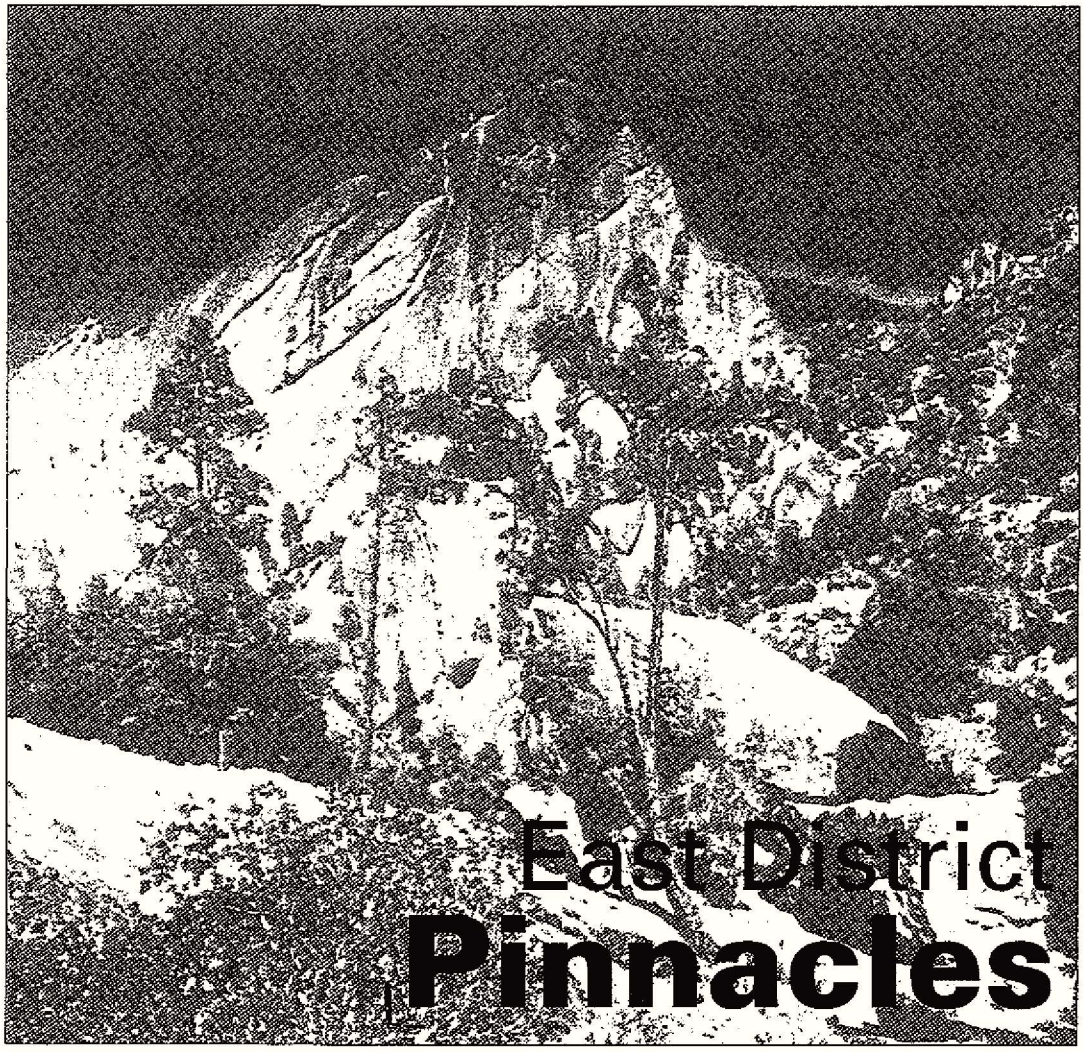
D-31

development concept plan and environmental assessment

october 1993



East District
Pinnacles

National Monument • California

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

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FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT PLAN
EAST DISTRICT
PINNACLES NATIONAL MONUMENT

The National Park Service proposes to approve and implement a Development Concept Plan for the East District, Pinnacles National Monument.

THE PROPOSED ACTION

The proposed action, identified as "East Side Plan A: Enhanced Visitor Experience" in the Draft Development Concept Plan and Environmental Assessment (DCP/EA), provides for the relocation of most housing, maintenance, and administrative facilities from the environmentally sensitive Bear Gulch area to less sensitive areas of the park. Elimination of these functions from Bear Gulch, along with the removal of several non-historic structures, will provide for enhanced visitor experience in this major use area. A new visitor center near the east boundary will improve opportunities to orient newly arriving visitors to the park's attractions and regulations. The existing Chalone Creek picnic area will be converted to a park housing site; replacement picnic opportunities will be provided at a new Sandy Creek picnic area, at Bear Gulch, and adjacent to the YACC shuttle lot.

Existing parking on the east side is sufficient to accommodate public visitation during off-season and weekday periods. In peak use periods, a shuttle operation will convey visitors from a shuttle parking lot at the YACC area to primary use sites.

Other features of the plan include relocation of the maintenance area from Chalone Creek to the YACC area, development of a new interpretive overlook, and development of a new trail staging site to serve users of the Old Pinnacle Trail.

Two alternatives to the proposed action were evaluated during the planning process. A no-action alternative would continue the existing operation in the East District. "East Side Plan B: Maximum Visitor Use", would provide for increased instantaneous capacity in the monument by providing additional parking in the boundary area and by retaining the Chalone Creek picnic area while expanding picnic opportunities in other portions of the park.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

The environmental consequences of the proposal will be primarily beneficial, providing for improvements in natural vegetation in restored areas at Bear Gulch and Chalone Creek, removing obtrusive features and operations from a key visitor use area, and providing enhanced day use opportunities. Adverse impacts will include minor vegetation and visual impacts on developed portions of the east boundary area.

PUBLIC REVIEW OF THE DRAFT PLAN AND ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

The draft plan was made available for public review from April 1, 1993, until May 31, 1993. Notification of availability of the plan was made through mailings to interested individuals and organizations, and news releases to area media. Substantial coverage of the planning project was provided by the media in response to the news releases.

Three public meetings were held in the vicinity of the park to present the plan

and receive comments. A total of 13 persons attended the three meetings. In addition, 29 letters were received regarding the plan. One letter enthusiastically supported the plan, while twenty-five indicated opposition. The remaining letters conveyed technical information regarding the plan.

With respect to the 25 letters of opposition, the primary area of controversy related to the commenters' preference for NPS acquisition of lands to the east of the existing boundary and development of any needed facilities on these lands, rather than within the existing boundary. Proponents of this course of action indicated concern over visual and ecological impacts within the boundary. This option was considered in the planning process but was rejected because the subject lands are outside the authorized boundary, because plan actions are not expected to incur significant adverse environmental impacts, and because the lands to be developed were added to the unit by Congress for this purpose.

MITIGATION

All new developments will be located and designed so as to minimize obtrusiveness. Construction activities will be monitored for archeological resources. Disturbed areas will be promptly replanted to avoid erosion. Interpretation and law enforcement will be employed to ensure that species of concern such as the red-legged frog and the western pond turtle are not subjected to collection by visitors. Removal of structures in the Bear Gulch area as provided for in the plan will not occur until National Register processes have been completed.

SUMMARY FINDING

Based on review of the environmental assessment and comments received from review of the draft plan, and the commitment to substantially mitigate all potential adverse environmental impacts, the National Park Service will implement the proposed Development Concept Plan, identified as "East Side Plan A" in the draft DCP/EA, and concludes that implementation of the plan does not constitute a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment. Consequently, an environmental impact statement need not be prepared.

RECOMMENDED:

S/ James Sleznick — 10/12/93

Superintendent, Pinnacles National Monument — Date

APPROVED:

S/ Lew Albert — 10/22/93

Acting Regional Director, Western Region — Date

SUMMARY OF THE

DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT PLAN

AND ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

FOR THE

EAST DISTRICT

PINNACLES NATIONAL MONUMENT

The development concept plan and environmental assessment for the east district is intended to implement planning decisions made in the Pinnacles Master Plan.

The plan presents three basic alternatives:

The **no-action plan** retains the existing facility configuration and the current operation.

Alternative A: Enhanced Visitor Experience, is the proposed action. It is aimed at improving the visitor experience on the east side and providing for more efficient park operations. Daily carrying capacity is retained at the present level but is not increased. It provides for relocation of most housing to the Chalone Creek area, relocation of the maintenance area to the YACC site, and relocation of administrative facilities from the Bear Gulch area to a new visitor center and headquarters building near the unit's east boundary. A shuttle system would convey visitors to primary use areas during periods of peak visitation, using a parking area at the YACC area. The plan would also include new picnic areas at three locations. Total capital costs of the developments would approximate $ 10.3 million. Environmental impacts would be minor and amenable to mitigation.

Alternative B: Maximum Visitor Use, is aimed at providing for increased visitor use capacity on the east side while retaining an acceptable visitor experience quality. It provides for relocation of administrative facilities to a new visitor center/headquarters building at the east boundary. Most of the park housing and the maintenance area now at Chalone Creek would be relocated to the YACC area. As in Plan A, a shuttle system would convey visitors to primary use areas during periods of peak visitation. In this plan the primary shuttle staging area would be located near the visitor center, and the YACC area would be used as an overflow shuttle staging site. Capital costs of the developments would approximate $ 14.9 million. Environmental impacts would not be major but would exceed those of Alternative A.

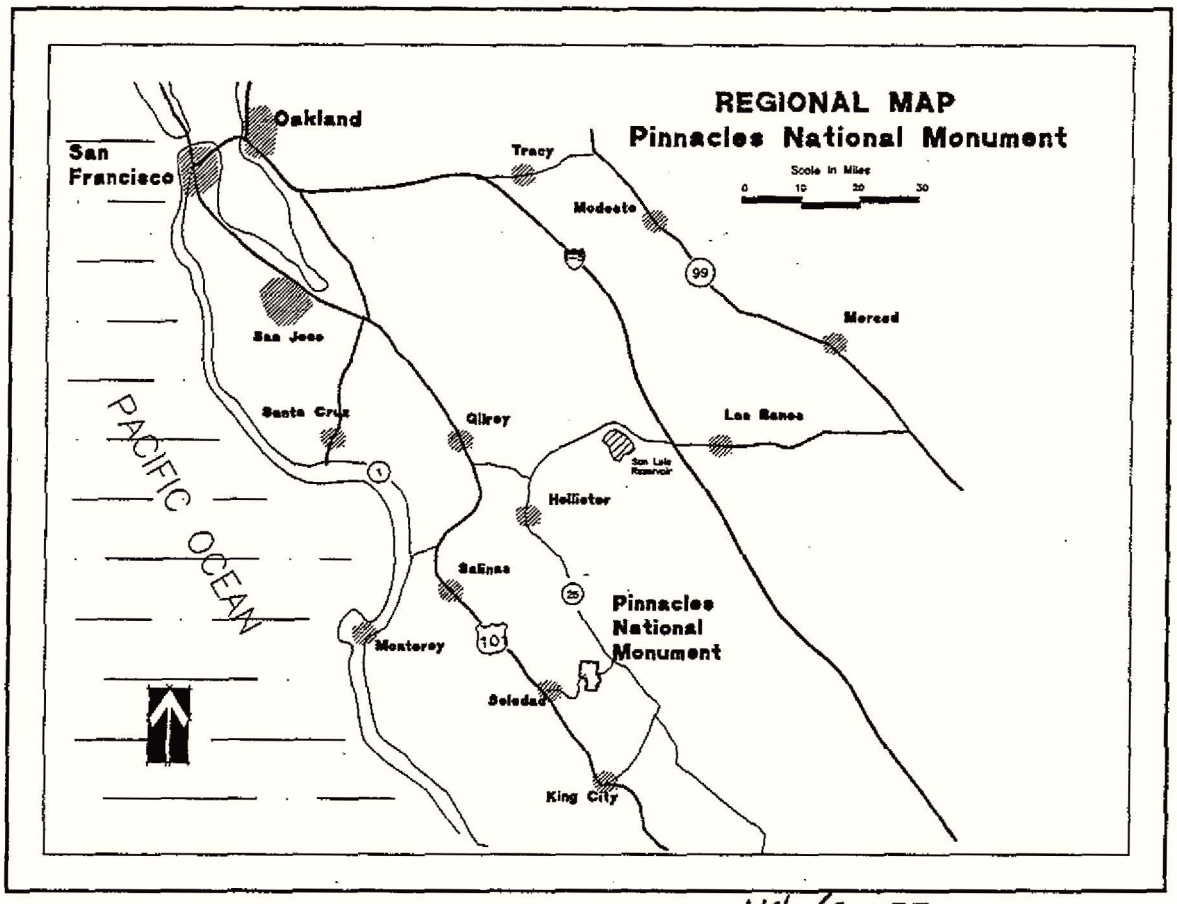
TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
PURPOSE AND NEED	
BACKGROUND	1
PLANNING HISTORY	1
PLANNING ISSUES	3
ALTERNATIVES	
NO ACTION PLAN	5
ALTERNATIVE A: ENHANCED VISITOR EXPERIENCE (The Proposed Action)	8
ALTERNATIVE B: MAXIMUM VISITOR USE	18
OTHER PLANS CONSIDERED	26
THE AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT	
THE REGION	27
NATURAL RESOURCES	27
CULTURAL RESOURCES	30
VISITOR USE PATTERNS	31
FACILITY ANALYSIS	32
ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES	
NO ACTION PLAN	37
ALTERNATIVE A: ENHANCED VISITOR EXPERIENCE	38
ALTERNATIVE B: MAXIMUM VISITOR USE	42
CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION	47
PLANNING TEAM	48
APPENDIX	
Endangered and Threatened Species List	

PURPOSE AND NEED

BACKGROUND

Pinnacles National Monument is located in the California Coast Range approximately 100 miles southeast of San Francisco. (See Regional Map.) The Monument was established by Presidential Proclamation in 1908 to preserve its unique volcanic pinnacle formations. The monument also fulfills an important role in preserving examples of coastal broadleaf chaparral and valley oak ecosystems. The monument contains both archeological and historic resources. Legislation in 1978 created a 12,952 acre wilderness area within the unit.



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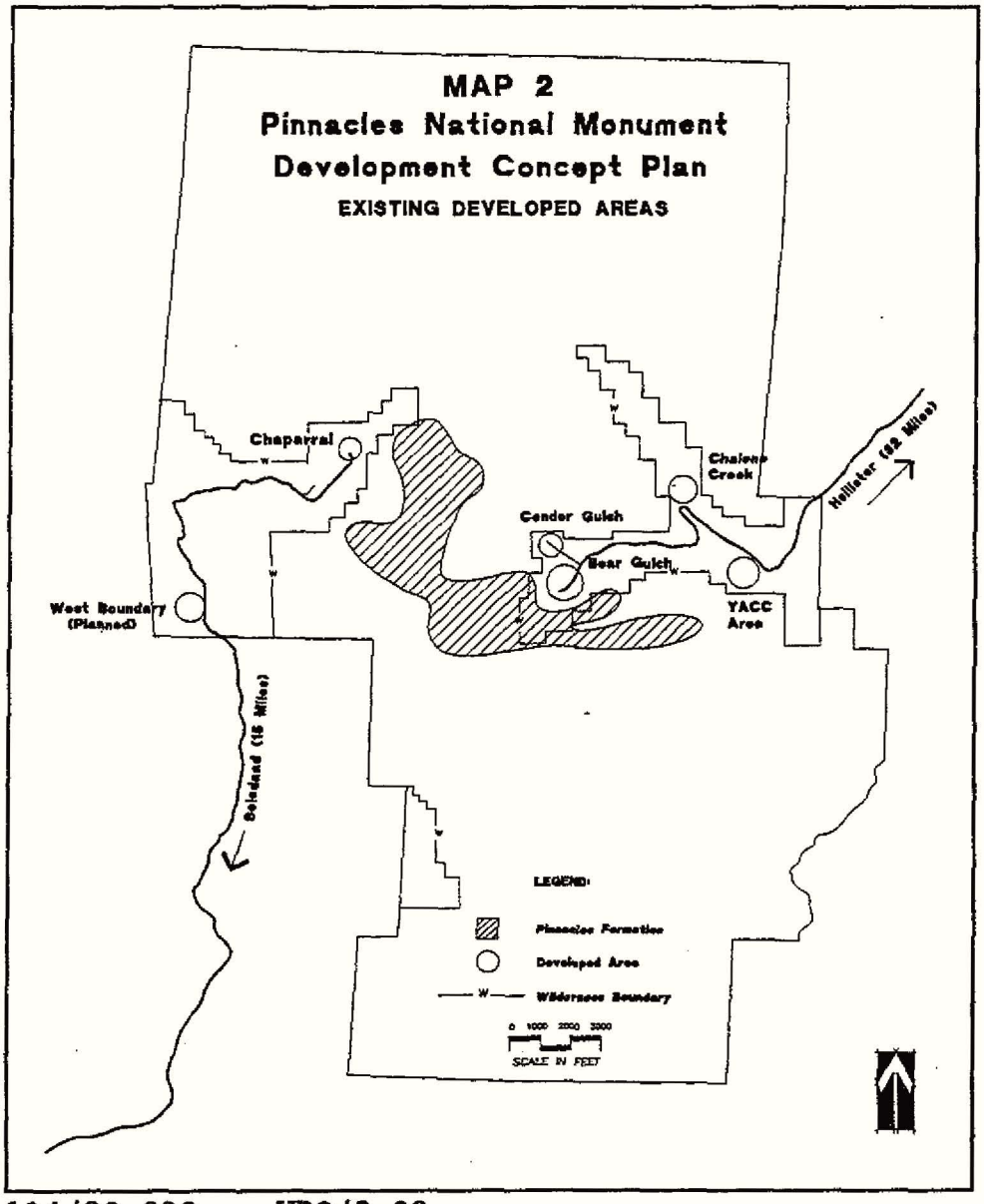
The monument's striking pinnacle formations, cave systems, miles of backcountry trails, and picnic areas make the unit a popular weekend destination for many residents of the Salinas, Monterey,

and San Francisco Bay areas. The monument has substantial visitation throughout the year, but use is particularly heavy in the late winter and spring when the wildflowers are in bloom and temperatures are comfortable for hiking.

Developed areas in the monument are accessible from both the west and the east, but there is no road connection through the monument between the two sides. Travel time between the two sides by motor vehicle is about 1.5 hours. Consequently, the monument functions almost as two separate units. Map 2 shows access to the monument and the location of developed areas.



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PLANNING HISTORY

A Master Plan for Pinnacles National Monument was completed in 1976. The master plan provides overall direction for the long term management and use of the unit. Because the master plan is conceptual and goal-oriented, more specific development concept plans are required to implement many of the features of that plan. A separate development concept plan for Pinnacles West District was approved in January, 1991.

Major provisions of the Master Plan relevant to the east side include:

1. Removal of visitor and support facilities from obtrusive locations within significant resource areas, and their relocation in less sensitive locations.

2. Implementation of a shuttle system and development of shuttle staging facilities near the park entrance.

PLANNING ISSUES

There are three basic planning issues on the east side as outlined below.

1. Inappropriately Located Facilities and Developments. The Bear Gulch developed area, located in a confined canyon at the end of the access road, is currently the primary focus of both visitor and administrative activity on the east side. This small area contains parking lots, picnic areas, a major trailhead, several units of park housing, a visitor center, and park headquarters offices. Weekend congestion is common in the peak spring and fall seasons, and may occur at any time of the year when weather conditions are right. This concentrated development results in disruption of riparian habitat, the potential for pollution of the creek through septic system overloads, and a general cluttered appearance in the area. In addition, administrative traffic in the headquarters/housing area is thought to be contributing to structural weakening of the rustic visitor center.

Much of the existing development at Chalone Creek is topographically screened from visitor use areas. However, the four-unit trailer annex is highly visible from the high peaks area and is a significant visual obtrusion.

Finally, overhead power lines extending from the boundary to the Bear Gulch and Chalone Creek developed areas are unsightly.

2. Inadequate Visitor Facilities. The park does not have adequate permanent facilities for visitor parking during peak periods. The existing visitor center does not have sufficient room for

meaningful interpretive displays to aid the visitor in fully appreciating and protecting the park resources. The visitor center is also poorly located to provide the visitor with an orientation to the park. Picnic facilities are insufficient to accommodate demand in peak visitor use periods, and the limited available restroom facilities in the Bear Gulch area make for long lines of newly-arrived visitors during peak use periods.

3. Inadequate Housing and Administrative Facilities. Park housing consists of a mix of trailers and permanent structures located in the Bear Gulch and Chalone Creek area. Units available for seasonal housing, in particular, are old and minimally acceptable, and the use of trailers for park housing is undesirable and contrary to NPS policy. The approved housing management plan provides for replacement of this existing housing stock and the development of new units to accommodate permanent and seasonal employees. In-park housing is needed on the east side to provide for after-hours security, and because the nearest available housing is more than thirty miles away.

Administrative facilities are inadequate to serve the existing park operation. The current headquarters offices are located in several small structures in the Bear Gulch area. There is insufficient space to adequately house the existing staff and the office equipment needed for operations. The separation of the office spaces makes for inefficient communication between functions and increases maintenance and utility costs.

The maintenance area, located at Chalone Creek, is adequate in size, but the buildings, originally erected by CCC crews as temporary structures in the 1930's, are inefficient in configuration, expensive to heat, and difficult to secure.

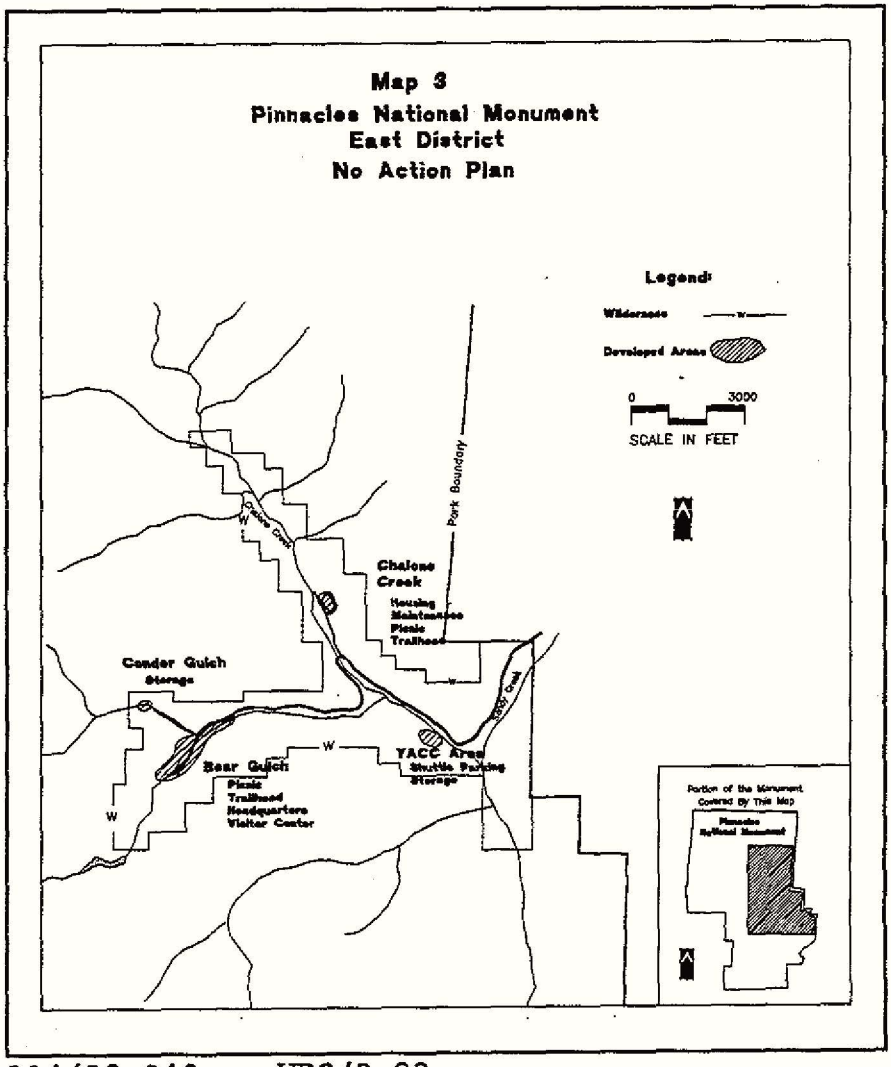
alternatives

ALTERNATIVE PLANS

Three alternative plans are discussed below.

NO ACTION PLAN

Under the no-action plan (See Map 3), visitor facilities would remain in their present location. Orientation of visitors would continue to be delayed until their arrival at the Bear Gulch



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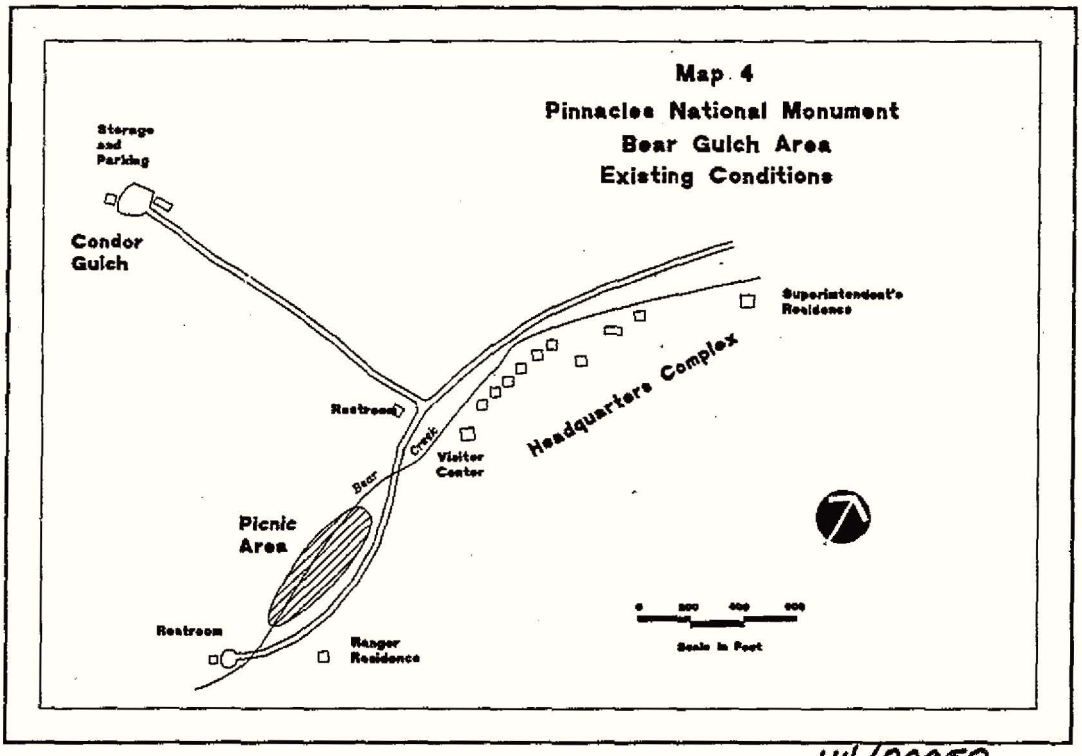
visitor center. The park would continue to operate a seasonal shuttle system, funds permitting, using a floodplain parking lot in

the YACC area. There would be occasional temporary interruptions of the shuttle operations during periods of high flow in Chalone Creek, when the lot would be unusable. The capability of the park to provide an interpretive program would remain extremely limited given the lack of display and program space in the existing visitor center. Restroom facilities to serve visitors would continue to be inadequate during heavy use periods.

Administrative facilities would remain overcrowded and inefficiently configured. Utility costs and maintenance costs would remain high for the several small buildings currently used as the headquarters complex.

The housing situation in the park would remain substandard. The units themselves are in many cases substandard and locations are undesirable, being mixed with administrative and visitor use facilities. The recruitment problems experienced by the park as a result of the unsatisfactory housing situation would continue.



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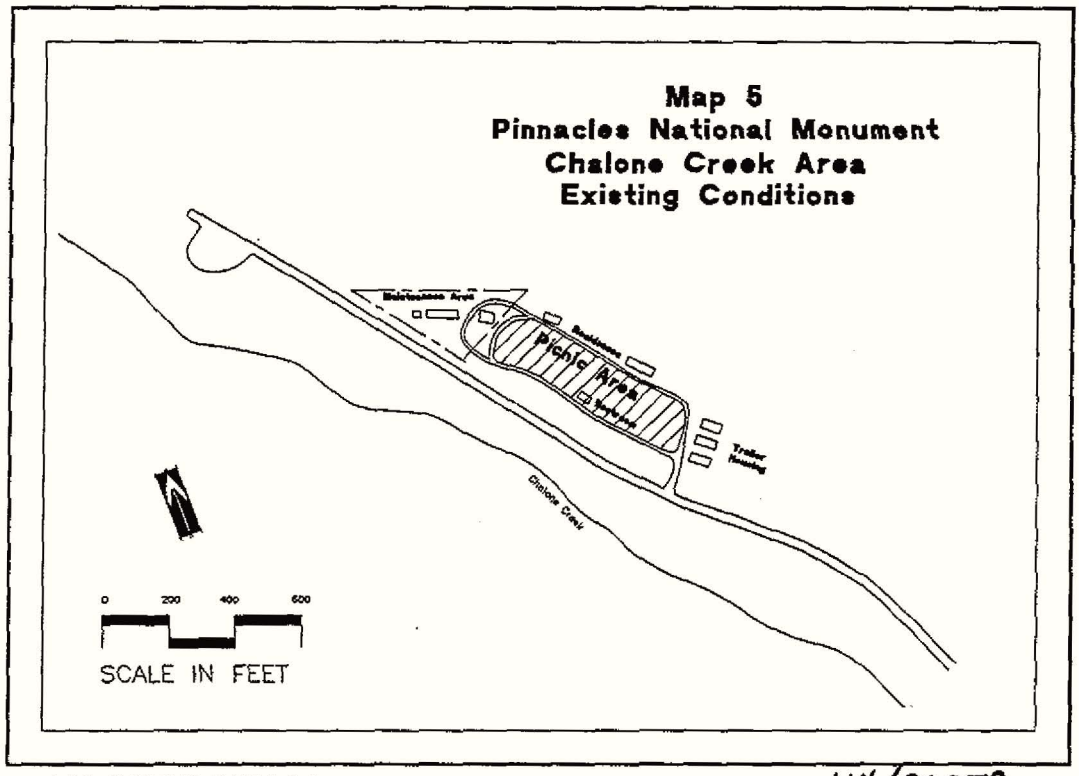

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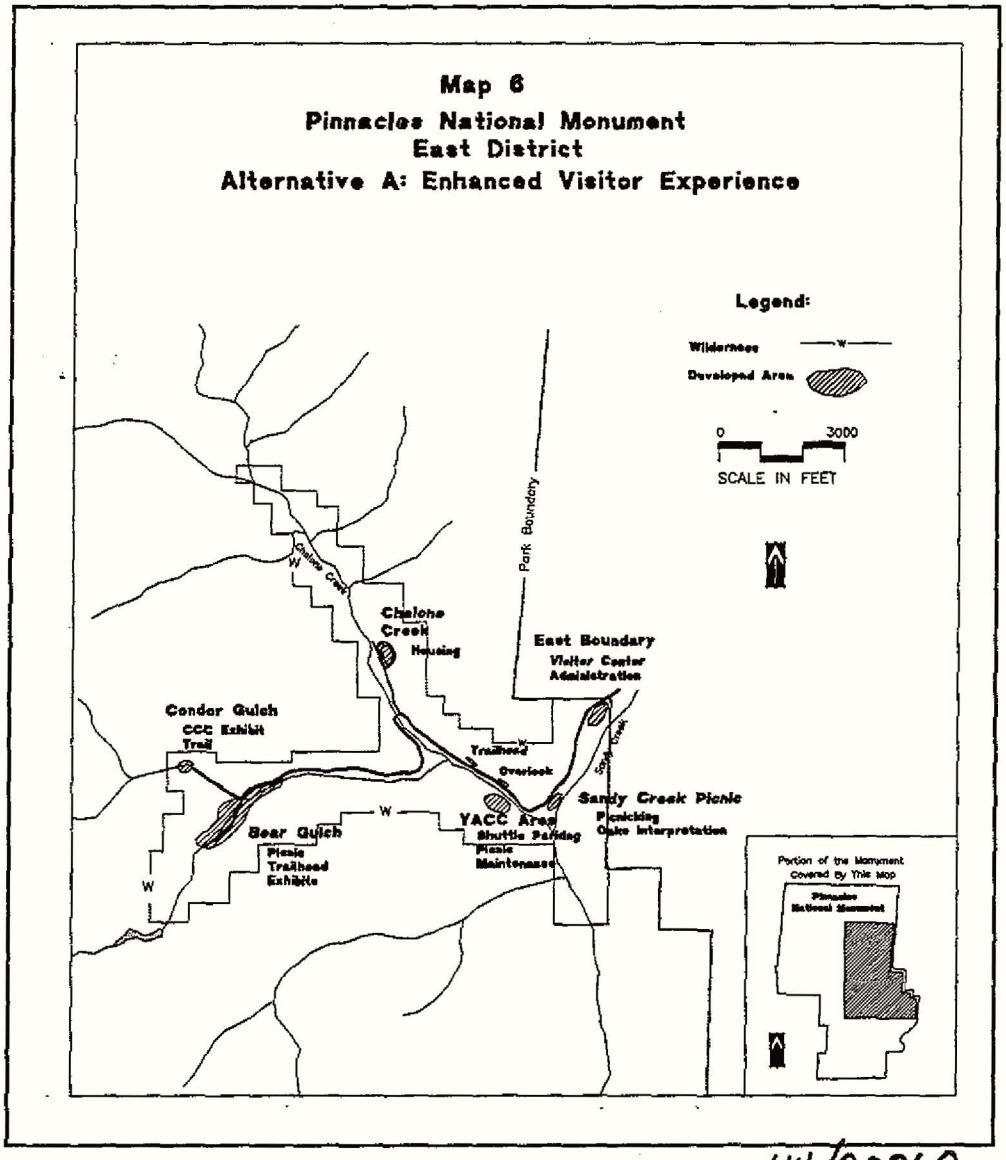
The inappropriate location of housing and administrative facilities would continue to conflict with visitor appreciation of park resources and would continue to contribute to adverse environmental impacts on water quality and riparian habitat.

EAST SIDE PLAN A: ENHANCED VISITOR EXPERIENCE (Proposed Action)

GENERAL CONCEPT

This alternative addresses the identified planning issues by removing facilities from sensitive resource areas and focusing development of needed visitor use and administrative facilities in areas better capable of sustaining such use. Visitors will enjoy enhanced interpretation and high quality recreation opportunities. The existing visitor use capacity would be retained but not increased.



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The plan provides for the relocation of the headquarters and visitor center functions to an area immediately adjacent to the east boundary. A scenic overlook would be developed a short distance inside the park to provide the visitor with initial visual perspective on the park's namesake resource, the pinnacles formation. The maintenance area, now located at Chalone Creek, would be relocated to the YACC site. Most park housing would be relocated to the Chalone Creek area, where the new residences would displace an existing picnic area. Three new picnic areas would replace the displaced Chalone Creek picnic area, and a new trailhead would provide access to the Old Pinnacles Trail.

Continued operation of a shuttle system would be integral to the plan.

VISITOR USE MANAGEMENT

Carrying Capacity. No definitive research has been accomplished to determine a resource-based carrying capacity for the monument. However, there is no evidence to suggest that resource damage is occurring as a result of excessive visitor use; rather, the key problems are related to inappropriate visitor behavior, and inappropriately placed visitor and administrative facilities.

Likewise, although no sociological carrying capacity has been scientifically established for the park, current levels of crowding do not appear to be significantly detracting from the quality of the diverse range of park experiences for most visitors.

Additional studies of resource and sociological carrying capacity are desirable and should be undertaken in the future. Monitoring programs should be implemented to ensure early detection of resource impacts and any decline in visitor satisfaction levels.

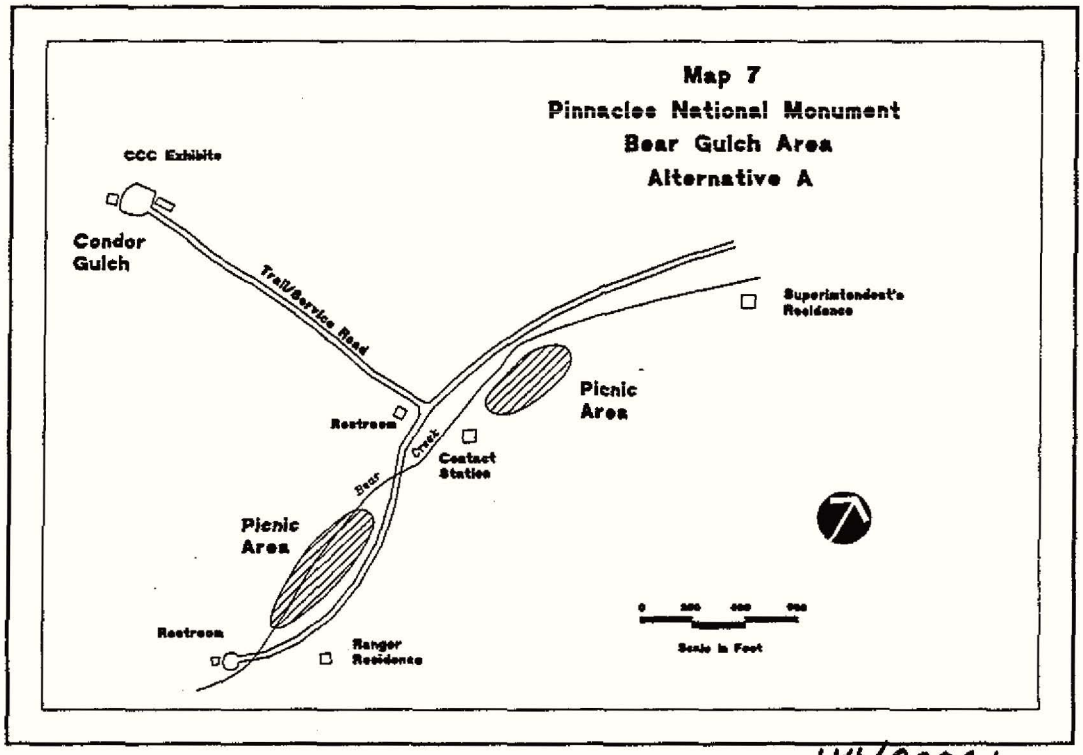
Currently the primary practical limit on the park's visitation level is the amount of parking. This proposal does not provide for a significant increase. Hence, barring a major change in the availability of mass transportation to the Pinnacles, peak visitation levels under this alternative will not increase significantly in future years.

Peak Load Management. Management of peak season weekend visitor loads is a major concern in the park now and will be more so in the future. The park would continue to use a van shuttle system in heavy use periods to supplement parking available in visitor use areas such as picnic sites and trailheads. Once parking at the visitor use areas is filled, generally by mid-morning on spring weekends, arriving visitors would be directed to a large (125-car) parking lot in the YACC area. From there an NPS operated van-shuttle would transport visitors to Bear Gulch or other east-side locations.

The YACC shuttle lot would accommodate visitor loads on most weekend days during the year. However, it would not accommodate parking demands on peak visitation spring weekends, when visitation may be 2-3 times the total parking available. It is neither economically nor environmentally feasible to accommodate these loads within the park. Development in the monument of parking sufficient to accommodate this demand would have significant and unacceptable environmental impacts. To deal with these seasonal loads, the park will continue to investigate and experiment with a variety of alternatives, including de-marketing in the spring to warn prospective visitors about weekend crowding and delays, shuttle service from fee parking lots on adjacent private lands, and a reservation system.

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

Bear Gulch. The Bear Gulch area would be significantly improved for visitor use by the relocation of most park housing and administrative functions. The existing visitor center, two restrooms, and the chief ranger's residence, all rustic rock-veneer structures dating from the CCC era and included in the List of Classified Structures, would be retained and used, providing



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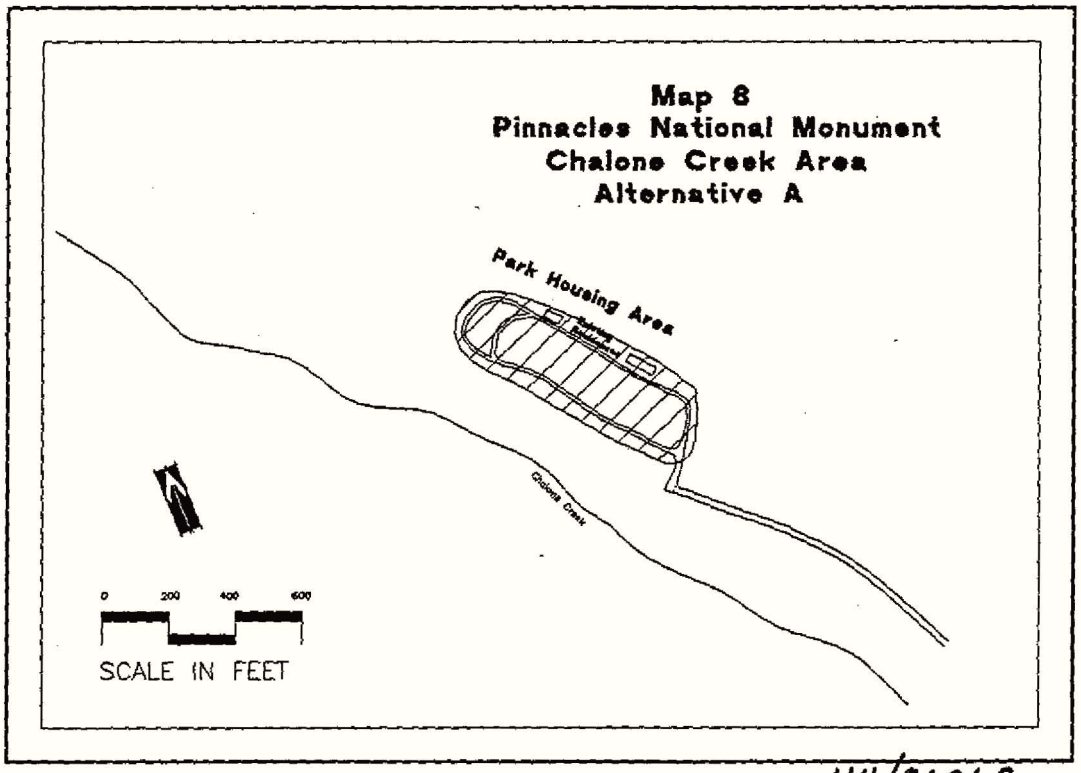
continuity with the park's architectural past. Existing uses of these structures would continue, with the visitor center modified to serve as a ranger contact station, providing information and

emergency services. Other buildings in Bear Gulch currently used for park housing and administration would be removed once replacement facilities became available. (Their removal would also be contingent on the completion of the National Register evaluation process.) A new walk-in picnic area would be developed in the area now occupied by the headquarters complex.

The two CCC-era stone buildings at Condor Gulch would remain, and would be adaptively used to interpret the CCC program. The existing paved road would be reduced in width to serve as a wheelchair-accessible trail and as service vehicle access.

Chalone Creek. Park housing would be consolidated into a residential complex at Chalone Creek, replacing the existing picnic area and maintenance yard. The exposed trailer sites at Chalone would be eliminated and restored with native vegetation.



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A total of 10 additional single family dwellings and 2 8-person dormitories would be constructed in this area. Children's play areas and outdoor community gathering space would also be provided.

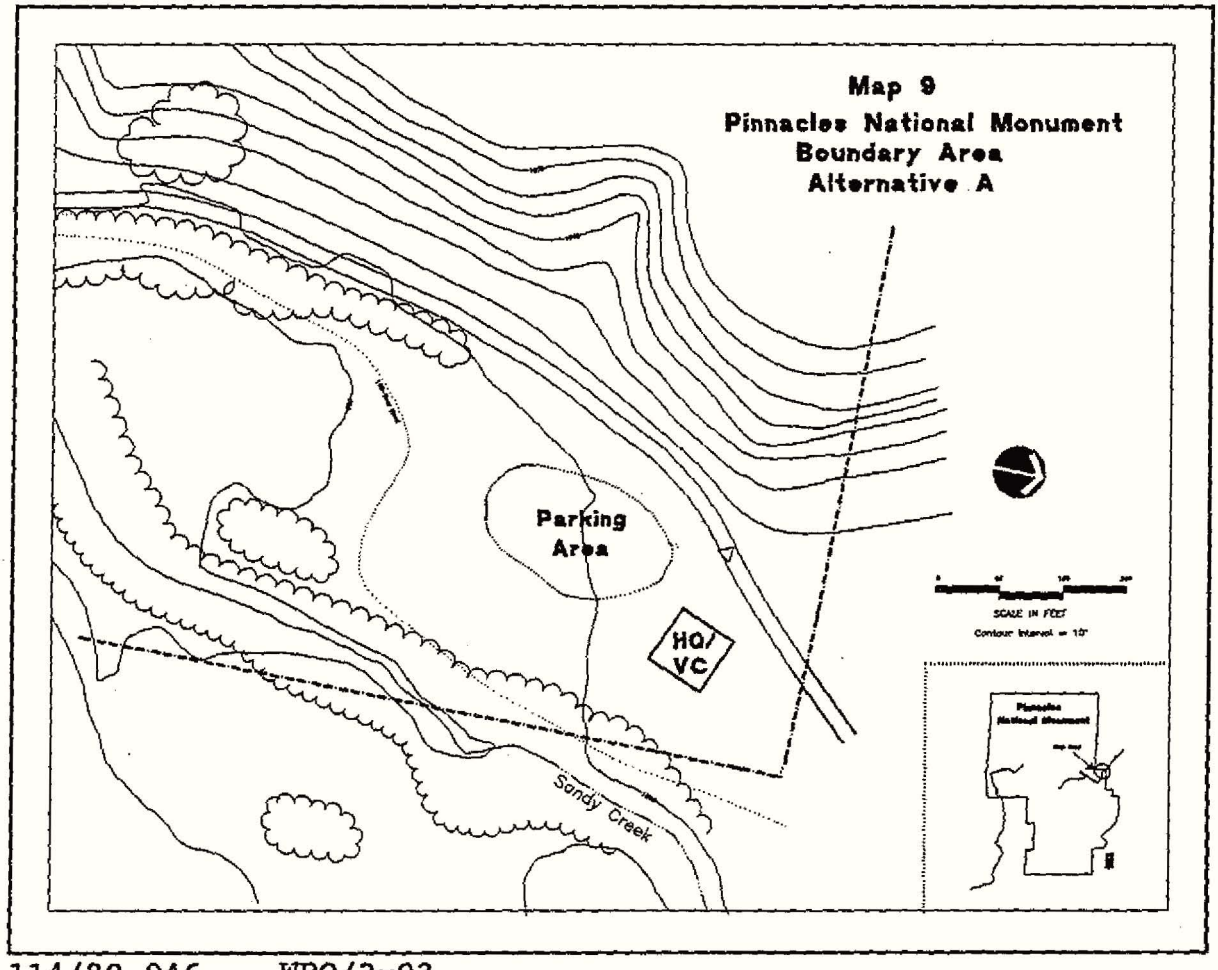
The road to Chalone Creek would be closed to public use and designated as an administrative road. Redesign of the existing intersection near the Chalone Creek bridge would help to direct

visitor traffic toward Bear Gulch and away from Chalone Creek.

Water supply would be provided by the existing well. Sewage treatment would use septic tanks and leach fields. It appears that it would be feasible to locate the leach field in the temporary trailer area located at the south end. This is a relatively large area and soils are acceptable.

The remaining development associated with the long-deactivated Chalone Annex campground, including the paved access road and the restroom structure, would be removed. Disturbed areas would be restored with native vegetation.

East Boundary Area. A new visitor center/headquarters building would be developed adjacent to the entrance road at the east boundary. This facility would include a visitor lobby with an information desk and exhibits, a cooperating association sales



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area, an auditorium, and public restrooms. Administrative space would include staff offices, storerooms, a conference room, a library, and interpretive and audio-visual workrooms. The space provided would be consistent with the requirements outlined in the interpretive prospectus. The structure would include approximately 12,500 SF.

A parking lot for approximately 75 cars would be developed to accommodate visitors and employees.

An entrance/fee collection station would be provided near the boundary line.

Map 9 shows one very preliminary alternative for location of the proposed features. However, additional more detailed design alternatives will be created and evaluated with the objective of best protecting vegetative and wildlife values and blending the existing visual scene with sensitively designed improvements.

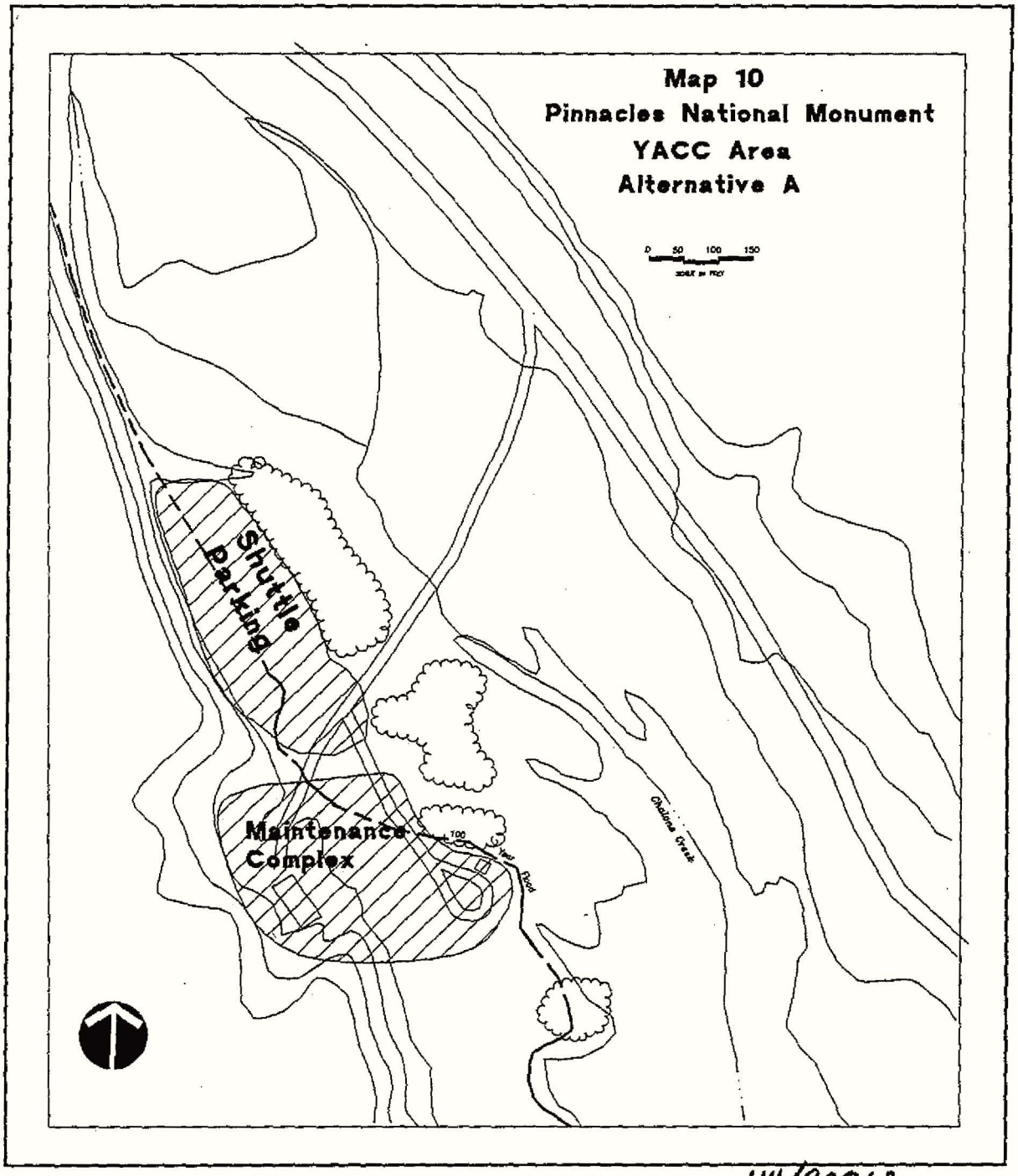
Water for the area would be provided from groundwater, either from existing wells or from a new well. Septic tanks would provide wastewater treatment with leach fields carefully located so as to avoid contamination of the creek or groundwater sources.

YACC Area. The east side maintenance facility would be located in this area. The existing structures, YACC building, pole barn, etc., would continue to be used and would be supplemented by approximately 4500 SF of new buildings. This would replace existing facilities located at Chalone Creek. The park stock corrals and native plant nursery would remain in this area.

The shuttle parking lot would also be located at this site. Approximately 125 unpaved spaces would continue to be provided on unvegetated flood-plain lands in this area. Improvements made in the area to facilitate visitor use would include development of a vault restroom (above the 100-year flood limit), provision of interpretive panels adjacent to the parking area, and development of a modest (10-20 unit) picnic area among the adjacent digger pines.

The existing water system would be improved to meet the additional demands. Chlorination would be provided. Sewage would be provided by a septic tank and leach fields located well above the flood-plain.

The concrete vehicle crossing across Chalone Creek would be raised and culverted to allow the passage of vehicles during moderate to low flow periods. It would not be passable during occasional major flood events. At these times, there would be no vehicle access to the shuttle parking area or to the maintenance areas. To alleviate the problems associated with this lack of access, the park would prepare a contingency plan for relocating visitors, park personnel



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and critical equipment from the maintenance area in advance of high runoff periods. Supplies needed during flood emergencies would be stored in the Chalone Creek area.

Scenic Overlook Area. A scenic overlook to introduce the incoming visitor to the pinnacles formation would be developed along the entrance road as indicated on Map 6. This would be located at a point soon after the pinnacles first come into view. Four to five pull-off parking spaces would be provided and interpretive panels would introduce the visitor to the pinnacles formation.

Sandy Creek Picnic Area. A picnic area of approximately 15-20 sites would be provided in this area. One site would be fully handicapped accessible. Access would be provided by an existing road, which would be paved for a short distance. Water would be extended to the site from the YACC well. Vault toilets would be provided.

This is an area of mixed oaks, including numerous mature valley oaks. Interpretation would be provided here of the various types of oaks, the statewide concerns about diminution of the oak population, and efforts being made by the park to encourage oak reproduction. A wheelchair-accessible interpretive trail would be provided. Care would be taken in designing the trail and picnic area to avoid locating sites where they would physically impact valley oaks through soil compaction, or lead to the need for their management as hazard trees.

Chalone Creek Trailhead

A new trailhead, accommodating 10-15 cars, would be developed adjacent to the main road as shown on Map 6. This trailhead would be located at a major trail crossroads with links to the Old Pinnacles Trail, Bear Gulch, the YACC area, and Pinnacles campground and the new visitor center at the boundary. The trailhead would be served by the shuttle.

Utility Lines

Power and telephone lines would be placed underground.

COST ESTIMATES

Estimated development costs for Alternative A, based on January 1992 price levels, are outlined in Table 1.

TABLE 1

COST ESTIMATES FOR ALTERNATIVE A: ENHANCED VISITOR EXPERIENCE

LOCATION	DEVELOPMENT ITEM	GROSS COST	PLANNING	TOTAL COST
Parkwide	Underground Power and Telephone	$ 265,000	$ 50,000	$ 315,000
	Waysides & Exhibits	200,000	40,000	240,000
Bear Gulch	Remove Structures	55,000	10,000	65,000
	Expand Picnic Area	25,000	5,000	30,000
Boundary	Parking- 75 Spaces	140,000	25,000	165,000
	Visitor Center/HQs	4,130,000	800,000	4,930,000
	Utilities	275,000	55,000	330,000
	Entrance Station	35,000	5,000	40,000
YACC Area	Unpaved Parking	15,000	5,000	20,000
	Restroom	50,000	10,000	60,000
	Stream Crossing	20,000	5,000	25,000
	Maintenance Facility	680,000	130,000	810,000
	Utilities	185,000	35,000	220,000

LOCATION	DEVELOPMENT ITEM	GROSS COST	PLANNING	TOTAL COST
Chalone Area	Housing Area	$1,840,000	$ 350,000	$ 2,190,000
	Utilities	400,000	80,000	480,000
Sandy Creek	Picnic Area	20,000	5,000	25,000
	Utilities	105,000	20,000	125,000
	Road and Parking-20 Spaces	65,000	15,000	80,000
Scenic Overlook	Pull-off Parking and Trail	40,000	10,000	50,000
Trailhead	Parking- 15 cars	50,000	10,000	60,000
	TOTALS	**$8,595,000**	**$1,665,000**	**$ 10,260,000**

EAST SIDE PLAN B: MAXIMUM VISITOR USE

GENERAL CONCEPT

As in Alternative A, this alternative addresses the identified planning issues by removing facilities from sensitive resource areas such as Bear Gulch and relocating them to sites better suited to such use. This alternative improves the park's interpretive capability, and also expands the facilities available to visitors, resulting in a greater peak period capacity for the park. Weekend crowding at the primary park attractions such as the caves and high trails will, consequently, be increased somewhat and developed areas within the park will be expanded.

Implementation of a permanent shuttle system would be integral to the plan. Shuttle parking would be provided both at the boundary and at the YACC area.

Housing and maintenance facilities would be consolidated in the YACC area.

Map 11 shows the general facility configuration for the east side under this alternative.

VISITOR USE MANAGEMENT

Carrying capacity and peak load management considerations would be similar to those in Alternative A. Peak load capacity would be substantially increased through retention of parking at Chalone Creek and a substantially larger lot in the boundary developed area. However, this additional parking would still not accommodate spring weekend demand, and options for management of this excess demand would need to be evaluated.

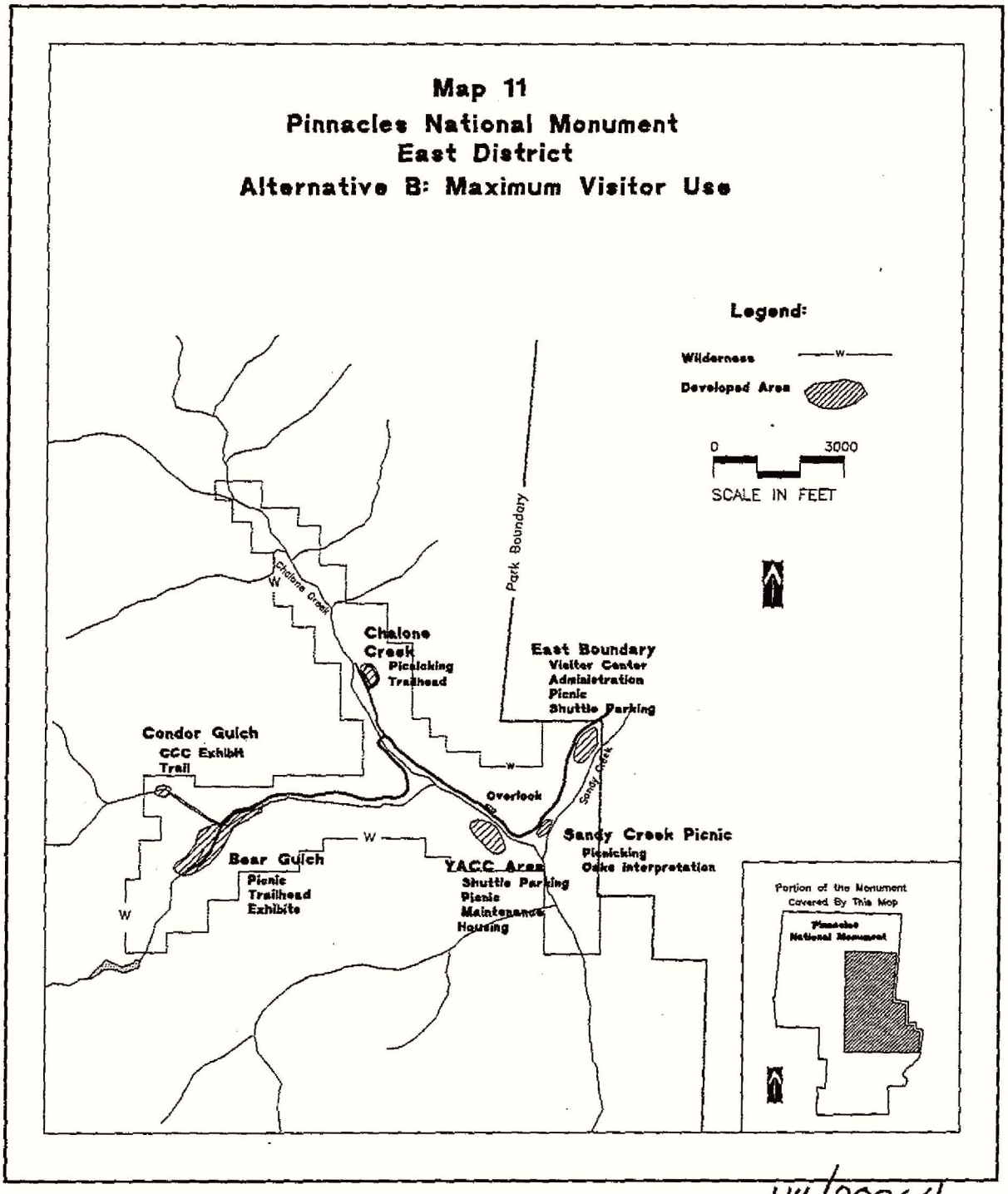
DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

Bear Gulch. The treatment of the Bear Gulch area would be the same as in Alternative A.

The two historic stone buildings at Condor Gulch would remain, and would be adaptively used to interpret the CCC program. The existing paved road would be reduced in width to serve as a trail and as service vehicle access.

Chalone Creek. The Chalone Creek area would also be significantly improved for visitor use. With the removal of the maintenance area and several units of park housing, the picnic area could be expanded by about 15 sites and the quality of the visitor experience improved.

No significant changes in utilities would be required to support



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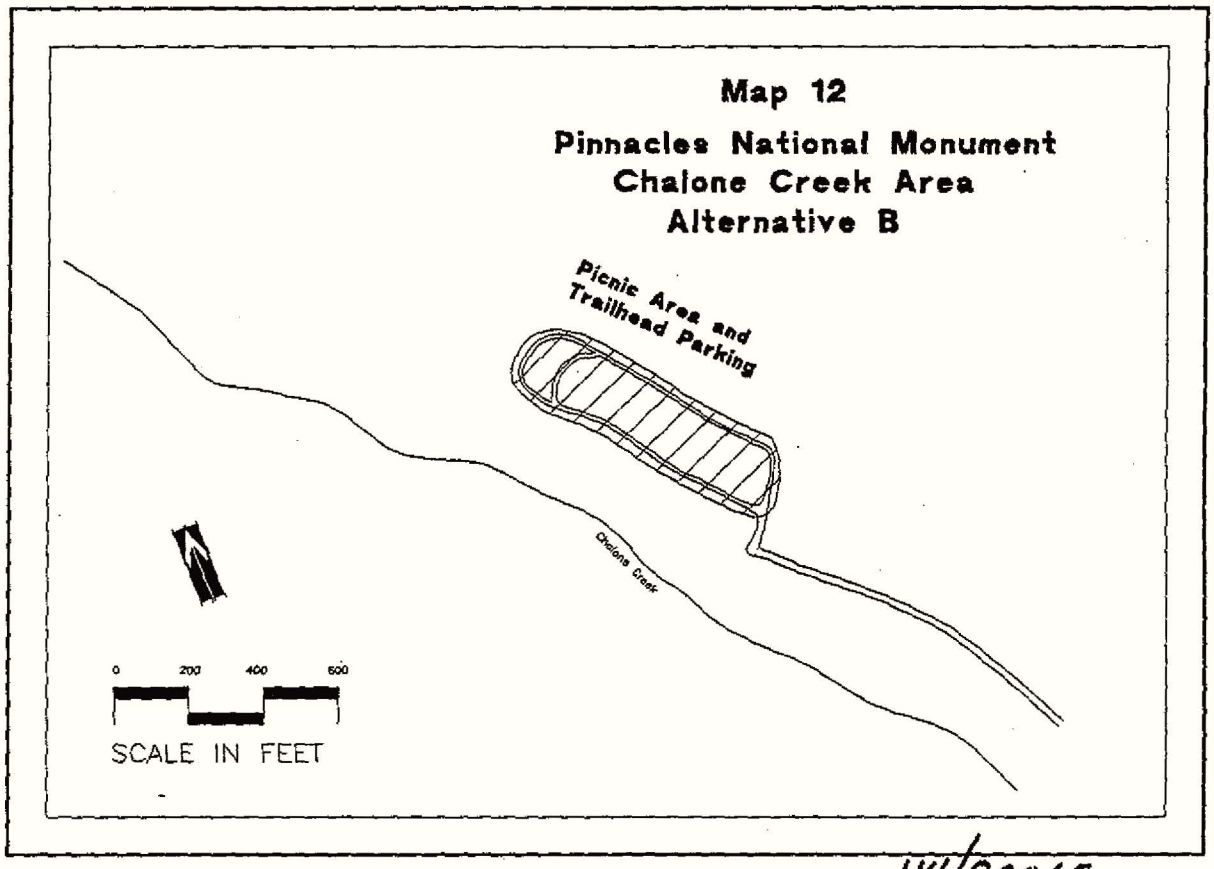
The remaining development associated with the Chalone Annex campground, including the paved access road and the restroom structure, would be removed. Disturbed areas would be restored with native vegetation.



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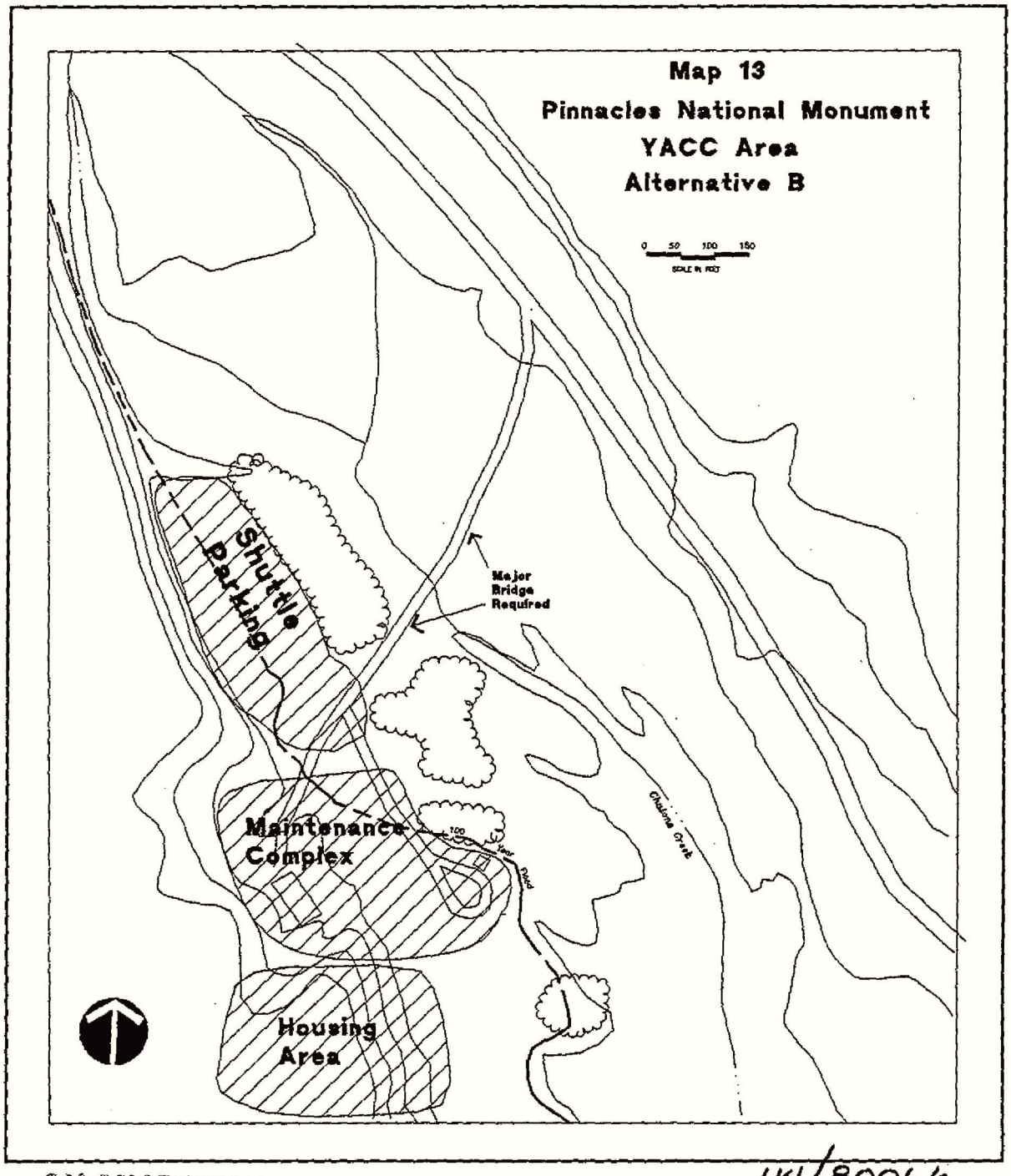
YACC Area. Housing now located at Chalone and Bear Gulch would be consolidated into a residential complex near the YACC area. Maintenance would also be relocated from Chalone to the YACC area. The existing building would be used, and additional structures of about 4500 SF would be developed to complete the facility. A well located near the YACC site would provide water which would be chlorinated. Sewage treatment would be provided by septic tanks.

An overflow shuttle parking lot accommodating approximately 125 vehicles would also be located here. This site would be opened for parking only after the boundary lot is filled.

A bridge would be constructed over Chalone Creek to ensure access to the YACC area during flood periods.

East Boundary Area. This would be similar to Alternative A, except that a large parking lot, accommodating approximately 270 vehicles would be included. In peak periods, once parking at visitor use sites was filled, visitors would park here and take the shuttle to the various activity areas and trailheads. During off-peak periods, visitors would stop at the visitor center for orientation and then continue on into the park.



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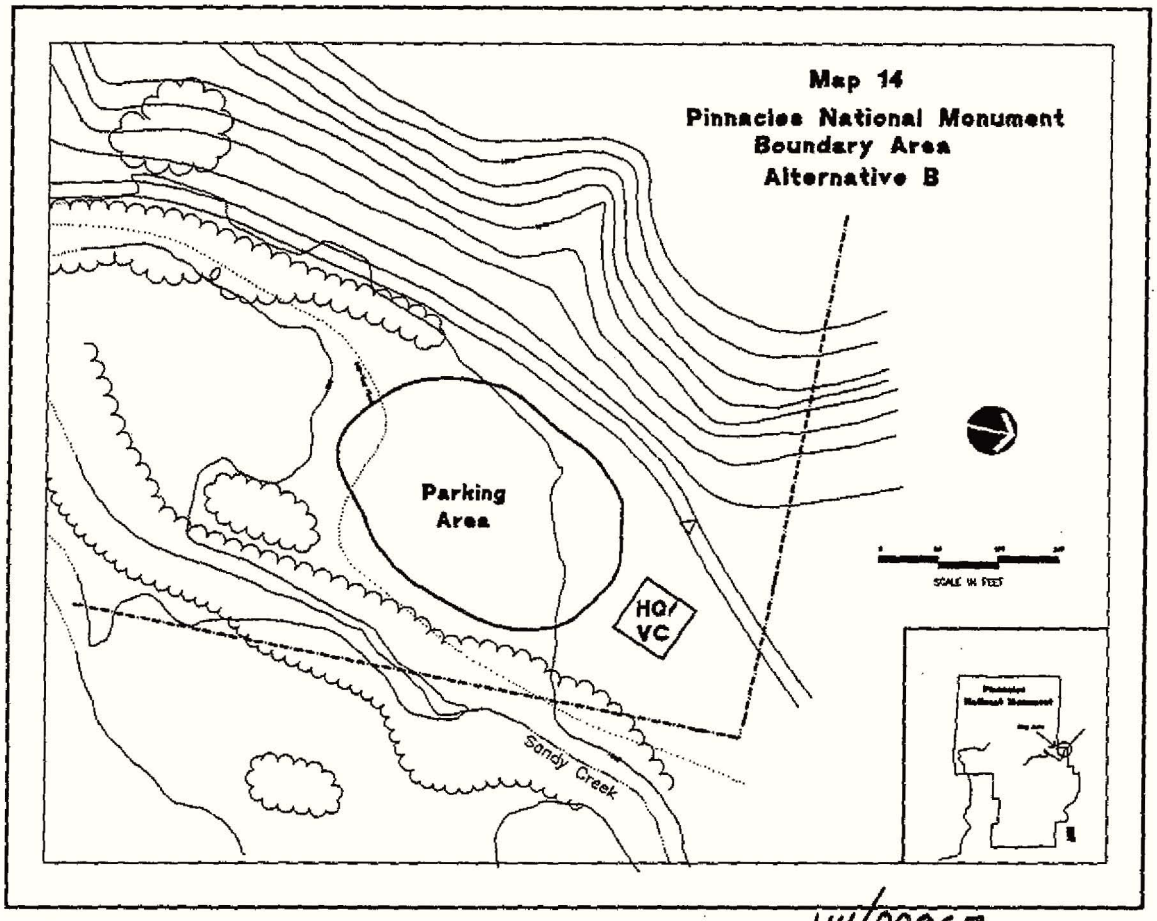
This facility would include space to accommodate interpretive requirements outlined in the interpretive prospectus. Administrative offices would consolidate functions now dispersed among the small buildings in the Bear Gulch area.



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A small picnic area would be provided in the vicinity of the visitor center.

An entrance station would be provided near the boundary line.

Water for the area would be provided from groundwater, either from existing wells or from a new well. Septic tanks would provide wastewater treatment.

Sandy Creek Picnic Area. This area would be the same as in Alternative A.

Scenic Overlook Area. Same as Alternative A.

Utility Lines. Power and telephone lines would be placed underground.

COST ESTIMATES

Estimated development costs for Alternative B, based on January 1992 price levels, are outlined in Table 2.

TABLE 2

COST ESTIMATES FOR ALTERNATIVE B: MAXIMIZE VISITOR USE

LOCATION	DEVELOPMENT ITEM	GROSS COST	PLANNING	TOTAL COST
General	Underground Power and Telephone	$ 265,000	$ 50,000	$ 315,000
	Waysides & Exhibits	200,000	40,000	240,000
Bear Gulch	Remove Structures	55,000	10,000	65,000
	Expand Picnic Area	25,000	5,000	30,000
Boundary	Parking- 270 Spaces	460,000	90,000	550,000
	Visitor Center/HQs	4,130,000	800,000	4,930,000
	Utilities	275,000	55,000	330,000
	Picnic Area	15,000	5,000	20,000
	Entrance Station	35,000	5,000	40,000
YACC Area	Unpaved Parking	15,000	5,000	20,000
	Restroom	50,000	10,000	60,000
	Bridge	3,280,000	620,000	3,900,000
	Maintenance Facility	680,000	130,000	810,000
	Utilities	580,000	110,000	690,000
	Housing Area	2,010,000	380,000	2,390,000

LOCATION	DEVELOPMENT ITEM	GROSS COST	PLANNING	TOTAL COST
Chalone Area	Remove Housing and Maintenance	$ 150,000	$ 30,000	$ 180,000
	Expand Picnic & Parking	55,000	10,000	65,000
Sandy Creek	Picnic Area	20,000	5,000	25,000
	Utilities	105,000	20,000	125,000
	Road and Parking-20 Spaces	65,000	15,000	80,000
Scenic Overlook	Pull-off Parking and Trail	40,000	10,000	50,000
	TOTALS	**$12,510,000**	**$2,405,000**	**$ 14,915,000**

OTHER PLANS CONSIDERED BUT REJECTED

Other options were considered in the planning process and are briefly described below.

Expanded Bear Gulch Headquarters. Consideration was given to obliteration of the several small buildings currently serving as park headquarters in the Bear Gulch area, and their replacement with a new structure providing sufficient space for headquarters operations and expanded visitor needs. This alternative would not relieve the congestion in the Bear Gulch area and would not provide the visitor with an initial orientation to the park. In addition, the area lacks a suitable site for a large structure and there is the potential for water quality problems generated by increased sewage flows.

Acquisition of an Administrative Site. There are very few sites within the park that provide entirely desirable locations for housing, maintenance, and park administration. All of the areas considered have some drawbacks in terms of conflict with visitor use and impacts on the environment, and consequently their use involves some degree of compromise.

An exterior administrative site, providing a location for most housing and administrative functions, would represent the most environmentally satisfactory alternative for the unit. However, this alternative was not pursued because of the need for additional legislative authority, the extended time horizon required for this alternative, and the finding that administrative and housing facilities could be located on lands within the existing boundary without significant adverse impacts on the environment or the visitor experience.

Sandy Creek Housing Area. The Sandy Creek bench area, site of a proposed picnic area in both Alternatives A and B, was considered as a possible park housing area. However, it was ruled out because the extensive development required would have significant adverse impacts on the valley oaks, and would be visible from the high backcountry trails.

the affected environment

THE AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

THE REGION

The Monument is located in the California Coast Range section of the Pacific Border physiographic province.

The area of the Monument is rural, but the southward growth of the San Francisco Bay area is edging ever closer to this unit. Nearby cities include Soledad, 15 miles distant on the west side, and Hollister, about 32 miles distant on the east side.

The Monument is surrounded by a mixture of BLM-managed public domain lands, and private lands used for grazing and the cultivation of grapes. In addition, a private campground is located immediately adjacent to the monument's east boundary.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Geology and Soils. Located on the eastern edge of the Pacific plate, the park displays outstanding manifestations of the phenomenon of tectonic plate movement. The rock is believed to have originated near Lancaster, California, some 195 miles south of the park's present location, and then moved northward along the San Andreas Fault, at a rate of about 1.5 inches per year.

The pinnacles consist of well consolidated breccia rising several hundred feet in height. They are the remnants of Miocene volcanic activity, and display the effects of weathering, block faulting, and continuous earthquakes over the past 23 million years.

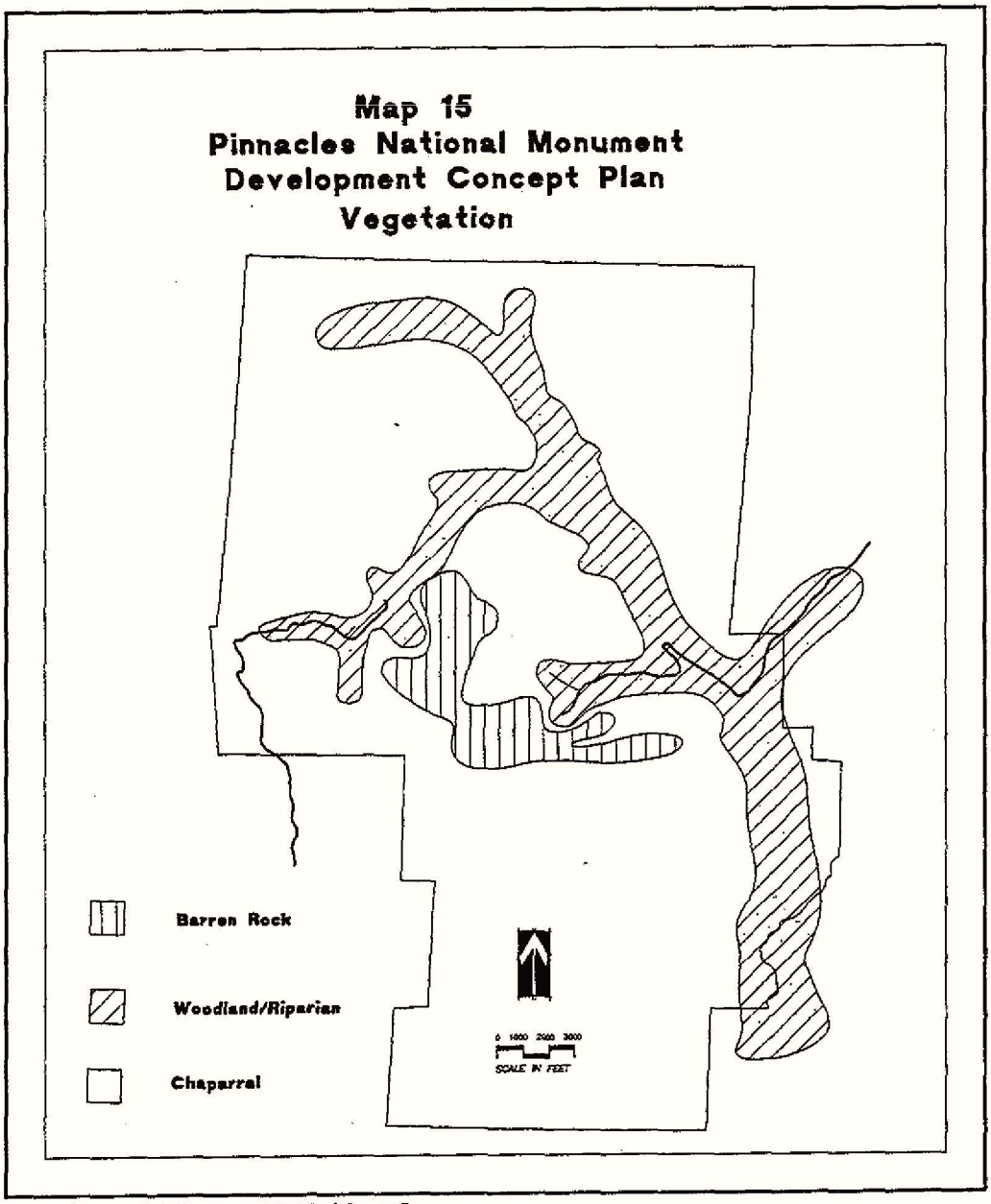
Faulting and erosion have created deep, narrow gorges where boulders have become wedged at various heights above the canyon floor, creating two complexes of talus caves.

Soils in the area have been mapped in detail by the Soil Conservation Service. Generally they are of low fertility, are permeable and well-drained, and are subject to erosion hazard on steep slopes.

Vegetation. Map 15 shows the generalized vegetation distribution in the Monument. Most of the Monument, about 82 percent, is covered with coastal chaparral. This community mainly consists of common plants such as chamise, buckbrush, holly leaf cherry, and manzanita. Also present is the less common Pinnacles buckwheat (Eriogonum nortonii), which is found primarily in burned/disturbed areas.

About 13 percent of the Monument is composed of riparian and

woodland communities, including oak, willow, buckeye, cottonwood, sycamore, elderberry, ferns, and toyon. Of particular interest in this category is the stand of valley oaks (Quercus lobata) found on the east side of the monument near the confluence of Chalone and Bear Creeks.



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The remaining 5 percent of the monument includes barren rock area and grasslands.

There are no federally listed threatened or endangered plant species in the Monument. However, 2 plant species found within the Monument, Juglans hindsii (walnut variety) and Poa unilateralis (native grass), are identified by the Center for Plant Conservation as species that could become extinct in the next ten years. A single specimen of Juglans hindsii has been located in the park on the east side of the monument southeast of the bridge across Chalone Cree. Poa unilateralis is found at a number of locations in the park, in areas of rocky outcrops.

Wildlife. The park supports a wide variety of mammals, reptiles, birds, amphibians, and insects. Chief among these are the coast blacktailed deer, bobcat, raccoon, gray fox, coyote, northern Pacific rattlesnake, gopher snake, prairie falcon, turkey vulture, raven and golden eagle. Infrequent sightings are reported of mountain lions.

Federal and State listed endangered wildlife species potentially inhabiting the monument area include the Least Bell's Vireo (Vireo bellii pusillus), bald eagle (Haliaeetus leucophalus), and American peregrine falcon (Falco peregrinus anatum). The historic range of the California condor (Gymnogyps californianus) also includes the monument. There are no records of sightings of the Least Bell's Vireo, and the California condor has been absent from the park for several decades. A peregrine falcon re-introduction program is currently underway on the Monument's east side and the Fish and Wildlife Service has considered the park as a potential future condor release site.

In addition to the above-listed species, there are a number of candidate species of mammals, amphibians, reptiles, and invertebrates that may be found in the monument. These are all listed as Category 2, indicating the need for the collection of additional information prior to formal listing as threatened or endangered. The complete list of such species as identified by the Fish and Wildlife Service is included in the appendix.

Water Resources. Streams in the Monument are mostly intermittent, with little flow in late summer months. However, in some cases the streams are subject to flood flows during the winter rainy season. The U.S. Geological Survey has evaluated flood plain conditions on the east side of the Monument and mapped the 100-year and maximum expected flood elevations for both Chalone Creek and Sandy Creek.

U.S.G.S. also has evaluated potential water supply sources on both the east and west sides of the Monument. For the east side, the study basically concluded that groundwater supply could readily be developed in several locations in reasonable proximity to potential development sites.

Scenic Quality. Scenic values are significant visitor attractions for the park. Most of the park, and much of the surrounding lands visible from high peak trails, remain natural and undeveloped. However, scattered residential development in the surrounding area continues, and detracts somewhat from views from the higher elevations. The existing trailer development at the Chalone Creek area also detracts from scenic quality.

Wilderness. Legislation in 1978 created a 12,952 acre wilderness area within the park. This represents approximately 80% of the total area within the park.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

The area of the Monument was used seasonally for hunting in prehistoric times by the indigenous Mutsun or Chalone peoples. Substantial archeological survey work has been accomplished in the Monument, and a number of bedrock mortar and lithic scatter sites have been documented. The Chalone Creek Archeological Sites District, consisting of a campsite, rock shelter, and bedrock mortars, is on the National Register of Historic Places. This area is on the Monument's west side, located to the east of the Chaparral developed area.

Most of the historic resources in the Monument are located on the east side and are associated with the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) activities. The CCC crews, working with NPS landscape architects, built a number of small buildings and other structures on the east side. This rustic architecture has come to be regarded as architecturally and historically significant to some extent.

The various CCC-related structures on the east have been evaluated under National Register criteria and nominations are being submitted to the SHPO. Several structures in Bear Gulch, including a park residence, the visitor center, and two restrooms, were nominated as likely qualifying for the Register. All are wood frame construction with rock veneer. Also nominated were the two rock buildings in Condor Gulch. One building was formerly a stable and the other was a gas station. Both are now used for storage.

Other structures in the east side developed area qualifying for the Register include the green stone entrance pylon, located near the old park boundary, and the Chalone Creek Bridge.

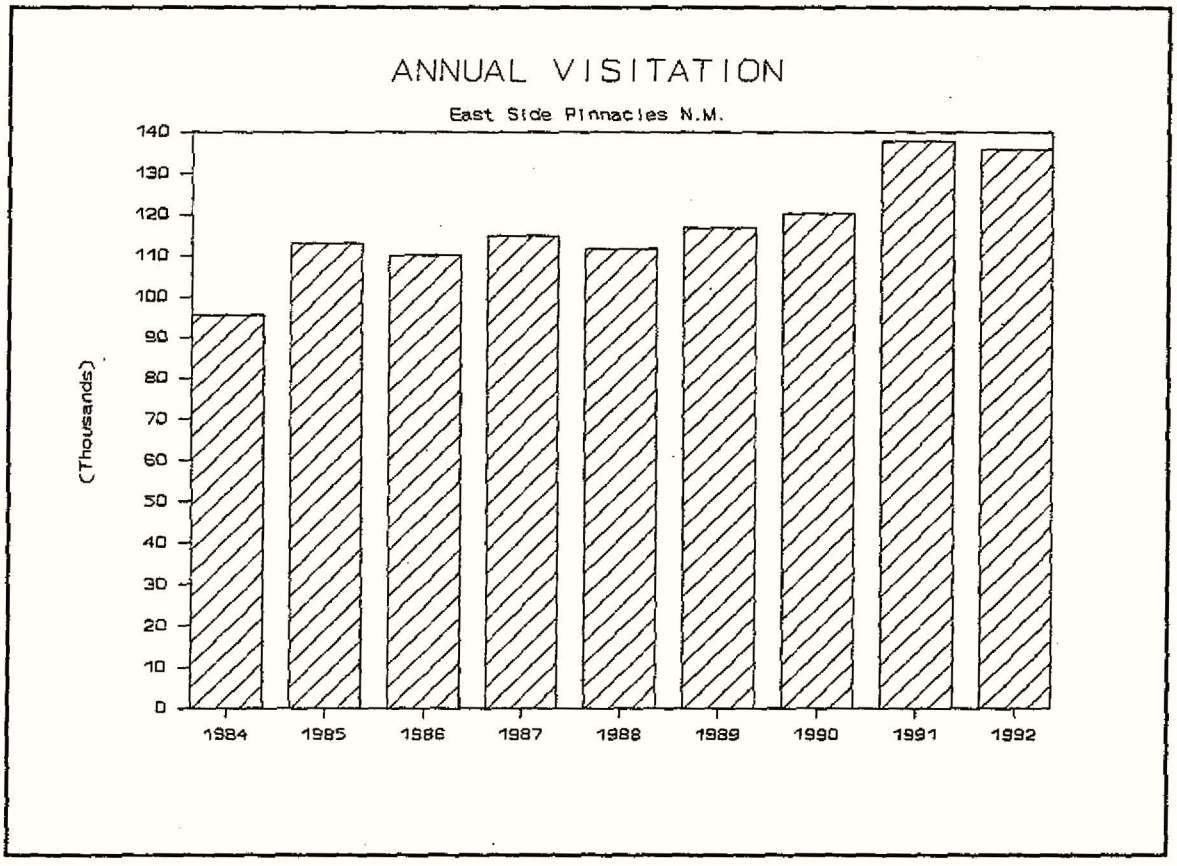
Several small buildings in Bear Gulch, currently used for park administrative purposes and for park housing, have been substantially modified over the years and do not meet National Register criteria.

In addition to the CCC structures, the Monument contains the remains of several early twentieth century homesteads, all of which are located in the park's backcountry.

There are no known ethnographic resources at Pinnacles National Monument. Copies of the draft will be sent to organizations with possible cultural affinities the Pinnacles in order to elicit views and concerns.

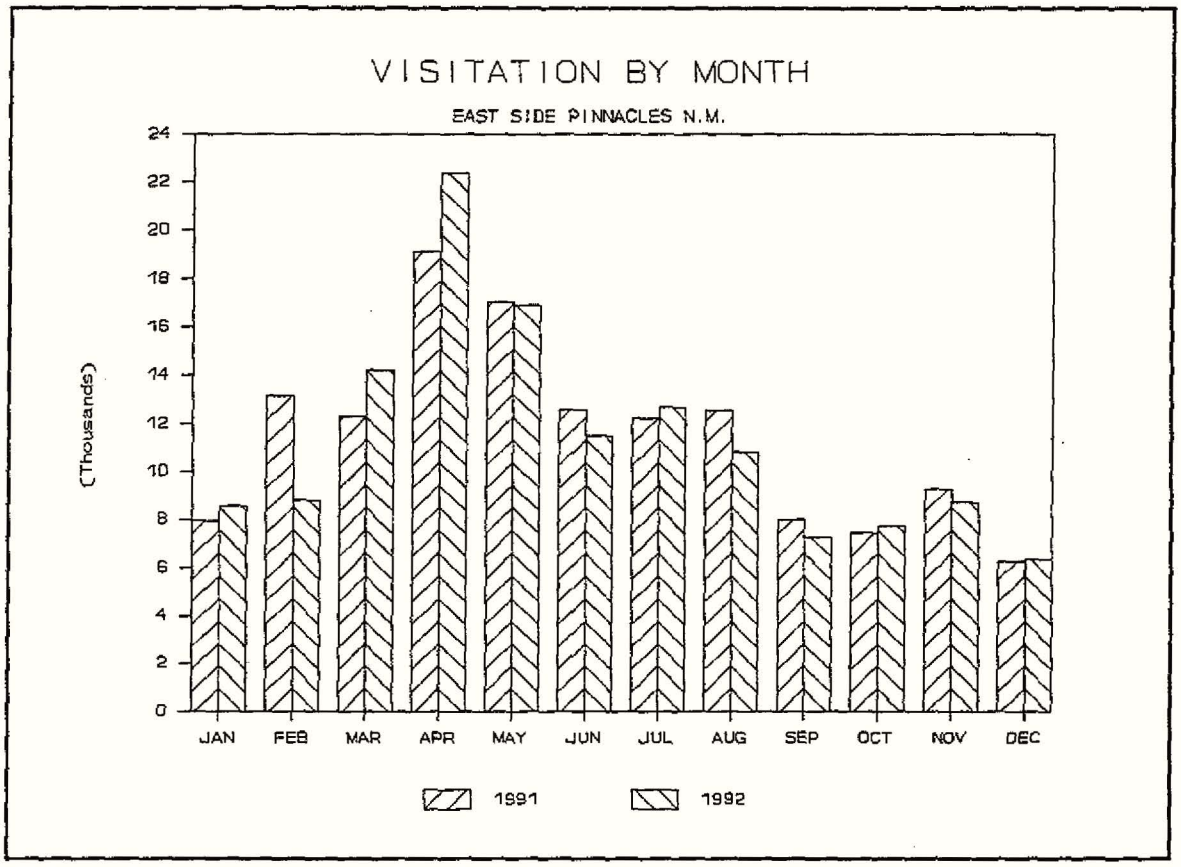
VISITOR USE ANALYSIS

Annual use at Pinnacles National Monument totalled 191,683 visits in 1991. The East District received approximately 135,839 visits, or about 71% of the total. Figure 1 shows annual visitation on the east side from 1984 through 1992.



Visitor use at Pinnacles exhibits significant seasonal variation. There is a surge of visitation in spring months when wildflowers are blooming and the weather is comfortable for walking and hiking. When the weather starts to warm appreciably, with temperatures frequently exceeding 100 F., use falls off sharply. Figure 2 shows monthly variations for 1991 and 1992.

Because Pinnacles is primarily a day use area with a preponderance of visitation from surrounding urban areas, the Monument also

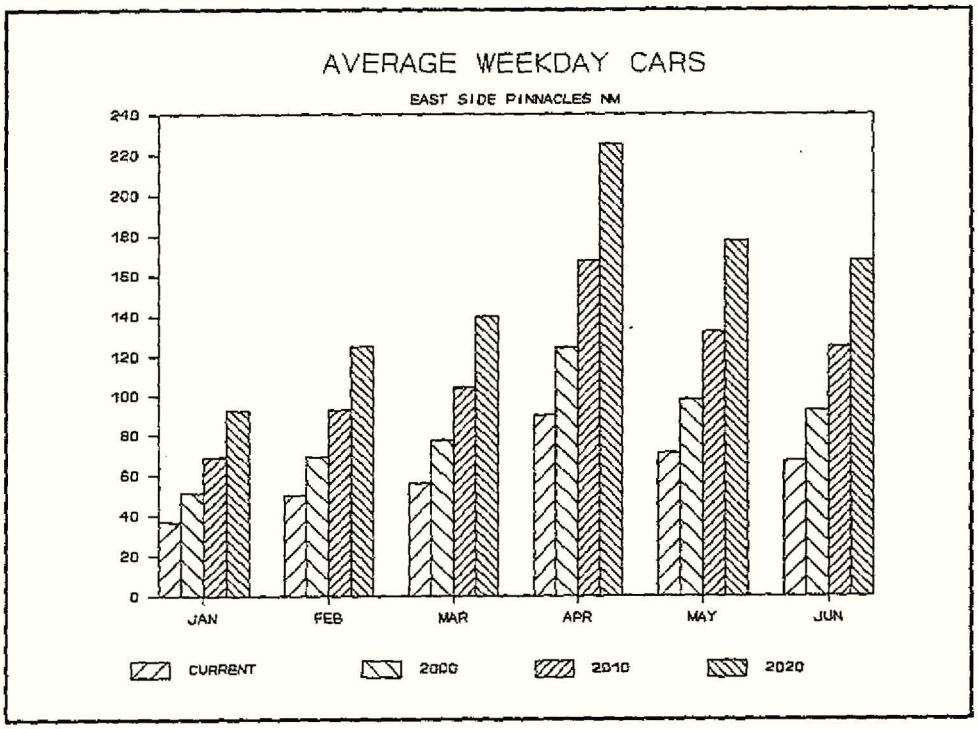


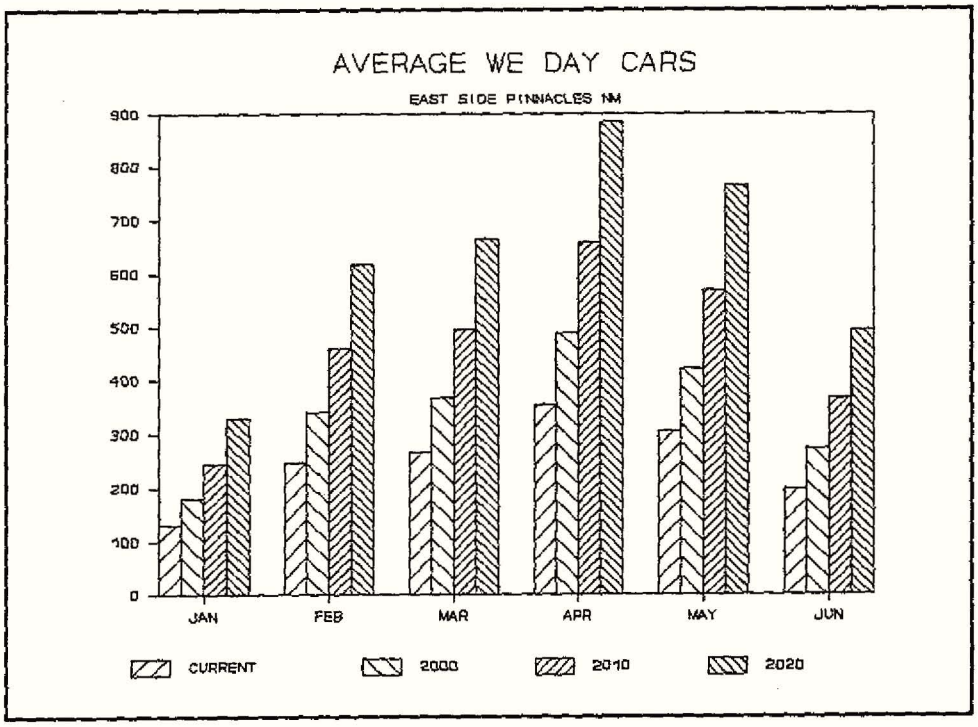
experiences significant variation in weekend and weekday loads. During the peak month, for example, the East District has an average of 90 vehicles per day on weekdays, and about 375 on weekend days.

The annual growth in use at the Monument over the last several years has averaged about 3%. Continued growth at least at this rate is anticipated, with the possibility of accelerated growth in east side visitation as the Hollister area continues its rapid expansion. Figures 3 and 4 show projected increases in use for the peak season, by weekend and weekday numbers of vehicles, for the period from 1991 until 2020.

FACILITY ANALYSIS

Visitor Facilities. Visitor use facilities on the east side are located at the Bear Gulch and Chalone Creek developed areas, and at the YACC site. (See Maps 3 and 4.) Bear Gulch has a small picnic





area and a very limited visitor center. It serves as a major

trailhead for hikes into the high peaks of the pinnacles formation and to the Bear Gulch caves. On spring weekends, the 75 parking spaces and 26 picnic sites at Bear Gulch are filled by mid-morning; on fall weekends, they are filled by noon. Heavy use also occurs on fine-weather weekends in winter and summer. At these times, the limited restroom facilities in the area are insufficient to meet the need.

Chalone Creek also has a small picnic area (27 sites) and serves as a trailhead both for high peaks hikes and for a lower elevation trail leading to the Balconies Caves. There are 50 parking spaces available for visitors. Visitor parking and picnic areas operate at capacity by late morning on peak season weekends.

A large temporary unpaved parking lot at the YACC site has been in use for the last several years on weekend days during the heavy use season. This lot accommodates up to 130 vehicles. Once the limited parking at Bear Gulch and Chalone Creek is full, incoming vehicles are diverted into this lot and visitors are provided van shuttle transportation from the lot to the visitor use areas at Bear Gulch and Chalone Creek. A few picnic tables are also provided near the lot for visitors wanting to eat lunch prior to departing for the activity areas.

The capacity of this area is substantial, but is near capacity on peak weekends. Because of its location on the Chalone Creek floodplain, it is not usable during or following periods of substantial precipitation.

Administrative Offices. The administrative offices for the park are located in a cluster of several small adapted CCC-era cabins and trailers in the Bear Gulch area. The configuration of these buildings is functionally inefficient and the space available is inadequate for the staff and equipment required in park operations.

Housing. The existing park housing units, consisting of a mixture of trailers and permanent structures, are located in the Bear Gulch and Chalone Creek areas. Several of the units are substandard and/or inappropriate in location and design, and none meet current NPS standards except the recently constructed duplex in Chalone Creek. The three newly developed trailer sites at Chalone Creek were placed there with the expectation that they would be relocated following completion of a development concept plan.

The park's current housing management plan for employees on the east side provides for 12 family housing units in an area to be identified in this plan. Two houses in Bear Gulch, the superintendent's residence and the chief ranger's residence, are to be retained. The housing plan also calls for modular apartments to accommodate a total of 16 seasonal employees.

Utilities and Roads. Water for the Bear Gulch, Chalone Creek, and

YACC area is provided by wells. The supply is adequate and quality is high. However, water at the YACC site is not treated and hence is not potable. Also, the well at Chalone Creek is currently being monitored for surface water infiltration. Relocation of the well or increased treatment may be required depending on the results of the monitoring. Sewage disposal in Bear Gulch and Chalone Creek is provided by septic systems. Septic systems in both Bear Gulch and Chalone Creek are operating at near capacity levels. Chemical sanitation is provided at the YACC area.

Electrical service to the east side is provided by Pacific Gas and Electric Co., while telephone service is provided by a small, local telephone company. Except for the administrative area in Bear Gulch, all power and utility lines are currently above ground.

Roads on the east side are adequate in design to serve existing and projected loads.

environmental consequences

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

NO ACTION PLAN

Impacts on Visual Quality. The concentration of administrative, park residential, and visitor use facilities in the Bear Gulch area would continue to impinge on visual quality in that key visitor use location.

The temporary trailer housing site at Chalone Creek, visible from the High Peaks area, would continue to produce negative impacts.

Impacts on Vegetation and Wildlife. The developments at the Bear Gulch area subject the riparian zone to trampling and require management of mature oaks as hazard trees. There are no identified threatened or endangered species in this area.

Impacts on Cultural Resources. The adverse structural effect of administrative traffic in the vicinity of the visitor center would continue.

Impacts on Soils. There are no current significant soils impacts.

Impacts on Wilderness. There are no physical impacts on wilderness from the existing development. The temporary trailer housing at Chalone Creek is visible from the wilderness and may impinge to some extent on the quality of the wilderness experience.

Impacts on Water Resources. Ground water supply for park developments on the east side is adequate and does not adversely impact resources.

Periodic flood flows in Chalone Creek damage trails and roads, and cut off access to the YACC building and the temporary shuttle parking lot.

Because of the concentration of facilities in the Bear Gulch area, and the limited area suitable for septic system flow percolation, there is potential for contamination of flows in Bear Creek at some time in the future.

Impacts on Visitor Use and Services. The visitor will continue to be faced with a "bare-bones" interpretive situation on the east side because of the lack of space in the visitor center for displays. Also, the visitor will continue to drive through much of the park before receiving an orientation on park attractions and activity areas. In the absence of a visitor use management strategy for peak use periods, visitors will increasingly be turned away or compelled to wait to enter the park.

ALTERNATIVE A: ENHANCED VISITOR EXPERIENCE

(The Proposed Action)

Impacts on Visual Quality. This plan would remove obtrusive administrative functions and housing facilities from the Bear Gulch area.

The boundary development would detract to some degree from visual quality in that area, but the meadow would remain as an important visual resource. The meadow area is visually attractive, particularly during the spring wildflower season. The new facilities would be designed to best harmonize with the natural scene. The development site is not visible from the high peaks trails.

The redevelopment of the Chalone Creek area into a residential site would change the appearance of the area substantially. New structures would be visually more attractive than the existing maintenance area, but less attractive than the picnic area. Some oak trees would have to be removed to accommodate the development, but this would be minimized by careful site planning. Additional natural vegetation would be used to soften and screen the structures. All new development would be designed to blend and harmonize with the natural surroundings.

The new housing area would be well screened from most visitor use areas. The limits of the developed area would be reduced under the plan concept, and those portions of the developed area now visible from the high peaks trails would be restored to natural conditions. Hence the overall visual impact at Chalone Creek should be positive.

The YACC area is well screened by terrain and vegetation from travel routes and primary visitor use areas, except the YACC shuttle lot, and visual impacts of development there would be minimal. Facilities would be designed to harmonize with the natural scene.

The new trailhead and overlook, both located adjacent to the main access road, would have minimal visual impact.

The Sandy Creek Picnic Area would be visually affected to some degree by the minor developments proposed there. The restroom structure would be designed to minimize obtrusiveness and parking would be screened by vegetation.

Overall, visual impacts would be minor.

Impacts on Vegetation and Wildlife. Approximately 1 acre in the 5-acre boundary meadow area would be disturbed under this proposal.

This area was grazed by cattle for a number of years prior to its addition to the Monument, and vegetation consists of a mixture of native and alien grasses and wildflowers. This represents the only open meadow habitat in the East District. A somewhat unique area of oak reproduction in the vicinity would not be affected.

Redevelopment of the Chalone Creek area for housing would require the elimination of a small number of mature oak trees located in the picnic area. Replacement natural vegetation would be provided in the area as landscaping.

Very limited vegetation would be removed at the YACC area for the shuttle lot as this area is already largely in place. Approximately 1 acre of chaparral vegetation would be removed to accommodate the maintenance facility.

Development of the Sandy Creek Picnic Area would have minimal impacts on vegetation, with less than an acre affected overall. Access would be via an existing road. Parking would be located so as to avoid mature oak trees. Care would be taken in the placement of picnic sites to avoid impacts on the trees. The picnic area could result in the attraction of additional squirrels in the area, with some minor impact on potential oak regeneration.

Minor roadside areas, with a mixture of grasses and wildflowers, would be affected by development of the overlook and the new trailhead.

Overall, less than 4 acres of natural vegetation would be affected by plan proposals. Approximately 1 acre of land at the Chalone Creek area now used for housing would be restored to native chaparral vegetation. In addition, adverse impacts on riparian vegetation in the Bear Gulch area would be lessened.

No listed threatened or endangered species have been identified in the development areas or should otherwise be affected by the plan. Three candidate species have either been found or are expected to be found in the park's riparian areas, and surveys of their presence are underway. These species include the red-legged frog, the western pond turtle, and the two-striped garter snake. These species may be found adjacent to developed areas but should not be affected by the proposal.

Development areas would be surveyed for rare plants prior to any construction work.

Overall impacts on vegetation and wildlife would be insignificant.

Impacts on Cultural Resources. The general area of the proposed boundary development was surveyed for archeological resources in 1981 as part of an overall project to evaluate newly authorized additions, and the specific area of the proposed development was

surveyed in detail in 1984. Several bedrock mortars were located to the south of the site, but none within or near to it. The survey revealed a very diffuse lithic scatter in the area with no expectation of significant resources. Minor excavations in the area in 1992 in conjunction with percolation tests were monitored by the regional archeologist and revealed no evidence of prehistoric use. Nevertheless, any ground disturbing activity would be closely monitored for evidence of artifacts.

There are no identified archeological phenomena in or near other development sites. Detailed surveys would be completed prior to construction in these areas.

None of the existing structures in the Bear Gulch and Chalone Creek areas has been identified by NPS historians as significant and appropriate for listing on the National Register. Removal of existing structures in the Bear Gulch and Chalone Creek areas would be contingent on completion of National Register procedures.

Impacts on cultural resources would be insignificant.

Impacts on Soils. Soils would be disturbed at development sites. Less than 4 acres would be affected. There are no identified soils problems in these relatively level areas. Erosion control measures would be included in construction plans, and revegetation with native species would be accomplished as soon as possible.

Soils impacts would be very limited.

Impacts on Wilderness. There would be no physical impacts on designated wilderness and none of the new developments would be visible from the wilderness trails. Peak level use of the wilderness would not increase. A current visual impact, the Chalone Creek trailers, would be eliminated. Existing visitor loads on wilderness would be retained but not increased.

Wilderness values would be marginally improved by the plan.

Impacts on Water Resources. This alternative would benefit water resources by removing concentrations of facilities from the Bear Gulch area with the attendant threat of septic flow contamination.

Sewage systems for the boundary, YACC, and Chalone Creek areas would be designed to avoid contamination of water resources. A sealed vault toilet would be used at Sandy Creek Picnic Area.

Water supply for the boundary development and the expansion of Chalone Creek residential development would be provided from groundwater supplies. An additional well may be needed to serve the boundary development. No adverse impacts to resources are foreseen.

All proposed new buildings would be located above the 100-year

flood plain. However, the YACC parking lot would be inundated in a 100-year flood, and access to the lot could be blocked by lesser flood events. The potential for life threat and property loss will be mitigated by park procedures for evacuation of this area when the potential for flooding exists.

No wetlands would be affected by plan proposals.

The plan would not have any significant impacts on water resources.

Impacts on Visitor Use and Services. The plan provides an expanded visitor center with room for significantly improved interpretive media. It offers a good opportunity for early visitor orientation on park attractions and regulations. Additional picnic areas would be provided at Bear Gulch, YACC area, and the Sandy Creek area. The quality of visitor experience at the existing activity areas would be significantly improved by the elimination of conflicting uses. Crowding levels during peak visitation periods would not increase.

Overall, the plan would have a beneficial impact on visitor use.

ALTERNATIVE B: MAXIMUM VISITOR USE

Impacts on Visual Quality. The boundary development, to include a visitor center and 270 parking spaces, would significantly detract from the visual quality of the meadow. The meadow area to be developed is visually attractive, particularly during the spring wildflower season. The new facilities would be designed to best harmonize with the natural scene; however the visual impact in the immediate area would inevitably be substantial. The boundary area is not, however, visible from the high peaks trails or from major visitor activity areas.

Visual quality at the Chalone Creek area would be improved by elimination of the exposed trailer sites and by removal of the maintenance facilities.

The YACC area, to include the employee housing area, the maintenance area, and a shuttle parking lot, is well screened by terrain and vegetation from travel routes and primary visitor use areas, except the overflow shuttle lot, and visual impacts of development there would be minimal. Facilities would be designed to harmonize with the natural scene.

Visual impacts on Bear Gulch, Sandy Creek Picnic Area, and the roadside overlook would be similar to Alternative A.

Overall, visual quality impacts would be greater than Alternative A, but not significant on a parkwide basis.

Impacts on Vegetation and Wildlife. Approximately 3 acres in the undeveloped boundary meadow area would be disturbed under this proposal. This area was grazed by cattle for a number of years prior to its addition to the Monument, and vegetation consists of a mixture of native and alien grasses and wildflowers.

Approximately 5 acres of chaparral vegetation would be eliminated in the YACC area to accommodate the new housing and maintenance areas.

Development of the roadside scenic overlook would require minimal vegetative clearing.

Approximately 1 acre of land at the Chalone Creek area now used for housing would be restored to native vegetation. In addition, adverse impacts on riparian vegetation in the Bear Gulch area would be lessened.

No listed or candidate threatened or endangered species have been identified in the development areas or should otherwise be affected by the plan. Development areas would be surveyed for rare plants prior to any construction work.

Overall, approximately 8 acres of natural vegetation would be removed and 1 acre would be restored by plan proposals. In addition, riparian vegetation in Bear Gulch would be somewhat enhanced. Overall plan impacts would be insignificant.

Impacts on Cultural Resources. Impacts on cultural resources would be similar to Alternative A.

Impacts on Soils. Soils would be disturbed in the boundary, YACC, and overlook areas as a result of development of facilities. About 3 acres in the boundary area and 5 acres in the YACC area would be affected. Erosion control measures would be included in construction plans, and revegetation with native species would be accomplished as soon as possible.

Overall impacts on soils would be negligible.

Impacts on Wilderness. There would be no physical impacts on designated wilderness from proposed developments and none of the developments would be visible from wilderness trails. The wilderness experience would be somewhat improved by provisions for removing visually intrusive features from the Chalone Creek area. However, the plan's provisions for increased peak period visitation would to some extent lessen the quality of the wilderness experience.

The plan would have only minor impacts on wilderness.

Impacts on Water Resources. This alternative would benefit water quality by removing concentrations of facilities from the Bear Gulch area with the attendant threat of future septic flow contamination.

Water supply for the YACC and boundary developments would be provided from groundwater supplies. An additional well may be needed to serve the boundary development. Water demands would be modest and no adverse impacts to resources are foreseen.

In the boundary area, all proposed buildings and parking areas would be located above the 100-year flood plain line. However, a portion of the parking lot at the boundary and the entire YACC shuttle lot would be subject to inundation during a 100-year flood. The potential for loss will be mitigated by the park's development of procedures to provide for evacuation of these areas when floodflows are expected.

No impacts to wetlands will occur as a result of the plan.

Overall, impacts on water resources will be insignificant.

Impacts on Visitor Use and Services. The plan provides an expanded

visitor center with room for significantly improved interpretive media. It offers a good opportunity for early visitor orientation on park attractions and regulations. Existing activity areas are significantly improved by the elimination of conflicting uses.

The plan also provides additional visitor use capacity in peak periods by providing approximately 250 additional parking spaces. These additional spaces will permit an additional 1000 daily visitors in peak periods. This increased use will result in additional crowding at primary park attractions and may thereby lessen the quality of the park experience during those periods.

PINNACLES NATIONAL MONUMENT
DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT PLAN
EAST DISTRICT

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS MATRIX

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTOR	NO-ACTION PLAN	ALTERNATIVE A: ENHANCED VISITOR EXPERIENCE	ALTERNATIVE B: MAXIMUM VISITOR USE
Visual Quality	Impacts from existing developments at Bear Gulch and Chalone Creek.	Beneficial impacts at Bear Gulch from elimination of administrative and housing facilities. Also benefits at Chalone Creek from removal of trailers now highly visible from backcountry trails. Some adverse impacts on meadow.	Beneficial impacts at Bear Gulch as in Alternative A. Also benefits at Chalone Creek through removal of visible housing area and restoration of a acre of land. Major negative impacts on meadow at boundary area.
Vegetation and Wildlife	Some impacts from trampling of riparian vegetation at Bear Gulch administrative area.	Approximately 1 acre of vegetation and related habitat would be restored at Chalone Creek, and about 4 acres of grassland and chaparral would be eliminated at the meadow, overlook, and YACC development areas.	Approximately 1 acre of vegetation and related habitat would be restored at Chalone Creek, and about 8 acres of grassland and chaparral would be eliminated at the meadow, overlook, and YACC areas.

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTOR	NO-ACTION PLAN	ALTERNATIVE A: ENHANCED VISITOR EXPERIENCE	ALTERNATIVE B: MAXIMUM VISITOR USE
Cultural Resources	Continued possible structural damage to visitor center from vehicle vibration.	No expected impacts. Development areas to be monitored for archeological resources.	Same as Alternative A.
Soils	No impacts.	Approximately 4 acres of soils would be affected. Erosion would be controlled.	Approximately 8 acres of soils would be affected. Erosion would be controlled.
Wilderness	Trailers at Chalone Creek would continue to be visible from wilderness areas.	Removal of visible development at Chalone Creek would benefit wilderness experience. New development would not impact experience.	Same as Alternative A.
Water Resources	Potential for septic contamination of creek in Bear Gulch from concentrated development.	Eliminate concentrated development at Bear Gulch and alleviate stress on septic system.	Eliminate concentrated development at Bear Gulch and alleviate stress on septic system. Potential for flood problems related to YACC housing and maintenance development.
Visitor Use and Service	Overcrowding and inadequate interpretive facilities continue.	Substantial improvement in visitor facilities and orientation.	Same as Alternative A, but with greater daily capacity.

CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

DISTRIBUTION OF THE DRAFT DEVELOPEMNT CONCEPT PLAN

The following organizations and agencies were asked to comment on the draft DCP/EA:

U.S. Geological Survey, USDI

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, USDI

U.S. Soil Conservation Service, USDA

Advisory Council on Historic Preservation

Environmental Protection Agency

State of California

- State Clearinghouse
- State Historic Preservation Officer
- Department of Parks and Recreation
- Department of Fish and Game

San Benito County

Monterey County

City of Soledad

City of Hollister

Sierra Club

Muwekma Tribe

In addition, copies of the draft were sent to individuals known to have an interest in the monument, and to those requesting copies as a result of announcements and news releases.

PUBLIC COMMENTS ON THE DRAFT PLAN AND ENVIRONMENTAL ASSSESSMENT

The Draft Development Concept Plan and Environmental Assessment (DCP/EA) was made available for public review from April 1 through May 31, 1993.

Public Meetings: Three public meetings were held in the vicinity of the park to explain the plan, answer questions, and receive comments. The meetings were announced in the public media and were conducted by the monument superintendent. A total of 13 persons attended.

Issues of concern included concern for the environmental impacts of additional development within the park, displacing wildflowers and other native vegetation, air and water polllution from motor vehicles, and the desirabiity of retaining Chalone Creek picnic area for public use. Virtually all those attending the public meetings felt that the monument should be expanded through the acquisition of land to the east currently owned by the Pinnacles Cattle Company.

Written Comments: A total of 29 letters were received regarding the draft DCP/EA. One letter enthusiastically supported the proposed plan. Twenty-five letters indicated opposition to the plan, most expressing the view that ranch lands to the east should be purchased and used for any needed park development, and citing concern regarding environmental impacts of the proposal. Finally, three letters were received from government agencies expressing primarily technical concerns needed to be addressed by the plan.

Sample letters encompassing the range of substantive issues are reprinted below along with the Park Service response.

RECEIVED
MAY 27 1993

May 25, 1993

Superintendent James Sleznick
Pinnacles National Monument
Paicines, CA 95043

Superintendent Sleznick,

I am writing to provide comments on your proposed relocation of visitor and administrative facilities on the east side of Pinnacles National Monument as described in the Draft Development Concept Plan. I support the general concept of removing facilities from Bear Gulch, building a new visitor center removed from the High Peaks area, and establishing a shuttle bus system. However, I oppose your choice of sites for these new or relocated facilities. Development in the flood plane of Chalone Creek is inconsistent with the wilderness character of the Monument and will result in considerable degradation of this beautiful watershed. I have hiked along this stretch of Chalone Creek many times. It is a delightful alternative to the more dramatic (and crowded) trails in the High Peaks area and is one of the few hikes along an ungrazed eastern Coast Range riparian habitat anywhere on public lands. Please don't increase development of rare resource.

The best alternative for realizing the goals of the draft Concept Plan is one that you rejected outright. That is acquisition of an administrative site outside the current boundaries of the Monument. This is a very realistic alternative as the current owners of the Pinnacles campground and adjacent 2000 acre ranch are offering their property for sale. It is my understanding that they have even offered this property to the Park Service! The Pinnacles campground is a much better site for a new visitor center and other facilities. It is even connected to the Monument by an existing trail. You should actively pursue this acquisition through Land and Water Conservation funds or other sources. Until the final outcome of this process is known, you should postpone any major changes to east side facilities. 1

Although, it does not pertain directly to the Draft Concept, I want to remind you of another way that the Monument's boundaries are not fixed. This is the potential addition of surrounding BLM parcels to the Monument, including Wilderness Study Areas that could be added to the Pinnacles Wilderness. I strongly support transferring these areas to the Monument. They would help give Pinnacles more geographically rational boundaries, and include more of the watershed of Chalone Creek in the Monument. The north side parcels would make a particularly attractive addition. The view from the ridge above Chalone Creek is one of the most spectacular in the Coast Range. It provides the unusual perspective of looking down on the High Peaks! I hope you will actively work to facilitate this transfer. And in the future, consider the likely future boundaries of the Monument in any management or planning. 2

Thank you for consideration of my views.

Sincerely,

Robert J. McLaughlin
980 Peralta Ave.
Albany, CA 94706

Response to Robert J. McLaughlin

1. As discussed in the DCP/EA, addition of this area would require legislative action to change the monument boundary and to appropriate the necessary funds for acquisition.

It should be noted that most of the developments proposed in the DCP/EA are located on lands that were added to the boundary and acquired specifically for that purpose, based on recommendations in the 1976 master plan. The one exception is the use of the Chalone Creek area as a housing area. Initially the concept was to locate housing in a stand of oaks along Sandy Creek. A concern for preservation of this oak woodland area led to the proposed use of this area as a low density picnic area, and use of the already disturbed Chalone Creek area for housing.

We have not studied the adjacent ranch area in any detail, nor are we authorized to do so. If a boundary study were authorized by Congress, we would provide a complete professional evaluation of resources and their relation to the existing monument area. However, based on our familiarity with the area, and with the criteria used to evaluate potential boundary additions, we would not expect to make a positive recommendation.

2. We agree with the concept of achieving more manageable and ecologically based boundaries for the monument, and the referenced BLM lands could contribute to this result. Legislation is currently pending to transfer these lands. These lands do not, however, have any implications for location of visitor or administrative facilities on the east side.

SIERRA CLUB • LOMA PRIETA CHAPTER
San Mateo • Santa Clara • San Benito Counties

Comments on the March 1993 Draft Development Concept Plan and Environmental Assessment for East District Pinnacles

The Loma Prieta Chapter of the Sierra Club covers three counties: San Benito, Santa Clara and San Mateo. The spectacular natural resources of Pinnacles National Monument are enjoyed by numerous members from the Loma Prieta Chapter and other Chapters within the Club each year.

National Parks exist to preserve, for all time, the natural wonders within its boundaries in an undisturbed state and to make these available for the enjoyment of the people. Pinnacles National Monument does provide an important recreational opportunity for bay area and Monterey residents but the park's current configuration is not providing adequate protection of the Bear Creek, Chalone Creek and Sandy Creek environments. Further, the current boundaries make little ecological sense.

While we agree that there is a need to address the three basic planning issues outlined on page 3, we believe that there are additional problems, such as protection of the Sandy Creek riparian values and impacts on rare, threatened or endangered habitats or California species of special concern (CNPS Inventory) which also need to be addressed by the National Park Service. The Environmental Assessment for the Draft Development Concept Plan should also address the threats to these habitats and species in the statement of the problem. Further, the selected development alternative should provide adequate protection for these habitat and species.

The Loma Prieta Chapters believes that the preferred alternative will not meet mandate of the National Park Service as it will reduce recreational opportunity, decrease the visitor experience and result in the irretrievable loss of of some natural environments (e.g meadow) and the degradation of others (e.g. water quality of Sandy Creek). Further, we believe that the current preferred alternative provides inadequate long-term response to those planning issues which are addressed in the document. The preferred alternative

Peninsula Conservation Center
2448 Watson Court
Palo Alto, CA 94303
415 494-9901
Fax 415 494-1946

Recycled Paper

is also inconsistent with some of the management objectives in the 1976 Master Plan, most notably the General Management Objectives, the Visitor Use Objectives and the Interpretation Objectives.

We contend that it is incumbent upon the NPS to implement a comprehensive, longterm solution to both the recreation, such as increased visitor use, and conservation problems, such as the island ecosystem effect, that face the park today. We believe that purchase and expansion into the adjacent ranch is the appropriate solution and should be aggressively pursued by the NPS. Therefore, we recommend that NPS adopt of the Acquisition of an Administration Site alternative as the preferred alternative the East District Development Concept Plan.

The short analyses given to this option in the EA acknowledges that it would provide "the most environmentally satisfactory alternative." However, the reasons given for not pursuing this alternative are inadequate. We disagree with the conclusion that "facilities could be located on lands within the existing boundary without significant adverse impacts on the environment or the visitor experience."and we believe that an development plan which results in the "most environmentally satisfactory alternative" should be NPS's priority. Additionally, not pursuing such an alternative because it requires spending additional time is insufficient justification. Our national treasures should not be compromised to meet a deadline. Pinnacles is worth the additional time necessary to secure this alternative which will truly address the long-term visitor needs of the parks and protect its special natural resources.

We urge the NPS to work creatively with other federal and state trustees as well as private land conservation groups to pursue possible acquisition options, including federal, state, private or joint ownership/management schemes. This type of creative, joint approach for protection of our natural values is outline in the Agreement on Biological Diversity (attachment 1).

The Loma Prieta Chapters believes that this document does not provide sufficient documentation to support many of the conclusions used to justify the selection of the preferred alternative. Specifically, we challenge the following:

Summary - Finding of No Significant Environmental Impacts — The document states that "environmental impacts would be minor and amenable to mitigation." We 1.

contend that the preferred alternative would result in a significant impact on vegetation and wildlife as approximately 1/5th of the meadow habitat ("only open meadow habitat within the East District" Page 39) within the East District will be irretrievable lost to development. This should be identified as a significant impact as relatively little of this ecosystem is available to the East District day use visitor. This type of ecosystem is important for both recreational and interpretive values as this grassland may serve as a foraging/hunting habitat for the park's raptors as well as other species. In addition, the document states that any loss is "amenable to mitigation," yet a comprehensive mitigation proposal and monitoring plan is not provided in the document. Since the mitigation plan and monitoring program are not provided, a determination of the mitigation's viability is not possible and should not be used as justification. 1

Visitor Use — The document states (on page 9) that there is no evidence to suggest that resource damage is caused by excessive visitor use. It also states that the "current levels of crowding do not appear to be significantly detracting from the diverse range of park experiences for most visitors." There is no information provided to justify this conclusion. In fact, the same section begins with "No definitive research has been accomplished to provide a resource based carrying capacity for the park....Likewise no sociological carrying capacity has been scientifically established for the Park." We contend that the current day use and picnic facilities are over crowded and worn from overuse. We believe this, coupled with projected growth figures, state a for strong case for expansion. 2

There are many indications, including the numbers cited in the 1976 Management Plan, and proposed regional growth (approximately 20 potential subdivisions in San Benito County), that visitation to the park will increase. We believe that NPS is failing to address this problem with their preferred alternative. Further, we believe that the method, de-marketing the park, is unproven and actually conflicts with the purpose of the NPS. The document states that the "park will continue to investigate and experiment with.....alternatives, including de-marketing." This indicates that park planners are not even sure it will work. Further there are no specifics offered for the other alternative — private parking on adjacent land. NPS is basing the success of the plan on an activity that they can not guarantee and without a plan for achieving it.

Regional Impacts — The environmental assessment does not analyze all of the impacts from the preferred alternative on the region. The preferred alternative states on page 10 3

that visitation may exceed parking by 2 to 3 times. However the EA does not address the impacts on circulation, air pollution and probability of trespass onto private property from those vehicles and visitors turned away from the park during peak periods. These environmental consequence should be analyzed. 3

Sandy Creek — There could be a significant impact to water quality of Sandy Creek. The effects on the groundwater recharge and surface flow of the Sandy Creek from the paving the recharge area within the 100 year flood plain is not addressed in the document. Further, the possible pollution of Sandy Creek from parking lot runoff is not addressed. 4

As the park is currently configured, only a small portion of Sandy Creek is under park management. Creeks are whole systems, not segments, and should be managed as a unit. Such management will both protect the natural values of the creek and provide an excellent interpretive opportunity for park visitors.

page specific comments:
Page 3 - Planning History — The Master Plan for the park was 49 pages. It drafted a visionary concept for the park. The summary provided is incomplete and leaves out answers to key provisions including: 5

- management of the monument to provide maximum visitor enjoyment of the resource during the peak periods (emphases added) in spring and fall, and on weekends and holidays. (Page 33)
- move administrative and maintenance facilities, except those required for public contact and protection, to a suitable location (page 34)
- identify and curtail man-initiated erosions, and promote the growth and reproduction of native vegetation (page 34).

page 3 - Planning Issues 2. Inadequate visitor facilities — The first statement identifies the problem, however solutions presented in the document do not adequately address the problem.

page 3 - Planning Issues 3. Inadequate hosing and administrative facilities — This degree of expansion can not be accommodated within the current park boundaries. If NPS pursued purchase of the adjacent land, there would be adequate space for housing available within the park so as to provide for public protection. 6

page 8 - General Concept — This solution does not address the problem listed on page 3 of the draft Development Concept Plan or on page 4 of the Management Plan.

Page 9 - Carrying Capacity — This sections states that there is "no definitive research" about the carrying capacity of the park nor a "sociological study " of quality of the experience for the visitor. However the document also states that there is no impact. How was this conclusion reached, given that there is "no definitive" answer? We believe that there should be further study before an alternative is actually chosen. 7

page 10 - Peak Load Management — This document identifies a fee parking lot from an adjacent property as a solution to the peak period overcrowding. However, the document does not address how NPS would guarantee this option. 8

page 15 - Sandy Creek Picnic Area — Only a portion of Sandy Creek is currently within the park boundary. The adjacent land should be purchased so that a greater portion of the creek is under NPS management. Providing a picnic facility in this location, without attempting to include the entire creek in the park will reduce the interpretive value of this site. 9

page 15 - Sandy Creek Picnic Area — "Care would be taken...to avoid" does not provide the specificity needed to determine the level of impact. 10

page 26 - Acquisition of an Administrative Site — We recommend selection of this alternative for as the preferred alternative. This is the only alternative which will truly address the problem. 11

page 27 - The Region — This discussion lacks a comprehensive review of the region's projected growth. Additionally, this discussion does not identify the adjacent private campground. This campground is too important to the visitor use patterns of the park to not be identified. Further the impact of this campground closing should be reviewed in the document. 12

page 27 - Vegetation — Both pinnacles manzanita and pinnacles buckwheat are limited to this region and should be listed as species of special concern. (Please see attachment 2) 13

page 31 - Visitor Use Analyses — This section clearly states that visitor use is anticipated to grow. The proposed preferred alternative does not address the identified problem. Also please see previous comment. 2

page 38 - Impacts on Visual Quality — There is insufficient information provide to make the determination that "the visual impacts would be minor." Statements such as "The new facilities would be designed to best harmonize with the natural scene" and "minimized by careful site planning" offer no specifics. 14

page 38 - Impacts on Vegetation and Wildlife — The Loma Prieta Chapter contends that the overall impacts on vegetation and wildlife would be significant.

The loss of approximately 1/5th of the meadow habitat ("only open meadow habitat within the East District" page 39) is unacceptable and constitutes a significant impact. The loss of this type of ecosystem also may greatly impact foraging/hunting habitat of the park's raptors and other species. This possibility is not addressed at all in the document. 1

The impacts on oak trees and their regeneration could be significant and should be given additional review. "Care would be taken...to avoid impacts on the trees" does not give the information necessary to determine if the exact impacts. Further, the impacts of squirrels attracted to picnic areas on the regeneration of oaks is not adequately quantified. 15

page 40 - Impacts on Water Resources — There is insufficient information provided to determine that there are "no significant impacts." In fact, the third paragraph states that "no adverse impacts are foreseen." This is not a scientific basis for a decision. We believe there could be significant impacts to Sandy Creek. 16

page 41 - Impacts on Visitor Use and Services — A better opportunity for early visitor orientation would be provided if the adjacent ranch was purchased and the Visitor Center was located near Hwy 25. Since potential visitation levels are projected to increase, we can assume that the statement "crowding levels during peak visitation periods will not increase" means some visitors will be turned away. We do not believe that this constitutes "a beneficial impact." 17

Appendix A - Given that wildflowers is one of the major attractions of the park, we believe that plant species should also be listed here. Both pinnacles manzanita and 13

pinnacles buckwheat are limit to this region and should be listed as species of special concern (California Native Plant Society Inventory - please see attachment 2).] 13

Appendix B - Why proposed developments are in the floodplains — We believe that restoring the creek bottom should be a priority. We oppose a parking lot on this site.]

To quote the National Parks and Conservation Association's Calendar:

> "Back in 1916, when a national park system was first envisioned, the parks were perceived primarily as aesthetic treasures. We still value these scenic vistas and their power to inspire and sooth, but today we recognize our national parks are more than wildlife zoos or a collection of geological or historical treasures.
>
> America has come to understand that our national parks are the critical core of our natural environment. The national parks protect fragile ecosystem that are already gone or rapidly disappearing.
>
> America's national parks are the extraordinary heritage of all citizens."

The Loma Prieta Chapter urges the NPS to protect the heritage of San Benito County and to choose an alternative which will both protect the park's resources and provide the opportunity for all who wish to enjoy those resources.

We recommend purchase of the adjacent ranch and the location of the administrative facilities in appropriate locations near the road or existing building sites.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Loma Prieta Chapter on May 28, 1993,

Julia Bott

Marlene Testaguzza 83

Julia Bott
CC
Senator Diane Feinstein
Senator Barbara Boxer
17th Congressional District
Congresswoman Anna Eshoo
State Senator Henry Mello
Assemblyman Rusty Areis

Response to the Sierra Club, Loma Prieta Chapter

1. While we agree that the displacement of any habitat within the monument is regrettable, we do not agree that the plan will result in significant losses. With regard to the boundary area to be used for the visitor center, it is noted that, while this type of habitat is limited in the park, there are many hundreds of acres of this same type of habitat outside the park along the reaches of Sandy Creek. The loss of this small acreage within the park is not expected to produce significant ecological impacts.

2. As indicated in the DCP/EA, we do not have scientifically based data regarding either physical or sociological carrying capacities at the monument. We do have numerous observations by park staff over the past several years regarding visitor use patterns and pressures, and currently this provides the only basis for conclusions and recommendations.

The problem we face in dealing with visitor use pressures in the monument is not the lack of space. There are vast areas within the monument that receive minimal visitor use. These chaparral and riparian areas are critical to the unit's ecological health and to the quality of the visitor experience, but they are by and large not sought out on their own merits. Rather, most visitors are attracted to a relatively discrete and concentrated set of resources among or in the vicinity of the pinnacles formations. Expansion of the monument to the east would do little to accommodate these prospective users.

We agree that potential visitation to the park will increase over the next few years, and we have projected this increase in the DCP/EA up to the year 2020. The portion of this potential visitation that is manifested in non-peak periods can be accommodated. We do not believe that is is feasible or desirable, from the standpoint of resources protection, quality of visitor experience, or economics, to accommodate all the potential weekend visitors during the peak spring period.

There are a number of potential methods for reducing peak loads. One option is "de-marketing". There is no question that de-marketing can be an effective tool in reducing peak visitor loads, as demonstrated by its success this summer in reducing potential overloads at Yosemite National Park. It is not a finely tuned and precise technique at this point, and sometimes its results are excessive. Short of instituting a reservation system, which can be cumbersome and expensive to operate, it is a necessary park management strategy for many areas, and one which serves not only to protect the park but to help the prospective visitor plan his visit at a time when the visit can be most enjoyable. As we experiment with this tool, we expect to make it work more consistently and productively.

3. We do not believe that significant regional impacts will result from implementation of the proposed plan. As discussed above, we anticipate that potential peak loads can be better managed and reduced to prevent problems with circulation, air pollution, and trespass.

4. We do not foresee significant water quality impacts to Sandy Creek from the relatively modest level of development proposed at the boundary area. Note that the proposed plan does not extend into, or even approach, the 100-year flood plain of Sandy Creek. Water quality impacts from the parking lot would be minimized by appropriate design and mitigation features. (See following response to California Department of Fish and Game, item 5.)

5. Although these specific items are not mentioned in the planning history discussion, they are all addressed in the proposed plan. The intention in the planning history section was to indicate the broad goals of the master plan as they relate to the development concept plan for the east side.

6. The proposed plan provides solutions to all of the identified issues. We recognize that there may be differences of opinion as to the effectiveness or desirability of these solutions.

7. As suggested above, our knowledge of "carrying capacity" at Pinnacles NM is more observational and anecdotal than scientific. We recognize this as an important information gap and are hopeful that better information can be developed in the future. In the meantime, the proposed plan takes the conservative approach of retaining but not increasing the number of parking spaces in the park, which effectively limits the number of visitors at any one time.

8. A fee parking lot on adjacent lands is one of several options for dealing with seasonal use surges. It is not necessarily the best and may or may not prove to be feasible.

9. The visitor use area at Sandy Creek will provide picnicking opportunities in a pleasant woodland setting with a scenic view of the pinnacles, and it will provide an opportunity for interpreting the oak woodland, including the variety of species, the current statewide concerns regarding oak regeneration, and park programs to facilitate regeneration. It is not necessary to have the entire length of the ephemeral creek within the boundary in order to achieve those interpretive objectives.

10. At this point, the public use area has not been designed and the trail has not been aligned. When the design process occurs, experienced staff biologists will guide the selection of routes and sites that will avoid adverse impacts on biological factors. The purpose of the plan at this level of specificity is to state the objectives and the cautions to be observed.

11. Please see above response #1 to Robert McLaughlin.

12. A comprehensive analysis of the region's growth is beyond the scope of this planning project. The impact of regional population growth is reflected in visitor use projections for the unit indicated on pages 31-33.

The discussion does identify the adjacent private campground. We are not aware of plans for closing this facility.

13. Pinnacles Buckwheat and Pinnacles Manzanita, both of which are chaparral plants, will not be significantly affected by implementation of the proposed plan. Less than one acre of chaparral vegetation will be affected.

14. Based on the scale of the proposals, and the sensitivity of the affected area, impacts can be characterized as minor. Design details are not determined at this stage of planning.

15. We have no basis for quantifying the increase in squirrels in the area. However, our natural resource specialists have considered this aspect and do not regard this as a major threat to oak regeneration.

16. Based on the scale of the development, its setback, and the commitment to impact-minimizing design, we do not foresee significant impacts to Sandy Creek.

17. A visitor orientation facilitity at the Highway 25 intersection would have some advantages, particularly with respect to visitor use management at peak periods. It would also, because of its distance from the park's major visitor use attractions, have some disadvantages in off-peak periods when only minimal staffing is available. This concept would also, of course, require a legislative boundary change and land acquisition.

We agree that visitor turnaways are not a beneficial impact. Our objective is to help the prospective visitor to plan his/her visit at a time when the park is less crowded.

18. The area proposed for a parking lot has been used for this purpose for several years. Prior to that it was used as a storage area. It is an area periodically scoured by floodflows and has quite limited vegetation. While we recognize that any development on a floodplain is less than ideal, we have not been able to identify more environmentally satisfactory solutions, short of drastically reducing parking capacity within the monument.

United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
ECOLOGICAL SERVICES
Ventura Field Office
2140 Eastman Avenue, Suite 100
Ventura, California 93003

May 26, 1993

RECEIVED
MAY 2 1993
PINNACLES

Memorandum

To: Superintendent, Pinnacles National Monument
Pinnacles, California

From: Field Supervisor, Ventura Field Office, Ventura, California

Subject: Draft Development Concept Plan and Environmental Assessment, East District, Pinnacles National Monument, California

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has reviewed the Draft Development Concept Plan and Environmental Assessment for the East District, Pinnacles National Monument, located in San Benito County, California. We offer the following comments for your consideration.

In general, the Service believes that implementation of the proposed alternative would lessen adverse impacts to the fish and wildlife resources of the National Monument. The lessening of impacts to the riparian community in the Bear Gulch area is viewed as a positive action, because riparian vegetation provides valuable habitat to migratory birds and many other species of wildlife.

The Service believes that the National Park Service should carefully review the potential effects of the altered vehicle crossing on the hydrology of Chalone Creek in relation to the three candidate species, southwestern pond turtle (Clemmys marmorata pallida), California red-legged frog (Rana aurora draytonii), and two-striped garter snake (Thamnophis hammondii), that may occur in the stream. The placement of visitor facilities adjacent to habitat for the southwestern pond turtle may also subject this species to collection, which has been identified as a factor in its decline. This potential impact could be mitigated by the National Monument's interpretive program.

The Service appreciates the opportunity to participate in your planning efforts. We also would appreciate receiving the results of the surveys for candidate species so we can add this information to our data base. If you have any questions regarding these comments, please contact Ellen Dillon of my staff at (805) 644-1766.

Judy Hohman

61

Response to the Fish and Wildlife Service

1. Potential impacts on the identified candidate species would be carefully considered prior to undertaking construction of an improved crossing structure on Chalone Creek. Siting of visitor facilities would consider and minimize the potential for collection. Early interpretation of restrictions on collection of wildlife would be provided in the visitor center, and regulations would be enforced.

DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
POST OFFICE BOX 47
YOUNTVILLE, CALIFORNIA 94599
(707) 944-5500

RECEIVED
JUN 14 1993
PINN

June 10, 1993

Steve SD

Mr. Jim Sleznick
Park Superintendent
Pinnacles National Monument
Paicines, California 95043

Dear Mr. Sleznick:

Draft Development Concept Plan and Environmental Assessment
East District Pinnacles National Monument

Department of Fish and Game personnel have reviewed the Draft Development Concept Plan and Environmental Assessment for the East District Pinnacles National Monument. The draft plan presents three alternatives regarding facilities and operations in the eastern portion of the park. We have the following comments.

1. A list of endangered, threatened, and candidate species is given in Appendix A of the plan and these are discussed in very general terms in the text. Impacts to these species, as well as California Species of Special Concern that may occur in the area, should be addressed more thoroughly. It is stated that surveys are underway for the red-legged frog, western pond turtle, and two-striped garter snake. Surveys should also be conducted for any other sensitive species that may be impacted, including the big-eared kangaroo rat and nesting raptors. The results of these surveys, as well as proposed mitigations should be included in the plan. 1

2. It is stated in the plan, under both Alternatives A and B, that development areas would be surveyed for rare plants prior to any construction work. These survey results and appropriate mitigation and contingency plans should also be included in this Concept Plan and Environmental Assessment. 2

3. Under Alternative A, the "Enhanced Visitor Experience" alternative, an unspecified number of mature oak trees would be removed in the picnic area. Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 17 establishes the State's position that protection and enhancement of oak woodlands is a priority due to their high habitat value for wildlife. This Department recommends 3

avoidance of oak woodland. Should this be deemed infeasible, we recommend that mitigation include protection of existing oak woodland at an acreage ratio of 3:1. Because preservation of existing woodland cannot fully mitigate the loss of habitat value, we recommend that tree replacement be required on an on-site location at a ratio that will ensure a 1:1 replacement of mature trees. A mitigation plan should provide for monitoring and a contingency plan to specify further steps should the established success goals not be met. 3

4. Map 14 indicates that the parking lot proposed near the headquarters under Alternative B, the "Maximum Visitor Use" alternative, is approximately 100 feet from the center of Sandy Creek. The distance from the top of the creekbank cannot be ascertained.

The Department recommends a minimum 100-foot buffer, measured outward from the top of each creekbank be established to protect the creek and its vegetation and to provide a travel corridor for wildlife. Unavoidable impacts to the creek should be identified and mitigation provided in the document. Impacted riparian or wetland habitat should be replaced on a 3:1 acreage ratio based on in-kind creation of equal or greater habitat value. 4.

Any work within the banks of the creek, including road crossings and culverts, will require a streambed alteration agreement with this Department. The Department has direct jurisdiction under Fish and Game Code sections 1601-03 in regard to any proposed activities that would divert or obstruct the natural flow or change the bed, channel, or bank of any stream. We recommend early consultation since modification of the proposed project may be required to avoid impacts to fish and wildlife resources. Formal notification under Fish and Game Code Section 1603 should be made after all other permits and certifications have been obtained. Work cannot be initiated until a streambed alteration agreement is executed.

The U. S. Army Corps of Engineers also has jurisdiction over the discharge of fill to streams and wetlands under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. We recommend that the Corps be contacted to determine if they have jurisdiction and if they require a permit.

5. Potential impacts caused by water quality changes due to grading and other construction activities need to be addressed. Erosion control measures need to be implemented to prevent sediments from reaching the creeks and methods of mitigating non-point source pollution need to be assured. We recommend that the plan include oil/grease separators in the storm drain system of parking lots with 50 cars or more. Annual maintenance of the separators, as well as a sweeping program for the lots should be required.

5

We request that subsequent documents related to this project be submitted to this Department for our review.

If you have any questions regarding our comments, contact Martha Schauss, Wildlife Biologist, at (408) 623-4989.

Sincerely,

Brian Hunter
Regional Manager
Region 3

Response to California Department of Fish and Game

1. Parkwide surveys have been completed for the red-legged frog, western pond turtle, and two-striped garter snake. These surveys revealed the red-legged frog at a number of locations on Chalone Creek, a few reported sightings of the western pond turtle, and no record of the two-striped garter snake. Red-legged frogs would be expected to occur in Sandy Creek but were not observed during the survey, possibly because of the significant feral pig activity in that area. The turtle has been observed at Willow Spring within the monument and on Sandy Creek upstream of the monument; however, no sightings have been reported in the vicinity of the proposed development site.

The potential for plan impact on nesting raptors, and the big-eared kangaroo rat, is extremely limited.

See also above response to Fish and Wildlife Service.

2. Project areas have been surveyed for rare plants and none have been found.

3. While there are oak trees in the Chalone Creek area, some of which may need to be removed to accommodate housing, the area is in no sense an "oak woodland". It has been actively and intensively used since the 1930's, when a CCC camp was located there. It was subsequently used as a camp area and is currently used as a picnic area. While oak trees are found in the area, virtually none of the understory remains. Landscaping of the housing area would rely primarily on native vegetation, including oak trees as appropriate and feasible.

4. It should be noted that the parking lot near headquarters contained in the proposed action is over 200 feet from Sandy Creek. The project is well removed from riparian vegetation, and will not alter streamflow or adversely affect the waterway.

We recognize the need for early coordination with the Department of Fish and Game in planning and design of a modified crossing of Chalone Creek in the YACC area.

5. Grading plans for all construction projects will include provision for avoiding erosion and preventing stream sedimentation, and the potential for use of oil/grease separators and/or other methods of minimizing the potential for water quality impacts, will be carefully evaluated in design of parking lots.

PLANNING TEAM

Dan Olson, Planner, Western Regional Office

James Sleznick, Superintendent, Pinnacles National Monument

Staff, Pinnacles National Monument

CONSULTANTS

Roger Kelly, Archeologist, Western Region

James Huddlestun, Environmental Specialist, Western Region

Patricia Quintero, Landscape Architect, Western Region

appendix

APPENDIX A

LISTED ENDANGERED AND THREATENED SPECIES AND CANDIDATE SPECIES THAT MAY OCCUR IN THE AREA OF THE PROPOSED PINNACLES NATIONAL MONUMENT (1-1-89-SP-938)

Listed Species

Birds

least Bell's vireo, *Vireo bellii pusillus* (E)
bald eagle, *Haliaeetus leucocephalus* (E)
American peregrine falcon, *Falco peregrinus anatum* (E)
California condor, *Gymnogyps californianus* (E)

Candidate Species

Mammals

big-eared kangaroo rat, *Dipodomys elephantinus* (2)
Pacific western big-eared bat, *Plecotus townsendii townsendii* (2)
greater western mastiff bat, *Eumops perotis californicus* (2)
Salinas pocket mouse, *Perognathus inornatus psammophilus* (2)

Amphibians

California tiger salamander, *Ambystoma tigrinum californiense* (2)
California red-legged frog, *Rana aurora draytonii* (2)

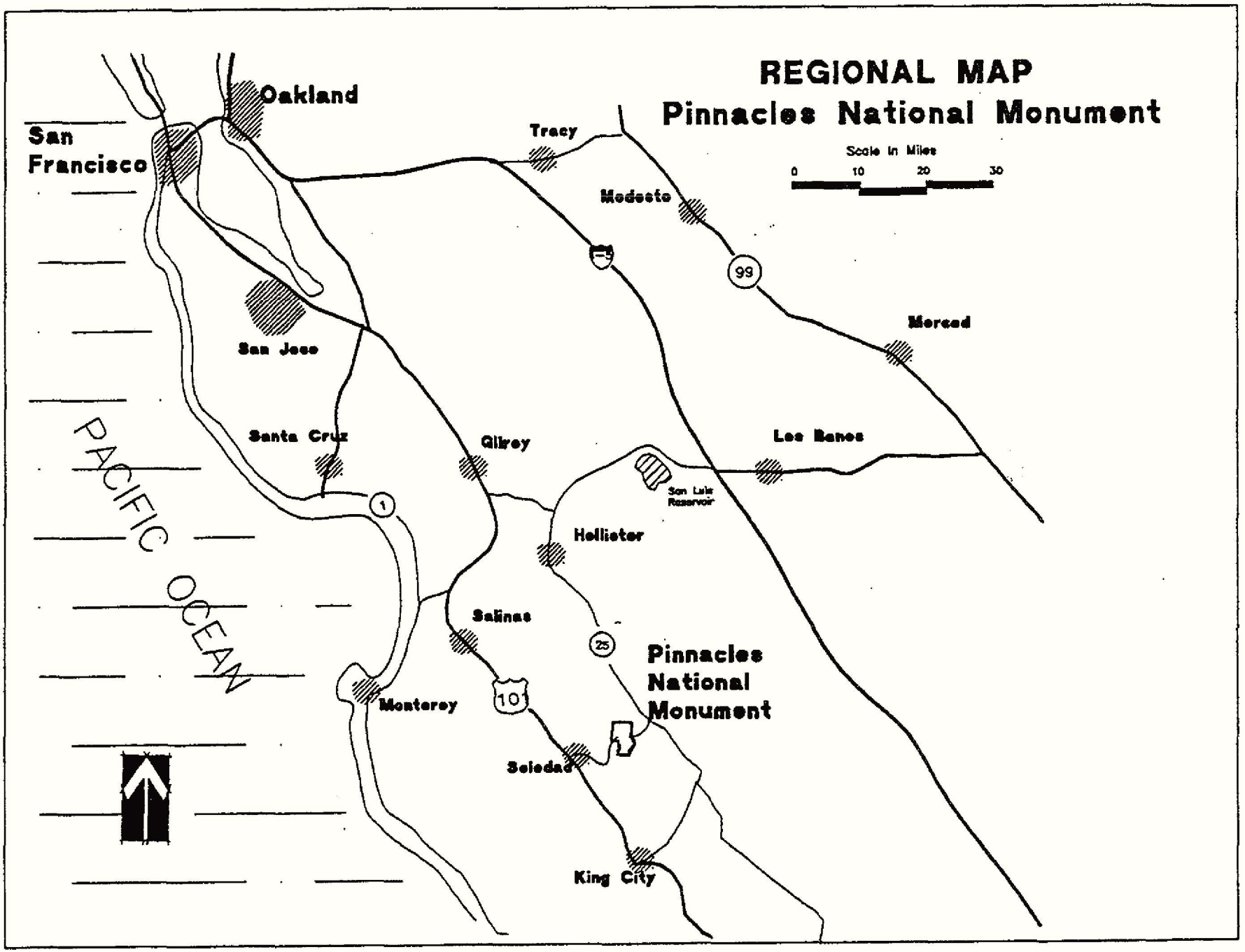
Reptiles

southwestern pond turtle, *Clemmys marmorata pallida* (2)

Invertebrates

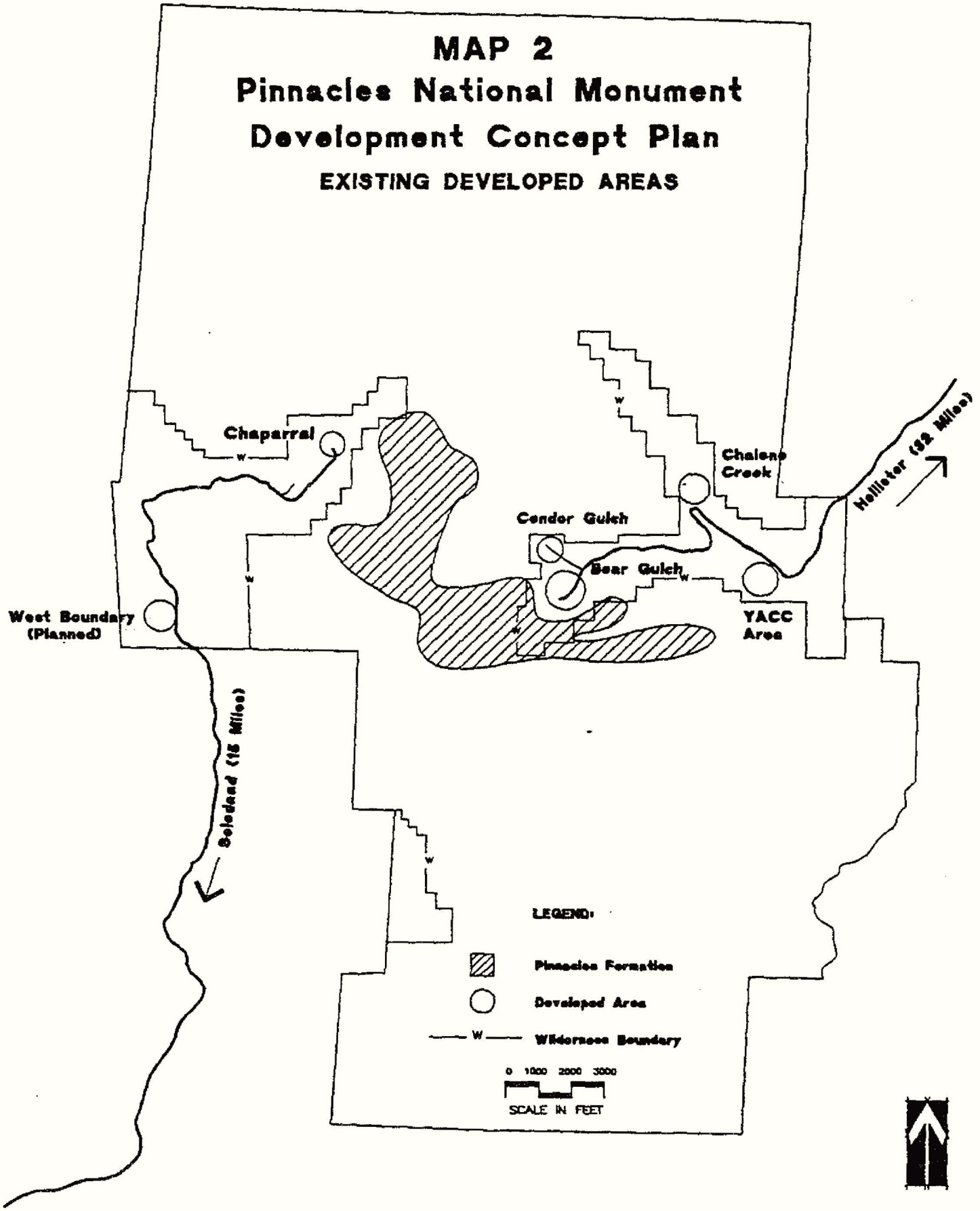
Pinnacles shield-back katydid, *Idiostatus kathleenae* (2)
Pinnacles optioservus riffle beetle, *Optioservus canus* (2)

(E)--Endangered (T)--Threatened (CH)--Critical Habitat
(1)--Category 1: Taxa for which the Fish and Wildlife Service has sufficient biological information to support a proposal to list as endangered or threatened.
(2)--Category 2: Taxa for which existing information indicated may warrant listing, but for which substantial biological information to support a proposed rule is lacking.


REGIONAL MAP
Pinnacles National Monument
Scale in Miles
0 10 20 30
Oakland
San Francisco
Tracy
Modesto
99
Merced
San Jose
Santa Cruz
Gilroy
Los Banos
San Luis Reservoir
PACIFIC OCEAN
1
Hollister
Salinas
25
Pinnacles National Monument
Monterey
101
Soledad
King City

114/80057

MAP 2
Pinnacles National Monument
Development Concept Plan
EXISTING DEVELOPED AREAS



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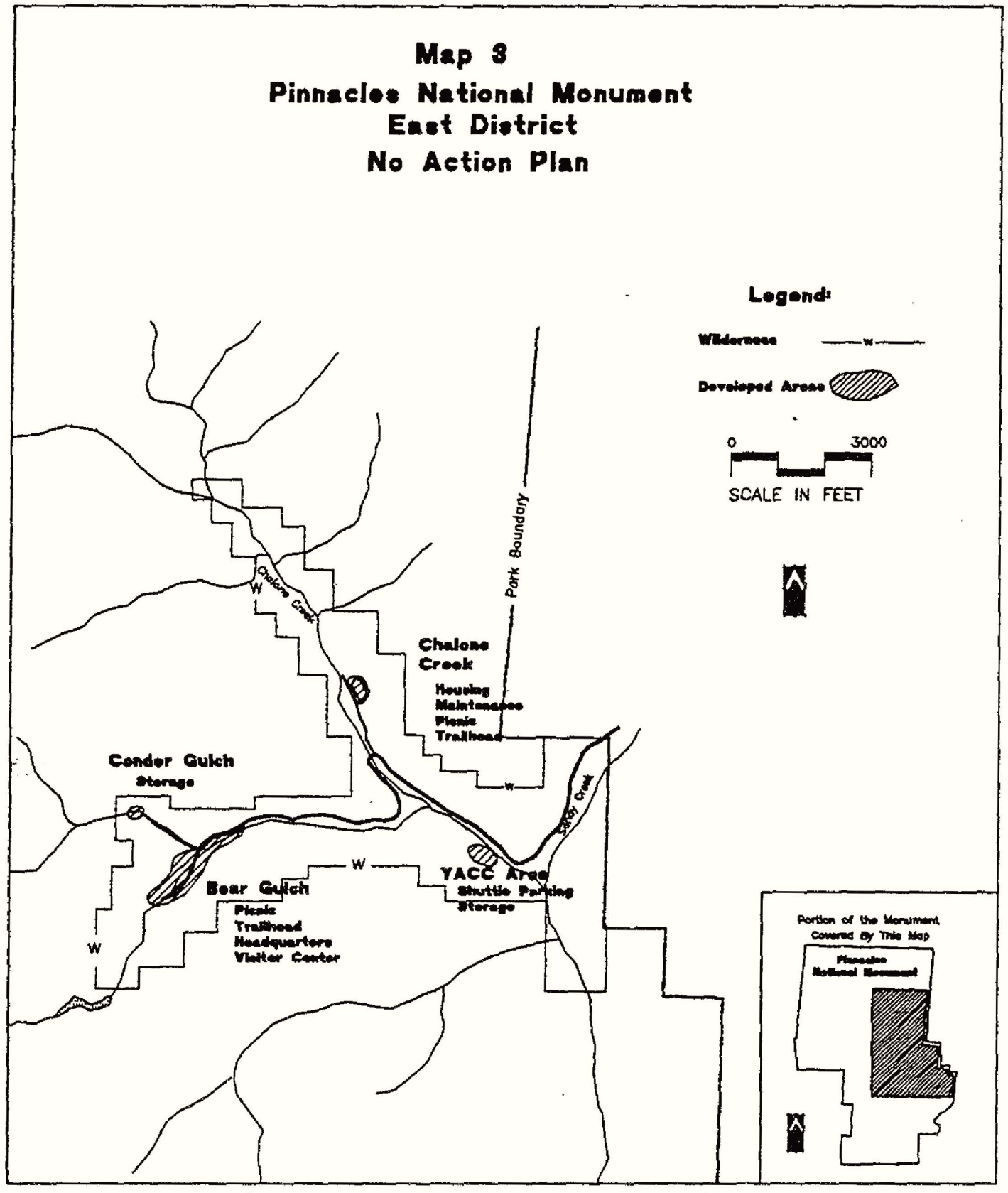
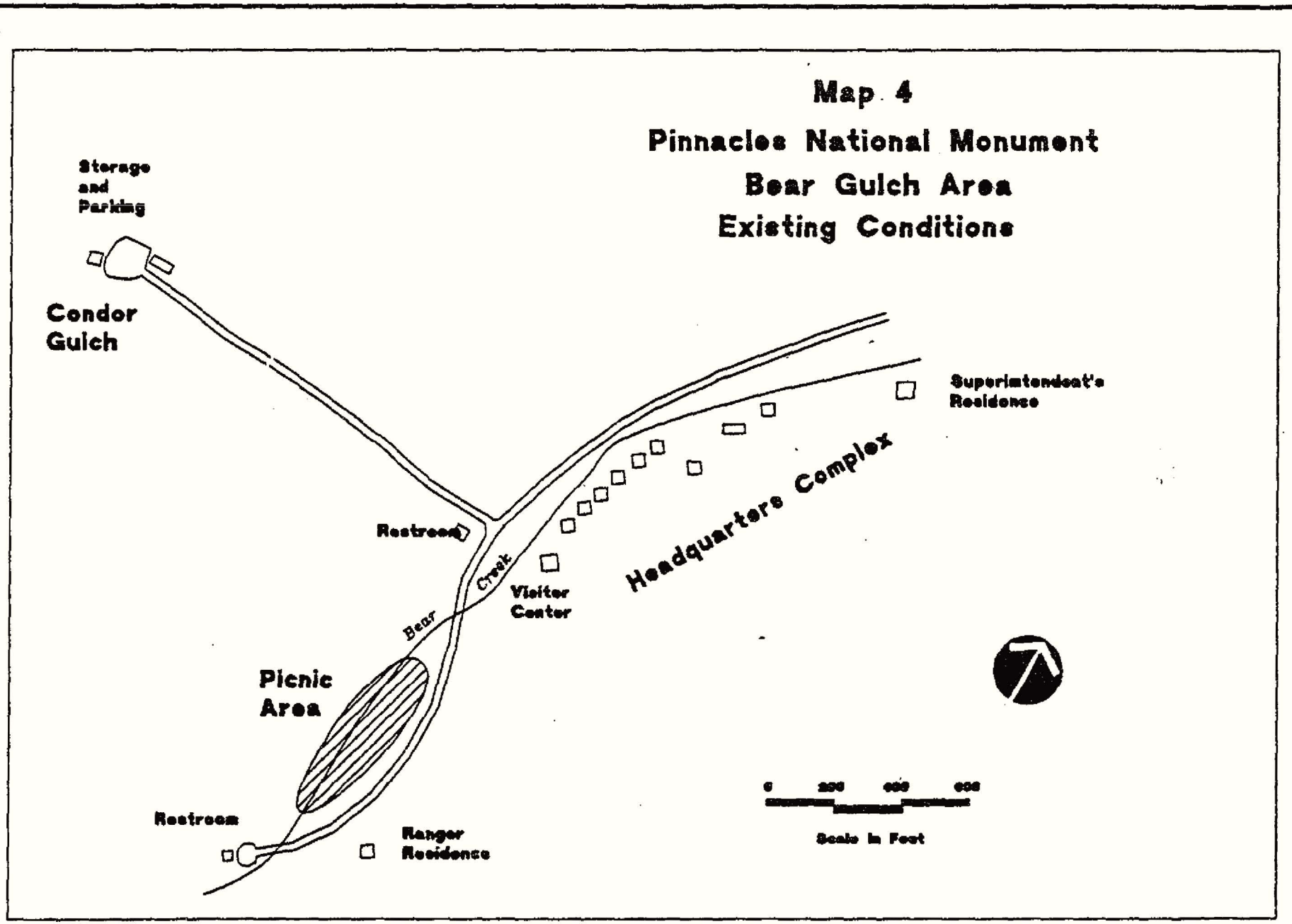
Map 3
Pinnacles National Monument
East District
No Action Plan

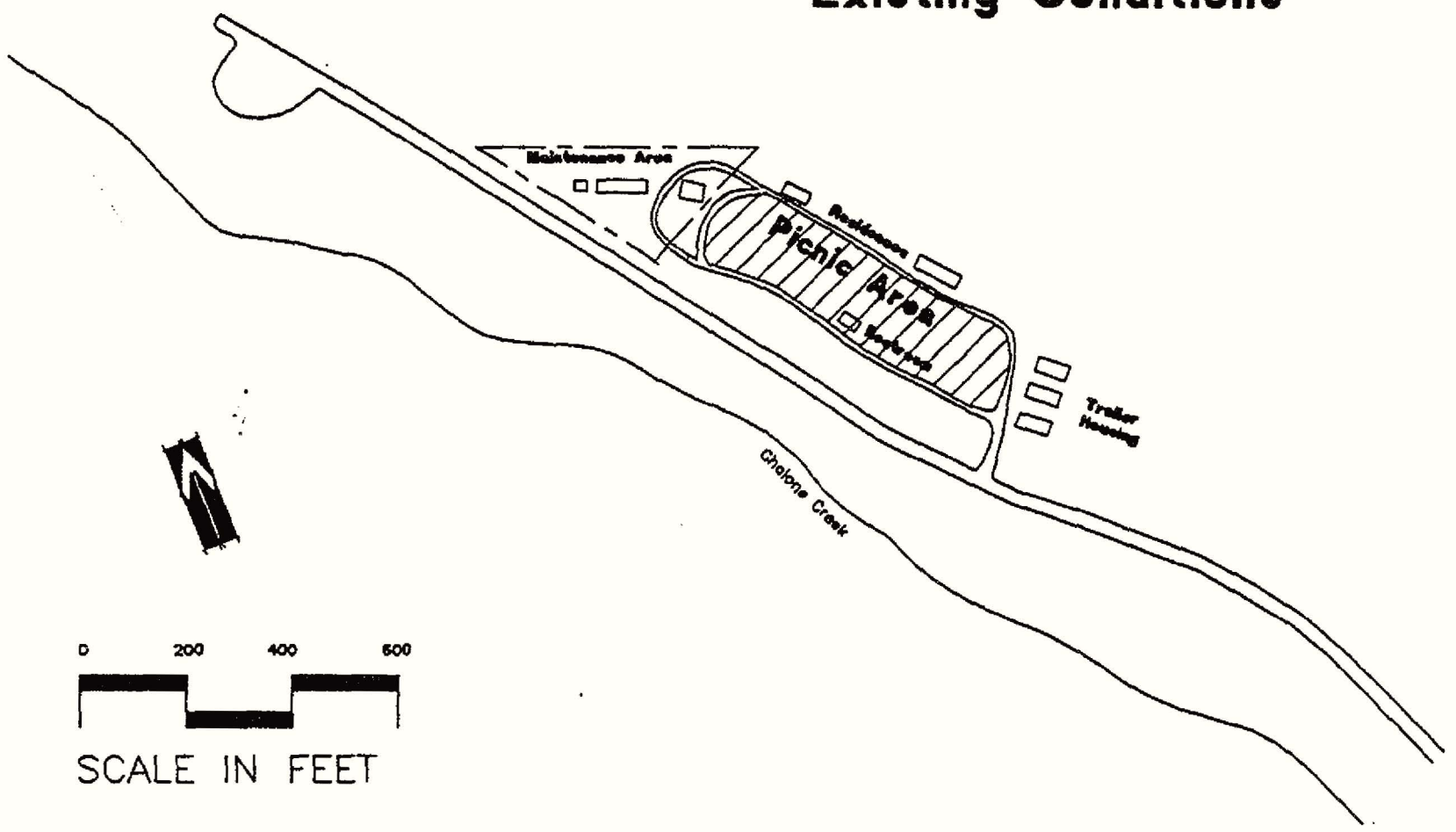


114/80,040 WRO/2-93


Map 4
Pinnacles National Monument
Bear Gulch Area
Existing Conditions
Storage and Parking
Condor Gulch
Restroom
Bear Creek
Visitor Center
Headquarters Complex
Superintendent's Residence
Picnic Area
Restroom
Ranger Residence
0
200
400
600
Scale in Feet

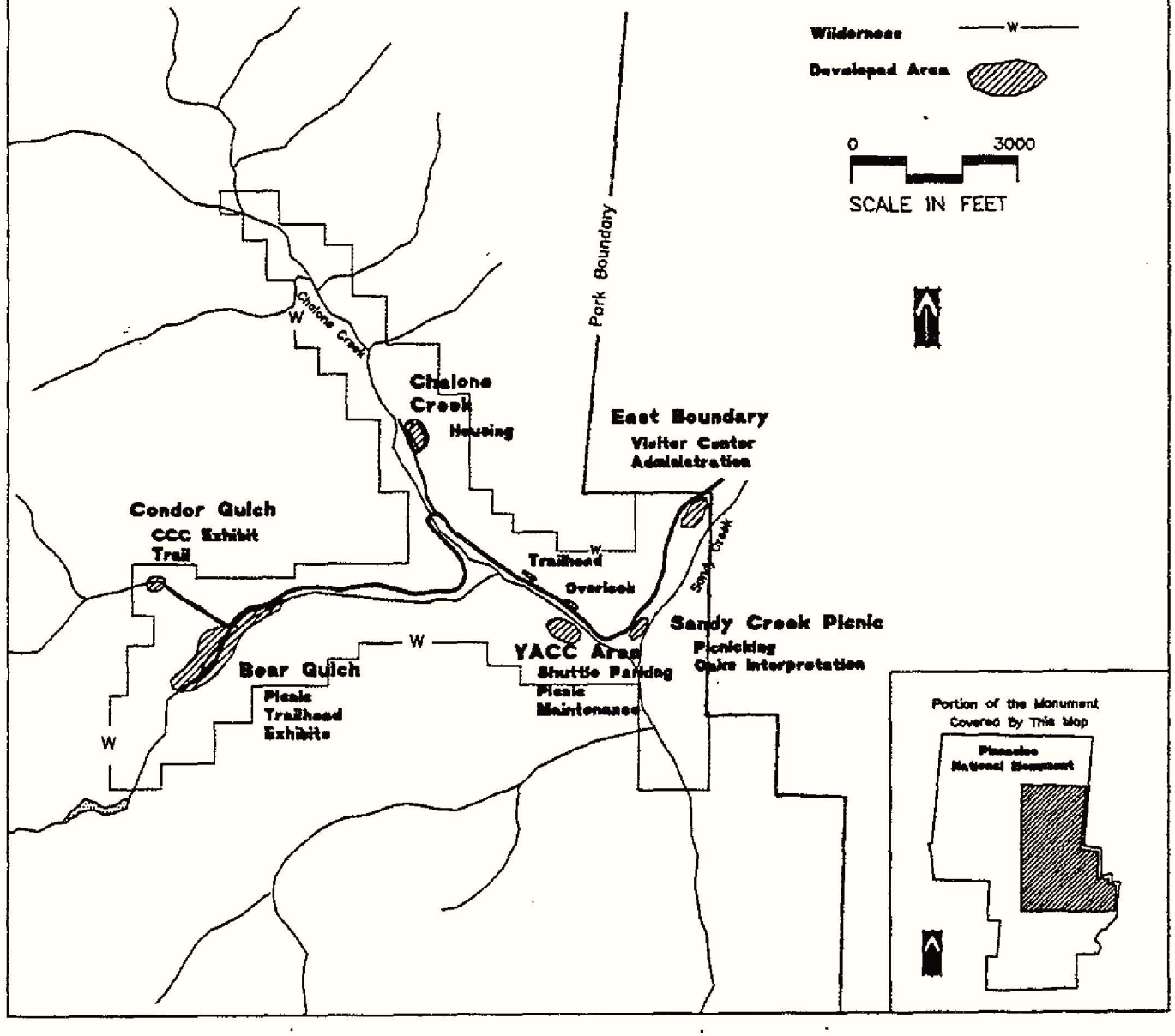
114/80058

Map 5
Pinnacles National Monument
Chalone Creek Area
Existing Conditions



114/80059

Map 6
Pinnacles National Monument
East District
Alternative A: Enhanced Visitor Experience



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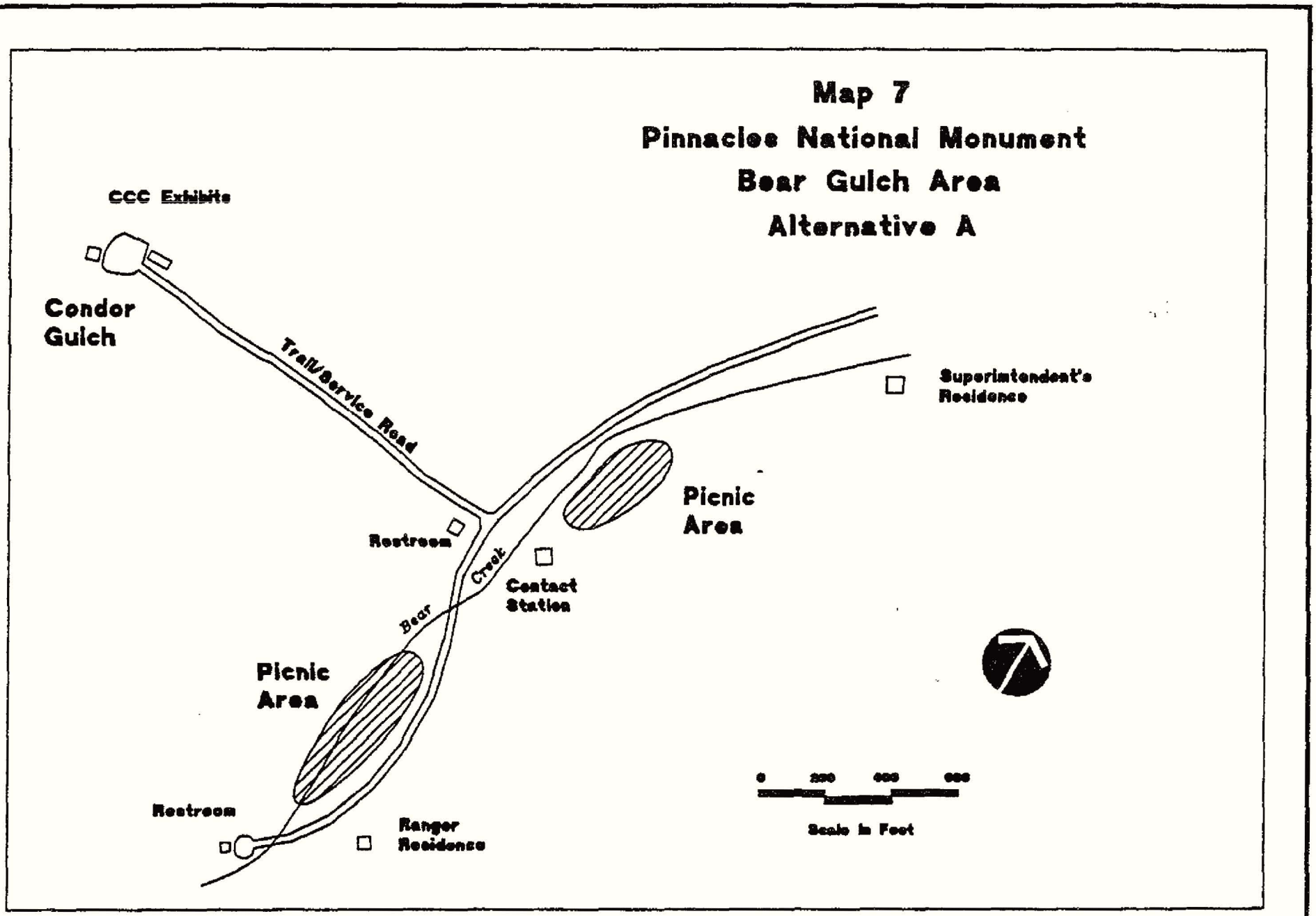
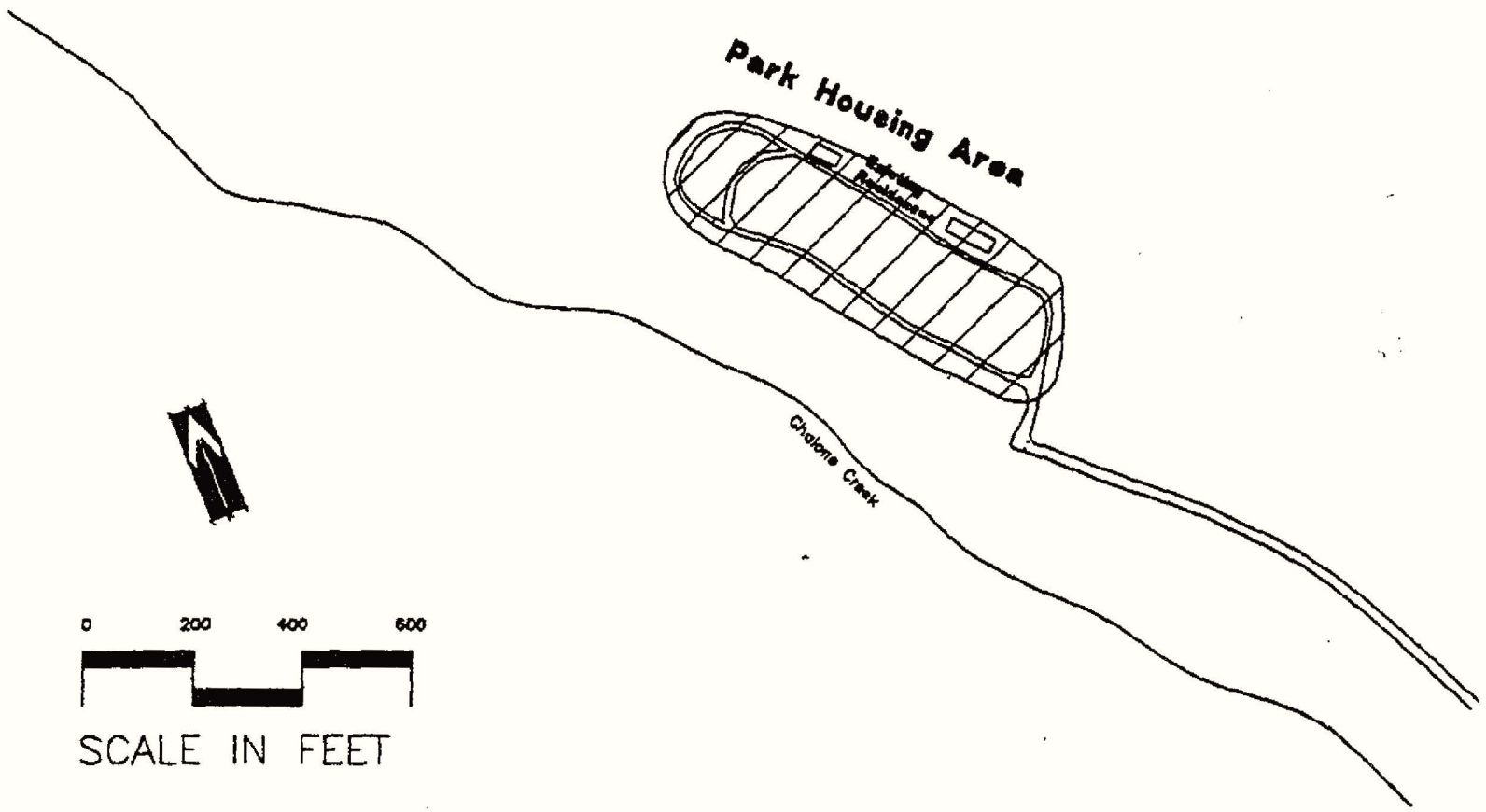

Map 7
Pinnacles National Monument
Bear Gulch Area
Alternative A
CCC Exhibits
Condor Gulch
Trail/Service Road
Superintendent's Residence
Picnic Area
Restroom
Bear Creek
Contact Station
Picnic Area
Restroom
Ranger Residence
0
200
400
600
Scale in Feet

114/80061

Map 8
Pinnacles National Monument
Chalone Creek Area
Alternative A



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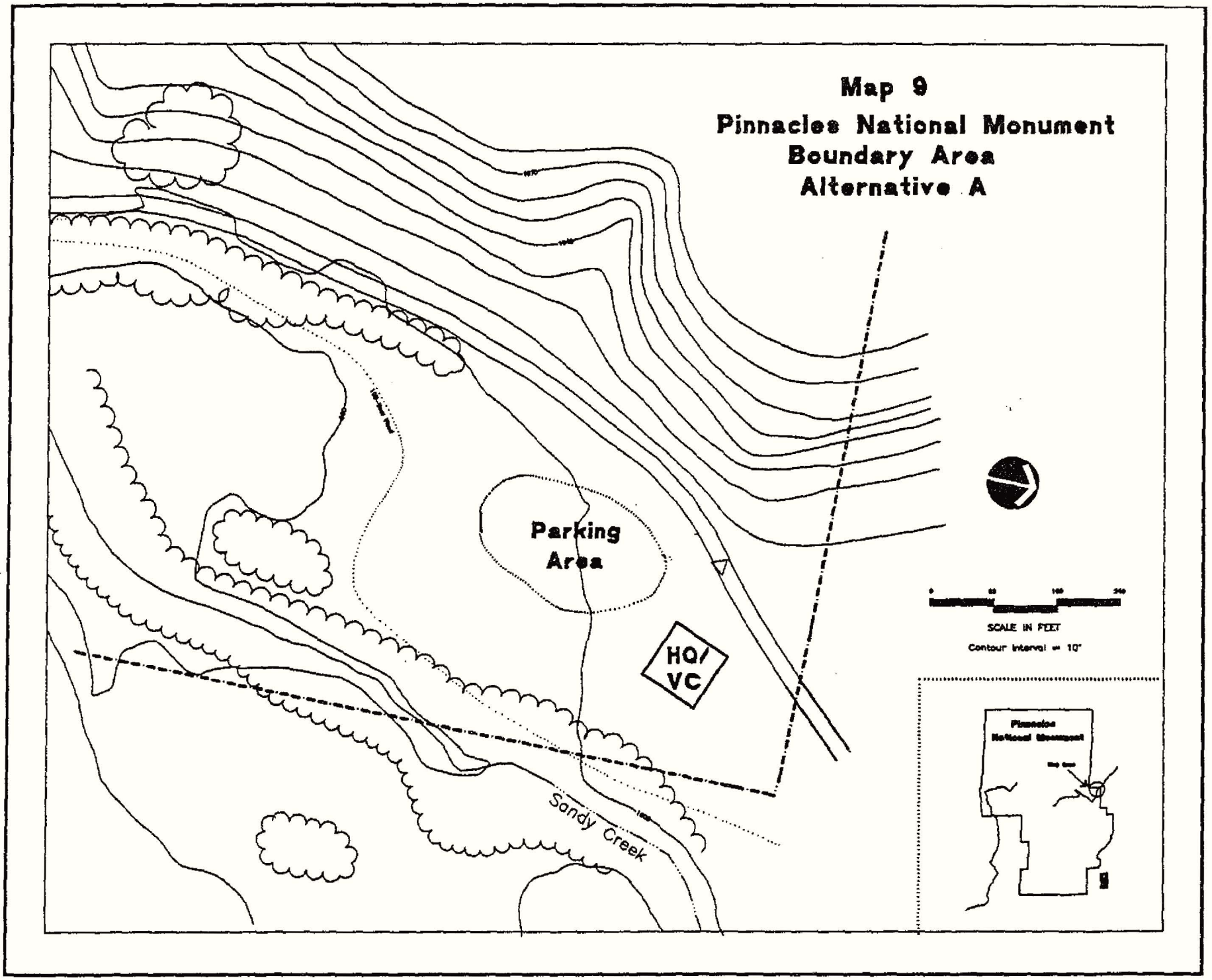

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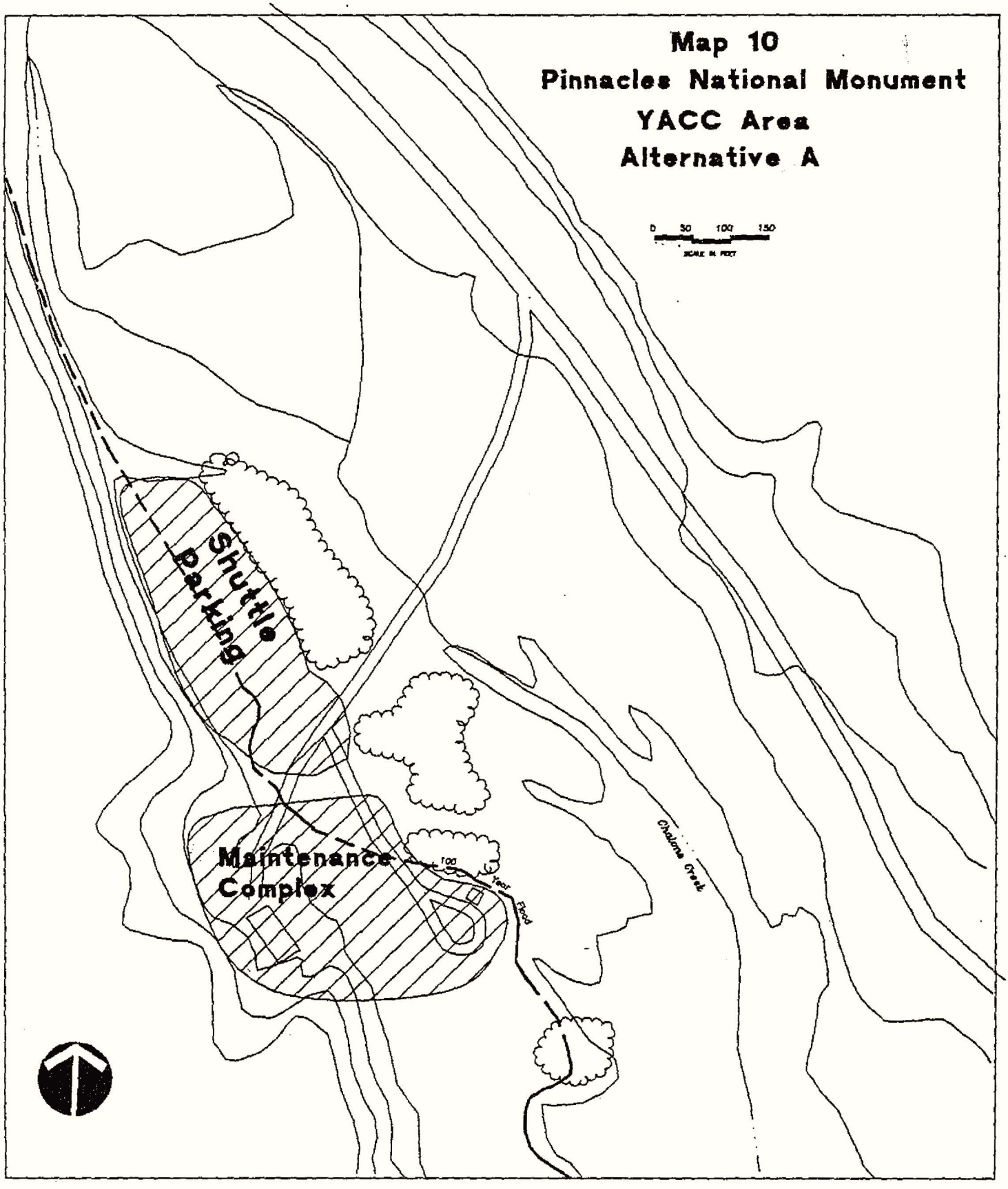
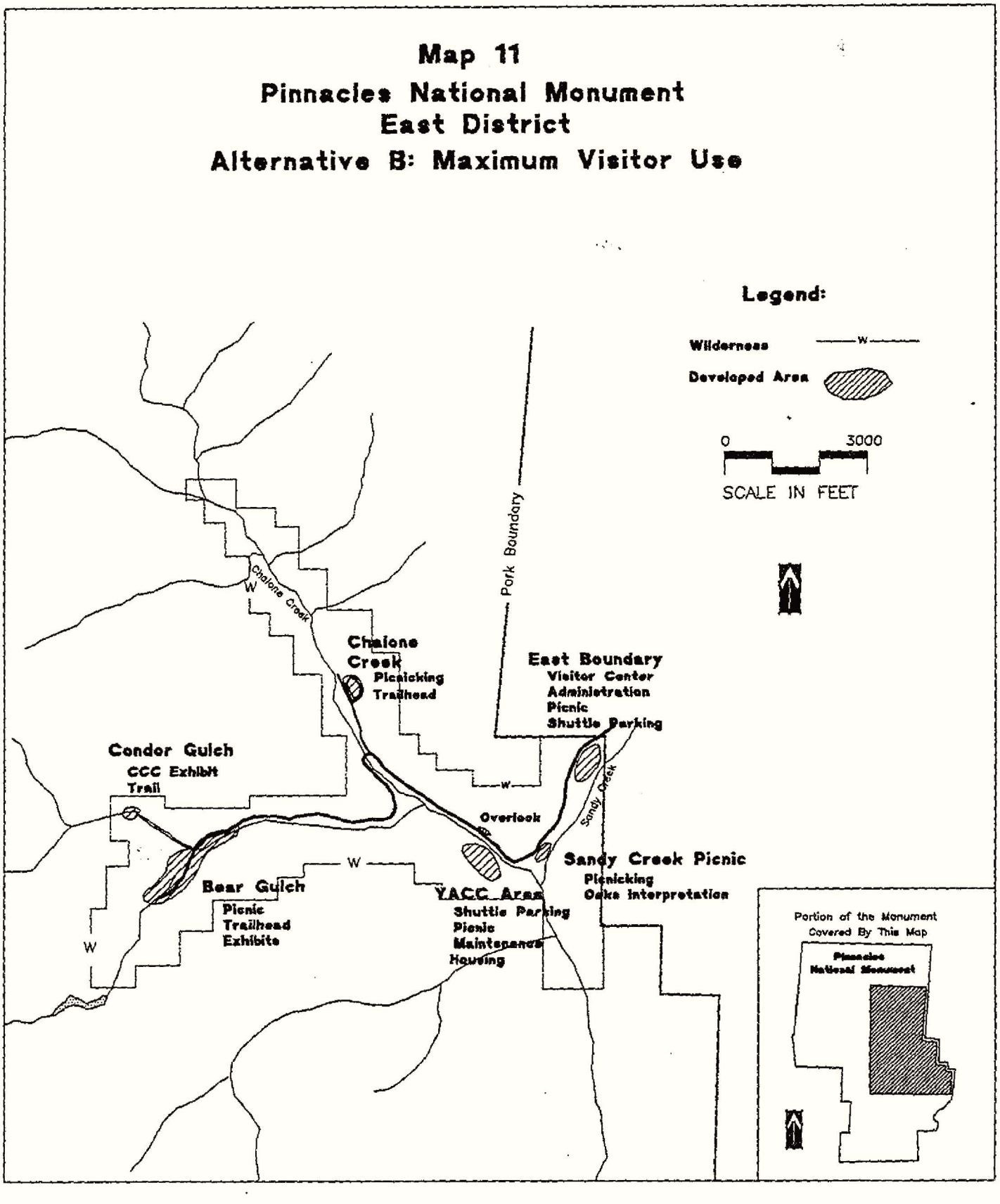

Map 10
Pinnacles National Monument
YACC Area
Alternative A
0 50 100 150
SCALE IN FEET
Shuttle Parking
Maintenance Complex
100 yr. Flood
Chalone Creek

114/80063

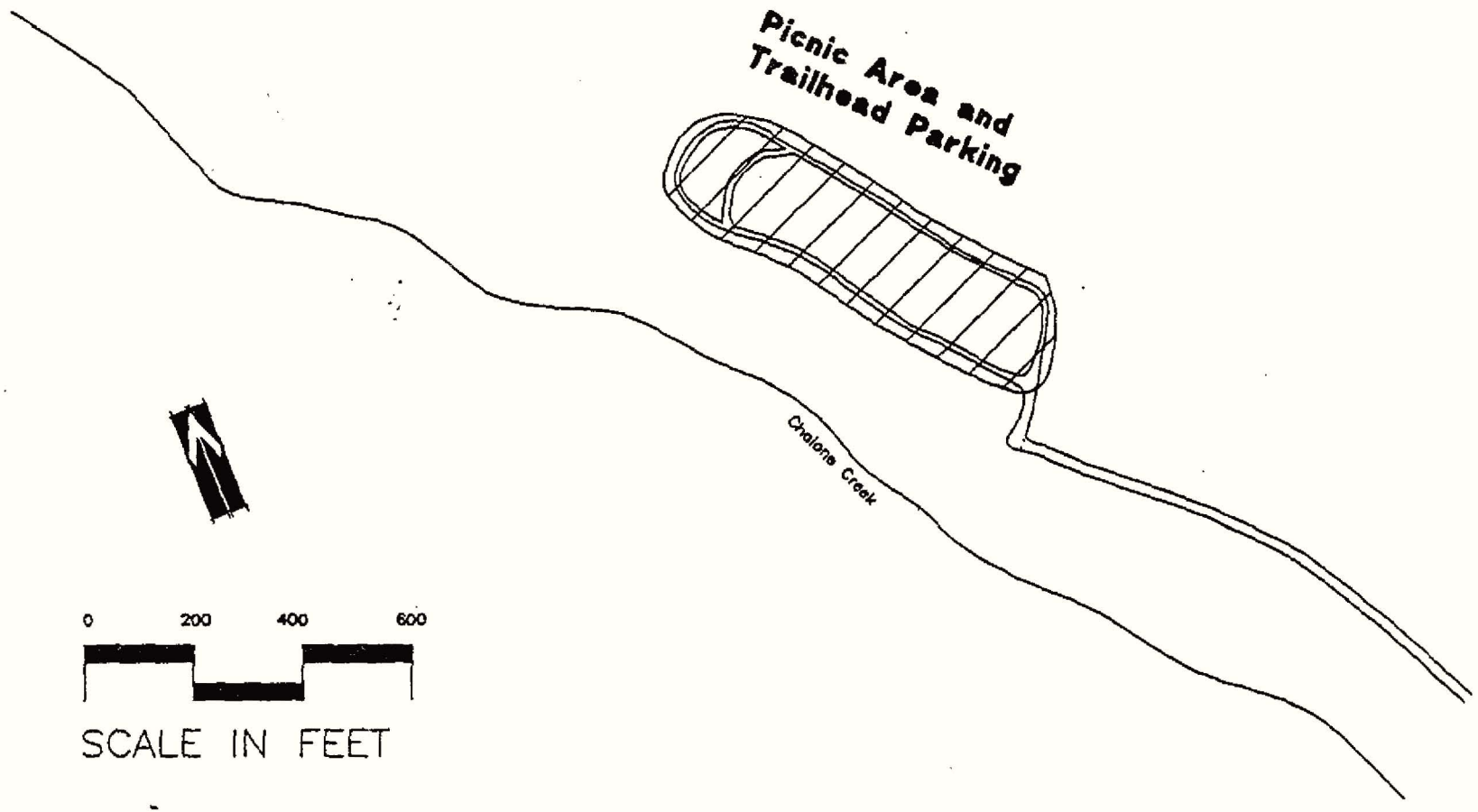
Map 11
Pinnacles National Monument
East District
Alternative B: Maximum Visitor Use



114/80064

Map 12

Pinnacles National Monument
Chalone Creek Area
Alternative B



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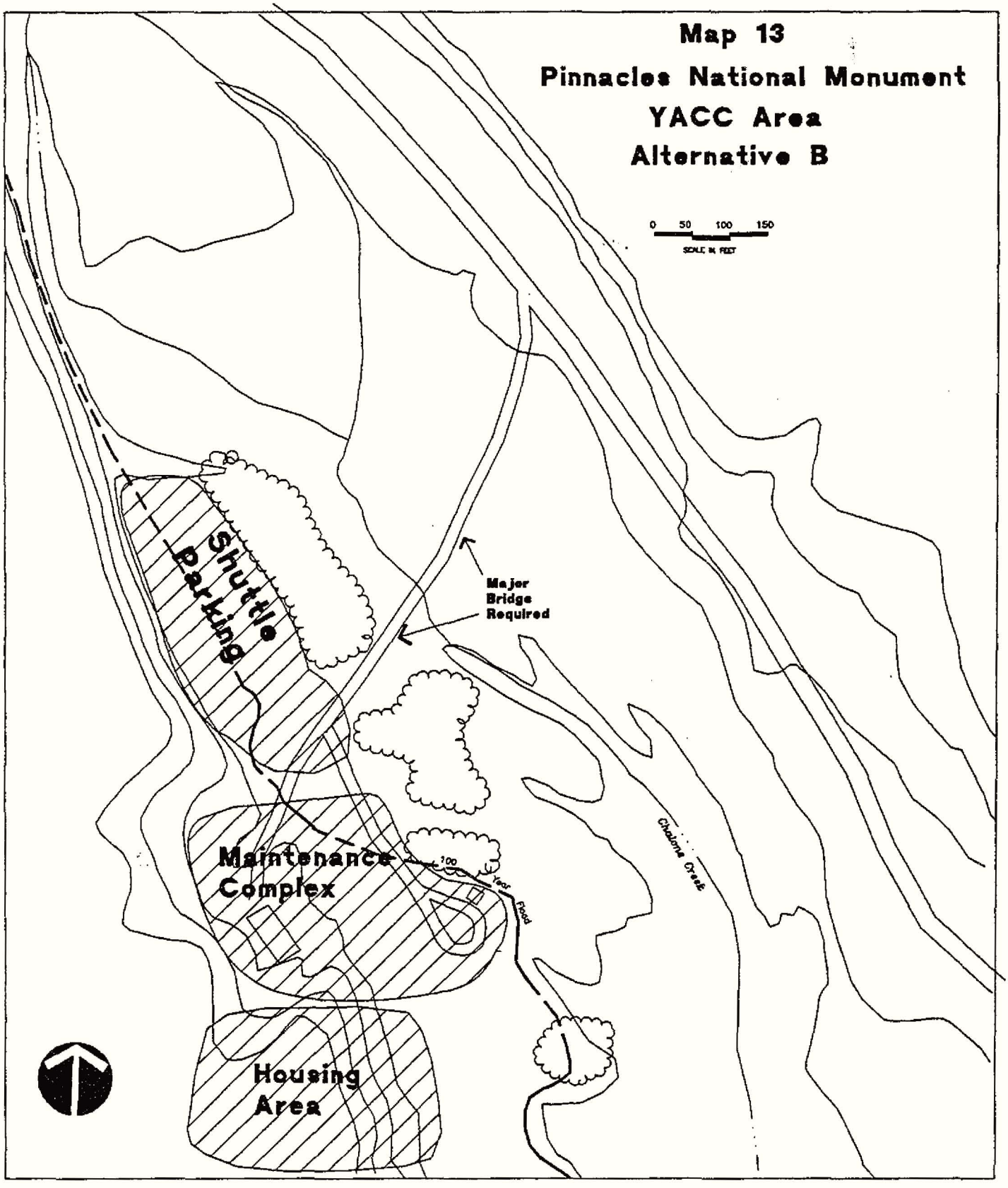
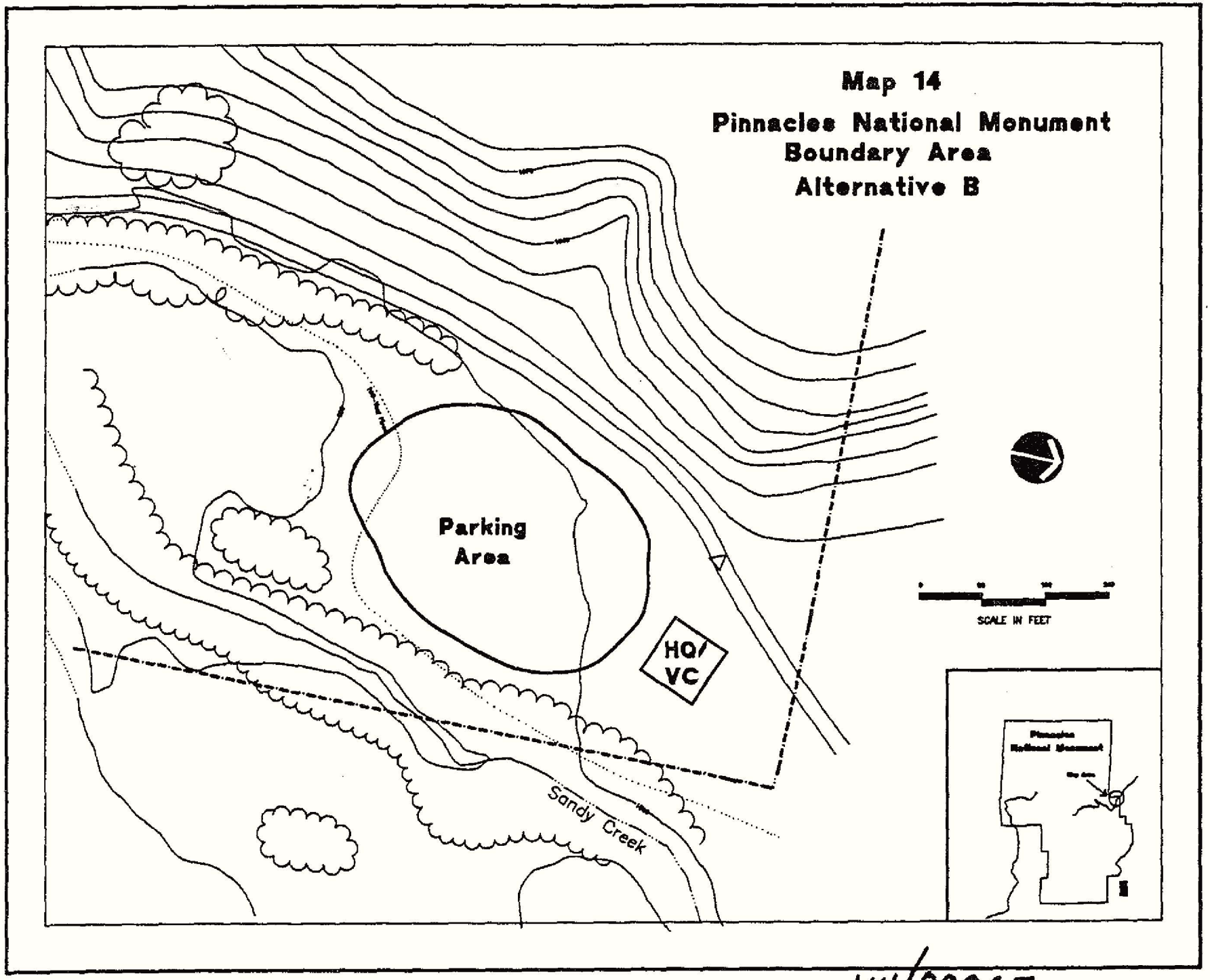
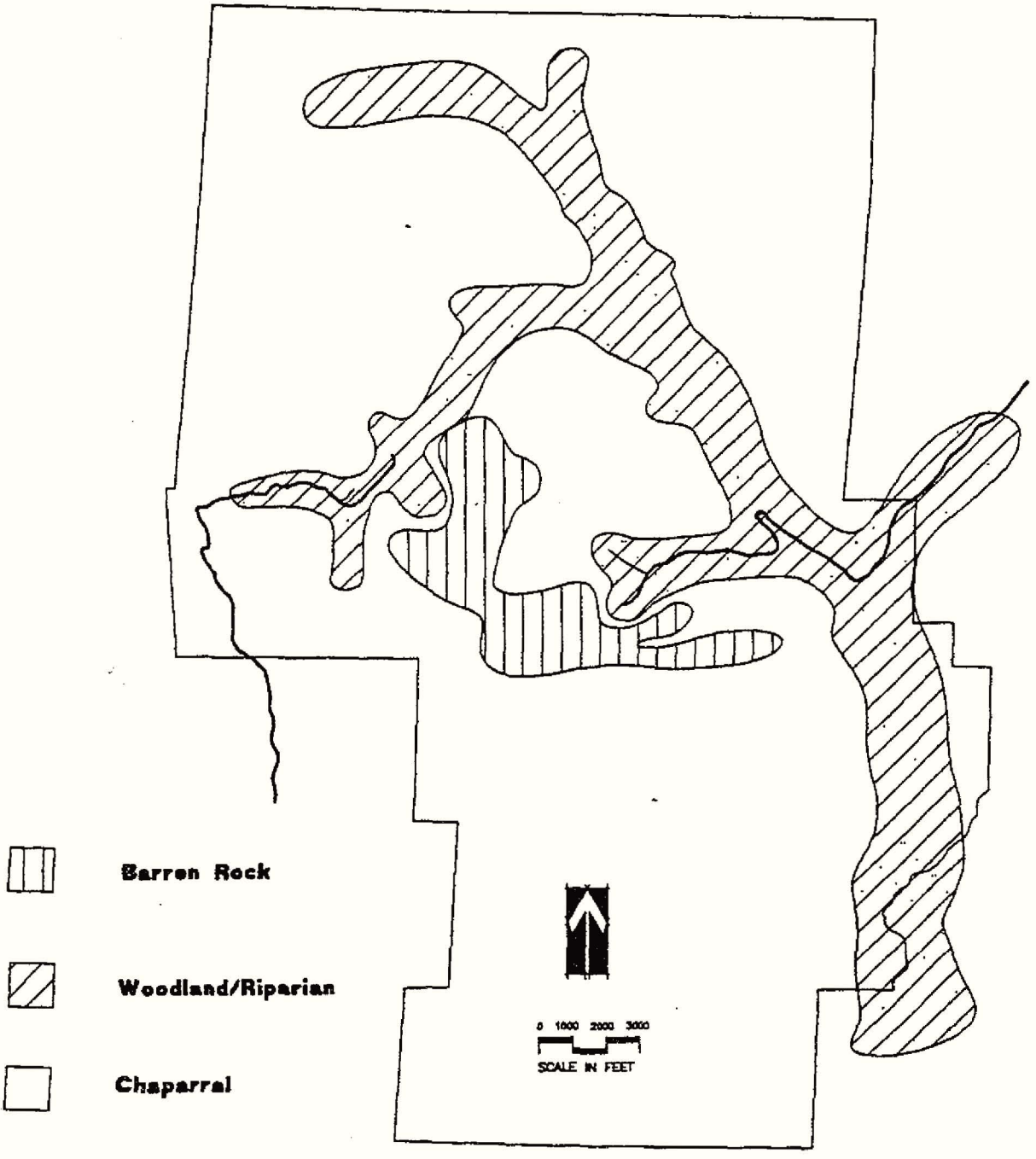

Map 13
Pinnacles National Monument
YACC Area
Alternative B
0 50 100 150
SCALE IN FEET
Shuttle Parking
Major Bridge Required
Maintenance Complex
100
Road
Chalone Creek
Housing Area

114/80066


Map 14
Pinnacles National Monument
Boundary Area
Alternative B
Parking
Area
HQ/
VC
Sandy Creek
SCALE IN FEET

114/80067

Map 15
Pinnacles National Monument
Development Concept Plan
Vegetation



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