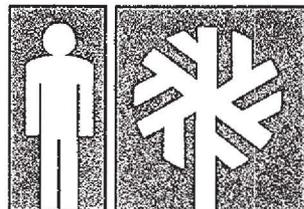
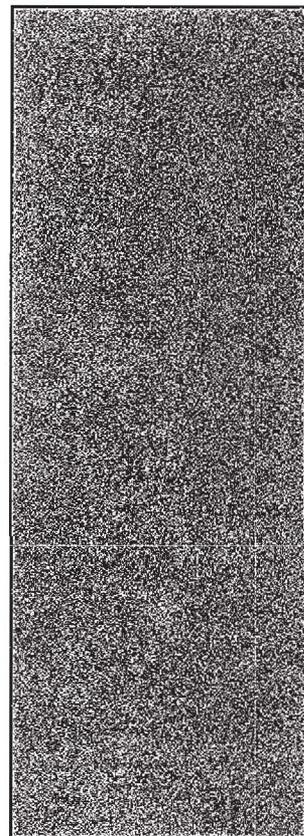
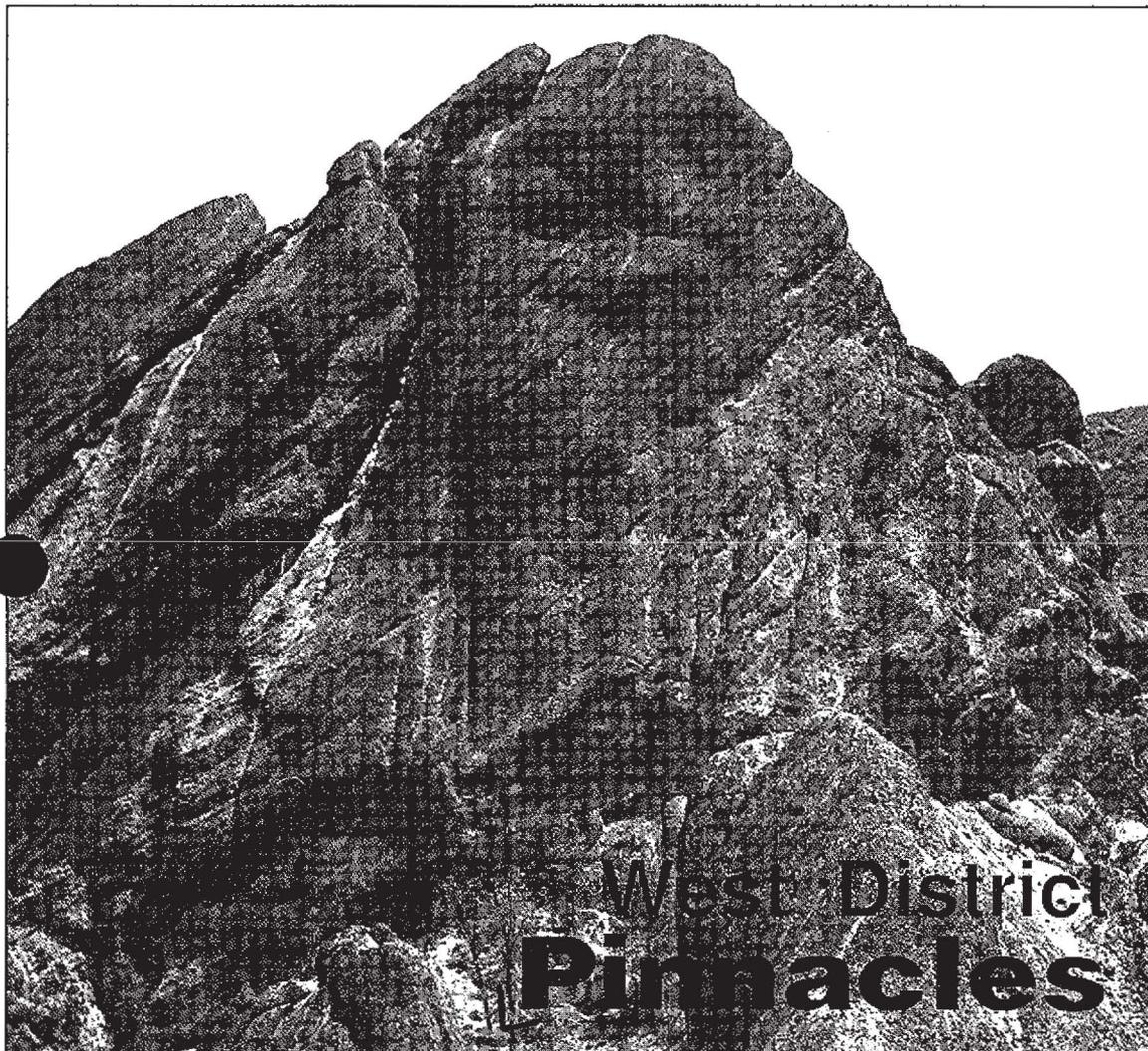


# development concept plan and environmental assessment

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

**DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT PLAN  
AND  
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

**WEST DISTRICT  
PINNACLES NATIONAL MONUMENT**

National Park Service  
Western Regional Office  
January, 1991

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

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

**THE PROPOSED ACTION**

The proposed action, identified as Alternative B: West Boundary in the Draft Development Concept Plan and Environmental Assessment (DCP/EA), including minor modifications, provides for the relocation of most housing, maintenance, and administrative facilities from the environmentally sensitive Chaparral area to a less sensitive area near the west boundary. In addition, parking at Chaparral would be significantly reduced, and the vacated areas would be restored to natural contours and replanted with native vegetation.

The remaining parking at Chaparral would be sufficient to accommodate public visitation at only relatively low levels of use. At other times, a shuttle operation would convey visitors from parking areas at the west boundary to the Chaparral area.

Other features of the plan include the elimination of camping on the west side, thereby eliminating conflicts between campers and day users and providing for increased day use opportunities at Chaparral, and development of additional picnicking sites at the west boundary area. Visitor information and interpretation would be enhanced through the development of a scenic turnout and a visitor center in the west boundary area.

Two alternatives to the proposed action were evaluated during the planning process. A no-action alternative would continue the existing operation in the West District. Alternative A: Doublegate, is similar in purpose to the proposed action except that facilities would be relocated to the Doublegate site instead of west boundary.

**ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES**

The environmental consequences of the proposal would be primarily beneficial, providing for substantial improvements in natural vegetation in restored areas, removing obtrusive features and operations from a key visitor use area, and providing expanded day use opportunities to meet a growing demand for this type of use. Adverse impacts would include minor vegetation and visual impacts on developed portions of the west boundary area. In addition, visitors would no longer have the opportunity to camp on the west side.

## **PUBLIC REVIEW OF THE DRAFT PLAN AND ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

The draft plan was made available for public review from July 2, 1990, until September 15, 1990. Notification of availability of the plan was made through mailings to interested individuals and organizations, and news releases to area media. Substantial coverage of the planning project was provided by the media in response to the news releases.

Two public meetings were held in Soledad to present the plan and receive comments. A total of 28 persons attended the two meetings. In addition, a total of 32 letters were received regarding the plan.

The primary area of controversy relating to the plan involved the elimination of overnight camping at Chaparral, to which a number of commenters were opposed.

### **MITIGATION**

All new developments in the west boundary area would be located and designed so as to minimize obtrusiveness. Planned development areas would be surveyed for rare plants and for archeological resources prior to ground disturbance. Disturbed areas would be promptly replanted to avoid erosion.

### **SUMMARY FINDING**

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

### **RECOMMENDED:**

s/ James Sleznick, Jr.

12/21/90

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Superintendent, Pinnacles National Monument

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Date

### **APPROVED:**

s/ Lew Albert

1/3/91

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Acting Regional Director, Western Region

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Date

**SUMMARY OF THE  
DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT PLAN  
AND ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT  
FOR THE  
WEST DISTRICT  
PINNACLES NATIONAL MONUMENT**

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

The document presents three basic alternatives. The no-action plan retains the existing facility configuration and the existing operation. Alternative A (Minimum Requirements) provides for relocation of all administrative facilities from the Chaparral developed area, located in the vicinity of significant park resources, to a site known as Doublegate. A shuttle system would convey visitors to primary use areas during periods of peak visitation. Capital costs of the developments would approximate \$ 3.0 million. Environmental impacts would be minor and amenable to mitigation.

Alternative B is the proposed action. It is similar to Alternative A except that administrative and visitor use facilities are relocated to a site known as West Boundary. The plan includes a new picnic area and trail. Capital costs of the developments would approximate \$3.2 million. Environmental impacts would be minor and amenable to mitigation.

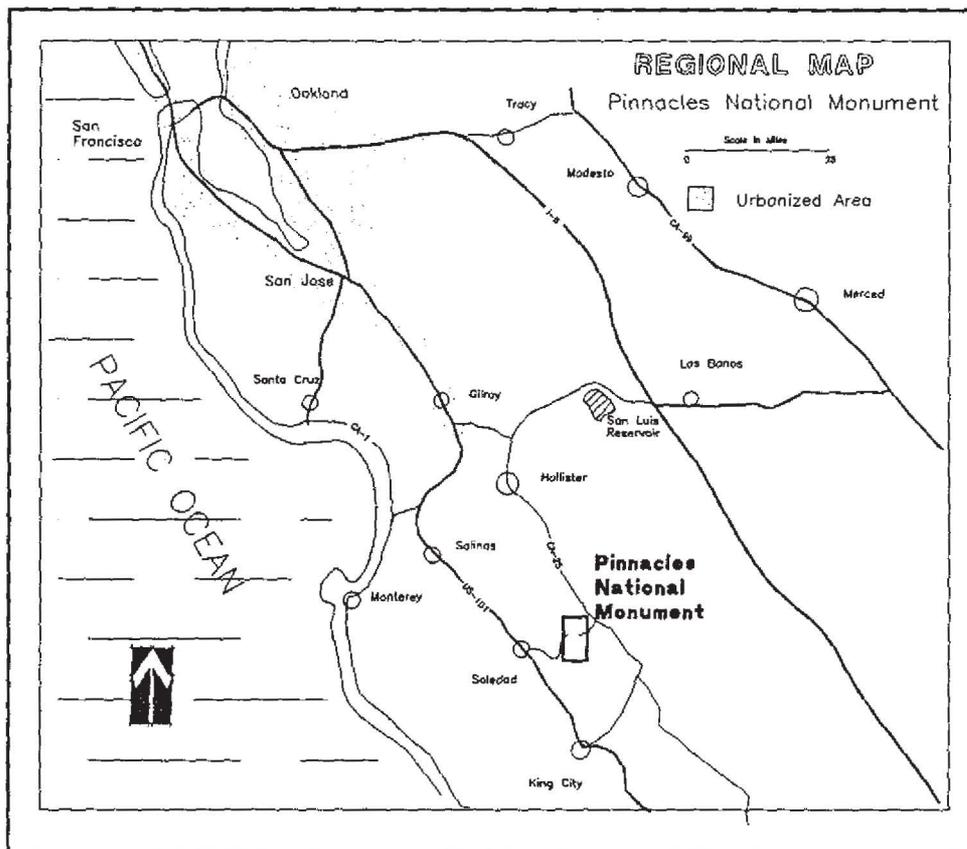
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## PURPOSE AND NEED

### BACKGROUND

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



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

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

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

## PLANNING HISTORY

A Master Plan, and accompanying Environmental Impact Statement, for Pinnacles National Monument were completed in 1976. The master plan provides overall direction for the long term management and use of the unit. Because the master plan is conceptual and goal-oriented, more specific development concept plans are required to implement many of the features of that plan. Separate development concept plans are being prepared for Pinnacles West and East Districts.

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

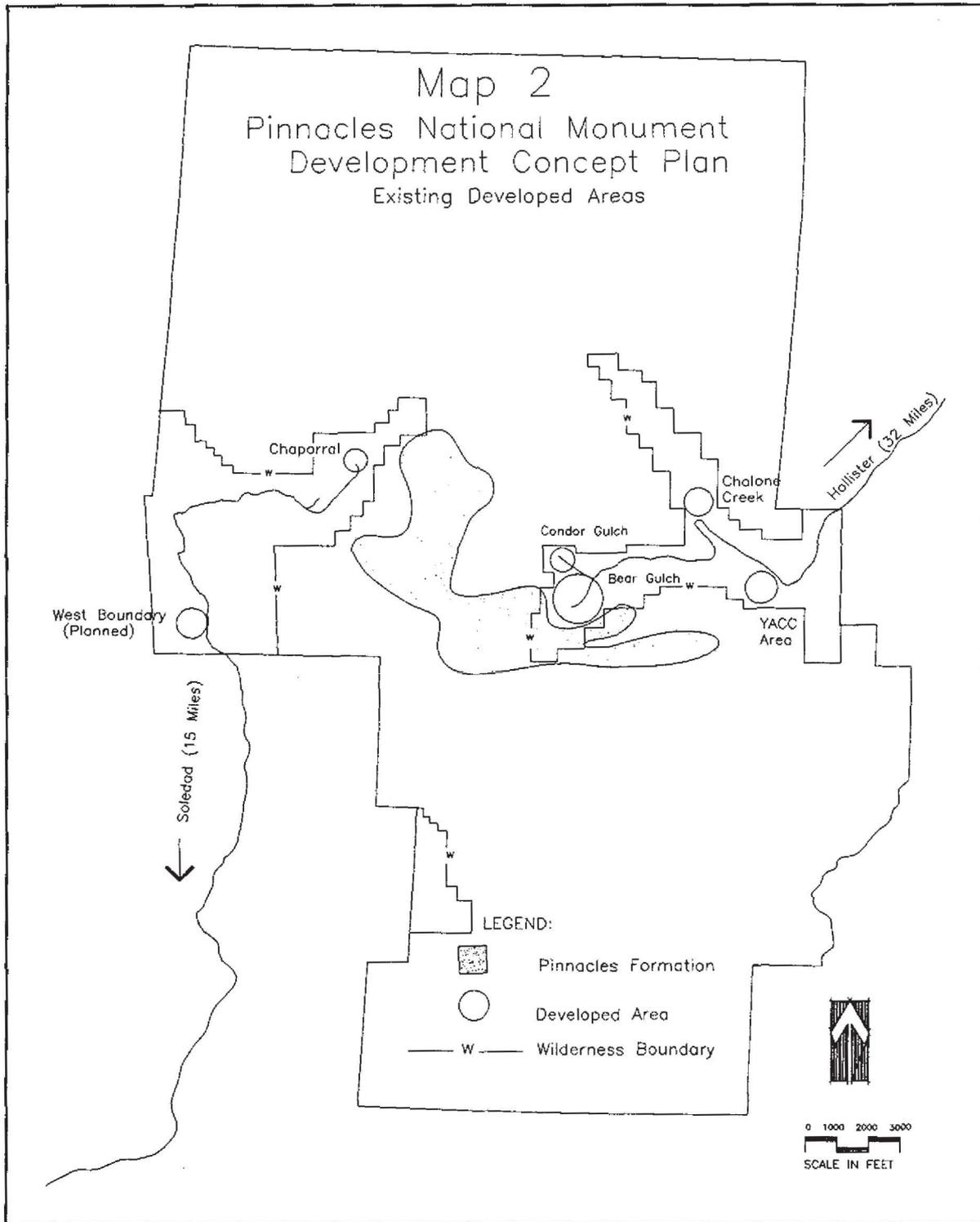
1. Conversion of the Monument to day-use activities only.
2. Removal of visitor and support facilities from obtrusive locations within significant resource areas, and their relocation in less sensitive locations.
3. Implementation of a shuttle system and development of shuttle staging facilities near the park entrance.

## PLANNING ISSUES

There are four basic problems in the West District as discussed below.

1. Obtrusive Facilities and Developments. The Chaparral developed area, located in a confined canyon at the end of the access road, and in full view of the Pinnacles formation, is currently the primary focus of both visitor and administrative activity on the west side. This small area contains a parking lot, combined camp/picnic area, major trailhead, park housing, ranger station, and maintenance area. Weekend congestion is common in the peak spring season. Highly obtrusive visual impacts are an inevitable result of this inappropriate mix of functions. In addition, the lack of commercial power to the site makes it necessary to run a generator, creating objectionable noise.

Map 2  
Pinnacles National Monument  
Development Concept Plan  
Existing Developed Areas



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2. Vegetative Trampling/Erosion at Chaparral. Natural vegetation and soils in the Chaparral area have been adversely impacted by concentrated visitor use. There are numerous eroded trail cutoffs and other denuded areas. The appearance of much of the area is that of a worn and overused site.

3. Inadequate Visitor Facilities. The park does not have adequate permanent facilities for visitor parking during peak periods. The existing ranger station does not have sufficient room for interpretive displays showing visitors how to appreciate and care for the park. Picnic facilities are insufficient to accommodate demand, and there are conflicts between campers and picnickers for the small dual-use area.

4. Inadequate Housing and Administrative Facilities. Onsite housing, and required occupancy, for a limited number of employees is considered necessary at Pinnacles to provide for after-hours security. The existing housing consists of two trailers and a small cabin located in the Chaparral area. The use of trailers for park housing is undesirable, and the cabin is old and substandard, lacking any plumbing.

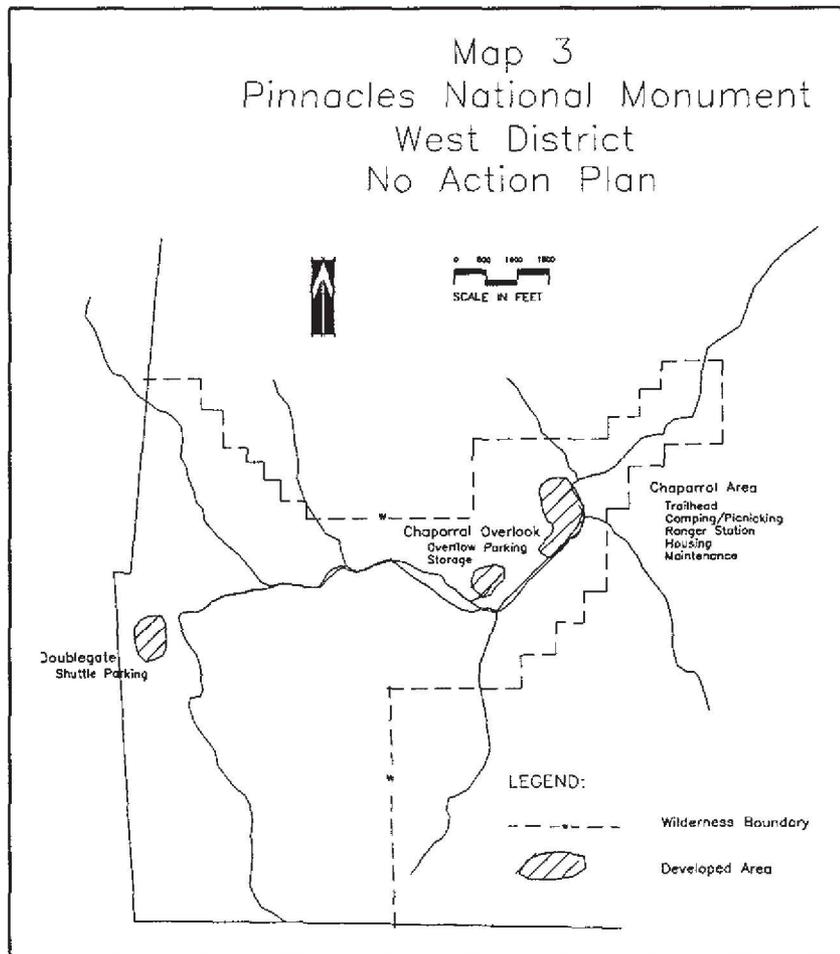
Administrative facilities, i.e. office space and maintenance workspace and storage, are inadequate to serve the existing park operation.

## ALTERNATIVES

Three alternative plans are considered below.

### THE NO ACTION PLAN

Under this alternative, the park would continue to operate in the current manner. Park visitor facilities would be overtaxed during peak periods and interpretation of natural and cultural phenomena would be extremely limited. See Map 3.

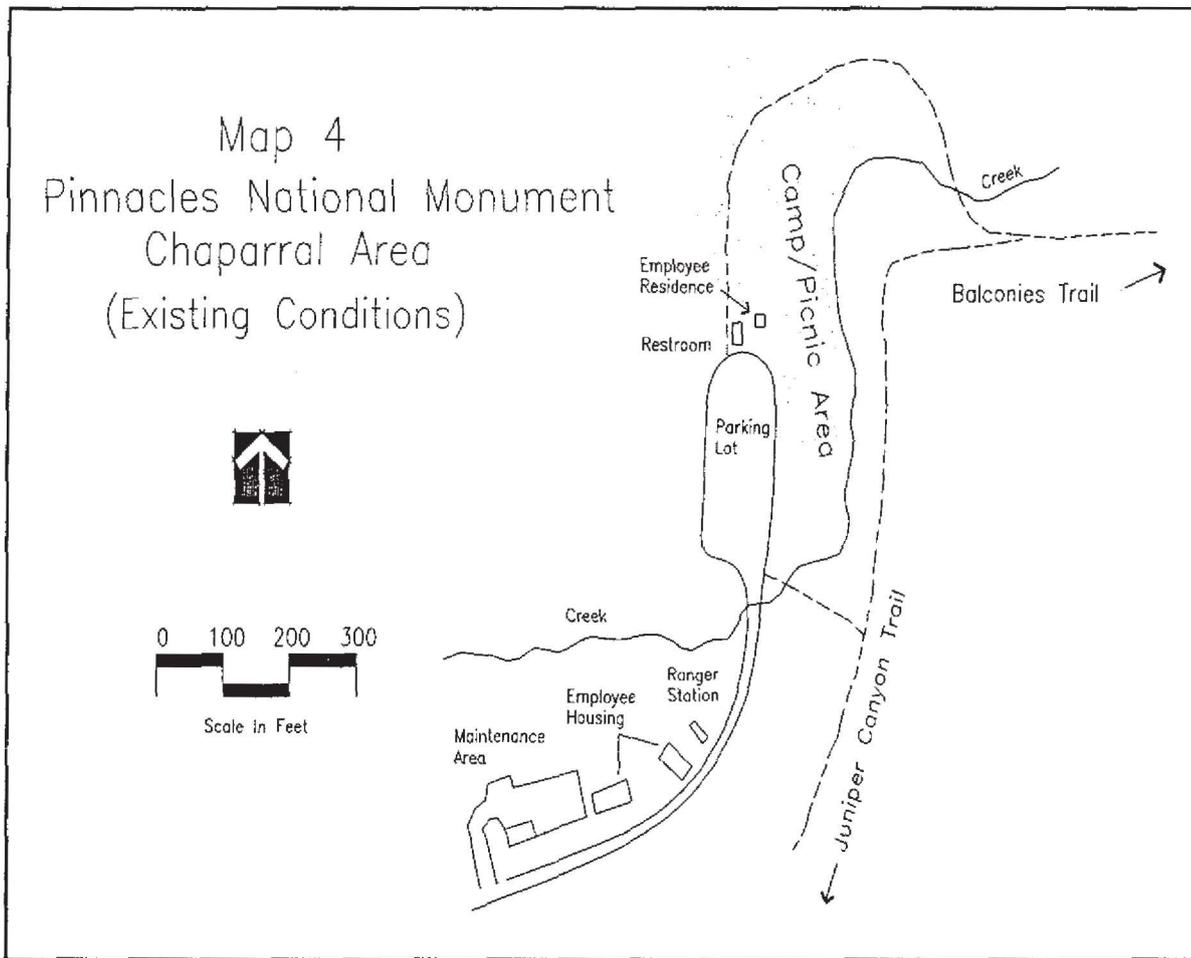


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The Chaparral area would exhibit the unpleasant effects of congestion and an inappropriate mix of functions. Park employees would continue to occupy trailers in the Chaparral area, and office space for administrative functions would remain

inadequate. See Map 4.



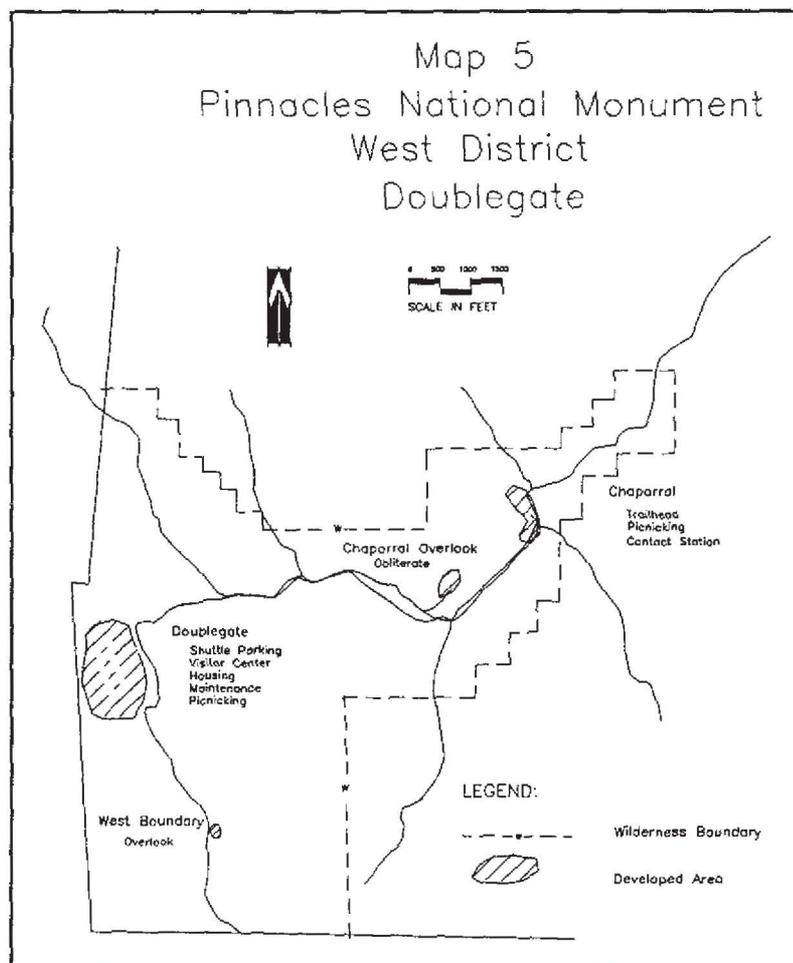
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The park would continue to use temporary arrangements to alleviate seasonal parking overflow through the use of the Doublegate site for a seasonal shuttle program, as funds permit, and through weekend campground closures during the peak season.

## WESTSIDE PLAN A: DOUBLEGATE (MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS)

**General Concept.** Under this plan, most of the administrative, residential, and visitor parking facilities now located at Chaparral would be relocated to the Doublegate site, and much of the existing developed area at Chaparral would be restored to natural conditions. See Map 5.



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Implementation of the plan would occur in three basic stages. In stage one, water and power would be developed to serve the new development area at Doublegate. In stage two, new maintenance, housing, visitor center, and shuttle parking would be developed in the Doublegate area. This would free up the Chaparral area for the implementation of stage three, when the camping area would be permanently

converted to picnic use, and the existing large parking lot and overlook area would be restored to natural contours and natural vegetation.

Specific features of the plan are discussed below.

**Visitor Facilities.** The existing combined camp/picnic area at Chaparral would be designated for day use only. A landscape planting plan would be completed to provide screening and generally improve the appearance of this heavily used and well-worn area.

The area at Chaparral now occupied by park housing, maintenance, and the ranger station would be made available for visitor parking.

A parking lot of about 25-30 spaces would be developed in this area. This parking lot would adequately serve visitor use during off-peak periods. A combination restroom/visitor contact station would be constructed adjacent to the parking lot. This structure would include a loft apartment for a seasonal employee.

A shuttle parking lot would be developed at Doublegate to accommodate between 100-150 vehicles. A portion of the lot, sufficient to accommodate 25 vehicles, would be paved; the balance would be gravel or stabilized turf to soften visual impact. The site is large enough to accommodate parking requirements at least until 2020.

The shuttle would be operated during periods of heavier visitation when the small parking lot at Chaparral is filled. The operation would involve the use of leased vans driven by NPS employees. There is no plan to charge the visitors for this service. Use of a concessionaire for the shuttle service is impractical at current and near term projected use levels but may be reconsidered in the future as year around use and mid-week use increase.

A modest visitor center (approximately 1800-2000 SF) to be developed at Doublegate would provide visitors with an initial orientation on the park's resources and information on how to enjoy and protect them. Restrooms would be provided in this facility.

A new picnic area with about 10 tables would be developed near the visitor center.

A scenic overlook would be developed near the park boundary. This pullout would give the incoming visitor a good view of the pinnacles formations and provide basic information on park facilities. Those visitors expecting to find camp facilities, those unwilling to use the shuttle, and sightseers wanting only a glimpse of the pinnacles formation, could turn around here without adding to congestion in the Chaparral area.

**Restoration and Revegetation.** All existing buildings in the Chaparral area except the wellhouse would be removed. The existing paved parking lot and the Chaparral Overlook would be removed, and the reclaimed area would be recontoured and replanted with native vegetation. In addition, the trail system at Chaparral would be redesigned to reduce or eliminate "short-cutting" and the picnic area would be designed to better channel visitor use and permit revegetation to occur.

**Employee Housing.** The existing housing would be removed from the Chaparral area. The trailers would be disposed of and the seasonal cabin would be demolished.

A new housing area, consisting of three houses and one duplex, would be developed at Doublegate. The houses would be occupied by permanently assigned personnel, including commissioned rangers, while the duplex would be available for seasonal employees.

**Administrative Facilities.** Office space for the District Ranger and staff would be included in the visitor center to be developed at Doublegate.

A new maintenance complex would also be developed at Doublegate to include a maintenance office/workshop building of about 1500 SF, a 1000 SF fire and rescue equipment storage building, and a covered four vehicle parking area.

**Utilities.** Comme electrical service would be extended to the west side.

Groundwater availability in the area would be investigated; if not found, water would be pumped to the area from the existing well at Chaparral. Sewage treatment would be via a septic system or alternative as determined during the design process.

**Access Road.** The character and width of the main access road would be unchanged. Provision would be made for interpretive wayside exhibits on the route as feasible.

**Costs.** Estimated development costs are presented in Table 1. They are based on January, 1990 price levels.

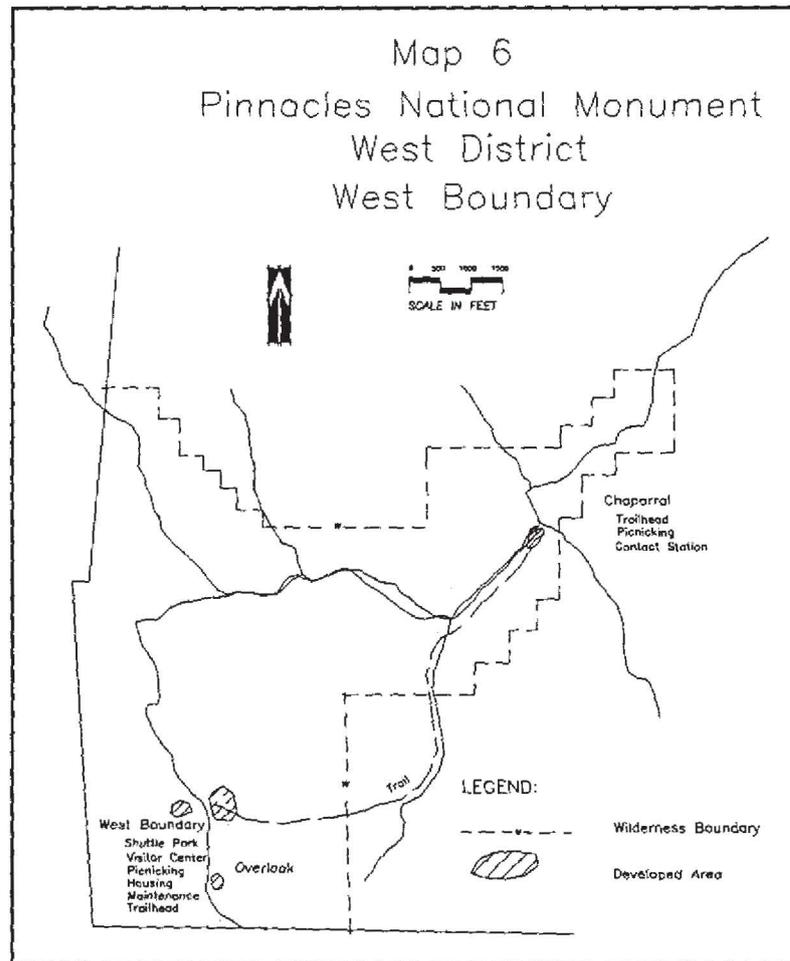
TABLE 1

## COST ESTIMATES FOR ALTERNATIVE A: DOUBLEGATE

LOCATION	DEVELOPMENT ITEM	GROSS COST	A D V A N C E P L A N N I N G	TOTAL COST
General	Electrical Service	\$ 390,000	\$ 75,000	\$ 465,000
Chaparral	Remove Existing Development	75,000	10,000	85,000
	Develop New Parking	50,000	10,000	60,000
	Site Revegetation and Restoration	65,000	15,000	80,000
	Restroom and Contact Station Building	215,000	40,000	255,000
Doublegate	Shuttle Parking	160,000	30,000	190,000
	Housing Area	590,000	110,000	700,000
	Visitor Center	355,000	70,000	425,000
	Maintenance Area	235,000	45,000	280,000
	Water and Sewer	330,000	60,000	390,000
	Picnic Area	15,000	5,000	20,000
West Boundary	Overlook	40,000	10,000	50,000
	<b>Total Costs</b>	<b>2,520,000</b>	<b>480,000</b>	<b>\$ 3,000,000</b>

## WESTSIDE PLAN B: WEST BOUNDARY (PROPOSED ACTION)

**General Concept.** Under this plan, most of the administrative, residential, and parking facilities now located at Chaparral would be relocated to the West Boundary site, and much of the existing developed area at Chaparral would be restored to natural conditions. See Map 6.



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Implementation of the plan would occur in three basic stages. In stage one, water and power would be developed to serve the new development area at the West Boundary area. In stage two, new maintenance, housing, visitor center, and shuttle parking would be developed in the new area. This would free up the Chaparral area for the implementation of stage three, when the camping area would be permanently converted to picnic use, and the existing large parking lot and overlook area would be restored to natural contours and natural vegetation.

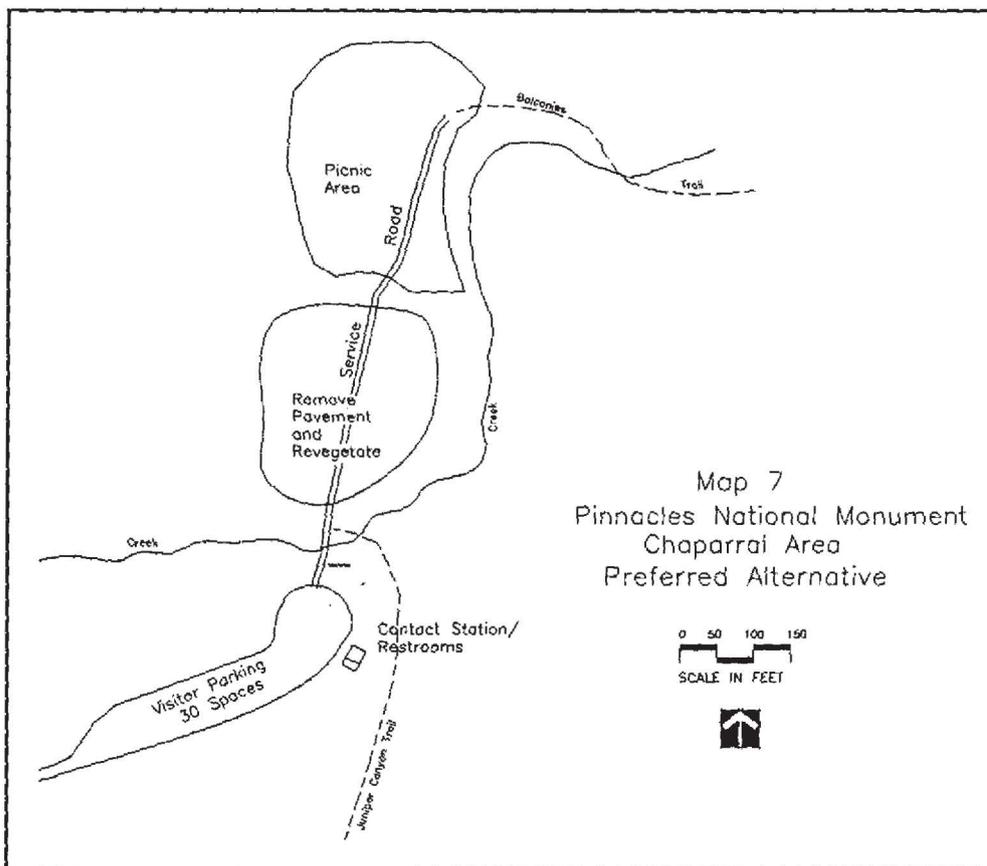
Specific features of the plan are discussed below.

**Visitor Facilities.** The existing combined camp/picnic area at Chaparral would be designated for day use only. A landscape planting plan would be completed to provide screening and generally improve the appearance of this heavily used and well-worn area.

The area at Chaparral now occupied by park housing, maintenance, and the ranger station would be made available for visitor parking.

A parking lot of about 25-30 spaces would be developed in this area. This parking lot would adequately serve visitor use during off-peak periods. A combination restroom/visitor contact station would be constructed adjacent to the parking lot. The structure would include a loft for a seasonal employee.

See Map 7.

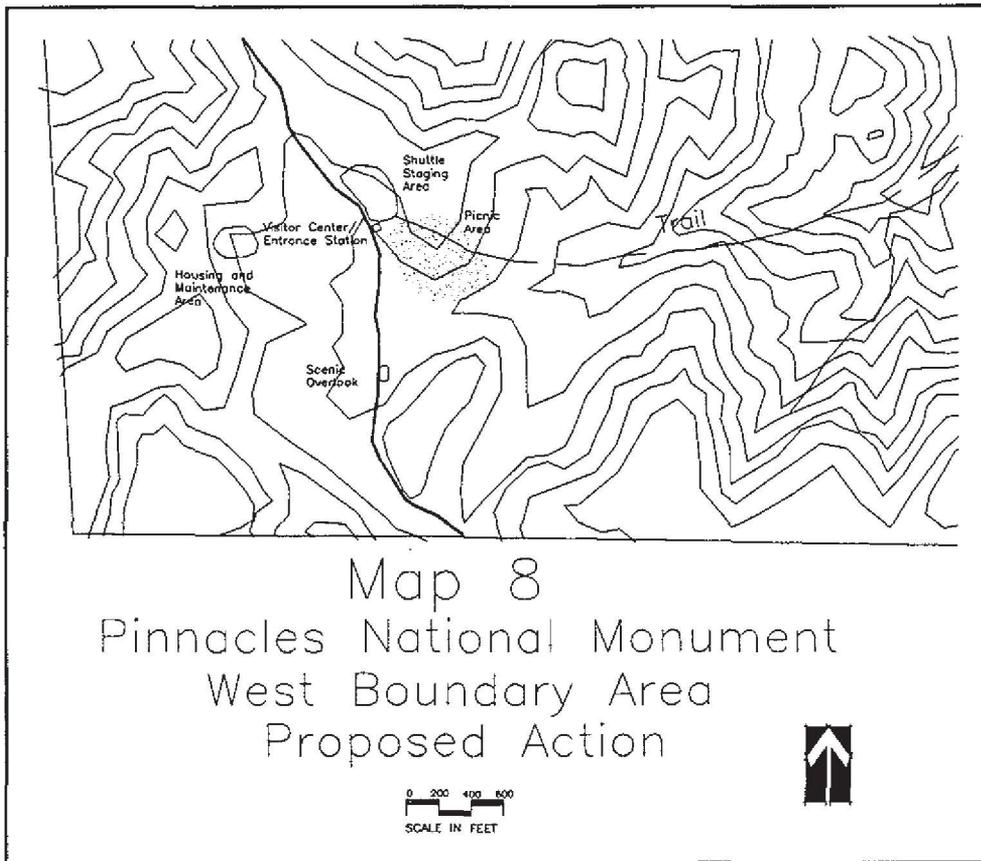


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A shuttle parking lot would be developed at West Boundary to accommodate between 100-150 vehicles. A portion of the lot, sufficient to

accommodate 30 vehicles, would be paved; the balance would be gravel or stabilized turf to soften visual impact. The site is large enough to accommodate parking requirements at least until 2020. See Map 8.



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The shuttle would be operated during periods of heavier visitation when the small parking lot at Chaparral is filled. The operation would involve the use of leased vans driven by NPS employees. There is no plan to charge the visitors for this service. Use of a concessionaire for the shuttle service is impractical at current and near term projected use levels but may be reconsidered in the future as year around use and mid-week use increase.

A modest visitor center (approximately 1800-2000 SF) to be developed at the West Boundary area would provide visitors with an initial orientation on the park's resources and information on how to enjoy and protect them. Restrooms would be provided in this facility.

A new picnic area with about 25 tables would be developed near the visitor center. In addition, a trail would be developed from the vicinity of the visitor center down Jawbone Canyon to the Chaparral area. This trail will provide an alternative to the

shuttle and provide an opportunity for an easy downhill hike, with return via the shuttle.

A scenic overlook would be developed near the park boundary. This pullout would give the incoming visitor a good view of the pinnacles formations and provide basic information on park facilities. Those visitors expecting to find camp facilities, those unwilling to use the shuttle, and sightseers wanting only a glimpse of the pinnacles formation, could turn around here without adding to congestion in the Chaparral area.

**Restoration and Revegetation.** All existing buildings in the Chaparral area except the wellhouse would be removed. The existing paved parking lot and the Chaparral Overlook would be removed, and the reclaimed area would be recontoured and replanted with native vegetation. In addition, the trail system at Chaparral would be redesigned to reduce or eliminate "short-cutting" and the picnic area would be designed to better channel visitor use and permit revegetation to occur.

**Employee Housing.** The existing housing would be removed from the Chaparral area. The trailers would be disposed of and the seasonal cabin would be demolished.

A new housing area, consisting of three houses and one duplex, would be developed at the West Boundary area. The houses would be occupied by permanently assigned personnel, including commissioned rangers, while the duplex would be available for seasonal employees.

**Administrative Facilities.** Office space for the District Ranger and staff would be included in the visitor center to be developed at West Boundary.

A new maintenance complex would also be developed at West Boundary to include a maintenance office/workshop building of about 1500 SF, a 1000 SF fire and rescue equipment storage building, and a covered four vehicle parking area.

**Utilities.** Commercial electrical service would be extended to the west side.

Groundwater availability in the area would be investigated; if not found, water would be pumped to the area from the existing well at Chaparral. Sewage treatment would be via a septic system or alternative as determined during the design process.

**Access Road.** The character and width of the main access road would be unchanged. Provision would be made for interpretive wayside exhibits on the route as feasible.

**Costs.** Estimated development costs are presented in Table 2. They are based on January, 1990 price levels.

TABLE 2

COST ESTIMATES FOR ALTERNATIVE B: WEST BOUNDARY

LOCATION	DEVELOPMENT ITEM	GROSS COST	A D V A N C E P L A N N I N G	TOTAL COST
General	Electrical Service	\$ 390,000	\$ 75,000	\$ 465,000
Chaparral	Remove Existing Development	75,000	10,000	85,000
	Develop New Parking	50,000	10,000	60,000
	Site Revegetation and Restoration	65,000	15,000	80,000
	Restroom and Contact Station Building	215,000	40,000	255,000
West Boundary	Shuttle Parking	160,000	30,000	190,000
	Housing Area	590,000	110,000	700,000
	Visitor Center	350,000	90,000	440,000
	Maintenance Area	235,000	60,000	295,000
	Water and Sewer	410,000	100,000	510,000
	Picnic Area	35,000	10,000	45,000
	Overlook	40,000	10,000	50,000
	Trail	35,000	10,000	45,000
	<b>TOTAL COSTS</b>	<b>2,650,000</b>	<b>570,000</b>	<b>\$ 3,220,000</b>

## OTHER PLANS CONSIDERED BUT REJECTED

Consideration was given to splitting the new developments between the West Boundary and Doublegate sites, i.e. placing the visitor facilities in one area and the maintenance/residential complex in the other area. This configuration would impose additional costs, primarily for the development of utility infrastructure at two sites, and would produce environmental impacts on visual quality and vegetation in two locations rather than one.

Consideration was also given to the development of a one-way loop road system, with a new road constructed down Jawbone Canyon to the vicinity of the existing ranger station. While this approach has potential in accommodating large future flows of short duration visitors, the new road construction would have significant environmental impacts on visual quality, vegetation, and wildlife.

Finally, consideration was given to the concept of eliminating all motorized traffic to the Chaparral area. This concept would involve providing all parking and other visitor facilities at either the West Boundary or Doublegate sites. Visitors would then hike to Chaparral and then on to other trail destinations. This approach would provide by far the best conditions for vegetative restoration of the Chaparral site, since visitor concentrations would be eliminated, but the substantial elevation change between the staging area and Chaparral would limit visitor use to those who are physically fit.

## THE AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

### THE REGION

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

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

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

### NATURAL RESOURCES

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

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

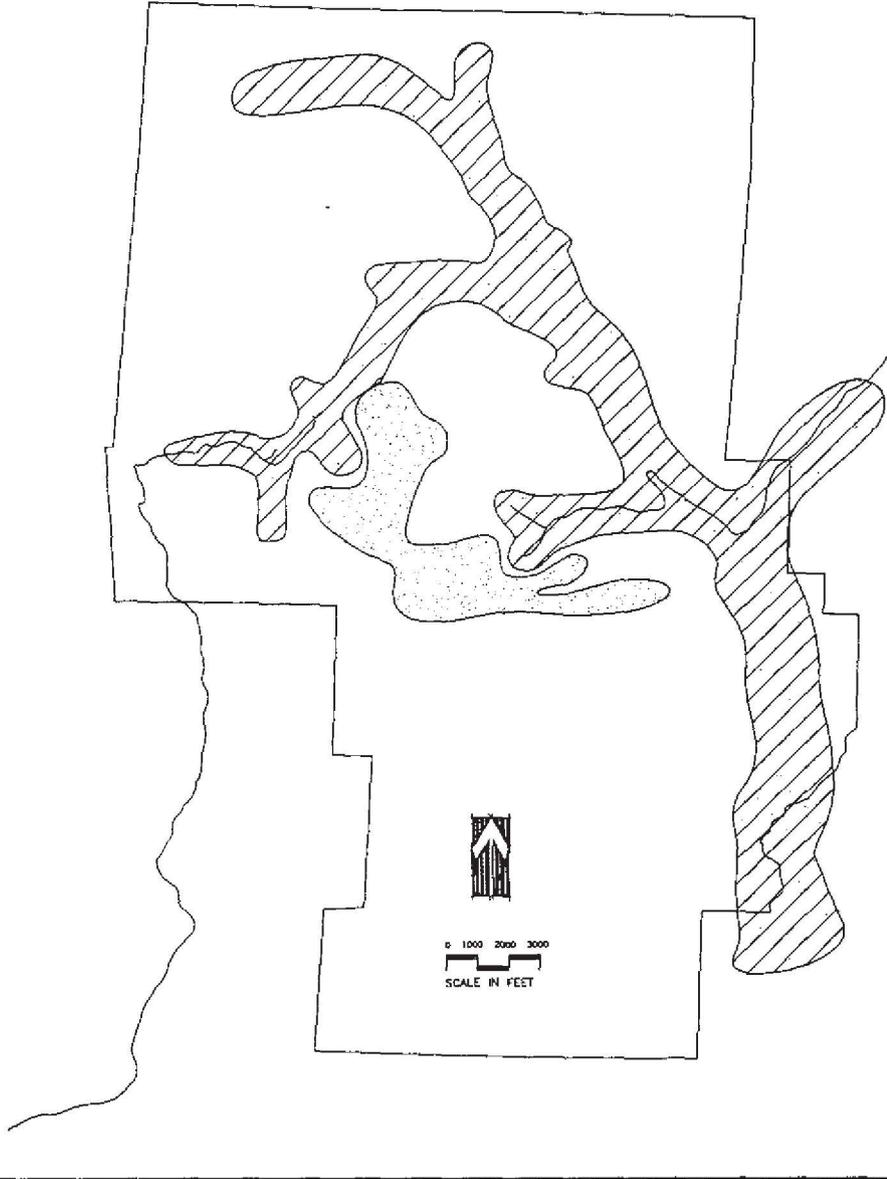
Faulting and erosion have created deep, narrow gorges where boulders have become wedged at various heights above the canyon floor, creating two complexes of talus caves.

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

**Vegetation.** Map 9 shows the generalized vegetation distribution in the Monument. The pinnacles cover about 10 percent of the Monument and support little vegetation other than lichen and mosses. Most of the Monument, about 80 percent, is covered with coastal chaparral. This community mainly consists of common plants such as chamise, buckbrush, holly leaf cherry, and manzanita. Also present is the

Map 9  
Pinnacles National Monument  
Development Concept Plan  
Natural Resources

□ Chaparral Community    ▨ Woodland/Riparian    ▩ Barren Rock



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less common Pinnacles buckwheat (*Eriogonum nortonii*), which is found primarily in burned/disturbed areas.

The remaining 10 percent of the Monument is composed of canyon/riparian communities, including oak, willow, buckeye, cottonwood, sycamore, elderberry, ferns, and toyon. Of particular interest in this category is the stand of valley oaks (*Quercus lobata*) found on the east side of the monument near the confluence of Chalone and Bear Creeks.

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

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

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

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

**Water Resources.** Streams in the Monument are mostly intermittent, with little flow in late summer months. In some cases the streams are subject to flood flows during the winter rainy season. Flood flows on the west side have not damaged park

buildings, but floodwaters have inundated portions of the campground immediately adjacent to the creek and seepage under the parking lot has resulted in pavement failure.

U.S.G.S. has evaluated potential water supply sources on the west side of the Monument. The study basically concluded that additional groundwater could readily be developed in the vicinity of the Chaparral developed area but that groundwater potential elsewhere, e.g. higher elevation areas in the vicinity of the boundary, was limited. Nevertheless, farmers and ranchers in the immediate area have had considerable success in locating water for their use in the vicinity of the boundary.

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

## **CULTURAL RESOURCES**

**Archeological Sites.** The area of the Monument was used seasonally for hunting in prehistoric times by the indigenous Costanoans. Evidence exists in the Monument of several temporary camps and resource utilization sites.

Substantial archeological survey work has been accomplished in the Monument, with a park-wide survey in 1967, and an intensive survey in 1980 of all lands currently under consideration as development sites.

Four prehistoric sites have been located on the west side. Three of the sites, including a campsite, rock shelter, and bedrock mortars, constitute the Chalone Creek Archeological Sites District, which is on the National Register of Historic Places. This area is located just to the east of the Chaparral developed area.

One additional archeological site is located west of the Doublegate area. The site, thought to be a soaproot gathering area, includes one bedrock mortar and diffuse lithic scatter.

**Historic Sites.** There were a number of homesteads established in and around the Monument during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and the Monument contains the remains of several of these habitations.

There is one such historic feature on the west side, a nineteenth century homestead site with remaining foundations and low rock walls. It is located east of the entrance road near where the road enters the park. A determination of eligibility for placement

on the National Register will be sought for this site.

### VISITOR USE PATTERNS

Annual use at Pinnacles National Monument totalled 218,601 visits in 1989. The West District received 71,100 visits, or about 33% of the total.

Visitor use at Pinnacles exhibits significant seasonal variation. There is a surge of visitation in spring months when wildflowers are blooming and the weather is comfortable for walking and hiking. When the weather starts to warm appreciably, with temperatures frequently exceeding 100 F., use falls off sharply. Figure 1 shows monthly variations for 1987 and 1988.

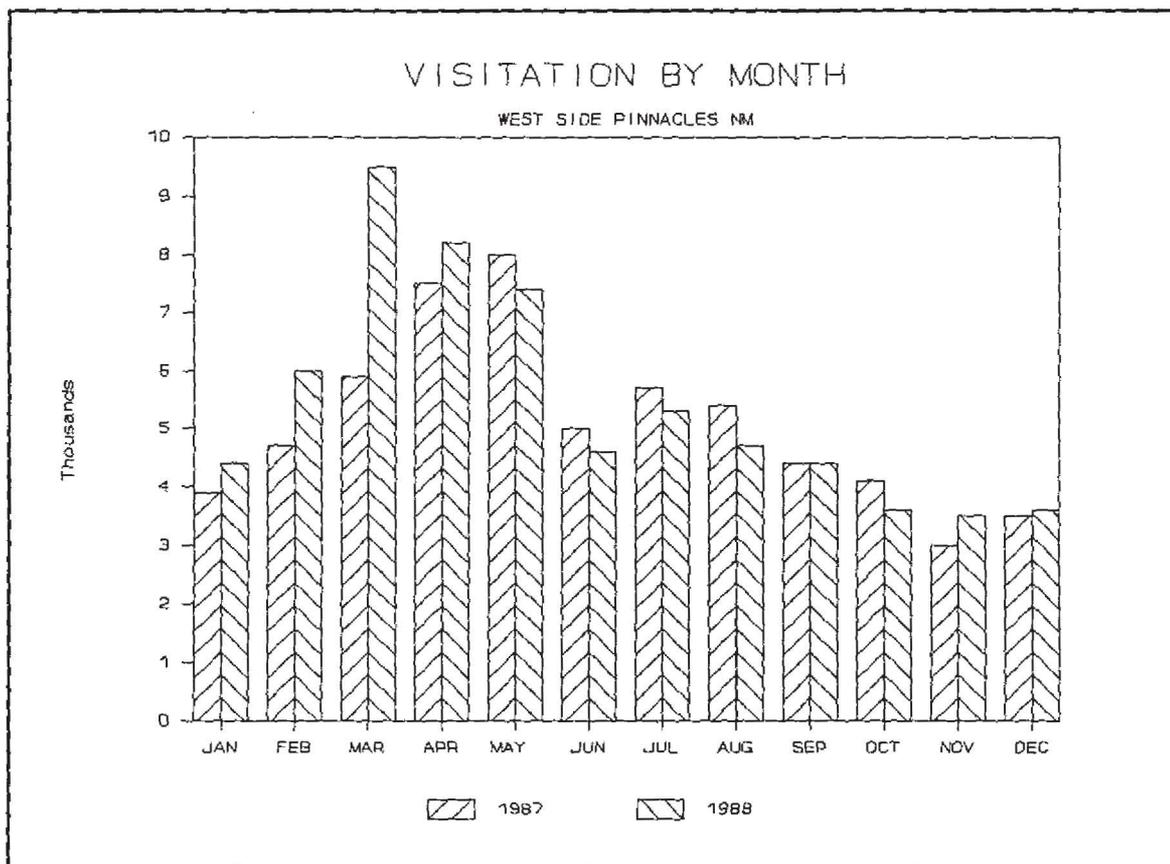


Figure 1

Because Pinnacles is primarily a day use area with a preponderance of visitation from surrounding urban areas, the Monument also experiences significant variation in weekend and weekday loads. During the peak month, for example, the West District has an average of 40 vehicles per day on weekdays, and about 130 on weekend days.

The annual growth in use at the Monument over the last several years has averaged about 3%. Continued growth at least at this rate is anticipated, with the possibility of accelerated growth as a result of efforts by the gateway community of Soledad to promote the use of west side facilities in the park and tourism in their area generally. Figures 2 and 3 show projected increases in use for the peak season, by weekend and weekday numbers of vehicles, for the period from 1989 until 2020.

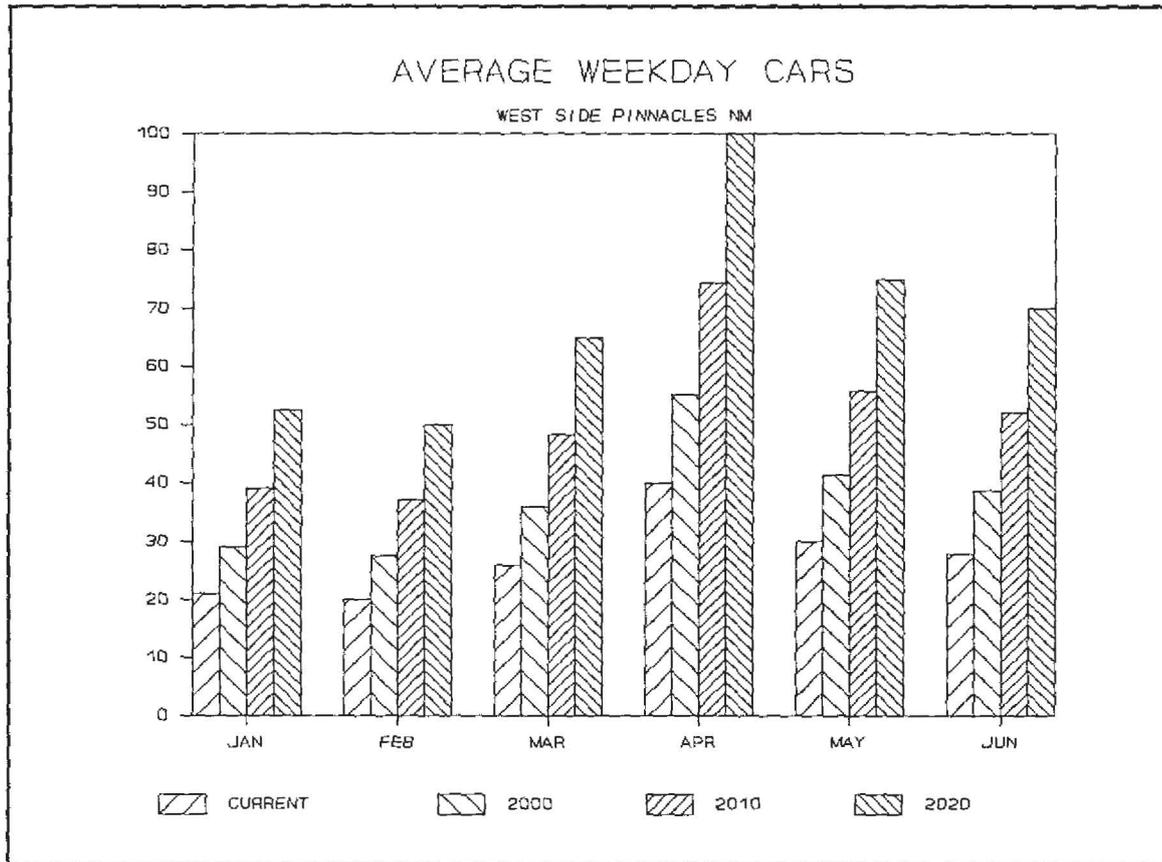


Figure 2

## FACILITY ANALYSIS

Visitor use facilities at the Chaparral area include a twenty-five site walk-in campground, which is also used for picnicking, a comfort station, and a parking lot for up to 50 cars. Trails originating in the area lead to major attractions such as the caves and high peaks areas.

The parking lot fills to overflowing on most weekend days during the spring peak season. The park has used several techniques to manage this overflow situation. A shuttle system is used when sufficient funds are available. Once the lot at Chaparral is filled, arriving visitors are directed to park at a temporary cleared parking area at the

Doublegate site. From there, NPS employees shuttle the visitors to Chaparral in vans. There are no permanent facilities at Doublegate. Chemical toilets and a few picnic tables are placed at the area during shuttle operations.

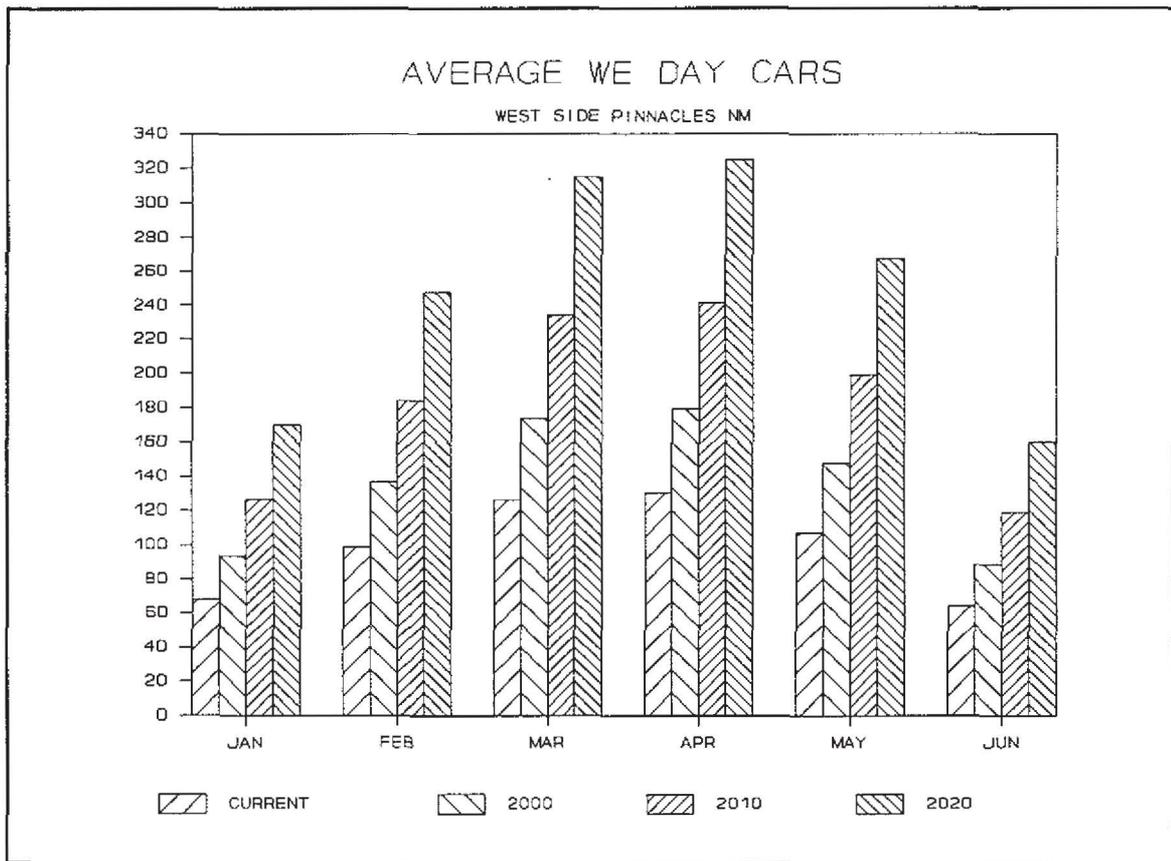


Figure 3

The park has also at times used the Chaparral Overlook for overflow parking, and has found it necessary to eliminate overnight camping at Chaparral on weekends during the peak season. This latter approach makes available a number of additional parking spaces for day users.

A small ranger station, approximately 350 SF, provides for visitor contact, fee collection, and cooperating association book sales in addition to providing office space for four or more employees. There is no space in this building for interpretive displays. In addition to the ranger station, the Chaparral area contains two trailers for permanent employees, a small cabin used for seasonal housing, and a small maintenance building housing a workshop and the generator set.

Water for the Chaparral area is supplied from a well, which provides an adequate

supply of good quality water. Sewage treatment is via a septic system with a newly installed percolation field. Electric power is produced by diesel generators. The generators are noisy and expensive to operate, with annual costs for operation and replacement in excess of \$ 30,000.

The Chaparral Overlook, located southwest of the Chaparral area on a short road spur leading from the main access road, was developed many years ago as a scenic overlook for the Pinnacle formation. The area is no longer a visitor use facility, and the pavement on the road spur is deteriorated. The overlook is used occasionally as an overflow parking area when the main lot at Chaparral is filled.

The West District's main access road is a narrow (16-foot) paved 2-lane road. Despite the narrowness of the road, there have been relatively few accidents on it, possibly because it is perceived by visitors as a route clearly requiring reduced speed and extreme caution.

## ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

### NO ACTION PLAN

Impacts on Visual Quality. The concentration of administrative, park residential, and visitor use facilities in the Chaparral area would continue to impinge on visual quality in that key visitor use location. These facilities are also visible from portions of the high peaks trails, detracting from views from that area.

The temporary staging facilities at Doublegate would also continue to detract from visual quality in that location.

Impacts on Vegetation and Wildlife. The concentration of use in the Chaparral area would continue to promote trampling of vegetation and consequent adverse impacts on related wildlife species. There are no identified threatened or endangered species in this area.

Impacts on Cultural Resources. There would be no impacts on cultural resources.

Impacts on Soils. Soils in the Chaparral area would continue to be subjected to erosion through the trail "shortcutting" now occurring with the existing trail system configuration.

Impacts on Wilderness. There are no physical impacts on wilderness from the existing development. Sights and sounds from the Chaparral area do impinge to some extent on the quality of the wilderness experience.

Impacts on Water Resources. Portions of the existing Chaparral developed area, including the parking lot and several sites in the camp/picnic area, have been subject to flood damage in the past. Although a detailed flood plain study has not been completed for this area, past floods have also come close to the existing maintenance, residential, and administrative structures in the area. The potential for damage will continue under this alternative.

Impacts on Sound Quality. The generators will continue to produce unpleasant sounds which detract from the natural character of the area and reduce visitor enjoyment, particularly during evening hours.

Impacts on Visitor Use and Services. The visitor will continue to be faced with a "bare-bones" interpretive situation on the west side because of the lack of space for displays. Conflicts will continue to erupt over dual use of the campground/picnic area. Visitors will continue to use the temporary staging facilities at Doublegate during peak use periods.

## **PLAN A: DOUBLEGATE (MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS)**

**Impacts on Visual Quality.** Visual quality in the primary resource area at Chaparral would be greatly improved by the removal of the existing collection of structures and the restoration to natural vegetation of the main parking lot and the Chaparral overlook. The parking lot to be developed in the area now occupied by the maintenance building and residences would be out of view of the high peaks trails.

Development impacts would be concentrated at Doublegate. None of the new development there would intervene between the visitor and views of the pinnacles and the development would be effectively screened from the high peaks trails by topography. Landscaping and structural design and finish would be aimed at minimizing the visual intrusiveness of this developed area.

The scenic overlook in the West Boundary would be to some extent visible from the high peaks (the road is already visible) but would be of modest size and would be located and designed so as to minimize obtrusiveness.

**Impacts on Vegetation and Wildlife.** Vegetation and wildlife habitat in the Chaparral area would be improved through the plan's provisions for improved visitor control and native vegetation restoration. Development of the staging area and administrative/residential complex in the Doublegate area would be in a chaparral area. Approximately 6 acres of chaparral vegetation would be eliminated, reducing habitat for wildlife dependent on this association.

No listed or candidate threatened or endangered species have been identified in developed areas or should otherwise be affected by the plan. The development areas would be surveyed for rare plants prior to any construction work. Candidate species would be given the same level of protection as listed species.

**Impacts on Cultural Resources.** There are no identified cultural resources that would be affected either by redesign and revegetation of the Chaparral area, or the development of the overlook in the West Boundary area. Nevertheless, all proposed ground disturbance in these areas would be subject to archeological clearance.

The proposed primary development location at Doublegate would be in the vicinity of an identified archeological site. The survey of this area indicates that it contains a very diffuse lithic scatter, and one bedrock mortar. Intensive study of the area would be required before development occurs. This would include collection and mapping of the lithic distribution, test excavation, and any other actions necessary to mitigate the adverse impacts of the proposed development.

**Impacts on Soils.** Soils would be stabilized in the Chaparral area as a result of the

plan for revegetation. Soils would be disturbed and compacted in the Doublegate and West Boundary areas as a result of construction activities there. However, attention to proper grading, drainage, and revegetation with native species would prevent the occurrence of significant impacts.

Impacts on Wilderness. There would be no physical impacts on designated wilderness. The wilderness experience would be improved by provisions for removing visually intrusive features from the Chaparral area and from the elimination of the generator noise.

Impacts on Water Resources. This alternative would benefit water resources by removing maintenance, housing, and administrative structures from an area possibly susceptible to flooding during major flood events. There would be no impact on wetlands and no improvements would be located in floodplains.

Impacts on Visitor Use and Services. The proposal would substantially improve visitor services and the quality of the visitor experience. At Chaparral, the congestion and inappropriate mix of functions would be alleviated, and the redesign of facilities and revegetation would improve the visitor experience at this location.

Adequate space would be available in the new visitor center to provide interpretive displays to better acquaint the visitor with the features of the area and explain some of the phenomena to be experienced. Additional picnicking sites in this area would be available.

Camping would be eliminated in the monument under this alternative. However, a large private campground is available adjacent to the east boundary to serve park visitors wishing to stay overnight in the area. In addition, the park will encourage the development of private campgrounds outside the monument to serve west side visitors.

#### **PLAN B: WEST BOUNDARY (PROPOSED ACTION)**

Impacts on Visual Quality. Visual quality in the primary resource area at Chaparral would be greatly improved by the removal of the existing collection of structures, and by the restoration of natural vegetation in the area of the parking lot and the Chaparral overlook. Expanded parking in the area now occupied by the maintenance building and residences would be out of view of the high peaks trails.

Development impacts would be concentrated at the West Boundary area. With the exception of the scenic overlook, none of the new development would intervene between the visitor and views of the pinnacles and the development sites would be screened from the high trails by topography.

The scenic overlook would be to some extent visible from the high peaks (the road is

already visible) but would be of modest size and would be located and designed so as to minimize obtrusiveness.

**Impacts on Vegetation and Wildlife.** Vegetation and wildlife habitat in the Chaparral area would be improved through the plan's provisions for improved visitor control, native vegetation restoration, and significant reductions in parking.

Development of the staging area and administrative/residential complex in the West Boundary area would be in a grassland area. Approximately 6 acres of grassland vegetation would be eliminated, reducing habitat for wildlife dependent on this association. This area was grazed for many years prior to its addition to the monument. Vegetation consists of introduced annual grass varieties and other introduced annuals. There are no known native grass species remaining.

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

**Impacts on Cultural Resources.** None of the proposed developments are located in the vicinity of known cultural resources. Nevertheless, all proposed ground disturbance would be subject to archeological clearance.

**Impacts on Soils.** Soils would be stabilized in the Chaparral area as a result of the plan for revegetation. Soils would be disturbed and compacted in the West Boundary area as a result of construction activities there. However, attention to proper grading, drainage, and revegetation would prevent the emergence of significant problems.

**Impacts on Wilderness.** There would be no physical impacts on designated wilderness. The wilderness experience would be improved by provisions for removing visually intrusive features from the Chaparral area and from the elimination of the generator noise.

**Impacts on Water Resources.** This alternative would benefit water resources through the removal of maintenance and housing from an area possibly susceptible to flooding during major flood events. The ranger station would be relocated from its present location adjacent to a creek to a higher elevation site. There would be no impacts on wetlands and no improvements would be made in floodplains.

**Impacts on Visitor Use and Services.** The proposal would substantially improve visitor services and the quality of the visitor experience. At Chaparral, the congestion and inappropriate mix of functions would be alleviated, and the facility redesign and revegetation would improve the visitor experience.

Adequate space would be available in the new visitor center to provide interpretive

displays to better acquaint the visitor with the features of the area and explain some of the phenomena to be experienced.

The location of the contact station and seasonal residence at Chaparral near the primary area of activity would ensure that someone was close at hand to deal with visitor questions and emergencies even during periods of slack demand when few employees are on duty.

The provision of a picnic area in the West Boundary area would allow some additional visitors to enjoy the views of the pinnacles without competing with other visitors for use of the Chaparral picnic area during peak periods. This area would be expected to receive full use during cooler spring and fall periods, but would be too exposed during summer months to receive much use.

The trail from the West Boundary parking lot to Chaparral would offer visitors an opportunity for a downhill hike through Jawbone Canyon to the Chaparral area, with return via shuttle during peak period operations. This opportunity should be particularly appealing to older visitors able to do some walking but not up to the exertion of climbing hills. It would also take some pressure off the shuttle system.

Camping would be eliminated in the monument under this alternative. However, a large private campground is available adjacent to the east boundary to serve park visitors wishing to stay overnight in the area. In addition, the park will continue to encourage the development of camping facilities on private lands outside the park to serve west side visitors.

**PINNACLES NATIONAL MONUMENT  
DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT PLAN  
WEST DISTRICT**

**ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS MATRIX**

<b>ENVIRONMENTAL FACTOR:</b>	<b>NO-ACTION PLAN</b>	<b>PLAN A: DOUBLEGATE</b>	<b>PLAN B: WEST BOUNDARY</b>
Visual Quality	Major impacts in Chaparral area from existing developments.	Major reduction of impacts at Chaparral. Some minor scenic impacts at development sites at Doublegate and West Boundary overlook.	Major reduction of impacts at Chaparral. Minor adverse impacts at West Boundary development sites.
Vegetation and Wildlife	Continued trampling of vegetation at Chaparral area.	Reduction of vegetative trampling at Chaparral. Six acres of chaparral and grassland vegetation displaced at development sites.	Reduction of vegetative trampling at Chaparral. Six acres of chaparral and grassland vegetation displaced at development sites.
Cultural Resources	No impacts.	Potential impacts on large, diffuse archeological site at Doublegate development area. Monitoring and mitigation would prevent major impacts.	No impacts on cultural resources.

**ENVIRONMENTAL  
FACTOR:**

**NO-ACTION PLAN**

**PLAN A: DOUBLEGATE**

**PLAN B: WEST  
BOUNDARY**

Soils

Soils at Chaparral would continue to undergo erosion and compaction.

Soil impacts at Chaparral would be lessened. Some minor compaction would occur in new development areas.

Same as Alternative A.

Wilderness

s and sounds from existing development at Chaparral intrude to a minor extent on wilderness quality.

Chaparral impacts would be reduced. No additional impacts from new developments.

Same as Alternative A.

Water Resources

Portions of existing development at Chaparral are subject to flooding. Erosion at Chaparral contributes sediment to Chalone Creek during periods of high runoff.

Elimination of most structures from Chaparral area and away from flood danger. Soil stabilization and revegetation will benefit water quality.

Elimination of all structures except ranger station from Chaparral. Ranger station to be relocated on high ground clear of flood flows. Soil stabilization and revegetation will benefit water quality.

**ENVIRONMENTAL  
FACTOR:****NO-ACTION PLAN****PLAN A: DOUBLEGATE****PLAN B: WEST  
BOUNDARY**

## Sound Quality

Generators at Chaparral will continue to adversely affect the visitor experience in that area.

Generators will be replaced with commercial power, improving the sound quality in the primary visitor use area.

Same as Alternative A.

## Visitor Use and Services

Interpretation will continue to be very limited. Conflicts will continue over the camp/picnic area.

Interpretation will be improved through additional room for exhibits. Intrusions from incompatible developments at Chaparral would be eliminated. Additional picnic sites would be provided.

Interpretation will be improved through additional exhibit space. Intrusions from incompatible developments at Chaparral would be eliminated. Quality picnic opportunities would be provided in the West Boundary area, along with a new trail.

## **CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION**

### **DISTRIBUTION OF THE DRAFT DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT PLAN**

The following organizations and agencies were provided copies of the draft DCP/EA:

U.S. Geological Survey, USDI

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, USDI

U.S. Soil Conservation Service, USDA

Advisory Council on Historic Preservation

Environmental Protection Agency

State of California

State Clearinghouse

State Historic Preservation Officer

Department of Parks and Recreation

Department of Fish and Game

San Benito County

Monterey County

City of Soledad

City of Hollister

Sierra Club

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS ON THE DRAFT PLAN AND ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

The Draft Development Concept Plan and Environmental Assessment (DCP/EA) was made available for public review from July 2, 1990 until September 15, 1990.

**Public Meetings.** Two public meetings were held in the City of Soledad to explain the draft plan, answer questions, and receive comments. A total of twenty-eight persons attended the two meetings. Most of the attendees disagreed with the plan's proposal to eliminate camping on the west side of the Monument, and expressed the desire that the Monument's Master Plan be amended to allow the continuation of camping. The monument superintendent requested attendees to *provide written comments reflecting their views and suggestions.*

**Written Comments.** A total of 32 letters were received regarding the draft DCP/EA. Of these, some 8 expressed general support for the plans, while some 19 expressed general opposition, primarily indicating disagreement with the elimination of camping. The remainder of the letters either acknowledged receipt of the plan without comment, or offered comments of a technical nature.

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

# California Native Plant Society

DEDICATED TO THE PRESERVATION OF CALIFORNIA NATIVE FLORA  
MONTEREY BAY CHAPTER

P. O. Box 381  
Carmel Valley, CA 93924  
Sept. 11, 1990

Mr. James Sleznick, Superintendent  
Pinnacles National Monument  
Paicines, CA 95043

RECEIVED  
SEP 13 1990

Dear Mr. Sleznick:

PINNACLES NATIONAL MONUMENT  
PAICINES, CA

The Monterey Bay Chapter of CNPS, whose boundaries include Monterey and San Benito counties, was gratified to learn from the *Monterey Herald* about the plan to relocate facilities from the Chaparral Campground area on the west side of Pinnacles National Monument. We have been concerned for some time about the increasing impacts caused by the concentration of heavy public use on the fragile riparian habitat in this area, and we would like to go on record in support of this plan.

We support Alternative B, which would relocate most administrative facilities to the Monument's west boundary. However, we would like to make the following recommendations which we believe will strengthen the the plan's consistency with the basic policy of the 1976 Master Plan to relocate visitor and support facilities to less sensitive locations and to give greater protection to fragile natural resources.

The shuttle from the West Boundary area is an excellent proposal for reducing congestion at peak periods; therefore, we are puzzled that the plan appears to call for *increased* parking in the Chaparral area by expanding into the disturbed area now occupied by structures that are to be removed. We would urge that the total parking spaces *not* be increased, but that the parking area should be shifted to the south so that the northern portion of the existing area can be restored to native riparian vegetation. In addition, the existing restroom should be moved out of the riparian corridor to a less intrusive location as soon as possible, rather than waiting until the "end of its useful life." We have long deplored the impacts of these facilities on the streamside vegetation and their high visibility from the High Peaks Trail, and we would therefore urge that their relocation should be a high priority.

We also are concerned about the impacts of constructing such a large (2000 sq. ft.) administrative/residential complex in the immediate vicinity of the Chaparral picnic area. While we recognize the need for a ranger station in this location, we have to question the need for seasonal housing here when three houses and one duplex are proposed for the West Boundary area.

We note that the plan calls for "selective widening and realignment of the main access road" with provision for interpretive wayside exhibits. With much of this road following the narrow riparian corridor, there is a potential for serious impacts on this sensitive

area. We urge that the existing alignment be retained and that oversized and overweight vehicles be prohibited from using this road. Further, any interpretive exhibits should be placed where there is sufficient room for pullouts without additional grading and without impacting the viewshed. ] 3

Our group is gratified to know that the plan calls for revegetation of the degraded areas in the Chaparral Campground area. We would like to stress the importance of using plant materials that are native to the site and of eradicating invasive non-natives. Also, if an outside contractor is used, a monitoring and maintenance plan should be part of the contract to insure that the plantings survive in the long term. ] 4

We can understand the Park Service's intention to make Pinnacles a day-use area, but we are concerned about visitors coming from a distance who wish to camp. Because there are no camping facilities near the Monument on the west side, we urge that every effort be made to provide for a campground near the West Boundary area similar to the one that has been established on the east side. ] 5

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the West District plan and we hope that you will give our recommendations serious consideration.

Sincerely yours,

  
Mary Ann Matthews  
Conservation Chairman

## Response to the California Native Plant Society

1. The draft plan provided ultimately for elimination of the existing parking lot once west side use justified a year-around shuttle operation. The plan has been revised to provide for elimination of the main parking lot and restoration of the area to natural vegetation once the housing and maintenance facilities have been relocated from Chaparral, and a smaller parking lot has been developed south of the creek crossing. Hence there will be no interim increase in parking at the Chaparral area.
2. The revised plan calls for construction of a modest contact station with seasonal loft apartment at Chaparral. The building will be approximately 1000 SF and will be topographically screened from the high peaks area. A seasonal residence is considered desirable here to provide early response to emergencies which may arise at Chaparral and in the backcountry.
3. The road through the riparian corridor will not be widened or relocated. Some minor realignment of the entrance road may be needed in the West Boundary area in conjunction with the development of relocated facilities.
4. The plan calls for revegetation using native plant materials. Monitoring and maintenance will be important components of revegetation projects.
5. The Park Service will continue to encourage the development of camping facilities on private lands to serve visitors to the west side of the Monument.



RUSSELL D. BUTCHER  
Southwest-&-California Representative

RECEIVED

SEP 10 1990

September 5, 1990

PINNACLES NATIONAL MONUMENT  
PAICINES, CALIFORNIA

RE: WEST DISTRICT PINNACLES  
DRAFT DCP/EA

Mr. Edward R. Carlson  
Acting Superintendent  
Pinnacles National Monument  
Paicines, CA 95043

Dear Ed:

As you know, National Parks and Conservation Association is a 200,000-member nonprofit conservation organization, founded 71 years ago to promote the protection, enhancement, and public understanding of the National Park System. We appreciate this opportunity to comment on the West District of Pinnacles National Monument draft development concept plan and environmental assessment, of June 1990.

We have carefully reviewed this excellent document, and commend everyone involved with it for producing such a worthy and well-thought-out draft plan.

The only substantive suggestion we feel tempted to make relates to the two picnic areas, under "Westside Plan B: West Boundary (Proposed Action)." Could you possibly institute a kind of "rest-rotation" system, whereby both areas would be open during the spring peak visitation period; the Chaparral picnic area would be closed during the late fall-winter so it could be free to recover during the late fall-winter rainy season; and the West Boundary picnic area, in turn, would be closed to use during the summer when it would be too hot to picnic there anyway.

Such a plan of operation would give each facility a chance to "rest"--thereby at least somewhat mitigating visitor impacts to the soils and vegetation in and around the picnic areas.

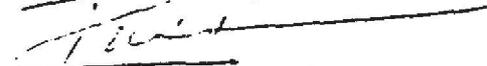
Other aspects of the proposed action, which address the important Planning Issues (p. 2), are very sound. Regarding the elimination of the noisy generator and the provision of bringing commercial electrical service into this part of the monument, we urge strongly that such a powerline be placed underground so as to avoid the visual impact of power poles and cables. Such undergrounding was accomplished several

years ago at Zion National Park and should soon be accomplished on a stretch of powerline in Sequoia National Park. The initial cost may be somewhat greater, but in the long term the advantages of undergrounding outweigh the short-term cost. While the document does not indicate one way or the other, we suspect you are already opting for undergrounding the powerline.

We are strongly supportive of the proposed action's objective of relocating various NPS facilities from The Chaparral area to a new site close to the boundary of the monument; and we strongly favor the use of a shuttle service during the peak visitation period. We also favor providing enhanced/expanded interpretive facilities.

National Parks and Conservation Association, therefore, is pleased to support the Proposed Action (Westside Plan B), and we wish you success in its implementation.

With best regards,



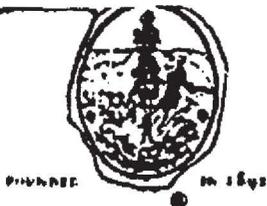
Russell D. Butcher  
Pacific Southwest Regional Director

cc: NPCA headquarters

P.S. Ed, I checked back in my appointments books to refresh my memory: we were there in March 1983, hiking around with you and Carey (including a hike in the McCabe Canyon area adjacent to the monument). That was an enjoyable visit. We've been back since then only once, in 1988. Guess it's time for a return visit. Hope you both are doing well.

## Response to the National Parks and Conservation Association

1. We agree with the concept of rest-rotation and will further consider the concept both among and within the westside developed areas. For example, with the elimination of the large parking lot at Chaparral, and the reestablishment there of native vegetation, we will have an opportunity to periodically rotate picnic sites within the Chaparral area and avoid the vegetative trampling and erosion that presently characterize this site.
2. We agree that powerlines serving the monument should be underground.



# SIERRA CLUB VENTANA CHAPTER

P O BOX 5667, CARMEL, CALIFORNIA 93921

CHAPTER OFFICE · ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER (408) 624-8032

September 12, 1990

James Sleznick, Superintendent  
Pinnacles National Monument  
Paicines, CA 95043

Re: DRAFT DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT PLAN AND ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT;  
WEST DISTRICT, PINNACLES NATIONAL MONUMENT

Dear Superintendent Sleznick:

The Ventana Chapter of the Sierra Club, with more than 5,000 members, supports most of the Draft Development Concept Plan and Environmental Assessment (hereafter plan) for the west district of the Pinnacles National Monument. However, although the chapter feels that the plan is a step in the right direction, it recommends that additional steps be taken towards ameliorating past damage to the riparian corridor and existing impediments to the viewshed and wilderness experience. The chapter respectfully offers the following recommendations for improving the plan.

Development should be placed at the West Boundary. The monument is only approximately five miles by seven miles. To permit the visitors any sort of wilderness flavor to their experience, structures and facilities should be at the margin of the monument. At present, the visitor experience is substantially degraded by the presence of a large asphalt parking lot, campground, cinderblock restroom, ranger station, mobile trailer ranger housing and workshop/storage area. This complex is visible and audible from numerous points on the Juniper Canyon and High Peaks trails. It should be removed to the western edge of the monument.

The plan should not increase the amount of staff housing provided within the monument in the west district. More than doubling the current housing (page 8) seems excessive. Placing the development complex at the western margin of the monument will permit the majority of the staff to live in Salinas Valley communities and commute to the monument. Security concerns can be adequately addressed by two ranger residences rather than the three residences and one duplex called for in the plan. This will also substantially reduce the cost of implementing the plan as the biggest cost item in the Level C estimates of the proposed alternative is for housing (page 9).

More should be done to eliminate adverse visual factors. Map 7 Pinnacles National Monument Chaparral Area Proposed Action shows that the present Chalona parking lot would be continued. While the plan does make passing reference to the long term goal of

eliminating the parking lot (page 7) this objective deserves a higher priority. One of only three major provisions of the 1976 Master Plan relevant to the west side advises:

"Removal of visitor and support facilities from obtrusive locations within significant resource areas, and their relocation in less sensitive locations." [is a goal of the Master Plan].

The current parking lot is larger than necessary for off-peak use at present and to the year 2010 (page 15). Increased use of a shuttle system will allow the monument flexibility in dealing with future use patterns (pages 14-15). An alternate site is marked on Map 7. Should this be the sole parking lot permitted as it is not visible from most trails on the west side?

Greater emphasis should be placed on maintaining and enhancing the riparian corridor. The club feels strongly that the current road is adequate for future use as periods of peak use will be augmented by shuttle use (page 7). The "Selective widening and realignment of the main access road"... "based on the 1983 FMA analysis." (page 9) will have adverse environmental consequences. The proposed action will require movement of earth and destruction of vegetation. These negative impacts will be exacerbated by the location of the road in the sensitive riparian corridor. New parking areas for the Chalone Creek and West Side areas should be constructed such that percolation is facilitated. This will prevent or substantially mitigate damage from runoff. Both maintaining the road as it is and surfacing the parking lots with permeable material will save money as well. Changes in the road were not addressed in the Environmental Impacts Matrix in the plan. Do you agree that this oversight should be corrected?

Additional BLM lands should be added to the monument to complete control of key watersheds, protect the watershed and enhance the wilderness buffer zone. Nowhere does the plan address the importance to the monument's west side ecological community of the upper reaches of the Chalone Creek Watershed. This area is key to the west side of the monument. Upstream impacts from future development could easily threaten the tenuous ecosystem of the west side. The watershed from the high peaks would also be seriously damaged by development in this area. Finally, the limited wilderness experience available in the monument will be preserved if the views of the adjacent BLM lands are preserved in perpetuity by including that land in the monument and designating it as wilderness.

Aside from the above suggestions, the plan is an excellent tool for implementing the 1976 Master Plan for the Pinnacles. The Park Service should move ahead and implement the plan with the above changes.

Respectfully,  
VENTANA CHAPTER, SIERRA CLUB

*Chris Broadwell*

Chris Broadwell, Chair  
CB/JH/JV

cc: Hon. Leon E. Panetta, U.S. Representative

Note: Further information may be obtained from:

Jack Holmgren  
P.O. Box 1194  
Salinas, CA 93902  
Phone: (408) 757-8026

Jud Vandever  
93 Via Ventura  
Monterey, CA 93940  
Phone: (408) 372-6001

## Response to the Ventana Chapter of the Sierra Club

1. The plan provides for relocation of most of the facilities at Chaparral to the West Boundary area. Those facilities retained are considered essential for resource and visitor protection and will be topographically screened from most backcountry trails.
2. The plan provides for a modest increase in staff housing. The three units available for permanent staff will ensure that personnel are available at all times to respond to emergencies. The seasonal duplex will greatly increase the park's ability to attract qualified lower-graded employees who may otherwise find private housing and commuting to be prohibitively expensive.
3. The plan provides for elimination of the large parking lot at Chaparral and development of a smaller lot in the area now occupied by the housing and maintenance complex.
4. See response # 3 to the California Native Plant Society.
5. The importance of adjacent lands to monument ecological values is recognized, and the park staff maintains close contact with BLM, other government agencies, and private owners to ensure that monument values are fully considered in land use decisions. Boundary changes, however, are beyond the scope of a development concept plan.

Joseph Rock  
582 Lighthouse Ave. #3  
Pacific Grove, CA 93950  
4 0 8 3 7 3 8 3 3 1

August 30, 1990

Superintendent  
Pinnacles National Monument  
Paicines, CA 95043

Dear Superintendent,

Since 1970 I've been coming to the Pinnacles, first as a hiker with my father, then began climbing in 1972. From the beginning it has held a special, almost mysterious quality. In 1974 & 75 on Thanksgiving holiday we would camp and climb on the East side. Both years we met two climbers from Devil's Lake in Wisconsin who came especially to climb at Pinnacles. That's incredible!

I remember distinctly how intimate the campground setting was and great to be able to wake with the cold air and frost on our sleeping bags, then drive the short distance to the climbing rocks.

Of course this campground is abandoned and a private one outside the park has taken its place. I recently stayed there with my family and was shocked by the poor treatment given us by the manager and the outrageous cost of \$6.00 per person per night. Needless to say I will never go there again.

Now the park service wants to eliminate the only camping within the park boundary; on the West side. With no regard for guaranteeing camping outside the park boundaries.

I feel we need to maintain a campground within the park and somewhere at Chaparral.

The Development Concept Plan has many false assumptions and leaves room for better solutions.

I have a few suggestions which could avoid moving all amenities out of the Chaparral area.

They include:

- 1) Locate a toll booth at the park boundary thereby controlling and regulating the number of campers and picnickers. If you limit the number of campers, once that quota is reached, you can tell the next visitors camping is full and they may picnic only. ] 1
- 2) Locate overflow parking in the Chaparral outlook area. This has been left empty for several years and is wasted. ] 2
- 3) Restore and fence off areas in the Chaparral area that wish to return to their natural state. Use volunteers if necessary. ] 3

- 4) If the maintenance buildings as well as some ranger housing need to transfer to the Boundary area then leave the rest of the area alone. I can't go along with impacting six acres of wildlife area to try and restore the Chaparral area. How does one outweigh the other? ] 4
- 5) Separate and designate picnic grounds from campsites. Once the number of sites are full then no more campers may stay. ] 5
- 6) Do not widen or straighten the access road. It will only encourage more visitors and impact the wilderness more, which is the main problem right? ] 6

I hope you take my comments into consideration and keep the Pinnacles a wonderful place to visit.

Sincerely,



Joseph Rock

## Response to Joseph Rock

General Comment: The letter indicates a desire that camping be retained at the Chaparral area. The problem faced at Chaparral is that the limited available area in the canyon bottom is highly attractive to campers and picnickers, and being in the riparian zone, has important wildlife values. Elimination of camping use from this area accomplishes three very desirable results:

1. It allows the area to serve many more visitors than would be served by the camp area. Picnic sites are generally turned over from 1.5 to 3 times daily on weekends. While it is expected that some visitors will choose to use the more open picnic sites to be made available in the West Boundary area, the creekside setting of Chaparral is inherently attractive to recreationists and will continue to draw picnickers throughout the year, but particularly in warmer months.
2. Picnic sites require less "hardening" and site definition than do camp sites, and are more amenable to periodic rotation. The existing camp/picnic area is vegetatively denuded in places because use has been excessively focused over a limited area. With the elimination of the parking lot and its revegetation, it should be possible to rotate picnic sites within a considerably larger area, allowing adequate time for recovery.
3. Use of the area for day use basically gives the important riparian zone back to wildlife at the end of the day.

## Specific Comments:

1. The plan provides for an entrance station at the West Boundary area. This can provide a means of limiting entrance to the Chaparral area should this prove necessary.
2. The Chaparral overlook is intended to be restored under the proposed plan. The area is highly visible from back country trails.
3. The plan proposes restoration of denuded areas at Chaparral. Fencing may be necessary in some areas and volunteer assistance will be sought.
4. While visual and vegetative impacts will be minimized in the West Boundary area, the ecological concerns in that area, which consists of largely introduced alien grasses, are not as significant as in the riparian zone at Chaparral.
5. As indicated above, the plan proposes to eliminate campsites on the west side.
6. See response # 3 to the California Native Plan Society above.

James Sleznick, Jr.  
Superintendent  
Pinnacles National Monument  
Faicines, CA 95043



Re: Pinnacles N.M. General Master Plan and  
Draft Development Concept Plan

As stated in my letter of Aug 31, 1990 what follows is my initial  
input of ideas, solutions and compromises targeted for the  
revision and amendment of the 1976 GMP and the June 1990 DDC.  
These ideas are intended to promote solutions to the "conflicts  
use, overcrowding at peak use periods, confusion of operation  
and a considerably diminished visitor experience" as outlined  
in the '76 GMP.

I do appreciate your stated "open mindedness" and your  
willingness to update the aged GMP. I realize that this involves  
significant work, and will cost some time to affect the process.  
In the long run a little extra planning time to "do it right the  
first time" will yield the highest quality result as well as  
being consistent with the current needs and wishes of your  
constituency.

I am in favor of the "no action plan" as stated in the June 1990  
DDC for Pinnacles National Monument UNLESS, the following  
specific points can be worked into the Western Boundry Plan,  
which I then would support. It would be interesting to see what  
approximately \$3 million of renovation and restoration would do  
for the existing Chaparral site.

1. A quota system needs to be initiated to regulate the number  
of day users and campers having access to the park. (In short, we  
need to start turning people away in order to preserve the flora,  
fauna and quality of visitor experience at the Pinnacles) This is  
common in other parts with a limited "carrying capacity."

2. Camping facilities need to be provided in the West  
District. I support a limited camping facility, via walk in or  
shuttle in service in the Chaparral Area. In 16 years, the Park  
Service has failed to identify a willing, private provider for  
out of the park camping, adjoining the west boundry. Eliminating  
the in-park camping would deminish the visitor experience to that  
of a county park and would not be for the long term good of  
perserving and protecting Pinnacles or other National Parks and  
Monuments.

A brief note:

The "elimination" of the east side Chalone Creek Camprounc has  
actually resulted in a net gain of improvements in that area.  
In fact, there are 3 added trailer residences, and an expanded  
maintenance area, in addition to the (previously existing single  
trailer residence adjoining the maintenace area and stock pen.  
This camp closure has met few objectives of the 76 GMP other than  
to relocate camping to outside the park (a disaster) and to  
reduce the burden on staff for fee collection and patrol.

Picnickers impact the area much like campers did and the result is no significant restoration, lessening of impact or reduction of development in the Chalone Creek area. Why not revert this area to a more useful walkin campground? One that is more central to trailheads, and the Finnacles experience! You have only to move a few boulders delineating parking.

Additionally, many view the private campground on the east side a major Park Service failure, do to the distancing of the camp to intrepetive displays, trailheads, the topographic features of the park and informative staff. Putting people "out of touch" so to speak. Private parks have a different purpose, provide different services and have radically different economic structures. They do not effectively communicate the need for conservation awareness, interpetation, stewardship for our wild lands or the Park Services ethics for visitor behavior. Most importantly, any campground outside the park is separate (a part from) the Monument. It cannot offer the same contact experience of a campground within the Park. The right kind of in Park camping experience is paramount to cultivate responsible wilderness ethics and behaviors.

My fear is that the west side Chaparral Campground, under the present DDC's Double Gate or Western Boundry Options would suffer much the same fate of the Chalone Creek site, and similarly fail to meet the desired end result. As the '76 GMF states (p.15) "Camping accounts for 27 percent of the total visitation" - this is a significant activity that must be adequately and properly planned for.

In theory and in practice the East and West Districts of the Monument, by topographical nature, as well as administrative design, function separately. There should be separate, unique N.P.S. plans to accomodate camping visitors on both sides of the Finnacles as it is impractical to commute from one district to another for day activities and the hike from East to West Districts may be too strenuous for some.

3. Separate use areas should be created. Picnic areas should be established separate from the Campground. A picnic area could be located North of the existing restroom building with a reworked trail (utilizing the existing bridge over the creek) as access to Machete Ridge. Camping could be relocated to the present parking area. Of course the asphalt would need to be removed and proper visual screening would need to be planted. 4

I do not object to the visual presence of the current camp or parking area. It is a small price to pay for the benefit of knowing that some campers will leave with a new found experience and appreciation for land conservation and our National Park system. Through an informal survey, it is my understanding that most Monterey Penninsula residents do not camp regularly at the Finnacles. More likely campers come from the Bay Area and beyond.

4. Greater emphasis should be placed on educating visitors as to the fragile nature of the Pinnacles ecosystem. A definitive interpretive plan and budget must be drawn and put into effect that will result in informed visitors actively contributing to the preservation of our park. } 5

5. Any plan adopted must result in a net reduction of improvements, regardless of their location. It is not equitable to trade the Chaparral area's "restoration" for the "destruction" of otherwise natural lands at the west boundary unless there is a significant reduction of disturbed lands. } 6

6. Staff housing should be relocated outside the park, with the exception of a ranger specifically assigned for 24 hour security. Soledad, 10 miles to the west offers reasonably priced and proximal housing. The same should be done for East District staff. } 7

In closing let me draw to our attention a thought, that, in the interest of "progress" is often overlooked:

For any land area, there is a "natural capacity" that can be supported by the topography, soil system and flora and fauna. Increased development wrongly suggests otherwise by upsetting nature's delicate balance. Ultimately all development results in a shift and magnification of conservation problems.

*LARRY ARTHUR*

### Response to Larry Arthur

1. The need for revising the Pinnacles' Master Plan was carefully considered but it was concluded that the plan's direction, including provisions calling for a shift to day use, remains fundamentally sound.
2. Given the plan's proposals for vegetative restoration at Chaparral, elimination of overnight camping, and the development of alternative day use facilities at the West Boundary area, it is expected that projected levels of use can be accommodated for many years. A few years of experience with the new development configuration will be needed to determine the need for additional controls or management actions.
3. See response above to Joseph Rock.
4. The plan provides for the removal of the parking lot and the rotation of day use facilities within this and the existing camp/picnic area.
5. An interpretive prospectus for the monument is being prepared to better inform visitors about the nature of the ecosystem and other important features of the Pinnacles. The proposed plan provides for a small visitor center on the west side with adequate room for interpretive exhibits.
6. The proposed plan will, through the restoration of the Chaparral overlook and main Chaparral parking lot, and through the removal from Chaparral of most administrative facilities, provide major ecological improvements for the west side. More importantly than the total affected acreage, the plan will shift the locus of development from the heart of Pinnacles' prime resources to the margin of the monument where development impacts are less critical.
7. See response # 2 above to the Ventana Chapter of the Sierra Club.

461 Donald Drive  
Hollister, CA 95023  
September 9, 1990

Mr. James Sleznick  
Superintendent  
Pinnacles National Monument  
Paicines, California 95043

RECEIVED  
SEP 12 1990  
PINNACLES NATIONAL MONUMENT  
PAICINES, CA. 95043

Re: West District - Draft Development  
Concept Plan and Environmental Assessment

Dear Mr. Sleznick:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on your proposed plans for the west side of the Monument. I am in general agreement with the proposed action, the West Boundary Alternative. I offer the following specific comments for your consideration in developing the final plan.

Chaparral Area

The proposed plan has the long term goal of relocating facilities which are visible from the High Peaks trail. A new combination ranger station and seasonal residence is to be located so that it is not visible from the high peaks trail. However no mention is made as to whether the new parking area is visible or not visible from the high peaks trail. The new parking area should be located where it is not visible from the high peaks trail. This should be clarified in the final EA.

From a design standpoint it may be preferable to interchange the location of the new parking area and the entrance road. By placing the parking area to the south the parked cars are less likely to be visible from the high peaks area. The sight of moving cars on the road would be less objectionable than a view of a parking lot. In addition visitors would not need to cross the road to visit the ranger station. This should encourage more visitors to come into the ranger station and learn more about the monument programs and policies.

Under the Proposed Action the existing parking area at the Chaparral area is to be retained for the present time. I recommend that you close and restore the existing parking area as one of the first steps of implementing the final plan. This could be done by enlarging the new parking area on a temporary basis to accommodate about the same number of vehicles as the existing lot. Then when visitor use

eventually increases to the point where a year round shuttle system is feasible any excess parking spaces at the Chaparral area can be removed and the area restored. Meanwhile the existing, highly visible, parking area would be well on its way to restoration.

3

The proposed action also calls for redesigning the existing trail system in the Chaparral area to reduce short-cutting. This would be the perfect opportunity to also design and designate a whole access trail in this area. It would be nice to see that in the final proposed action.

4

### Camping

The 1976 Master Plan for the Monument calls for the elimination of camping within the monument boundaries. At the present time there does not seem to be a proposal for a private campground near the west side of the Monument. It would seem appropriate to provide an overnight campground in the West Boundary developed area until such time as a private campground is developed nearby. The Chaparral area would be converted to day use only as part of the proposed action. Camping within the monument would only be eliminated when private facilities become available. This would be a similar scenario to that which occurred some years ago on the east side where camping within the Monument was eliminated after the development of the private Pinnacles Campground adjacent to the Monument.

5

### Trails

The trail down Jawbone Canyon sounds like a good route and I look forward to its completion. Is a trail from the shuttle area at the West Boundary to the High Peaks Trail near Scout Peak also possible? This would reduce pressure on the shuttle for those who wanted to head directly to the High Peaks and would make an additional loop trail available by connecting with the Jawbone and Juniper Canyon trails.

6

### Appendix A

The appendix lists only animal species. Are there no endangered, threatened or candidate plant species in this area?

7

Please place my name on your mailing list for a copy of the Final Development Concept Plan.

Sincerely,

*John B. Hervey*  
John B. Hervey

## Response to John Hervey

1. The proposed parking lot will be topographically screened from most points on the high peaks trails and from all major vistas.
2. The plan has been revised to make the new parking lot the terminus in the Chaparral area. Parking will be located as close as practicable to the south to ensure good screening from the high peaks trails.
3. The plan provides for early elimination and restoration of the existing parking lot, and the implementation of a shuttle program as needed.
4. The Balconies Trail is currently wheelchair accessible for approximately half a mile, providing good opportunities to experience the phenomena of the Pinnacles. Possibilities for further enhancing the accessibility of this trail will be considered in the context of restoration of the main parking lot and redesign of the trail system in the Chaparral area.
5. Development of a replacement campground at the West Boundary area would affect 5-6 acres of land and would be counter to the objective of minimizing development impacts. Also, comments by campers suggest an affinity for the existing campground location; there is some doubt as to whether a substitute site in a dry grassland area would provide an equivalent experience.
6. This is a good concept and opportunities for a direct trail route from the developed area to the High Peaks will be investigated. The steepness of the terrain and need to avoid adverse visual impacts will necessitate a careful evaluation of this proposal.
7. Plant species are discussed in the body of the document under Affected Environment; Natural Resource, Vegetation.

## **PLANNING TEAM**

Dan Olson, Planner, Western Regional Office

Ron Replogle, Landscape Architect, Western Regional Office

James Sleznick, Superintendent, Pinnacles National Monument

## **CONSULTANTS**

Staff, Pinnacles National Monument

Staff, Park Historic Preservation Division, Western Region

James Huddlestun, Environmental Specialist, Western Region

**APPENDIX**

**U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE**

**LISTING OF**

**ENDANGERED, THREATENED, AND CANDIDATE SPECIES**

APPENDIX A

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

Listed Species

**Birds**

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

Candidate Species

**Mammals**

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

**Amphibians**

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

**Reptiles**

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

**Invertebrates**

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

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