



Aerial photo of the Canyonlands region. The confluence of the Colorado and Green Rivers is in the upper left, Big Spring Canyon is the west tributary in the upper right, and the Chesler Park/Grabens region at the heart of the Needles is at the bottom.

SATELLITE IMAGE FROM GOOGLE

CLOSING THE ROAD TO CHESLER PARK:

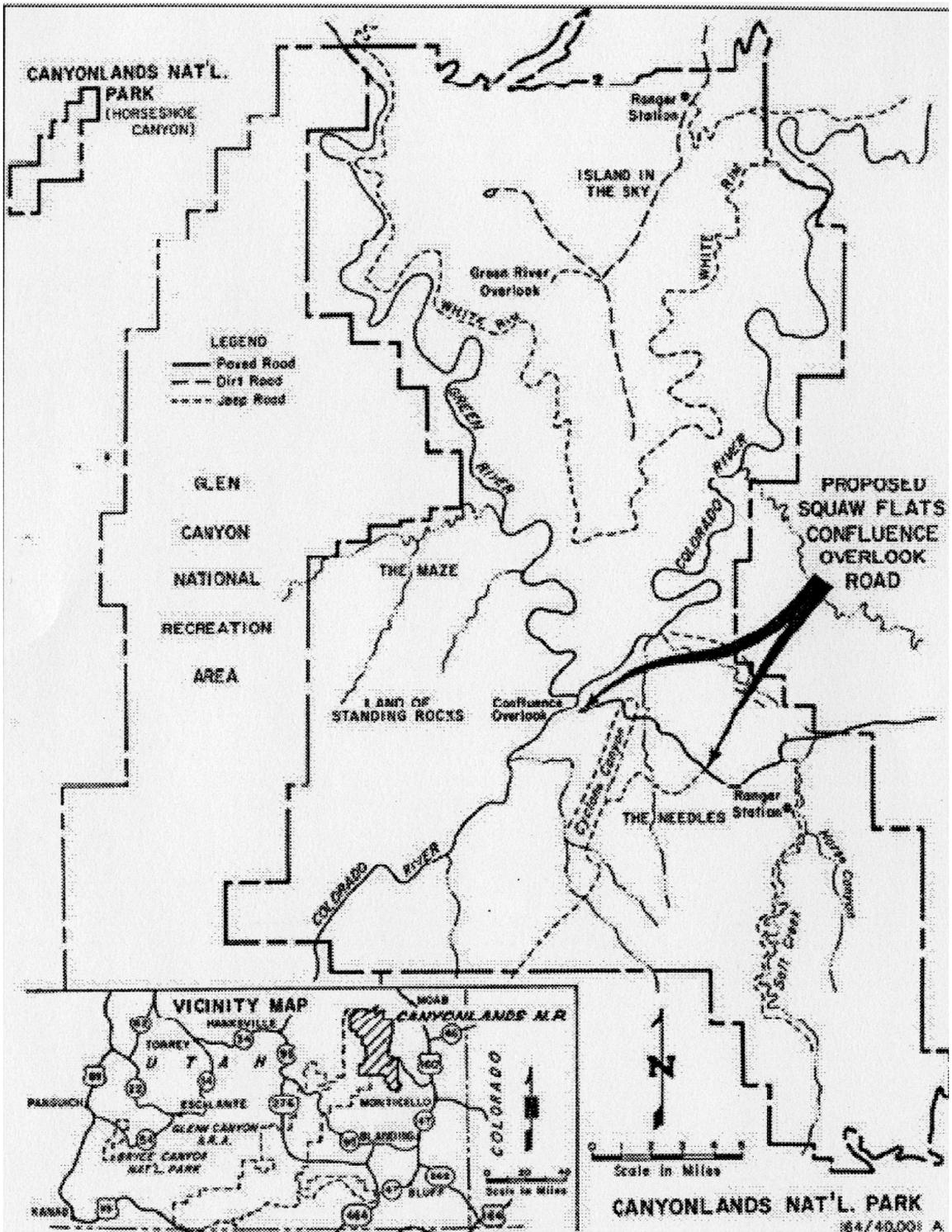
Why Access to Canyonlands National Park Remains Limited

BY CLYDE L. DENIS

Canyonlands National Park, established in 1964, is the largest national park in Utah and was the first new national park formed in the continental United States after World War II. Viewed at the time of its creation as “the Nation’s last opportunity to establish a national park of the Yellowstone National Park class—a vast area of scenic wonders and recreational opportunities unduplicated elsewhere on the American Continent or in the world,” Canyonlands today is vastly different from Yellowstone in terms of visitor amenities.¹ Its Needles District, for instance, has few paved roads and no lodges and concessions. In particular, the Chesler Park/Grabens region at the heart of the Needles is remote and accessible only to hikers and people with four-wheel-drive vehicles.

The contrast between the road accessibility envisioned at Canyonlands’ conception and the eventual lack of development of the park is evident in a comparison of the Canyonlands Master Plan of 1965 with the General Management Plan (GMP) of 1978 (still enforced today). The Master Plan of 1965 proposed five paved roads. The present-day road terminating at Big Spring Canyon (‘A’ on map on page 332) was to leap the canyon in a graceful bridge, and continue to a juncture. From there, a one-mile paved road would lead to a stunning view overlooking the Green/Colorado River confluence (‘B’). South from the juncture, the road would make its way deep into the Grabens area, running through Devils Lane. A

¹ U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, *An Act to provide for establishment of the Canyonlands National Park in the State of Utah, and for other purposes*, 88th Cong., 2nd sess., August 17, 1964, 9.



Canyonlands National Park as shown in a 1969 proposal for its expansion that would include the Maze District and Horseshoe Canyon. Congress expanded the park to its current boundaries in November 1971.

mile or so outside of Chesler Park ('C'), a spur road would climb into Chesler Park, the centerpiece of the Needles District. As a congressional report noted, "the placid parks, particularly Chesler and Virginia, ringed by the bristling forest of fantastic [rock] needles, are outstanding."² Once in Chesler Park, a paved road would take visitors around the inner circumference of the park to waiting picnic tables and a view of the impressive Devils Pinnacles and the five-hundred-foot-tall, mile-long central reef of layered white and pink Cedar Mesa sandstone. The main road, outside of Chesler Park, would run south through Beef Basin and its archeological jewels along the east flank of the Abajos to State Route 95, just east of Natural Bridges National Monument between Blanding and Hanksville, Utah. This latter road would be called the Kigalia Parkway ('D').

The rationale for these five roads was clear. The nation's citizens could have access to Chesler Park, and once there, as San Juan County officials insisted, they must have the option of taking the Kigalia Highway loop road, which would enable them to visit and spend money in Monticello and Blanding. However, the GMP of 1978 rejected all of these access roads, simply stating that, "The road [to the] . . . Confluence Overlook [which was key to the Chesler Park road and the Kigalia Highway] will not be completed as previously planned because of excessive construction cost and irreversible environmental damage."³

The transformation of Canyonlands' Needles District from the proposed accessible recreation area to a preserved wilderness-like area resulted from the convergence of two events. First, the exorbitant costs of the Vietnam War caused at least a ten-year delay in constructing the access roads into the Needles District. Second, when monies became available for road construction, new superintendents of Canyonlands and their superiors in the National Park Service favored a more aggressive preservation of the natural areas of the park.

A core quandary of Canyonlands' development was eloquently summarized in 1972 by Thomas

F. Flynn, acting director of the Park Service: "If the average visitor is denied this [access] he may well ask what is the point in having a park at all."⁴ This question was inherent within the divided purpose of the Organic Act of 1916, which established the National Park system to both "conserve the scenery" so that it be "unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations" and "to provide for the enjoyment" of the current generation.⁵ Only in 1978 did the nation finally resolve this conundrum with the amendment to the Redwoods National Park Act. This act clarified the Organic Act: "authorized activities . . . shall not be exercised in derogation of the values and purposes for which these various areas have been established." The courts have repeatedly interpreted this amendment to mean that for the Park Service "resource protection [is] the overarching concern," that its "primary management function with respect to wildlife is preservation," and that its purpose is "to leave [its units] unimpaired; this mission had and has precedence over providing means of access, if those means impair the resources, however much access may add to the enjoyment of future generations."⁶

This preservation-focused interpretation of the Park Service mandate, however, was not dominant in the 1950s, or even in the mid-1960s when Canyonlands was formed, even though the Wilderness Preservation Act had just been passed in 1964. The change over time in the Canyonlands roads encapsulates a national shift emphasizing preservation over tourist access.

Canyonlands was conceived in the 1950s, when "providing access" was the talisman of the Park Service, a focus strongly supported by a rapid increase in visitation following World War II

2 U.S. Congress, House, *Canyonlands*, 6.

3 U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, "Canyonlands General Management Plan," October 1978, U.S. Department of the Interior.

4 Thomas F. Flynn to Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, June 23, 1972, memorandum, fd. 286, CANY 36607, Canyonlands National Park Administrative Collection, Southeast Utah Group Archives, National Park Service, Moab, Utah (hereafter Canyonlands Collection).

5 Lary M. Dilsaver, ed., *America's National Park System: The Critical Documents* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1994), 392.

6 U.S. National Park Service, Environmental Quality Division, *Canyonlands National Park and the Organic Act: Balancing Resource Protection and Visitor Use*, by David A. Watts (U.S. Department of the Interior, 2008), 10-14.



A U.S. Geological Survey map showing planned roads in Canyonlands. The proposed five Needles District roads are indicated with a dashed line emanating from 'A' where the road to Big Spring Canyon currently ends and the bridge was to be built. The junction of the road to the Confluence overlook is labeled with a 'B.' The entry by road to Chesler Park is marked with a 'C.' The Kigalia Parkway south to Beef Basin to State Road 95 is marked with a 'D.'

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and the deplorable state of the park infrastructure. Visitors to the parks encountered decrepit park roads, campgrounds, and lodges. According to *Reader's Digest* in 1955, parks had poor sanitary conditions, with campgrounds "approaching rural slums."⁷ Connie Wirth, director

of the National Park System, responded with the aggressive Mission 66 program, a ten-year proposal quickly approved by President Dwight D. Eisenhower and Congress to restore and revitalize the parks. Mission 66 sought to protect park resources and at the same time develop them for public use. Critics of Mission 66, however, felt that development was taking precedence, with too many roads and an "urbanized" feel. As the

7 *Reader's Digest* warned prospective visitors to parks: "Your trip is likely to be fraught with discomfort, disappointment, even danger." Conrad L. Wirth, *Parks, Politics and the People* (Norman: University of Oklahoma

Press, 1980), 237.

National Parks Magazine criticized, “engineering had[s] become more important than preservation,’ creating wide, modern roads similar to those found in state highway systems.” As was noted about Rocky Mountain National Park, “[i]ronically, Mission 66, by ‘modernizing’ the Park and by making travel in it more attractive and comfortable, had detracted from the Park’s scenic naturalness. . . . [Wide] roads ma[d]e Park travel easier but not necessarily more meaningful.”⁸ In respect to wilderness, the Park Service maintained that there are “different kinds of wilderness, including . . . accessible wilderness, available with a ten-minute walk from many park roads, or where visitors could ‘see, sense, and react to wilderness, often without leaving the roadside.”⁹

The effort to create Canyonlands involved those with varied interests: those most focused on boosting the economy of southeast Utah both through tourism and the unimpeded use of natural resources—minerals, oil, and grazing; those most focused on a large national park with road access; and those advocating on behalf of scenic preservation.

The local support for some type of Canyonlands park was in response to the series of southeast Utah boom and bust cycles since the late nineteenth century involving free-range cattle, dry farming, and uranium mining.¹⁰ At a hearing on the proposed park, one local said, “Monticello in 1955 was on a boom, jobs were plentiful

. . . now, 7 years later, business is poor, jobs are scarce, vacant houses and apartments are numerous. In 1956 I had six men working for me in the plumbing and heating business but now I do not have enough work for myself and there is no other plumber here.”¹¹

Although many locals desired the creation of several smaller isolated parks (presenting “this image of wilderness, the image of protection”) and multiple-use of the other adjacent lands, Democratic Utah Senator Frank E. Moss (in conjunction with Bates Wilson, then superintendent of Arches National Park) walked the delicate and often tortuous line to ensure the creation of a large national park. Senator Moss felt that developing tourism through the creation of national parks would be a long-term and effective means of increasing the economies of southern Utah towns.¹² Moss and his allies in southeast Utah were convinced that “Canyonlands would become the Yellowstone of southeast Utah.”¹³ As summarized by one San Juan County resident during the congressional hearings on the proposed national park, the locals would benefit greatly from roads and other developments as soon as possible to “build and grow the additional tourist business.”¹⁴ Stewart Udall, Secretary of the Interior in 1962, fueled these hopes by saying, “we have proposed to spend millions of dollars developing this [Canyonlands] like we have developed Grand Canyon, Dinosaur, and all the national parks, . . . with construction of approach roads and judiciously located park roads within the area itself to make the inspirational values accessible for the people of our country.”¹⁵ At the birth of

8 Lloyd K. Musselman, *Rocky Mountain National Park Administrative History 1915–1965*, (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1971).

9 Richard West Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), 185–87.

10 After the free range cattle industry died at the end of the nineteenth century, it was followed by the dry farming experiments of 1910 to 1930 in which San Juan County lost 35 percent of its farms. Clyde L. Denis, “Departure of the Late Nineteenth Century Cattle Companies from Southeastern Utah: A Reassessment,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 80 (Fall 2012): 354–73; Clyde L. Denis, “Fallout from the Demise of the Large Cattle Companies of Late Nineteenth-Century Southeast Utah: The Economic Ascendency of Moab,” *Journal of the West* 53 (2014): 43–53. In the late 1950s, the southeast Utah economy plummeted when the Atomic Energy Commission decided that the military had sufficient uranium. From 1960 to 1970, Monticello lost 22 percent of its population, and by the mid-1960s Moab was viewed by non-locals as “a depressed region.” Katy Brown, phone interview with the author, May 2014.

11 U.S. Congress, Senate, Subcommittee on Public Lands of the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, *Proposed Canyonlands National Park in Utah: Hearing before the Subcommittee on Public Lands of the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs*, 87th Cong., 2d sess., March 29–30, 1962, 363.

12 *Ibid.*, 123; Michael Cornfield and Anne Zill, “Frank E. Moss, Democratic Senator of Utah,” in *Ralph Nader Congress Project: Citizens Look at Congress* (Grossman Publishers, 1972), 1–11.

13 Glen Alexander, phone interviews with author, 2013–2016.

14 Testimony of James Black, President, Monticello Chamber of Commerce in U.S. Congress, Senate, Subcommittee on Public Lands, *Proposed Canyonlands National Park in Utah: Hearing before the Subcommittee on Public Lands*, April 25, 1963, 216.

15 U.S. Congress, Senate, Subcommittee on Public Lands,



In the heart of Canyonland's Needles District, Chesler Park offers stunning views of desert grasslands and sandstone formations. Concerned about the environmental impact of jeep travel, park officials decided to close Chesler to motorized vehicles in the late 1960s.

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Canyonlands, therefore, people expected road access within the Needles District in the immediate future.

The 1965 Master Plan encoding the access roads in the Needles District was approved by Bates Wilson, the newly appointed superintendent of Canyonlands. Wilson, who had proselytized for Canyonlands protection prior to its formation, now had the duty to implement this plan. However, he had various conflicting interests to contend with. On the one hand, many opposed access roads that would exploit and despoil the land. On the other hand, vehicular access was paramount. As one Moabite and Park Service

employee who had never hiked the Chesler Park/Grabens area observed: "Now the panic of fear sets in that man eventually might ruin Canyonlands National Park with modern intervention. Not so." Those "who prefer to thrill at nature's wonders in a less vigorous way will be able to drive their modern cars over smooth paved roads to the colorful fantasy land. Nor should the most ardent wilderness lover begrudge these access roads which will make the sights of Canyonlands available to all Americans. . . . It's too big and too tough to spoil."¹⁶

Wilson had originally conceived a Canyonlands in which access would be substantially by jeep and hiking; however, his planning documents for Canyonlands throughout the 1960s dealt with construction of multiple sealed roads in the region, and throughout the 1960s he told Moss of such plans.¹⁷ His first assistant super-

Proposed Canyonlands National Park in Utah: Hearing before the Subcommittee on Public Lands of the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, 52–58; Testimony of Max N. Edwards, Assistant Secretary of the Department of the Interior, in U.S. Congress, Senate, Subcommittee on Public Lands, *Proposed Canyonlands National Park in Utah: Hearing before the Subcommittee on Public Lands*, 38. The Department of Interior's "Canyonlands" brochure of 1962 contains pictures of roads to the Confluence overlook and to and into Chesler Park.

16 Maxene Newell, "It's a Rugged Park," *Times-Independent* (Moab, UT), May 19, 1966, 3.

17 Lloyd M. Pierson, "Looking Back on Canyonlands

intendent, Roger J. Contor, also supported paved roads to Chesler Park. Contor had been brought to Canyonlands to handle the administrative side of the park by George B. Hartzog Jr., the autocratic director of the Park Service from 1964 to 1972. Hartzog saw himself “as seeking a balance between those who wanted parks to provide more roads . . . and those who wanted to protect the natural areas from being overrun by people.”¹⁸ Throughout his tenure he fought wilderness designation in national parks by maintaining that “natural environment lands” could have “minimum” facilities such as “one-way motor nature trails” and “informal picnic sites ‘for public enjoyment.’”¹⁹ He had instructed Contor to “keep the southeast Utahns happy” in terms of road development. Contor, who later would be considered a strong environmentalist, had not yet developed his environmentalist ethic in the mid-1960s and would not have wanted to cross Hartzog at that stage of his career.²⁰ As Contor later indicated, “Government employees basically avoid risk. . . . I wanted to be able to retire from the Civil Service.”²¹ In the 1960s, Contor, Chief Ranger James Randall, and Wilson were all enthusiastic about paving the White Rim road (now a unique and premier jeep and mountain biking route) in the Island in the Sky district in order to provide better access and visitation. This proposal was killed, however, by P. E. Smith of the Park Service’s Western Office of Design and Construction (WODC) who maintained that the primitive jeep road was for the few and “not the majority of visitors to the park.”²²

National Park Formation,” typescript in possession of author; Bates Wilson to Frank E. Moss, January 12, 1971, fd. 673, Canyonlands Collection.

18 Frank P. Sherwood, “George B. Hartzog, Jr.: Protector of the Parks,” in *Exemplary Public Administrators: Character and Leadership in Government*, eds. Terry Cooper and Dale Wright (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1992), 147.

19 Craig W. Allin, *The Politics of Wilderness Preservation* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1982), 146–47, 150–51; Michael Frome, *Regreening the National Parks* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1992), 72.

20 Alexander interviews.

21 Michael E. Fraidenburg, *Intelligent Courage: Natural Resource Careers That Make a Difference* (Malbar, FL: Krieger, 2007), 12.

22 P. E. Smith, Acting Chief, WODC, to Regional Director, South West Region, September 9, 1965, fd. 180, Canyonlands Collection; Superintendent Bates Wilson to Regional Director, Southwest region, September

However, not all parts of the original Master Plan were favored. In September 1965, the acting chief of the Southwest Regional Office, which oversaw Canyonlands, commented about the nearly finalized Master Plan: “We agree that care should be taken in locating the loop road [within Chesler Park] to avoid intrusion,” to which Canyonlands administrative officer Kent Wintch noted, “Loop road cannot avoid intrusion” and Randall added laconically, “impossible.”²³ Early in 1966 Wilson expressed his own doubts: “I awake during the night sometimes in a cold sweat, fearing that we will build a road into Chesler Park that would ruin it!”²⁴ In September, Wilson indicated to his superiors that the interior paved loop road should be deleted and that the jeep road providing access into Chesler Park should be retained but not paved.²⁵ Consequently, in his budgets after 1967, Wilson did not include funds for the loop road or paved access road. Yet, the change was not immediate, as even as late as March 1967 Wilson was allowing his landscape architect, Paul Fritz, to spend time surveying Chesler Park for possible road locations.²⁶

Wilson soon became concerned about allowing jeep access to Chesler Park at all. In the 1970s Wilson recalled the jeep road and its desecration of Chesler Park: “The jeeps were driving all over, not just on the original paths, killing the cryptogamic soil, creating ruts in all directions.”²⁷ In 1968 Edgar Kleiner and Kimball Harper of University of Utah completed a seminal study of the effects of limited cattle grazing from the 1890s to 1960s on plant type and growth, soil sustainability, and environmental degradation in Chesler Park, as compared to no domestic grazing in Virginia Park. Kleiner’s data, which Wilson saw,

27, 1965, fd. 180, Canyonlands Collection; Master Plan Brief for Canyonlands National Park, August 4, 1965, fd. 181, Canyonlands Collection; Roger J. Contor to Owen W. Burnham, October 10, 1967, fd. 181, Canyonlands Collection.

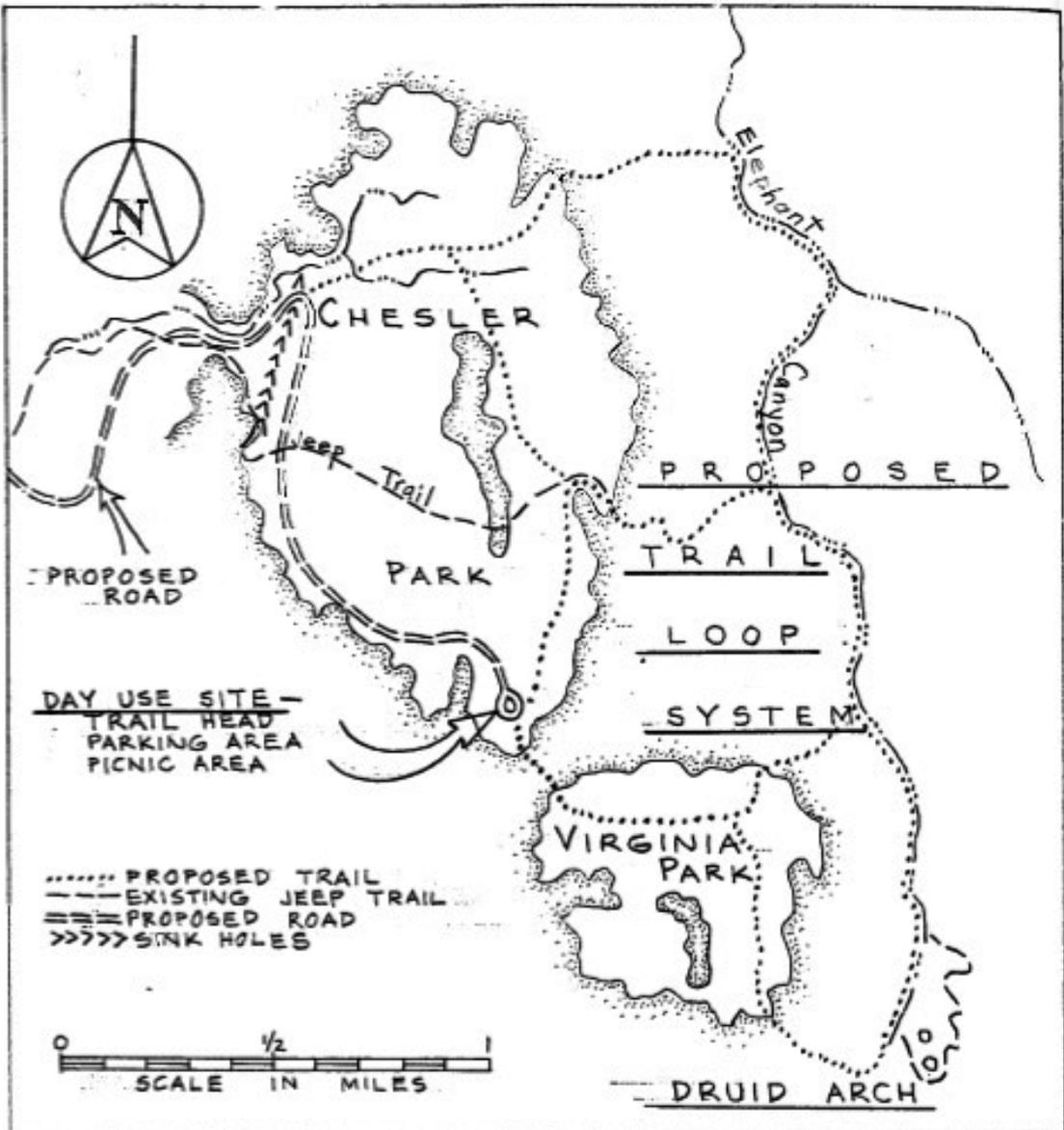
23 Acting Chief, WODC, to Regional Director, Southwest Region, September 9, 1965, comments made September 13, 1965, fd. 180, Canyonlands Collection.

24 C. Sharp, “Differences of Opinion on Routes Develop on Interagency Tour,” *Times-Independent*, April 28, 1966, 1.

25 Bates Wilson to Chief, Office of Resource Planning, SCC, September 22, 1966, fd. 180, Canyonlands Collection.

26 Canyonlands Complex Staff Meeting Minutes (CCSMM), March 29, 1967, Folder 42, Canyonlands Collection.

27 Alexander interviews.



PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT CHESLER & VIRGINIA PARKS - DRUID ARCH

- Provides road access to west and south end of Chesler Park, with adequate trail possibilities
- Trail loop system affords access to Chesler and Virginia Parks and Druid Arch
- Road terminates in ideal setting for day-use activities and scenic overlook

Planned loop road into and around Chesler Park from the Canyonlands National Park Master Plan Brief, August 4, 1965.

indicated clearly that limited winter cattle use in Chesler Park had caused irredeemable loss of habitat and soils by destroying the cryptobiotic cover, a degradation that might be irreversible.²⁸ Irresponsible jeep driving off designated paths in Chesler Park had the potential to do more havoc in a shorter time period than had all the intermittent domestic grazing over the last century. While Wilson's road plans in February 1968 still included paving the jeep road to the edge of Chesler Park (supported by his staff, including Contor), by the next month Wilson had requested from his superiors permission to actually close the jeep road to Chesler Park and begin instead construction of the spectacularly narrow Joint Trail that would provide hiking access into Chesler Park.²⁹ By early 1969, the decision had been made to close jeep travel into Chesler Park, although it still took two years for this to occur. When in October 1969 district ranger David Minor proposed blocking four-wheel-drive access into Chesler Park beginning in November, the then-assistant superintendent Joe Carithers responded that "it was [not] feasible to close the road to Chesler Park at the present time and it would be a question of timing when this would be feasible."³⁰ Carithers, who had been an aide to Udall and who would become instrumental in establishing preserved areas in Arizona, had been brought into Canyonlands to run "the nuts and bolts of the park," as Bates Wilson "was doing mostly PR work"³¹ In April 1971, Wilson and the young ranger Jerry Banta (later to become superintendent of Canyonlands) finally closed the Chesler Park jeep access road.

Given these delays in closing even the rough road into Chesler Park, it is very likely that at least the road running to outside Chesler Park would have been paved had not the Vietnam

War escalated just as Canyonlands was created. The siphoning of national monies for the Vietnam War impacted negatively the budgets for all domestic, discretionary funds. Hartzog remembered, "With the exploding growth of the National Park System from 1963–1972 (an average of nine new parks each year), and the escalating costs of the Vietnam War, our operating budget came under increasing pressure."³² Hartzog's comment is an understatement. The Park Service Capital Improvement Funds (from which road budgets derive) peaked from 1963 to 1965 (\$72 million) and then fell precipitously because of the war to a low of \$22 million in 1969.³³ Moreover, between 1964 and 1972 the aggressive leadership of Hartzog led to the dramatic expansion of the Park system with the addition of seashores, urban areas, and a litany of historical sites. Given these additions, according to estimates of the Southwest Regional office in July 1965, "one half of our present tentative 1967 programs will have to be scrapped."³⁴

One result of the budget crunch was that the entry road to Squaw Flat, which now brings visitors to the Needles Visitor Center, had been scoped out and graded by 1967 but not finished. In fact, in 1967 there was no road budget at all for Canyonlands. Only in 1968 was the \$1.8 million finally budgeted to finish the Squaw Flat road; it was finally paved in 1971.

As for the other three proposed access roads, including the Kigalia Highway loop road, Wilson proposed for 1968 to 1970 that \$5.3 million dollars be allocated for their construction.³⁵ None of these monies were obtained in those years, however, because of the Vietnam War. In fact, by 1975, only the short road from Squaw Flat to Big Spring Canyon had been built. When in 1968 the San Juan County commissioners demanded an explanation of why even the road to Squaw Flat—let alone the road to Chesler Park—had yet to be finished, the National Park responded saying they were as keen as ever on finishing these roads. Even Utah Governor Cal-

28 Edgar F. Kleiner to Bates Wilson, May 16, 1968, and Kimball T. Harper to James W. Larson, Acting Deputy Chief Scientist, September 16, 1968, fd. 753, Canyonlands Collection.

29 CCSMM, March 20, April 3, and April 17, 1968, fd. 43, Canyonlands Collection; Bates E. Wilson to the Regional Director, Southwest Region, March 11–26, 1968, fd. 181, Canyonlands Collection.

30 CCSMM, January 20, 1971, fd. 46, Canyonlands Collection; CCSMM, October 1, 1969, fd. 44, Canyonlands Collection.

31 Joseph Carithers, interview by John R. Moore, 1994, Big Bend Oral History Project, University of Texas at El Paso Oral History Institute; Paul L. Allen, "Obituary of Joseph F. Carithers," *Tucson Citizen*, July 4, 2001.

32 George B. Hartzog, Jr., *Battling for the National Parks* (Mt. Kisco, NY: Moyer Bell Limited, 1988), 152.

33 Wirth, *Parks*, 237.

34 George W. Miller to Bates Wilson, July 23, 1965, fd. 243, Canyonlands Collection.

35 Bates Wilson to Regional Director, Southwest Region, January 4, 1967, fd. 243, Canyonlands Collection.

vin L. Rampton, upon his tour of Canyonlands in May 1969, commented that he sympathized with the Park Service for its lack of funds to construct roads.³⁶

Around this time, Wilson wrote his superior in the Regional Southwest Office, “the road to the Confluence Overlook holds higher priority than the road [from the south] to the junction west of Chesler Park. The Confluence is a logical destination, and one upon which various offices of the Service agree.” Wilson elaborated that engineering and management issues were unresolved concerning Chesler Park. Two weeks later, however, after being called down to the regional office, Wilson wrote to the office that “we enclose revised [roads] for construction towards Chesler Park rather than to the Confluence Overlook. We have embraced construction all the way to Chesler Junction in both cases. . . . In the event of fund shortages, it may be necessary to construct only portions of these [roads].”³⁷ For budget planning it was summarized: “Assuming that the current freeze on contracting will be relaxed this winter, we hope to contract for another seven to ten miles of construction . . . this coming spring.”³⁸ But the freeze did not end.

After another study team review, Wilson in March 1968 summarized the Canyonlands staff position on access roads: “No through road should be developed.” The Squaw Flat road “should end east of Elephant Hill.”³⁹ Wilson indicated that he and the review team “didn’t want the country torn up.”⁴⁰ Instead, the south road should come from “Dugout Ranch southwest and west to Beef Basin, then into the Park from the south, ending in Chesler Canyon south of Chesler Park. No roads should be built

into Chesler Park.”⁴¹ In May, Director Hartzog officially announced deferment of the proposed Squaw Flat to Chesler Park road on the basis that it “would violate the beauty and serenity of the Canyonlands’ country and would be a contradiction of national park purposes.” The plan instead was to build “a one-way loop road from the junction of Devils Lane and Chesler Canyon through Devils Lane to the confluence overlook and return[ing] via Cyclone Canyon.”⁴² This new plan, as Wilson indicated, would provide “for reasonable access” with “very little of the Needles . . . more than two hours’ hike from a hard surfaced road. What more can be asked?”⁴³ Wilson’s staff again supported this plan. Contor believed the Cyclone Canyon/Devils Lane paved loop road, which would have destroyed the backcountry isolation of the Grabens region, to be “the best compromise between use and preservation of outstanding feature[s].”⁴⁴

These developments induced San Juan County officials to write to Senator Moss: “It now appears that the radical conservationists who would like to ‘lock up’ everything have achieved their goals through their lobby and planning in Washington by isolating Chesler and the Confluence from the main entrance and by requiring American people wishing to see Canyonlands to go to dead end roads.”⁴⁵ Moss quickly responded that Wilson and the Park Service had assured him that the Squaw Flat road to the Confluence was not dead, just placed in second priority to the road from Dugout Ranch. But Moss immediately pushed Hartzog to commit to a new “special study team” to find access to the Needles District that would “not be destructive of the park resources.”⁴⁶

In July 1969 the report of that study team (members included Wilson and the assistant director of the Park Service, Gary Everhardt, who later as NPS director would be very supportive of the

36 Canyonlands National Park (Existing) Program Summary, March 1967, fd. 176, Canyonlands Collection; Bates Wilson to Regional Director, Southwest, May 21, 1969, fd. 181, Canyonlands Collection.

37 Bates Wilson to Regional Director, Southwest Region, January 31, 1967, fd. 243, Canyonlands Collection.

38 Roger J. Contor to Owen W. Burnham, October 23, 1967, fd. 181, Canyonlands Collection.

39 Document on Recommended Changes to Roads and Development in Master Plan, March 11, 1968, fd. 181, Canyonlands Collection.

40 “Canyonlands Park Officials Outline Details of Proposed Master Road Plan Alternatives,” *Times Independent*, October 24, 1968, 2.

41 CCSMM, April 12, 1967, fd. 42, Canyonlands Collection.

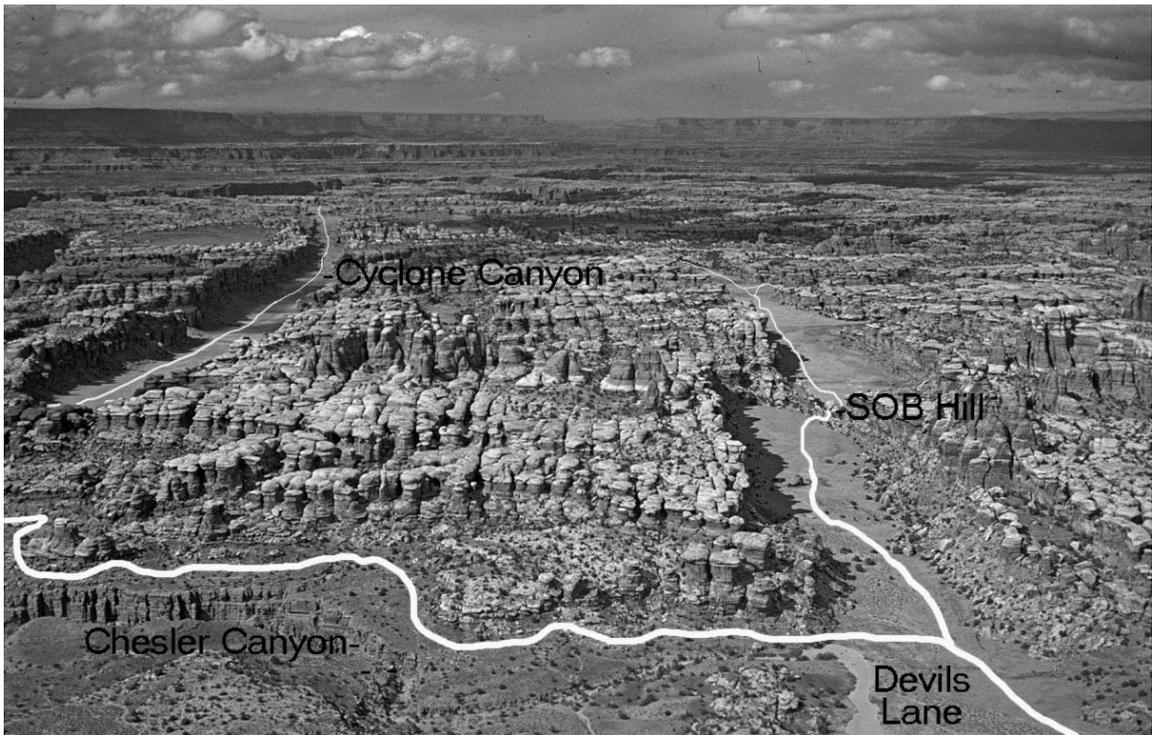
42 News Release, Department of the Interior, May 8, 1968, fd. 176, Canyonlands Collection.

43 “Canyonlands Park Officials Outline Details of Proposed Master Road Plan Alternatives,” 2.

44 CCSMM, April 12, 1967, fd. 42, Canyonlands Collection.

45 San Juan County Commission to Frank E. Moss, October 16, 1968, fd. 673, Canyonlands Collection.

46 Frank E. Marion to W. Hazleton, Chairman, San Juan County October 28, 1968, fd. 673, Canyonlands Collection.



Aerial photo of the north Grabens area with projected roads drawn in. Through Chesler Canyon to Devils Lane would be a newly created road, whereas the others followed existing jeep trails.

PHOTO BY OWEN SEVERANCE

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1978 GMP) stated that the Squaw Flat to Confluence Overlook Road would be given first priority. The one-way road to outside Chesler Park would then be built from the Confluence. This ended the possibility of the “destructive” entry road from SR95 or Dugout Ranch. The new Republican-appointed assistant Secretary of the Interior Russell E. Train confirmed this to Moss in August 1969.⁴⁷ The Confluence Road would be built, requiring a small bridge over Little Spring Canyon, a 700-foot bridge over Big Spring Canyon, and a 130-foot tunnel farther on.

Train’s 1969 decision ended questions as to which access roads were to be constructed. Vietnam funding restrictions delayed sealing of the Squaw Flat road until 1971, and fiscal years 1972 to 1974 were supposed to involve the construction of the road to the Confluence overlook. But the world of 1972 was no longer that of the 1960s.

The road to the overlook now foundered on other fronts, even though more money would become available as the Vietnam War wound down. The 1969 National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 required an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) before any such project could begin. This EIS for the overlook road was not finished until October 1973. These delays exasperated Moss. In a speech to the Senate early in 1973, Moss lambasted the Park Service, saying that there was a “cabal in the Park Service—in the Department of the Interior itself—of staff people who for some reason or another [were] trying to prevent the completion” of roads.⁴⁸ Even the early 1970s preservationist-minded Canyonlands superintendent Robert I. Kerr indicated, “I too was nostalgic for the good old days when if you wanted a road you just built it without having to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement.”⁴⁹

48 Frank E. Moss to Interior and Related Agencies Subcommittee, Senate Appropriations Committee, May 9, 1973, fd. 286, Canyonlands Collection.

49 Robert I. Kerr, phone interviews by author, May 2013 to August 2014.

47 Russell E. Train to Frank E. Moss, August 28, 1969, fd. 286, Canyonlands Collection.

The draft EIS received many comments from the public and governmental agencies, with a surprising seventy percent saying “no” to the road, at least until a new master plan had been prepared. One environmentalist group suggested that the EIS was “incomplete, not supported by . . . basic engineering data, contradictory, and evidences major omissions of material required to be present in such documents.”⁵⁰ Other environmental groups went further and suggested, “Why then does the Park Service insist on building an unplanned road . . . with the full knowledge that at some date in the future it will probably conclude that to do so was a mistake?”⁵¹ In response to the EIS’s statement that it was critical to put in a paved road to allow summer tourists to see the Needles District, the Sierra Club replied, “True, travel in the hot summer months would be difficult, but so is travel in the high country of Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks during the winter. Yet no one advocates a network of roads and other facilities to change that situation.”⁵² The Department of the Interior under a Republican administration, however, was in control of the decision, and the final EIS concluded that the bridges, tunnel, and road would not adversely affect the environment.⁵³

By the time the Department of the Interior approved the EIS, Bates Wilson had retired (in 1972, apparently upon Hartzog’s insistence), and an environmentally responsive Canyonlands administration had taken control of the park.⁵⁴ It was under the tenure of the two new

superintendents, first Kerr and then Peter L. Parry (“an avid preservationist but not as much as Kerr”), that the new master plan, the 1978 GMP, was drafted, given community exposure and comment, and finally agreed upon by both the Park Service and the Department of Interior, then under a Democratic administration.⁵⁵ This new document, prepared during the construction of the road to Big Spring Canyon from Squaw Flat, ensured that no bridge would be built over the canyon.

The GMP deemphasis on roads was the end result of a several-year process. In 1968 Wilson had prepared a statement of guiding principles for Canyonlands, saying that the original master plan, with its heavy emphasis on access, was flawed and that Canyonlands should be a park attuned to its fragile ecological community. In December 1971 Wilson proposed a new master plan with new priorities: “[C]hanging attitudes and new values are constantly revealing past park planning efforts as having been born of naivety, lack of foresight and insufficient data,” leading to “one fortunate situation”—a “lack of development funds . . . a ‘problem’ that delayed realization of possible hasty decisions.” The document further emphasized “the simple feeling that the visitor need not (or even should not) be able to reach nearly every outstanding feature in a park, particularly at the expense of another individual’s experience.”⁵⁶ In compliance with then-current practice, outside consultants prepared a new master plan, completed in November 1973. In complete contrast to Wilson’s statements, the plan called for building roads to the Confluence overlook and to outside Chesler Park and paving most of the Kigalia Highway from SR95 to the south part of the Needles District. As a counterpoint, it proposed closing all jeep roads into the Chesler Park/Grabens region, as “jeep dust was killing plants adjacent to the road.” It criticized the alternative of no new roads as “a puristic approach . . . not in the best interest . . . of the casual visitor who expects to see some portions of the park without undue effort.” Although the draft master plan admittedly

50 U.S. Department of the Interior, *Final Environmental Statement: Proposed Squaw Flat-Confluence Overlook Road*, 1973; Moab Chapter of the “Interested in Saving Southern Utah’s Environment” to Robert I. Kerr, Superintendent, Canyonlands National Park, September 18, 1972, fd. 692, Canyonlands Collection.

51 Sierra Club to Nathaniel P. Reed, Assistant Secretary for Fish, November 15, 1972, fd. 286, Canyonlands Collection.

52 DOI, *Final Environmental Statement*; Sierra Club to Superintendent Robert I. Kerr, September 19, 1972.

53 DOI, *Final Environmental Statement*, 5.

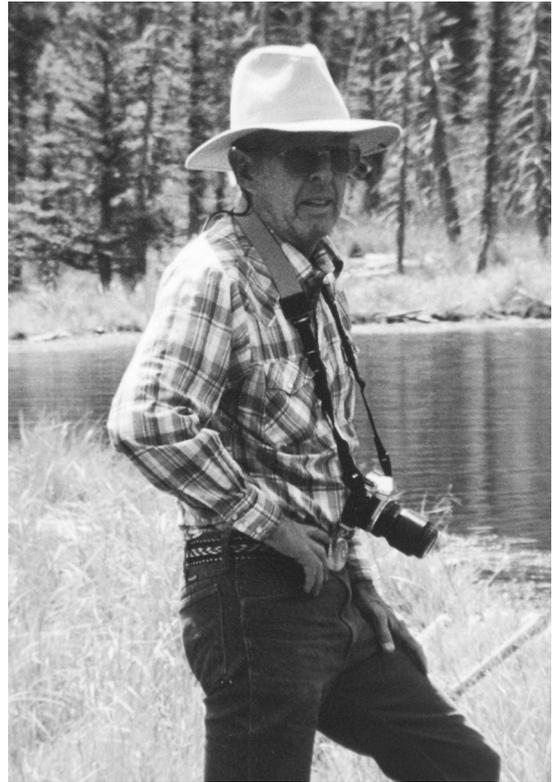
54 Hartzog apparently harbored a deep-seated resentment for Wilson’s independence in establishing National Parks (an area that was supposed to be Hartzog’s unique legacy), Wilson’s ability to get things done in Washington, D.C. without Hartzog’s help, and Wilson’s deep friendship with Udall, whom Hartzog did not like. Hartzog’s actions against Wilson are consonant with other comments on Hartzog. See Sherwood, “George B. Hartzog, Jr.: Protector of the Parks,” 174; Frome, *Regreening*, 73–74.

55 Alexander interviews.

56 Office of Environmental Planning and Design, WSC, “Master Plan Study, Canyonlands National Park,” December 1971, fd. 181, Canyonlands Collection.

would “damage [the park] by construction . . . and by large visitor impacts,” it dismissed the no-road alternative as creating a park “mostly as a large land reserve.”⁵⁷ But as Parry later indicated, “thank goodness” the plan “was not acceptable to Bob Kerr.”⁵⁸ J. Leonard Volz, Kerr’s supervisor at the Midwest Regional Office, agreed. According to one of Kerr’s staff, the plan was too costly, and “closing all jeep roads was not politically possible . . . [as] Bates, among many other notables, was against that. It was a crazy idea. The enviro[n]mentalists did NOT want to trade jeep road closure for a paved system in any way, shape, or form.”⁵⁹ Moreover, the argument that jeep roads needed to be eliminated because of lethal “jeep dust” appears to have had no validity in the real world.⁶⁰ Under Kerr, this draft plan consequently disappeared, as it never was officially sent upstream within the Park Service, leaving Canyonlands without a current master plan.⁶¹

Meanwhile in 1974 Kerr indicated that “I shudder at the connotation of the ‘loop road,’” going “on record as opposing a paved road—or an improved dirt road.”⁶² He also decided that the road over Big Spring Canyon to the Confluence would fail on its own and that he would not fight to keep the road to Big Spring Canyon from being built. “The bridge would be too expensive to ever be built,” he later said. “So, it would be better to not contest the road to Big Spring Canyon. Why bring in the big guns, like the Sierra Club, to fight San Juan County over this dead end road and create so much ill feeling and animosity. At least the road would take people to a nice overlook of the canyon and satisfy southeast Utah residents. Someone



Robert I. Kerr, mid 2000s. As Canyonlands superintendent from 1972 to 1975, Kerr opposed road development in the park.

PHOTO PROVIDED BY BOB KERR

57 The Environmental Associates: Architect Planners, Landscape Architects, “Canyonlands National Park Master Plan,” November 1973, fd. 184, Canyonlands Collection; National Park Service, “Environmental Statement: Master Plan of Canyonlands National Park,” November 1973.

58 Peter Parry, interview by Samuel Schmieding, Moab, Utah, June 2, 2003, Schmieding Oral Histories, CANY 45551, Canyonlands Administrative History Project Oral History Component, Canyonlands Collection.

59 Alexander interviews.

60 Edgar Kleiner and Jayne Belknap, email interviews by author, February 2016.

61 Alexander interviews.

62 Robert Kerr to State Director, Utah, February 13, 1974, fd. 319, Canyonlands Collection.

else could deal with not building the bridge.”⁶³ This someone else became the new superintendent, Pete Parry. Parry, who never shied from controversy, actively sought the Canyonlands superintendency, indicating he “got dust in my blood and my liking for the desert” when he was superintendent of Joshua Tree National Monument.⁶⁴

In his draft GMP in 1976, Parry called for a road to the Confluence that did not leap Big Spring Canyon. His final GMP did not change this view. He stated this decision was consonant with community views: of the 995 letters they received on the subject, 980 were against the bridge. Again, Parry’s supervisors fully supported this GMP.⁶⁵

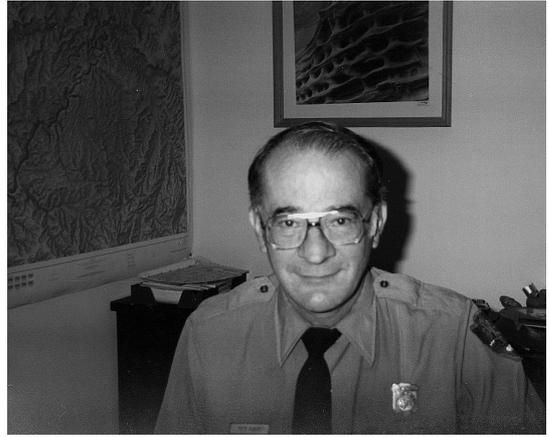
63 Kerr interviews.

64 Parry interview.

65 Alexander interviews; George Raine, “Conflicts Rise over Use of Utah Park,” *New York Times*, August 2, 1981.

Three critical factors led to the approval of the 1978 GMP. First, in the early 1960s, planners had not comprehended how much money it would take to build the proposed roads. By 1978, much of the sentiment against the road to the Confluence and all subsequent road extensions was due to cost. The 700-foot bridge across Big Spring Canyon alone required \$11 million in 1977 (\$44 million in today's dollars) with another four to seven million dollars just to get to the Confluence, dwarfing the entire annual Canyonlands budget.⁶⁶ The oil difficulties and high gasoline prices of the 1970s had reduced tourist visitation to southeast Utah and "millions, each year" were not clamoring over the area as originally forecasted. Even the accessible Island in the Sky unit of Canyonlands, immediate adjacent to Moab, only had some 40,000 visitors annually throughout the 1970s. Therefore, it was difficult for the Park Service to justify spending enormous money for a dead-end road to the Confluence. As indicated by one of Parry's staff, neither Udall nor San Juan County had understood "that drawing lines for roads on paper had no correspondence with reality on the ground. It would cost billions to put that road in, with all of the wash crossings and terrain to navigate." "There never was going to be enough money to build that road [Kigalia Highway and road to the Confluence]."⁶⁷

Second, a different group of individuals controlled the creation of the 1978 GMP as compared to that of the 1965 Master Plan. Originally, satisfying the locals was a primary goal, for the park could not have been created without local support. Hartzog, Udall, and Wilson apparently felt compelled to favor local desires in the 1965 Master Plan. Parry had no such compulsions. He differentiated "protection of the resource," in this case, allowing road development in the Needles District, from that



Peter L. Parry, circa 1980, who succeeded Kerr as Canyonlands superintendent.

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of "preserving an experience that people . . . love . . . [and] they'll never forget." To Parry, "Canyonlands wasn't a traditional park, and it was a kind of wild park," unlike Arches, with its "paved access roads, drive-through" experience.⁶⁸ And now that Canyonlands was an established national park, the whole country's citizenry, not just southeastern Utahns, were to be listened to. Parry consequently held a number of meetings to obtain input on his plan. The meetings, as was the norm, were held at localities adjacent to the park within the state and other places in adjacent states. After the NPS announced it would accept letters on this issue, environmental groups instigated a letter-writing campaign. When it turned out that San Juan County commissioner Calvin Black (known locally as the "Governor of San Juan County") did not similarly persuade a horde of locals to write their views, Parry responded, "Well if they don't care enough to get their supporters to write letters, it just indicates that they really don't care enough about this issue at hand and they will have to endure the consequences."⁶⁹

The local meetings, held in September 1976, went generally as expected. At the Monticello meeting (seventeen attended) the consensus was for more access roads everywhere. Discussions at the two Moab meetings (fifty-five attendees) were split, with no consensus being

66 National Park Service, *An Economic Study of the Proposed Canyonlands National Park and Related Recreation Resources*, by Robert R. Edminster and Osmond L. Hartline, 176; Frank E. Moss, 87th Cong., 2d sess., *Congressional Record* (March 28, 1962).

67 Alexander interviews. In today's dollars to put a road to the Confluence overlook would have be at least about seventy million, to pave the roads to outside Chesler Park about 120 million, and to reach State Road 95 another 1.5 billion.

68 Parry interview.

69 Alexander interviews.

reached on road development. At Green River (unaffected economically by the issue) all five attendees opposed building the road to the Confluence. One local rancher summarized their views: the roads should remain “at least as bad as they are now.”⁷⁰

Farther away, in Salt Lake City, Denver, Grand Junction, and Phoenix, the sentiment was against the road to the Confluence; for instance, 95 percent of the hundred attendees in Denver were against constructing the bridge over Big Spring Canyon.⁷¹ Therefore, Parry was not lying when he said people opposed the bridge. It just depended on whom he asked, and he mainly asked urban, non-southeast Utah individuals. Moreover, the attendees at these non-local meetings were largely former park rangers, jeepers, college students, and environmental group members. Once Parry and his staff came up with the GMP, it would be a foregone conclusion that it would be accepted; as one staff member concluded, “of course, we knew this was how it would turn out.”⁷²

Third, the GMP in 1978 came after a renaissance in ecological and environmental awareness that was not nationally prevalent in 1962, when the blueprint for road access to the Needles District was created. These intervening years saw the profound influence of Rachel Carson’s seminal *Silent Spring* and Edward Abbey’s rousing *Desert Solitaire*. Major environmental battles and accomplishments took place in the 1960s: the Wilderness Protection Act of 1964; the 1969 Environmental Protection Act; the Leopold Report and the National Academy of Sciences Report strongly condemning the Park Service for not using a scientific and ecological basis to prevent impairment of its vast national parks; and the fight over a dam that would flood parts of the Grand Canyon.⁷³

To assess the effect of national environmental discussions on road access in the Needles

District, it is illustrative to compare the 1962 community comments during the congressional hearings on establishing Canyonlands with comments on the draft GMP of 1976. In 1962, about 60 percent of the comments by San Juan County residents opposed establishing a large Canyonlands park. The majority favored three much smaller units with all of the intervening lands open to resource development and extensive road development within all three units. In 1976, the consensus of Monticello was for complete road building throughout the Chesler Park/Grabens region to attract maximum tourist visitation and boost San Juan County business. In 1962, Moab was equally split between those favoring a large park and those favoring the Monticello model of smaller parks. In 1976, Moab similarly could not reach consensus about the road access question. Therefore, in southeast Utah there was no change in attitudes between 1962 and 1976, and economic development remained the paramount concern.

The rest of the country was unaffected by economics in regards to Canyonlands. In 1962, the vast majority of people who commented at the Salt Lake City and Washington, D.C. hearings favored the largest Canyonlands possible, but it is clear they generally also favored road access (three to one among those who commented about roads), consistent with national attitudes at the time. But by 1976, all groups at meetings outside of southeast Utah reached the consensus that no more roads in the Chesler Park/Grabens region should be built. This change in attitude appears to be the result of the national change in attitudes concerning the preservation of wilderness-like areas that Canyonlands embodied.

From 1962 to 1976, San Juan County essentially lost control of Canyonlands National Park. The people immediately in charge of making decisions about roads through the Chesler Park/Grabens region after 1972 were superintendents Kerr and Parry, unencumbered by connections to Moss, and his replacement in 1976, Republican Senator Orrin Hatch (a good friend of Calvin Black). While Kerr indicated that going against San Juan County’s wishes meant that ill feelings and conflicted Park Service interactions with the local constituents would become the norm, it was ultimately Parry and his successors that paid this price. San Juan County in

70 U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *Assessment of Alternatives, National Park Service, General Management Plan, Canyonlands National Park, Utah* (Denver, August 1977), 96.

71 Ibid.

72 Alexander interviews.

73 Dilsaver, ed., *America’s National Park System*, 278; Alfred Runte, *National Parks: The American Experience*, 2d ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1987), 191.

1978 “severed . . . diplomatic relations” with the Park Service and “terminated deputy sheriff commissions and bail bondsmen’s authority . . . accorded Park Service personnel.”⁷⁴ It also persuaded Utah’s congressional representatives to not support President Jimmy Carter’s proposal for 287,985 acres of wilderness in Canyonlands in 1978, ending the opportunity for most of Canyonlands to be officially designated as wilderness. In the following years, motions and statements by the San Juan County commissioners were routinely presented stating that “the sooner Mr. Parry is replaced, the better off San Juan County will be,” and that “Pete Parry is an enemy . . . to San Juan County.”⁷⁵ San Juan County animosity toward Canyonlands, unfortunately, remains present today, with traditionalist locals avoiding hiking in the Needles District and viewing it as “the black hole of San Juan County.”⁷⁶

Ironically, all of the roads conceived in the original 1965 Canyonlands Master Plan would probably have been constructed in the 1950s had a proposal for the Escalante National Monument been approved in the late 1930s. This monument would have placed all of the Canyonlands area under Park Service control around the time Arches National Monument was created. Arches did not have hard-surfaced roads until the late 1950s, when “access” was dominant in the Park Service and Mission 66 funds became available. It can be reasonably assumed that had an Escalante National Monument been created, a road to and within Chesler Park would also have been paved, and there would have been no backcountry to Canyonlands.

The Needles District road access debates of the 1960s and 1970s illustrate continuing decisions about national land use and availability. Often, local economic benefits, as those for southeast Utah and particularly San Juan County, have to be weighed against broader interests—in this case, preservation of a little-known area. But such discussions have to be grounded in a clear understanding of whether local economic benefits will occur from development, and wheth-

er sacrificing preservation is warranted. For Canyonlands, it is not certain that construction of all the roads in the Needles District would have propelled Monticello and Blanding to the economic development they desired. For one thing, as remarked on by Parry, “I could never understand why Cal [Black of San Juan County] wanted that road so badly. Just look at the map. If tourists left the Needles by way of his Kigalia Highway, they would have bypassed both Monticello and Blanding and all the businesses that would have benefitted from the tourist traffic. It made no sense.”⁷⁷ Critically, although Monticello was twenty-four miles closer to the Needles District than Moab, it was from Moab that tourists launched their visits. Monticello lacked the immediate red rock ambience that Moab had in abundance, with its adjacency to Arches National Monument. Moreover, Moab, not Monticello, was geographically situated to benefit from the tourism industry, being the first entry to the Canyonlands region for visitors from the north and east and from California traveling to Bryce and Zion.⁷⁸ Importantly, in 1962 the economically depressed community of Moab offered more community services and amenities for the traveler than did Monticello: thirteen motels in Moab compared to five motels in Monticello, seven overnight trailer courts compared to none, and thirteen restaurants compared to eight. Grand County had three times as many tourist-related jobs, mainly located in Moab, than did San Juan County.⁷⁹ All these factors were known at the time and were the reasons why the Canyonlands headquarters became located in Moab rather than Monticello.

Central to these discussions are the philosophical views of the individuals who wield the power to either promote or limit access to remote and

77 Jim Stiles, “Unsung heroes of the canyon country #1: Pete Parry,” *Canyon Country Zephyr* (August/September 2012).

78 Robert L. Barry, “The Local Interest as a Consideration in the Planning of Highway Construction in the Canyonlands Region of Southeastern Utah” (M.S. thesis, Utah State University, 1973), 1-147; Michele L. Archie, Howard D. Terry, and Ray Rasker, *Landscapes of Opportunity: The Economic Influence of National Parks in Southeast Utah* (Salt Lake City: National Parks Conservation Association, 2009), 4.

79 Environmental Associates, Inc., *Transportation Study: Arches, Canyonlands, Capitol Reef National Parks, Utah* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1973), 24-25; Edminster and Harline, *An Economic Study*, 85.

74 Raine, “Conflicts Rise Over Use of Utah Park.”

75 San Juan County Meeting Minutes, June 27, 1983, January 14, 1985.

76 Bill Boyle, “How San Juan County’s crown jewel became San Juan County’s black hole,” *San Juan Record*, March 13, 2013, 5.

undeveloped natural areas. Wilson and his staff, including Contor and Carithers, and Wilson's superiors, Hartzog and Udall, initially all favored automobile access by the casual visitor. There is no evidence that contacts with Senator Moss or with San Juan County were forcing their hands on this issue. But times changed. Key to this shift in attitudes is the difference between protection and preservation inherent in the Organic Act's use of the word "conserve." Bates Wilson helped *protect* and thereby *conserve* the Canyonlands area when he promulgated the need for a national park, but that did not mean philosophically he had arrived at the position of *preserving* it. Protection implies restricting outside incursions while preservation implies limiting internal development. This difference is grounded in the intersection of ecological and emotional concerns. While Wilson eventually transitioned into favoring preservation of the Needles District, it was Kerr and Parry, upon their respective arrivals, who were philosophically attuned to these differences, and it was ultimately Parry who scotched the road projects. While it can also be argued that Parry was not unique and that any other superintendent of 1976 Canyonlands would have done the same, individuals do matter. Harvey Wickware, the 1990s Canyonlands superintendent who eventually paved the access roads in Island of the Sky (favored by Parry in 1978 as a sop to not paving the Needles District), indicated that had he been superintendent in 1976, "I would have paved the road to outside Chesler Park and the road to SR95 and probably the road into Chesler Park."⁸⁰

Although many in southeast Utah might still feel that "locals were sort of duped into a plan that Washington never intended to follow" and "the Park Service [ordained] from the outset . . . that Canyonlands would be designed to exclude people," it is clear that the federal government throughout the 1960s had no intention of misleading rural Utahns.⁸¹ Initially, local support evinced by southeastern Utahns and Senator Moss was aligned with national concerns about protection of scenic, archaeological, and natural areas in Canyonlands. Wilson in the early 1970s

indicated that in these situations one has to take the very long-term view and not worry about the immediate battles lost or won. The long-term goal was to establish the park and protect its great scenery. The future would take care of the rest. People's attitudes would change, but no matter what happened, the area would be protected with some access roads or none.⁸² Udall, in contrast to Wilson, indicated in 1977 that he had no "memory of [any such] . . . commitment [as to road access] . . . [although] compromises were reached with then Senator Frank Moss," adding in 1981, "I think there may have been some misunderstanding about development."⁸³ But there had been no misunderstanding. Udall's Interior Department published in 1962 a proposal with roads to the Confluence overlook and to and around Chesler Park.⁸⁴ The early 1960s congressional hearings and later letters clearly indicate that Moss, Udall, Wilson, and the Park Service were in agreement on road access, at least to outside Chesler Park.

Instead, what happened, as indicated in Wilson's 1972 proposal for a new Canyonlands Master Plan, the delay in road construction caused by the financial restrictions imposed by the Vietnam War had created an opportunity to rethink road development for the Park. Individuals, such as Wilson, who were connected to the Park on the ground and intimately engaged in learning about its ecosystem interactions and fragility, moved away from their initial thoughts and became more receptive to new viewpoints. Wilson's changed views were summed up in his quip, "I don't think . . . that every point of interest should be open to a pink Cadillac."⁸⁵

In contrast to Wilson's evolution in thinking, local individuals not daily involved in the Park (e.g.,

82 Alexander interviews.

83 Briefing Statement, Confluence Overlook Road, from National Park Service, November 21, 1977, fd. 286, Canyonlands Collection; Raine, "Conflicts Rise over Use of Utah Park."

84 U.S. Congress, Senate, Subcommittee on Public Lands, *Proposed Canyonlands National Park in Utah: Hearing before the Subcommittee on Public Lands of the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs*, 52–58; Edwards testimony in U.S. Congress, Senate, Subcommittee on Public Lands, *Proposed Canyonlands National Park in Utah: Hearing before the Subcommittee on Public Lands*, 38.

85 George Raine, "Conflicts Rise of Use of Utah Park," *New York Times*, August 2, 1981.

80 Harvey Wickware, interviewed by author, Moab, UT, September 2014; Parry interview.

81 For local reactions to the park, see Sena Taylor Hauer, *Times Independent*, February 21, 2013; Raine, "Conflicts Rise over Use of Utah Park."



Senator Frank Moss, Superintendent Bates Wilson, and Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall in the Maze area sharing water and planning for Canyonlands' expansion, August 1968. Congress added the Maze District to Canyonlands in 1971.

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southeast Utahns and Moss) still had to contend in the 1970s with the same lack of local economic development issues as they did in the early 1960s. For Moss, preservation issues had never been high on his list. Moss's congressional specialties were primarily in consumer affairs and restricting tobacco advertising. Even though he was eventually responsible for several national parks in southern Utah, in terms of environmental issues, he was ranked fairly low by the League of Conservation Voters.⁸⁶ He believed in allowing all people access to national parks rather than preservation, where visitation was limited to "just a few who can afford horseback riding or hiring of jeeps, or otherwise have a lot of time to get into the wild parts of our area."⁸⁷

But by the mid-1970s the decisions for road access had switched from local control to national interests receptive to preservation and environmental issues. Superintendent Parry, who from

the onset was not dead set against paved road development in Canyonlands, became sympathetic to these national concerns and felt, according to one staff member, that "people driving through Canyonlands desire dust in their trunks."⁸⁸ Therefore, his 1978 GMP derived its philosophy from the original language in the act for the founding of Canyonlands in 1964: "The purpose of the park . . . is to preserve an area."⁸⁹

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WEB EXTRA

Check out history.utah.gov/uhqextras for black and white and color images of Canyonlands National Park in the Utah State Historical Society's collection.

86 Cornfield and Zill, "Frank E. Moss, Democratic Senator of Utah."

87 Moss to Interior and Related Agencies Subcommittee, Senate Appropriations Committee, May 9, 1973.

88 Alexander interviews; Thomas C. Wylie, phone interview by author, February 2016.

89 Assessment of Alternatives, 5.