with other development and actions proposed for this park, aesthetics and visual considerations will be kept in mind to reduce the impact of any action, either singly or in combination with other actions.

Approximately 300 acres of agricultural land are presently under cultivation and will continue to be cropped on a per year rental basis.

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

It is proposed that a canoe take-out and stairway be located near the proposed canoe campsite area. Billings Creek is presently listed as a class 2 brown trout stream within the park boundary and has had some in-stream trout habitat improvement structure and riprap installed in the past. The entire portion of Billings Creek within the park acquisition boundary is scheduled for in-stream habitat improvement once public access is gained along the stream.

Approximately 2.5 miles of stream will be improved at a cost of approximately \$30,000 per mile. Badly eroded banks will be sloped and riprapped. Some stream bank brushing will also be undertaken as appropriate. Specific sites for all stream improvements will be identified as soon as the stream course can be examined in greater detail. Funding for the stream improvement projects will be derived from trout stamp money.

Approximately 3,600 fall fingerling and yearling brown trout are stocked in Billings Creek every spring and fall. Cheyenne Creek receives approximately 1,600 fish each year. No trout are stocked in the Kickapoo River. The Kickapoo River is presently classed as non-trout water within the park boundary. No in-stream habitat work has been done nor is any being planned.

7. Buildings, Treatment Units, Roads and Other Structures

The proposed family campground calls for the construction of 75 campsites. Development items include an asphalt roadway including about 1/2 mile of 24-foot wide road and approximately 3/4 mile of 12-foot wide one-way road. Campsites will include a 12 x 50 foot long gravel surface spur and a 35-foot diameter grass surface pad for setting up tents and other camping units. One or two flush toilet buildings approximately 800 square feet each will be constructed. One of these toilet buildings will also include shower stalls. A well and water distribution system will be needed for the proposed water fountains to be located throughout the campground. In addition, electrical conduit will be needed to service approximately half of the campsites. One off-season, 8-unit combination sealed vault pit toilet will also be constructed in a central location in that campground for off-season use. Its size is approximately 20 x 20. The toilet structures call for a multi-thousand square foot septic field and appropriate sized septic tank.

Group camp facilities entail the construction of two 4-unit combination vault toilets, well and hand pump, and new shelter building. Any new office/contact/nature center building may be located in the area of the existing family campground once it is eliminated. A stage and wood seats will be constructed for the amphitheater. Self-guided nature trails will be developed in association with these interpretive facilities. Two standard 4-unit pit toilets will be provided in the horse trail camp area and two single-unit toilets will be constructed in the rustic canoe campsite area. Similarly, the backpack campsites will have two single unit toilets. The existing octagon shelter building will have insulated walls, window, door, and fireplace installed for the winter season to serve as a warming house for visitors involved in skiing, hiking, and other outdoor activities. The existing group camp shelter will be replaced with a 20 by 40 foot laminated beam structure. The toilets in the existing group camp area will be razed or removed and used in the extensive area outpost campsites. The visitor contact/park/-office/nature interpretation building will be constructed the latter part of the ten-year period and will be contingent upon removal of the existing family campground, construction of the new family campground, and possible modification of the public road system which transect the park. Fencing, signing, and renovation of or replacement of various support facilities would also be undertaken as needed.

The proposed realignment of Highway 33-131 would use about 88 acres of park land.

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 pollution might be expected during construction due to the use of heavy equipment and related construction activities. Vehicular traffic is expected to increase about 7% (7 cars per hour over an 8-hour period during 182-day major use period) into and through the area within the next 10 years. The resulting emissions are not expected to significantly affect the ambient air quality. Fossil fuels and lubricants consumed by construction equipment and those used for labor activities and fabrication of materials will be consumed and will result in some exhaust emissions. Secondary emissions and discharges will be created through fuel and electricity used to operate the facility.

9. Other Changes

The Department of Transportation is evaluating the realignment of Highway 131 and Highway 33 which are located within the park boundary. The park has four main use area entrances. Three of these are located off Highway 33 which travels in a north-south direction through the park. The other entrance is off of County Trunk Highway F. CTH F would remain uncontrolled and would continue to pose management and revenue collection problems, especially at the Ice Cave area. However, this road runs through primarily undeveloped parklands and, therefore, should have little impact on the overall operations of the park.

Approximately 10 years ago, as part of the La Farge dam project, Highway 33-131 was to be rerouted through the western edge of the park. Until this or similar realignment of the highway actually occurs, entrances will continue to be a management problem in controlling access for sticker sales, park security, and efficient management of the use areas. If Highway 33-131 is realigned in the future, it would be very desirable to create a one or two entrance property. The Department will continue to work closely with the Department of Transportation in evaluating the feasibility of this action in conjunction with the relocation of Highway 33-131.

In 1972, the State Highway Commission, as part of the original La Farge dam project, adopted the Highway 131 corridor to be relocated in a north-south direction on the west side of the park. This new highway would then carry traffic from Highway 33 as well as 131, thereby eliminating the need for the current Highway 33 road corridor. The proposed road corridor would have a negative impact on the scenic quality of the Kickapoo River valley. The corridor would be visible in its entirety from the upland overlook areas in the park. DNR and DOT staff will begin discussions on alternatives which would alleviate DNR concerns while providing for a safe highway. These alternatives will include mitigation measures such as screening and grade modifications on the proposed corridor, as well as a re-evaluation of alternative corridors.

DOT will undertake an environmental review and prepare the necessary environmental analysis before proceeding with any construction associated with the relocation of STH 33 and 131.

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):

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

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

Rocks and minerals have greatly influenced Vernon County's soil and topography. Dolomite limestone and sandstone are the two basic bedrocks. The oldest underlying rock formation is upper Cambrian sandstone. It is evident along the deepest valleys, including those of the Mississippi, Bad Axe, west fork of the Kickapoo and Pine Rivers. Above the sandstone is the Prairie du Chien dolomite (lower magnesian limestone). It underlines the ridges throughout the county and is the most common outcrop. At higher elevations in the southwest part of the county, St. Peter sandstone overlies the dolomite. In addition, on the very highest peaks in the southwestern area, some Platteville sandstone may be found lying above the St. Peter sandstone (Weidman and Shultz, 1915).

Soils within the park are covered predominantly by the Norden-Fayette soil association. The parent material of the Norden soil series is formed in a loess mantle up to three feet thick over fine-grained sandstones containing glauconitic sandstone, siltstone, and shale. It is found on valley slopes and bedrock benches. It is well-drained, infiltration rate is intermediate, and permeability is moderate. Runoff from higher areas is a hazard on valley slopes. Erosion hazard may be very severe. The Fayette soil series was formed in 42-inch or more of the wind-deposited Loess from the Mississippi floodplains. It is found on rolling upland ridges, on benches, and on valley slopes. It is well-drained, has intermediate infiltration rate, and has moderate permeability. Erosion is severe on steep slopes and moderate elsewhere. A small section in the northeast corner of the park is composed of Fayette-Stony Rockland-Dubuque association. It is Stony Rockland on nearly level to steep slopes, moderately deep to deep, well-drained soil on valley slopes and bedrock benches.

Wildcat Mountain State Park encompasses portions of Billings Creek, Cheyenne Creek, and the Kickapoo River. Billings Creek is a class 2 brown trout stream flowing through the park boundary for approximately two miles. The water is cold, clear, carries a moderate silt load, is very hard, and moderately alkaline (pH - 8.0). Cheyenne Creek is a class 2 brown trout stream with the lower 300 feet flowing through the park boundary where it empties into Billings

Creek. The water is cool, clear, carries a moderate silt load, is hard, and moderately alkaline. The Kickapoo River is a warm-water stream which flows through a major portion of the park. Approximately 2.5 miles of stream lies within the park boundary. The water temperatures are marginal for trout survival, there is a heavy silt load, and the water is moderately hard and alkaline. The Kickapoo River has a long history of severe flooding.

While most of the geological formations in Vernon County contain water, the principal water bearing horizons are the upper Cambrian sandstone and Prairie du Chien dolomite in the uplands and alluvial sands and gravels in the valleys. Upland wells are usually drilled to 100 feet or deeper but in the lowlands, water can usually be obtained at the depth of less than 50 feet. Flowing springs are common in the valleys, but several dry up during the extended dry periods.

Due to the nature of the river valley gradient, very little wetland occurs on the property. A few scattered wet spots in areas adjacent to the rivers and creeks may be classified as marsh, but probably wouldn't total more than 20 acres.

12. Biological

a. Flora

Prior to white settlement, the area now comprising Wildcat Mountain State Park was a mosaic of diverse vegetation. This diversity was largely due to the wide range of aspects created by the hilly terrain. The ridges supported true prairie which were maintained through periodic burning by the Indians. The hillside forest varied from scrub oak and hickory on the southern and western slopes to stands of red oak, sugar maple, and basswood on the northern and eastern exposures. Dense forests of maple, basswood, elm, and ash stood on the bottomlands and relics of a more northern forest type including hemlock, yellow birch, and white pine flanked the Kickapoo River and its tributaries.

Over one century of agriculture, livestock grazing, fire control, and timber harvesting has changed the vegetation. Still, representative stands of all the presettlement vegetation are present today. In addition to the original types, new types such as fruit orchards, abandoned fields, and pine plantations now add diversity to the park. The vegetation types in the park were mapped in 1973.

The park contains one designated scientific area, the Mount Pisgah Hemlock Hardwoods. This 30-acre area is a stand of hemlock, white pine, and northern hardwoods. This forest type, native to northern Wisconsin, is unique in this part of the state. Also unique are the plant species *Sullivantia renifolia*, *Adoxa moschatellina*, and several varieties of spring ephemerals which flourish in the area.

b. Fauna

A list of wildlife species known to be present within the park can be found in the master plan appendix. Major species found within that list include whitetail deer, cottontail rabbit, gray and fox squirrel, raccoon, gray and red fox, muskrat, mink, beaver, striped skunk, river otter, opossum, weasel, and woodchuck. Birds would include a variety of ducks, Canada goose, coot, ruffed grouse, bobwhite quail, woodcock, as well as a variety of songbird species. The Office of Endangered Species indicated that Department records show the following threatened species within Wildcat Mountain State Park:

Northern monkshook, moschtell, and Cooper's hawk - no nest locations on record, but August site records of adult hawks would indicate that they may be present and should be checked further.

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

The property is located in the rural setting of the beautiful Kickapoo River Valley. Adjacent land use is predominantly agricultural and woodlot. The nearest business area is in the Village of Ontario which serves the needs of the park visitor as well as the surrounding rural population. The closest metropolitan area is La Crosse, Wausau, Marshfield, Stevens Point, Wisconsin Rapids, and Madison. Primary access to the park is provided by Highways 33 and 131. Dairying and its associated enterprises is the dominant agricultural activity in the area.

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

According to the 1980 Wisconsin Camper Survey conducted by the University of Wisconsin Recreation Resources Center Extension, camper spending had a very substantial economic impact on the local economy. The report stated that "Hypothetically, a 100-site campground with 45% occupancy over a 100-day period would generate \$216,000 of direct community spending and an additional \$168,000 in indirect spending. This is assuming a multiplier of 1.7. Furthermore, almost 10 full or part-time jobs could be supported by such spending in a community in 1980."

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

A survey of the park undertaken by the State Historical Society indicates that none of the buildings are historically or architecturally significant. However, seven prehistoric sites have been discovered in the park and it is felt that the park is likely to contain many additional sites. Therefore, if any sites or articles are found during construction, the Department will stop construction and consult with the State Historical Society office to determine whether further archaeological testing and facility changes are warranted.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES (probable adverse and beneficial impacts including indirect and secondary impacts)

15. Physical (include visual if applicable)

Proposed new development and major building maintenance will have limited impact on the property. Use is expected to increase approximately 25% over the next 10-year period; however, based on the existing and proposed facilities, this increase should not overtax the man-made or natural resource. Maintenance of the area, its man-made features, and vegetative cover should maximize user enjoyment and perceptions, as well as provide some diversity of habitat.

Development of the proposed campground, trails, and other support facilities will cause some minor disruption to the soil, mainly through exposure and compaction during the construction phase. Farther away from these specific developments, soils will be affected by such things as compaction caused by maintenance equipment and foot traffic. Maintenance practices will be utilized to guard against destruction of ground cover which may result in erosion or other detrimental effects to the resource.

Development plans call for additional planting of trees and shrubs for shade, screening, and space definition in the areas such as the campground, group camp, and day use areas.

In the extensive areas of the property, all tree harvesting activities will be done with aesthetics in mind. Buffer strips, irregular cut boundary lines, and other techniques will be utilized to reduce the visual impact of cutting and development activities. The potential realignment of Highway 33-131 could have detrimental impact on the overall aesthetics of the park, especially as viewed from the upland overlook area. Therefore, the Department will continue working with DOT in identifying a new road corridor to limit negative visual impact. 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 the use of heavy equipment and disruption of surface conditions. Some increase of 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 33, Highway 131, and County Trunk F provide immediate access to the property. These highways should easily accommodate the expected 7% increase in traffic volume over the next 10 year period.

16. Biological

The number and type of plant species at Wildcat Mountain State Park will change somewhat due to natural succession, interruption of succession, cutting, 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 in use areas and along trails and overlook sites. This would entail some tree removal, limb cutting, and occasional mowing. Timber harvest will occur on the small pine plantations

located throughout the property and on the oak hardwood stands as indicated in the forest management report. As the dominant vegetative cover is removed from cut areas, accelerated growth of the remaining vegetation is expected. In addition, revegetation will be fostered through underplanting and new planting as needed. Disrupted land near construction sites will be reseeded and planted with native tree and shrub species as well as a variety of ground covers to guard against erosion and provide the user with shade and other amenities associated with vegetative cover.

Hiking trails, horse trails, and primitive campsites located throughout the property will increase the disturbance of those species, i.e., fox, that are timid and do not adapt well to humans. However, most species present in the park are already well adapted to human disturbance. They should not be noticeably affected. Some species such as deer will use the trails as travel lanes and, if seeded to grass and legumes, as feeding areas.

Development of a new family campground facility near the existing group camp area will increase use in this section of the park. This, in turn, will slightly reduce deer, song bird, and small mammal populations in this area. A few others that learn to beg a meal from campers (chipmunks) may increase.

The trout habitat improvement on Billings Creek proposed by Fish Management will increase fish numbers, health, size, and result in a better fishery. Trout stocking will occur on Billings Creek and Cheyenne Creek. No fish stocking will occur on the Kickapoo River.

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

Expansion and improvement of park facilities will result in better service to the public. Providing the new family campground and rustic camp areas will serve to meet some of the need as identified in local, regional, and state outdoor recreational plans. The facilities will also increase campsite utilization and length of stay and, therefore, will increase camping revenue. This should also mean more dollars for the local economy based on information presented within the 1980 Wisconsin Camper Survey. Providing a nature center, amphitheater, and additional nature and hiking trails will increase the educational mission of the property and provide the user with more information about their natural environment and Department programs being undertaken to safeguard those and other resources. The same holds true for the section of land designated as scientific area and public use natural area.

Enlarging, remodeling, and, in some instances, replacement of obsolete facilities should increase park user satisfaction and lead to increased use and duration of stay. This, in turn, will provide economic benefits through increased park admission sticker and campsite rental fees. It is expected that the park will continue to generate local commercial sales for such things as gasoline, picnic and camping supplies, canoe rental, and related items. If the proposed development projects are implemented, at least \$750,000 will be put into the local economy. Proposed land acquisition will cause a shift from private ownership to public ownership with the resulting availability of land for public recreation and enjoyment. Tax loss will be negligible as the state makes payments in lieu of property tax on lands it owns. These payments do decline every 10 years to a minimum of 50¢ per acre.

On the land remaining to be purchased, there are 8 homes, 3 farm units, one canoe livery, and a small 5-unit motel. It is the state's policy to acquire any land within the boundary from willing sellers. If the landowner desires to sell his residence, relocation assistance is available.

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

At present, there are no known archaeological or historical sites which may be affected by development. However, the State Historical Society will be contacted to inspect the property if any evidence of sites is uncovered. If needed to avoid impact on such a site, development plans and construction would be modified.

Protection will be provided for endangered and threatened species that may be found to inhabit or migrate through the park. Guidelines and Manual Code 2328.1 will be followed.

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 will expose some soil to water and wind erosion. Some dirt and noise will also be created during construction. Air pollution emissions to the atmosphere will increase slightly due to the 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 will be minimized through the use of appropriate erosion control techniques. Increased use could possibly lead to 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 and by maintenance vehicles used in the park. Traffic will increase on the state trunk highways leading to the property; however, this increase is minimal and therefore is not expected to have a 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 recreational facilities. This alternative is not desirable since the property was acquired for recreational purposes in order to meet the needs as identified in state, regional, and local outdoor recreation plans. Since the property is at or near maximum user density as it applies to a family campground, horse

trails, and other facilities, the lack of additional development could lead to safety problems, undesirable user experience, and degradation of the resource. Similarly, not acquiring existing inholdings within the park boundary could lead to potential trespass, encroachment, and undesirable land use developments which could cause management problems. Also, in the future, this additional land may be needed for the development of trail systems and other facilities to meet new recreational demands.

Limited Additional Acquisition and Development

Through limited additional development of recreational facilities such as the new family campground, horse camp, group camp, primitive campsites, horseback riding and hiking trails, the property will be better able to meet the recreational and educational needs as identified in state, regional, and local outdoor recreation plans. In addition, the development of a new family campground will increase the revenue generating capabilities of the property, increase operational efficiency, and overall better meet the needs of the camping public.

The proposed acquisition of lands remaining within the property will help protect fragile natural features, prevent encroachment, and provide better access to other presently owned Department lands. In addition, by reclassifying some of the lands to scientific area and public use natural area, management will be given another tool to safeguard the fragile and rather unique natural resources of the property.

Additional Large Scale Development on Lands Within the Park Boundary

This alternative would include all actions listed under #2 and would provide for the development of an additional campground facility, day use area, and a variety of trails. Although this action may be desirable for some time in the future, present supply and demand data within the outdoor recreation plans do not indicate a need for such action and, therefore, this alternative is not feasible at this time.

Develop 1 or 2 Access Road Park

This alternative assumes that all traffic to the major use areas could be controlled at one point if Highway 33 were abandoned and turned over to the state park system. Such action would increase operational efficiency and security, maximize user services, and reduce pedestrian-vehicular conflict in many use areas. The second access (off of C.T.H. F) would remain uncontrolled and would continue to be a management and revenue collection problem. However, this road runs through mostly extensive area and, therefore, should have limited impact in regards to the above considerations.

Modify Park Boundary

Only minor modification of the park boundary is proposed in the northwest section of the property. This should result in very little or no change to the project acreage goal. However, there is interest in obtaining control of land around Billings Creek as it enters the Kickapoo River. This would entail

either fee acquisition or easement of lands within section 23 and a small portion of section 26, Forest Township, T15N, R2W. At the present time, this land is controlled by the federal government as it is part of the La Farge dam project. Assuming that the project remains deauthorized, it is proposed that the state acquire these lands to protect Billings Creek and its immediate environs. Therefore, the option should be left available to increase the project acreage goal by about 600 acres and modify the boundary to include these lands when and if the federal government decides to declare them surplus and sell them.

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.

Providing a new family campground, horse trail campground, group camp, and rustic campsite area will increase the use of the park to the point where park revenues will be increased and secondary economic benefits will be realized by the local business establishments. Upgrading and enlargement of the day use facilities will also increase additional income and have secondary economic benefits. This additional use will generate traffic into the area and increase use of local roads.

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 a significant change to the social, physical, or biological environment of the property because similar facilities and recreational activities have been provided on the property since its establishment.

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.

Wildcat Mountain State Park has a scientific area, unique and threatened plant and animal species, and a number of archaeological sites. It is the only state park located within the Kickapoo River valley. For these reasons, the park can be considered somewhat scarce, both regionally and statewide. In regards to use, the park gets the majority of its use from southern and western Wisconsin.

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

This action is not precedent setting as similar management practices and programs discussed throughout the master plan are being carried out on a statewide basis. There are over 50 other state parks in the state being managed similarly to Wildcat Mountain State Park.

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

Realigning Highways 33 and 131 within the corridor presently proposed by DOT would be highly controversial because of its major impact on the scenic quality of the park, especially as seen from the upland overlook areas. Efforts will be made to accommodate DOT highway needs and minimize the visual impact of the road corridor if it traverses the park.

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 initial planning and review process. This project is in accord with local, county, and state outdoor recreation plans.

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 modification of existing buildings, there should be little significant impact on the natural environment.

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 is non-recoverable as is the manpower utilized in the planning, construction, and operation of the park. Fuel used to power vehicles to and from the park will 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 be basically unslavable. However, land covered by these facilities could be 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?

No

Yes, refer to item 17.

30. Other:

None

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

<u>31.</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Contact</u>	<u>Comment Summary</u>
	7/1/82	Div. Resource Mgt. Adm. Dist. Director's Office	Establish master planning task force
	8/19/82	Master Planning Task Force	Held initial task force meeting and drafted preliminary goal and objective statement
	8/11/82	To Ray Kyro, LaCrosse Area Wildlife Spec. from Jim Hale, Office of Endangered Species	Provided data on threatened species within Wildcat Mountain State Park.
	10/28/82	To Jim Lissack, WCD Director from J.R. Huntoon, Div. of Resource Mgt. Administrator	Sent out approved goal and objective statement for Wildcat Mountain State Park.
	12/8/82	From Bill Smith Office of Endangered Species to Mike Ries, WCD Park Planner	Proposed changes for the scientific area and establishment of a public use natural area
	2/3/83	From James D. Gruendler, Dist. Chief Design Engineer, Dept. of Transportation, Dist. 5, La Crosse to Mike Ries	Provided information regarding advanced right-of-way acquisition for State Trunk Highway 131 between Rockton and Ontario. Project ID number 5111-2-21.
	2/15/83	From Dale Erlandson to Mike Ries	Expansion of park acquisition boundary to include all of section 23 and T14N, R2W.
	12/1/83 to 5/25/83	From Ron E. Nelson Wildcat Mt. Supv. to Mike Ries, Park Planner	Public response to Wildcat Mountain State Park Master Planning Workbook.
	5/25/83	Bill Smith, Ron Nelson Mike Ries	On site inspection of scientific area expansion and establishment of public use natural area within Wildcat Mountain State Park.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Contact</u>	<u>Comment Summary</u>
5/11/83	From James D. Gruendler Dist. Chief Design Eng., Transp. Dist. 5 to Mike Ries, WCD, Park Planner	Notification of meeting regarding Rockton to Ontario State Highway 131 and 33 relocation, project ID# 5111-02-21.
6/13/83	From Richard W. Dexter, Chief, Reg & Compliance Sec., Historical Div., State Historical Society to Ronald E. Nelson, Wildcat Mt. State Park Supv.	Identification of historical and archaeological sites of significance within Wildcat Mountain State Park. Note: At least 7 prehistoric sites have been discovered in the park.
7/6/83	From James D. Grundler, Dist. Chief Design Eng., Transp. Dist. 5 to Mike Ries, WCD Park Planner	Project ID 5111-02-21, Rockton to Ontario State Highway 113 and 33, Vernon County.
7/27/84	Meeting with represen- tatives of the Depart- ments of Natural Resources and Transpor- tation	DOT's concerns that the Wildcat Mountain Master Plan and environmental assessment did not properly consider DOT plans to relocate STH 33 and 131 were discussed.

RECOMMENDATION

EIS Not Required..... _____

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.

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

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

Request EIR..... _____

Wildcat Mt. Ski Park M.P., EA

Vernon
12/2

- 20 -

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

Michael L. Rice 3/19/84
SIGNATURE OF EVALUATOR DATE

J. Weidell for D. Weigensleben 8/23/84
NOTED / AREA SUPERVISOR OR BUREAU DIRECTOR DATE

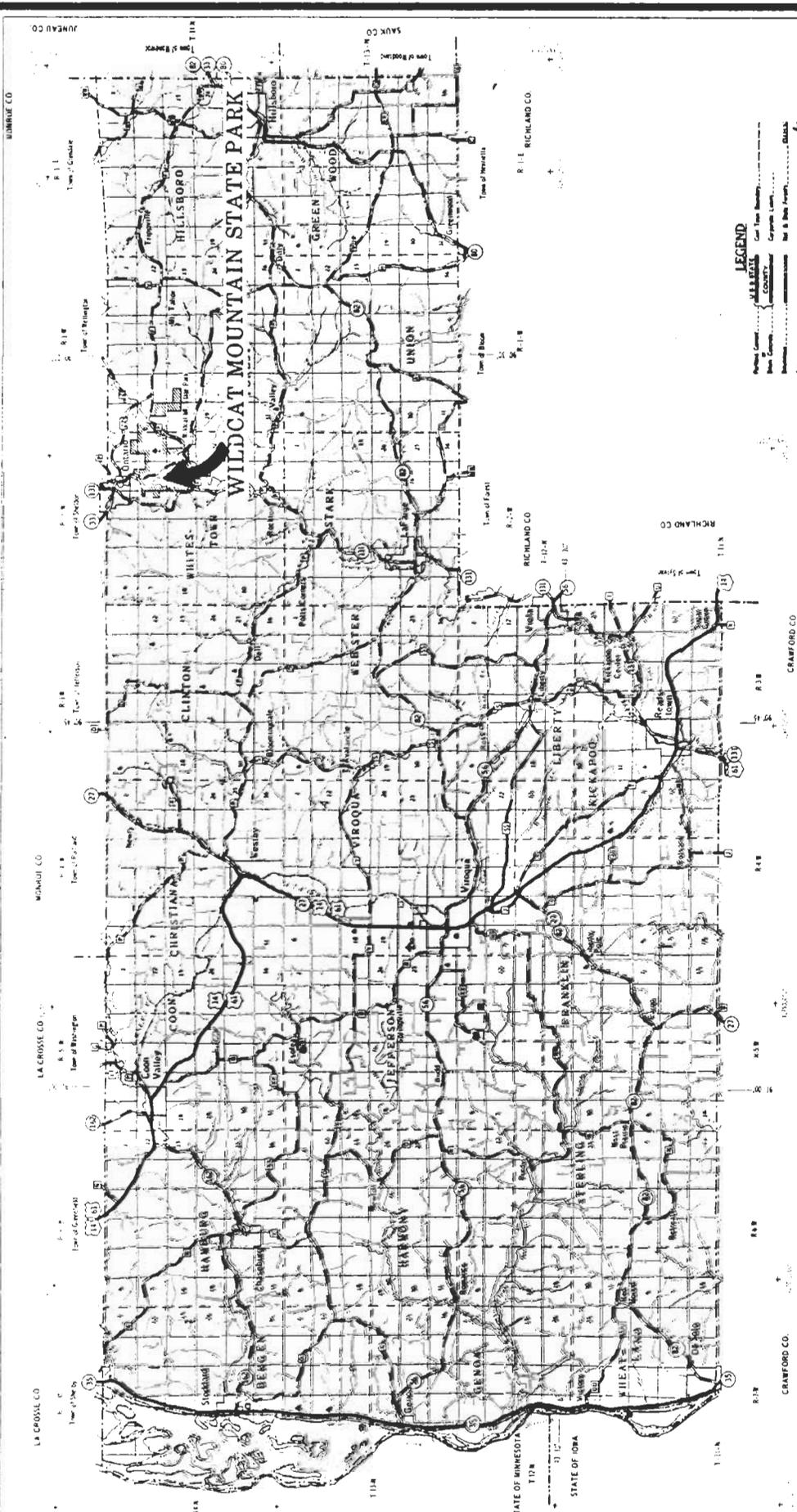
Number of responses to public notice _____

Public response log attached? yes

As amended, Lewis Torday 9/27/84
CERTIFIED TO BE IN COMPLIANCE WITH NEPA DATE
DISTRICT DIRECTOR OR DIRECTOR OF BEI (OR DESIGNEE)

This decision is not final until certified by the appropriate District Director or the Director of BEI. If you believe that 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(s), Stats.

2997L



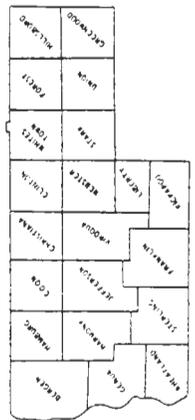
- LEGEND**
- Car Time Boundary
 - Corporation Limits
 - Rail & Boat Ferry
 - Airport
 - Fair Ground
 - Game Preserve
 - County Seat
 - Cemetery
 - Public House or Park
 - Range Station
 - U.S. Highway
 - State Highway
 - County Highway
 - County Park
 - School
 - State Boundary
 - County Boundary

VERNON CO.
 DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
 DIVISION OF HIGHWAYS
 WASHINGTON, D. C.
 SCALE: 1:250,000
 1954 Edition



TOWNSHIP	1	2	3	4	5
1	1	2	3	4	5
2	6	7	8	9	10
3	11	12	13	14	15
4	16	17	18	19	20
5	21	22	23	24	25
6	26	27	28	29	30
7	31	32	33	34	35
8	36	37	38	39	40
9	41	42	43	44	45
10	46	47	48	49	50

U.S. 11th MERRILL
 JAN. 1, 1937
 LOCAL BOUNDARIES
 CIVIL TOWNS
 TOTAL TOWNSHIP 50



CIVIL TOWNS

COUNTY LOCATOR MAP FIGURE 1

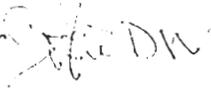
CORRESPONDENCE/MEMORANDUM

STATE OF WISCONSIN

Date: September 26, 1984

File Ref: 2500/1600

To: L. Posekany - IE/3

From: D. Weizenicker 

Subject: Amendment to EA #1712 - Wildcat Mountain State Park Concept Element

The following amends environmental assessment #1712 prepared for the Wildcat Mountain State Park Concept Master Plan. This amendment addresses the comments received from the Department of Transportation on the Wildcat Mountain Master Plan and environmental assessment concerning the S.T.H. 33 and 131 corridor.

Page 2, Management Section - Add "Expansion of the scientific area and designation of the public use natural area may complicate the S.T.H. 33 and 131 corridor proposal."

Page 4, Item 2 - Add "The Department of Transportation, as a part of the dam project studies has determined the approved corridor to be more cost-effective than the existing location should improvements to S.T.H. 131 be required prior to completion or abandonment of the Corp's LaFarge project."

Page 8, Item 9 - Delete the word "entirety" and add partially.

Page 17, Item 25 - Change "would" to could.

The Development Map (Figure 3) was revised to show the correct location of the S.T.H. 131 approach to the park from the south.

After reviewing the original assessment and this amendment, we believe the impacts of the Wildcat Mountain State Park Master Plan proposals have been adequately addressed.

DJK:ln

cc: D. Kulhanek - P&R/4

