

Afterbay/River Ranch

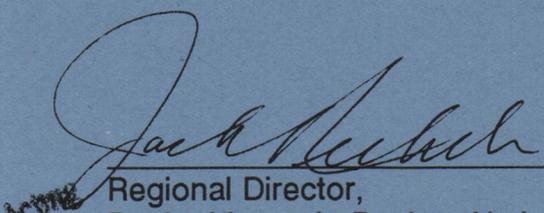
General Management Plan/ Development Concept Plan Amendment

February 1990



**Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area
Montana/Wyoming**

Recommended: /s/ William G. Binneweis 1/18/90
Superintendent, Date
Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area

Approved:  2/6/90
Regional Director, Date
Rocky Mountain Region, National Park Service

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

General Management Plan/Development Concept Plan Amendment for Afterbay/River Ranch Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area Montana/Wyoming

Introduction

The National Park Service (NPS) prepared a Draft General Management Plan/Development Concept Plan Amendment and Environmental Assessment for the Afterbay and River Ranch area of Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area in October 1989. The purpose of this plan/environmental assessment was to evaluate and provide alternative solutions to existing management in the Afterbay/River Ranch area; provide sufficient information and analysis to determine whether to prepare a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) or a supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (EIS); and amend the existing General Management Plan/Development Concept Plan if necessary. The document was placed on public review for a 30 day period beginning October 27, 1989 and ending November 27, 1989. Five public agencies and one individual commented on the document. Major public comments (oral and written) are summarized below along with the NPS response.

Proposal/Alternatives Considered

The proposal responds to existing needs and amends the current General Management Plan (GMP) and Development Concept Plans (DCPs) for the Afterbay/River Ranch area. In the proposal, fisherman visitor use and resource protection will be provided for. In the Afterbay, the proposal simply calls for resolving immediate management needs. Some dispersed campsites, a reconstructed 25-unit campground for fishermen, and a raft/boat launch would be formalized. The existing picnic area would be rehabilitated. A 35-unit tent/trailer campsite would be added. On the River Ranch property, the proposal calls for formalizing the existing raft/boat launch facility for use as a raft launch facility and a trailhead, adding nature trails, phasing out the grazing operation, and removing the farmstead buildings. Alternatives considered were no-action and management outlined under the previous General Management Plan development concept. For more detail, refer to the environmental assessment.

Public Review Comments and NPS Response

Concerns were expressed regarding construction of facilities below elevation 3,192 feet. The plan amendment does not show facilities below this elevation. Statements have been added to the plan to insure clarification.

Several comments opposed proposed improvements for the existing parking area and boat launch ramp below the Afterbay Dam, on the basis of the possibility of the construction of a powerplant or modification of the Afterbay Dam to deal with nitrogen saturation. Currently, the boat launch facility and parking area is a primary public access to the river. Because there are no alternative sites for the National Park Service to develop a new access in the vicinity of the Afterbay Dam, the proposed improvements to the existing site will remain, with the understanding that if a hydropower project is developed or dam modifications are made, a new GMP/DCP amendment may need to be completed. No improvements will be made without consultation with the Bureau of Reclamation who has primary responsibility for development and management of the Yellowtail Project.

Concerns were expressed over the impacts on domestic sewer and water supply of the planned formalization of a 60-unit campground. The existing system has adequate capacity to handle the planned development and the addition of two comfort stations in a 60-unit campground would not impact the existing waste disposal system or domestic water supplies. The Bureau of Reclamation will be consulted prior to construction.

Concerns were expressed regarding the control of noxious weeds during construction. All disturbed sites will be monitored for exotic plants during the course of construction, and appropriate control measures will be taken, should any be discovered.

Comments were made regarding the provision of facilities that are accessible to persons with disabilities. The fishing pier, comfort stations, parking areas, River Ranch trail/kiosk area, and vault toilets will all be accessible to persons with disabilities.

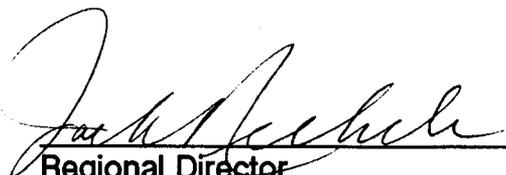
The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service concurred with the NPS determination that the plan amendment will not affect any endangered or threatened plant or animal species. No sensitive wildlife species will be adversely affected.

Conclusion

The proposals do not constitute actions that normally require preparation of an environmental impact statement. The proposals will not have a significant effect on the human environment. Negative environmental impacts that could occur are minor and temporary in effect. There are no adverse impacts on health, public safety, threatened or endangered species, sites or districts listed in or eligible for listing in the National register of Historic Places, or other unique characteristics of the region. No highly uncertain or controversial impacts, unique or unknown risks, cumulative effects, or elements of precedence were identified. Implementation of the actions will not violate any Federal, State, or local law.

Based on the foregoing, it has been determined that an EIS is not required for this project and thus will not be prepared.

Approved:


Regional Director,
Rocky Mountain Region

7/6/90
Date

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF MAPS AND TABLES	ii
INTRODUCTION	1
THE PLAN AMENDMENT	1
Overall Management Strategy	1
The Afterbay	3
Summary.	3
Land Use and Management.	3
Access.	4
Circulation and Parking Capacity.	4
Visitor Use and Interpretation.	4
Visitor Support Facilities.	12
Operations.	13
Construction Cost Estimate.	13
The River Ranch	15
Summary.	15
Land Use and Management	15
Access and Circulation.	15
Visitor Use and Interpretation.	15
Visitor Support Facilities.	16
Operations.	16
Construction Cost Estimate	16
Future Planning Needs	21
Future - Construction of the Transpark Road.	21
LIST OF PREPARERS	22

LIST OF MAPS AND TABLES

Maps

Location Map (2)

Existing Conditions Map (5)

Map 1, Development Concept - Afterbay (6)

Map 2, Fisherman Campground (7)

Map 3, Afterbay Float Launch and Parking (9)

Map 4, Development Concept - River Ranch (18)

Map 5, River Ranch Float Launch and Parking (19)

Detail Concepts

Typical Detail Concept 1, Fisherman Campsite (10)

Typical Detail Concept 2, Trailer/Tent Campsite (11)

Tables

Table 1, Consolidated Management Cost, Afterbay (14)

Table 2, Consolidated Management Cost, River Ranch (17)

INTRODUCTION

This plan recognizes that the Afterbay and River Ranch areas of the Bighorn National Recreation Area and the Bighorn River are primary recreation resources in the northern area of the park. The plan changes the current General Management Plan (GMP) and Development Concept Plans (DCPs) for the Afterbay and supplements the GMP and DCP for the River Ranch. The plan amendment is intended to provide a balanced response to the traditional use of the fishing resource, while providing adequate visitor services and facilities to efficiently accommodate existing and projected future use. In addition, the plan amendment responds to the administrative, operational, and maintenance needs of the River Ranch. In the Afterbay, the plan amendment simply calls for resolving immediate management needs by formalizing some dispersed campsites, reconstruction of a 25-unit campground for fishermen, the addition of a 35-unit tent/trailer campsite, reconstruction and formalization of a raft/boat launch, and rehabilitation of a picnic area. On the River Ranch property, the plan amendment calls for formalizing the existing raft/boat launch facility for use as a raft launch facility and a trailhead, adding nature trails, phasing out the grazing operation, and removing the farmstead buildings.

The plan presented in this chapter constitutes the National Park Service's amendment to the *General Management Plan/Development Concept Plan* for the Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area.

THE PLAN AMENDMENT

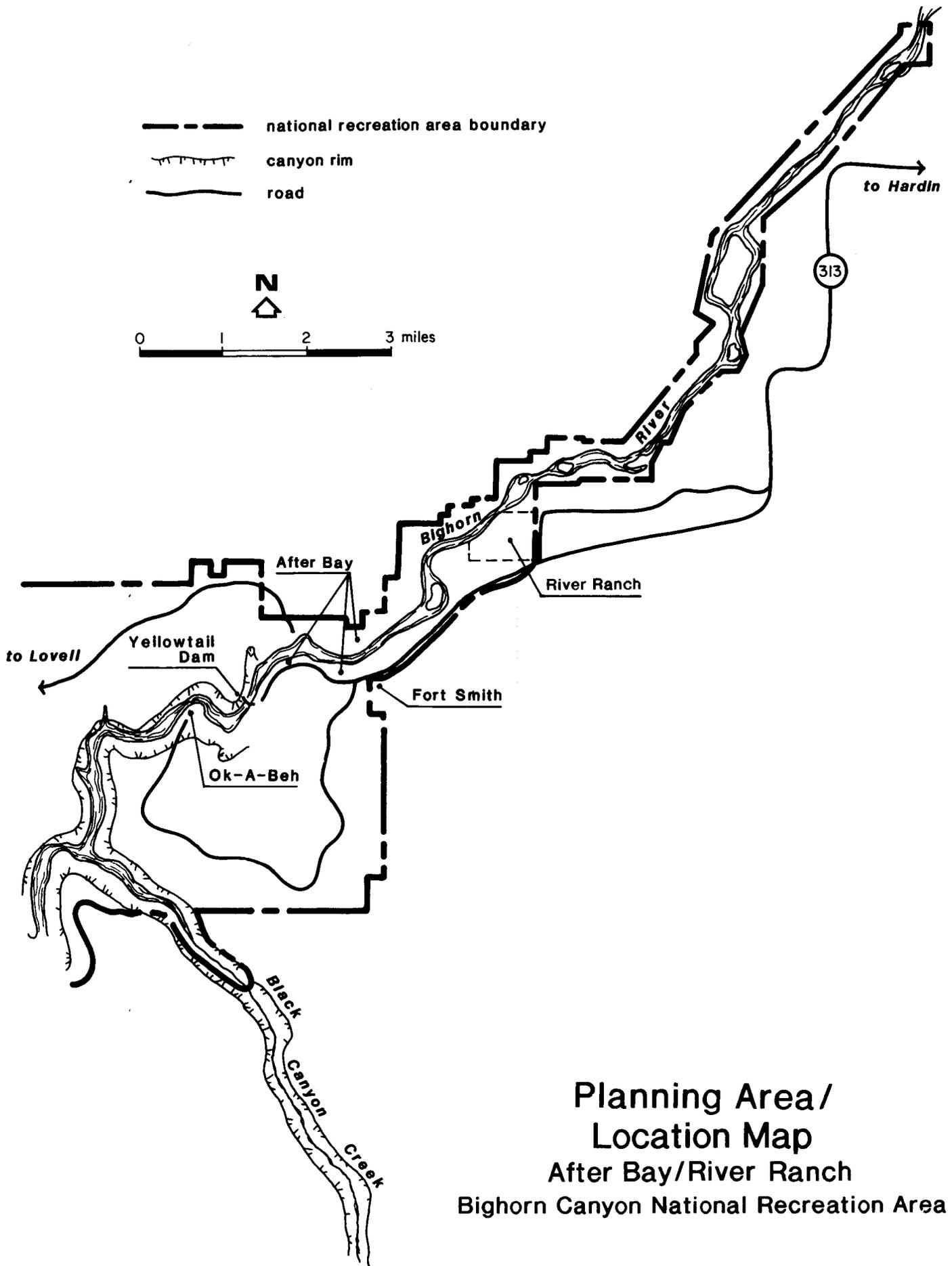
The National Park Service plan amendment responds to established uses without the construction of the Transpark Road (Bad Pass Road) and the likelihood that use in the area without this road will remain similar to current usage. *The plan amendment will consolidate management for the destination visitor, provide adequate campground expansion space for self-contained campers, and use existing resource areas and established visitor-use patterns.*

OVERALL MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

The following management guidelines and policies apply to all alternatives:

Because some lands administered by the National Park Service are within the Crow Indian Reservation, the traditional rights of Native Americans (subsistence hunting and fishing and traditional religious observations) are recognized.

The following stipulations for the River Ranch area are provided by Title 36 II CFR, Chapter 1, parts 1 through 7:



**Planning Area/
 Location Map
 After Bay/River Ranch
 Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area**

- A no shooting zone will be established. In accordance with State law, waterfowl hunting is permitted only on the immediate banks of the Bighorn River, 1,000 feet upstream from the boat/raft launch. No waterfowl hunting is permitted on any tributary streams or adjacent fields.
- The area is closed to upland game bird, big game, and nongame hunting and trapping.
- No camping or campfires are permitted.
- All dogs must be on leashes not to exceed six feet in length, unless their owners/controllers are licensed to hunt and are actively hunting waterfowl.
- Pets or feral animals running at large and that are observed killing, injuring, or molesting livestock or wildlife may be destroyed by park officials.

THE AFTERBAY

Current uses are shown on the Existing Conditions map. Overall development schemes for the Afterbay are illustrated on Map 1, Afterbay Development Concept. Proposed management actions are outlined under *Visitor Support Facilities* using numbers that correspond to specific areas on Map 1. Several areas require more detailed development concepts and have been broken out to show detailed actions. Map 2, Afterbay Fisherman Campground, shows the NPS plan amendment for an expansion of campground facilities. Map 3, Afterbay Float Launch and Parking, shows the NPS plan amendment to provide adequate parking and float launch facilities for the Bighorn River.

Summary

Under the plan amendment, many traditional uses will be formalized. The plan amendment will resolve immediate management needs. The existing campground facility, now used by fishermen as a wayside parking/camping area, will be reconstructed and converted to 25 fisherman camping units. Thirty-five new tent/trailer campsites will be added in an adjacent area. Repaving of roads is proposed for the existing picnic area and campground. The boat launch below the Afterbay will be reconstructed to provide a formalized paved road and parking area and an informal sod/concrete-paved overflow parking area. Resurfacing is proposed for gravel roads leading to dispersed campsites on the north side of the Afterbay. These dispersed campsites will be formalized as small fisherman camping sites. Planting of native trees is proposed on slopes with north aspects and adjacent to drainages, where survival can be reasonably expected. A permanent tie-down area and vault toilet will be provided at the airstrip.

Land Use and Management

Any future planning efforts should consider the status of an application for hydropower license for the Yellowtail Afterbay Dam. Mitex Corporation filed for a license with the

Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) in 1988. A Motion for Intervention was filed by the Agencies of the Department of Interior (DOI); the National Park Service, the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), and the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) on behalf of the Crow Nation. The Motion for Intervention filed by the DOI has been accepted. The National Park Service requested intervention on the basis that FERC lacks jurisdiction within the boundaries of all areas administered by the NPS, and the BOR on the basis that Congress has authorized the Secretary of the Interior to develop the power potential for the Yellowtail Afterbay Dam. Granting of the license might significantly impair recreational opportunities on the Bighorn River in the planning area by requiring existing access facilities to be moved off of park lands and further down stream. It could be in violation of Public Law 89-664, and will, if upheld, require the National Park Service to reassess development plans. If a hydropower project is developed under the pending FERC license, a new GMP/DCP amendment may need to be developed.

Access

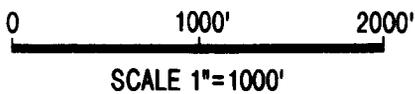
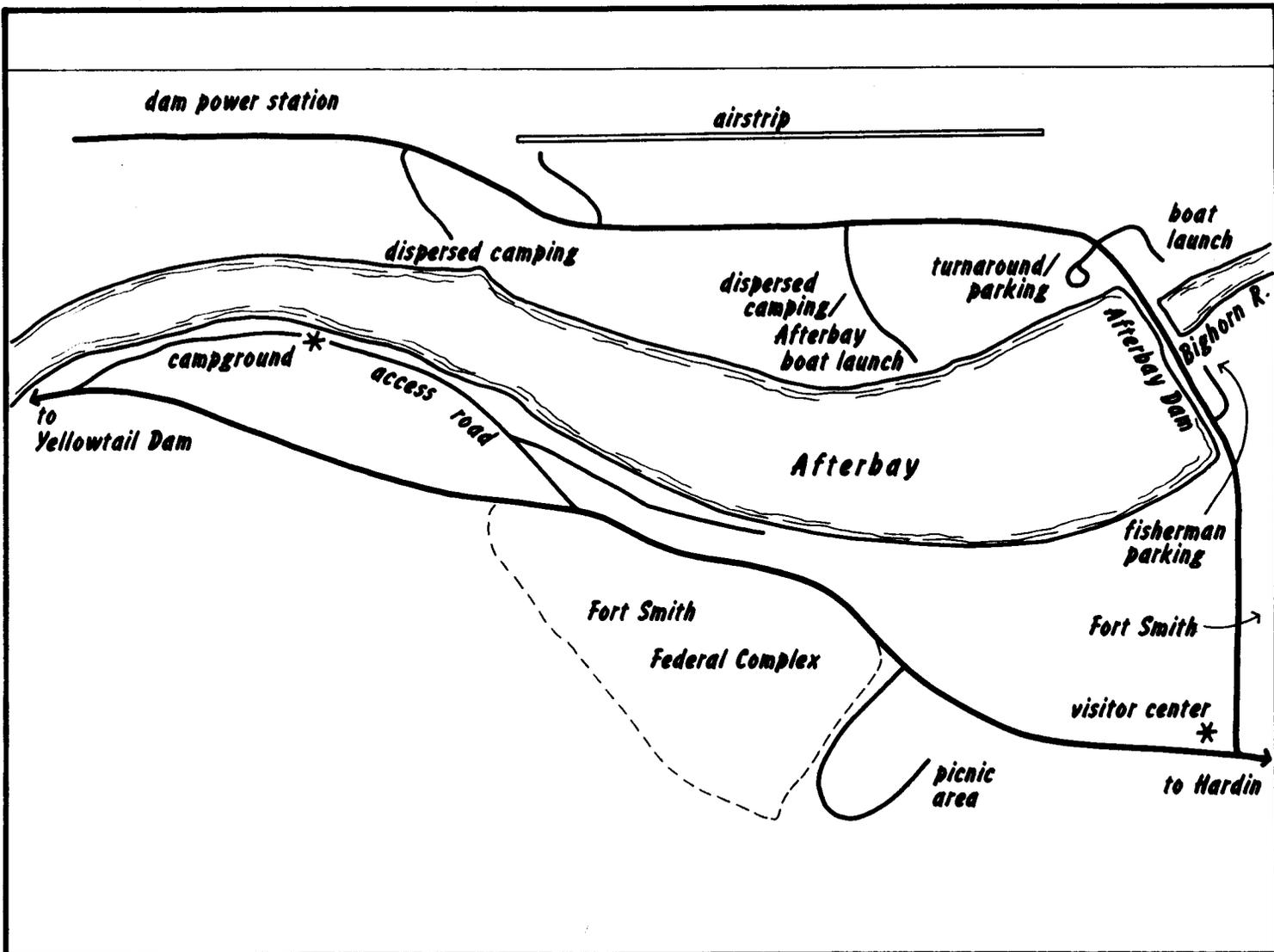
Many of the roads leading to recreation facilities are poorly surfaced and defined. Under the plan amendment, the boat launch area of the Bighorn River will be paved. Resurfacing is proposed for the paved road leading to the campground and the picnic area. In the campground, parking definition will be improved and textural changes made to vehicle parking and camping areas (See Typical Detail 2). The general appearance of road surfaces, parking lots, camping spurs, and site amenities will be improved.

Circulation and Parking Capacity

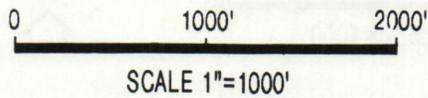
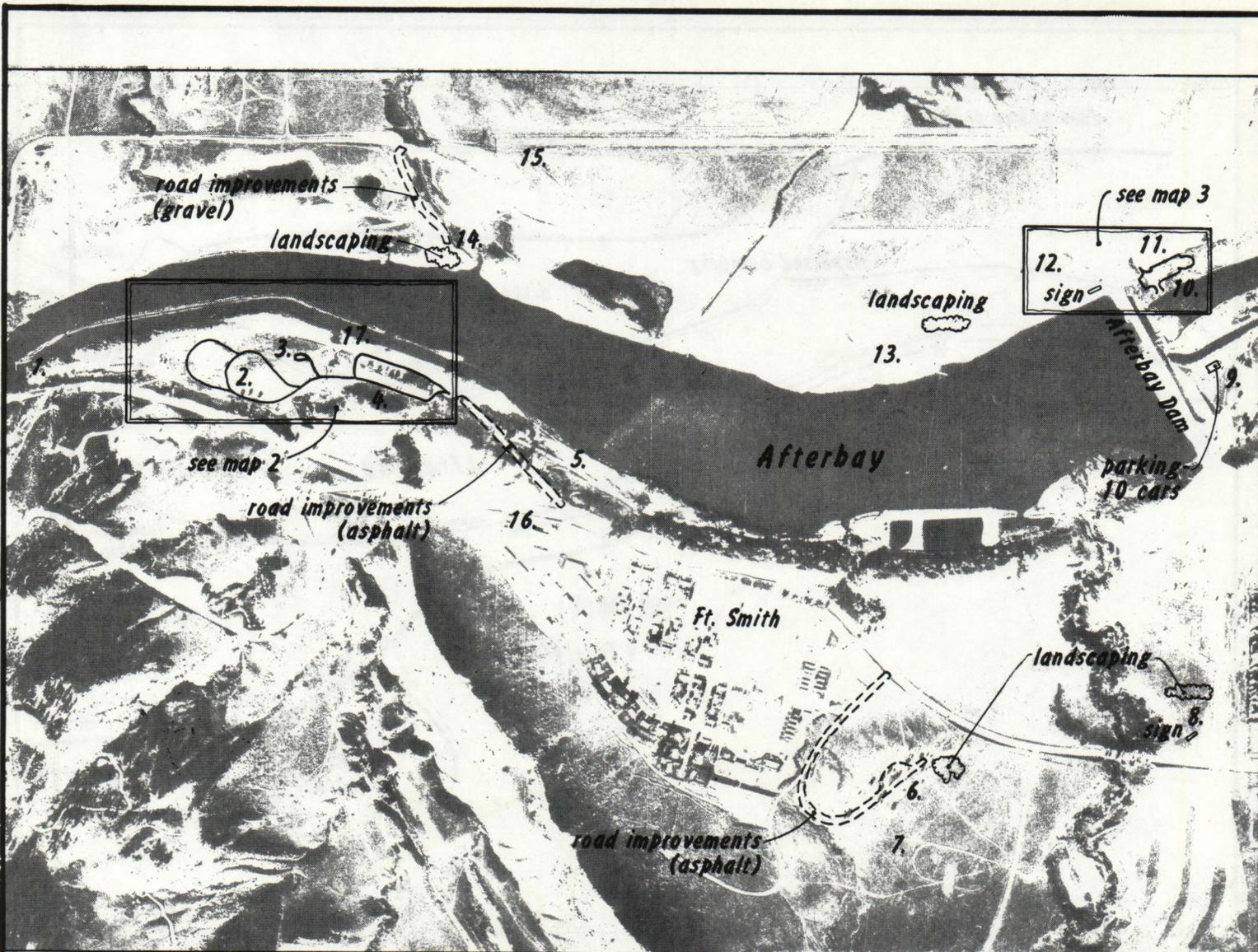
The popularity of the Bighorn River as a premier trout fishery, is illustrated by 1987's documented fishing use of 122,000 visits. The area has gained in stature as an important park recreation resource. With launches peaking at 1,400 in August, adequately sizing parking facilities, providing overflow parking to protect resources during peak use periods, and formalizing parking are all necessary to improve the circulation between fishermen, boats, and vehicles. Circulation in other areas will generally remain as is, with some improvements in the campground expansion area, through formalization of the road network.

Visitor Use and Interpretation

Under the plan amendment, interpretive programs for cultural history, natural history, recreation, and information and orientation, as outlined on page 24 of the original GMP, will be maintained. A new trail brochure and some additional signs emphasizing the recreation theme will be added.

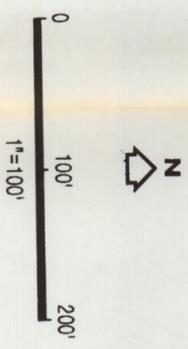
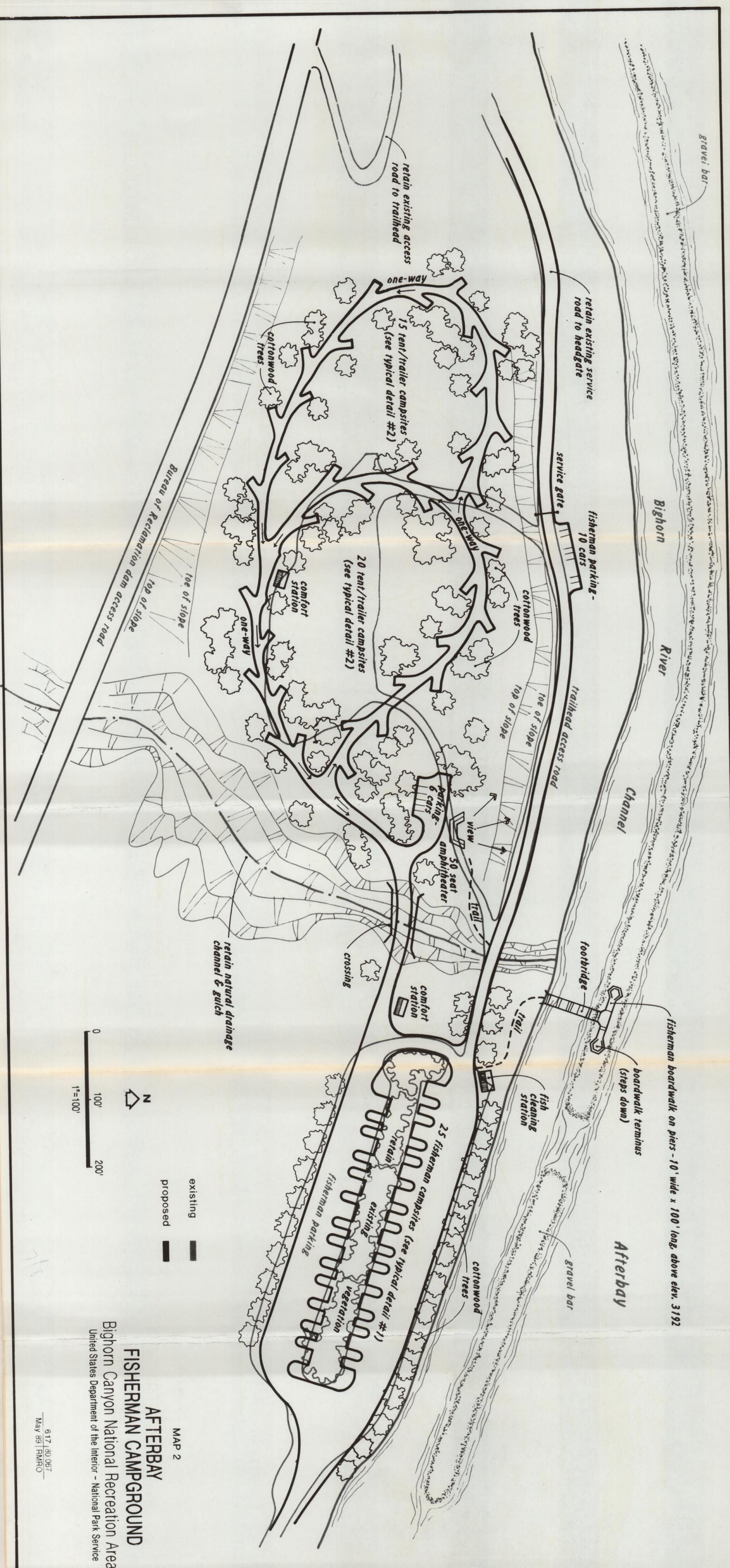


AFTERBAY EXISTING CONDITIONS
 Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area
 United States Department of the Interior-National Park Service

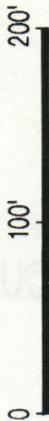


MAP 1
AFTERBAY DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT

Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area
 United States Department of the Interior - National Park Service



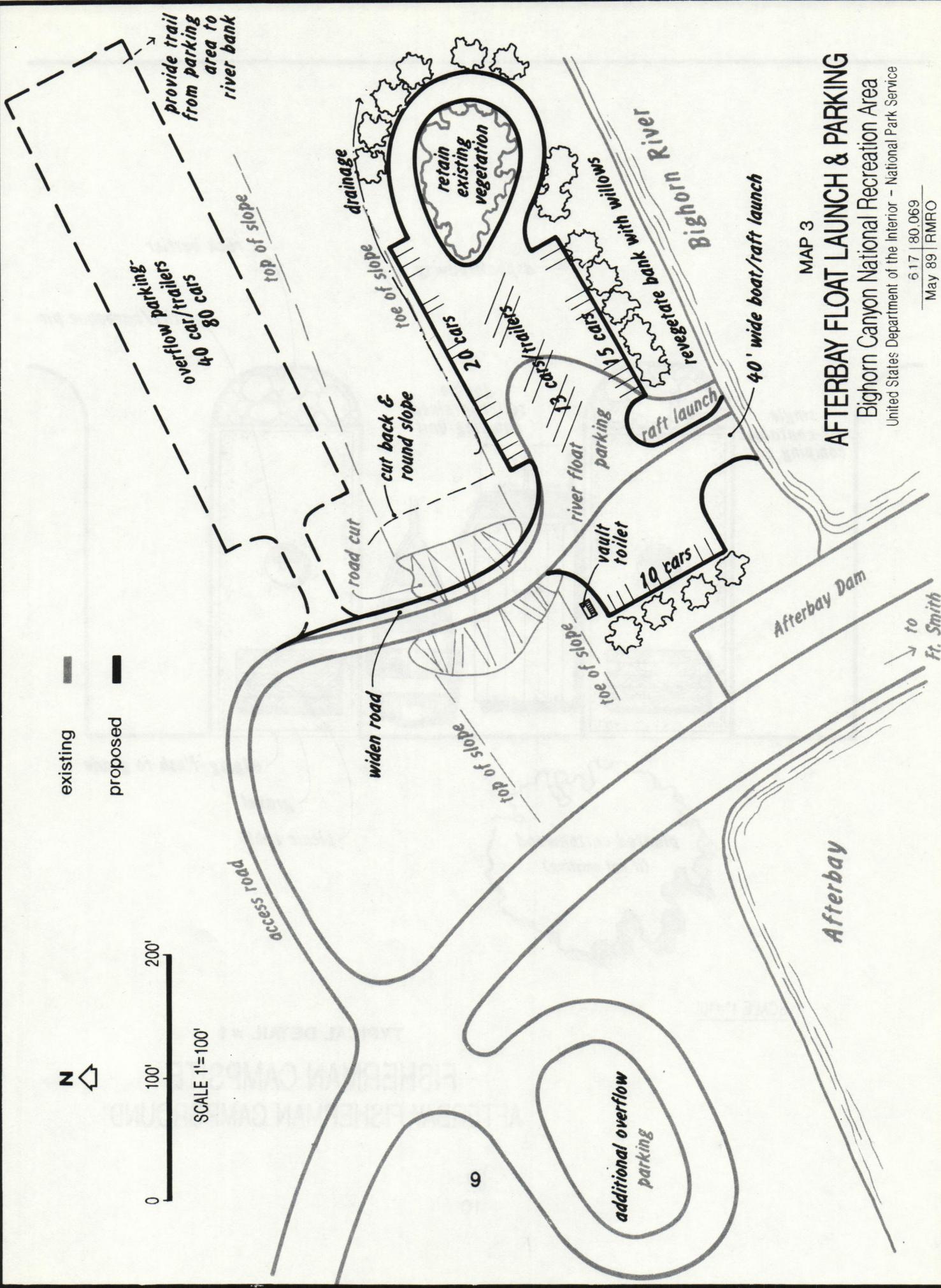
MAP 2
AFTERBAY
FISHERMAN CAMPGROUND
 Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area
 United States Department of the Interior - National Park Service



SCALE 1"=100'

existing

proposed



MAP 3

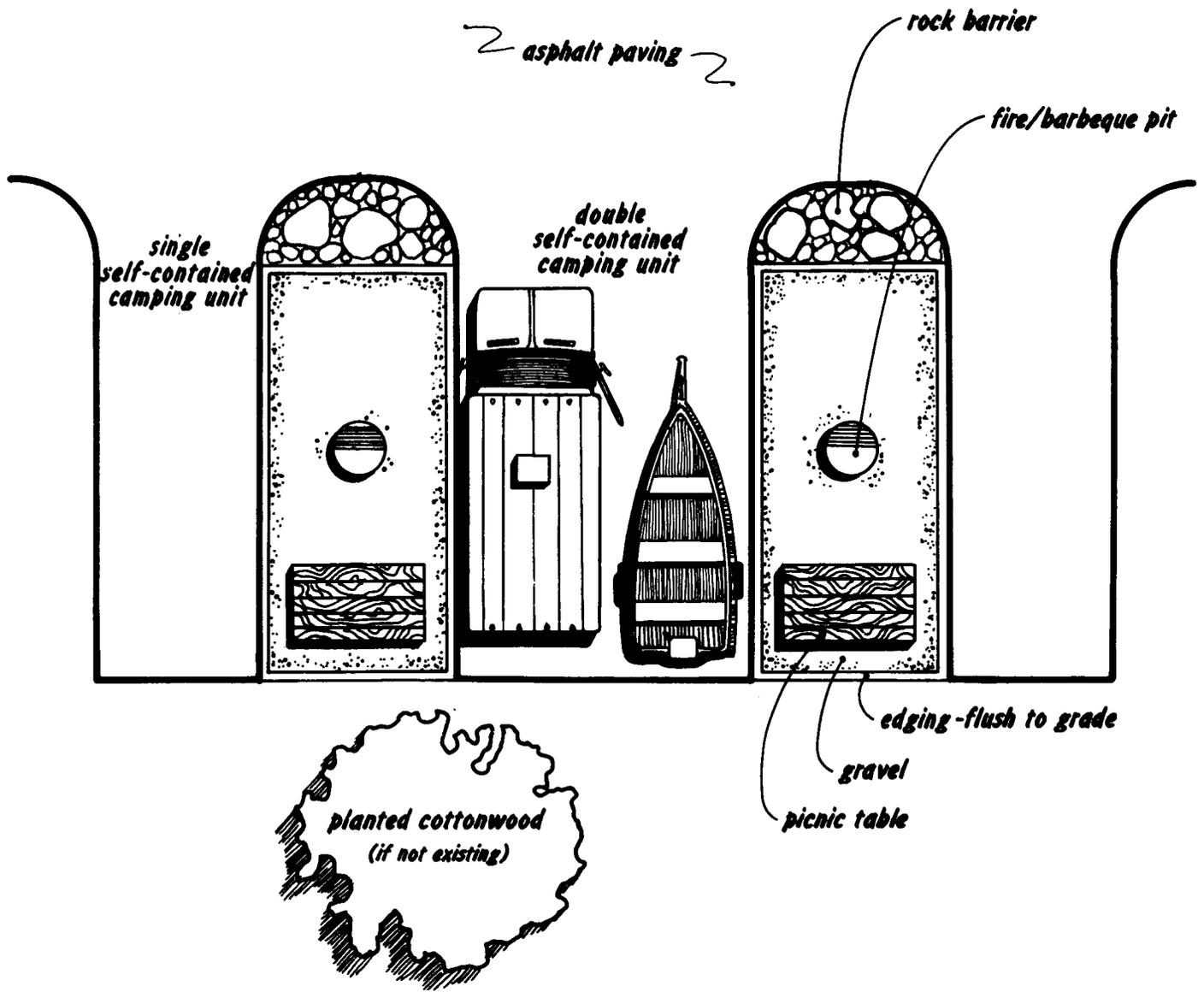
AFTERBAY FLOAT LAUNCH & PARKING

Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area

United States Department of the Interior - National Park Service

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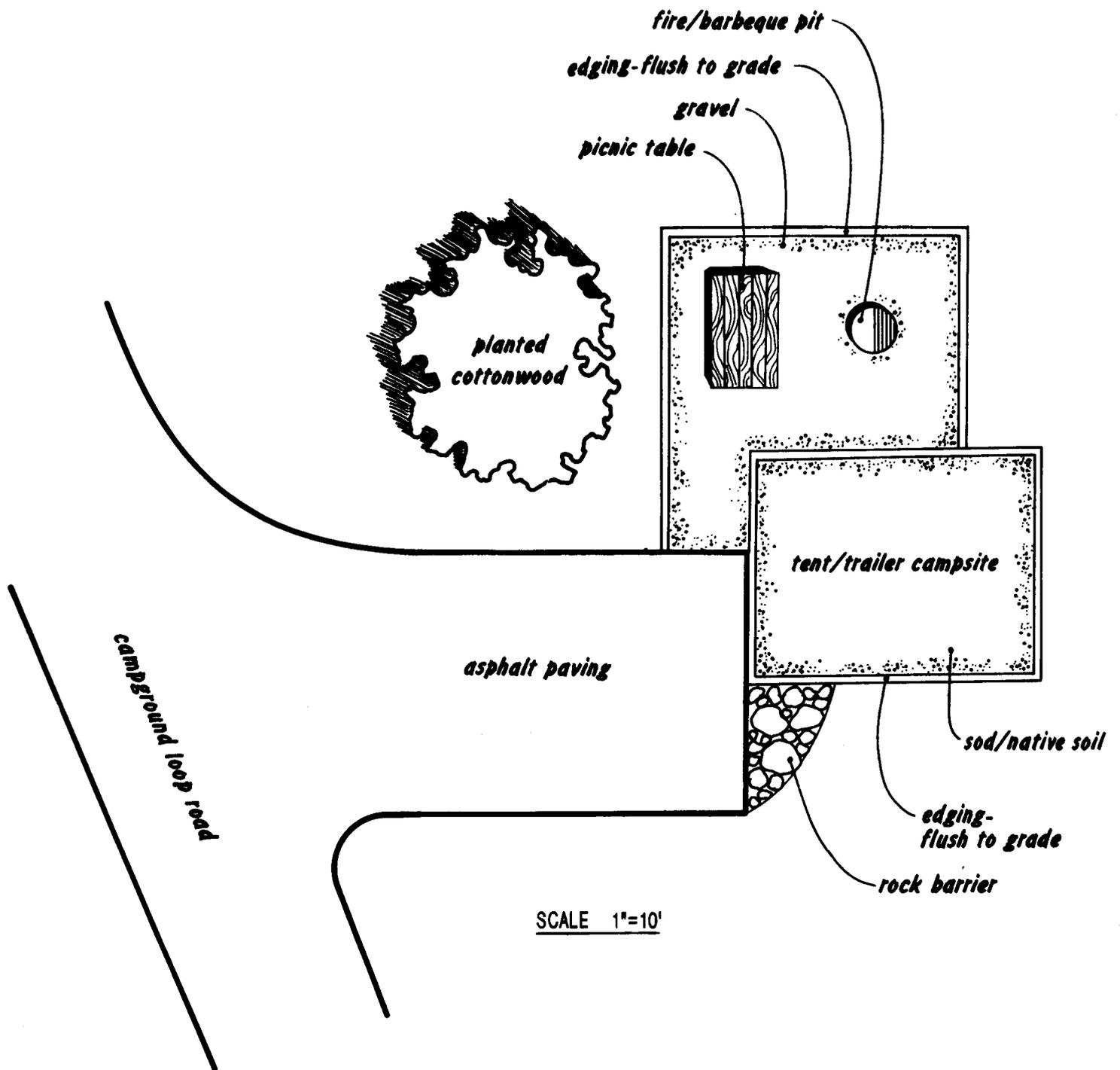
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SCALE 1"=10'

TYPICAL DETAIL #1

FISHERMAN CAMPSITE
AFTERBAY FISHERMAN CAMPGROUND



TYPICAL DETAIL #2
TENT/TRAILER CAMPSITE
AFTERBAY FISHERMAN CAMPGROUND

Visitor Support Facilities

Map 1 shows proposed Afterbay facility development corresponding to the map items listed below. The new comfort stations, restrooms, campground facilities, and the fisherman boardwalk will be designed to be accessible to persons with disabilities. Two areas have been blown up to show specific design concepts: the existing and expanded campground and the boat launch area. In addition, because fisherman use is of prime concern, designed units for the campground are illustrated in Typical Detail concepts 1 and 2. These are intended to accommodate self-contained RV camping units (1) as well as person with tents (2).

Under the plan amendment, improvements outlined in the new Development Concept Plan for the Afterbay are as follows:

1 - Trailhead to The Headgate. No change.

2 - Campground Expansion Area. Add thirty-five trailer/tent campsites (See Map 2 and Typical Detail concept 2); add new comfort station; add shade trees and landscaping (100 trees); and provide garbage dumpster collection for garbage disposal.

3 - Amphitheater. Construct new amphitheater (50-seat).

4 - Existing Campground. Improve road surfacing (600' paved resurface); rehabilitate existing campsite to 25 fisherman campsites (Map 2 and Typical Detail concept 2); add comfort station; add fish-cleaning station; add lift station (2,000' sewer, 1,000' water, 1,000' electric); add 10-car fisherman parking (gravel) and service gate.

5 - Fishing Access. No change.

6 - Picnic Facility. Improve road (1,200' paved road resurfacing and parking and add landscaping (25 trees).

7 - Future Expansion Area. No change.

8 - Visitor Center and Entrance Sign Area. Additional landscaping (20 trees to line entry and exit road) and additional signing for Beaver Pond Trail (2 signs).

9 - Fishing Access. Add 10-Car paved parking facility.

10 - Existing Boat Launch and Parking Facility. New launch and parking (45-car, 13-car/trailers, 4-lane launch) and add paving and widen road (200').

11 - Boat/Trailer Parking and Overflow Parking. Add overflow parking area (40-car/trailer, 80-car).

12 - Visitor Overlook. Add interpretive sign about Bighorn Canyon/Afterbay.

13 - Existing Campground and Afterbay Launch Site. Rehabilitate 15 campsites as per Fisherman Campsite Detail and add landscaping (25 trees) near drainage.

14 - Existing Campground. Improve road (350' gravel); rehabilitate 10 campsites as per Fisherman Campsite Detail and add landscaping (15 trees) near drainage.

15 - Airstrip Tie Down Area. Add permanent vault toilet facility and add tie down area.

16 - Existing Dump Station. No change.

17 - Fishing Access. Add boardwalk for fishermen (100') (See Plan) and add bridge access to gravel bar.

All trees to be used are native to the area.

Operations

Under the plan amendment, the following additional staffing levels will be needed:

Maintenance	2.0 FTE
Visitor Protection/Interpretation	<u>1.0 FTE</u>
Total	3.0 FTE

For the Afterbay area only, estimated yearly recurring costs for additional staffing, operations and maintenance are \$116,600. (Estimates are based on a GS-5 step 5 salary for one full time employee [FTE].)

Construction Cost Estimate

The following table reflects the estimated costs for the plan amendment for the Afterbay area:

Consolidated Management Proposal

Item	Gross Construction Costs	Advance & Project Planning Costs	Total Project Costs
Afterbay			
Phase I			
Areas 10, 11, 12			
boat launch 40'	\$26,200	\$5,000	\$31,200
45-car & 13car/trailer parking	\$103,752	\$19,800	\$123,552
160-car overflow parking	\$251,520	\$48,000	\$299,520
1 sign	\$1,310	\$250	\$1,560
500' gravel road	\$29,606	\$5,650	\$35,256
15 fisherman campsites	\$39,300	\$7,500	\$46,800
25 trees	\$8,188	\$1,563	\$9,750
Sub Total	\$459,876	\$87,763	\$547,639
Phase II			
Areas 2, 3, & 4			
35 fishing campsites/1 comfort stati	\$504,350	\$96,250	\$600,600
sewage lift station	\$163,750	\$31,250	\$195,000
underground electric (1000 lf)	\$18,340	\$3,500	\$21,840
water (2000 lf)	\$57,640	\$11,000	\$68,640
sewer (1500 lf)	\$66,810	\$12,750	\$79,560
3 garbage dumpsters	\$11,790	\$2,250	\$14,040
amphitheater	\$55,675	\$10,625	\$66,300
road surfacing 600'	\$46,112	\$8,800	\$54,912
25 fisherman campsites	\$65,500	\$12,500	\$78,000
comfort station	\$117,900	\$22,500	\$140,400
fish cleaning station	\$14,410	\$2,750	\$17,160
crossing 70'	\$11,004	\$2,100	\$13,104
Areas 6,7,8, & 9			
1200' asphalt resurface	\$92,224	\$17,600	\$109,824
5000 seedlings	\$28,820	\$5,500	\$34,320
20 trees	\$6,550	\$1,250	\$7,800
150' gravel road	\$8,908	\$1,700	\$10,608
Areas 13, 14, & 15			
350' gravel road	\$20,829	\$3,975	\$24,804
10 fisherman campsites	\$26,200	\$5,000	\$31,200
airport tiedown	\$6,550	\$1,250	\$7,800
Area 17			
100' elevated fishing boardwalk	\$41,920	\$8,000	\$49,920
75' wooden foot bridge	\$6,386	\$1,219	\$7,605
Sub Total	\$1,323,362	\$251,300	\$1,568,112

Note: All costs are in 1988 dollars.

THE RIVER RANCH

Overall development schemes for the River Ranch are illustrated on Map 4, River Ranch Development Concept. Proposed management actions are outlined under *Visitor Support Facilities* using numbers that correspond to specific areas on Map 4. Several areas require more detailed development concepts and have been broken out to show detailed actions. Map 5, River Ranch Float Launch and Parking, shows the NPS plan amendment to provide adequate parking and float launch facilities for the Bighorn River.

Summary

Under the plan amendment, as in the Afterbay section, many functioning traditional uses will be formalized. The plan amendment resolves the immediate needs of the area. The entry road will be paved. The existing boat launch facility with a small parking area, will be enlarged, formalized, and paved to accommodate boat launch use. This parking area will also double as a trailhead for nature trails. A vault toilet, telephone, and information kiosk will be added. The existing boat ramp will be widened to three lanes. Picnic tables will be placed informally in a cottonwood grove to the south of the boat launch to serve visitors' needs. The grazing operation currently being administered in the River Ranch will be phased out and the farmstead buildings removed.

Land Use and Management

The plan amendment will modify existing management zoning for the area to include a Development Zone. The plan amendment shows the addition of a Development Subzone within a protected Natural Zone. This has been carefully placed to avoid conflicts with riparian habitat. The Development Subzone is about 5.45 acres or 0.05 percent of the total park area. All grazing will be eliminated in the River Ranch to conform with the Protected Natural Zone established in the 1981 GMP.

Access and Circulation

Access through the ranch will be improved. Road width will be expanded to the minimum necessary to accommodate two-way traffic. Paved surfacing will be installed. Separation of visitor use for nature study and float traffic will be accomplished by the addition of a short road to the new trailhead for nature trails. The primary residence and four other outbuildings within the 100-year floodplain will be removed. Entrance to the boat launch will terminate with a turnaround facility.

Visitor Use and Interpretation

Under the plan amendment, existing interpretive programs for cultural history, natural history, recreation, and information and orientation, as outlined on page 24 of the original GMP, will be maintained. The newly established nature trail and small picnic area support the recreation theme of hiking and picnicking. A short interpretive program on native flora and fauna will also be provided via personal interpretive services.

Visitor Support Facilities

Map 4 shows proposed facility development corresponding to the numbered items for improvement listed below. One area has been blown up to show specific design concepts - the River Ranch Float Launch and Parking. Map 5 illustrates this concept as well as a trailhead for nature trails.

Under the plan amendment, improvements outlined in the new Development Concept Plan for the River Ranch are as follows:

1 - Existing Farmstead. Remove 5 outbuildings and residence.

2 - Existing Parking Area. Redefine existing parking area (25-car/trailer, 45-car); add new overflow parking for peak use (20-car/trailer overflow); add information kiosk/telephone for emergencies; add vault toilet; and add landscaping to screen parking from farm house (60 trees).

3 - River Float Access. Improve launch access ramp (3-lane width); pave and widen existing road to 20' width (2,500 lf); remove fence (2,500 lf); install new cattle guard; and add new nature trail system from trailhead (7,000 lf).

Operations

NPS staffing levels required to implement this plan amendment are as follows:

Maintenance	2.0 FTE
Visitor Protection/Interpretation	1.4 FTE

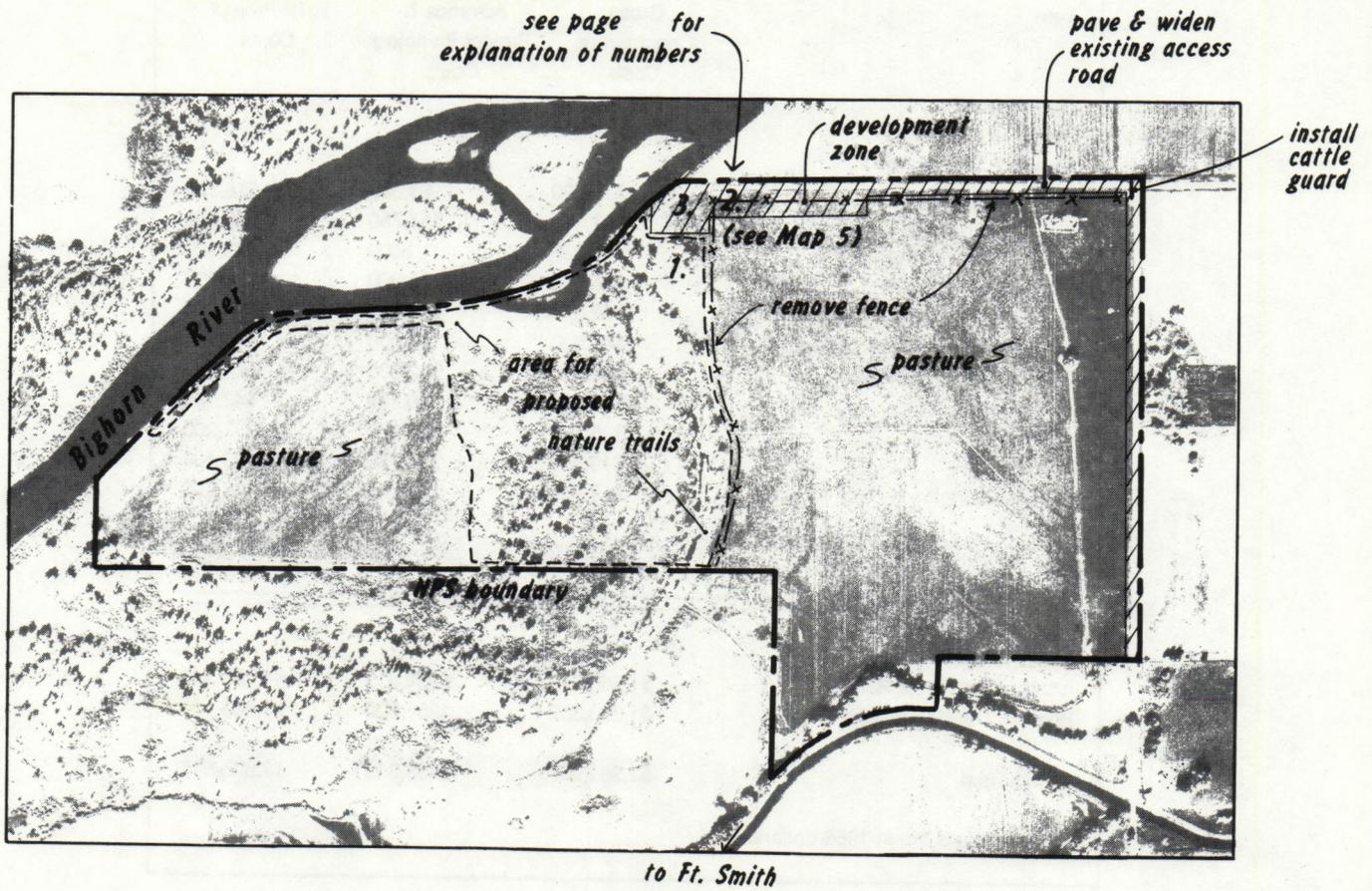
For the River Ranch Area only, estimated yearly recurring costs for additional staffing, operations and maintenance are \$132,300. (Estimates are based on a GS-5 step 5 salary for one FTE.)

Construction Cost Estimate

The following table shows the estimated costs of the plan amendment for River Ranch:

Consolidated Management			
Item	Gross Construction Costs	Advance & Project Planning Costs	Total Project Costs
River Ranch			
Phase I			
Area 1, 2, 3, & 4			
remove 6 buildings	\$15,720	\$3,000	\$18,720
new asphalt road .42-miles	\$302,610	\$57,750	\$360,360
remove 5000 lf range fence	\$2,620	\$500	\$3,120
install new cattleguard	\$26,200	\$5,000	\$31,200
7000lf wood chip trail 5' width	\$45,850	\$8,750	\$54,600
25-car/trailer & 20-car parking	\$41,920	\$8,000	\$49,920
40-car overflow parking	\$62,880	\$12,000	\$74,880
kiosk/telephone	\$35,370	\$6,750	\$42,120
vault toilet	\$26,200	\$5,000	\$31,200
60 trees	\$19,650	\$3,750	\$23,400
30' boat launch	\$19,650	\$3,750	\$23,400
Sub Total	\$598,670	\$114,250	\$712,920
Phase I Total			
Afterbay and River Ranch	\$1,058,546	\$202,013	\$1,260,558
Phase II Total - Afterbay	\$1,323,362	\$251,300	\$1,568,112
Grand Total	\$2,381,908	\$453,313	\$2,828,670
Note: All costs are in 1988 dollars.			

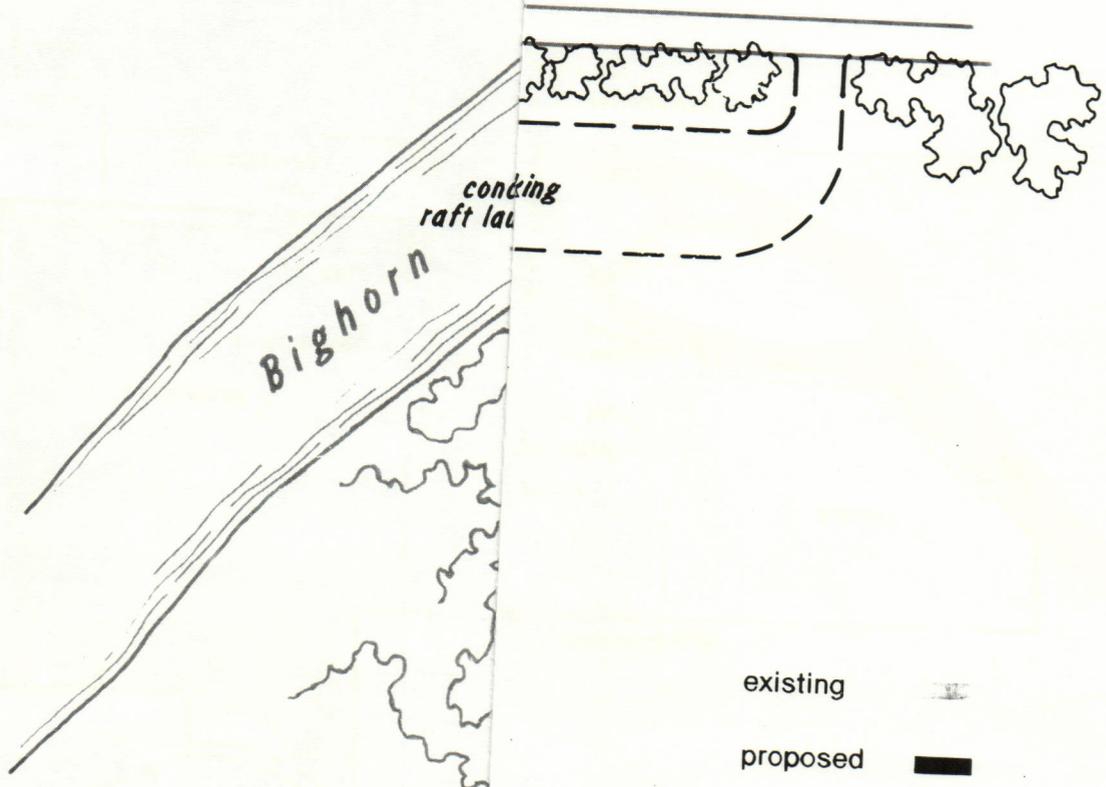
Total cost for the plan amendment at both the Afterbay and River Ranch is \$2,828,670 with annual operation and maintenance costs of \$248,800.



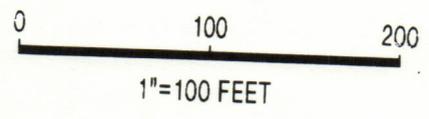
MAP 4

RIVER RANCH DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT

Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area
 United States Department of the Interior - National Park Service

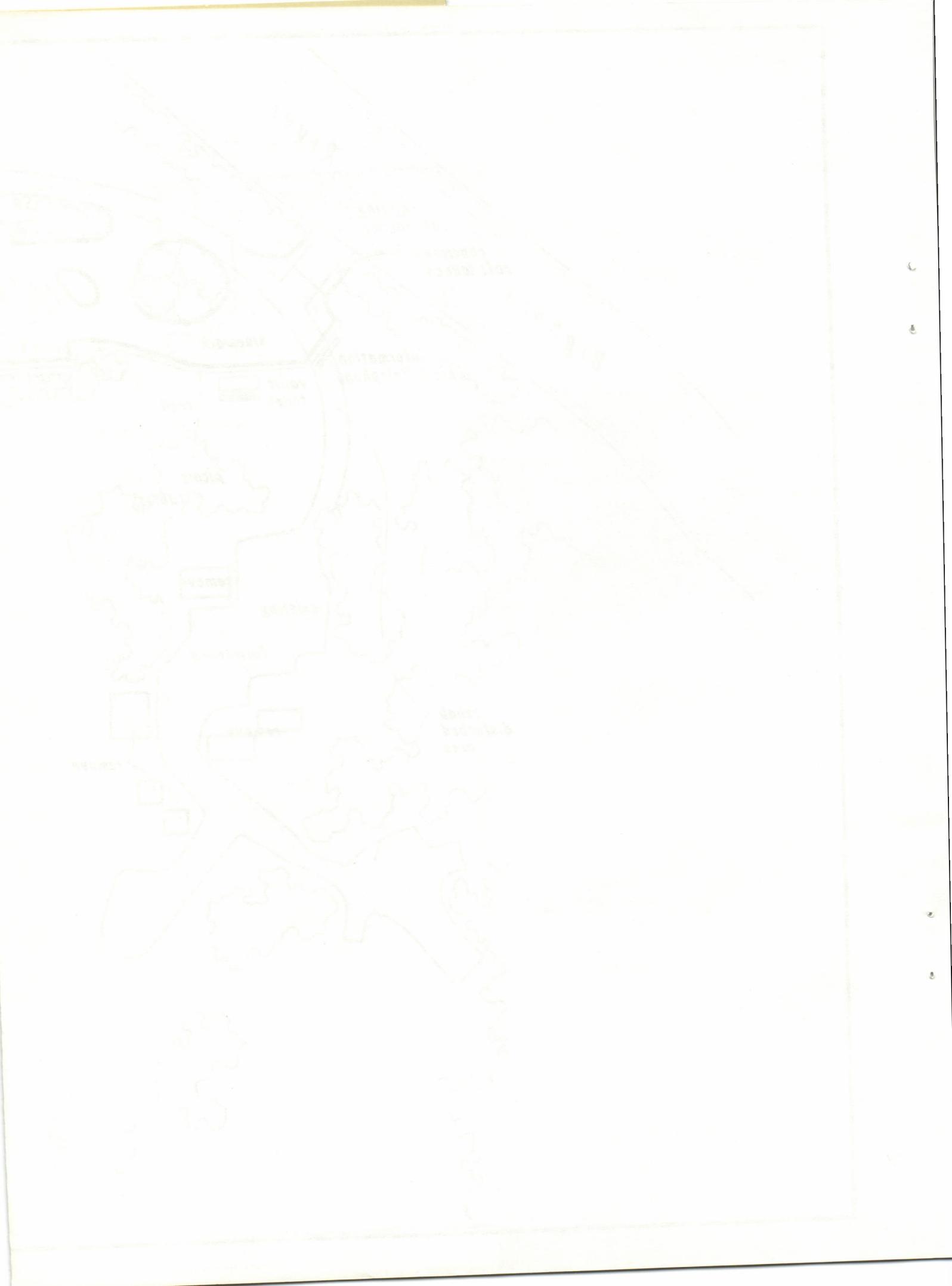


existing 
 proposed 



MAP 5
**RIVER RANCH
 FLOAT LAUNCH AND PARKING**
 Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area
 United States Department of the Interior - National Park Service

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FUTURE PLANNING NEEDS

Use along the Bighorn River is expected to increase over the next ten years. Two of three public access points to the river and its fishery on the first thirteen miles below the Afterbay are controlled primarily by the National Park Service. Use may increase to a point that will impact the resource as a fishery and may need to be regulated. The need for a carrying capacity study for the Big Horn River has been identified. This study should be done prior to the completion of a new general management plan and should be a joint effort by the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks and the National Park Service.

FUTURE - CONSTRUCTION OF THE TRANSPARK ROAD

The Transpark Road proposal called for a 45 mph, two-lane highway from Fort Smith, Montana, to Lovell, Wyoming. The construction of the road will increase tourism because it will connect Mount Rushmore in the Black Hills with the Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation, the Crow Indian Reservation, Custer Battlefield National Monument, Bighorn National Recreation Area and Yellowstone National Park. No action has been taken on the road. Were the Transpark Road constructed, it would change the characteristics of visitor use in the area. While this area is currently a destination facility, with its main attraction being its fishery, construction of the Transpark Road would likely increase the amount of through-tourist traffic (enroute to Yellowstone). Camping expectations of facility type, social interchange, and needs of visitors are very different for the destination and through-tourist groups.

Under the plan amendment, camping facilities are geared to fishermen campers having self-contained units. There is some allowance for tents and trailers. This mix of facilities may not be appropriate for large numbers of through-traffic visitors. *Therefore, under this plan amendment, if the Transpark Road (Bad Pass Road) is built, the road project should address the need for a camping facility adjacent to its right-of-way.* The NPS should explore alternatives to supplement costs with public or private funds. This campground should be designed to meet the needs of the through-traffic visitor.

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