A Management Plan for Itasca State Park

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

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Itasca
State Park

Prepared by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

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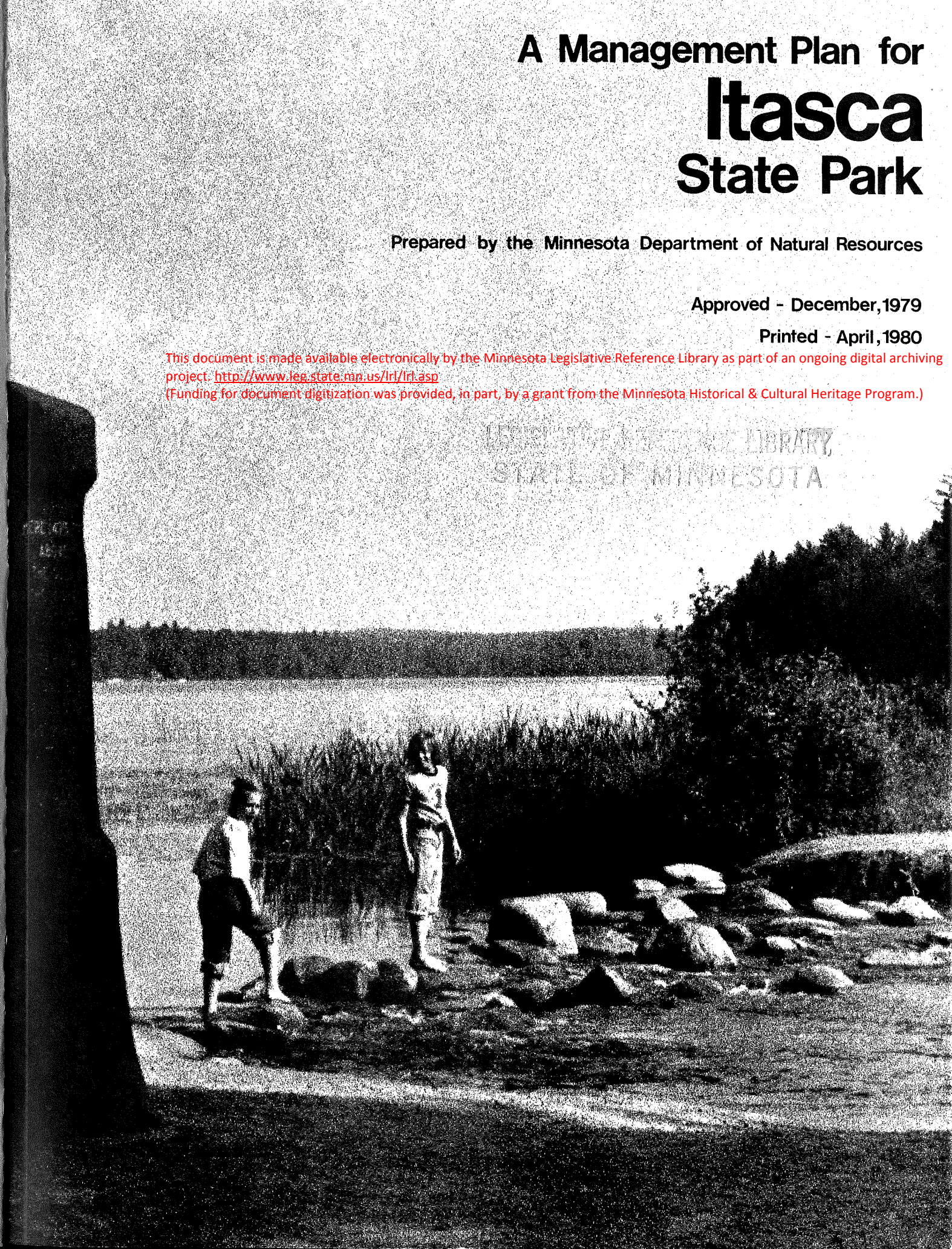


TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF MAPS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ORA '75 - Outdoor Recreation Act of 1975
DNR - Department of Natural Resources
MHS - Minnesota Historical Society
SPA - State Planning Agency
MnDOT - Minnesota Department of Transportation
NPS - National Park Service
AYH - American Youth Hostels
LAWCON - Land and Water Conservation Fund
CCC - Civilian Conservation Corps
TH - Trunk Highway
CSAH - County State Aid Highway
mi - miles
km - kilometers
sq - square
in. - inches
cm - centimeter
F - Farenheit
C - Centigrade
ft - feet
m - meters
mph - miles per hour
kmph - kilometers per hour
p - page
pp - pages
T - Township
R - Range

PREFACE

The primary concern in the development of the park management plan format was the identification of the "audience." For whom are these plans to be written? Many audiences were identified. The requirements of each of the audiences are different. All audiences require a document which includes some technical data, but the degree of detail, as well as the manner of presentation, varies. Some audiences require that specific topics be discussed in detail in all phases from inventory through recommended management. Other groups require a short, non-technical, yet comprehensive and logical management plan. A plan, obviously, cannot be both technical and non-technical nor can it be both long and short.

It seemed logical then to produce two documents: 1) a short, comprehensive, non-technical document for the general public ("General Park Management Plan" GPMP), and 2) a detailed, technical document for specialists ("Management Plan Detail" MPD).

This document is the General Park Management Plan. All recommendations, both resource management and physical development, are included in this document. Detailed inventory data and specific instructions necessary for implementation of the plan are not included. This information has been compiled into technical appendices, which are available upon request from:

Park Planning
Department of Natural Resources
Box 10E
Centennial Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Introduction

SUMMARY OF ITASCA STATE PARK MANAGEMENT PLAN

A natural state park classification is proposed for Itasca State Park.

The goal for the park can be found in the purpose for all natural state parks as stated in the Outdoor Recreation Act of 1975 (ORA' 75).

> "A natural state park shall be established to protect and perpetuate extensive areas of the state possessing those resources which illustrate and exemplify Minnesota's natural phenomena and to provide for the use, enjoyment, and understanding of such resources without impairment for the enjoyment and recreation of future generations."

Resource management in the park will focus on the vegetation and wildlife. Perpetuation of existing pine stands, the reestablishment of plant species representative of those that existed prior to European settlement, the protection of rare or unusual plant communities, and the reestablishment and perpetuation of vegetation in high use areas will be the focal points of the vegetation management program.

Wildlife management will focus on controlling the park deer herd, primarily by continuing the hunting season. The beaver population will be monitored and, if necessary, controlled to prevent destructive cutting and damming.

The proposed changes to existing park facilities include:

- Constructing an interpretive center. This will be a joint project between the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the Minnesota Historical Society (MHS).
- Expanding the picnic grounds.
- Improving parking facilities.
- Expanding the swimming beach.
- Constructing a new kitchen/snack bar facility to replace the Douglas Lodge kitchen and Forest Inn snack bar. The new facility will be located behind Douglas Lodge.

- Rehabilitating the Clubhouse. It will continue to be used as a rental facility.
- Asphalt surfacing Wilderness Drive.
- Improving interpretive stops and trails along Wilderness Drive.
- Reestablishing the launch service on Lake Itasca.
- Establishing a shuttle bus service on Park Drive from Douglas Lodge to the Headwaters.
- Constructing bicycle trails connecting the high use areas.
- Rehabilitating the park's sewage disposal systems.

The 63 acre (25 hectare) tract of state land (formerly owned by the Lorna Fitz estate) outside of the park statutory boundary and adjacent to Trunk Highway 200 (TH 200) will be declared surplus and be disposed of according to established procedures.

Two boundary expansions are proposed if the landowners approve. One 80 acre (32 hectare) expansion would include two tracts of land directly north of the statutory boundary along the Mississippi River. This proposed expansion would double the amount of the Mississippi River in the park and allow the construction of hiking trails. The other proposed expansion is directly east of County State Aid Highway 38 (CSAH 38). Sufficient land would be included to realign part of CSAH 38 just before it enters the park. This would allow construction of a safe intersection where Park Drive meets CSAH 38. It would also allow construction of a north entrance and contact station which would be visible from the TH 200/CSAH 38 intersection.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

The variety of outstanding natural, cultural, and historical resources of Minnesota provide abundant opportunities for outdoor recreation and education. In order to ensure that present and future generations will continue to have the opportunity to enjoy these resources, we must plan now to perpetuate, protect, and provide access to these resources. For this reason, the Minnesota legislature passed the ORA '75.

This act mandated that a comprehensive management plan be completed for each of the major units in the state recreation system. In the course of this planning process, each state park will be classified in recognition of its resources and its role in the statewide system.

This plan sets the long range goals and objectives for resource management and recreational development which are appropriate for the park's classification. The actions that should be taken to move toward fulfilling these goals and objectives are then stated and scheduled.

The planning process consists of five steps:

1. Compilation of an inventory of natural resources and existing facilities. Task forces of specialists from other DNR divisions and sections are mobilized to assist in collecting pertinent data. At this point the first public workshop is held.

2. Identification of alternatives for park management and development. A second public workshop is held to review these alternatives and invite further public comment. These alternatives are then reviewed by the Division of Parks and Recreation.

3. Classification of park, development of park goal, and writing of draft plan. This step culminates in the first interdepartmental review, followed by a 30 day public review. Within this 30 day period, the third public workshop is held.

4. Revision of the draft plan according to information received from public and interdepartmental reviews. Plan is then sent to the State Planning Agency for a 60 day reviewal period.

5. Implementation of development plan by the Division of Parks and Recreation.

AN OVERVIEW OF ITASCA STATE PARK

Itasca State Park is located in north central Minnesota in the southeastern corner of Clearwater County with small portions extending into Hubbard and Becker counties. Chief access to the park from the south and east is by TH 71. In addition to the south and east park entrances, a north entrance is located in Clearwater County along TH 200. The nearest centers of population are Park Rapids, 18 miles (mi) 29 kilometers (km) to the south and Bemidji 31 mi (50 km) to the northeast.

The statutory boundary encloses 30,619 acres (12,392 hectares). Of these, 28,757 acres (11,638 hectares) are state owned, 1,595 acres (645 hectares) are trust fund land, and 267 acres (108 hectares) are in private ownership.

The glacially formed landscape of Itasca is typical of this part of Minnesota. In general, it is rolling, hilly country with some relatively flat areas formed by the outwash of glacial debris.

Itasca is well known for its water resources. Bodies of water in the park occupy 2,325 acres (941 hectares). The largest of these is Lake Itasca at 1,180 acres (472 hectares). The Mississippi River begins as a small stream flowing from the northernmost part of Lake Itasca.

Another of Itasca's outstanding physical features is its many majestic stands of Norway, white, and jack pine. One of the most popular is Preacher's Grove, located one mi (1.6 km) north of Douglas Lodge. This majestic stand of Norway pine is over 250 years old.

Because of its historic significance, Itasca has been placed on the National Register of Historic Places. In addition, there are two sites within the park which are listed on the Minnesota State Register of Historic Sites – the Headwaters of the Mississippi River and the Wegmann Cabin. The Wegmann Cabin was once the home of Theodore Wegmann, an early settler and game warden in Itasca.

Itasca State Park offers a variety of activities for both day–users and overnight visitors. Of interest to the tourist are such scenic attractions as Preacher's Grove, Peacepipe Vista, Aiton Heights Lookout Tower, Wilderness Drive, and the Mississippi Headwaters. The park also has a swimming beach on Lake Itasca and many miles of hiking and multiple use trails. Souvenirs and hand-crafted items can be purchased at Forest Inn, Brower Inn, or the Headwaters. Meals are available in the dining room at Douglas Lodge, or a quick lunch can be purchased at Forest Inn or Brower Inn.

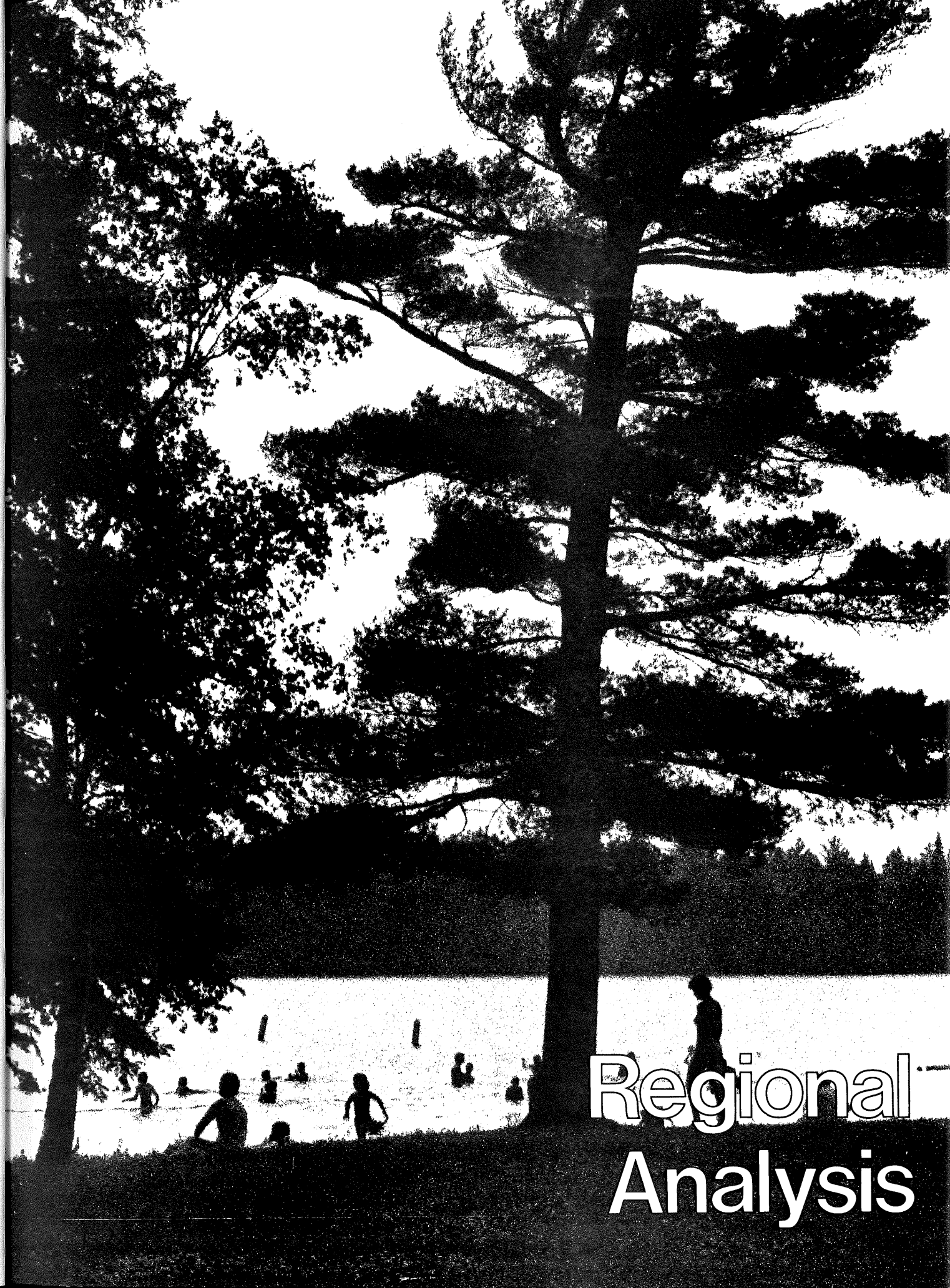
Itasca has a variety of overnight accommodations. Bear Paw and Pine Ridge campgrounds have a total of 237 campsites with modern toilet and shower facilities available. Douglas Lodge and Nicollet Court have 25 rooms available for overnight visitors. Those wishing more rustic housing can rent one of the park's cabins or take a room in the Clubhouse. There are 12 rental cabins in the Douglas Lodge area, six cabins equipped with kitchen facilities in Bear Paw Campground, and Squaw Lake Cabin, a two bedroom cabin located on the north end of Squaw Lake.

Itasca is also open for winter use, though on a more limited basis. Anyone willing to brave the chill of winter can camp in Pine Ridge Campground. Snowmobilers make frequent use of the park, and those who enjoy ski touring will find the Itasca trails some of the finest in the area.

Official recognition of Itasca came on April 20, 1891 when Governor William Merrian signed the bill making it Minnesota's first major state park. (Camp Release was the first, but it was quite small and is no longer part of the state park system.) The original boundary of the park encompassed a 36-section piece of land in Clearwater County. Since then the park has been expanded several times.

It was not without difficulty that Itasca became a state park. Much opposition came from lumbermen, who were not interested in the idea of preserving the large tracts of virgin pine for recreation and the enjoyment of future generations. In fact, many acres of park land

were stripped of pine (and various hardwoods). It was only through the efforts of Jacob Brower, the first park commissioner, and others who aided him, that much more park timber did not fall before the lumberman's axe. Without Brower's diligent efforts, the beauty of Itasca as we know it might only be a fading memory.



Regional Analysis

INTRODUCTION

In order to determine a park's role in protecting and perpetuating natural resources and fulfilling recreational needs, a state park analysis process has been initiated. The analysis is designed to look at a given park's interrelationship with:

the state park system

the biocultural region system

state park use patterns

regional influence/impact factors

Recognition of a state park's interrelationship with these components helps to ensure that park development will be planned to protect natural resources, meet appropriate recreational demands, and avoid undue competition with other recreation providers.

The State Park System

Minnesotans traditionally have a great appreciation for nature. The variety and everchanging beauty of our 65 state parks testify to the vast natural and historic wealth of our state. The goal of Minnesota's state park system is to protect and perpetuate these natural resources while offering the public a variety of recreational opportunities.

There is a delicate balance which must be maintained when recreational facilities are provided for large numbers of people in areas of outstanding, often sensitive resources. Generally, certain resources are best suited for particular types of recreation. To help ensure this recreation/resource balance, the Minnesota legislature outlined in the ORA '75 the components which comprise all state recreational lands. These components are: historic sites, state forests, water access sites, rest areas, state trails, wildlife

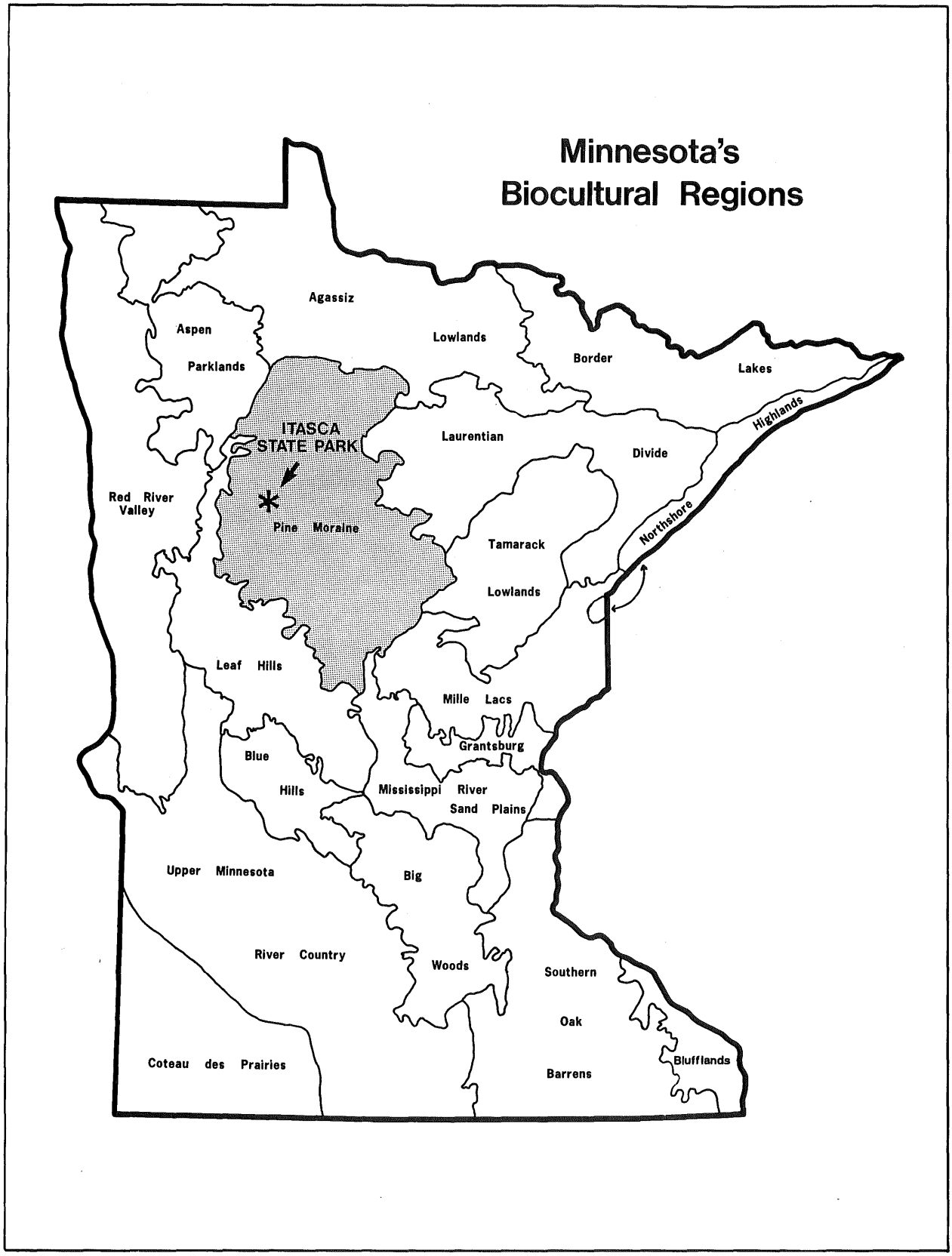
management areas, scientific and natural areas, wild, scenic and recreational rivers, wilderness areas, and state parks. Also included in this legislation is a classification system which identifies general criteria for planning and management direction. The two primary classifications for state parks are natural or recreational.

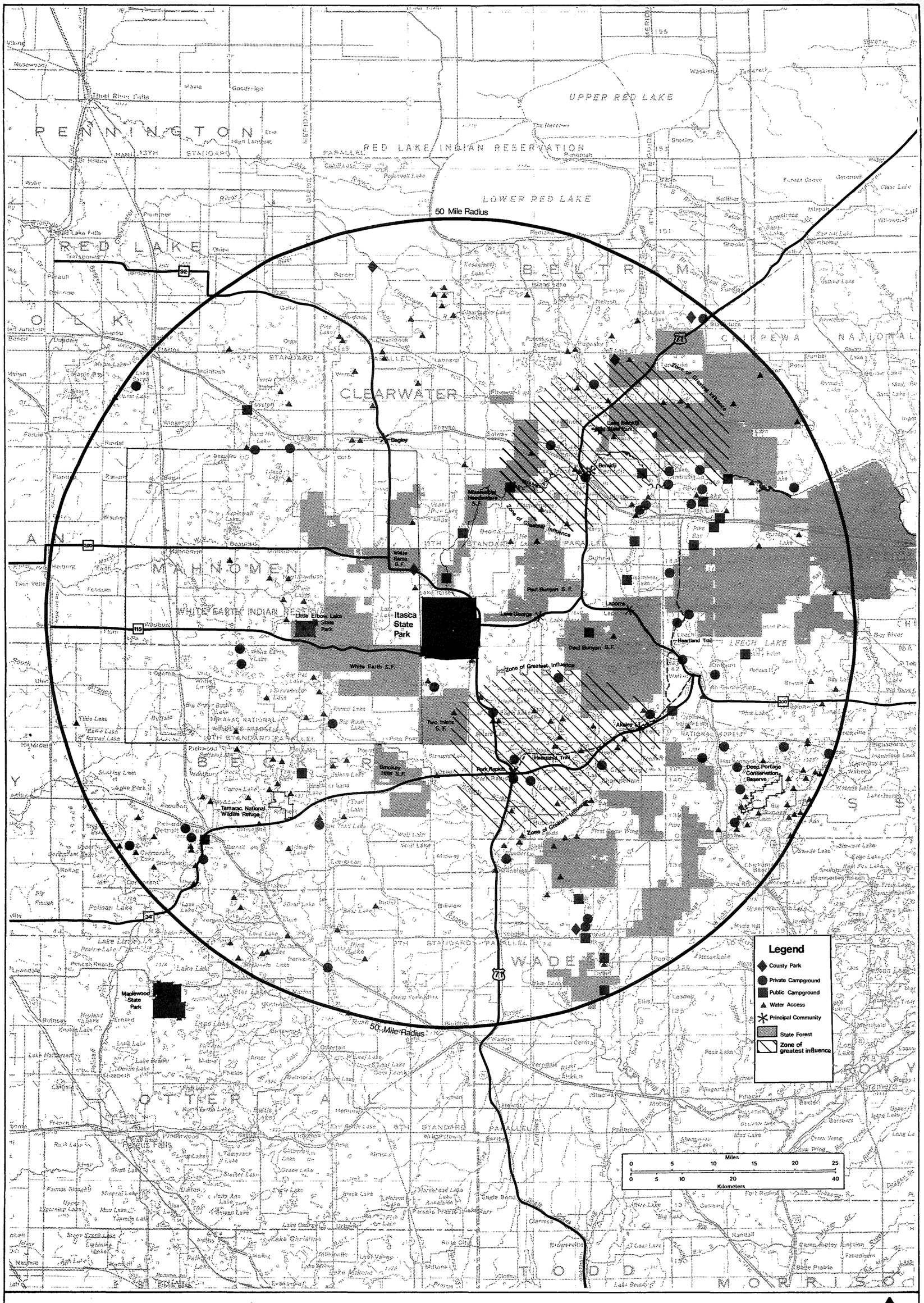
A natural state park classification places primary emphasis on perpetuation of the natural resources. Recreational state park classification, while not allowing major disruption of the natural resources, focuses on providing a variety of recreational facilities for large numbers of people. This classification determines each park's role as a unit in the statewide park system. (See Classification Section, p 27 for further discussion.)

It is proposed that Itasca State Park be designated a natural state park. Its natural resource base of numerous lakes and vast tracts of forest consistently draws large numbers of out-of-state visitors, and has national significance.

Biocultural Region System (Formerly Landscape Region System)

The ORA '75 defines a landscape region as "an identifiable geographic region with generally homogeneous natural characteristics which exemplify the natural processes which formed the geography, geology, topography, and biology of the state." Since 1975, it has become apparent that human impact on the landscape has not been included to a sufficient extent in this system. As a result, several studies have been directed toward amending the system to include the interrelationship of cultural, biological, and geological impacts on the environment. The system has been renamed the biocultural region system. This system divides the state into 18 regions which are differentiated according to the characteristic plant life, animal life, and landforms of presettlement times and the cultural impacts which have altered the landforms since settlement.


Minnesota's
Biocultural Regions
Agassiz
Lowlands
Aspen
Parklands
Border
Lakes
Highlands
ITASCA
STATE PARK
Laurentian
Divide
Red River
Valley
Pine Moraine
Tamarack
Lowlands
Northshore
Leaf Hills
Mille Lacs
Grantsburg
Blue
Hills
Mississippi River
Sand Plains
Upper Minnesota
Big
River Country
Woods
Southern
Oak
Coteau des Prairies
Barrens
Blufflands



Itasca State Park | Regional Analysis

State Park Use Patterns

Each park in the state system has, over the years, developed identifiable use patterns. The significance of Itasca's resources and its location in a major tourist destination area result in heavy use of the park. It consistently ranks as one of the top five state parks in attendance each year. Use of this park is characterized by a high percentage of day use visitors; consistent use throughout the week; and increasing winter use.

Most of Itasca's visitors are tourists who have accommodations outside of the park and stop in the park as part of their daytime activities. In 1978, 350,000 visitor-days were spent in Itasca. Of these, 78% (297,000 visitor-days) were one day visits to the park. This high degree of day use is not, however, due to heavy local use. Less than 5% of the park visitors live within 50 mi (80 km) of the park; 62% come from the rest of Minnesota, and 33% come from other states or foreign countries (a DNR park users survey in 1974). Itasca State Park draws visitors from a large area, and these visitors usually utilize other recreational facilities and accommodations in the area during their stay.

Unlike many state parks, Itasca has a fairly consistent level of use throughout the week. For instance, during the months of June, July, and August of 1978, an average of 3,317 people visited the park each weekend day, compared to an average of 2,376 visitors each weekday.

The year-round use of Itasca is increasing. Just a few years ago, state parks were essentially unused in winter. However, as ski touring and snowmobiling have increased in popularity, parks have become year-round recreational facilities. From December 16, 1977 to March 15, 1978, 2,855 snowmobilers visited the park. That is an average of 32/day. During this same three month period, 14,832 other visitors (a large share of them skiers) visited the park--an average of 165/day. Pine Ridge Campground is open during the winter and receives occasional use by winter campers, primarily on weekends.

Regional Influence/Impact Factors

Recreational patterns in the region surrounding a state park must be analyzed in order to adequately plan a park. Recreation and tourism are vitally important to the economy and lifestyle of the Itasca State Park area. The DNR must strive to understand the needs of local resorts, private campgrounds, and other recreational facilities, and work in cooperation with them to satisfy the needs of the recreating public. This approach will provide a direct economic benefit to the local community. Regional influence/impact factors which are considered in the Itasca State Park planning process are the park's relationship with surrounding resorts, the effects of the energy situation on park use, and the park's relationship with other existing and proposed public facilities in the area.

- Surrounding Resorts

The Regional Analysis Map, p 13, identifies parks, forests, campgrounds, and water access sites within a 50 mi (80 km) radius of the park. Many public and private recreational facilities are highlighted. However, private resorts are not noted because of necessary restrictions on map size. The two zones of greatest influence highlight the areas with the greatest concentration of population and resorts.

The relationship between Itasca State Park and surrounding resorts is complex. The park is seen as both a help and a hindrance to business by resort owners. The park is a major attraction in the region and resorts advertise their proximity to the park. In previous years, 78% of the park's visitors were day users who found nightly accommodations outside of the park. The day use facility improvements proposed in this plan, such as the new interpretive center, picnic ground expansion, interpretive trail development, ski trail expansion, in-park bus service, launch service, and bike trails can be expected to enhance the park's attractiveness for day use by tourists.

Itasca, however, is the only state park which has lodging and restaurant facilities. Surrounding resort owners perceive this as direct competition with their own operations. This concern, mainly due to a 4% annual attrition rate for private resorts statewide, has led private businessmen in the area to believe that Itasca State Park may be hurting their business. However, the DNR believes that the park is not a significant factor in the annual attrition rate, that the amount of actual income taken in by the state is insignificant in relation to the area's total recreational income, and that the park's lodging facilities are an important and necessary part of the park.

The lodging facilities were built before or during the great tourism boom of the 1940's, and were well established long before the decline of the tourism industry. According to the University of Minnesota Agricultural Extension Service in its Minnesota Lodging Industry Bulletin of 1975, the decline should instead be attributed largely to a change in recreation and travel patterns. This study indicates that tourism patterns began to change in the late 1950's and early 1960's, with a resulting sharp curtailment in Minnesota resort construction. The following were considered to be the major issues which led to this decline in the private resort industry:

- improved long distance freeway travel
- more vacations covering greater distances
- increased air travel
- increased interest in camping
- inter-regional competition from other states and nations
- loss of Minnesota's advantage of "natural air conditioning" due to technological advances

Suggestions that Itasca's lodging facilities unduly compete with private resort operations in the area fail to take into account the relatively small size of the Itasca operation in comparison with the surrounding area. The following chart shows the total amount of income from lodging during 1977 for Itasca State Park and the five surrounding counties (Becker, Beltrami, Clearwater, Hubbard, and

Mahnomen). Lodging income includes all income from resorts, campgrounds, motels, and hotels. As is evident, Itasca accounts for only a small portion of the lodging income in the area.

Itasca's lodging facilities give people who are unable to camp the opportunity to enjoy the park on a 24-hour-a-day basis. In addition, they provide the destination park user with a complete resource and recreation package. The quiet solitude of the vast forest, the historic and natural significance of the Mississippi Headwaters, the extensive park interpretive program, and a wide variety of activities combine to form a tourist destination unique in Minnesota.

- Energy Considerations

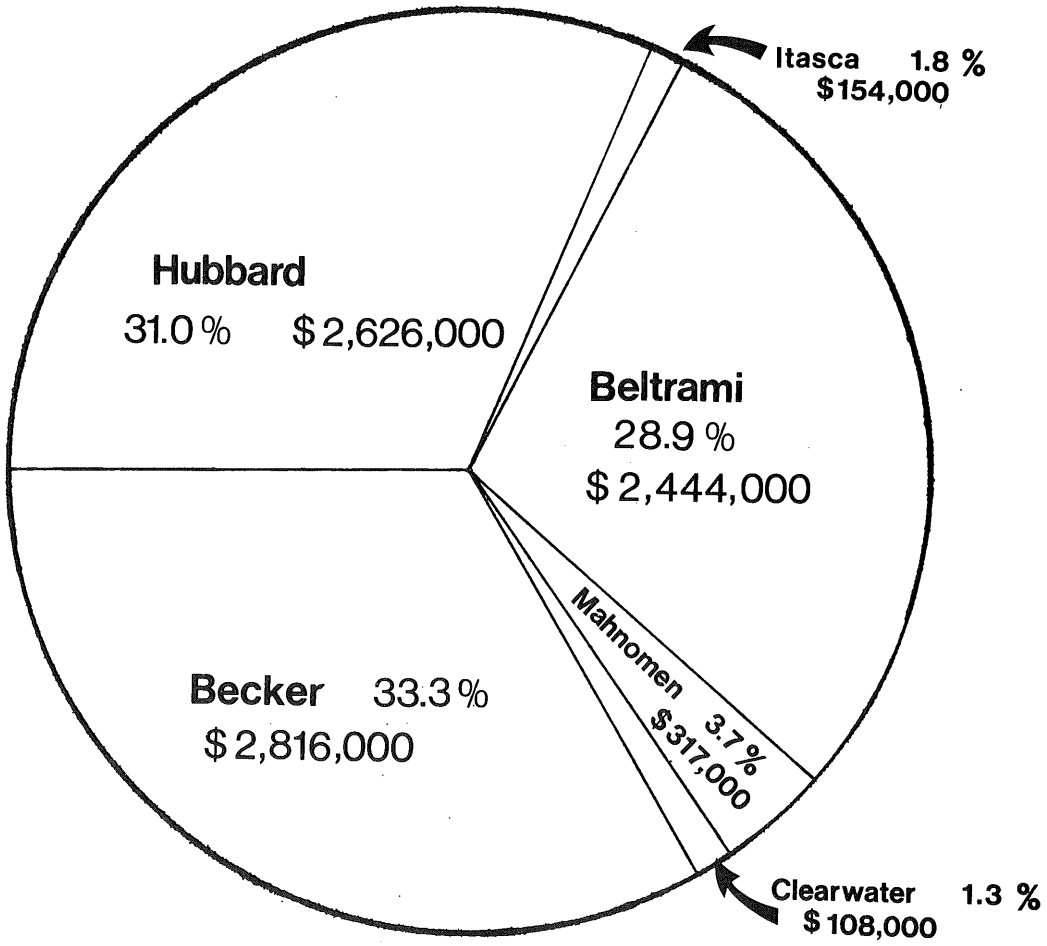
Another factor that must be considered in regional recreational development is the energy situation. High gas prices and fuel scarcity will change recreational use patterns. While it is still too early to tell what direction this change will take, reasonable possibilities include an increase in the use of the bicycle as a car substitute for short trips and increased use of public transportation.

There are some developed bicycle routes in the Itasca area. TH 71 and the Heartland Trail both accommodate bike use. The Great River Road, when developed, will also provide for bike use. Proposed park bike trails will provide in-park circulation and a link to TH 71 and the proposed Great River Road.

Another potential result of the energy shortage is the increased use of public transportation. The Itasca region already has some public transportation facilities. (See the Regional Transportation System Map, p 18 for the locations of bus and AMTRAK routes and stops.) Clearwater County is implementing a bus system designed to serve special populations which will also be usable by the general public. This system will provide transportation for most of the county including a route from Itasca to Bagley and a connection between Bagley and Bemidji. However, if substantial numbers of public transit users are to vacation in this area, a more comprehensive regional

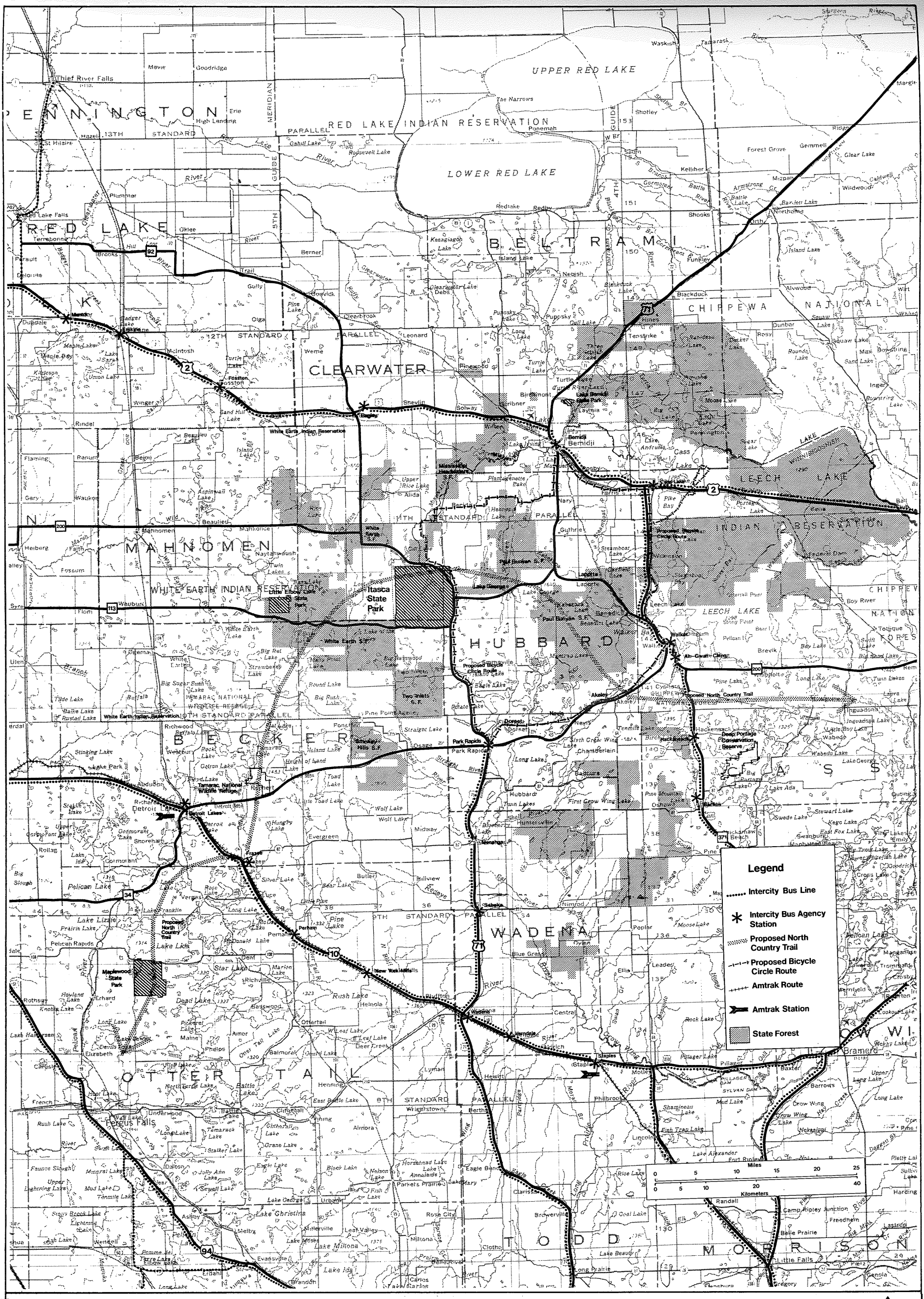
1977 INCOME FROM LODGING

(includes campgrounds, resorts, hotels, and motels)



Total lodging income for Itasca and the five surrounding counties is $8,465,000.

The percentages noted indicate the amount of the total lodging income generated in each county.


Legend
Intercity Bus Line
Intercity Bus Agency Station
Proposed North Country Trail
Proposed Bicycle Circle Route
Amtrak Route
Amtrak Station
State Forest
Miles
0 5 10 15 20 25
Kilometers
0 5 10 20 40
Itasca State Park
Regional Transportation System

transportation system must be developed. Once an in-park transit system has been established, inter-city bus service may be extended to the park. If a trend toward public transit use can be initiated, the local resort community could develop a regional system with some assurance of success.

- Local Public Facilities

Itasca State Park is located in close proximity to four major state forests (see Regional Analysis Map, p 13). These areas offer recreational facilities which complement those in Itasca. Paul Bunyan State Forest, located east of Itasca, has seven primitive campgrounds with a combined total of 46 campsites and 16 picnic sites. The forest also has 72 mi (116 km) of marked and groomed snowmobile trails. White Earth State Forest, west of Itasca, has one campground with six campsites and 50 mi (80 km) of marked and groomed snowmobile trails. Mississippi Headwaters State Forest, located north of Itasca, offers visitors four campgrounds with eight campsites and 32 mi (51 km) of marked and groomed snowmobile trails. South of Itasca, Two Inlets State Forest operates one campground with 14 campsites and has 20 mi (32 km) of marked and groomed trails.

Itasca and Little Elbow Lake state parks and Paul Bunyan, White Earth, Mississippi Headwaters, and Two Inlets state forests are all connected by a snowmobile trail.

Several public recreational facilities have been proposed for the area. The DNR's Heartland Corridor Trail will be developed from Park Rapids to Cass Lake. Uses of the trail will include bicycling, ski touring, snowmobiling, and horseback riding. To date, the section from Park Rapids to Walker has been developed with a surfaced bicycle/snowmobile trail.

The proposed North Country Trail, a federally sponsored 3,246 mi (5,223 km) trail beginning in New York State, will pass through the area, taking advantage of the resources and facilities in the Chippewa

National Forest, Paul Bunyan and White Earth state forests, and Itasca State Park. This trail will be designed primarily for hiking.

The Great River Road is a proposed scenic highway which will be developed along the Mississippi River from Itasca to New Orleans. It is a federally funded project which is still in the planning stages in the Itasca area. It is possible that several projects proposed in this plan dealing with the Headwaters area can be partially funded through the Great River Road proposal.

- Activity/Facility Analysis

Recreational facilities in a park's zone of influence often offer similar services. Facilities in a particular area may, however, provide a quality of experience which causes people to frequent that area over other facilities of the same general type. For example, state parks provide camping facilities. Municipal and county parks located in the vicinity of a state park may also have campsites. However, some people will consistently travel to the state park because of the type of experience it offers, namely, camping in a natural setting augmented by other recreational opportunities such as hiking and wildlife observation. Camping facilities may be duplicated elsewhere, but the total activity experience is not.

The interrelationship of activity demand and facility supply is an integral part of the regional analysis process. It can best be analyzed by studying the recreational activities available in the park, the experiences people seek when participating in these activities, and the pattern of complementing facilities in the area.

The following chart compares Itasca's facilities with complementing facilities in the area surrounding the park.

Activity/Experience	Complementing Facilities
Camping	
The park staff estimates that 70% of midweek and 80% of the weekend campers in Itasca chose the park as their principal camping destination. Destination campers have indicated their preference to camp at Itasca because of the beauty of the resources and diversity of the activities offered.	A vast majority of the Itasca campers are from locations greater than 50 mi (80 km) from the park. In addition, park camping attendance figures clearly show that Itasca's camping facilities were at or near capacity during the high use season (June-August). These figures help to show the camping destination attraction of Itasca State Park. There are approximately 65 private, county, or municipal campgrounds in the Itasca influence zone. However, the unique camping activity/experience of Itasca is not duplicated.
Picnicking	
Eighty seven percent of the state's population picnics at least once a year. People enjoy picnicking in this park because the activity is complemented by the scenic environment. Other outdoor pursuits such as wildlife observation, hiking, and fishing heighten the picnicking experience.	Although there are many picnic areas (approximately 110) in the park's influence zone, the combined picnic activity/experience of Itasca is not duplicated elsewhere.

Activity Experience	Complementing Facilities
Hiking	
Many park visitors enjoy experiencing Itasca's variety of vegetational types, geological landforms, and wildlife through use of the park's trails. (See Existing Development, p 73 for trail mileage.)	In Hubbard County, the Heartland Trail, a multi-use recreational trail, extends from Park Rapids northeast to Walker. In addition, there are about 100 mi (161 km) of other recreational trails in the county. The majority of these trails are in Paul Bunyan State Forest.
Snowmobiling	
Snowmobiling in the Itasca influence zone is a popular activity. The park's trail connects with the county trail system and offers snowmobilers a scenic ride through the park.	The grand-in-aid program has provided approximately 680 mi (1094 km) of snowmobile trails in the surrounding counties.
Itasca's snowmobile trail head is a focal point from which snowmobilers can travel 23 mi (37 km) of park trails and access many more miles of outlying regional trails. A warming shelter with toilet facilities has been proposed at the trail head for the benefit of snowmobilers. (See Proposed Development, p 105 for further discussion.)	

Activity/Experience	Complementing Facilities
Ski Touring	
The popularity of ski touring has grown rapidly in recent years. People come to Itasca to ski because of the varied and scenic terrain. (See Proposed Development, pp 98 -101 for further discussion.)	As the popularity of ski touring continues to rise, additional ski trails are being developed to meet demand. The diversity and quality of ski touring trails and facilities in and around Itasca will continue to attract skiers to the area.
Interpretation	
The function of the Itasca interpretive program is to expose visitors to the outstanding natural and historical resources of the park. People enjoy the wide variety of programs, which include slide shows, arts and crafts exhibits, nature hikes, and caravans through the park.	There are several interpretive centers in the area. There is no direct cooperation between any of these centers and the park interpretive program. However, groups from some of these centers occasionally visit Itasca and participate in interpretive activities. In addition, regional DNR staff from Bemidji have, in the past occasionally presented programs at some of these centers.

Activity/Experience	Complementing Facilities
Swimming	
The park staff estimates that 3-4% of the summer (June-August) day use visitors in Itasca State Park are swimmers. The swimming experience is also enhanced by the opportunity to participate in other park activities such as picnicking and hiking.	Itasca provides one of many swimming facilities in the park's influence zone. Hubbard County for example, has six public and 129 private beaches.
Fishing	
Fishing is a popular activity in Itasca. There is a boat and motor rental facility which includes a bait shop on Lake Itasca. Squaw, Elk, and Mary lakes have fishing docks or loading ramps and one or two row boats available for anglers.	Itasca is located in a part of Minnesota which has an abundance of quality fishing opportunities. Sport fishing has consistently been a major attraction of this area.

Surrounding Land Use

Most of the land surrounding Itasca is forested and is used for timber production. There are scattered private residences along TH 200 near the north side of the park, and a few along TH 113 on the south side.

The closest commercial developments are an active resort on the north boundary and a closed resort along CSAH 38, the north entrance road. There is also a restaurant/bar and a store at the TH 200/CSAH 38 intersection. The Lake Alice store/restaurant is approximately 3 mi (5 km) east of the park on TH 71/TH 200.

Wooded Public Land

Wooded Private Land

Agricultural

Residential

Commercial

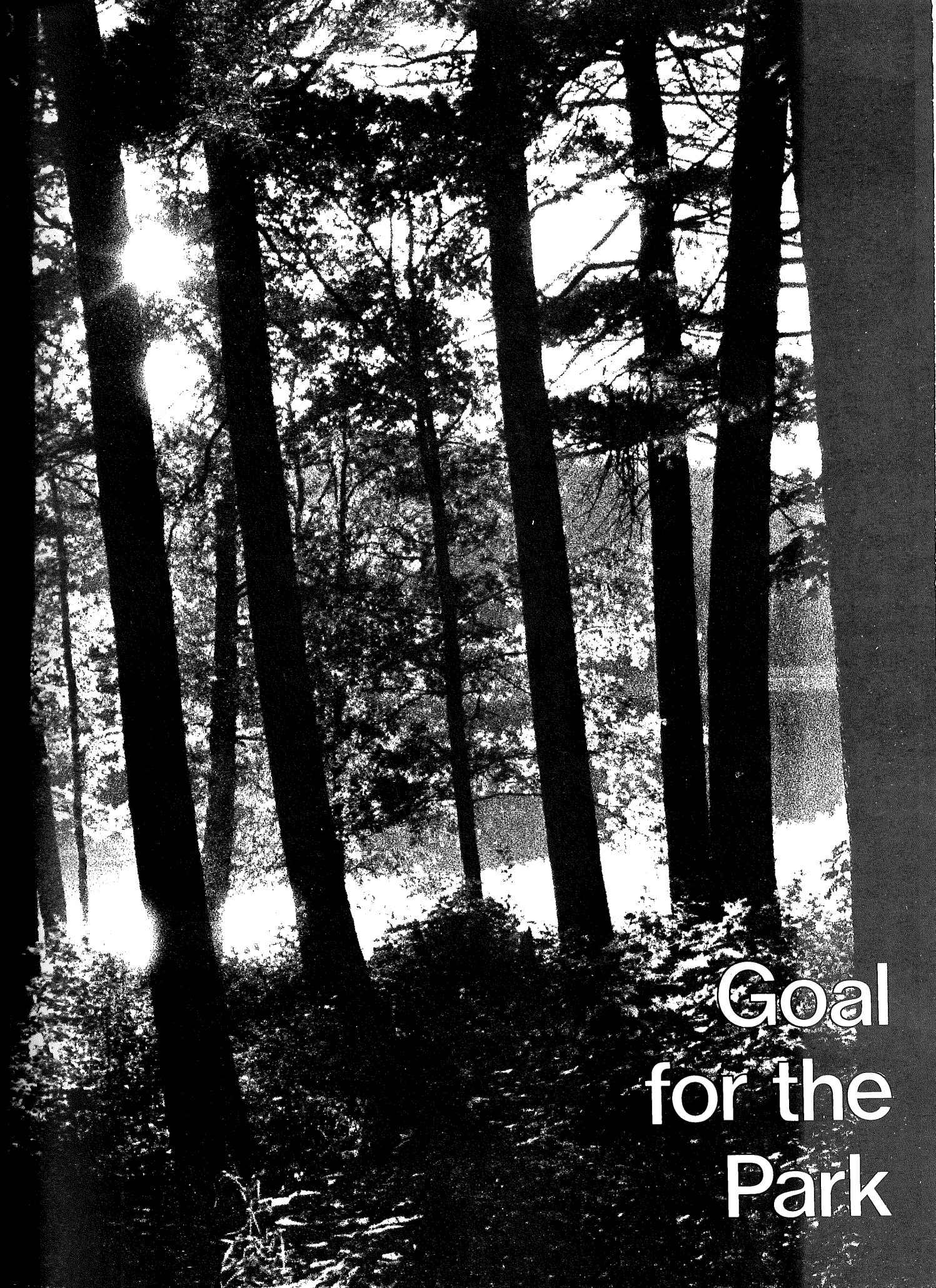
N

Miles 0 1/4 1/2 1 2 mi

Kilometers 0 500m 1km 2km

Itasca State Park

Surrounding Land Use



Goal for the Park

CLASSIFICATION

Purpose

The purpose of the classification process, as stated in the ORA '75, is to establish "an outdoor recreation system which will (1) preserve an accurate representation of Minnesota's natural and historical heritage for public understanding and enjoyment and (2) provide an adequate supply of scenic, accessible, and usable lands and waters to accommodate the outdoor recreational needs of Minnesota's citizens."

Process

The major factors considered in the classification of a park are the natural resources. Each park is managed and developed according to the nature of these resources and their ability to tolerate visitor use.

The classification alternatives considered for Itasca State Park were recreational or natural state park. Itasca fulfills the criteria for both of these classifications. Scientific and natural area or wilderness area sub–units were also considered.

The criteria in the ORA '75 for a natural state park are as follows:

1. Exemplifies the natural characteristics of the major landscape regions* of the state, as shown by accepted classifications, in an essentially unspoiled or restored condition or in a condition that will permit restoration in the foreseeable future; or contains essentially unspoiled natural resources of sufficient extent and importance to meaningfully contribute to the broad illustration of the state's natural phenomena;

*Now referred to as biocultural regions, see Biocultural Region System, p 12 .

Itasca is located in the Pine Moraine Biocultural Region. This region has ranges of hills dotted with countless lakes, ponds, and bogs. Dominant vegetation includes white and Norway pine, aspen–birch, mixed hardwoods, jack pine barrens, and conifer bogs. Itasca State Park accurately portrays all these characteristics. With proper management, more pine vegetation will be established.

2. Contains natural resources, sufficiently diverse and interesting to attract people from throughout the state;

Itasca attracts people not only from throughout the state, but from throughout the United States and many foreign countries.

3. Is sufficiently large to permit protection of the plant and animal life and other natural resources which give the park its qualities and provide for a broad range of opportunities for human enjoyment of these qualities.

Itasca is approximately 30,619 acres (12,392 hectares) in size. With proper management and development, the natural resources of the park can be maintained while providing for the enjoyment of these resources by park users.

The criteria in the ORA '75 for a recreational state park are as follows:

1. Contains natural or artificial resources which provide outstanding outdoor recreational opportunities that will attract visitors from beyond the local area;

The Mississippi River Headwaters, mature pine, lakes, fishing opportunities, miles of trails, and outstanding scenic qualities of the park combined to attract visitors from beyond the local area.

2. Contains resources which permit intensive recreational use by large numbers of people;

Much of the park contains resources which can be used by large numbers of people without undue disruption of those resources. Areas that are sensitive can be avoided or developed so that disruption is minimized.

3. May be located in areas which have serious deficiencies in public outdoor recreation facilities, provided that recreational state parks should not be provided in lieu of municipal, county, or regional facilities.

Good municipal and county facilities are available in the vicinity.

Recommended Classification

A natural state park classification is recommended for Itasca State Park, with a public use scientific and natural area subunit.

Because of its size and vast array of resources, Itasca can be classified as a natural state park and still provide the many high quality recreational experiences that visitors to Itasca have come to expect. Existing activities such as structured lodging, camping, sight-seeing drives, picnicking, snowmobiling, and ski touring can be maintained without undue stress to the natural resources. Itasca's natural resources are more representative of the original character of the biocultural region than any other park in that region.

Subunit Classification

The Itasca State Park Wilderness Sanctuary was established in 1939 by agreement between the Department of Conservation and the Minnesota Academy of Science. In 1965, the Wilderness Sanctuary was the first natural landmark in Minnesota to be designated by the United States Department of the Interior in the National Registry of Natural Landmarks.

Since a wilderness sanctuary is not an official designation, there are no established, written regulations governing its management. Under the ORA '75, this area could be classified as either a state wilderness area

or a state scientific and natural area. An area can be designated as a state wilderness area if it:

> Appears to have been primarily affected by the forces of nature with the evidence of man being substantially unnoticeable or where the evidence of man may be eliminated by restoration.

The Wilderness Sanctuary meets this qualification. According to the ORA '75, it must also provide "outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive types of outdoor recreation" including activities such as hiking and backpack camping. However, its approximate size is only 2,300 acres (931 hectares). This is a very small area in which to provide a wilderness experience for a significant number of people.

An area can be designated as a state scientific and natural area if it:

(1) Embraces natural features of exceptional scientific and educational value, including but not limited to any of the following:
   (i) natural formations or features which significantly illustrate geological processes;
   (ii) significant fossil evidence of the development of life on earth;
   (iii) an undisturbed plant community maintaining itself under prevailing natural conditions typical of Minnesota;
   (iv) an ecological community significantly illustrating the process of succession and restoration to natural condition following disruptive change;
   (v) a habitat supporting a vanishing, rare, endangered, or restricted species of plant or animal;
   (vi) a relic flora or fauna persisting from an earlier period; or
   (vii) a seasonal haven for concentrations of birds and animals, or a vantage point for observing concentrated populations, such as a constricted migration route; and

(2) Embraces an area large enough to permit effective research or educational functions and to preserve the inherent natural values of the area.

The Wilderness Sanctuary also qualifies as a scientific and natural area because it is generally an undisturbed ecological community and is a nesting area for bald eagles. The University of Minnesota has conducted research studies there for many years. Permanent study plots have been established for succession and plant composition studies.

Recommended Subunit Classification

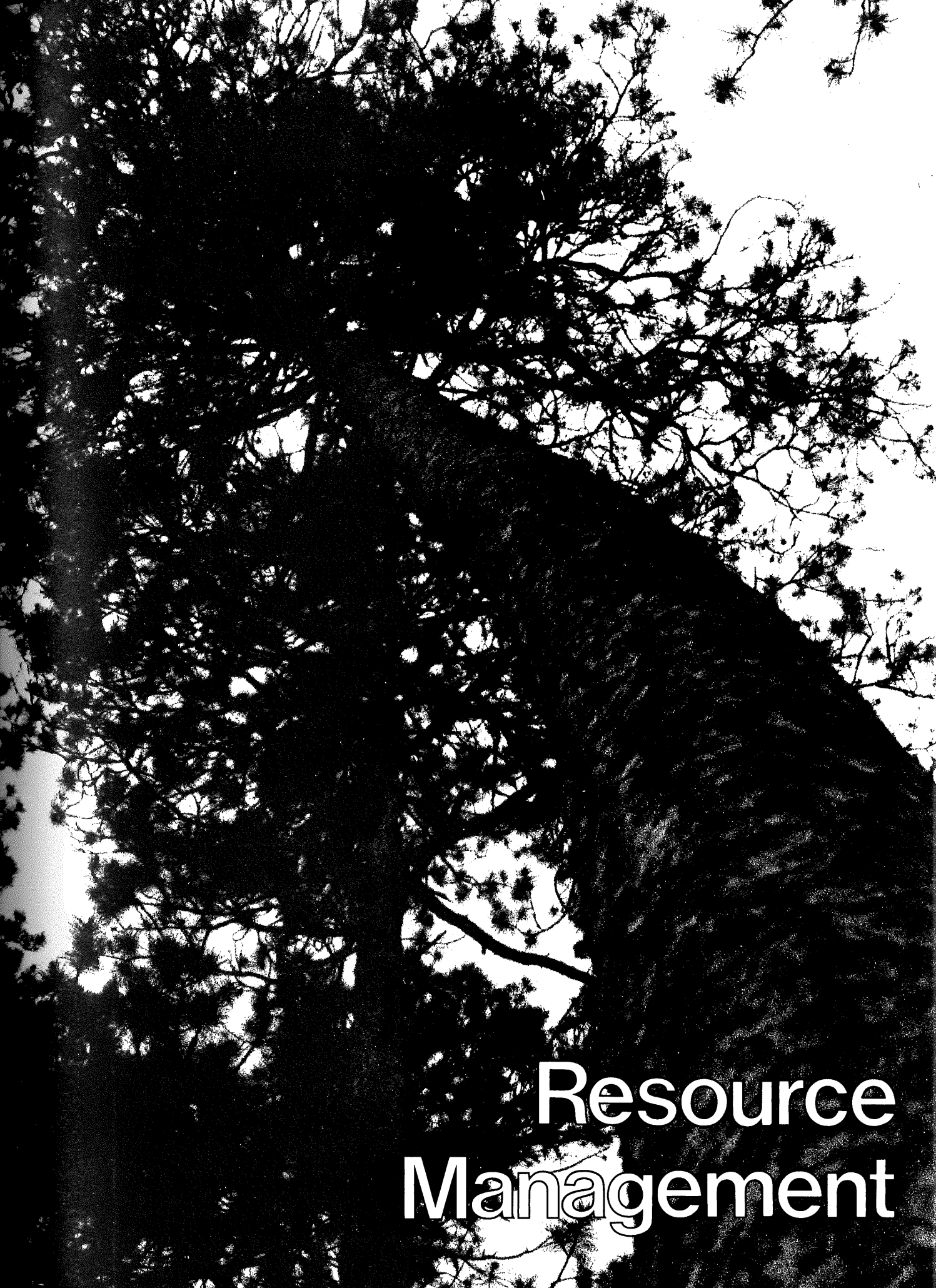
A public use scientific and natural area designation is recommended for the Wilderness Sanctuary. It will include portions of T143N R36W Sections 9, 10, 11, 15, 16, and 22. It will be bounded on the west and south by Wilderness Drive, on the east by Nicollet Creek and Lake Itasca, and on the north by the northern edges of Sections 9, 10, and 11.

THE GOAL

The goal for Itasca State Park can be found in the purpose for natural state parks and scientific and natural areas in the ORA '75.

> "A natural state park shall be established to protect and perpetuate extensive areas of the state possessing those resources which illustrate and exemplify Minnesota's natural phenomena and to provide for the use, enjoyment, and understanding of such resources without impairment for the enjoyment and recreation of future generations."

> "A state scientific and natural area shall be established to protect and perpetuate in an undisturbed natural state those natural features which possess exceptional scientific or educational value."



Resource Management

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

The following general objectives have been formulated to ensure consistent resource management in all natural state parks in the state park system.

They are:

To perpetuate or reestablish plant and animal life which represent pre-European settlement biotic communities

To use resource management techniques that will harmonize with the park's natural systems

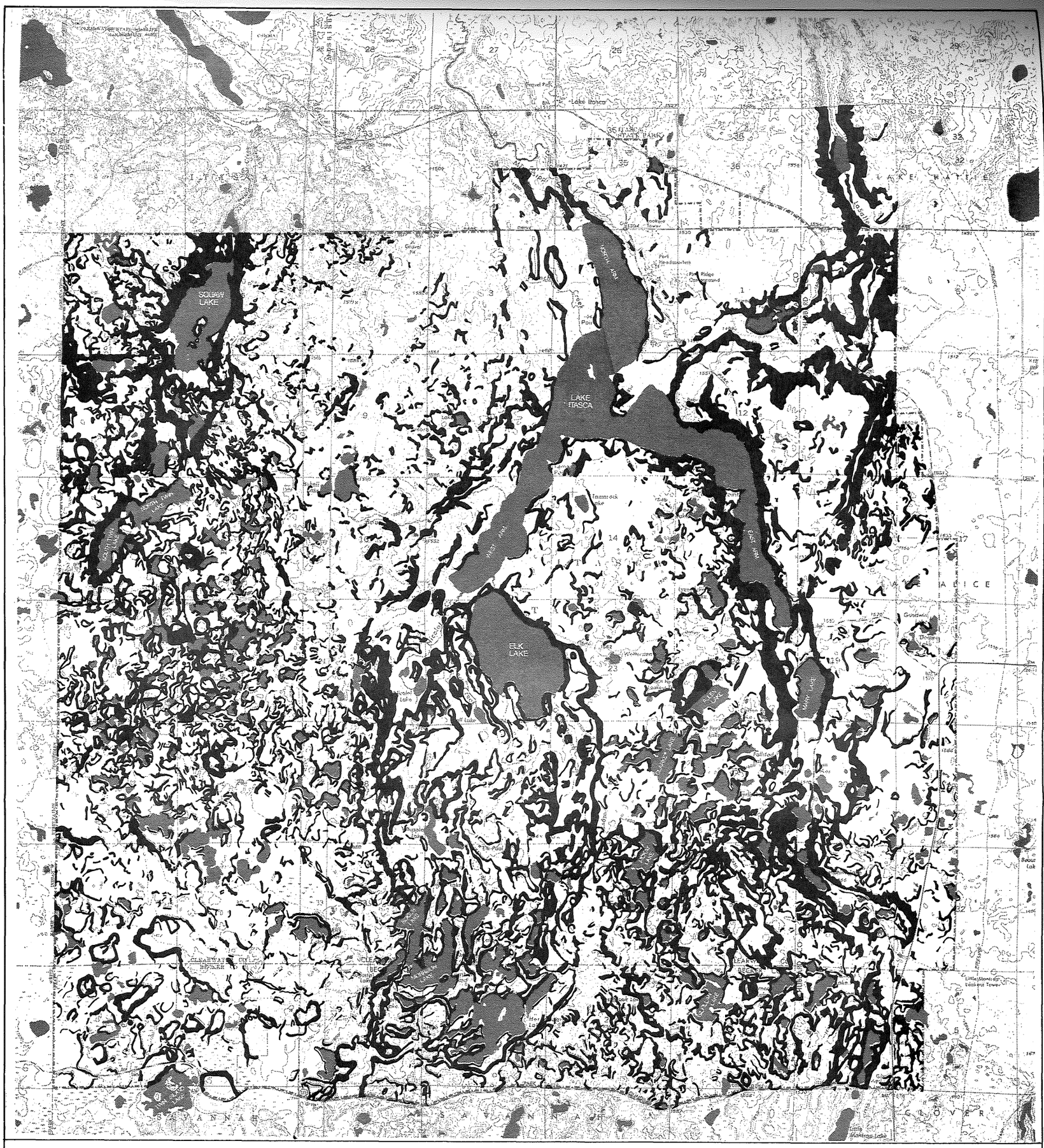
To identify, evaluate, protect, and preserve the park's archaeological and historical resources

To provide for visitor enjoyment in a manner which minimizes adverse effects of visitor activities on these resources

ELEVATION AND SLOPE

The Slope Map, p 36 , was developed from an analysis of the contour lines on a United States Geological Survey Map. Use of this map will aid in the site selection and management of park facilities.

At present, the major concern regarding slope is in those areas where soil erosion is a problem. The developments most often located in these areas are roads and trails. Such developments will require more active management and, in some cases, realignment to minimize the erosion. Future developments will avoid steep slopes wherever possible.



Legend

12% or greater

N

0 250' 1/2mi 1mi 2mi.
Miles

Kilometers
0 1km 2km

Itasca State Park

Slope

CLIMATE

Average summer temperatures in Minnesota vary only a few degrees from north to south. Itasca State Park has an average summer (June-August) temperature of 66°F (19°C). By comparison, Helmer Myre State Park, located 275 mi (442 km) south of Itasca in extreme southern Minnesota, has an average summer temperature of 71°F (21°C). The only exception to this minor state-wide fluctuation in summer temperatures is along the North Shore of Lake Superior. There, average summer temperatures range from 10 - 15°F cooler than in southern Minnesota. There is a much broader variation in average winter temperatures. Itasca averages 9°F (–12°C) for the months of December-February. Helmer Myre State Park averages almost 22°F (–5°C), a significant difference.

The variation in winter temperatures has a direct effect on the usability of park facilities for winter recreation. Itasca is very popular with snowmobilers and skiers. Snow depth is not a critical factor for skiers because the activity does not create undue soil disruption, even with minimal snow cover. However, with a snow depth of less than 3 in. (7.6 cm), soil disruption can be expected on snowmobile trails.

Trails in Itasca are fairly safe from such soil disruption. A long winter and a substantial snowfall provide a good snow base. An average snow base of 3 in. (8 cm) or more is present at least 120 days a year. By contrast, Helmer Myre can expect a 3 in. (8 cm) snow base only 60 to 70 days a year.

Though the chance of soil disruption in Itasca is minimal, snow depth on trails should be monitored and trails closed if snow cover is insufficient.

GEOLOGY

The existing landforms of Itasca are the result of glacial activity. The landforms are composed of outwash deposits left behind by the Wadena lobe of the Wisconsin glacial stage. A lobe is a "finger" of the glacier which may extend as many as several hundred miles ahead of the main body of ice. This lobe of ice covered Itasca more than 20,000 years ago and, when it melted, exposed the existing topography of the park.

Several of the hills in the park are actually esker ridges. Most geologists believe that eskers were formed by deposits of soil and rock from streams which flowed under a melting glacier. One of these esker ridges, which reaches a height of over 50 ft (15 m), lies a short distance east of Lake Itasca in a north-south orientation.

Most of the lakes in the park were also formed by the glacier. As the climate warmed, the glacier began to melt. Huge chunks of ice were trapped in glacially carved basins and covered by outwash sediments. These ice chunks slowly melted and the water filled the basins, creating lakes such as Lake Itasca.

A continental divide which separates two major watersheds is located only a few miles west of Itasca. Waters west of the divide flow to the Red River, eventually emptying into Hudson Bay. Waters to the east are a part of the Mississippi River watershed. The waters of Itasca are significant because they are the first contributors to the vast Mississippi River.

SOILS

Inventory

The soil types found in Itasca were developed from outwash deposits left behind by the glacier. The original deposits have been modified through the centuries by vegetation and water.

Soil Characteristics and Limitations

Detailed soil type information is not available for the park. However, general information was available from the soil atlas project. The soil atlas identifies five different soil landscape units in the park. Most are well-drained soils, either deep silt over loam or sand over sand. Small areas of organic soils over sand, non-acid organic, and sand over loam were identified (see Soils Map, p 40).

This general information and the Slope Map, p 36, were used to identify suitable areas for development. Some developments, such as septic tank filter fields, will require detailed soil surveys before construction.

Management

Objectives:

To locate development on soils suitable for the intended use

To minimize erosion caused by unauthorized use of unstable areas

•Detailed Recommendations

Action #1. Reduce erosion at Peace Pipe Vista by constructing an access stairway and path down the steep slope to the lake's edge.

Peace Pipe Vista is a popular scenic stop along Park Drive. Although the intention of the vista is to provide a scenic overlook of Lake Itasca, many visitors climb down the slope to get to the lake. The

Legend

LLWL– loam (silty) over loam, well drained, light colored soils

SSWL– sand over sand, well drained, light colored soils

SLWL– loam over sand, well drained, light colored soils

organic soils over sand

non–acid organic soils

N

Miles 0 250' 1/2 mi 1 mi 2 mi

Kilometers 0 1 km 2 km

Itasca State Park | **Soils**

slope is made up of light sandy soil which is highly erodable. Since there is no designated path or stairway down the slope, visitors have established several paths of their own. All are severely eroded.

Any barrier constructed to prevent visitors from climbing on the slope would significantly detract from the scenic quality of the vista. The most feasible action is to construct a stairway and path down to the lake and direct all foot traffic to it.

Cost. $15,000

Action #2. Repair lakeshore erosion in the Bear Paw Campground (see Camping, Action #2, p 84).

Action #3. Grade existing barrow pits to blend with the surrounding topography.

Several old barrow pits with steep eroding sides and a very unnatural appearance have been left. They should be graded to blend with the surrounding topography and to minimize erosion.

Cost. $2,000

Action #4. Test soils for development suitability in all locations where major development is proposed.

As stated previously, a detailed soils survey for the Itasca area has not yet been completed. Such information is necessary to ensure that the proposed development is compatible with the existing soils.

Cost. Included in cost of the proposed development.

VEGETATION

Inventory

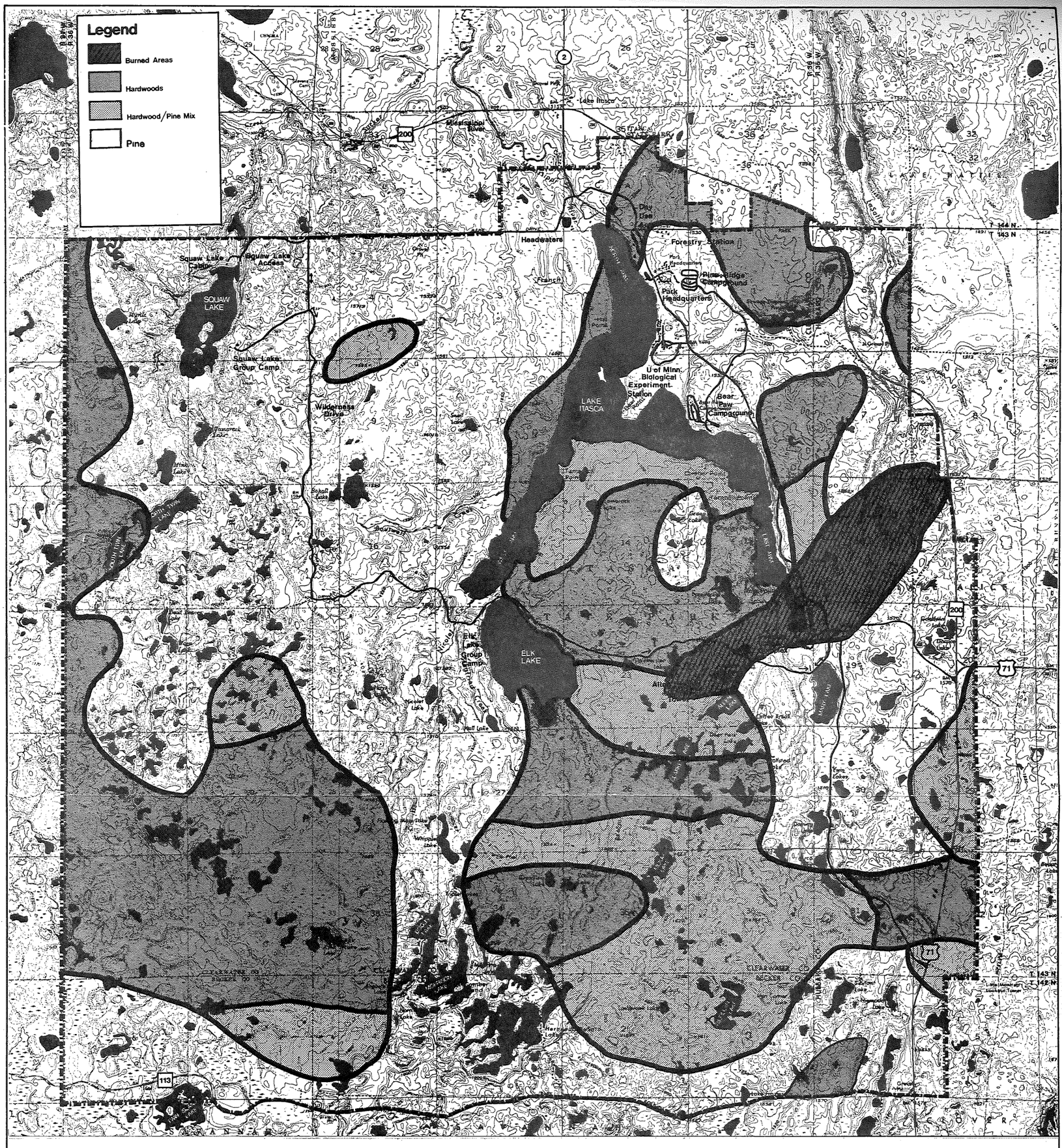
Pre-European Settlement Vegetation

The records of early travelers provide some idea of the character of the vegetation before pioneer settlement. When O. E. Garrison visited the area in 1881, he reported extensive forest areas in various stages of regeneration following devastation by fire. The fires were said to have been set and spread by Indians to improve feeding grounds for wild game. In his PhD dissertation, S. S. Frissell points out that the park area's presettlement forests were typically diverse in species composition and age structure, rather than vast homogenous stands of undisturbed pine forest.

The map on p 43 shows the forest cover types found in the park prior to logging. This map was developed using the general vegetation descriptions from the field notes of the first survey done by the General Land Office from 1875 to 1879.

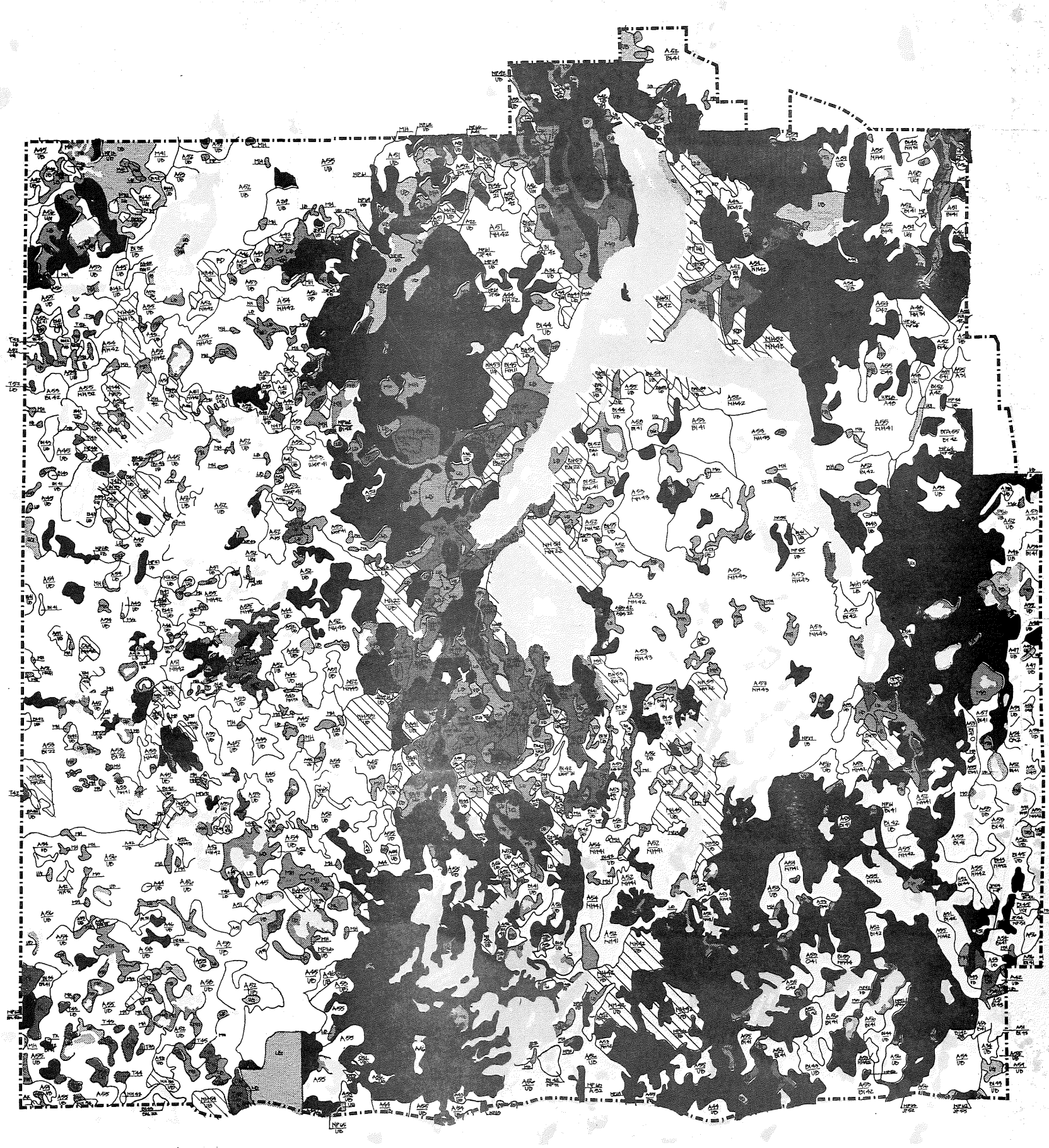
Existing Vegetation

Itasca is located in a transition area between three distinctly different vegetation associations. There are prairies to the west, boreal forests to the north and east, and northern hardwoods to the south. Therefore it is characterized by a varied and rugged terrain and a diverse vegetation pattern. Logging in the park in the early 1900's had a major impact in creating the species composition and age structure of the present forest stands. Some tracts were clearcut, resulting in a second growth of hardwoods, mostly aspen. Other areas were partially cut to a minimum diameter limit, giving rise to the present stands of large pine over younger aspen and other hardwoods. Aspen is the dominant species in the park. It is found in almost all vegetation communities.



Itasca State Park

Pre-Settlement Vegetation



Legend

- Pine
- Spruce, Tamarack, & White Cedar
- Marsh, Muskeg; & Lowland Brush
- Upland Brush & Grasses
- Hardwoods
- Aspen & Birch

N

0 250' 1/2mi 1mi 2mi
Miles

0 1km 2km
Kilometers

Itasca State Park

Vegetation

Approximately 20% of the park's acreage is mapped as pine. This is far less than existed in pre-settlement times. Much of the acreage was logged before it became park land. Fire suppression and the build-up of excessive populations of porcupine and deer (as a result of predator control and prohibition of deer hunting) further reduced the number of pine and minimized pine reproduction. The introduction of white pine blister rust also affected white pine stands. Of the surviving pine stands, 50% of the Norway pine and more than 85% of the white pine are over 200 years old and subject to heavy mortality. The once common jack pine, ecologically fire-dependent, is now reduced to only a few small stands. Because of the short life expectancy of jack pine, the remaining stands are now literally falling apart. Overmature trees are more subject to insect attack, disease, and wind damage. Research has demonstrated that the death rate of the old growth pine is accelerating.

The other vegetation types are generally found in small localized areas.

Management

Objectives:

To retain or reestablish the vegetative cover of the majority of the park consistent with pre-European settlement vegetation patterns

To protect and perpetuate rare or unusual plant communities

To manage vegetation for scenic diversity and diversity of wildlife habitat

To manage vegetation in development areas to allow intensive use without major resource deterioration

To manage vegetation with natural forces (such as fire) wherever feasible

Overview

By law, the DNR must "...preserve intact the primeval pine forest now growing in Itasca State Park, and shall cut no part thereof except weak, diseased, or insect infested trees, or dead and down timber..." (Mn Stat 1907, Section 90.2)

The major thrust of the vegetation management program in Itasca will be to reestablish pine where it would occur naturally. Wherever feasible, the reestablishment methods used will closely parallel natural processes.

The park has been divided into six general zones for vegetation management purposes. These zones were established by assessing an area's vegetation and wildlife, its existing use patterns, and its potential for forestry research. (See Vegetation Management Map, p 48 .)

Wilderness Sanctuary - This area is proposed as a scientific and natural area. It will be protected and perpetuated through management techniques which are similar to natural forces, such as controlled burns.

Minimal Disturbance Areas - These areas should be disrupted as little as possible because they support sensitive or rare wildlife or plant populations. These areas will be managed for the perpetuation of specific species or communities. Actions that do not negatively impact the species or community being managed and are desirable for other species will be implemented.

Restricted Management Zone - This zone includes most of the park. Management actions will parallel natural processes wherever feasible. First priority will be to establish young pine in natural openings in or near existing mature pine stands. Some removal of aspen, birch, brush, and dead or diseased pine may be necessary, although fire will be the main management tool.

Special Research Areas - These four areas are active pine reestablishment research projects. Research was initiated by the University of Minnesota Forestry and Biological Station and is being implemented by the DNR, Divisions of Forestry and Parks and Recreation. Results from the research will be used to reestablish pine in other portions of the park.

Intensive Management Zone - This portion of the park was heavily logged in the early 1900's. Second growth aspen is found almost exclusively on the uplands. Experimental management activities will be permitted here. These activities may include controlled burns, logging, site preparation, planting, seeding, and the use of herbicides with due provision for public and wildlife safety.

Development Zone - This zone includes all of the major development areas in the park and approximately 300 ft (91 m) on either side of the major roads. These areas will be managed for intensive use, and for scenic quality. Management activities will include planting and selective tree removal for safety or enhancement of scenic quality.

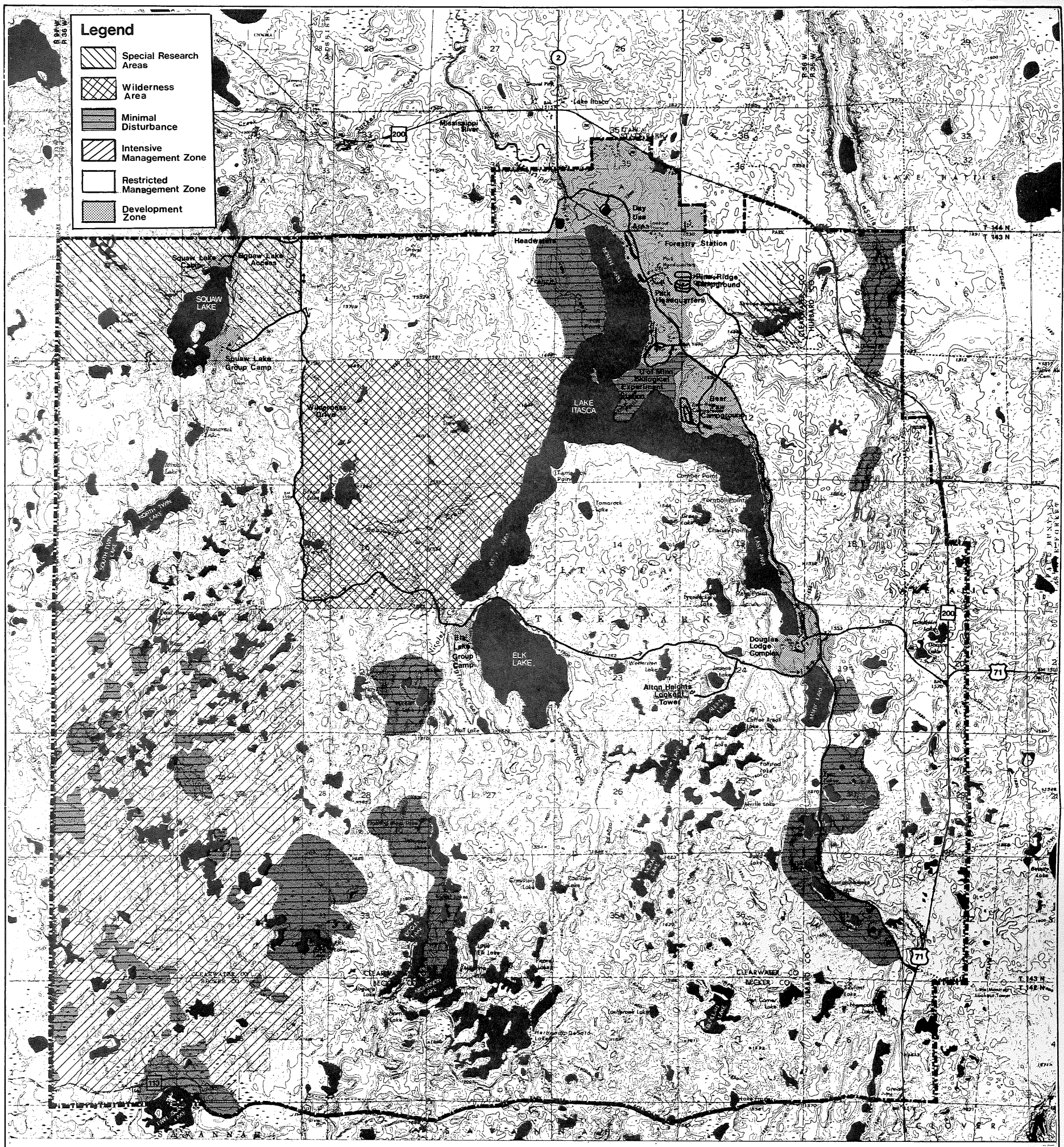
• Detailed Recommendations

Detailed recommendations for the entire park cannot be completed at this time. Most management actions will be determined only after conclusive results from the special research and intensive management areas are available. However, all future management actions will follow the established objectives and the guidelines for each vegetation management zone. The detailed recommendations which have been identified and can be implemented at this time are as follows:

Wilderness Area

Action #1. Burn area in early spring.

The area should be burned while there are still scattered patches of snow on the ground. This should ensure a cool and easily controlled fire. There are no fire roads in this area. If a fire started during late



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0 250' 1/2mi 1mi 2mi
Miles

0 1km 2km
Kilometers

Itasca State Park

Vegetation Management

summer or fall, it would probably quickly turn into a top fire which would be very difficult to stop. Through the years of preservation management, fire-supporting dead and down timber has increased to a point where a major fire in the near future is possible. Several successive cool ground fires will reduce the tinder and allow future duff-consuming summer fires for pine management.

The goal in this area is to reach a point when wildfires can be allowed to burn unchecked. However, until the tinder load is reduced with annual spring fires, wildfires should be controlled.

The area within a one-quarter mi (400 m) radius of the eagle's nest should not be burned. Fire or activity in this area may frighten the birds and cause them to abandon their nest.

Cost. $5,000/yr.

Minimal Disturbance Areas

No specific management actions are currently proposed for these areas.

Restricted Management Zone

Action #2. Remove some of the overmature jack pine.

Small 3 - 10 acre (1 - 4 hectare) openings will be clear cut near the southern edge of jack pine stands in Sections 17 and 18, T143N R35W. Norway pine will be left standing. Slash will be piled and the opening burned. This is the most economical way of providing a good seed bed for Norway and jack pine regeneration.

Cost. By contract with logging companies.

Special Research Areas

Action #3. Continue controlled burns.

This area has been burned each year that a burn was feasible. This practice should continue, dependent on fire conditions and staff availability. If continued, these burns will slowly remove layers of accumulated duff and set back brush understory until a good pine seed bed is established. When a good density of pine seedlings is established, burning should be stopped.

Cost. $1,000/yr.

Intensive Management Zone

Action #4. Continue the pine restoration project as scheduled.

This area will be actively managed to replace second growth hardwoods with pine. This project has been extensively researched by the University of Minnesota. Sensitive areas have been identified and will be excluded from management activities.

Cost. $15,000/yr

Development Zone

Action # 5. Plant disturbed areas with native vegetation.

Old roads, parking lots, and building sites will be graded to their original contour. They will then be planted with native trees and shrubs. Large size transplants should be used, particularly near high use areas. Plantings should conform, in kind and percent of species, to the natural vegetation.

Cost. $15,000

Action #6. Plant trees in the open area west and north of Wegmann Cabin.

Large transplanted pine and hardwoods should be used instead of seedlings. Trees should be planted in a natural, random pattern.

When the trees become large enough to provide shade, it will be developed as a picnic area.

Cost. $10,000

Action #7. Plant trees between Brower Inn and the lake.

Brower Inn is highly visible from Lake Itasca. Large transplanted trees should be planted between the lake and Brower Inn so that the building will be screened from the lake. Views of the lake from Brower Inn will be maintained. These trees will also provide shade and screening for people who prefer to go outside to eat food purchased at the snack counter. The DNR, Bureau of Engineering will develop a planting plan for the area.

Cost. $10,000

Action #8. Plant native trees and shrubs in Pine Ridge Campground.

Many of the campsites are very open and sunny. While it is desirable to have some sunny sites for early spring and late fall campers, more of the sites should be shaded, and more intersite screening provided.

Large transplanted trees and shrubs rather than seedlings should be used for the plantings intended to provide shade. Shrubs can be transplanted or allowed to seed into unmowed areas for intersite screening.

Cost. $15,000

Action #9. Plant trees around the Lake Itasca boat launch and parking lot.

The parking lot is highly visible from both the lake and the road. Large trees and shrubs should be planted between the parking lot and the lake, between the parking lot and lagoon, and between the road and the old parking lot. These plantings will eventually screen the area from both the lake and the road, and provide shade for the parking lot.

Cost. $20,000

Action #10. Relandscape Bear Paw Campground.

Intensive use for many years has resulted in severe resource deterioration in Bear Paw Campground. The soil is compacted, the groundcover is thin or non-existent, runoff is rapid and erosive, and the overstory trees are becoming less vigorous. There is no screening between campsites, and vegetation on the lake shore slope is worn away.

Flat bottom waterways will be graded to direct runoff and initially vegetated with staked-down sod. This will help reduce erosion. In time, brush can be expected to establish itself, slowing runoff and further stabilizing the soil.

Some campsites will be removed (see Camping, Action #3, p 85). This will allow separation of the remaining sites and the establishment of islands of trees, shrubs, and wild flowers between many of the sites. Wherever feasible, these islands should be located in the graded shallow waterways. The dense root systems and duff accumulation should act as a sponge and help slow runoff.

Aeration of the soil with a mechanical soil core remover will allow it to absorb more water, reducing runoff. It will also provide better air and water penetration, resulting in healthier trees.

Cost. $30,000

Action #11. Plant and prune trees and shrubs at Peace Pipe Vista.

The parking lot is barren looking. Large trees planted between the lot and the road will provide shade and screen the lot. However, good visibility at the entrances must be maintained. Trees and shrubs planted around the paved vista area will help define walks, provide shade, and screen the parking lot. Some openings should be pruned through the young pines to provide views of the lake.

Cost. $6,000

Action #12. Plant trees and shrubs around the proposed Preacher's Grove parking lot.

The area disturbed by construction should be returned to a natural character. The parking lot should be screened from view by planting large trees and shrubs. Good visibility must be ensured at parking lot entrances.

Cost. $10,000

Action #13. Plant pine trees in the Douglas Lodge complex.

Plant large pines in openings throughout the complex. When the existing mature pine die, there should be well established young pine to replace them. This will ensure that the character of the area will be maintained.

Cost. $20,000

Action #14. Stop mowing and plant pine seedlings south of the dormitory.

This area is not seen or used by most park visitors. It takes many hours each summer to keep it mowed. If interplanted with pine and left unmowed, native understory will eventually be established and blend with the surrounding vegetation.

Cost. $2,000

Action #15. Maintain views of Lake Itasca from Park Drive.

Areas along Park Drive that have been cleared of brush to allow views of Lake Itasca should be maintained.

Cost. By park staff.

Action #16. Reestablish views of the lakes and marshes along Wilderness Drive.

Wilderness Drive is a long tree-lined road with limited variation in the distance a visitor can see from the road. Reestablishing views of nearby lakes and marshes would make the drive much more scenic and interesting.

Cost. By park staff.

WILDLIFE

Inventory

Itasca provides habitat for a wide variety of wildlife. Observers have identified 219 species of birds in or near the park. The species of most concern for management and park visitors is the bald eagle. A pair often raise their young in one of several huge nests near Lake Itasca. Usually two or three pair of osprey also nest in the park.

Fifty-three species of mammals have been seen in the park. Of special interest to most park visitors are black bear, coyote, timber wolf, and beaver. Bears are seldom seen by park visitors, but tracks or other signs of their passing may occasionally be seen. Coyotes are fairly common in the park, although again seldom seen. Timber wolves occasionally pass through the park. Beaver are abundant. Nine hundred beaver were counted in 1979, down 200 from the 1978 population. Park visitors enjoy watching this industrious animal, but a large beaver population can cause much tree damage. White-tailed deer are also common in the park. In the late 1930's and early 1940's, the number of deer in the park increased dramatically. By 1945 there was an average of about 75 deer per sq mi (29 per sq km). In general, biologists estimate the carrying capacity of Itasca at 16 deer per sq mi (6 per sq km). In 1945, the park was opened to public hunting. This helped alleviate the severe overpopulation problem, but overbrowsing of pine seedlings is still a problem.

Several of the species observed in Itasca are considered by the DNR to merit varying degrees of special consideration and management.*

Species of Changing or Uncertain Status are species that are uncommon or have restricted habitats in Minnesota. They are not presently endangered or threatened, but could become so.

*Moyle, John B., 1975. "The Uncommon Ones." Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.

Eastern timber wolf - These are seldom seen, but do pass through the park.
Fisher - Reintroduced into the park in 1968.
Osprey - Common, nests in the park.
Marsh hawk - Uncommon in the park.
Cooper's hawk - Uncommon in the park.
Northern bald eagle - Common, nests in the park.
Double-crested cormorant - Rare in the park.

Species of Special Interest are species that merit special management because of unusual or unique values, special public interest, or vulnerability of habitat.

Bobcat - Rare in the park.
Common loon - Common, nests in the park.
Great blue heron - Common, nests in the park.
Pileated woodpecker - Common, nests in the park.
Snapping turtle - Common in the park.
Common newt - Rare in the park.

Management

Objective:

To maintain and reestablish, where feasible, those wildlife species present in the park before European settlement

To provide opportunities for deer hunting during the established hunting season with consideration for the safety of other park visitors and the park staff

•Detailed Recommendations

Action #1. Conduct a wildlife study on the park deer herd.

There is no current data on the deer population within the park. Such information is necessary to determine what would be an appropriate size for the deer herd in Itasca. Overpopulation must be avoided to prevent starvation and overbrowsing of seedlings planted under the proposed pine regeneration program.

Public hunting is allowed in state parks as a management tool for reducing deer herd populations. Accurate deer population information is necessary to determine the necessity of continuing the annual deer hunting season.

Cost. $5,000

Action #2. Maintain the deer hunting season in the park.

At present, the entire park, except the high use area, is open for public hunting. Although overbrowsing is still a problem for pine regeneration, the severity of the problem has been reduced because of the deer hunting. Therefore, the park will continue to be open for deer hunting until the study (see Action #1) is completed and a decision made on the necessity of continuing the season.

Cost. No development cost.

Action #3. Trap troublesome beaver.

When beaver create a problem, such as damming bridges or culverts, the park manager should contact the local conservation officer. The conservation officer will determine the most desirable solution and, if necessary, arrange for the beaver to be trapped. It is very desirable to maintain a population of beaver in the park, both for visitor observation and to maintain the integrity of the natural systems. However, beaver cutting and damming actions can be very destructive to park resources and should be closely monitored.

Cost. No development cost.

Action #4. Utilize some standing dead trees for wildlife habitat.

Standing dead trees provide habitat for a variety of wildlife. At least one dead tree per acre should be left standing in all areas of timber removal. All dead trees should be removed near high use areas and trails because they are a hazard to park users.

Existing nesting sites for bald eagles, ospreys, and great blue herons are protected by including them in the minimal disturbance zone.

Cost. No development cost.

Action #5. Create small forest openings.

During the process of reestablishing pine, temporary openings will be established. These openings are necessary for pine management, and also provide the vegetation variety necessary for maintaining a diverse wildlife population. Each opening will eventually be replaced with pine. However, because reestablishing the pine will take many years, there will always be openings at varied stages of succession in the park for wildlife habitat.

Cost. Covered in the Vegetation Management Section.

WATERS

Inventory and Analysis

Surface Water Properties and Quality

Itasca's water resources include many lakes, streams, and marshes totaling 2,325 acres (930 hectares). Lake Itasca is the largest body of water in the park with 1,180 acres (472 hectares), 14 mi (23 km) of shoreline, a maximum depth of 40 ft (12 m), and an average depth of 14 ft (4.2 m). Other major bodies of water (in surface acres) include Elk, Squaw, Mary, Morrison, and DeSoto lakes. Though small in size, the Mississippi River is a significant water resource. The Headwaters of the Mississippi is the most popular visitor attraction in the park.

Itasca's water resources were formed during the end of the last glacial period. Most of the lakes in the park are ice block lakes. As the glacier retreated, it left behind many huge blocks of ice covered by sand and gravel. As these ice blocks melted, they formed lakes.

Deming Lake, though small in acreage, is one of the deeper lakes in the park with a maximum depth of 57 ft (18.7 m). Its location in a deep depression, surrounded by forest, shelters it from the wind. Its size, depth, and natural protection prevent the semi-annual turnover which maintains the oxygen level necessary to sustain aquatic life. Turnover is a mixing action caused by seasonal warming and cooling of the water. As a result, Deming Lake has no game fish population. It is currently under study by the University of Minnesota Forestry and Biological Station. Arco and Josephine lakes are similar to Deming, although they do experience occasional turnover.

All three lakes are located in the minimal disturbance zone for vegetation management. (See Vegetation Management Map, p 48.) Location within this zone helps to ensure the protection of these three lakes and their watersheds.

The quality of all surface waters is good because there is no agricultural, industrial, or residential runoff. The park is at the head of the watershed, and the park sewage disposal systems are generally safe and efficient. The one problem with sewage disposal is the system servicing the rental cabins near Douglas Lodge and the Lodge itself. The system is antiquated and in need of replacement.

Groundwater Properties and Quality

The soil of Itasca is a complex mixture of glacial deposits. These deposits were the result of the collapse of glacial drift which occurred when huge blocks of ice left behind by the retreating glacier melted. Because of this process, the composition of soils in the area may change abruptly within a short distance. This mixture of glacial materials is underlain by Precambrian bedrock consisting of igneous rock and metamorphosed sedimentary rock.

The irregularity in soil deposits is responsible for uneven deposits of groundwater in the area. These irregularities cause some problems in locating adequate supplies of groundwater. Generally, the best water-bearing deposits are lenses of sand and gravel.

Groundwater quality is adequate for drinking. No chemical treatment is necessary. A high percentage of iron in the water does create some maintenance problems.

Management

Objectives:

To maintain high surface water quality for recreation and for maintenance of aquatic life

To maintain high quality groundwater

To provide high quality drinking water for park users

To decrease maintenance costs of all park wells

- Detailed Recommendations

Action #1. Replace the sewer systems which service the rental cabins in the Douglas Lodge area.

At present, each of the rental cabins is serviced by a log crib septic tank. These sewage disposal systems are old and in need of repair. They are located close to the lake shore and could contaminate the water. Replacing them with a new system located farther from the lakeshore would minimize the potential of pollution.

Cost. $20,000

Action #2. Rehabilitate the sewage system which services Douglas Lodge and Forest Inn.

The existing system is outdated and in need of repair or replacement. Modifications are subject to further study by the DNR, Bureau of Engineering. All modifications will follow the setbacks recommended in the shoreland ordinance.

Cost. Dependent on DNR, Bureau of Engineering study.

Action #3. Install iron filtration systems on all park wells.

Groundwater in the Itasca area has a high iron content, causing numerous problems with plumbing and other facilities which use well water. Installation of iron filters on all wells would eliminate many maintenance and repair costs.

Cost. $25,000

Action #4. Continue the present 10 mph (16 kmph) boat speed limit. See Action #1, Fisheries, p 62 and Action #2, Water Activities, p 113.)

FISHERIES

Introduction

Fishing is one of the most popular recreational activities in Minnesota. Each year more than one and one-half million Minnesotans, as well as hundreds of thousands of tourists, fish the state's lakes and streams. With this tremendous pressure upon fish populations, every effort should be made to maintain or improve fisheries.

The primary goal for any fisheries management program is to maintain an optimum natural fish population. The optimum is determined by such factors as water fertility, oxygen supply, food supply, and water temperature.

Most of the fishing activity in the park is concentrated on four lakes - Itasca, Elk, Mary, and Squaw. All are accessible by road and all have rental boats and docks or launch ramps. DeSoto and Morrison lakes have been fished in the past, but small amounts of data are available on their present fish populations. They are shallow, subject to winter kill, and accessible only by hiking trail.

Management

Objectives:

To maintain the present level of fishing opportunities

To maintain the natural fish population at its optimum level

•Detailed Recommendations

Action #1. Continue the 10 mph (16 kmph) boat speed limit.

Available information suggests that motor boating is not damaging the fish populations in lakes used for recreational fishing. Outboard motors which run at a slow speed produce only small amounts of air

and water pollution and are no more than a minor visual and noise disturbance to other visitors.

Cost. No development cost.

Action #2. Request that the DNR, Division of Fish and Wildlife conduct a study of all lakes and streams in the park which are used for recreational fishing.

Fisheries inventory information for Itasca is not up to date. Such information should be gathered before management decisions on fisheries management or water use regulations are made. The study should include a species inventory, an estimate of species abundance, and identification of spawning areas for game species.

Cost. No development cost.

HISTORY/ARCHAEOLOGY

Prehistoric Sites

Itasca State Park has a long and fascinating history dating from prehistoric times when it was inhabited by American Indians. The first visitors arrived in the area about 8,000 years ago. They were wandering bands of hunters attracted by the abundance of game. Proof of their presence was found at the Bison Kill Site near the southern portion of Wilderness Drive. Here archaeologists found the bones of several prehistoric bison and a few crude stone tools.

Village sites and burial mounds of the Woodland period are another evidence of human habitation in the park. These Woodland people lived in the park between 500 and 900 years ago. They differed from the wandering nomads who preceded them by living in villages (at least during the summer) and burying their dead in mounds. Several of these sites have been found in the park. One example is a group of 10 mounds located near the Mississippi Headwaters.

Historic Sites

There are several old log cabins scattered throughout Itasca which contribute to the park's rustic, north-woods character. An example is the Old-Timer's Cabin located along the Dr. Roberts Nature Trail near Douglas Lodge. Others include Nicollet Cabin near Nicollet Lake and the remains of DeSoto Cabin on the north side of Hernando DeSoto Lake.

Management

Objectives:

To preserve and protect all important prehistoric and historic sites in the park

To interpret prehistoric and historic activities in the park area for park visitors

To encourage archaeological research in the park

•Detailed Recommendations

Action #1. Field check all proposed development and logging sites for prehistoric and historic remains before any work is begun.

If remains are found, the state historic preservation officer and state archaeologist will determine the significance of the site and if warranted, authorize the excavation. Moving a facility to another location will be considered if the site proves to be significant. All excavated artifacts will become the property of the DNR.

A good deal of archaeological study has been done in Itasca. However, because of Itasca's size, the entire park has not been examined. Therefore, caution will be exercised in the location of any development in potential archaeological site areas.

Cost. $12,000

Action #2. Initiate a study to determine the feasibility of preserving the park's log buildings.

There are a number of log structures in the park which were built 30 to 50 years ago. These buildings have established the architectural theme of Itasca and many of them have historic significance. These buildings should be preserved if:

- they have statewide or national historic significance
- they serve a useful purpose
- they have not deteriorated to a point which makes restoration too costly
- they can be made safe for public use

The entire park is a historic district listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In addition, some structures and sites in the park are listed on the State Register of Historic Sites. It is possible that more will be included.

To avoid jeopardizing Itasca's listing on these registers, building removal or remodeling must receive necessary approval. This is of particular importance where matching Land and Water Conservation Funds (LAWCON) are used in restoration work. Failure to comply could result in loss of LAWCON funding for future restoration projects.

The MHS or a qualified private consultant should be contracted to determine the buildings' historical significance, their physical condition, and the amount of restoration necessary to make them usable by the public. The study should include cost estimates for labor and materials. Any restoration work must have the approval of the state historic preservation officer to ensure that the historic character and appearance of these buildings is maintained.

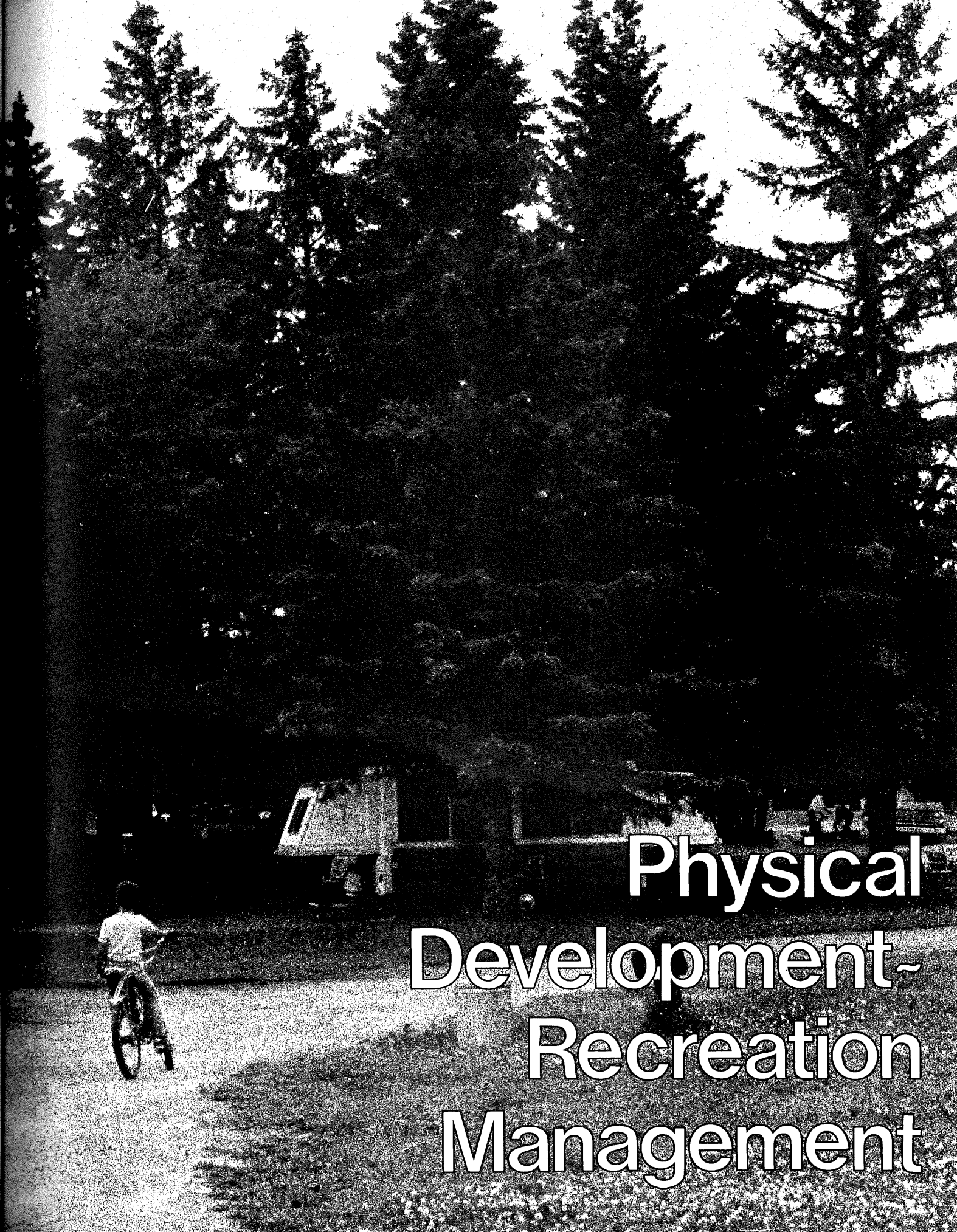
Cost. $5,000

Action #3. Make all information regarding prehistoric or historic sites in the park available to the park interpretive staff for the development of interpretive programs.

As a part of the interpretive program, park visitors will be allowed to observe archaeological excavations in progress. This will give visitors first hand information on the site being excavated and archaeological data gathering techniques.

Human prehistory of Itasca should be an important feature of the park interpretive program. New archaeological information will improve the interpretive program by further developing an understanding and appreciation for Itasca among park visitors.

Cost. No development cost.



Physical Development~ Recreation Management

RECREATION MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

The following recreation management objectives will be used to guide the development of recreational facilities in all natural state parks.

To coordinate park development with private and other public facilities and resources in the vicinity

To limit park development to that which is necessary for efficient management and for the public to experience, study, and enjoy a park's natural and historic resources

To locate park development where it will have the least impact on sensitive natural or historic resources, will not detract from the enjoyment of other users, and will allow easy access to areas of high scenic or educational value

To make major facilities in the park accessible to special populations (i.e., persons with physical disabilities, the elderly, and the very young)

EXISTING DEVELOPMENT

- A total of 237 campsites in Bear Paw and Pine Ridge campgrounds. Each campground has modern sanitation facilities.

- A group camp with kitchen, dining, and sanitation facilities on Squaw Lake.

- A primitive group camp with water and pit toilets on Elk Lake.

- Two primitive backpack campsites on DeSoto Lake.

- Douglas Lodge with kitchen and dining facilities and five units for public lodging.

- Thirteen cabins in the Douglas Lodge area for public lodging.

- Nicollet Court with 18 rooms for public lodging.

- Clubhouse with 10 rooms for public lodging.

- Six housekeeping cabins in Bear Paw Campground for public lodging.

- Forest Inn with a souvenir shop, snack counter, and meeting room.

- Staff quarters for year-round and seasonal staff.

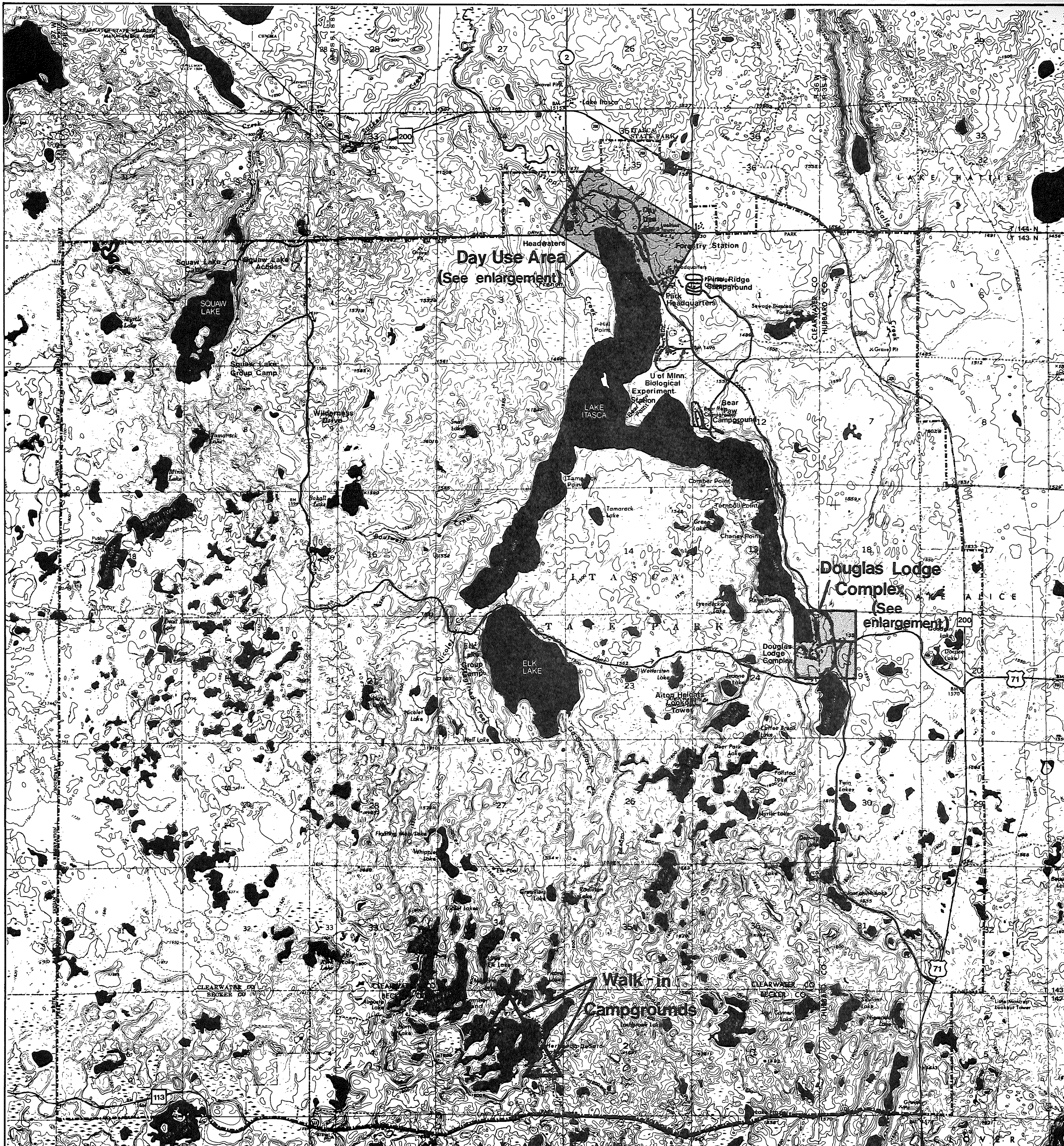
- Three contact stations.

- Park office.

- Service court with a garage, workshops, and storage buildings.

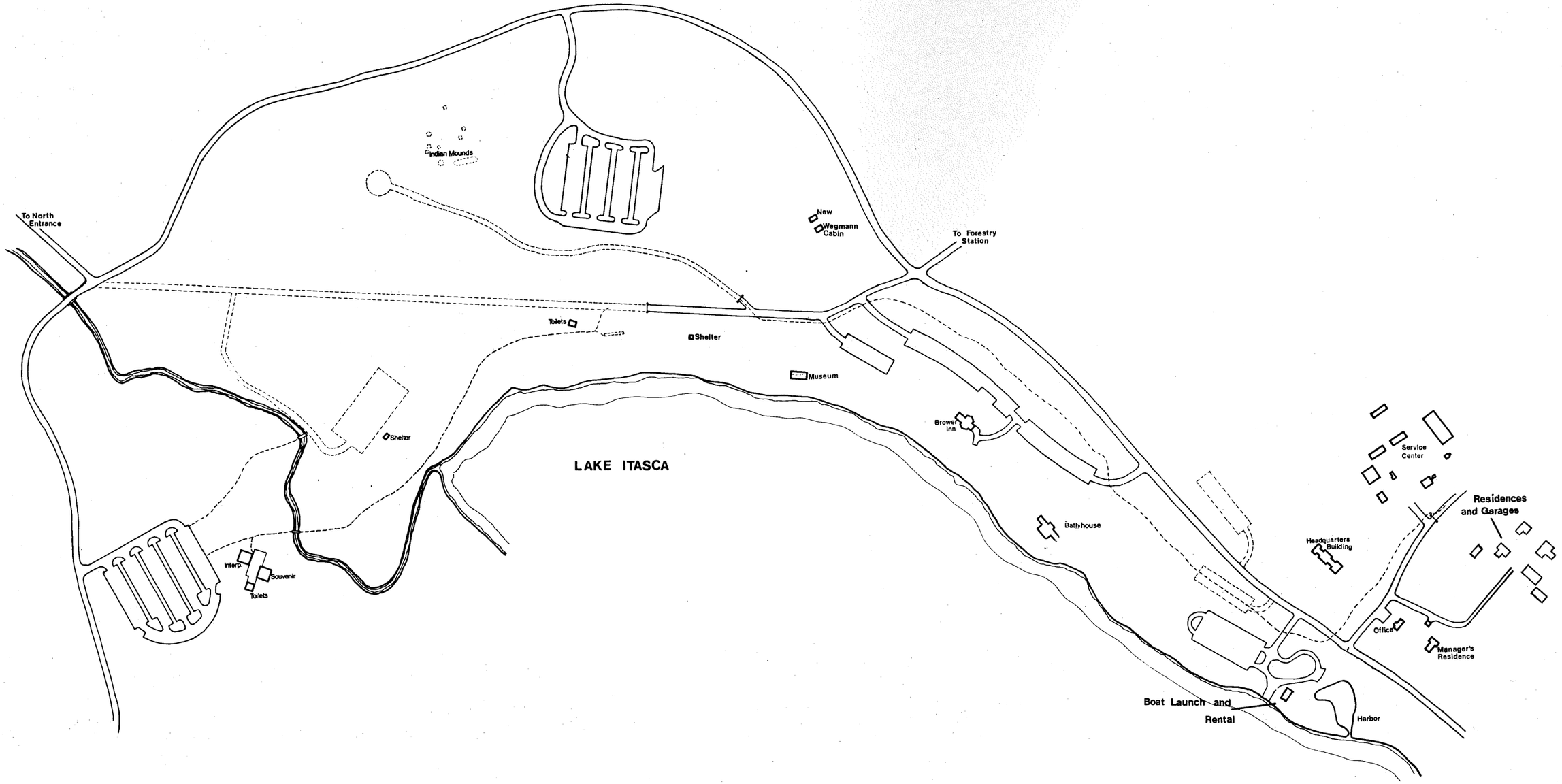
- Swimming beach with a bathhouse on Lake Itasca.

- Boat launch and boat rental facility/bait shop on Lake Itasca.



Itasca State Park

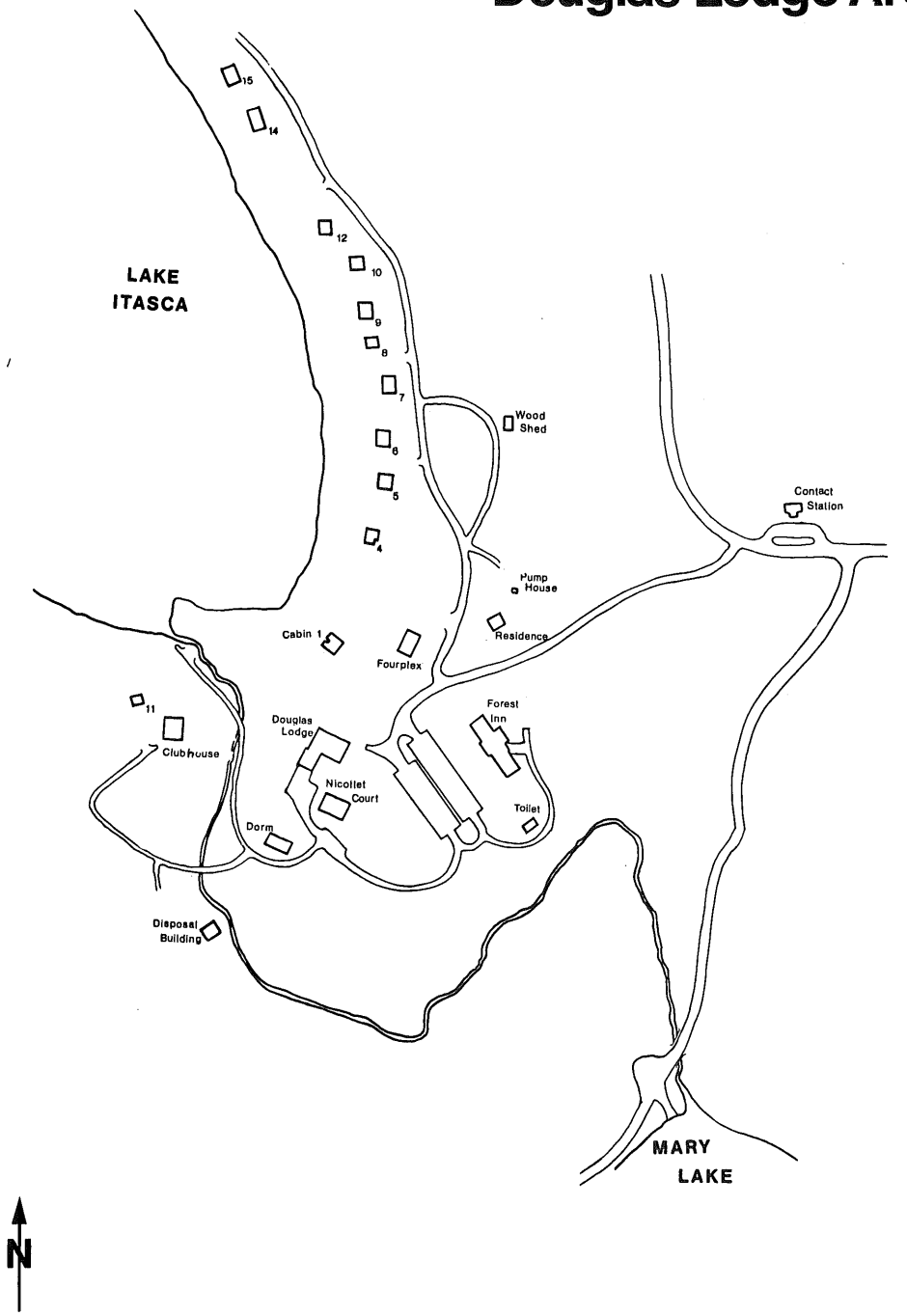
Existing Development



Itasca State Park

Existing Development - Day Use Area

Existing Development
Douglas Lodge Area



- Boat launches on Elk, Mary, and Squaw lakes.

- Brower Inn with a snack bar and craft shop.

- A picnic ground with 150 tables and a sanitation building on the north end of Lake Itasca.

- Mississippi Headwaters area with an interpretive center, museum, souvenir shop, and sanitation facilities.

- A multi-use trail system:
  - 44 mi (71 km) hiking
  - 1.4 mi (2 km) biking
  - 24.6 mi (40 km) snowmobiling
  - 21.6 mi (35 km) ski touring

- Aiton Heights lookout tower.

- Road access to all park facilities with parking space.

- A modern sewage system which services developments on the north end of Lake Itasca.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT OVERVIEW

Access and Visitor Contact (p 80)

- Obliterate all abandoned roads and relandscape.
- Construct a log style park sign at the north entrance.
- Construct a contact station at the north entrance.
- Gate all uncontrolled access roads into the park.
- Pave Wilderness Drive with asphalt.
- Establish a shuttle bus service within the park.

Camping (p 84)

- Improve inter-site spacing and revegetate Bear Paw Campground.
- Rehabilitate the group camp on Elk Lake.
- Retain the Squaw Lake structured group camp with minimal maintenance.

Picnicking (p 88)

- Rehabilitate and expand the picnic ground.
- Remodel the museum to accommodate Up North Handicrafts.
- Construct a picnic shelter with winterized toilet facilities.
- Expand the parking lot.
- Move the Brower Inn food service upstairs.

Lodging (p 92)

- Replace the Douglas Lodge kitchen. Include a snack bar and lodge manager's office in the new addition.

- Renovate the south end of Forest Inn for use as a winter warming area. Present summer use will be continued.

- Renovate the Clubhouse and surrounding area, including the cabins.

Trails (p 98)

- Increase ski touring trail mileage by 7.3 mi (11.7 km).

- Increase bike trail mileage by 4.7 mi (7.5 km) and paint a bike lane on Wilderness Drive for an additional 15 mi (24 km).

- Develop a bicycle rental concession.

- Construct two or three interpretive hiking trails along Wilderness Drive.

- Construct a trail from Douglas Lodge down to the boat launch.

- Develop a snowmobile trail around the perimeter of the park.

Visitor Services (p 105)

- Retain the amphitheater until the new interpretive center is built.

- Construct a new interpretive center to be jointly operated by the MHS and the DNR.

- Develop additional interpretive stops along Wilderness Drive.

Water Activities (p 112)

- Reestablish the boat launch service on Lake Itasca from Douglas Lodge to Brower Inn.

- Upgrade boat launches on Itasca, Squaw, Elk, and Mary lakes.

- Expand the swimming beach.

Administrative/Support Facilities (p 115)

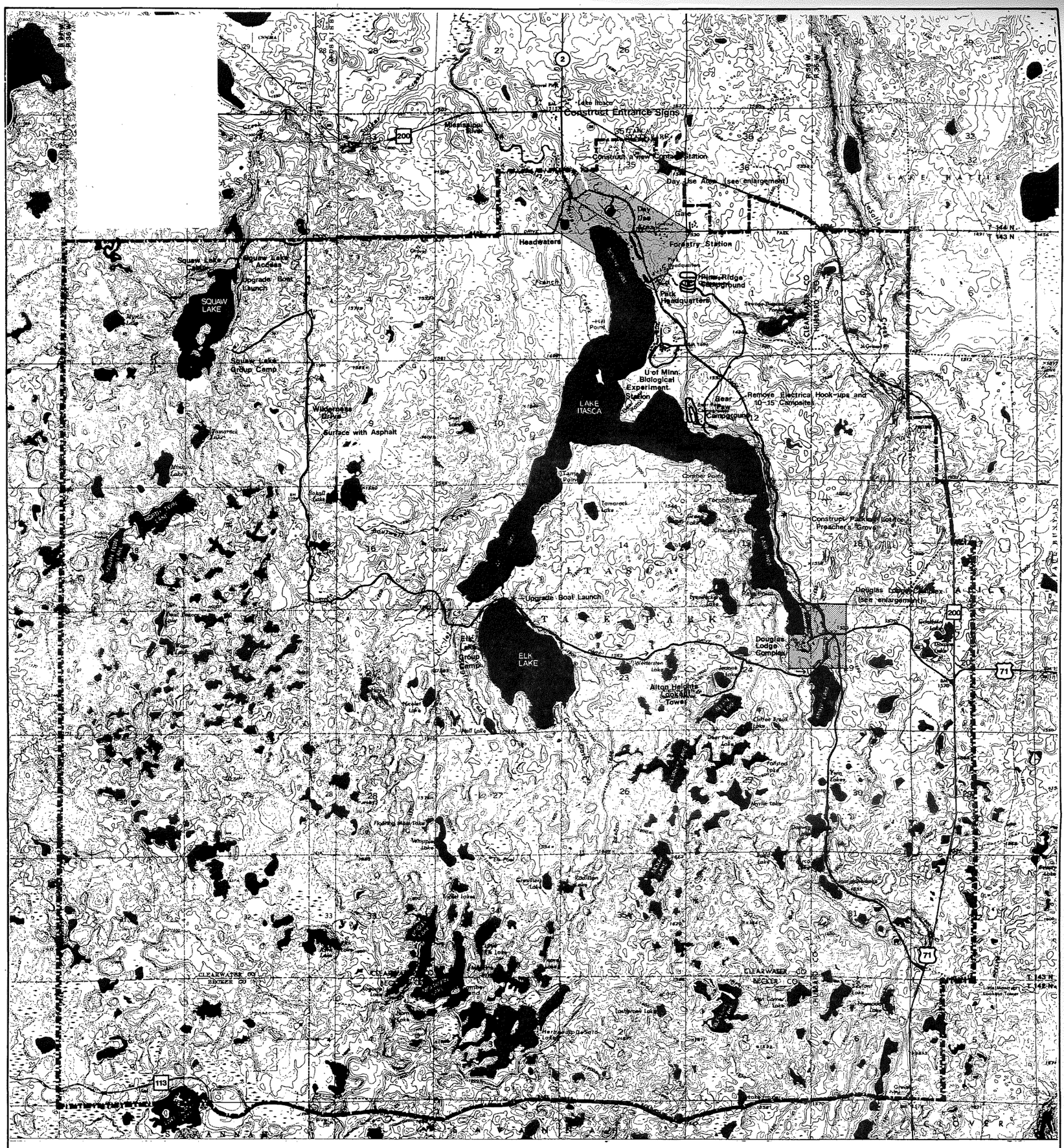
- Remodel the former Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) building for use as a seasonal staff dormitory.

- Remodel lumber storage building.

- Construct a new garage.

- Rehabilitate and/or redesign the water supply system for Bear Paw and Pine Ridge campgrounds and the day-use area.

- Rehabilitate sewage systems throughout the park.



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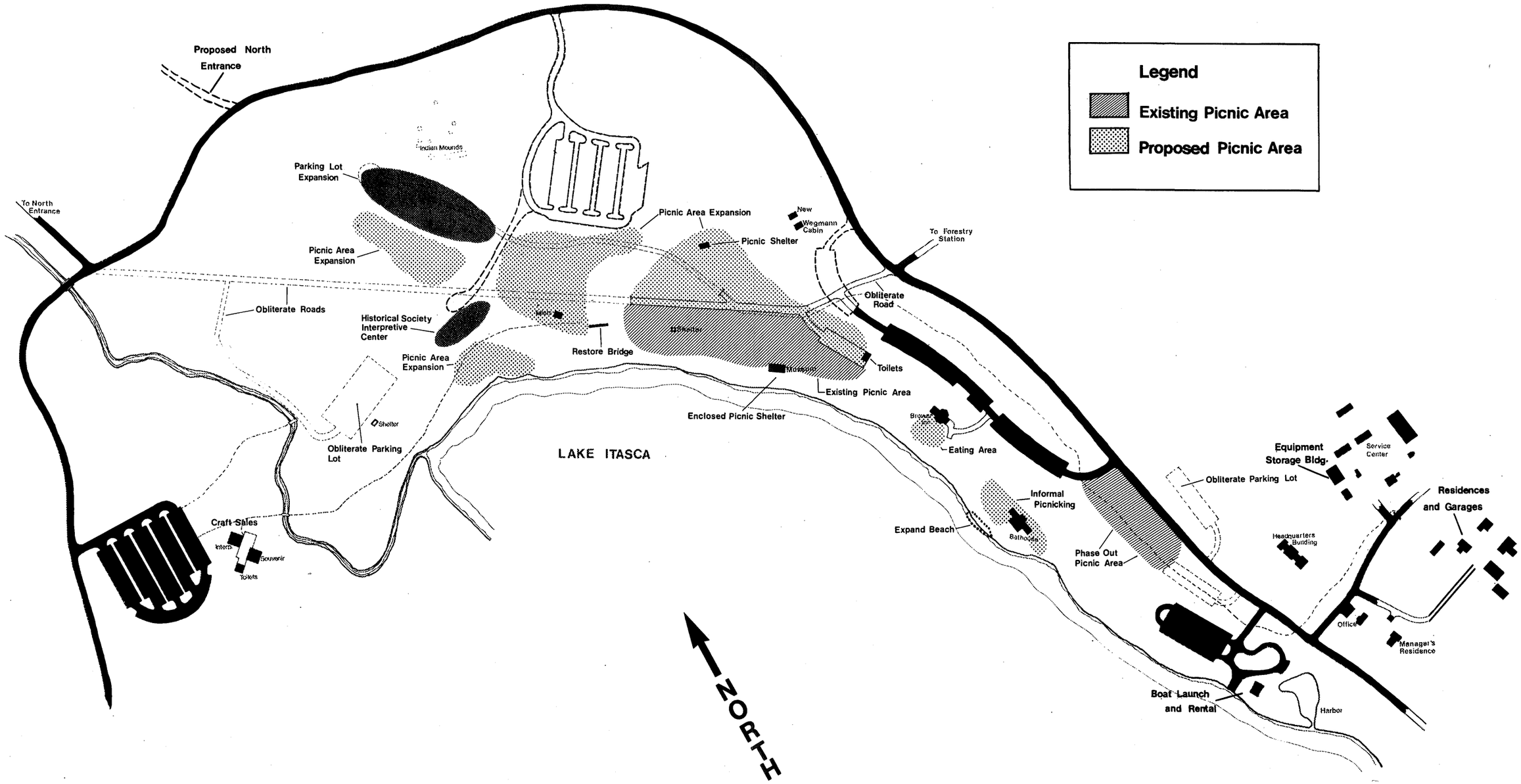
0 250' 1/2mi 1mi 2mi

Miles

Kilometers 0 1km 2km

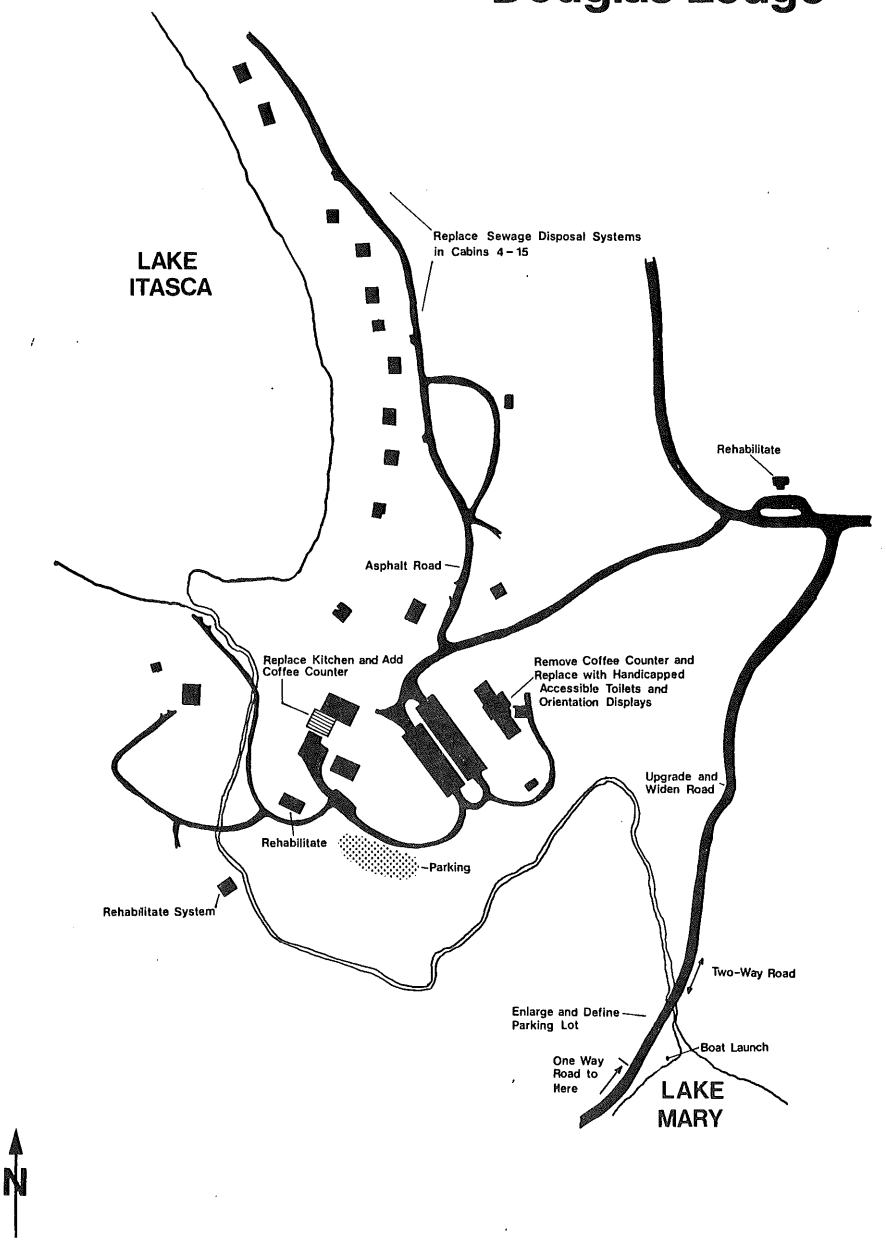
Itasca State Park

Proposed Development



Itasca State Park | **Proposed Development - Day Use Area**

Proposed Development
Douglas Lodge



DETAILED RECOMMENDATIONS

Access and Visitor Contact

Objectives:

To provide scenic, easily identifiable vehicle entrance routes into the park

To develop facilities which will accommodate changing modes of transportation to the park

To develop a transportation system for the park which will decrease traffic congestion without affecting scenic quality

Action #1. Obliterate abandoned roads and parking lots near the north end of Lake Itasca.

These roads include the former TH 200 road bed; the former Headwaters parking lot, access road, and concession stand location; and the former access road and parking lot for the Indian Mound. These abandoned developments are unsightly and should be integrated into the landscape. They will be graded to conform to the contour of the area, and vegetation will be reestablished to blend with surrounding types. (See Vegetation Management, Action #5, p 50.) The Headwaters access trail, which follows portions of these abandoned roads, and is now used as a bike trail and by people with physical disabilities, will be maintained. The entire trail will be graded and surfaced.

Cost. $100,000

Action #2. Construct a log-style Itasca State Park sign at the CSAH 38/TH 200 intersection.

Some park visitors become confused at this intersection because the park entrance is not well-marked. The Department of Transportation (MnDOT) has agreed to design and construct a park entrance sign on MnDOT land at the CSAH 38/TH 200 intersection. The design will be reviewed by the DNR, Bureau of Engineering.

Cost. $5,000

Action #3. Construct a contact station for the north park entrance.

The present contact station is a small wood frame structure about 15 years old. Its appearance is unattractive in comparison to the contact stations at the east and south entrances, and there are no sanitation facilities for staff or public use. A new structure with sanitation facilities should be built near the site of the existing contact station. (See Proposed Development Map, p 77 .) Some minor realignment of CSAH 38 may be necessary near the new contact station to allow for the necessary turn-off lanes for sticker sales and information requests.

Cost. $70,000

Action #4. Install a gate on the road which passes the Lake Itasca Forestry Station.

This road intersects TH 200, passes the Itasca Forestry Station, and then intersects Park Drive approximately 1 mi (1.6 km) south of the north entrance. There is no contact station at this intersection, allowing uncontrolled access to the park. In order to control unlawful use of the park, this access must be closed.

The road will be kept open for public use from TH 200 to the forestry station. The section between the forestry station and Park Drive will be maintained as a service road because forestry personnel must have direct access to the park for general management work and forest fire control.

A locked gate will be installed at Park Drive and a dead end sign will be placed near the forestry station. Keys to the gate will be issued to forestry personnel and park staff.

Cost. $2,000

Action #5. Pave Wilderness Drive with asphalt.

Wilderness Drive has a gravel surface from the Headwaters to the south entrance road east of Mary Lake. Potholes and erosion are an annual maintenance problem for the Clearwater County Highway Department.

The dust is unpleasant for road users and it coats vegetation, making the drive less scenic.

Surfacing the road will alleviate the dust problem, decrease the county's maintenance problems, and allow for a designated bicycle lane along one side. (See Trails, Action #8, p 102.)

Wilderness Drive from the Headwaters to the point where it turns south is very straight and partially follows the northern boundary. Prior to surfacing, some minor realignment is desirable. The road should have more curves to slow the speed of traffic and enhance scenic views. A screen of woods between the road and privately owned land would ensure scenic view control by the park. A private resort has access off this road. A road alignment change that would negatively impact this business should be avoided.

By maintaining the present one-way traffic system, a fairly narrow asphalt road can be built. This will require little, if any, widening of the existing roadbed and thus will not damage adjacent vegetation.

Cost. $300,000

Action #6. Provide shuttle bus service within the park.

If the price of gasoline continues to rise at the expected rate, more park visitors may wish to travel to the park by public transportation or bicycle.

The development areas and points of interest in Itasca are spread far enough apart so that most people drive rather than hike from area to area. This in-park use of cars has created a safety and congestion problem on Park Drive.

An alternative mode of transportation would decrease traffic in the park and provide park access for those individuals not using private automobiles. In addition, such a service could be utilized by the park interpretive staff to provide information for visitors. A concessionaire operated shuttle bus service would effectively provide for this transportation need. The bus system will probably be implemented as a demonstration project by the MnDOT.

Cost. Dependent on a MnDOT study.

Action #7. Contract a consultant to conduct a study of all existing and potential concessionaire operations (excluding lodging and food service).

Present concessionaire operations in the park include the boat and motor rental and bait shop concession on Lake Itasca and the Up North Handicrafts operation in Brower Inn. Operations which have the potential to be run on a concessionaire basis include the craft shops at Forest Inn and the Headwaters, the proposed shuttle bus, the boat launch, and bicycle rental facilities.

The study should be a feasibility analysis of concessionaire versus DNR operation of park facilities and should include a breakdown of costs and quality of service.

Cost. $5,000

Camping

Objectives:

To provide quality camping facilities on a year-round basis which allow the public to enjoy park resources on a 24-hour-a-day basis

To improve the privacy of existing campsites

To provide facilities where groups, particularly children, can experience, study, and enjoy the natural environment on a 24-hour-a-day basis

To provide primitive camping facilities for backpackers in remote areas of the park

Action #1. Relandscape Bear Paw Campground. (See Vegetation Management Section, Action #10, p 52 .)

Action #2. Construct steps, water bars, and plant vegetation to minimize shoreline erosion in Bear Paw Campground.

The lakeshore along the west side of Bear Paw Campground is a popular location for campers to beach their boats. However, the steep shoreline is subject to erosion. Several footpaths have been developed down the slope. They are bare of vegetation and erode during rainstorms and spring runoff.

Log or heavy timber steps down to the shoreline and a trail near the top of the bank will direct user access down to the lake.

See Vegetation Management, Action #10, p 52 for recommendations on revegetating the shoreline slopes and the campground.

Cost. $15,000

Action #3. Remove 10-15 campsites in Bear Paw Campground.

The present campsites are open and permit little user privacy. Vegetative screening between sites will improve this situation. Once established, this screening would also affect the flow of foot traffic. Campers will tend to stay on existing paths and roadways, eliminating some short-cuts through other sites. Closing these scattered pathways will also help alleviate soil compaction/erosion problems.

Some campsites which are too close to one another will be closed permanently to allow better inter-site spacing. Some campsites which have been overused will be closed for several years to allow natural regeneration of the resources.

Cost. $15,000

Action #4. Place all electrical hookups in Bear Paw Campground in the eastern-most lane.

Bear Paw Campground is much older than Pine Ridge Campground. Campsites in Bear Paw were designed for tent camping with a space to park one automobile at each site. Many sites are too small for a large recreational vehicle. The size of the sites will be further limited with inter-site vegetative screening. The eastern-most lane can most easily accommodate recreational vehicles.

Pine Ridge Campground is more open and each site has a larger space for vehicle parking. Large recreational vehicles can be more easily accommodated here. Therefore, electrical hookups will be provided primarily in Pine Ridge Campground.

Cost. $1,000 (Materials only, labor by park staff.)

Action #5. Rehabilitate the Elk Lake group camp.

The Elk Lake group camp has received heavy use for many years. The groundcover has been worn down and many areas have been eroded. The staff cabin and the shelter are both in poor condition and the pit toilets are not accessible to people with physical disabilities.

Typical erosion control measures such as the construction of water bars will be implemented immediately. The staff cabin and the shelter will be removed. The well will be renovated and a picnic shelter and barrier-free pit toilets will be constructed. The parking lot will be graded and defined with posts. Vegetation regeneration measures will be implemented.

Demand for this camp is heavy. To close the only primitive group camp in the park would be unfair to its many users. Therefore, rehabilitation will be done during the spring and fall. This will make it unnecessary to close the camp during the high use season.

Cost. $25,000

Action #6. Retain the Squaw Lake structured group camp with minimal maintenance for the near future.

Squaw Lake is an excellent site for a group camp facility. It is located away from the regular campgrounds and busy day use areas. It has good road access, access to Squaw Lake, and is spacious enough to accommodate large groups. A dining hall, toilet/shower building, staff cabin, and areas for tents are provided.

Itasca is located in an area well populated with group camps operated by churches, scout groups, and private concerns. A recent study of organized group camps in Minnesota showed that there are 39 other structured group camps within 60 mi (96 km) of Itasca. When questioned as to availability of other facilities and their financial ability to go elsewhere, most groups now using Squaw Lake stated it would not be difficult to find other suitable camps. None of the buildings in the group camp are of historical significance. They are in poor condition and can meet no more than minimum public health

standards. The maintenance budget for the DNR, Division of Parks and Recreation has been considerably reduced, making the continued upkeep of this facility difficult.

However, many of the current users of the camp are satisfied with the facilities in their present condition and wish to continue to use the camp. Therefore, the facilities at the Squaw Lake group camp will not be removed in the near future. No funds will be allocated for development or maintenance other than that which is necessary to convert the area to a primitive group camp, namely:

- Removal of the existing toilet/shower building
- Construction of two barrier-free pit toilets
- Construction of a field shower facility with attached changing rooms
- Removal of the existing kitchen sink and replacement with a three compartment sink.

In the future, it may be necessary to remove the staff cabin if further deterioration of the structure warrants it.

Cost. $22,500

Action #7. Maintain the two backpack campsites located on DeSoto Lake.

At present, these sites are not frequently used but do provide a desirable alternative to camping in Bear Paw or Pine Ridge campgrounds. Since very little maintenance is required, they should be retained for those who wish to use them.

Demand for these sites could increase with the completion of the North Country Trail and the Heartland Trail, both of which will connect with the park trail system. These trails would probably attract the kind of campers interested in backpack sites. If such a situation occurs, consideration should be given to increasing the number of backpack sites in Itasca.

Cost. By park staff.

Picnicking

Objectives:

To provide a variety of picnic facilities to fulfill needs of a wide range of users

To provide the complementary facilities needed for a pleasant picnicking experience

To provide an adequate number of high quality picnic sites to serve present and future user levels

Action #1. Expand the picnic ground.

The picnic ground is a long, narrow, 3.5 acre (1.4 hectare) strip of land on the northern shore of Lake Itasca. All of the sites have excellent views of the lake. They are all easily accessible from the parking lot which parallels the area on the east.

The picnic ground is too small to accommodate the large number of visitors who wish to picnic during the high use summer months. As a result, erosion and compaction problems are very evident.

Many people park on the narrow shoulder of Park Drive when the lot is full. This creates traffic and safety problems. Therefore, a new 200-car parking lot will be developed to serve both the picnic area and the interpretive center. (See Picnicking, Action #6, p 90.) The existing parking lots (approximately 130-car capacity) will be removed and the area used for additional picnic sites (see Action #5, p 90). More picnic sites will be developed near the new parking lot and the interpretive center. The total picnic expansion area will include 9.5 acres (2.3 hectares) and will provide an additional 60 tables.

The sites closest to the parking lot will be shaded and have good access to the interpretive center. However, they will not provide a good view of the lake. It is hoped that the new sites, because of their location

close to the parking lot, will receive enough use to relieve the current high use of the lakeshore sites.

Cost. $50,000

Action #2. Construct a picnic shelter with 6 - 8 tables and winterized toilet facilities in the proposed expansion area north of the existing picnic ground.

Because of the high use the picnic ground receives and the expectation that this use will increase, a second picnic shelter will be needed. Many large groups meet at the park for group picnics. During bad weather, it will be desirable to have a second shelter for their convenience.

The existing toilet building is located an inconvenient distance from some parts of the picnic ground, particularly for those with physical disabilities. (See Existing Development Map, Day Use Area, p 71 .) There are toilet facilities in Brower Inn, but they receive considerable use at present and would be unable to accommodate an increase in use.

A new picnic shelter with toilet facilities will be constructed a convenient distance from all parts of the picnic area. (See Proposed Development Map, Day Use Area Map, p 78.)

Snowmobilers who use the park need toilet and trail shelter facilities. This proposed picnic shelter will also function as a winter trail shelter. Therefore, the toilets will be winterized, the building will have removable panels for summer use, and a fireplace will be installed to provide heat.

Cost. $115,000

Action #3. Replace fire grills.

The fire grills are in very poor condition and should be replaced for safety and convenience.

Cost. $3,000

Action #4. Repair areas in the picnic ground that show signs of soil compaction, erosion, and loss of groundcover.

Many years of intensive use have caused extensive damage to the present picnic ground. Areas which receive considerable foot traffic are compacted and lack groundcover. The lakeshore is badly eroded in many places.

A combination of soil aeration, minor regrading, water bars, and planting will aid resource regeneration in the area. The expansion of the picnic ground will decrease the use of the damaged sites, further aiding the rehabilitation of the area.

Cost. $10,000

Action #5. Remove the two parking lots currently used for picnic parking.

These lots are inefficiently designed and are too small to accommodate current demand. They occupy land that is very desirable for picnic sites.

Parking for the picnic ground will be directed to a larger parking lot (Action #6). The existing lots will be removed and the area leveled and sodded for additional picnic sites.

Cost. $15,000

Action #6. Complete construction of the parking lot located directly east of the Indian Mounds. (See Proposed Development Map, Day Use Area, p 78.)

Construction of the parking lot was begun a few years ago, but was halted pending completion of the park management plan.

The completion of this lot is necessary because existing parking facilities are not sufficient to accommodate the number of visitors who use the picnic ground, Brower Inn, and the swimming beach.

Even more parking space will be needed when the proposed interpretive center is completed. This parking lot can accommodate users of both facilities.

If, in the future, this lot is too small to service both the picnic ground and interpretive center, there is room south of the Indian Mounds for additional parking lot expansion.

Cost. $50,000

Action #7. Rehabilitate the footbridges near the toilet building.

Present access to the toilet building is poor. The most direct route is through a small ravine. Foot traffic through this ravine has caused erosion of the banks. A footbridge originally crossed the ravine, but it has been unusable for many years.

Restoration of the bridge will require some repair of the stone supports and replacement of the wooden walkway and hand railing. The new bridge will decrease the erosion problem in the ravine and will improve access to the toilet building.

Cost. $15,000

Action #8. Remodel Brower Inn.

Up North Handicrafts is presently housed in a portion of the second floor of Brower Inn. This sales operation will be relocated in the picnic ground museum. The other portion of the second floor houses a slide program on Jacob Brower and several historic photos. When the new interpretive center is constructed, the Brower slide program will be installed there.

The snack bar facility on the first floor of Brower Inn will be relocated on the second floor. Its present location is inadequate for several reasons

- The area of the snack bar is too small for the crowds of customers on busy days.

- There is very limited seating for customers.
- There is insufficient storage space.

Therefore, the snack bar facility should be relocated on the second floor of Brower Inn. The area is much larger and can provide more seating. Some of the vacated space on the first floor can be used for storage.

The park enforcement staff is currently housed at park headquarters. The space is inadequate and remotely located. During the summer months, much enforcement time is spent in the picnic ground/swimming beach area. It would be advantageous if the enforcement staff had offices in the day use area. The vacated portion of the first floor of Brower Inn would be an excellent location. Therefore, the snack bar area on the first floor should be remodeled to serve as summer office space for the enforcement staff. During the winter months this area could be used for miscellaneous storage.

Cost. $20,000

Action #9. Remodel the picnic ground museum to accommodate Up North Handicrafts. (See Visitors Services, Souvenir Sales, Action #3, p 112.)

Lodging

Objectives:

To provide opportunities for visitors to enjoy the park overnight by camping or staying in Douglas Lodge or in other park rental units

To provide more efficient lodging and food services

To decrease operating costs

To provide necessary facilities for winter ski tourers

To charge lodging fees that are equivalent to those charged by local resorts for similar services

Action #1. Contract a restaurant/lodging management consultant to analyze the existing and proposed food service and lodging facilities in the Douglas Lodge complex.

This study will focus on the cost effectiveness of the operation of the facilities by the DNR as compared to operation by a private concessionaire. This study must consider both facilities and staffing. It must also determine the most efficient design for the proposed kitchen and snack bar facilities.

Cost. $10,000

Action #2. Remove the Douglas Lodge kitchen addition and replace it with a new kitchen, snack bar, and lodge manager's office.

Although Douglas Lodge has been partially rehabilitated recently, more work is needed. The kitchen particularly needs replacing. The plumbing, venting, and wiring are not up to current code requirements.

The separation of food services in Forest Inn and Douglas Lodge is an inefficient use of staff and equipment. Combining the snack bar and the dining room food service in one kitchen will improve service to the public and increase staff and equipment efficiency. The snack bar can be located on the lake side of the kitchen to utilize the scenic view. A porch may also be provided for informal outdoor eating. The basement of the addition will be designed for efficient and easily accessible food storage.

The lodge manager's office, which is also located in this part of the lodge, should be included in the new addition.

Cost. $300,000

Action #3. Conduct a study to evaluate the need for winter lodging in the Itasca area.

Winter use of the park has increased considerably in recent years, primarily by visitors using the park ski touring trails. Large numbers of these skiers come from some distance away. Such users would probably be interested in overnight lodging if it were available.

A study done in conjunction with the lodge and food service study should be conducted to determine the demand for winter lodging. It should also analyze the opportunities which now exist for winter lodging in the area. If winter lodging opportunities are insufficient, resort, hotel, and motel owners shouldshould be conducted to determine their willingness and ability to offer this service. If they are not interested, the operation of winter lodging facilities in Itasca should be considered.

It would be most feasible to provide this type of lodging in the CCC Headquarters building, which will be remodeled for park employee lodging in the summer. There is potential for eventually converting the structure into a hostel.

Cost. $5,000

Action #4. Provide barrier-free toilets in Douglas Lodge.

The Douglas Lodge toilet facilities are now in the basement and on the second floor. Neither is easily accessible for dining room customers. Easily accessible toilets on the main floor must be provided, either in the existing structure or in the kitchen addition.

Cost. $40,000

Action #5. Remove the snack bar from Forest Inn and use the area for winterized toilets and a park and region orientation display. Retain the souvenir sales facility and the meeting room.

The present toilet facilities for Forest Inn are in a separate, non-winterized stone building. Pit toilets are provided for winter use. It would be difficult to make the toilet building accessible to people with

physical disabilities, and it would be very inefficient to heat it for winter use. When the snack bar is removed, space will be available in Forest Inn for toilets. They will be barrier-free for special populations, insulated, and adjacent to the winter warming room.

Park and region orientation in most state parks is a service provided at the contact station. However, because of the variety of recreational services provided in the park and the region and the fact that the contact stations are often very busy, a separate display area is needed.

Cost. $80,000

Action #6. Winterize the south end of Forest Inn and continue to use it as a winter warming room.

This room is currently used as a winter warming area. The half stone walls and many windows make this room inefficient to heat. Energy conservation projects that do not change the character of the room but do increase the heat retention should be implemented. A temperature of $50^{\circ}F$ - $55^{\circ}F$ ($10^{\circ}C$ - $13^{\circ}C$) would be sufficient for a winter warming area. Coin operated hot drink dispensers will be provided.

Cost. $5,000

Action #7. Restore the Clubhouse.

The MHS has determined that the Clubhouse is a significant historic structure and should be preserved. Therefore, all actions necessary to continue its use as a rental lodging unit should be implemented. Some of the necessary actions include: replace or repair all rotted logs, replace all wiring, replace plumbing and sewage system, replace or repair the foundation, rehabilitate all bathrooms, replace rotten roof members, reroof, and make main floor toilets accessible to people with physical disabilities. A small basement for use as a utility room should be included in the renovation project. The first step will be to contract a historic restoration specialist to determine the most feasible restoration method and cost estimates.

Cost. Study - $10,000

Restoration costs are expected to be less than $150,000

Action #8. Establish a 30-car winter parking lot. (See Proposed Development Map, Douglas Lodge Area, p 79.)

The existing parking lot is already too small for the level of use on many winter weekends and an increase in the amount of ski touring is expected. An area should be established which could be used for winter parking only. No formal construction will be done. A grassy area from which snow can be removed is all that is necessary.

Cost. $2,000

Action #9. Construct a gently sloping trail to the lake edge from the Clubhouse bridge. (See Trails, Action #12, p 103.)

Action #10. Eliminate public use of the road from Douglas Lodge to the Clubhouse and Cabin #11. Maintain it as a service road.

There is currently very little parking space for people using the Clubhouse and Cabin #11 and no room to provide more parking. The access road is poor, particularly during rainy weather. There is a good view of the two log structures from the lake and the presence of cars detracts from this view.

The parking lot behind Nicollet Court is adjacent to the foot bridge. Parking this distance from the Clubhouse and Cabin #11 will not be a great inconvenience for people using the buildings.

The road will be maintained as an access for park vehicles.

Cost. No development cost.

Action #11. Remodel six cabins to be usable and accessible by people with physical disabilities.

Six of the cabins can be made usable and accessible without major structural changes. These modifications will make the cabins more convenient for all guests.

Cost. $60,000

Action #12. Replace individual sewage systems for the rental cabins in the Douglas Lodge area. (See Waters, Action #1, p 61.)

Action #13. Rehabilitate the sewage system for Douglas Lodge and Forest Inn. (See Waters, Action #2, p 61.)

Action #14. Pave the road and parking spaces for the cabins with asphalt.

Erosion and dust will be minimized and the road and parking spaces will be more clearly defined, reducing indiscriminate parking on the side of the road. The low traffic use of the road and the surfacing would allow its use by special populations as a pedestrian trail to Douglas Lodge.

Cost. $20,000

Action #15. Maintain comparable lodging rates.

The rates charged for lodging in Itasca have been increased significantly for the 1979 season. This increase establishes rates for the park which are equivalent to those charged by local resorts for comparable facilities and services. The rates will be reviewed annually to ensure that they remain comparable to local private rates.

Cost. No development cost.

Action #16. Remodel the former CCC headquarters building for use as a seasonal park staff dormitory, with future potential for use as a hostel.

For further discussion, see Administrative/Support Facilities, Action #7, pp 116 -118.

Trails

Objective:

To provide trail access to a variety of areas within the park along alignments chosen for slight gradient, scenic views, interesting study areas, avoidance of sensitive areas, and separation of conflicting uses

Action #1. Develop three short loops in the ski touring trail system.

The present ski-touring system provides a scenic, challenging skiing experience. However, the trails are too long for those who are not experienced skiers in good physical condition. The shortest ski route in the system is almost 8 mi (12.8 km) long.

By constructing three loop short cuts, skiers can select a distance to ski from a variety of alternatives. This action would add 2.5 mi (4 km) of trails to the existing 21.6 mi (35 km) trail system.

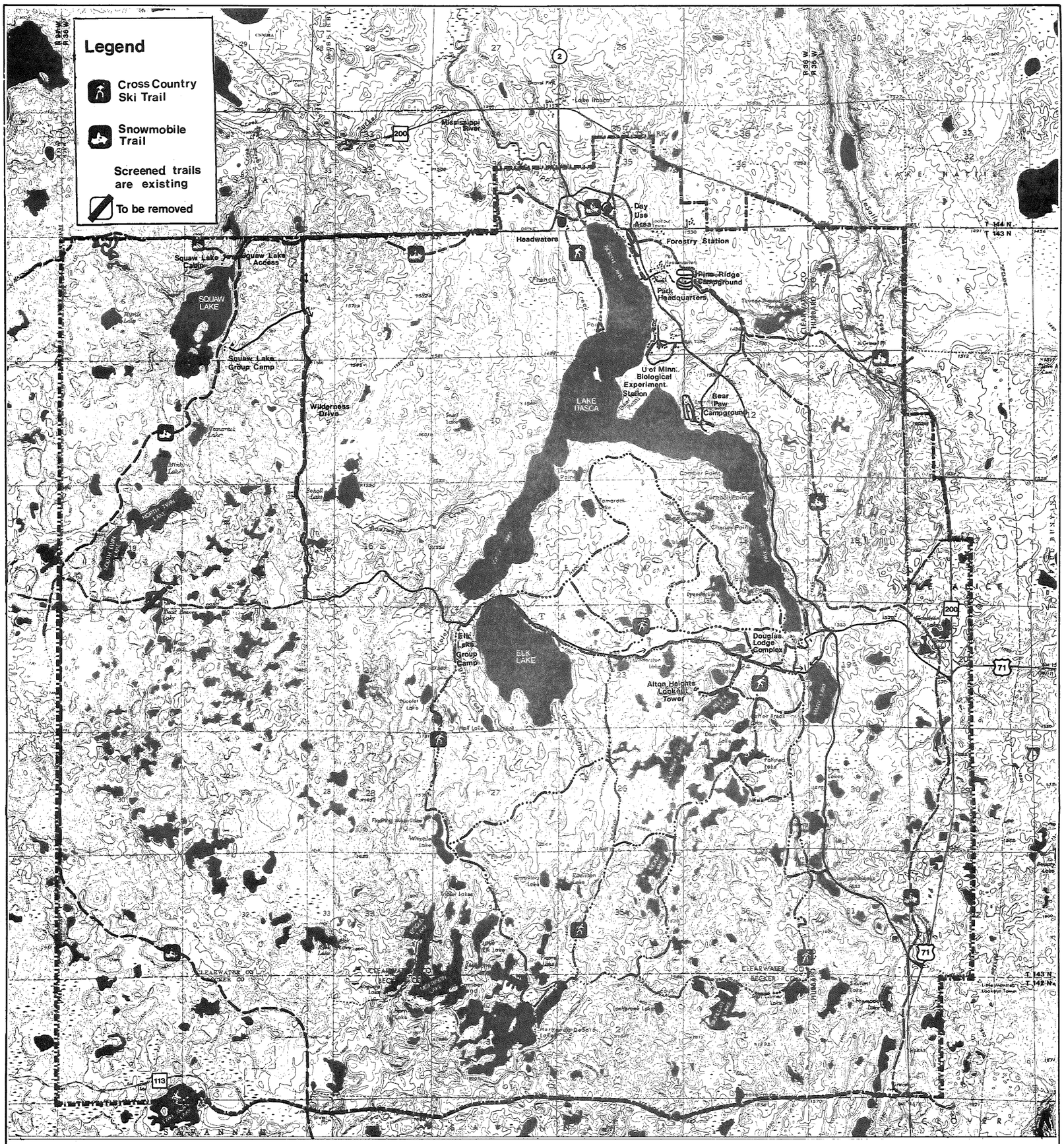
Cost. $3,000

Action #2. Construct a ski touring trail for inexperienced skiers.

Existing ski touring trails are all laid out for intermediate or advanced skiers. For this reason, inexperienced skiers are hesitant to use the trails in Itasca. The area between the two southern arms of Lake Itasca has potential for the development of a two-loop beginner trail. A total of 7.3 mi (12 km) of trail will be developed. The short loop will be 2.8 mi (4 km) long and the long loop will be 5.3 mi (8 km). Connections to the existing trail will add another 1.2 mi (2 km).

There are a number of hills in the area. Trails should be aligned to allow skiers the option of skiing these hills or detouring around them on a lesser slope. This will provide inexperienced skiers with a safe, relatively level trail with the option of skiing a few challenging hills. The trail will begin at Forest Inn, as do all existing ski trails except for Schoolcraft Trail, which is in the Headwaters area.

Cost. $20,000



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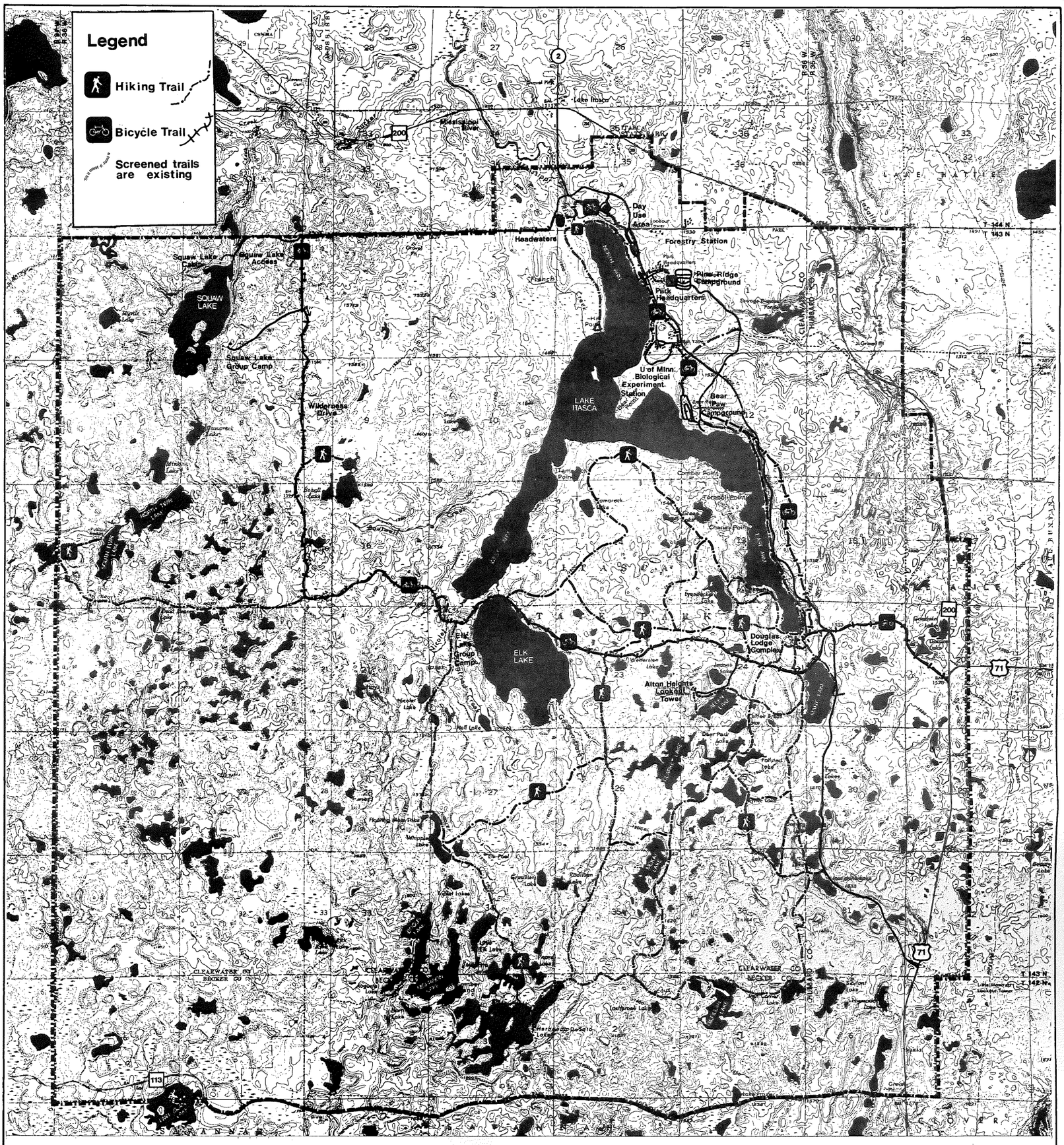
Itasca State Park

Proposed Winter Trails



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Itasca State Park

Proposed Summer Trails

Action #3. Remodel the south end of Forest Inn as a winter trail center/warming room. (See Lodging, Actions #5 and #6, pp 94 - 95.)

Action #4. Maintain Nicollet Cabin as a trail shelter.

This cabin is only accessible by trail. The roof and floor are rotted, but the walls seem sound. It is one of the few early cabins in the park that is still salvageable.

The roof, floor, and steps will be replaced, along with other minor repair work. These actions should greatly increase the life of the structure. Major log rot repair or other labor intensive projects are not cost effective for this building and should not be implemented unless inexpensive skilled labor is available in the future.

Cost. $10,000

Action #5. Construct a 3 mi (5 km) bicycle trail from Douglas Lodge through Bear Paw Campground connecting to the existing bike trail near the park office.

The separation of bicycle and automobile routes is desirable because it increases traffic safety. An off-road bicycle trail is needed because Park Drive is heavily used by automobiles. The drive is a narrow two lane road with no shoulders. Cyclists using the drive create a traffic hazard.

The present bicycle trail connects Pine Ridge Campground to the park office, beach, picnic area, the Headwaters, and the proposed interpretive center site. The proposed trail expansion would also connect Bear Paw Campground and the Douglas Lodge complex into this off-road system.

Cost. $60,000

Action #6. Construct a 1.2 mi (2 km) bike trail to connect the park bike trail system to TH 71.

TH 71 has wide paved shoulders suitable for a bicycle lane and could link the park to the 26 mi (42 km) paved Heartland Trail. The east entrance road from TH 71 is too narrow for safe use by both bicycles and cars. Therefore, an off-road bike trail connecting TH 71 to the internal trail system will allow safe access to many miles of trails for park users. This action will also provide good access to the park by bicycle for resort users who have access to either TH 71 or the Heartland Trail.

Cost. $37,000

Action #7. Construct a .5 mi (.8 km) bike trail from the interpretive center to the north park entrance.

If the Great River Road project is completed to the park, it will serve as a bike route to the north entrance. This short trail will connect the park's bicycle trail system to the Great River Road, providing safe access to many miles of bike routes for park users. This action will also provide good access to the park by bicycle for resort users from the surrounding area who have access to the Great River Road.

Cost. $16,000

Action #8. Paint a bicycle lane on Wilderness Drive after paving it with asphalt. (See Access and Visitor Contact, Action #5, p 82.)

The bike lane, when combined with the other proposed bike trails, (Actions #6 and #7 above), will provide non-car access to all the major use areas in the park.

The 15 mi (24 km) Wilderness Drive will provide a very scenic half day ride for the experienced bicyclist or a leisurely day trip for family groups.

Little additional grading should be necessary on the one way portion of Wilderness Drive. Some widening of the surface or development of an off-road trail will be necessary along the two way sections of the road.

Cost. Covered in Access and Visitor Contact, Action #5, p 82.

Action #9. Rebuild the bicycle trail in the Headwaters area. (See Access and Visitor Contact, Action #1, p 80.)

Action #10. Develop a bicycle rental concession.

When all the bicycle trails are completed, cyclists will have access to any park facility which can now be reached by automobile. As it may be inconvenient for many to travel to the park by bicycle or to carry bicycles in an automobile, a concession operation should be available where visitors can rent them. This concession will be located in an area which is easily accessible to the public and presents no management, staffing, or security problems. The most feasible alternative appears to be combining it with the existing boat and motor rental concession. A small bicycle storage building will be constructed. The concessionaire will be responsible for providing bicycles.

Cost. $7,000

Action #11. Construct two or three short interpretive hiking trails along Wilderness Drive. Small (4-6 car) parking lots will be provided at the beginning of each trail.

Cost. Covered in Visitors Services, Interpretive Facilities, Action #7, pp 109 - 110.

Action #12. Construct a gently sloped trail from Douglas Lodge to the launch service docking area.

The Lake Itasca launch will be a very desirable activity and transportation method for special populations. At present, the only well defined access from Douglas Lodge to the boat launch is the stone stairway. People with physical disabilities have difficulty negotiating this stairway.

The proposed trail will lead from Douglas Lodge across the existing bridge near the Clubhouse, then wind down the slope to the launch dock. The trail should have a level surface and a gentle gradient that is designed to minimize erosion.

Cost. $4,000

Action #13. Develop a snowmobile trail system which will provide a loop trail around the perimeter of the park.

It is desirable to provide a trail system which would allow snowmobilers to travel a complete circular route around the perimeter of Itasca. The proposed route will allow snowmobilers to see a considerable amount of the park without conflicting with other winter activities and without requiring the construction of many new miles of trail.

The existing portions of snowmobile trail on the west side of Wilderness Drive and the Two Spot Trail from Wilderness Drive to the west boundary of the park will be closed. (See Winter Trails Map, p 99.)

Old logging roads in the northwest and southwest portions of the park (see Winter Trails Map, p 99) will be used for snowmobiling. These two trails will be connected by a trail along the western boundary of the park. The trail has already been brush-cleared to mark the boundary of the park. Further work will include some minor widening and the removal of stumps and rocks.

The southern portion of the circular route will be developed outside the park boundary by the local snowmobile club with county grant-in-aid snowmobile funds. It will use existing logging roads and unplowed county roads to connect in a southeastern direction with the county grant-in-aid trail running north from Park Rapids. This intersection will occur about 1.5 mi (2.4 km) south of the southeast corner of the park. Snowmobilers can then ride this trail a short distance back into the park.

If this southern portion of the trail outside the park is not developed by the local snowmobile club or if a future decrease in grant-in-aid trail funds prohibits maintenance of the trail, consideration will be given to the construction of a trail within the park paralleling the southern boundary. Development of such a trail is less desirable because it would require substantial clearing of trees and brush and would place the snowmobile trail in close proximity to existing ski touring trails.

Total mileage for this perimeter trail will be approximately 29 mi (47 km); 21 mi (34 km) will be on park land on the east, north, and west sides of the park, and 8 mi (13 km) will be south of the park, outside the park boundary.

Cost. To be determined by regional trails supervisor.

Action #14. Provide winterized toilet and warming facilities for snowmobilers. (See Picnicking, Action #2, p 89.)

Action #15. Provide access through the park for the North Country Trail.

The North Country Trail is a federally sponsored hiking trail beginning in New York State. The very general alignment proposed will pass through the Paul Bunyan State Forest, Itasca State Park, and into the White Earth State Forest. The trail, if implemented, should pass the east contact station and generally follow existing trails or service roads. A proposed alignment cannot be delineated at this time because no potential alignments in either state forest have been identified.

Cost. To be determined by the regional trails supervisor.

Visitor Services

Interpretive Facilities

Objective:

To provide interpretive opportunities for those visitors interested in the history and natural environment of Itasca and the surrounding area

Because of Itasca's size, diversity of facilities, and large number of visitors, park information must be made readily available. There are three contact stations at the park entrances where visitors can purchase park permits, pick up a park map, and get information on the surrounding area. Information is also available at several facilities in the park, including Douglas Lodge, the campground office, park headquarters, and the Headwaters interpretive center. In addition, park maps are posted in various locations to help orient park visitors. All roads have location signs for park facilities and are well-signed with speed limits and mileage distances.

Itasca has a wide variety of natural and historical features which are the basis for an interesting and diverse interpretive program. Highlights of the program include the wildlife, geology, plant life, and water resources of the park. Archaeology, focusing on early American Indian history, is also emphasized. In addition, the naturalist staff interprets the history of Itasca's once vast pine forest. These programs focus on the human impact on the forest, and what is being done to reclaim areas damaged by logging, natural forces, and unwise preservation efforts.

Existing interpretive facilities are limited and dispersed throughout the park. Interpretive displays and programs are currently available at these locations:

A. Forest Inn - One third of the building is set aside as a meeting room. It is used during the summer for presenting interpretive programs which include slides or movies. Seating capacity is limited.

B. Brower Inn - There is an automatic slide and tape program which is presented on the second floor of the building. It deals with Jacob Brower, the first commissioner of the park, and his struggle to establish and protect the park during its early years.

C. Museum (in the picnic ground) - This building houses displays on glaciers, park wildlife, and prairie restoration. Many of these displays are outdated and they are so diverse in topic that no centralized theme is evident.

D. Amphitheater - This outdoor facility is located next to the museum overlooking Lake Itasca. It is often used for evening programs.

E. Headwaters Interpretive Center - It is located next to the parking lot in the Headwaters area. Displays focus on the Mississippi River. A automatic slide/tape program on the construction of birch bark canoes is also shown here.

Action #1. Cooperate with the MHS on the construction and operation of a new interpretive center.

At present, interpretive facilities are dispersed throughout the park. There is a need to centralize the interpretive program in one area.

The MHS is involved with the project of documenting the search for the Headwaters of the Mississippi River. Rather than develop two separate interpretive facilities, it has been proposed that the MHS and DNR coordinate their programs and cooperatively develop and maintain a Mississippi Headwaters Interpretive Center.

The Mn/DOT has expressed interest in developing an interpretive display in the center which focuses on the Great River Road project.

The structure will be designed for energy efficient, year-round use. It will include a lobby, an audio-visual presentation room, an exhibit area, toilets, publication sales facilities, staff offices, and work rooms.

A committee comprised of representatives from the MHS, DNR, and Mn/DOT should be formed and given the authority to make decisions regarding building and display design, staffing, and operation of the facility.

Cost. Dependent on recommendation of architectural consultants.

Action #2. Continue to use the Forest Inn meeting room for interpretive programs until a new facility is provided.

The meeting room in Forest Inn will be retained for interpretive programs, particularly for evening slide shows and movies. It may also be reserved for meetings, if an interpretive program is not scheduled. When the new interpretive center is constructed, audio-visual programming will be moved to the center.

Cost. No development cost.

Action #3. The automatic slide/tape presentation on Jacob Brower will be retained in Brower Inn pending construction of the new interpretive center.

Although the main use of the second floor of this structure will be changed from craft sales to a snack bar and informal dining area, the Brower presentation will be temporarily retained.

Cost. No development cost.

Action #4. Remodel the picnic ground museum to accommodate Up North Handicrafts sales. (See Visitors Services, Souvenir Sales, Action #3, p 112.)

Action #5. Maintain the amphitheater pending construction of the proposed interpretive center.

The use of this facility may decrease when the new interpretive center is constructed. The amphitheater should, however, be maintained until the park interpretive staff can determine facility needs.

If the amphitheater's function can be included in the new interpretive center, the old facility should be removed. If it cannot be accommodated in the center, the amphitheater will be maintained, either in its present location or in a more suitable location as determined by the interpretive staff.

Cost. Dependent on recommendation of architectural consultant.

Action #6. Maintain the existing Headwaters interpretive building pending construction of the proposed interpretive center.

It will be several years before the proposed interpretive center is completed and open to the public. Until its completion, the existing interpretive building will be maintained as a visitor service. When the proposed center is completed, the final decision will be made regarding what to do with the Headwaters interpretive building. One possible alternative would be to use it as a park facility orientation center. The final decision on the building will be made by the DNR, Division of Parks and Recreation.

Cost. No development cost.

Action #7. Improve the existing interpretive stops and provide two or three additional stops along Wilderness Drive. Three short, self-guided interpretive trails will be included at these stops.

The Wilderness Drive has pull-over stops at the "World's Largest Norway Pine", the Forestry Demonstration Area, the Bison Kill Site, the Aiton Heights Observation Tower, and the Wilderness Area. The interpretive potential of these sites can be increased using current interpretive techniques.

There are long stretches of the drive which have no stops and which have little change in scenery. Enjoyment of the drive could be improved if interpretive stops were placed in these areas.

Suggested topics for interpretation include wildlife of the park, park geology, the forest fire history of Itasca, and other topics not interpreted in the proposed MHS/DNR interpretive center. Final determination of these interpretive stops will be made after the interpretive theme and display topics for the proposed interpretive center have been established. Information at these sites will be provided through handouts and signage.

Small (4-6 car) parking lots will be provided at each pullover stop.

Most of the existing hiking trails are several miles long. There is little opportunity for visitors with limited time or physical abilities to hike in Itasca. The Allen Lake Trail is the only short, self-guided interpretive trail. The Dr. Roberts Nature Trail located near Douglas Lodge, the only other self-guided interpretive trail in the park, is 2 mi (3.2 km) long.

The area along Wilderness Drive has several features which would make an interesting focus for a short interpretive trail.

Cost. $8,000

Action #8. Provide interpretive pamphlets at all proposed and existing interpretive stops.

Because of limited interpretive staff and the need to provide interesting programming on an unscheduled basis, written materials are a necessary part of the interpretive program.

Cost. $6,000

Souvenir Sales

Objective:

To continue to provide park visitors the opportunity to purchase mementoes of their visit to the park

Souvenir sales have been a tradition at Itasca for at least 40 years. Itasca is a unique park in the state park system and many people enjoy purchasing a memento of their visit. Critical comments have been made concerning the kinds of souvenirs sold. Some changes are necessary. However, it is desirable to continue souvenir sales at the park as a visitor service. This service is not in competition with area businesses and it is a source of state income.

Souvenir sales are currently housed in three locations:

- Forest Inn (north end of the building) – This concession is operated by park staff and income is turned over to the state general fund (as is all other park income). Items include inexpensive souvenirs, T–shirts, moccasins, and a variety of nature oriented books.

- Headwaters Souvenir Shop – This concession is also operated by park staff and income is turned over to the general state fund. In general, souvenirs at this shop are more expensive and include items such as jewelry and glassware.

- Brower Inn – The concession on the second floor of Brower Inn is operated by Up North Handicrafts, a subsidiary of Northwest Economic Development, Inc., a non–profit organization. Items sold are handcrafted and include housewares, knick knacks, American Indian handicrafts, and toys. The park furnishes employees to operate the concession. In return, the park receives 10% of the gross sales. In addition, Up North Handicrafts sponsors craft demonstrations at Brower Inn several times a week throughout the summer. Demonstrations include such skills as woodcarving, quilting, rosemaling, and basket making.

Action #1. The DNR, Division of Parks and Recreation will assess all souvenirs sold at the Forest Inn and the Headwaters souvenir shops. It will determine what kinds of items should be sold and remove all items not compatible with this determination.

A wide variety of souvenirs are sold at Itasca. Many of these are of poor quality, have a religious theme, or are suggestions of minority stereotypes. There is also an assortment of jewelry and glassware which can be purchased at any of a number of gift shops in the Itasca area. Such items need not be sold in the park.

Cost. No development cost.

Action #2. Employ a consultant to conduct a study which will assess the advantages and disadvantages of operating souvenir sales as a concessionaire versus a park run facility. (See Access and Visitor Contact, Action #7, p 83.)

Action #3. Remodel the picnic ground museum to accommodate Up North Handicrafts.

The present museum is of little use to the park interpretive program. Most of the wildlife displays (on loan from the Bell Museum, University of Minnesota) have been removed and will not be replaced. The need for a park interpretive center will be accommodated when the proposed interpretive center is constructed.

Up North Handicrafts is in need of more space and perfers to be located in a high use area for maximum exposure of their merchandise. Relocating them in the museum would fulfill both of these needs. The building will maintain its historic appearance as no exterior remodeling and only minor interior remodeling will be necessary.

Cost. $3,000

Water Activities

Objectives:

To minimize use conflicts on boating lakes

To provide the opportunity for park visitors to fully explore the water resources of the park

To provide alternative types of in-park transportation

Action #1. Reestablish the launch service on Lake Itasca from Douglas Lodge to Brower Inn.

A launch service was once provided on Lake Itasca and was very popular. To once again provide such service would be advantageous for several reasons. It would be an excellent interpretive facility. It would serve as an alternative access to the facilities at the north end of the lake. It would give visitors a chance to view the park from a different perspective. And it would provide an excellent activity and access to other facilities for special populations.

The former launch was a deep draft boat with an inboard engine. The craft produced a substantial wake and was responible for some erosion damage to the east shore of Lake Itasca. The launch required deeper water for docking at Brower Inn and Douglas Lodge and the large docks were a visual intrusion on the shoreline.

The proposed launch will be a pontoon-style craft with a very shallow draft and a small engine. This launch would produce a much smaller wake and require very minimal docking facilities. In addition it would be able to make stops at locations which were impossible with the other launch, such as at Bear Paw Campground.

The launch service should be operated by a concessionaire. The DNR, Division of Parks and Recreation will be responsible for providing the boat, docking facilities, and setting operation standards.

Cost. $20,000

Action #2. Continue the 10 mph (16 kmph) boat speed limit.

The lakes and river in the park are used a great deal by canoeists and fishermen. Boats traveling at high speeds are noisy and create an unnecessary safety hazard.

Present use of motors on Itasca, Elk, Mary, and Squaw lakes is low enough to minimize any pollution. However, if motorized use increases significantly, water quality would diminish. This is particularly true of Mary Lake, which is small and has a very small watershed.

Should motorized use increase in the future, more stringent regulations should be implemented.

Cost. No development cost.

Action #3. Upgrade and maintain boat launches on Itasca, Squaw, Elk, and Mary lakes.

All four lakes provide a good fishing experience and are quite popular with visitors. Present launching facilities are in poor condition and must be repaired and upgraded in order to continue to tolerate the use they now receive. The Itasca Lake docks are particularly unattractive and should be upgraded or replaced.

Cost. $20,000

Action #4. Maintain the boat and canoe rental concession.

Boating and canoeing are popular activities in the park. For those who do not bring a boat or canoe to Itasca, the concession serves a useful purpose.

Cost. No development cost.

Action #5. Expand the swimming beach area.

The beach is too small for the number of visitors who now use it. There is crowding both on the beach and in the water. By expanding the beach and swimming area by 50% this problem can be alleviated. It may be necessary to hire an extra lifeguard so that the beach remains a safe place to swim.

Cost. $10,000

Action #6. Upgrade the boat launch at Douglas Lodge to improve the appearance and allow easier access.

The access road down to the launch area is in poor condition. There is no turn-around lane or back-up spur at the launch. Cars and trailers are driven indiscriminately in the area.

The steep section of road behind Douglas Lodge will be realigned to facilitate manuvering cars and trailers down to the lake. A turn-around lane and a back up spur will be developed to facilitate launching boats. No parking will be permitted in the launch area. However, parking space will be available near Douglas Lodge.

Cost. $3,000

Administrative/Support Facilities

Objectives:

To improve control of vehicle access to the park

To provide buildings which will ensure effective, efficient management of the park

To improve the operation of the park's water and sewage systems

Action #1. Construct gates which can be locked at all uncontrolled accesses into the park.

There are several uncontrolled access roads leading into the park. Some are old logging roads and others are maintained as access roads for forest fire fighting equipment. These roads allow access to people who want to avoid paying the vehicle entrance fee. Such roads also present a problem during periods of high fire danger when park access must be closely controlled.

Gates should be installed to alleviate this problem. Keys to the gates should be made available to all necessary park and forestry personnel for emergencies and park maintenance.

Cost. $2,000

Action #2. Construct a new contact station for the north park entrance. (See Access and Visitor Contact, Action #3, p 81.)

Action #3. Construct office facilities for the manager of Douglas Lodge. (See Lodging, Action #2, p 93.)

Action #4. Remodel existing lumber storage building.

This structure will remain in use as a lumber storage building. It will be remodeled to include storage racks for more efficient storage.

Cost. $2,000

Action #5. Construct an equipment storage building.

The building previously used by the carpenter collapsed during the winter of 1979. An equipment storage building approximately 30 ft x 60 ft (9 m x 18 m) should be constructed on the site.

Cost. $60,000

Action #6. Redesign and rehabilitate the water supply system for Bear Paw and Pine Ridge campgrounds and the day use area.

Present facilities are generally in poor condition. Back up supply systems are poor or non-existent. A DNR, Bureau of Engineering study should be done to design an efficient, guaranteed water supply system for these high use areas.

Cost. Dependent on DNR, Bureau of Engineering study.

Action #7. Remodel the former Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) building (see Existing Development Map, Day Use Area, p 71) for use as a seasonal park staff dormitory, with the future potential for use as a hostel.

The CCC headquarters building is of historical significance and should be preserved and maintained. Both the staff dormitory and the hostel are good uses for the structure after it is renovated.

Available housing for seasonal staff is limited. Currently, the majority of the seasonal staff is housed in the staff dormitory behind Douglas Lodge. However, the building is not large enough to accommodate all of the seasonal staff. It was designed for housing unmarried employees. Two of the seasonal staff have their families living with them.

When the proposed interpretive center is completed and the beach is expanded, more staff will be needed. Housing them in existing buildings will be difficult.

The former CCC building has sufficient space to provide housing for those who are now housed in several different locations, as well as for additional staff. The proposed dormitory is conveniently located for employees working in the day use area.

If the demand exists, the converted structure could be used as overnight housing for winter park visitors. In the future, if the need for staff housing decreases, consideration should be given to operating the structure during the summer months as a hostel.

Hostels are popular overnight stops for vacationers who are traveling on foot, bicycle, bus, or train. They provide minimal services such as bed, bathroom, shower, and kitchen facilities. Occasionally prepared meals are available.

Such a facility at Itasca would be particularly popular with cyclists using the Heartland Trail and the Great River Road. It is not expected that such a facility would compete with resorts and campgrounds in the area. Cyclists would be likely to use park campgrounds if the hostel was not available. Skiers might choose to limit their skiing in the area to one day or they might choose to ski in some other area. Available overnight lodging in the park might entice skiers to spend extra time and money in the area.

The National Park Service (NPS) and several state park systems have operating hostels in their parks. NPS has designed a set of guidelines for the operation of hostels in national parks. These could be of assistance in designing a hostel facility in Itasca.

American Youth Hostels (AYH) operates hostels in three different parks in the Pennsylvania state park system. They are similar to this proposal in that the buildings utilized are restored and remodeled historic structures. Contact should be made with AYH to determine the feasibility of such a facility in Itasca.

Cost. $60,000

Action #8. Request a DNR, Bureau of Engineering study of the sewage systems in the Bear Paw and Pine Ridge campgrounds, and the day use area.

The DNR, Bureau of Engineering will undertake a study to assess the effectiveness of the sewage lagoon which serves the two campgrounds, the day use areas, and the park headquarters. The system will be rehabilitated according to needs assessed in the study. (For discussion of other sewage system renovation proposals see Waters, Action #1 and #2, p 61.)

Cost. Dependent on DNR, Bureau of Engineering study.

Action #9. Remodel first floor of Brower Inn to provide office space for the park enforcement staff. (See Picnicking, Action #8, pp 91 - 92.)

SECONDARY UNITS

University of Minnesota, Lake Itasca Forestry and Biological Station

The Lake Itasca Forestry and Biological Station has been operated by the university since 1909. It was a forestry camp until 1934, when its use was increased by adding the biology session. The station is used intensively from mid-May to late September. With the completion of the aquatic laboratory in 1966, the Itasca station became a year-round research facility. Its primary function is twofold -- a site for field courses in forestry and biology and a research center.

The summer season biology program consists of two five week terms with a maximum of 125 students each term. Forestry and biological research is conducted, both on a seasonal and year-round basis by faculty, students, and independent researchers. In addition, the facilities are available, for a fee, to other educational groups.

The station is composed of 57 buildings including staff and student residences, laboratories, a dining hall, and several maintenance and storage buildings. A few of the buildings are winterized, including the station manager's residence and those cabins occupied by the university faculty who do research during the winter or live at the station year-round.

The university renews the lease with the DNR for the land on which the station is located every two years. All buildings on the site are the property of the university. The present lease arrangement has been in effect since 1957.

The following objectives are those formulated by the Lake Itasca Forestry and Biological Station. Proposed construction will be done by the university if approved by the DNR. No DNR funds will be used in these construction projects.

Objectives:

To provide year-round educational programs in field biology for undergraduate and graduate students

To provide facilities for forestry and biological research

To provide a growing data bank of information on the biology of the area

To coordinate the development of the Lake Itasca Forestry and Biological Station with Itasca State Park development

Action #1. Construct a new manager's residence.

Two winterized residences are necessary at the station, one for the station manager, and one for the resident biologist. The resident biologist currently uses a small cabin that is not adequate for year-round use. A new residence will be constructed for the manager and the resident biologist can then move into the existing manager's residence. The small cabin will be used as a temporary residence for researchers or instructors.

Action #2. Construct an animal holding facility.

Research conducted at the station often requires live animals. Due to recent stringent regulations on animal holding facilities, a new structure is necessary to efficiently keep research animals in the prescribed manner.

Action #3. Construct four cabins.

Many scientists desire to conduct research at the station. Students and their instructors are given the highest priority for existing lodging facilities. There are seldom extra cabins for researchers during the spring and summer. These are the seasons when most of the research projects can be conducted. Therefore, additional cabins are necessary if researchers are to be accommodated.

Providing facilities for researchers is desirable because of the money generated from facility rental and the information added to the growing data bank of information on the surrounding area.

Action #4. Construct an education building with a lecture room, library, and administrative offices.

Combining these uses in one structure will facilitate a more efficient operation and better service to station users. The library is currently located in two buildings. Better organization and control of library materials would result in a single library located in the same building with the administrative offices. An additional lecture room is needed for better class scheduling and meetings. The rooms vacated will allow for better space allocation for both classes and research.

Action #5. Landscape the grounds.

Tree and shrub plantings are necessary to screen buildings from Lake Itasca and to provide a scenic shaded campus.

Action #6. Ensure that the university continues to provide the DNR with a list of research studies which contain information pertinent to management of the park's resources.

University faculty and students have conducted extensive research on the natural resources of Itasca. Much of this information is of value in managing the park's resources. It is made available to DNR personnel responsible for resource management. This arrangement should continue in the future.

In addition, there are several resources in the park which would benefit from future research projects. The DNR could cooperate with the university in developing a list of suggested research topics. Both parties would benefit from such cooperation.

Action #7. Revise the existing lease the university has on the 40 acres (9.8 hectares) of land in the park.

The present lease is negotiated every two years. The university would prefer to have the lease extend for longer periods of time. This matter should be resolved to the mutual agreement of the university and the DNR before the existing lease expires.

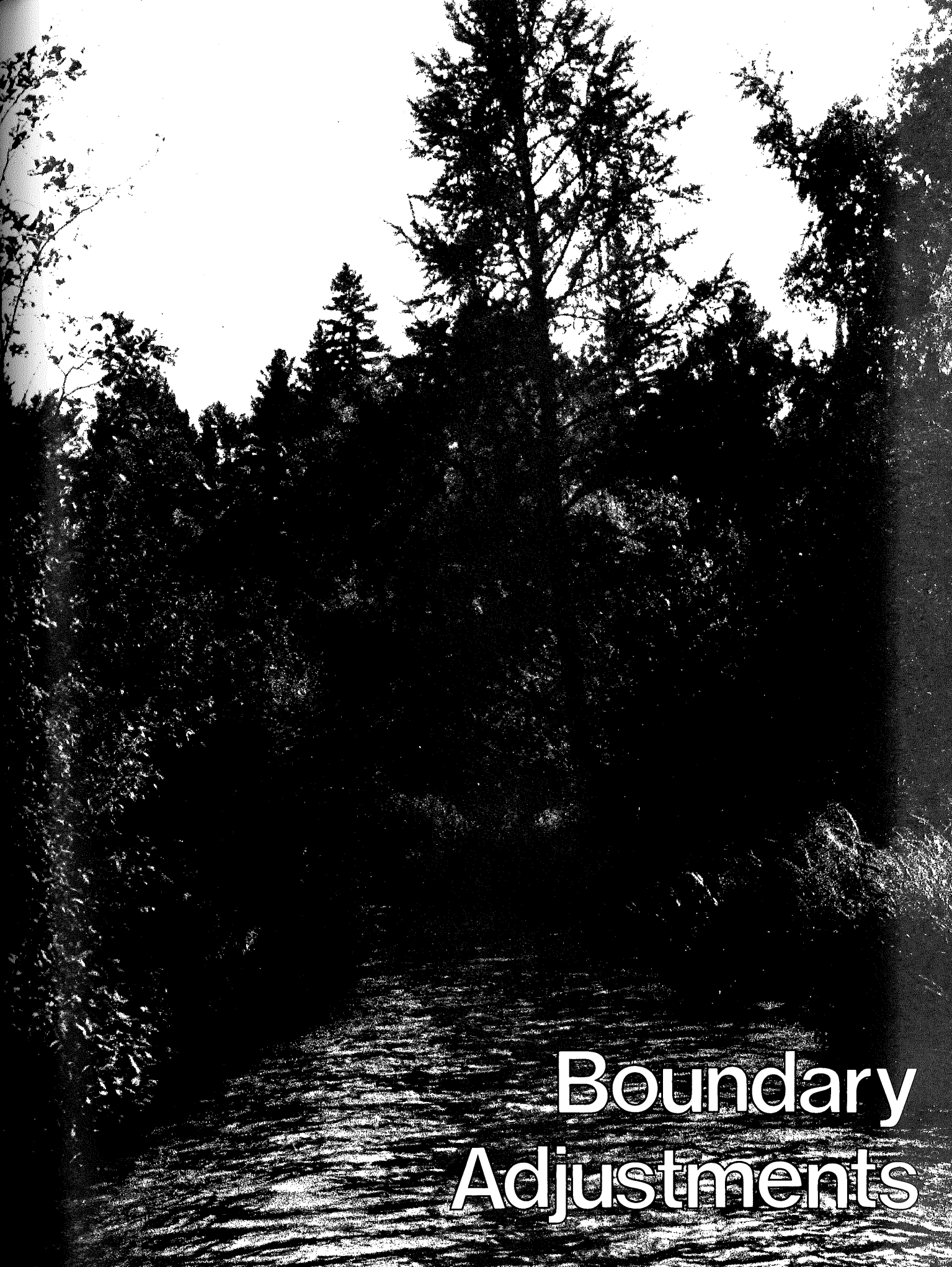
Forestry Station

The Division of Forestry maintains a station in the northeastern part of the park. The station consists of a residence, office, observation tower, garage, shop, and storage building. Any future development at the station should be consistent with this plan and should be coordinated with the Division of Parks and Recreation before construction.

ARCHITECTURAL THEME

Most of the buildings in the park were built in the 1930's and 40's and are constructed of logs and split granite. This type of construction is significantly more expensive than modern frame construction. New log buildings for year-round use are the most expensive. It is necessary to build a frame wall inside the log wall to achieve the wall insulation value required by the new energy efficient construction standards. Most of the park buildings constructed in the 50's and 60's are frame buildings with rounded siding. These blend with the log structures, but lack the character of the whole log structures.

All new buildings should maintain the low profile, simplistic form, and rustic and massive character of the old log buildings. Log construction is desirable when it is economically feasible. Color, texture, and roofing material will conform in style and character with existing buildings. Buildings that will be used year-round should be energy efficient.



Boundary Adjustments

BOUNDARY ADJUSTMENTS

Itasca State Park was established in 1891. It was the first major state park in Minnesota. The statutory boundary of the park has been revised several times during the park's history and currently encompasses 30,533 acres (12,357 hectares). Of these, 267 acres (108 hectares) are privately owned and 1,595 acres (645 hectares) are trust fund land (see Ownership Map, p 122).

Objective:

To provide sufficient park acreage to protect and perpetuate the natural resources and provide the necessary recreational facilities to interpret and enjoy these resources, without including acreage that would be unnecessary or unreasonable to purchase

Action #1. Declare the 63 acre (25 hectare) tract number TR-30, located T144N, R36W, Sec 33 (formerly owned by the Lorna Fitz estate), surplus land. Dispose of it according to established procedures.

Itasca State Park was expanded in 1976 by adding 2,353 acres (952 hectares) to the statutory boundary on the north side of the park. This action was not well received by the local landowners and in 1977, 2,064 of these acres (835 hectares) were deleted from the statutory boundary.

Tract TR-30 (see Boundary Adjustments Map, p 127), was within the 1976 expansion area and was purchased by the state. This parcel is in the area which was deleted from the statutory boundary in 1977 and therefore must be transferred out of the custodial control of the DNR, Division of Parks and Recreation. The following description obtained from the attorney general's office outlines the procedure that must be followed to dispose of land that has been declared surplus.

Legend

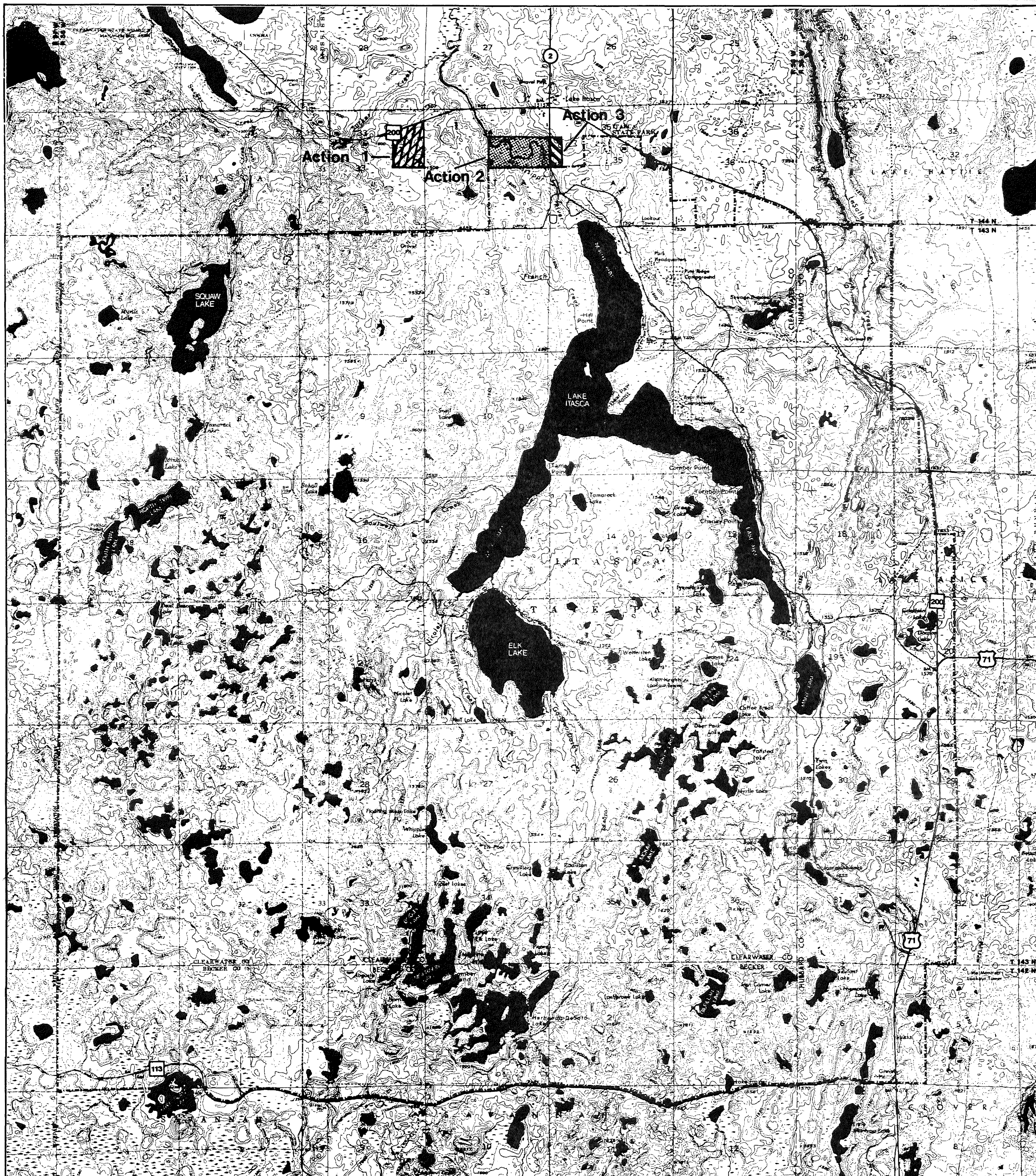
- State Land
- Trust Fund Land
- Private Land

N

0 250' 1/2mi 1mi 2mi
Miles

0 1km 2km
Kilometers

Itasca State Park | Ownership



Itasca State Park | **Boundary Adjustments**

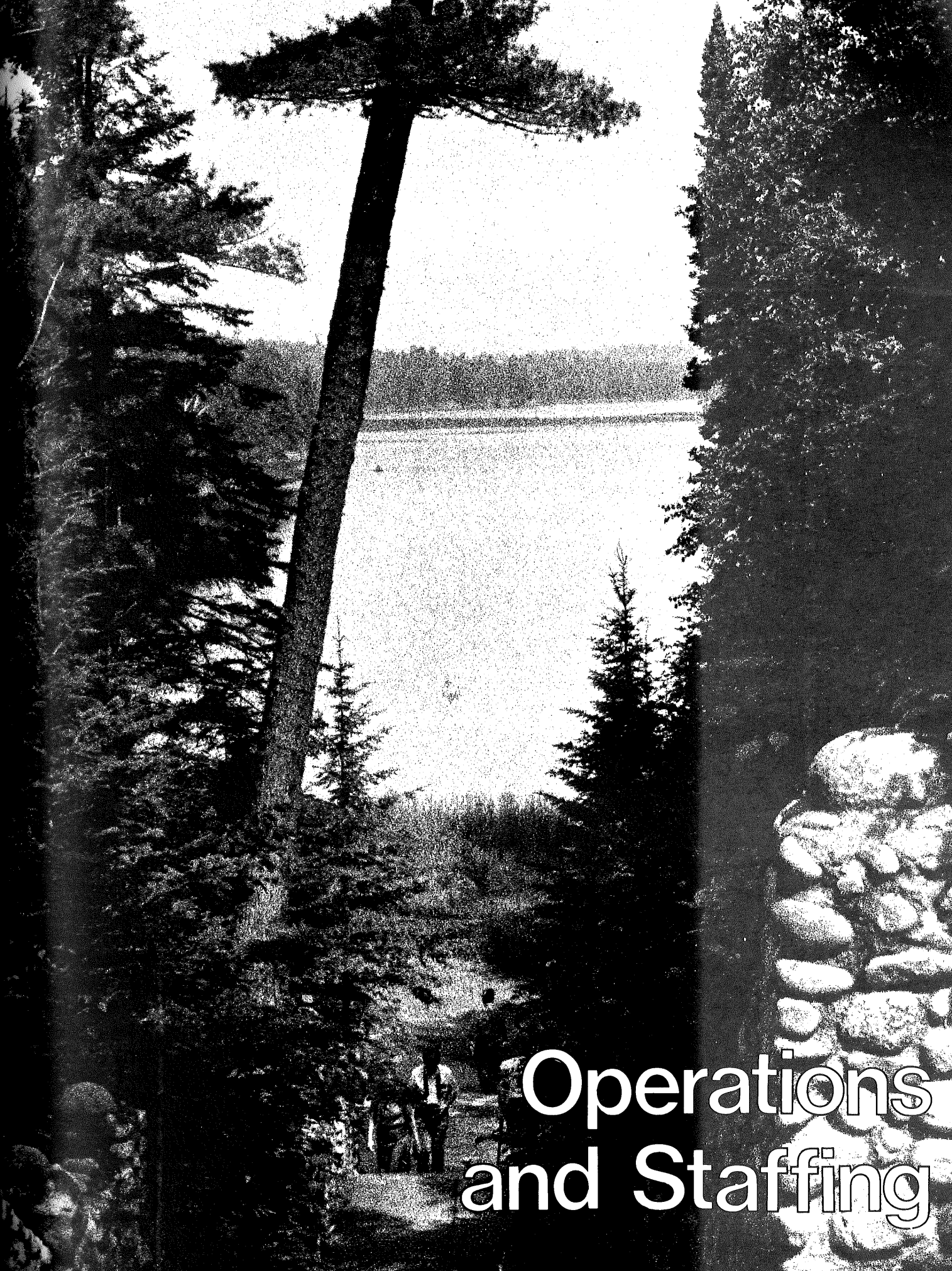
The commissioner of DNR can certify that the department no longer needs the land. If the commissioner of Administration finds no other state department or agency or the University of Minnesota interested in purchase of the land, it can be recommended to the executive council that it be sold. If the council approves, the commissioner of Administration has the land appraised. Before putting it up for public it must first be offered to "... the city, county, town, school district, or other public body corporate or politic in which the lands are situated for public purposes..." To make such entities aware of the opportunity, published notice and "... written notice to the governing body of each political subdivision whose jurisdictional boundaries include or are adjacent to the surplus land. If a public body desires to purchase the surplus land it shall submit a written offer -- setting forth in detail its reasons for desiring to acquire and its intended use of the land." Mn Stat 1978 Section 94.10, subd. 1.

Action #2. Submit a request to the state legislature to expand the statutory boundary by 80 acres (32.3 hectare).

If the owners of the two tracts in T144N, R36W, S 1/2 of the NE 1/4 of Section 34 would consider selling to the state in the future, the state legislature should be requested to expand the statutory boundary to include these two tracts.

The Headwaters of the Mississippi River is the most important natural feature in Itasca State Park. However, there is less than .75 mi (1.2 km) of the river in the park. The proposed expansion would more than double the amount of the Mississippi River in the park and allow the construction of a hiking trail along the river.

Purchase of these parcels would not allow any realignment of the north entrance road, but would allow removal of the closed resort cabin complex, which is visually intrusive at present.



Operations and Staffing

OPERATIONS

Maintenance is an essential responsibility of the DNR, Division of Parks and Recreation. It is responsibility that often goes unnoticed by the park visitor in comparison with new developments. Yet, the park and the DNR are continually judged by the appearance of the park and its facilities.

The task of providing services to the public and security for park facilities and resources 24 hours a day, 12 months of the year is monumental. During the busy season, full-time operation is necessary 98 hours per week (8:00 to 10:00 p.m., seven days a week). The remaining hours are covered by the resident manager. During other seasons, there is only part-time operation 98 hours per week, however, maintenance, repair, and park security accounts for many extra work-hours. If these responsibilities are to be met, competent trained personnel is essential.

There are four basic aspects to maintenance and operations:

1. Maintaining resources
2. Maintaining facilities
3. Providing services to the park visitors
4. Enforcing rules and regulations which protect park visitors, resources, and facilities

One of the major maintenance problems of parks is the heavy impact of large numbers of people concentrated in specific locations. These areas include: campsites, trails, lakeshores, river banks, areas around buildings, and scenic points of interest. This overuse affects the groundcover and frequently exposes tree roots to damage from foot traffic. The eventual result may be erosion slides, disfigured sites, and even danger to park visitors. A regular maintenance program with adequate personnel, supplies, and equipment controls damage, thereby, avoiding future reconstruction expenditures.

STAFFING

One of the staffing problems in all state parks is the heavy reliance on federally funded work programs, such as the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA), the Neighborhood Youth Crops (NYC), and Green Thumb. The low cost personnel provided by these programs makes it possible for parks to offer programs and services which would otherwise be impossible. However, these employees are hired on a short-term basis, usually 8 to 10 weeks and often do not have the training and experience necessary to provide needed services without constant supervision in already understaffed parks. To avoid these problems, funding should be made available to hire trained personnel for major public service and maintenance programs. Temporary employees should only be hired for minor maintenance and special projects.

The following chart summarizes the existing staff in Itasca State Park. Because of the seasonal nature of park operations, the positions in each staffing category have been grouped into total "staff years." Staff years is a common denominator which reflects the amount of time spent in each area of park maintenance and operations.

Existing Staff	Staff Years
Management	
3 full-time staff (park manager, assistant park manager, and senior clerk) and 3 seasonal clerical staff	4 1/2
Maintenance	
3 full-time staff (mechanic, general repair worker, and laborer); 8 seasonal laborers; 2 student workers; and extensive use of CETA, YCC, YACC, and other government programs	7
Campgrounds	
1 full-time ranger; 7-10 seasonal park workers and laborers; and CETA	3 1/2
* Contact Stations	
7 park workers	3
* Interpretive Programs	
2 naturalists and 2 student workers	2/3
Enforcement and Security	
1 full-time supervisor; 2 seasonal laborers; and 2 seasonal lifeguards	2
* Douglas Lodge	
1 manager; 4 clerks; 3 laborers; 1 superviso., 4 cooks; 1 baker; 26 park workers; (2 food service, 5 kitchen, 10 dining room, 9 maid and laundry service)	11
* Forest Inn	
9 park workers (7 snack bar and 2 souvenir shop)	
* Brower Inn	
9 park workers (7 snack bar and 2 souvenir shop)	3
* Headwaters	
1 clerk and 5 park workers	2
TOTAL	40 2/3

*All staff seasonal

TOTAL WAGES FOR 1979 - $477,000

Future Staffing Needs

Some actions proposed in the plan, when implemented, will require additional park staff. Other actions will allow the reduction of staff, because staff time can be used more effectively, or because a service will be discontinued. Some of the most significant potential staff changes are as follows.

Because of the extensive vegetation management necessary in Itasca, a vegetation management coordinator is needed. (See Action #2, Memoranda of Agreement p,134.)

The plan recommends a study to determine whether the Douglas Lodge complex, food service, and craft shops should be operated by the DNR, Division of Parks and Recreation or contracted out to a concessionaire. If latter method is chosen, seasonal staff could be reduced by as many as 64 people.

The proposal to modernize the Douglas Lodge kitchen would reduce the number of staff needed. The snack bar service, which is now provided in Forest Inn, would be included in the new kitchen addition, further reducing needed staff.

A study to determine the desirability of providing lodging in the park during the winter is proposed. If winter lodging is provided and operated by the division, some seasonal positions must be extended to 12 months.

A new interpretive center is proposed to be developed and operated jointly between the DNR and the MHS. This will require a larger, joint interpretive staff. (See Action #3, Memoranda of Agreement, p135.)

The amount of staff in the state park system is dependent on the amount of funding allocated by the state legislature. Staff funding is requested every two years. Therefore, the amount of staff will continue to change. Current information on the staffing level is available on request from the DNR, Division of Parks and Recreation.

Memoranda of Agreement

Action #1. Develop a memoradum of agreement between the DNR, Division of Forestry and the DNR, Division of Parks and Recreation regarding the Lake Itasca Forestry Station.

Although there has been a good working relationship between the forestry station staff and the park staff, a written agreement should cover the amount of land to be used by the station and the potential necessity of a development review process.

Action #2. Develop a memorandum of agreement between the DNR, Division of Forestry, the DNR, Division of Parks and Recreation, and the University of Minnesota regarding the implementation of the park vegetation management plan.

The DNR, Division of Forestry, the DNR, Division of Parks and Recreation, and the University of Minnesota have all been active in managing the park vegetation. The role of each of the agencies needs to be clarified and a system developed to ensure that necessary management actions are implemented with as little delay as possible.

One system that should be considered is the establishment of a three member vegetation management steering committee. A representative from each of the three agencies would serve on this committee. It would propose specific management actions in keeping with the general guidelines discussed in the Vegetation Management Section, pp 45 - 54.

The director of the DNR, Division of Parks and Recreation will have final approval of all actions proposed by the steering committee.

A vegetation management coordinator position should also be established. This could be only a six month position and may be funded jointly by the University of Minnesota and the Division of Parks and Recreation. The DNR, Division of Parks and Recreation has a regional

vegetation management coordinator, but there is enough work in Itasca alone to justify a second position. The park vegetation management coordinator would be responsible for implementing the actions proposed by the steering committee and approved by the director of Parks and Recreation.

Action #3. Develop a memorandum of agreement between the DNR and the MHS on the design, construction, operation, and maintenance of the proposed interpretive center.

In order to ensure that the proposed structure will fulfill the interpretive needs of both agencies, it is necessary for MHS and DNR to enter into an inter-agency agreement on the design, construction, and operation of the building.

Such an agreement would address the following issues:

- Building design
- Design of display work
- Selection of a firm for an architectural and engineering study
- Source of construction funds (Great River Road funds may be available for the project)
- Ownership of the building site
- Staffing
- Maintenance
- Equipment

Action #4. Develop a memorandum of agreement between the DNR and the MnDOT on all projects where Great River Road funds are used.

This agreement will cover development, operation, and maintenance responsibilities.

Costs and Phasing Summary

The following cost estimates were generated in January, 1979. These cost estimates are based on current prices and available information. As new information is made available and as new or modified programs are initiated, revised cost estimates will be prepared to more realistically represent costs at that time. This plan is intended to be implemented in ten years. The phases noted suggest the level of funding to be requested each biennium. However, there is no guarantee that this amount of funding would be received from the legislature. Therefore, some changes to these phases can be expected.

Potential special sources of funding (other than normal LAWCON and general revenue)

A - MnDOT (Great River Road)
B - MnDOT (Bike Trails)
C - MnDOT (Public Transit)
D - MHS (Interpretive Center Request)

		Phases					
Action		1	2	3	4	5	Total
SOILS							
Action #1	Repair erosion - Peace Pipe Vista	$ 15,000					$ 15,000
Action #2	Repair erosion - Bear Paw Campground	Cost covered in Camping, Action #2					
Action #3	Grade barrow pits				$ 2,000		2,000
Action #4	Soil tests	Included in cost of the proposed development					
TOTAL							17,000
VEGETATION							
Action #1	Early spring burns	10,000	$ 10,000	$ 10,000	10,000	$ 10,000	50,000
Action #2	Remove overmature jack pine	By contract with logging companies					
Action #3	Continue yearly burns	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000	10,000
Action #4	Continue the pine restoration project as scheduled	30,000	30,000	30,000	30,000	30,000	150,000
Action #5	Plant disturbed areas	15,000					15,000
Action #6	Tree planting near Wegmann Cabin	10,000					10,000

Action		1	2	3	4	5	Total
Action #7	Tree planting near Brower Inn		10,000				10,000
Action #8	Tree planting in Pine Ridge Campground		15,000				15,000
Action #9	Tree planting in boat launch area	20,000					20,000
Action #10	Relandscape Bear Paw Campground	30,000					30,000
Action #11	Plant and prune trees - Peace Pipe Vista	6,000					6,000
Action #12	Plant trees and shrubs - Preacher's Grove parking lot		10,000				10,000
Action #13	Plant pine trees - Douglas Lodge complex	20,000					20,000
Action #14	Plant pine tree seedlings near dormitory	2,000					2,000
Action #15	Maintain Lake Itasca view		By park staff				
Action #16	Reestablish views along Wilderness Drive		By park staff				
TOTAL							348,000
WILDLIFE							
Action #1	Deer herd study		5,000				5,000
Action #2	Maintain deer season		No development cost				
Action #3	Trap troublesome beaver		No development cost				
Action #4	Maintain some standing dead trees		No development cost				
Action #5	Create forest openings		Covered in the Vegetation Management Section				
TOTAL							5,000

Action		1	2	3	4	5	Total
WATERS							
Action #1	Replace sewers - Douglas Lodge area rental cabins	20,000					20,000
Action #2	Rehabilitate Douglas Lodge and Forest Inn sewage system		Cost dependent on DNR, Bureau of Engineering study				
Action #3	Install iron filtration systems on all park wells		25,000				25,000
TOTAL							45,000
FISHERIES							
Action #1	Continue 10 mph (16 kmph) speed limit		No development cost				
Action #2	Fisheries study		No development cost				
TOTAL							
HISTORY/ARCHAEOLOGY							
Action #1	Field check development sites for archaeological remains		4,000	4,000	4,000		12,000
Action #2	Evaluate log structures			5,000			5,000
Action #3	Make archaeological information available to park interpretive staff		No development cost				
TOTAL							17,000

Action		1	2	3	4	5	Total
PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT/DETAILED RECOMMENDATIONS							
Access and Visitor Contact							
Action #1	Obliterate abandoned roads and parking lots	100,000 A					100,000
Action #2	Construct log-style park sign at north entrance		5,000 A				5,000
Action #3	Construct contact station-north entrance		70,000				70,000
Action #4	Install gate on forestry station road		2,000				2,000
Action #5	Pave Wilderness Drive with asphalt				300,000 A, B		300,000
Action #6	Provide shuttle bus service in park		Dependent on a Mn/DOT study				
Action #7	Concessionaire consultant study			5,000			5,000
Camping							
Action #1	Relandscape Bear Paw Campground		Covered in Vegetation Management, Action #10				
Action #2	Construct steps and water bars along shoreline of Bear Paw Campground	15,000					15,000
Action #3	Remove 10-15 campsites in Bear Paw Campground		15,000				15,000
Action #4	Remove electrical hookups in Bear Paw Campground, except eastern-most lane			1,000			1,000
Action #5	Rehabilitate the Elk Lake group camp		25,000				25,000

Action		1	2	3	4	5	Total
Action #6	Retain the Squaw Lake group camp with minimal maintenance	22,500					22,500
Action #7	Maintain backpack campsites on DeSoto Lake		By park staff				
Picnicking							
Action #1	Expand the picnic ground		50,000 A				50,000
Action #2	Construct a picnic shelter with toilets			115,000 A			115,000
Action #3	Replace fire grills			3,000 A			3,000
Action #4	Repair soil erosion and compaction in the picnic grounds	10,000					10,000
Action #5	Remove the two parking lots currently used for picnic parking			15,000 A			15,000
Action #6	Complete construction of the parking lot east of the Indian Mounds			50,000 A			50,000
Action #7	Restore footbridges		15,000				15,000
Action #8	Remodel Brower Inn		20,000				20,000
Action #9	Remodel picnic ground museum for craft sales		Covered in Visitors Services, Souvenir Sales, Action #3				
Lodging							
Action #1	Consultant study on Douglas Lodge operation		10,000				10,000
Action #2	Remove and replace Douglas Lodge kitchen		300,000				300,000
Action #3	Consultant study on winter lodging		5,000				5,000
Action #4	Provide barrier-free toilets in Douglas Lodge		40,000				40,000

Action		1	2	3	4	5	Total
Action #5	Remove snack bar in Forest Inn and install toilets and a regional orientation display			80,000			80,000
Action #6	Winterize south end of Forest Inn	5,000					5,000
Action #7	Restore the clubhouse		10,000	150,000			160,000
Action #8	Establish a 30-car winter parking lot	2,000					2,000
Action #9	Construct a trail from Lake edge to Clubhouse bridge		Covered in Trails, Action #12				
Action #10	Close road to Clubhouse and cabin #11		No development cost				
Action #11	Remodel six cabins to be usable and accessible by people with physical disabilities		35,000		25,000		60,000
Action #12	Replace individual sewer systems for the rental cabins in Douglas Lodge Area		Covered in Waters, Action #1				
Action #13	Rehabilitate Douglas Lodge and Forest Inn sewage system		Covered in Waters, Action #2				
Action #14	Pave the road and parking lots for the cabins with asphalt			20,000			20,000
Action #15	Maintain comparable lodging rates		No development cost				
Action #16	Remodel CCC headquarters building		Covered in Administrative/Support Facilities, Action #7				
Trails							
Action #1	Develop three short loops in the ski touring trail system		3,000				3,000

Action		1	2	3	4	5	Total
Action #2	Construct a ski touring trail for inexperienced skiers		20,000				20,000
Action #3	Remodel Forest Inn as a winter trail shelter/ warming room		Covered in Lodging, Actions #5 and #6				
Action #4	Maintain Nicollet Cabin as a trail shelter		10,000				10,000
Action #5	Construct a 3 mi (5 km) bike trail from Douglas Lodge to the park office		60,000 B				60,000
Action #6	Construct a 1.2 mi (2 km) bike trail to connect the bike trail system to TH 71		37,000 B				37,000
Action #7	Construct a .5 mi (.8 km) bike trail from the interpretive center to the north park entrance		16,000 B				16,000
Action #8	Paint a bike lane on Wilderness Drive after it is paved with asphalt		Covered in Access and Visitor Contact, Action #5				
Action #9	Rebuild bike trail in Headwaters area		Covered in Access and Visitor Contact Action #1				
Action #10	Develop a bicycle rental concession			7,000			7,000
Action #11	Construct two or three interpretive hiking trails along Wilderness Drive		Covered in Visitor Services, Interpretive Facilities, Action #7				
Action #12	Construct a trail from Douglas Lodge to the boat launch			4,000			4,000
Action #13	Develop a snowmobile trail system		To be determined by regional trails supervisor				
Action #14	Provide winterized warming and toilet facilities for snowmobilers		Covered in Picnicking, Action #2				
Action #15	Provide North Country Trail access		To be determined by regional trails supervisor				

Action		1	2	3	4	5	Total
Visitor Services - Interpretive Facilities							
Action #1	Cooperate with MHS on interpretive center construction and operation		Dependent on recommendation of architectural consultant				
Action #2	Continue use of Forest Inn meeting room for interpretive programs		No development cost				
Action #3	Retain the automatic slide/tape presentation in Brower Inn		No development cost				
Action #4	Remodel the picnic ground museum for craft sales		Covered in Visitor Services, Souvenir Sales, Action #3				
Action #5	Maintain the amphitheater pending construction of the interpretive center		Dependent on recommendation of architectural consultant				
Action #6	Maintain the Headwaters interpretive building		No development cost				
Action #7	Improve the existing interpretive stops and provide two or three additional stops along Wilderness Drive		8,000				8,000
Action #8	Provide interpretive pamphlets		2,000	2,000	2,000		6,000
Vistor Services - Souvenir Sales							
Action #1	Assess all souvenirs sold in the park		No development cost				
Action #2	Consultant study of souvenir sales		See Access and Visitor Contact, Action #8				
Action #3	Remodel picnic ground museum for craft sales		3,000				3,000
Water Activities							
Action #1	Reestablish launch service on Lake Itasca				20,000		20,000
Action #2	Maintain the present 10 mph (16 kmph) boat speed limit		No development cost				

Action		1	2	3	4	5	Total
Action #3	Upgrade and maintain boat launches	5,000 A	15,000 A				20,000
Action #4	Maintain the boat and canoe rental concession		No development cost				
Action #5	Expand the swimming beach area			10,000 A			10,000
Action #6	Upgrade Douglas Lodge boat launch			3,000 A			3,000
Administrative/Support Facilities							
Action #1	Construct gates at all uncontrolled accesses into the park		2,000 A				2,000
Action #2	Construct a new contact station for the north park entrance		Covered in Access and Visitor Contact, Action #3				
Action #3	Construct office facilities for the Douglas Lodge manager		Covered in Lodging, Action #2				
Action #4	Remodel lumber storage building		2,000				2,000
Action #5	Construct an equipment storage shed		60,000				60,000
Action #6	Redesign and rehabilitate the water supply system for the campgrounds and day use area		Cost dependent on DNR, Bureau of Engineering study				
Action #7	Remodel CCC headquarters building for dormitory use			60,000			60,000
Action #8	Rehabilitate sewage systems		Cost dependent on DNR, Bureau of Engineering study				
Action #9	Remodel Brower Inn		Covered in Picnicking, Action #8				
TOTAL							1,871,500
TOTAL DEVELOPMENT COSTS		$339,500	$951,000	$576,000	$395,000	$42,000	$2,303,500

Implementation

AUTHORITY

Division of Parks and Recreation

Once a management plan has been completed and approved, it will become the responsibility of the director of the Division of Parks and Recreation (hereafter referred to as the director) to ensure proper implementation of the recommendations of the plan. As such, the director will act as the coordinator and liaison between the planning staff, regional staff, local officials, and the general public to ensure that the plan is implemented correctly.

In order to ensure the accomplishment of this cooperative planning and implementation effort, the following responsibilities have been established.

The director and staff will:

1) Coordinate and administer field operations as delegated by the deputy commissioner.
2) Develop and administer programs necessary to accomplish plan goals and objectives. Programs include those necessary to implement management plans and to maintain and operate parks and other programs assigned to the Division of Parks and Recreation (hereafter referred to as the division). Specific program responsibilities at this time are: acquisition, development, resource management, maintenance and service operations, interpretive services, and accessibility.
3) Prepare policies, guidelines, procedures, and standards necessary to implement programs established in this plan (e.g., responsibilities related to letting contracts and initiating force account projects).
4) Prepare legislation necessary to provide program funding, boundary changes, and operational authorities.
5) Review and approve all detailed plans, specifications, and project proposals prepared by the DNR, Bureau of Engineering (BOE) or field staff. Coordinate on-site field staking and site layouts with BOE and regional staff.

6) Coordinate divisional administrative functions with other DNR administrative offices.

7) Work with the DNR's federal grant specialists to obtain maximum federal funding (e.g., LAWCON) for all division programs.

8) Recommend modifications and provide information necessary to update the management plan. All major modifications to the recommendations of an approved plan will be processed through the Office of Planning. The director will submit requests for modifications in writing, stating justification for change and what impact the change would have on the overall management plan. If comments and rationale for opposing a proposed change are not received within 25 working days, agreement is implied. In the event that significant change in the direction of the plan is proposed (e.g., altering goals and/or objectives of the plan), it will be necessary to follow the same procedures established in developing the original plan. If the director and the Office of Planning cannot come to an agreement on the requested change, the director will then submit the request to the commissioner's Planning and Environmental Review Team (PERT) which will formulate the final recommendation to be submitted to the commissioner's executive council. If a recommended modification is minor and follows the intent of the plan, the director has the discretion to make the change without following these procedures, provided informal written agreement is reached with the Park Planning section.

9) Assign responsibilities and funding for implementation of the development program to BOE for letting contracts and to the regional staff for initiating force account projects. In addition, the director shall coordinate the implementation of resource management programs.

10) Make recommendations which will expedite the park planning process and evaluate progress toward the achievement of goals and objectives stated in the plan.

11) Forward BOE requisitions and field project proposals in summary form to the Office of Planning so that the progress of implementation can be monitored.

Regional Office

The regional park supervisor will supervise the physical implementation programs as recommended in this plan.

The regional park supervisor will:

1) Coordinate with the regional administrator and other discipline supervisors to obtain qualified staff to implement this management plan. The district forester, wildlife managers, and other specialists should be consulted on specific aspects of the resource management of the plan.
2) Supervise and direct the park manager to ensure that the management plan is implemented correctly.
3) Regularly field inspect all development in the park.
4) Submit written reports on the progress of development programs to the director with copies to the regional administrator.
5) Submit information to faciliate plan updates and changes. All recommendations for change will be submitted in writing to the director. Rationale and analyses of the impact a requested change might have on the plan must be included in this request.
6) Submit project proposals to the director for review and approval. The director and staff will review all project proposals verifying compliance with the intent of the plan.

The region may implement approved project proposals after detailed specifications have been prepared and funding has been provided.

Park Manager

It will be the responsibility of the park manager, under the direct supervision of the regional park supervisor, to coordinate the physical implementation of assigned sections of the management plan. The manager will inform the regional supervisor concerning the progress of the implementation through project proposals and written progress reports.

The park manager will:

1) Seek the assistance of the regional park supervisor in the resolution of any major implementation problems.
2) Consult with the regional park supervisor if there is uncertainity, concern, or opposition to a recommendation of this plan.
3) Assist and give direction to park field personnel.
4) Maintain records on the progress of development projects to ensure continuity and reference for future updating and revision.
5) Work with the regional park supervisor in initiating project proposals to be submitted to the director for review and approval.
6) Submit to the regional park supervisor information to aid in the updating and revision of the plan.

Office of Planning

The Office of Planning and Research will evaluate implementation of the management plan and make recommendations to the director if it appears revisions are necessary.

The Office of Planning will:

1) Review BOE requisitions.
2) Process all modifications to the approved management plan.
3) Provide additional information and justification for specific recommendations of this plan when requested by the division.
4) Maintain contact with the public, local officials, legislators, and DNR staff regarding the updating of the plan.

IMPLEMENTATION OF RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PROJECTS

There are two procedures for the division to follow in the implementation of resource management projects: contract and force account.

Contract

Director initiates a project by preparing the management program, in compliance with this plan.

Director distributes copies of the preliminary program and drawings to the regional staff for review.

Director approves project and initiates bidding process through the Department of Administration, Division of Procurement.

Director supervises and monitors the program.

Consultant or contractor, in coordination with divisional and regional staff, completes this project.

Director approves the completed project.

Force Account

Director initiates a project by preparing the management program, in compliance with this plan.

Director distributes copies of the preliminary program and drawings to regional staff for review.

Director assigns funds to the regional park supervisor.

Regional park supervisor and resource staff prepare a detailed resource management program.

Detailed resource management program is submitted to the director for approval.

Once approved, the regional park supervisor and resource manager may:

Assign the park manager and field personnel to implement the program

Prepare contracts to be let to local contractors or consultants

Regional staff supervises program project.

Director and staff monitor the overall progress of the resource management program.

Regional park supervisor notifies the division that the project has been completed as planned.

IMPLEMENTATION OF DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

There are two procedures for the division to follow in the implementation of development projects: contract and force account.

Contract

Director initiates project by preparing a development program which complies with this plan.

Director distributes copies of preliminary program and drawings to the regional staff for review.

Director requests BOE to prepare detailed drawings and specifications in accordance with the approved program.

Force Account

Director initiates a project by preparing a development program which complies with the management plan.

Director distributes copies of the preliminary program and drawings to regional staff for review.

Director assigns funds to the regional park supervisor.

BOE submits drawings and specifications to the director.

Director approves drawings and specifications, ensuring compliance with the objectives and goals of this plan.

BOE processes contract documents through the Department of Administration, Division of Procurement for bidding and contract award procedures.

BOE provides direction to the contractor and establishes site location and field staking.

BOE supervises construction and approves completed work according to the contract.

Director and staff monitor the progress, funding, and necessary coordination between other state agencies and funding sources.

Regional park supervisor may:

Request that BOE prepare detailed drawings and specifications for review by the director

Assign the park manager to complete the project with field personnel

Assign park manager, in cooperation with the regional staff, to let bids to local contractors

Regional, divisional, or BOE staff will supervise the project depending on the complexity of the specific project.

Regional park supervisor will notify the director that the project has been completed as planned.

Director and staff will monitor the progress of the development program.

MAINTENANCE AND OPERATIONS

The division will provide the regional staff with necessary direction to maintain and operate state parks in a statewide system. Training courses and policy manuals will be prepared by the division on park operations, maintenance, enforcement, signing, and construction standards. If necessary, special operational orders will be prepared by the commissioner for specific problem areas.

General Procedures

The director, in cooperation with the deputy commissioner, will establish policies, guidelines, and statewide procedures for maintenance and operations of all state park facilities.

The regional park supervisors will follow the policies, guidelines, and statewide procedures of the division, as well as commissioner's orders.

The regional park supervisor will supervise and direct the park managers to ensure that park maintenance and operation policies, guidelines, and procedures are followed.

The park manager, under the supervision of the regional park supervisor, will maintain and operate all park facilities.

The director and staff will inspect and review operations of state parks on a regular basis to ensure that statewide procedures are being implemented and followed correctly.