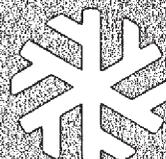


# general management plan

may 1979

MESA VERDE



NATIONAL PARK / COLORADO

ON MICROFILM

SCANNED

4/9/01

APPROVED:

5/17/79  
Date

Glen T. Bean  
Acting Regional Director, Rocky Mountain Region



MESA  
VERDE  
NATIONAL  
PARK  
COLORADO



GENERAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

## CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
THE PARK STORY	2
THE VISITOR EXPERIENCE	3
VISITOR CAPACITY	4
VISITOR USE PROGRAMS AND FACILITIES	5
DEVELOPED AREAS AND PRIORITIES	9
<i>LAND MANAGEMENT AND USE MAP</i>	11
<i>DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT PLAN: PARK ENTRANCE MAP</i>	13
PLANNING TEAM AND CONSULTANT	15
REFERENCE MATERIALS	15
ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW	17

## INTRODUCTION

The proposals presented here were developed to guide visitor use and development of Mesa Verde National Park. The concepts were based upon legislative and administrative constraints, management objectives, resource capabilities and limitations established in the approved *Resources Management Plan* and *Wilderness Recommendation*, and the public's desires. The plan — the result of a comprehensive evaluation of these factors during the 1976 assessment of alternatives for Mesa Verde National Park — reflects the aspirations of the people interested in the park's future and communicates the intent of the National Park Service to carry out the mandate for preservation of this significant resource.

The major concepts of the plan and the rationale for their selection are presented in this document. The supporting information and details of the concepts as well as their alternatives are contained in a separate document, *Assessment of Alternatives*. Environmental impacts associated with the proposed actions will not be significant; the proposals suggest only minor alterations to existing development and operations with an overall goal of improving visitor use and preserving the park's resources. There will be no significant environmental effects or any cumulative or secondary effects. The selected actions commit the National Park Service to expenditures totaling an estimated \$16,306,000 over the next 15 years, and assessments on design alternatives will be prepared for individual components of the plan. Based on the above, an environmental statement will not be prepared for the general management plan.

## THE PARK STORY

The story of the San Juan Anasazi at Mesa Verde encompasses more than 700 years, during which complex changes were generated by forces both from within the group and from outside. Cultural periods dating from Modified Basketmaker to Classic Pueblo are recognized at Mesa Verde. The challenge is to present the cultural progression of the "Ancient Ones" – their origin and their development and abandonment of the Mesa Verde – while conveying a feeling for the life-style of a quiet and industrious people who endured great personal hardship to occupy the cliff dwellings.

The natural history of the Mesa Verde strongly influenced Anasazi cultural development. Geology, geography, vegetation, climate, and wildlife were daily concerns that were dealt with by means of religious ceremonies and traditions and relatively simple technology. On the Mesa Verde, the Anasazi were apparently successful in their adaptation to the environment until earth forces changed. One can only speculate about the technical and religious reasons for abandonment of the Mesa Verde, but environmental pressures – especially drought – were probably major factors. In probing such unknowns, we may find a parallel to our own environmental problems and an association between the impending environmental crisis we face today and the one faced by the Anasazi nearly 700 years ago.

## THE VISITOR EXPERIENCE

There are two purposes of Mesa Verde National Park. One is to preserve the cultural, natural, and scientific resources of the area. The other is to provide the public with opportunities to use the park and to appreciate the way of life of the prehistoric people who occupied the mesa from about 400 A.D. to the late 1200s A.D.

A diverse range of visitor experiences will be offered in support of the park's purposes. In the proposed entrance facility, visitors can gain an overview of the Anasazi culture through a variety of interpretive media. Once on the mesa, they enter the physical setting of steep-walled canyons, gnarled juniper, and barren rock, and they can begin to understand how the Anasazi harmonized with this beautiful but harsh environment. Then by following *marked trails along the mesa top or down into the canyons, they can view the dwellings and participate in cultural activities of the Ancient Ones, gaining insights into what life must have been like in these places.*

The quality of the visitor experience at Mesa Verde relies on effective interpretation perhaps more than at any other national park. Don Watson, former chief archeologist at the park, described this need succinctly – "Unfortunate, indeed, is he who views this ancient city and sees only the towering walls. Unfortunate because the stones are the least important part. Cliff Palace is really built of the hopes and desires, the joys and sorrows of an industrious people. It is not a cold empty city, for it is still warm with the emotion of its builders." It could appear cold and empty, however, unless visitors are carried in spirit seven centuries into the past.

The best way of attaining this empathy with the Anasazi is by spending time in the ruins – listening in a quiet, uncrowded atmosphere to stories of the people in concert with the wind, the ravens, or the sound of rain, feeling the warmth of the sun, and the cold of the night. Unfortunately, increased visitation and the fragile nature of the dwellings and their limited visitor capacity have precluded most opportunities for such in-depth personal exploration. Consequently a more shallow exposure to the resources has resulted, with a corresponding reduction in feeling for what the ruins represent.

During the primary visitor season, a self-guided tour of a cliff dwelling supplemented by a walk through the fine old museum and 1½ hours of scenic driving comprise the experience for many visitors. This may be adequate for some, but other options need to be considered for those who seek *a more intimate involvement with the resource.* If such opportunities were provided, additional facilities, programs, and staffing would be required to ensure a good visitor/ranger ratio throughout the park.

## VISITOR CAPACITY

The link between defining the kind of experience visitors should have and establishing how the park should be developed is the park's visitor capacity, which has both physical and psychological dimensions. Once it is known how many people can experience the park — the way its resources should be experienced — at any one time, the park can be developed to accommodate that number of people.

The cliff dwellings are the critical aspect of the resource in determining the park's visitor capacity because of their unique value to the visitor experience, their fragile nature, and the limited number suitable for tours. The use of these resources by visitors is difficult to direct. Too much regulation would be contrary to the purposes that warranted the park's creation; however, the resources must be protected from misuse and overuse.

A visitor capacity has been established for each cliff dwelling that has the potential for visitor tours, based on the number of people each dwelling can accommodate at any one time without being degraded and on the amount of time people should spend in the dwellings to enjoy the anticipated visitor experience. The following capacities are based on a determination, made by the park staff and the planning team, that approximately two thirds of the visitors to Mesa Verde actually tour one of the cliff dwellings.

Park Entrance —	900 visitors per hour
Chapin Mesa —	550 visitors per hour
Wetherill Mesa —	280 visitors per hour

In order to maximize the number of people who can experience the park, the following strategies are suggested for further consideration.

- Extend the operating season
- Extend the visitor day
- Open more cliff dwellings to the public
- Schedule additional guided tours

The plan recognizes that many of the most popular resources — the Chapin Museum and Cliff Palace, for example — are situated on Chapin Mesa. Therefore, all visitors should have the opportunity to visit that mesa as long as the resources are not damaged by too many visitors and the desired visitor experience can be achieved. In the future, however, this may no longer be possible during periods of peak visitation, and visitors may have to be restricted to Chapin or Wetherill Mesa, but not both, in one day. Eventually, the restrictions of such a system and a year-round school program could cause a greater spring and fall distribution of visitation, in effect, extending the operating season even further.

## VISITOR USE PROGRAMS AND FACILITIES

Many visitors come from great distances to enjoy Mesa Verde National Park. They are generally unfamiliar with the area and unaware of the numerous recreational and educational opportunities available within the park and in the surrounding region. If visitors are to become aware of all their opportunities, they must be fully informed of what there is to see and do and how to use their time efficiently. This will be accomplished by providing information and orientation at the park entrance. Here visitors will make basic decisions about where to go — whether to visit the mesa top or go to other visitor attractions in the region. Once they have decided where to spend their time, they can consider tour options and travel routes.

Access to Chapin Mesa will continue to be by private automobile. Minitrain service similar to that on Wetherill Mesa will be provided on Chapin Mesa during the summer season, but during the remaining portion of the year, private vehicles will be the only means of circulation on Chapin Mesa. Access to Wetherill Mesa will continue to be by public bus from Far View. When the entrance facility is completed, alternative transportation systems will be evaluated and considered for implementation from the entrance facility to both mesas. If the system was implemented the parking area would be expanded to accommodate approximately 1,200 cars. The system could operate on a first-come-first-served basis and would provide management with a tool for controlling visitor use in the park at any time. Visitors would pay their entrance fee and board a public conveyance vehicle going to either Chapin or Wetherill Mesa. If visitors could not get in to the mesa tour they prefer right away, they could go to the other mesa or spend additional time at the entrance facility or at the Far View Ruins while waiting for an opening.

The role of interpretation at the entrance facility will be to explain the significance of the park's cultural and natural resources, to prepare visitors to visualize life during prehistoric times on the Mesa Verde by introducing them to the Anasazi, and to relate the Anasazi culture at Mesa Verde to that of other prehistoric Pueblo peoples in nearby sections of the Southwest. The remainder of the park will become the outdoor museum where on-site *interpretation and visitor participation will reinforce and develop the broad concepts presented in the entrance facility.* In attempting to foster an appreciation of life on Mesa Verde during prehistoric times, evening programs could be offered at the entrance facility as well as on the mesa tops. These programs could include guest lectures, films, and guided tours.

The natural and cultural resources in the area are illustrative of one story that includes the land's formation, its inhabitants, and the natural and man-made changes that have occurred on it. A short audiovisual program at the entrance facility will illustrate this theme. This program will be complimented by exhibits of pottery, artwork, and other artifacts relating to food and religion, and other elements that cannot be treated effectively on site. In the future, management will consider using limited replica artifacts in selected cliff dwellings and surface ruins.

Visitors could gain greater insight into the daily routine of prehistoric peoples as they watch demonstrators coil pottery and grind corn or work with a crude digging stock. Visitors could be encouraged to try these activities themselves.

Park headquarters will be relocated to the park entrance. In addition to the offices of the park superintendent and his immediate staff, headquarters will include central maintenance and supply functions. Facilities required for road, trail, and building maintenance on the mesa will remain in their present locations. The relocation of headquarters will enable some permanent staff to move off the mesa. Five residences and a six unit apartment will be *constructed at the park entrance as part of this move.* Housing vacated on the mesa will either be rehabilitated and adapted to seasonal quarters or removed.

Another function to be included in the entrance facility is museum collection and storage. This facility will provide proper security and storage conditions for an archeological collection that is now in excess of 42,000 specimens and will increase in the future as additional archeological surveys are completed.

No food, retail sales other than Museum Association items, or visitor lodging will be provided at the park entrance facility because there are sufficient developable private lands outside the park. The National Park Service will encourage landowners and public officials to prepare a land-use plan for development of visitor services and protection of the visual quality along U.S. 160.

Prepared with background information and a sense of anticipation, visitors will proceed from the entrance facility along the primary park road toward the top of the Mesa Verde. This road as well as the Wetherill Mesa Road will be rehabilitated to improve safety, enhance interpretive opportunities, and reduce the amount of maintenance required. In addition to providing access to the major visitor attractions in the park, these two roads offer many impressive scenic panoramas.

The campground and village located in Morfield Canyon will continue to serve both recreational-vehicle and tent campers. The campground will be redesigned to offer separate areas for each style of camping.

Far View will continue to provide overnight lodging as well as the concessioner-operated cafeteria, restaurant, Indian craft shop, and evening interpretive programs. Visitor support and concession services on both Chapin and Wetherill Mesas will be limited to comfort stations, lunch services, picnic supplies, and Indian crafts.

The Far View Visitor Center will accommodate both interpretation and park operations. The upper floor will interpret the Mesa Verde ecosystem including the Anasazi inhabitants. Interpretation and protection staffs will utilize the first floor during the summer months when Wetherill Mesa is open. Since the Far View Visitor Center was not built for winter use, it can only be used during the warm summer months unless it is substantially modified. The Indian arts and crafts exhibits now on display at Far View are representative of Indian culture of the entire region and will be moved to the entrance facility.

Near the visitor center and at the hub of the Y-shaped park circulation system is a unique interpretive resource — the Far View Ruins complex.

The Far View area and the entrance facility would serve as holding areas for visitors waiting to tour the cliff dwellings or surface ruins on Chapin or Wetherill Mesa.

In order to fully protect and interpret this area, approximately ½-mile of road in the Far View area will be relocated and the existing section of road will be obliterated.

From Far View, visitors go to either Chapin or Wetherill except during the off-season, when Wetherill is closed to visitors. Once the entrance facility is completed, visitor support and concessioner services on both Chapin and Wetherill Mesas will be limited to comfort stations, fast food services, and picnic supplies. In addition to these facilities, Indian crafts will be sold on Chapin Mesa.

Top priority for development within Mesa Verde is the protection of the resources — particularly fragile excavated surface ruins on Chapin and Wetherill Mesas. The important and continuous effort to implement the surface ruin shelter design and construction for 17 excavated ruins cannot be overemphasized. Although this matter is addressed in the Resources Management Plan for Mesa Verde, it warrants repeating in this plan.

Visitors will be encouraged to leave their vehicles and experience Chapin Mesa at their own pace. In order to accomplish this, a public transportation system will be initiated on Chapin Mesa. Before any facilities are constructed on Chapin Mesa, a detailed plan (development concept plan) is required. It will determine which vacated buildings in the Spruce Tree Historic Administrative District will be converted to appropriate uses or removed, and if any new structures or parking areas are needed for visitor services and park operations. The foot and bike trail system on the mesa will be expanded. Some trails will be redesigned to accommodate people with varying degrees of curiosity and endurance, and will provide for a variety of recreational and interpretive activities. There will be self-guiding trails with in-place labels that relate to a descriptive leaflet. Each leaflet will have its own theme; for instance, at Park Point the interpretive theme will focus on the natural history and geology of the mesa and their influence on the Anasazi culture, as well as on today's use of the mesa.

Guided and self-guided trails will continue to be provided. Potential topics for these trails include rock scrambling, Indian lore, nature, architecture, in-depth natural history, ecological principles, and erosion.

Careful consideration and planning are needed in developing these trail systems because of the nature of the archeological resources. They must be developed to provide specific visitor experiences.

**DEVELOPED AREA (INCLUDES MAJOR FACILITIES AND PROGRAMS)**

**PARK PRIORITIES**

**ESTIMATED GROSS COSTS\***

**1 PARK ENTRANCE**

Information/orientation/interpretive facility (8,000 sq. ft.)	8	640,000
Administrative/maintenance facility (4,000 sq. ft.)	8	320,000
Three-bedroom residences (5 units)	8	400,000
Efficiency apartments (6 units)	8	200,000
Entrance station (200 sq. ft.)	8	16,000
Archeological collection/storage facility (2,000 sq. ft.)	8	240,000
Paved visitor parking (300 cars and 50 trailers)	8	460,000
Paved administrative/maintenance area (5,000 sq. ft.)	8	250,000
Utilities for administrative/maintenance/residential area (power, water & storage, sewer, electricity, telephone and concessioner hot line or video telephone)	8	600,000

**2 MORFIELD CAMPGROUND**

Campground Rehabilitation (477 family sites, 17 group sites, amphitheater)	17	45,000
Campground Village (service station, laundry, showers, and store)		Existing
Redesign ranger station and employee duplex	15	30,000
Construct 4-unit apartment complex and tie to existing utilities)	16	227,000
Trailers (2 National Park Service and 2 concessioner)		Existing
Amphitheater parking (100 cars)		Existing
Construct trails (Knife Edge and Windy Point-Park Point and Prater Ridge-5.5 miles)	18	83,000

**3 PARK POINT**

Paved parking (75 cars)		Existing
Remodel existing fire lookout	19	116,000

**4 FAR VIEW**

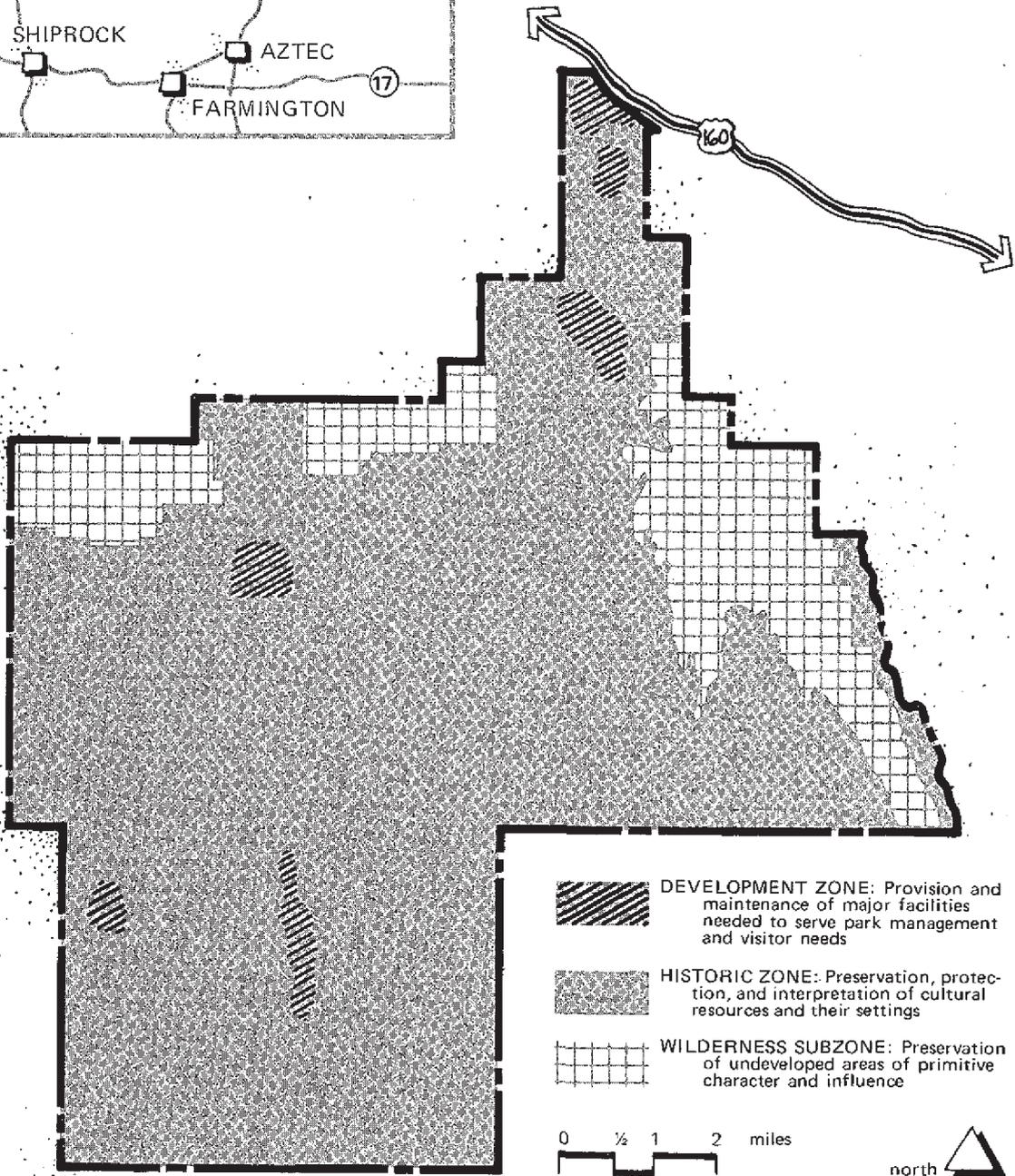
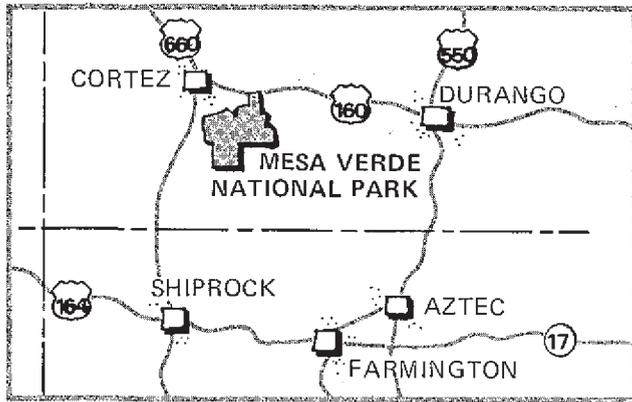
Increase visitor center paved parking (125 to 300 cars)	10	175,000
Provide new exhibits and remodel visitor center	10	125,000
Paved concessioner parking (230 cars)	Concessioner	Existing
Lodge units (50 new units and utility connections)	Concessioner	Proposed
Remodel Far View Terrace concessioner complex	Concessioner	Proposed
Replace concessioner trailers with modular apartments	Concessioner	Proposed
Replace NPS trailers with duplex & one 4-unit apartment	11	365,000
Upgrade Far View sewer system	5	179,000

**5 FAR VIEW RUINS**

Paved parking (75 cars)	13	223,000
Ruin shelters and exhibits (3 units)	2	242,000
Surfaced trails (2.0 miles)	13	35,000
Comfort station and utility connection	13	133,000
Road obliteration and revegetation (0.4 mile)	13	25,000
Relocate paved road (0.75 mile)	13	225,000

DEVELOPED AREA (cont.)	PARK PRIORITIES	ESTIMATED GROSS COSTS*
<b>6 CHAPIN MESA</b>		
Ruin shelters and exhibits (6 units)	2	484,000
Comfort station and utility extensions (2 units)	6	106,000
Rehabilitate archeological museum	12	123,000
Increase paved parking (225 to 390 cars)	12	165,000
Expand paved bicycle trail (0.5 mile)	12	8,000
Minitrain/buses	Concessioner	Proposed
<b>7 WETHERILL MESA</b>		
Ruin shelters and exhibits (6 units)	2	484,000
Surfaced trails (1.5 miles) and overlooks (2 units)	14	121,000
Comfort station and utility connections	14	137,000
Information/concessioner facility and utility connections (2,000 sq. ft.)	14	160,000
Paved roads (12.5 miles)	4	3,140,000
Minitrain/Buses	Concessioner	Existing
<b>PARK GENERAL</b>		
Paved road reconstruction (1.2 miles from Highway 160)	4	588,000
Slide hazard corrections on park entrance road (1,000,000 cubic yards)	4	1,900,000
Paved road reconstruction (8.0 miles – Montezuma Overlook to Navajo Hill)	4	2,310,000
Paved or stabilized overlook parking and pull-offs (100 cars)		Existing
Ruin stabilization (17 units)	3	85,000
Development concept plan (Chapin Mesa)	9	35,000
Tunnel lighting	7	140,000
Upgrade water system	1	1,110,000
Fire ecology	20	16,000
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$16,306,000</b>

\*The estimated costs are based on construction of similar facilities in other National Park Service areas as of January 1978. They include planning, design, supervision, and construction. These preliminary estimates will be refined as the specific site designs and programs are developed.



**DEVELOPMENT ZONE:** Provision and maintenance of major facilities needed to serve park management and visitor needs



**HISTORIC ZONE:** Preservation, protection, and interpretation of cultural resources and their settings



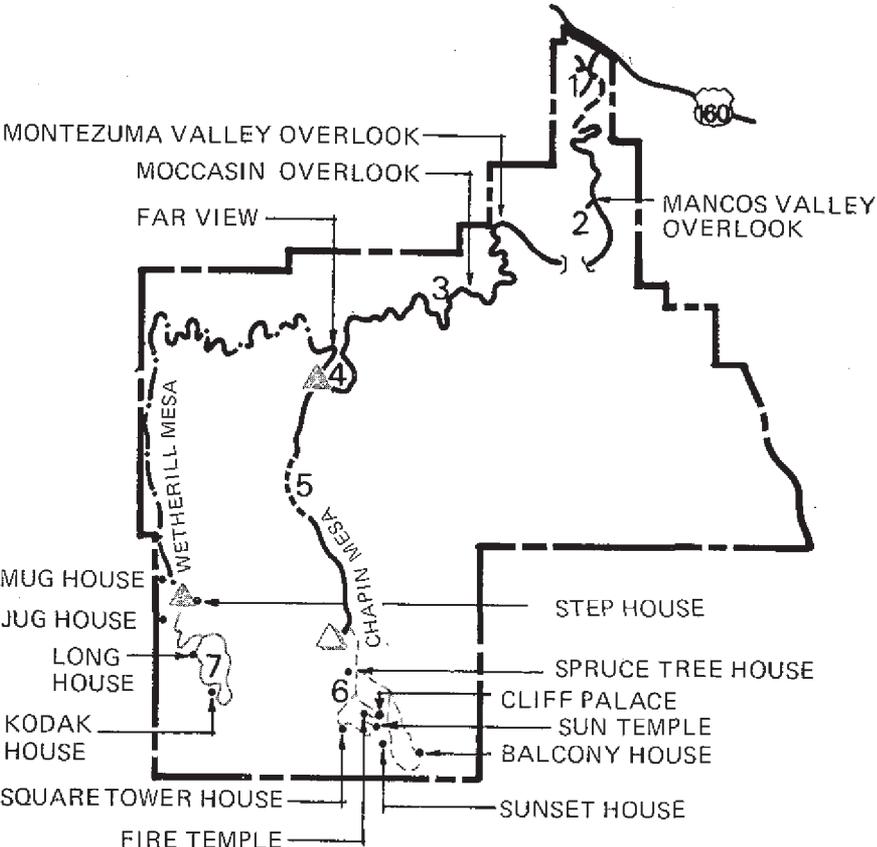
**WILDERNESS SUBZONE:** Preservation of undeveloped areas of primitive character and influence

# LAND MANAGEMENT AND USE

307 | 40033  
dsc | may 78

ON MICROFILM

# GENERAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN



existing    proposed

▲    △

— — — — —    Private vehicle

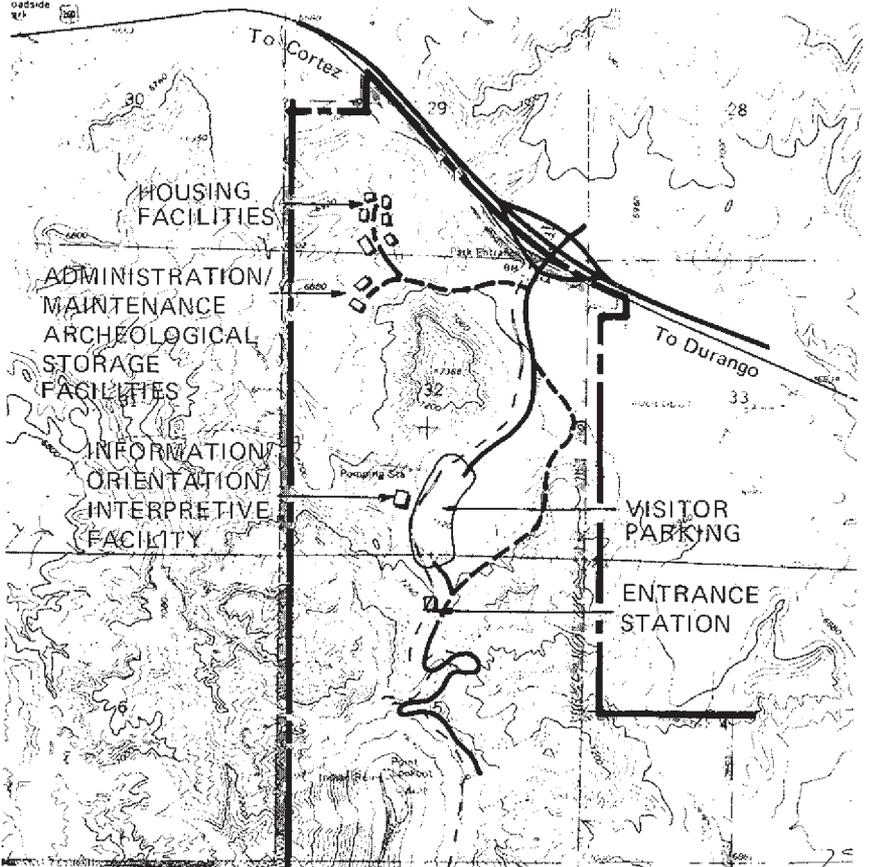
- - - - -    Public bus system

— · — · — · — ·    Public minitrain system

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7    Developed areas (see chart)

north ▲

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DSCIMA 7 78



## PARK ENTRANCE DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT PLAN

ON MICROFILM

## **PLANNING TEAM**

Frederick Babb, Planner and Landscape Architect, Team Captain, DSC  
Dennis Piper, Planner and Landscape Architect, DSC  
Donald Follows, Interpretive Planner, DSC  
Superintendent and Park Staff  
Rocky Mountain Region Staff

## **CONSULTANT**

Concessioner, William C. Winkler, Mesa Verde Company

## **REFERENCE MATERIALS**

Wilderness Recommendation-9/72  
Mesa Verde Historical Administration District-11/74  
(an Archeological/Historical Study)  
Resources Management Plan-7/75  
Assessment of Alternatives-1/76  
(This document contains a completed  
bibliography of materials used during  
the planning process)  
Statement for Management-7/76, updated 2/79  
Review of Alternatives-8/76



## I. PROPOSED ACTION

The actions proposed have been developed from an environmental assessment of January 1976, and subsequent public review and response. (Appendix A)

The alternative actions selected from the Environmental Assessment, General Management Plan of January 1976, are as follows:

### A. Archeological Ruins Stabilization

Top priority development action for Mesa Verde remains protection of the resources - particularly fragile excavated surface ruins. The importance and continuous effort to implement the surface ruin shelter design and construction for 13 excavated ruins cannot be overemphasized. Although this matter is addressed in the Resources Management Plan for Mesa Verde and a development package proposal has been submitted to initiate action, it warrants repeating here.

### B. Road Rehabilitation

The park entrance road (approximately 8.5 miles) and the Wetherill Mesa road (approximately 12.7 miles) will be rehabilitated as required for safe access by park, concession and private vehicles. This will include correction for grades and curves, improvements of base and resurfacing, widening less than one lane, and improvement of shoulders and drainage.

### C. Visitor/Administrative Services and Facilities

1. Interpretation/Orientation Facility - A new facility to provide interpretation/orientation will be located at the existing park entrance. This facility will provide information and orientation services to Mesa Verde and regional visitors. No food, retail sales, or visitor lodging will be provided at the entrance facility. Another function to be included in the base facility is museum collection, storage and security.
2. Transfer Superintendent and Immediate Staff to Park Entrance - In conjunction with the interpretive facility relocation, park administrative functions - the park superintendent and his immediate staff - and some permanent staff housing will be moved off the mesa. Housing on the mesa vacated by this action will be rehabilitated and converted to seasonal quarters or removed.
3. Transfer Some Maintenance Functions to the Entrance - The third function to be relocated to the new entrance facility complex will be those maintenance functions that will operate more effectively from the base. Maintenance functions necessary for trail and building maintenance at Far View, Chapin Mesa, and Wetherill Mesa will remain at those locations.

4. Spruce Tree Area Building - All buildings in the Spruce Tree area will retain the present use until the base facilities proposed above are completed. At that time these buildings will be reevaluated for conversion or removal.

5. Far View Visitor Center Conversion - The Far View Visitor Center should be used for natural history interpretation. The Indian art and craft exhibits at Far View are representative of Indian culture of the entire region and belong in the orientation facility proposed for the park entrance. When new artifact storage facilities are provided, the lower level of the Far View Center can house the resource management and visitor protection staffs.

6. Visitor Services at Chapin and Wetherill Mesas - Visitor support and concession services on both Chapin and Wetherill Mesas will be limited to comfort stations, food services, picnic supplies and Indian crafts.

7. Concession Facilities at Far View - The concession facilities at Far View will continue to provide existing services.

8. Camping - Morfield campground and village will continue to serve both recreational vehicles and tent campers, but separate areas for each style of camping will be provided.

9. Horse Rentals - Horse rentals will be reevaluated when the present concessions contract expires.

10. Visual Qualities Near Entrance - The National Park Service will work with the appropriate landowners and public officials to develop measures to protect the visual quality along U.S. 160 near the entrance to Mesa Verde.

#### D. Transportation System

Private auto access to Chapin Mesa, shuttle service to Wetherill Mesa, and minibus service on Wetherill Mesa will continue as presently operating. However, minibus service will be developed on Chapin Mesa. When the base facilities are completed, alternate transportation systems will be evaluated and considered for implementation.

## II. TIME SCHEDULE

Completion of these proposals will require approximately \$12,500,000 (does not include housing) (1975 costs) within the next 25 years and in the following priority:

1. Archeological Ruins Stabilization
2. Road Rehabilitation

3. Visitor/Administrative Services and Facilities

4. Transportation System

III. MAGNITUDE OF THE PROJECT

Major Federal Action	Yes
Significant Environmental Effects	No*
Substantive Adverse Impacts	No
Cumulative or Secondary Effects	No
Highly Controversial	No
First Time, Precedent Setting	No
Commits Service to Future Actions	Yes

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

The proposed action is considered to be a major Federal action. It is not highly controversial. The magnitude of environmental impacts on proposed road rehabilitation and visitor/administration complex at the entrance will be determined in Environmental Assessments during the comprehensive design stages. Impacts of other proposed actions are not considered significant. Therefore, an environmental impact statement will not be required on the Master Plan.

\*Only two of the proposed actions might be expected to produce significant effects: 1. rehabilitation of the park entrance road and Wetherill Mesa Road, and 2. construction of the new interpretive/orientation/administrative complex at the park entrance. The magnitude of impact from these proposals will be determined in an Environmental Assessment that will be prepared when sufficient details are available on these proposals (comprehensive design).

As the nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has basic responsibilities to protect and conserve our land and water, energy and minerals, fish and wildlife, parks and recreation areas, and to ensure the wise use of all these resources. The department also has major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in island territories under U.S. administration. NPS 1434