

final master plan  
January 1976

# ROCKY MOUNTAIN

NATIONAL PARK / COLORADO

**RECOMMENDED**

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February 2, 1975

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January 9, 1976

United States Department of the Interior / National Park Service

ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK  
final master plan

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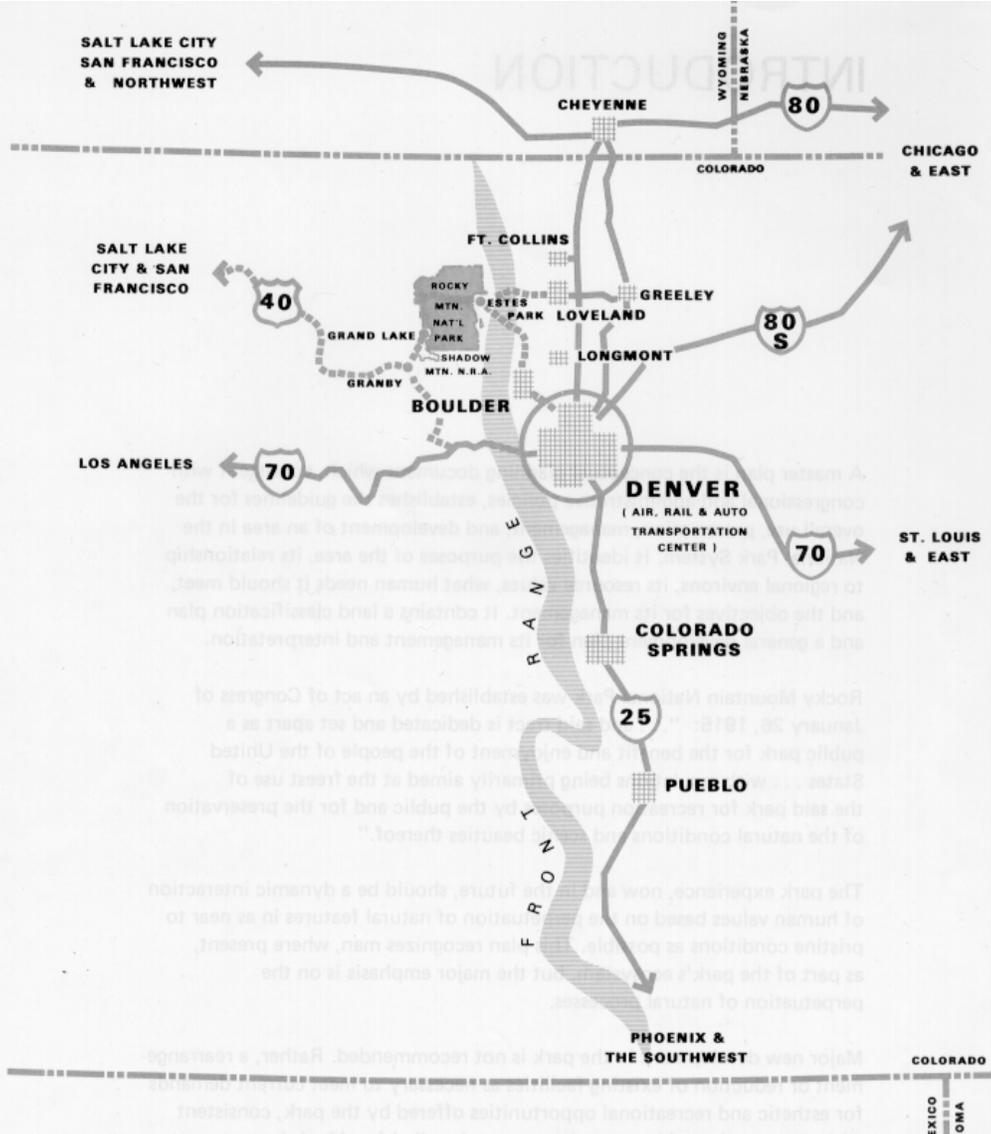
# INTRODUCTION

A master plan is the conceptual planning document which, consistent with congressional and administrative policies, establishes the guidelines for the overall use, preservation, management, and development of an area in the National Park System. It identifies the purposes of the area, its relationship to regional environs, its resource values, what human needs it should meet, and the objectives for its management. It contains a land classification plan and a general development plan for its management and interpretation.

Rocky Mountain National Park was established by an act of Congress of January 26, 1915: ". . . and said tract is dedicated and set apart as a public park for the benefit and enjoyment of the people of the United States. . . with regulations being primarily aimed at the freest use of the said park for recreation purposes by the public and for the preservation of the natural conditions and scenic beauties thereof."

The park experience, now and in the future, should be a dynamic interaction of human values based on the perpetuation of natural features in as near to pristine conditions as possible. This plan recognizes man, where present, as part of the park's ecosystem, but the major emphasis is on the perpetuation of natural processes.

Major new development in the park is not recommended. Rather, a rearrangement or reduction of existing facilities as necessary to meet current demands for esthetic and recreational opportunities offered by the park, consistent with perpetuation of its natural resources, is called for. Man's impact must be minimized and controlled. To this end, living plant and animal communities - the dynamic culmination of natural processes in the park - provide visible indicators against which to measure and evaluate the condition of those processes.



 **SCENIC ROUTE**  
 **INTERSTATE ROUTE**

**THE REGION**  
**ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK**  
 COLORADO  
 NEW MEXICO  
 OKLAHOMA  
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# THE SETTING

## THE REGION

Rocky Mountain National Park lies within easy driving distance of millions of people who live in the fast-growing metropolitan area of Pueblo, Denver, Cheyenne, and Laramie. Its ready accessibility, due to a network of state and interstate highways, makes it especially attractive for visits by regional residents and also a goal for cross-country travelers. Its popularity and accessibility make it important to the Estes Park and Grand Lake local economies.

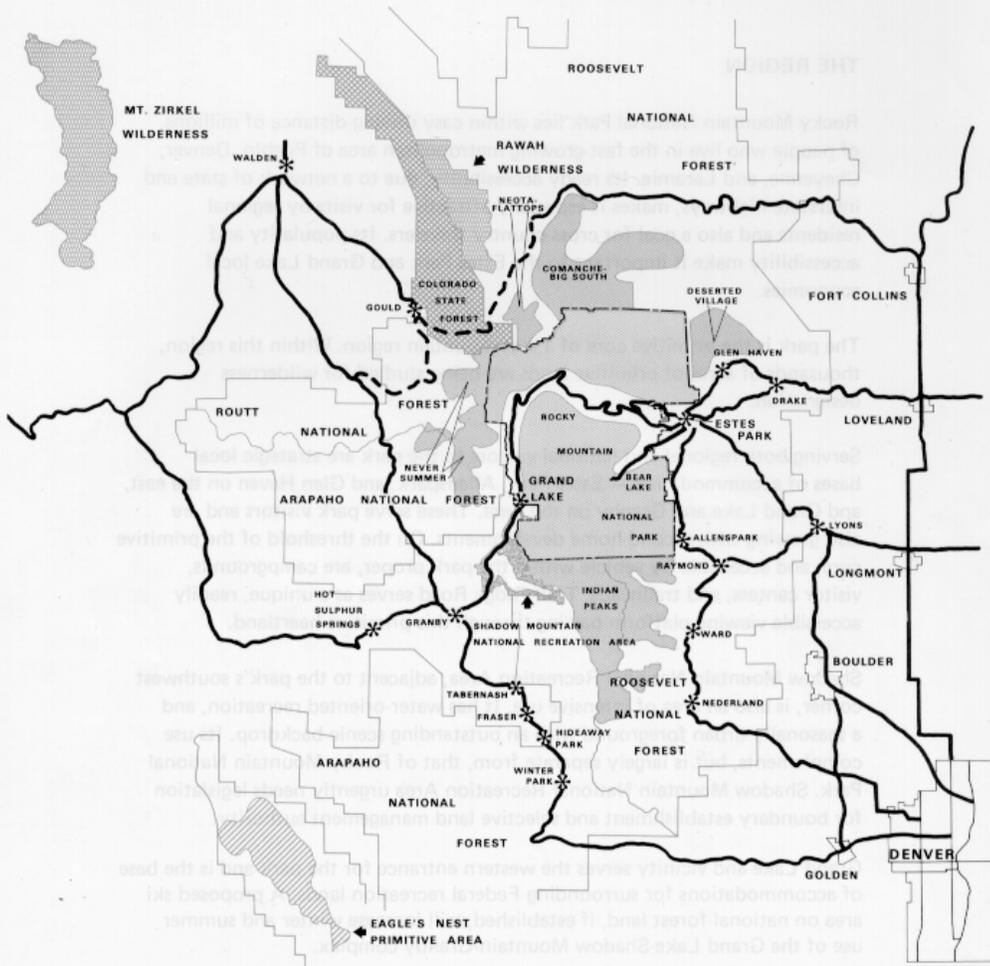
The park is the primitive core of a vast mountain region. Within this region, thousands of acres of primitive lands are being studied for wilderness designation.

Serving both regional and national visitors to the park are strategic local bases of accommodation - Estes Park, Allenspark, and Glen Haven on the east, and Grand Lake and Granby on the west. These serve park visitors and are also growing with second-home developments. On the threshold of the primitive core, and accessible by vehicle within the park proper, are campgrounds, visitor centers, and trailheads. Trail Ridge Road serves as a unique, readily accessible viewing platform passing through this primitive heartland.

Shadow Mountain National Recreation Area, adjacent to the park's southwest corner, is also an area of intensive use. It has water-oriented recreation, and a seasonally urban foreground with an outstanding scenic backdrop. Its use complements, but is largely separate from, that of Rocky Mountain National Park. Shadow Mountain National Recreation Area urgently needs legislation for boundary establishment and selective land management authority.

Grand Lake and vicinity serves the western entrance for the park and is the base of accommodations for surrounding Federal recreation lands. A proposed ski area on national forest land, if established, will increase winter and summer use of the Grand Lake-Shadow Mountain-Granby complex.

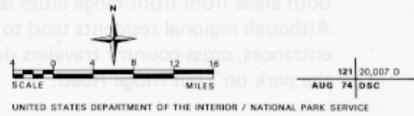
Broadly speaking, the park lends itself to short-term use and the recreation area lends itself more to extended use. This is due to the relative position of the areas within the surrounding regional road network. A loop drive through both areas from front-range cities is popular and this use is increasing. Although regional residents tend to enter and return through eastern park entrances, cross-country travelers during the summer season, pass through the park on Trail Ridge Road.



**LEGEND**

-  EXISTING WILDERNESS AREA
-  ROADLESS AREA UNDER STUDY FOR WILDERNESS DESIGNATION
-  MANAGED AS PRIMITIVE AREA
-  NATIONAL FOREST BOUNDARY
-  COLORADO STATE FOREST

**ROCKY MOUNTAIN  
PRIMITIVE CORE FOR THE REGION  
VICINITY MAP**



**NATIONAL FOREST LANDS**  
(Multiple Use)

Day Use  
Extended Camping  
Primitive Area Use  
Scenic Enjoyment  
Hiking  
Winter Sports  
Picnicking  
Trail Bike and 4-Wheel Drive Use  
Hunting  
Timber Harvesting  
Grazing  
Mining

**GRAND LAKE**  
(Urban Services)

**SHADOW MOUNTAIN**  
(Recreation)

Weekend Use Activities  
Water (Lakes)  
Urban Foreground  
Scenic Background  
Fishing (Stocked)  
Environmental Study  
Bicycling  
Winter Sports

**ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK**  
(Perpetuation/Recreation)

Day Use  
Primitive Area Use  
Scenic Enjoyment  
Hiking/Climbing  
Winter Use  
Interpretive Programs  
Research Opportunities  
Environmental Study  
Fishing (Wild)  
Wildlife Observation  
Nature Photography

**ESTES PARK**  
(Urban Services)

# THE RESOURCE

A highway interchange east of the park is being planned by Larimer County and the State. This interchange will affect the visitor's choice between the Fall River entrance on the north and the Beaver Meadows entrance to the south. The State has studied route improvements to establish State Highway 14, north of Rocky Mountain National Park, as an all-year, east-west road. This would relieve some non-park traffic on Trail Ridge Road. In addition, the Long Draw Reservoir area, adjacent to the park's northwestern boundary, would become more accessible. Current plans to stabilize the reservoir and increase Forest Service day-use facilities around it may result in the need for a new park visitor contact station near La Poudre Pass. Portions of Trail Ridge Road north of Grand Lake provide potential access to a proposed Forest Service ski area being studied in Bowen Gulch. This would extend the use period in the vicinity of Grand Lake.

The southern Rocky Mountains form the mid-section of the North American Continental Divide. They are a mixture of massive peaks, long ridges, and incised valleys, developed from an interlaced network of major intrusions and faults. Composed of fractured, compressed, and dislocated rock, these features were carved by vast sheets of moving ice some 10,000 years ago. Thousands of lakes are still found occupying depressions left by the receding glaciers. Geological change, though subtle, is still occurring, and is exciting only to the informed eye. However, little imagination is required to appreciate the awesome evidence of past glaciers - ancient in man's measure, but recent in geologic time.

Intimately related to this topography is a succession of vegetation types that change with variations in altitude and exposure and act as a sponge for surrounding watersheds. Lower elevations are dominated by conifer forests, with occasional U-shaped glacier-carved valleys covered by mixed shrubs, grasses, and flowers. At higher elevations, the trees become sparse and stunted, eventually giving way on top to spreading alpine tundra. All act as a complex expression of environmental forces.

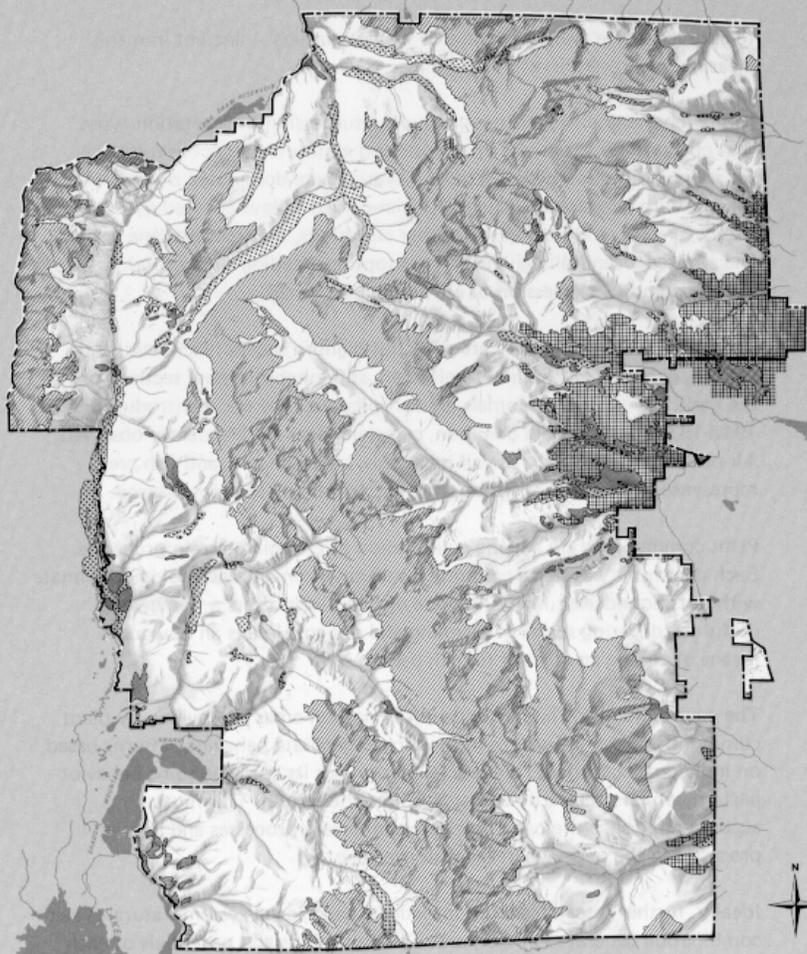
The wolf, bison, and grizzly are gone but bighorn sheep, black bear, and marten, although elusive and rarely seen, still inhabit remote sections of the park. Many other mammals are conspicuous. The elk, reintroduced in 1913-1914, is once again common, and mule deer are frequently observed. All other native species of small mammals, birds, insects, and fish are represented, with the exception of otter, which will be reintroduced.

Plant communities are a living culmination of changing terrain processes. Each community shares a common visual environment and biological climate within its boundaries. Mapping these distributions offers a framework useful for differing scales of planning and design. Here is an obvious means of zoning an area for human use.

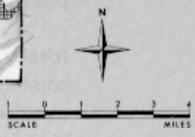
The environment for human behavior in natural areas is provided by plant communities. Human groups in the terrain generate behavior patterns based on individual activities. Thus, each location has its corresponding behavior pattern, which necessarily adjusts itself to the terrain. This mutual accommodation is the basic link between terrain processes and human processes in the park, wherever man is present.

Ideally, further research should investigate each social-system/natural-system combination generated in the park. The limitations and potentials of each man/land set must be evaluated at roads, trails, and overlooks, and at day-use, overnight, and backcountry sites, as part of the total ecology of Rocky Mountain National Park.

Human behavior is more than a reflection of the setting in which it occurs. It is also a product of cultural conditioning, including fundamental man/man relationships. Thus, research is needed equally on patterns and trends of human behavior by recognizable cultural groups within different park settings. This will require an extensive and continuing period of observation, and should be expanded now.



**ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK  
COLORADO**

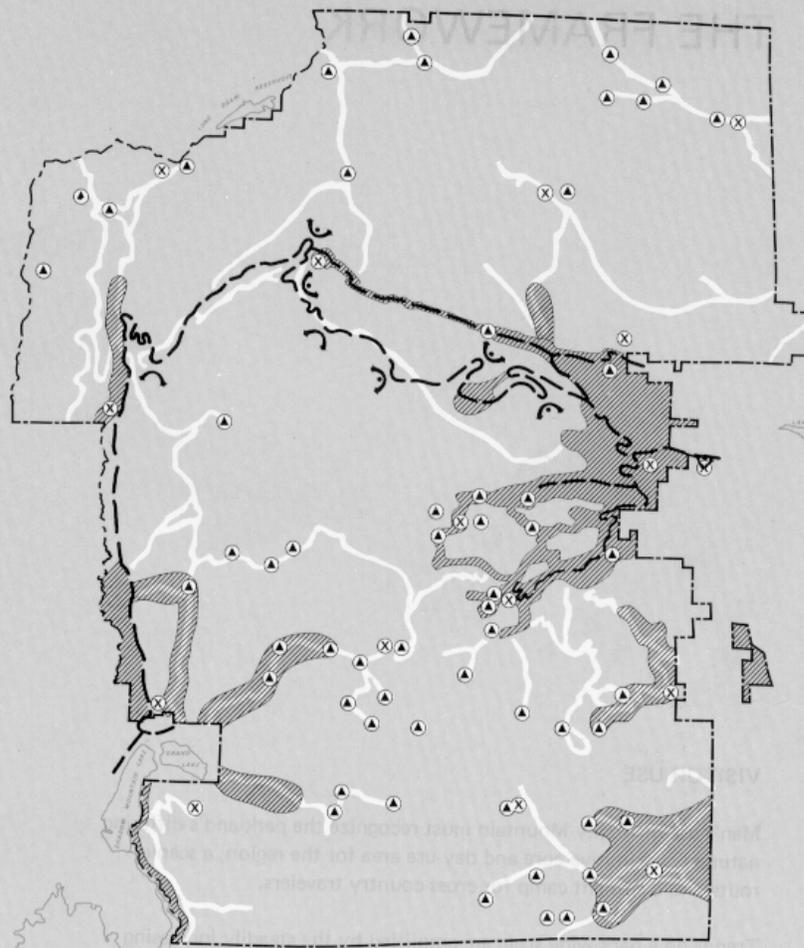


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**PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT**

KEY	MANAGEMENT ECOSYSTEM	DOMINANT VEGETATION	BIOLOGICAL CLIMATE	USE CONSTRAINTS
	ALPINE TUNDRA	KRUMHOLTZ TUNDRA DWARF SHRUB-HERB SEDE-GRASS-COMPLEX	VERY COLD/ DRY OR MOIST	NEED TO RESTRICT AND CHANNELIZE USE
	SUBALPINE FOREST	SPRUCE-FIR-LODGEPOLE	COLD / MOIST	USE IS CHANNELIZED BY VEGETATION
	MONTANE FOREST	PONDEROSA PINE- DOUGLAS FIR	COOL & MOIST / TO HOT & DRY	MORE RANDOM USE IS POSSIBLE
	BRUSHLAND	HERB-SEDE-GRASS- SAGEBRUSH-MIXED GRASS	DRYER THAN SURROUNDING	ATTRACTIVE - BUT WILL NOT TOLERATE UNLIMITED USE
	WET MEADOW	SEDE-WILLOW- BOG BIRCH	WETTER THAN SURROUNDING	AVOID USE

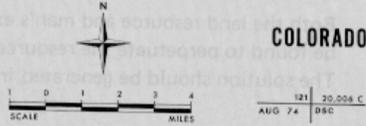


# HUMAN ACTIVITY

ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK

COLORADO

- LEGEND**
-  DAY-USE (ACTIVE)
  -  PRIMITIVE (DISPERSED)
  -  DAY-USE (SCENIC DRIVING)
  -  PRIMITIVE (CONCENTRATED)
  -  VIEW POINT
  -  CAMPSITE AREAS
  -  RANGER STATION-LOOKOUTS
  -  PARK BOUNDARY



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# THE FRAMEWORK

## VISITOR USE

Man's use of Rocky Mountain must recognize the parkland's differing natures: a primitive core and day-use area for the region; a scenic route and overnight camp for cross-country travelers.

Trends on a park-wide scale are amplified by the steadily increasing numbers of people: 1,774,000 visitors in 1962, rising to 2,520,000 in 1972. It now exhibits the greatest increases in the spring and fall along with the usual summer vacation peak period. There is an increasing impact on the environment as measured by the effects on vegetation and wildlife. And there is a growing impact on the experience, as demonstrated by crowding and conflicts in lifestyle.

Both the land resource and man's experience are endangered, and a way must be found to perpetuate the resource base, while enriching the park experience. The solution should be generated from the patterns of use that have developed around different parts of the park, ranging from drive-through viewing from the Trail Ridge Road, to the adjacent day-use areas, and into the less accessible backcountry.

Here, two basic premises must be stated. One is that all visitors do not want the same park experience. The other is that all use-zones are interrelated, For example, many people will be satisfied with looking at distant peaks from their automobile, while others want nothing less than climbing those peaks in an area devoid of manmade facilities. Yet, both activities are based on the same resource, and differ primarily in the means used to satisfy the end.

Thus, each area within the park, by virtue of its ease of access or its existing facilities, falls into a definable pattern of use. And, each use-zone can be designed to provide the man/land experience for which it is most suited. Where conflicts occur, either from excessive stress on the physical environment, or through high human density, management priorities must defer to the basic character of a given zone. With different priorities established for each zone, high-density use can be accommodated where necessary, and the maintenance of natural conditions can be given preference in the more primitive portions.

Three broad zones can be identified in the park: the scenic viewing or drive-through zone, the day-use zone, and the primitive or backcountry zone.

The scenic viewing or drive-through zone is experienced by most visitors. Because the park is easily accessible- by two major east-west interstate highways (70-80) with minor north-south connectors from the developing front-range cities, it provides the opportunity for a scenic drive or loop for both cross-country travelers and regional residents. Cross-country travelers, especially those going west, find a scenic drive through the mountains a welcome change from the long drive across the nearly flat plains states. They normally enter at one side of the park and exit at the other. Regional residents, however, usually enter and exit from the east side. Because Trail Ridge Road is one of the few roads crossing the Rockies over a ridge, rather than through a valley, it offers a spectacular scenic drive. This is a unique experience and is a valuable interpretive opportunity in itself. Trail Ridge Road will thus be retained.

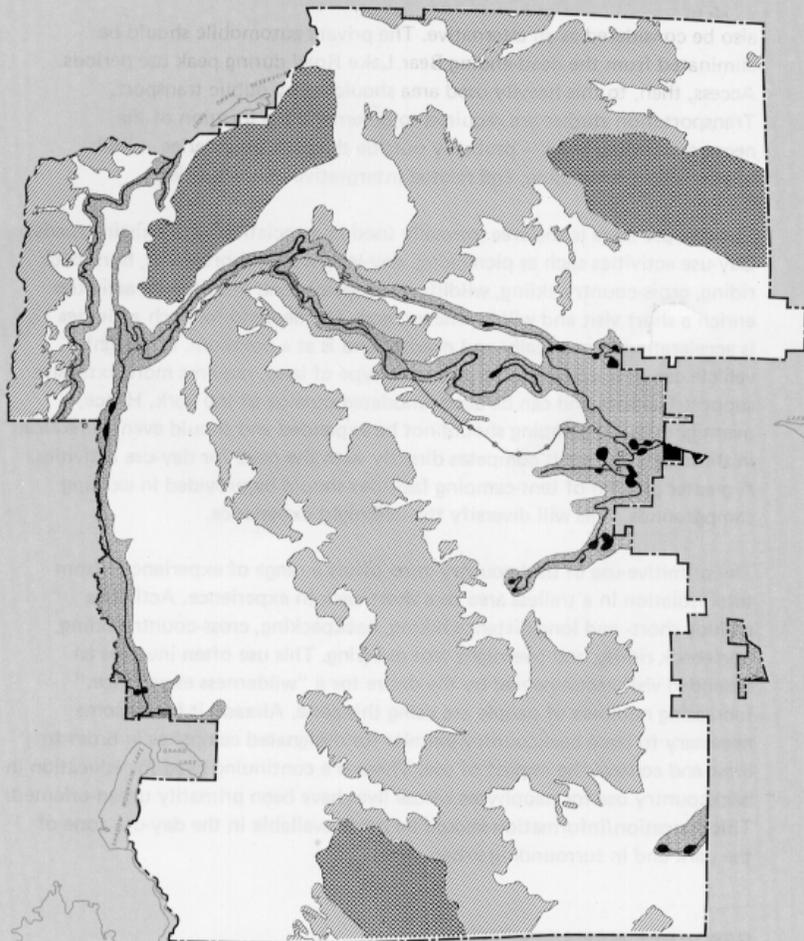
However, alternatives to private automobile use on the park road network, especially during the "summer vacation" peak period, must be considered. A Fall River Road/Trail Ridge Road loop by means of public transport should also be considered as an alternative. The private automobile should be eliminated from the dead-ending Bear Lake Road during peak use periods. Access, then, to this heavily used area should be by public transport. Transportation studies are required to determine the location of the necessary staging areas - probably outside the park boundaries - their relationships, scheduling, and related interpretive opportunities.

The day-use zone is the area normally used in association with existing roads. Day-use activities such as picnicking, day-long walks, short walks, horseback riding, cross-country skiing, wildlife observation, and interpretive activities enrich a short visit and will be encouraged. The demand for such activities is accelerating dramatically and needed land is at a premium. Overnight vehicle camping competes for the same type of land, requires more extensive support facilities and can be accommodated outside of the park. Hence, overnight vehicle camping should not be expanded and should even be reduced in those areas where it competes directly with the need for day-use activities. A greater portion of tent-camping facilities should be provided in existing campgrounds. This will diversify the overnight experience.

The primitive-use or backcountry zone offers a range of experiences, from total isolation in a trailless area to a short walk-in experience. Activities include short- and long-distance hiking, backpacking, cross-country skiing, horseback riding, and overnight tent camping. This use often involves an extended visit accompanied by the desire for a "wilderness experience." Increasing numbers of people are using this zone. Already it has become necessary to issue backcountry permits for designated campsites in order to limit and control the impact of use. There is a continuing need for education in backcountry use for neophytes whose lives have been primarily urban-oriented. This education/information should be made available in the day-use zone of the park and in surrounding urban areas.

## **RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

Rocky Mountain National Park will be administered and managed under the policies, rules, and regulations for a natural area. In the past, its resource management has been guided along a path similar to that of many other large western parks. As in most areas, the National Park Service did not acquire a complete ecological entity, free from manmade factors originating outside the park lands. The activities of the early residents of the front-range eliminated the gray wolf, Colorado grizzly, and bison. Ranching, resort developments, summer homes, gold and silver mining, lumbering, water diversion, and man-caused fires all altered the landscape prior to the park's establishment.



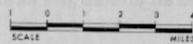
## LAND CLASSIFICATION MAP

LEGEND

 NONE	 ONE HIGH DENSITY RECREATION	 FIVE PRIMITIVE
 TWO GENERAL OUTDOOR RECREATION	 THREE NATURAL	 SIX HISTORIC AND CULTURAL
 FOUR OUTSTANDING NATURAL	 RESEARCH NATURAL AREA ( ALSO CLASS FOUR )	 PARK BOUNDARY

ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK

COLORADO



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Early preservation efforts attempted to extend the idealism behind the national park movement. The concept of an inviolate sanctuary for animals only magnified the imbalances that existed within living populations at the time of the park's establishment. Elk, reintroduced during 1913-1914, multiplied beyond the capacity of the land to support them. Zealous efforts to extinguish all natural and man-caused fires unnaturally favored selected species at the expense of those developing after a fire. The park's streams and lakes have been drastically altered by many years of management favoring sport fish, some not native to the area.

Ever-increasing numbers of visitors with contemporary comfort standards are a growing threat to the resources. The total amount of the park that has been visibly altered is small, but it is the most used and obvious part. The alpine tundra is highly fragile and particularly susceptible to man's impact, as is evident near parking areas along Trail Ridge Road. Also, both dry and wet meadows are easily damaged and slow to recover.

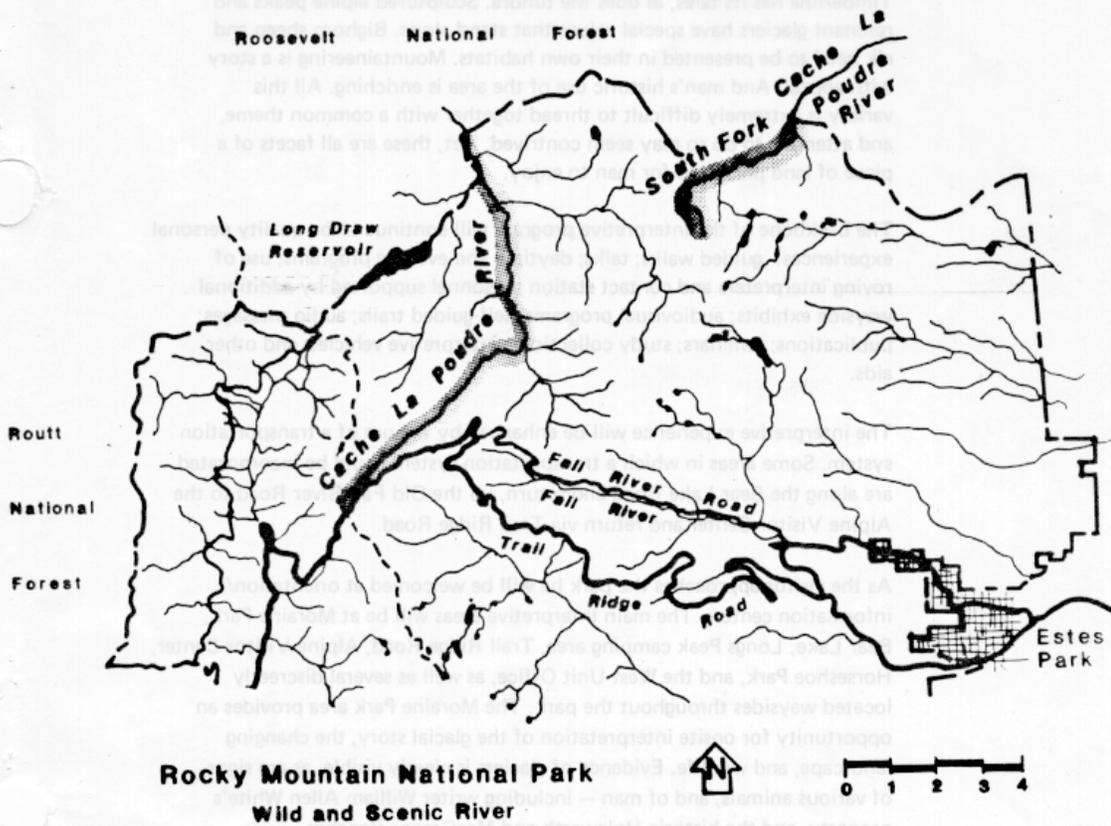
The key to controlling man's impact is to channel use through facilities designed and grouped to insulate the resources. A few visitors wandering randomly about, or even following a single route for a few seasons, will not cause serious damage. On the other hand, where many concentrate their walking, serious destruction of natural resources can occur in a few days. Around sites where concentrations are encouraged, the visitor must be guided along established routes. Traditional approaches may be inadequate. Elevated walkways, partially enclosed or severely restricted access offering only a view, will be necessary at selected sites. Large groups will be restricted from the more fragile areas.

Designing corridors for use is one way of safeguarding the park's vital land processes. Another need is to restore the native ecosystems. Rocky Mountain forests are ravaged occasionally by windstorms or natural insect epidemics. Lightning fires have always denuded vast areas and changed vegetative patterns for decades. Natural wildfires should be allowed to burn themselves out where they do not threaten an undesirably large area, lands outside the park, prime scenic resources near roads, trails, or developed areas.

Many species of wildlife are dependent upon the early stages of successional plant communities, following some catastrophe such as a fire. Others, such as the otter and native greenback trout, will be restored. Exotic fishes, plants, and animals should be eliminated where practical, although fishing for wild trout will be continued as a visitor experience. If dynamic ecosystems are to be perpetuated, natural forces must prevail. The basic strategy is clear: restore missing plant, animal, and fish types, and ensure that natural environmental rhythms continue.

## WILD AND SCENIC RIVER

The October, 1986 amendment to the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1986 designated certain segments of the Cache La Poudre River within the park as wild. The subject area is also a small part of a much larger area recommended for wilderness designation and currently being managed as such. The Wild and Scenic Rivers designation will in no way jeopardize wilderness values or necessitate a change in the manner in which the area is being managed.



## INTERPRETATION

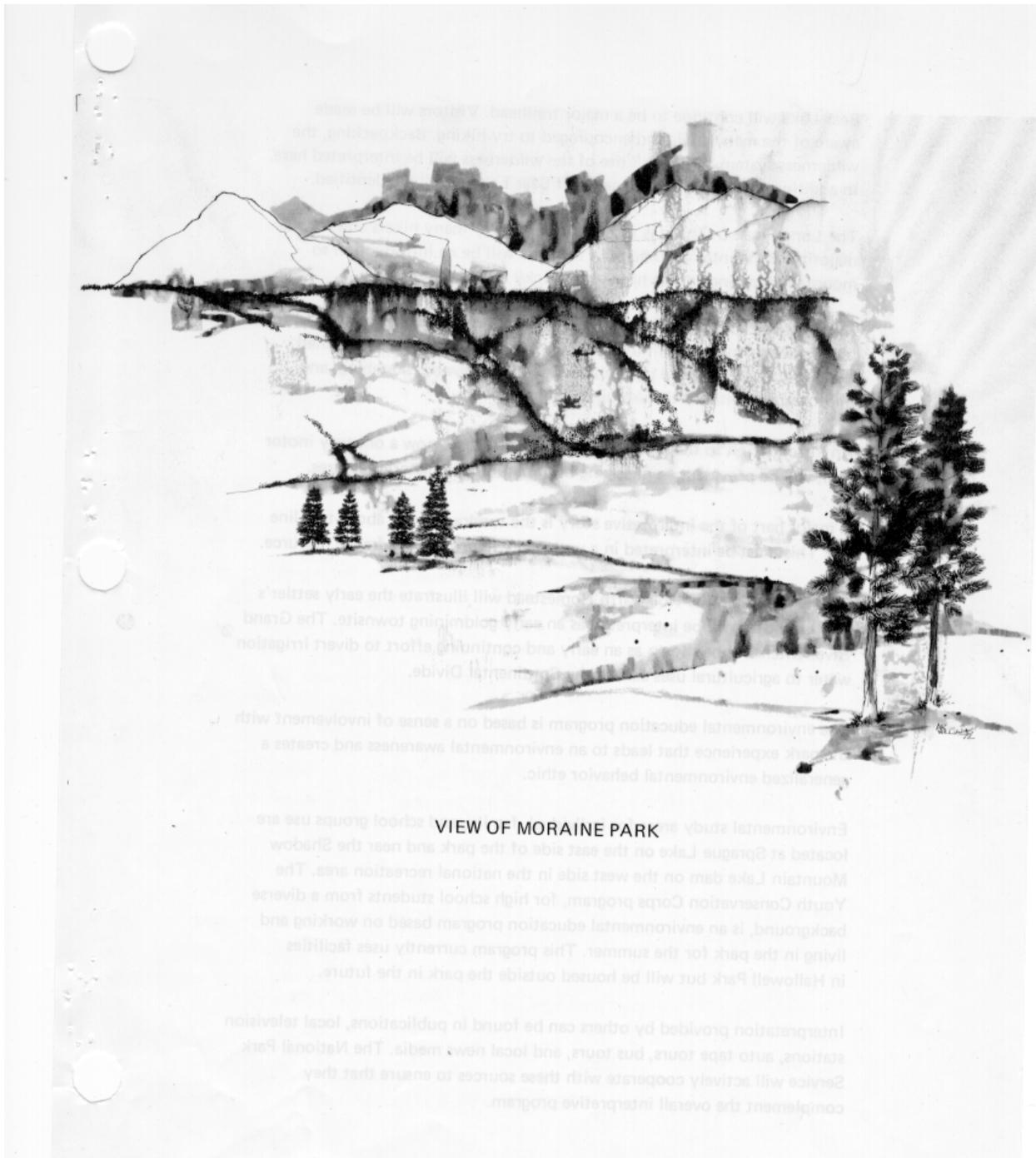
Interpretive themes must strengthen the diverse impressions and moods of the park experience. They must allow the visitor to develop his own appreciation and understanding of the onsite resource, by seeing, reinforced by touching, tasting, hearing, and smelling. A grandiose presentation that stretches beyond the meanings of the resources themselves must be avoided. The park should be compared to man's total environment and its ecological interrelationships only where appropriate.

Thus, more than one theme will be developed and park visitors will respond to man/land involvement at various sites. In the lower elevations, the stories of conifer forests, glacial moraines, and beavers are important and appealing. Timberline has its tales, as does the tundra. Sculptured alpine peaks and remnant glaciers have special values that stand alone. Bighorn sheep and elk need to be presented in their own habitats. Mountaineering is a story with appeal. And man's historic use of the area is enriching. All this variety is extremely difficult to thread together with a common theme, and attempts to do so may seem contrived. Yet, these are all facets of a piece of land preserved for man to enjoy.

The backbone of the interpretive program will continue to be quality personal experiences: guided walks; talks; daytime and evening programs; use of roving interpreters and contact station personnel supported by additional wayside exhibits; audiovisual programs; self-guided trails; audio messages; publications; seminars; study collections; interpretive vehicles; and other aids.

The interpretive experience will be enhanced by the use of a transportation system. Some areas in which a transportation system could be incorporated are along the Bear Lake Road and return, up the Old Fall River Road to the Alpine Visitor Center and return via Trail Ridge Road.

As the visitor approaches the park he will be welcomed at orientation/ information centers. The main interpretive areas will be at Moraine Park, Bear Lake, Longs Peak camping area, Trail Ridge Road, Alpine Visitor Center, Horseshoe Park, and the West Unit Office, as well as several discreetly located waysides throughout the park. The Moraine Park area provides an opportunity for onsite interpretation of the glacial story, the changing landscape, and wildlife. Evidence of glaciers is clearly visible, as are signs of various animals, and of man - including writer William Allen White's property, and the historic Holzwarth and MacGregor Ranches.



**VIEW OF MORaine PARK**

Environmental study school groups use are located at Sprague Lake on the east side of the park and near the Shadow Mountain Lake dam on the west side in the national recreation area. The Youth Conservation Corps program, for high school students from a diverse background, is an environmental education program based on working and living in the park for the summer. This program currently uses facilities in Hallowell Park but will be housed outside the park in the future.

Interpretation provided by others can be found in publications, local television stations, auto tape tours, bus tours, and local news media. The National Park Service will actively cooperate with these sources to ensure that they complement the overall interpretive program.

Bear Lake will continue to be a major trailhead. Visitors will be made aware of the many trails and encouraged to try hiking. Backpacking, the wilderness system, and man's use of the wilderness will be interpreted here. In addition, the glaciers - the cause of Bear Lake - will be identified.

The Longs Peak trailhead is the starting point for many hikers and for the majority of mountain climbers. In this area will be an introduction to mountain climbing and its history at Rocky Mountain.

In Horseshoe Park there is an excellent opportunity to observe many of the birds and animals found in the park. Here the wildlife will be identified, the visitor encouraged to participate in wildlife viewing, sketching, and photography, without disturbing the animals.

An introduction to the historic Old Fall River Road, now a one-way motor trail, will be provided, emphasizing both natural and historic features.

A major part of the interpretive story is the tundra and the above-tree-line life. This must be interpreted in a way that will protect the fragile resource.

On the west side, the Holzwarth Homestead will illustrate the early settler's life. Lulu City will be interpreted as an early goldmining townsite. The Grand River Ditch will be shown as an early and continuing effort to divert irrigation water to agricultural uses east of the Continental Divide.

The environmental education program is based on a sense of involvement with the park experience that leads to an environmental awareness and creates a generalized environmental behavior ethic.

Environmental study areas for individual, family, and school groups use are located at Sprague Lake on the east side of the park and near the Shadow Mountain Lake dam on the west side in the national recreation area. The Youth Conservation Corps program, for high school students from a diverse background, is an environmental education program based on working and living in the park for the summer. This program currently uses facilities in Hallowell Park but will be housed outside the park in the future.

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# THE ACTIONS

## DEVELOPMENT CONCEPTS

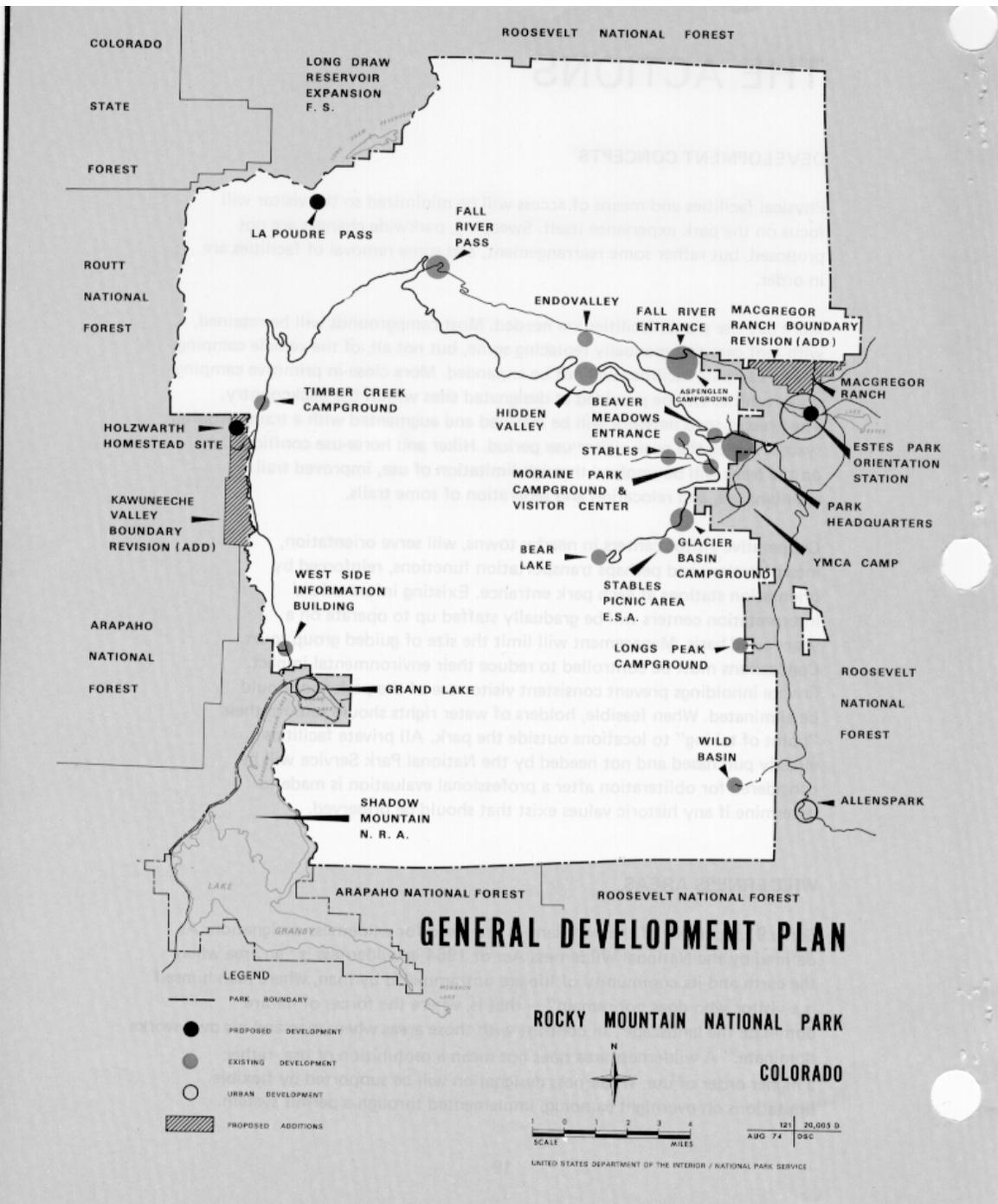
Physical facilities and means of access will be minimized so the visitor will focus on the park experience itself. Sweeping, parkwide changes are not proposed, but rather some rearrangement, and some removal of facilities are in order.

More day-use picnic facilities are needed. Most campgrounds will be retained, with tent camping gradually replacing some, but not all, of the vehicle camping. Group camping facilities will not be expanded. More close-in primitive camping opportunities will be provided at designated sites within the backcountry. The present road network will be retained and augmented with a transportation system during the peak visitor-use period. Hiker and horse-use conflicts on the trails will be resolved through limitation of use, improved trail maintenance, and relocation and separation of some trails.

Cooperative visitor centers in nearby towns, will serve orientation, interpretation, and perhaps transportation functions, reinforced by orientation stations at each park entrance. Existing information/interpretation centers will be gradually staffed up to operate on a year-round basis. Management will limit the size of guided group tours. Concessions must be controlled to reduce their environmental impact. Private inholdings prevent consistent visitor use of the park and should be eliminated. When feasible, holders of water rights should remove their "point of taking" to locations outside the park. All private facilities already purchased and not needed by the National Park Service will be considered for obliteration after a professional evaluation is made to determine if any historic values exist that should be preserved.

## WILDERNESS AREAS

Some 91.5 percent of the park land is proposed for wilderness designation. As defined by the National Wilderness Act of 1964, a wilderness is "an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain" - that is, where the forces of nature dominate the landscape "in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate." A wilderness area does not mean a prohibition of use, rather a higher order of use. Wilderness designation will be supported by flexible limitations on overnight camping, implemented through a permit system.



## **RESEARCH NATURAL AREAS**

Portions of Specimen Mountain, West Creek, and Paradise Park, lying within the remote areas of the park, will be managed as research natural areas. A world-wide system of natural areas for scientific and educational purposes has been established by the International Biological Program. Here, natural processes are allowed to predominate and act as important baselines against which man-caused changes elsewhere can be measured. The forces of nature are supreme, and even a visit by man should be rare. Only foot traffic will be allowed, and no facilities of any kind will be permitted.

## **CIRCULATION**

Roads and trails have become overcrowded during the peak summer vacation period. The overcrowding is due as much to the location and sizing of park developments as it is to increasing use. At certain spots, automobiles have become a barrier between man and the land. Groups of horseback riders along the trails conflict with hikers.

Trail Ridge Road is the only through park road, yet traffic patterns indicate that it is being used as if it were a deadend road. Over 75 percent of the summer-season traffic enters at the two east side stations, and 70 percent exits through those same stations. Fall River Road, a historic, dirt road, 9 miles long, leaves Horseshoe Park, at 8,600-foot elevation and is then traveled, one-way up, to rejoin Trail Ridge Road at Fall River Pass near the 11,800-foot elevation. About 25,000 cars a year now make the trip during the few months the road is open. Traffic dust often occurs.

The first phase of any possible transportation system on the Fall River Road might involve buses on an experimental basis. Fall River Road, with return on Trail Ridge Road, would be for bus travel only during the peak visitor season.

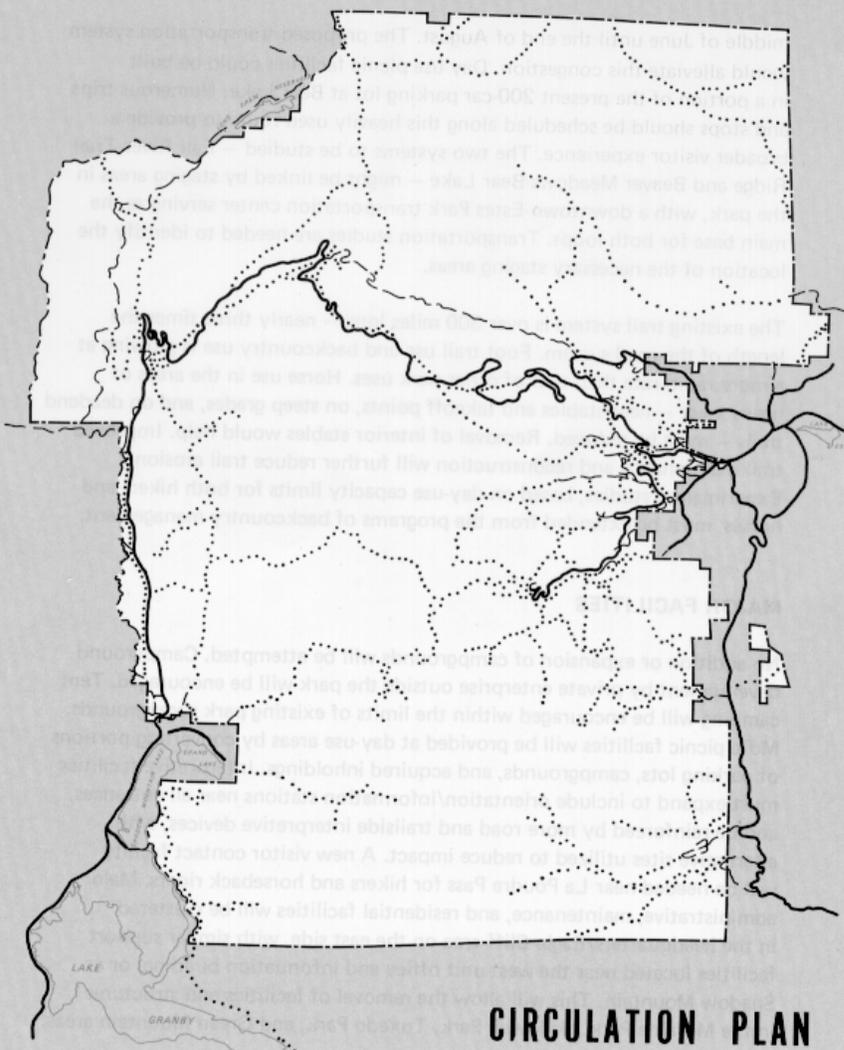
The present Bear Lake spur winds 9 miles from the Beaver Meadows entrance road to a deadend at Bear Lake. It also serves Moraine Park campground, Glacier Basin campground, the Moraine Park Visitor Center, the Moraine Park and Glacier Creek livery stables, and the Sprague Lake picnic and environmental study area. It reaches important backcountry trailheads, as well as a crowded day-use area. Traffic studies show that an average of 780 cars per day, between the hours of 9 and 5, use the terminal parking area from the middle of June until the end of August. The proposed transportation system would alleviate this congestion. Day-use picnic facilities could be built in a portion of the present 200-car parking lot at Bear Lake. Numerous trips and stops should be scheduled along this heavily used route to provide a broader visitor experience. The two systems to be studied - Fall River-Trail Ridge and Beaver Meadows-Bear Lake - might be linked by staging areas in the park, with a downtown-Estes Park transportation center serving as the main base for both loops. Transportation studies are needed to identify the location of the necessary staging areas.



**BEAR LAKE WITH BUS AND PICNIC AREA**

The first phase of any possible transportation system on the Fall River Road might involve buses on an experimental basis. Fall River Road, with return on Tall Ridge Road, would be for bus travel only during the peak visitor season.

The present Bear Lake spur winds 9 miles from the Beaver Meadows entrance road to a deadend at Bear Lake. It also serves Moraine Park campground, Glacier Basin campground, the Moraine Park Visitor Center, the Moraine Park and Glacier Creek lively staples, and the Sprague Lake picnic and environmental study area. It reaches important backcountry trailheads, as well as crowded day-use areas. Traffic studies show that an average of 780 cars per day between the hours of 8 and 5 use the terminal parking area from the



# CIRCULATION PLAN

- LEGEND**
- PARK BOUNDARY
  - MAJOR ROAD
  - - - SECONDARY ROAD
  - ..... TRAIL

**ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK**  
**COLORADO**



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR / NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

The existing trail system is over 300 miles long - nearly three times the length of the road system. Foot trail use and backcountry use is growing at a more rapid rate than that of other park uses. Horse use in the areas of heavy wear - near stables and takeoff points, on steep grades, and on deadend trails - must be reduced. Removal of interior stables would help. Improved trail maintenance and reconstruction will further reduce trail erosion. Experimental studies, based on day-use capacity limits for both hikers and horses, must be extended from the programs of backcountry management.

## **MAJOR FACILITIES**

No addition or expansion of campgrounds will be attempted. Campground development by private enterprise outside the park will be encouraged. Tent camping will be encouraged within the limits of existing park campgrounds. More picnic facilities will be provided at day-use areas by converting portions of parking lots, campgrounds, and acquired inholdings. Interpretive facilities must expand to include orientation/information stations near all entrances, and be reinforced by more road and trailside interpretive devices, with alternative sites utilized to reduce impact. A new visitor contact facility will be needed near La Poudre Pass for hikers and horseback riders. Major administrative, maintenance, and residential facilities will be clustered in the headquarters/Eagle Cliff area on the east side, with similar support facilities located near the west unit office and information building, or at Shadow Mountain. This will allow the removal of facilities and structures in the Moraine Park, Hallowell Park, Tuxedo Park, and Green Mountain areas.

Development concept plans will be prepared for four important locations of the park: The headquarters/Eagle Cliff area needs major expansion and reconstruction of residential and maintenance facilities. Trail Ridge Road needs re-examination of its parking-area system. The Wild Basin area requires a treatment that will formalize trailhead parking and provide picnic facilities along North St. Vrain Creek. Marginal intersections on the west side entrance roads should be eliminated and clarification made of the traffic patterns serving private developments outside the park's southwest corner boundary.

## **Special Programs**

The Student Conservation Association provides for trail maintenance and other activities. College students in this program act as park assistants and help operate information stations. The Volunteers in the Park program allows any concerned individual to work on resource management and public contact without compensation. Nine 1-week seminars co-sponsored by the Rocky Mountain Nature Association, Inc., concentrating on the park's physical environment, are held each summer and winter, principally out-of-doors.

## **CONCESSIONS**

### **Hidden Valley**

Hidden Valley Ski Area provides family winter recreation; during the 1972-73 season, it generated 28 percent of the visitation entering the park through the Fall River and Beaver Meadows entrance stations - approximately 40,000 skiers per year use the area. Its drawback in relation to national park values is its visual impact on summer visitors, who see it from several areas along Trail Ridge Road. Snow conditions are marginal, and the site is subject to excessive winds. By Forest Service standards it is unsuitable for development; without heavy Federal subsidies, it probably could not have been developed or operated economically. The shortage of satisfactory slopes for beginners - the class of skiers who predominate at Hidden Valley, crowding during peak periods, and the quality of snow and slopes all contribute to a skier accident rate approximately double that of other ski areas throughout Colorado.

However, as the only area reasonably accessible to nearby communities in northeastern Colorado, Hidden Valley does offer definite social values, and thus should continue in operation until alternative facilities become available. At Christmastime it attracts regional use through the nearby YMCA camp. Hidden Valley should continue to operate as a modest family-type ski area, with expansion limited to minor improvements that would contribute to the safety of beginning skiers.

Necessary goals for Hidden Valley should include reducing the visual impact from Trail Ridge Road; reducing congestion by establishing carrying-capacity quotas or distributing use throughout the week; and reducing the Federal subsidy that is now disproportionate in relation to other ski areas and to the very localized source of users.

## **Trail Ridge Store**

The ski area concessioner also operates the Trail Ridge Store, which provides food service and souvenir sales to visitors at the only major roadside resting area along Trail Ridge. The store and adjacent visitor center attract vehicle congestion in the fragile high-altitude tundra. Sanitation facilities, parking, and water supply are all taxed to their physical or economic limits. The curio and novelty sales section of the store is of questionable public value at this location, while contributing to the length of the visitor's stay and thus to congestion problems.

Alternate rest stop facilities at other sites along Trail Ridge Road will provide better visitor distribution. Eventual elimination of souvenir sales in the store will reduce the length of the stop without removing an appropriate rest area where visitors may appreciate the natural attractions. Meeting this goal will require purchase of the concessioner's possessory interest and renegotiation of the contract for the less profitable food and rest stop purposes. Both Service and concessioner facilities are overdeveloped for this sensitive and operationally expensive location. Every effort should be made in long-range planning to "decongest" this area by reversing the overdevelopment.

## **Horse Use**

Both the 1972 environmental assessment of horse use, and the 1975 horse management plan for the park recognize the experience of horse riding as historic and desirable. They also make it clear that horse use must be balanced with other uses to minimize its impact. Approximately 10,000 horse trips per year originate from the interior concession stables at Moraine Park and Glacier Creek. Another 25,000 horse trips per year enter the park from the 25 livery operations who operate from stables based just outside the boundary. The outside livery operations tend to use the fringe area of the park more than the interior livery operations and thus are generally in less conflict with hikers who usually begin their trips from locations deeper inside the park. The outside livery operations can serve any point within the park, moreover, as for many years they have provided truck delivery of saddle horses to interior trailheads. Through special use permits they operate under the same park regulations as the interior livery operations. Possible solutions to hiker-horse conflicts include dual trail systems, preferential zoning for both uses, and improved trail circulation systems.

The concession stables located in the interior of the park provide good service, but do so from locations where hiker use is concentrated, and conflicts between horseback riding and hiking are more common. A plus factor of concession stable locations is that the entire ride is in a high quality environment. Justification for the visual and environmental impact of the interior livery operations has been questioned. Elimination of livery stables within the park is recommended for 1979. Between now and the 1979 expiration of the current contract, the disadvantages as well as the merits of the two interior livery operations will be observed. The final decision for retention or elimination

of such service will be made at that time. Until then, they will operate at their present level.

Any proposed termination of concession contracts must honor the Service's contracted commitment to make equitable compensation to the concessioners for their investment in possessory interest.

## **HISTORIC RESOURCES**

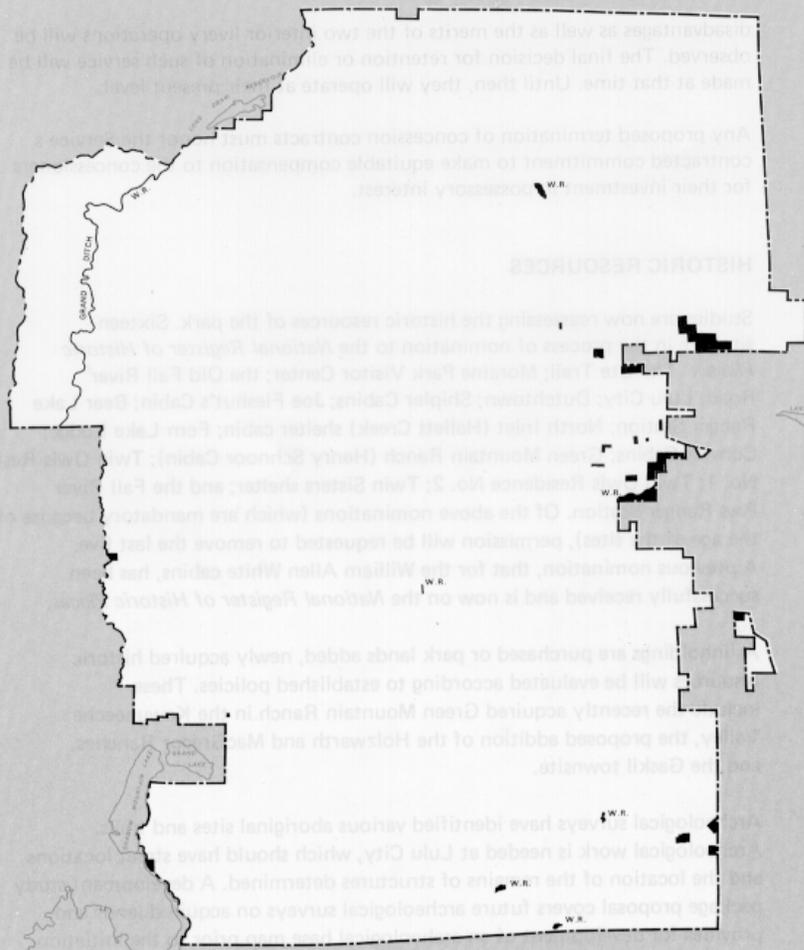
Studies are now reassessing the historic resources of the park. Sixteen sites are in the process of nomination to the *National Register of Historic Places*: The Ute Trail; Moraine Park Visitor Center; the Old Fall River Road; Lulu City; Dutchtown; Shipler Cabins; Joe Fleshut's Cabin; Bear Lake Ranger Station; North Inlet (Hallett Creek) shelter cabin; Fern Lake Lodge; Convict Cabins; Green Mountain Ranch (Henry Schnoor Cabin); Twin Owls Residence No. 1; Twin Owls Residence No. 2; Twin Sisters shelter; and the Fall River Pass Ranger Station. Of the above nominations (which are mandatory because of the age of the sites), permission will be requested to remove the last five. A previous nomination, that for the William Allen White cabins, has been successfully received and is now on the *National Register of Historic Places*.

As inholdings are purchased or park lands added, newly acquired historic resources will be evaluated according to established policies. These include the recently acquired Green Mountain Ranch in the Kawuneeche Valley, the proposed addition of the Holzwarth and MacGregor Ranches, and the Gaskil townsite.

Archeological surveys have identified various aboriginal sites and trails. Archeological work is needed at Lulu City, which should have street locations and the location of the remains of structures determined. A development study package proposal covers future archeological surveys on acquired lands and provides for development of an archeological base map prior to the initiation of current construction projects.

## **LAND AND WATER INHOLDINGS**

Inholdings constitute only 0.4 percent of the park's lands and waters - yet they interfere with proper use and management. Effort must be continued toward eliminating these private lands. If the opportunity ever occurs, all manmade storage reservoirs within the park should be eliminated, and the "point of taking" moved outside the park.



# LAND OWNERSHIP AND WATER RIGHTS ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK

COLORADO

- LEGEND**
-  PARK BOUNDARY
  -  PRIVATE
  -  FEDERAL
  -  WATER RIGHTS



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR / NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

## **BOUNDARY ADJUSTMENTS**

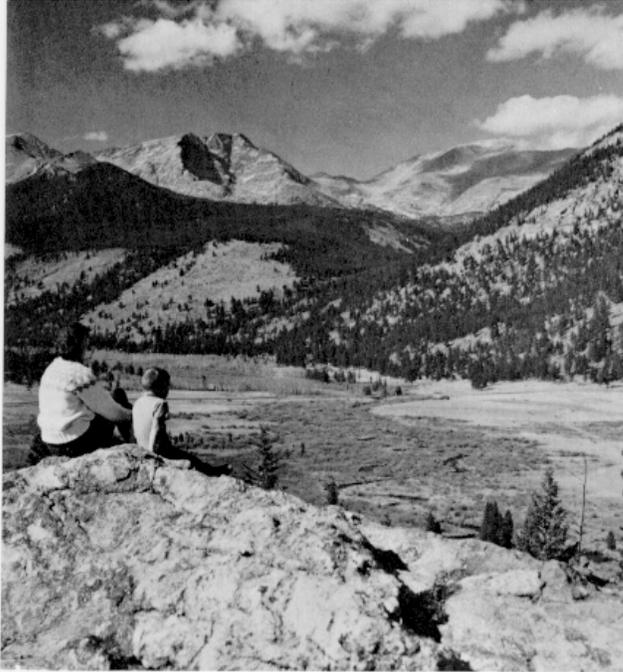
The boundaries of the park should be readjusted on the basis of geographical and biological criteria, in order to approach an ecological unity. Several physiographically defined boundary lines, rather than the present abstract survey lines, should be agreed upon with the Forest Service, whose lands surround most of the park. More effective overall management for both agencies would result.

The upper portion of the Kawuneeche Valley should be added to the western side of the park, and the lower portion of Black Canyon added to the eastern side. The Kawuneeche Valley is an integral part of the headwaters area of the Colorado River. It furnishes prime elk habitat. Its natural character is visually part of the park, especially as viewed from Trail Ridge Road. The Holzwarth homestead site, included in this proposed addition, would enrich the historic scene. Similarly, the MacGregor proposal above Estes Park includes deer and elk winter range, provides high-quality, scenic open space, and includes the historic MacGregor ranch site.

## **REGIONAL FACILITIES**

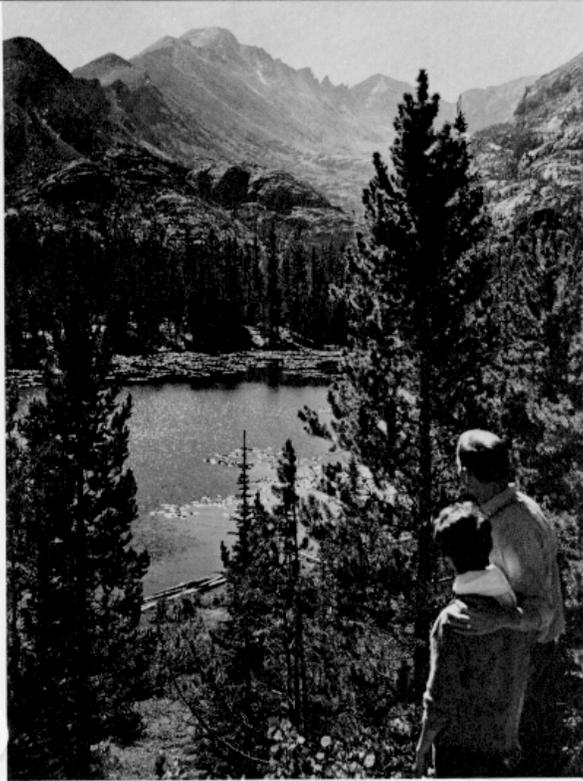
Physical, social, and cultural environments do not stop at administrative boundaries. Active regional cooperation with many groups on an informal basis has been fundamental in producing this plan. In turn, the National Park Service has contributed towards plans of others. The *Three Lake Environmental Assessment Plan* by Consultants Nelson, Haley, Patterson, and Quirk, for Grand County, was partially funded by the Service. Computer time was funded for a transportation study of the Bear Lake area - a master's thesis at Colorado State University. Environmental education programs have been made available to schools in Colorado and Wyoming. A formal council of governments could result in a mosaic of master plans for the region.

Regional orientation/information centers should be developed on a cooperative basis by government agencies, private enterprise, and local governments; and should deal with the park and the recreational opportunities throughout the vicinity. These should be located outside the main park entrances, near Estes Park on the east side and Granby on the west side, and may become the basis for future transportation terminals. These centers could be linked with the Denver Regional Transportation District. They will be reinforced by complementary orientation/information stations near the east and west side park entrances.



BOUNDARY ADJUSTMENTS  
The boundaries of the park should  
and biological systems, in order  
physiographically defined forms  
gravel pits, should be given the  
ground most of the park. Most  
species would result.

The upper portion of the Keweenaw  
side of the park, and the lower



## APPENDIX

### MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVE

The following statement by the Park reflects park management

General Management  
To manage Rocky Mountain

The park experience, now and in the future, should be a dynamic interaction of human values based on the perpetuation of natural features in as near to pristine conditions as possible.



# APPENDIXES

## MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

The following statement by the superintendent of Rocky Mountain National Park reflects park management's needs and goals relative to this master plan.

### 1. General Management

To manage Rocky Mountain National Park on a year-round basis, with full utilization in the summer and sightseeing and wildlife observations all year at the lower elevations.

To recognize three programmed operational levels:

1. Peak Season: All facilities and personnel services in operation for extended daily periods.
2. Spring and Fall: Limited facilities in regular daily operation with personal services available on a reduced schedule.
3. Winter: Basic camping facilities available. Information services available at the Headquarters Building and West Side Information Building. Hidden Valley Ski Area open with personal services available. Limited road network kept plowed.

To maintain a policy of keeping all overnight facilities, with the exception of campgrounds, outside of the park, and to encourage private developers to construct adequate campground facilities outside of the park.

To organize campgrounds on a unit basis both for the protection of the environment and to facilitate the setting and collecting of camping fees. Fee collection is considered necessary to reduce unfair competition with outside campgrounds and to permit users to help pay for operation of Federal campgrounds.

To maintain a policy of requiring all concessioner equipment storage buildings and housing, with the exception of minor storage at Hidden Valley, to be provided outside of the park boundary.

To permit no further expansion of concession operations requiring constructed facilities inside the park. Existing operations to be eliminated when no longer needed within the park boundary.

To keep all appropriate existing secondary and administrative roads open to public use, except as defined under "Operational Levels."

To house all east side personnel either outside the park, within the headquarters area, or at the Fall River Entrance area; on the west side, personnel will be housed at the Grand Lake Entrance area and Shadow Mountain Village. Exceptions may include a minimum number of maintenance and protection personnel housed at strategic, visitor-serving locations within the park.

To confine development in the headquarters area to Sections 34 and 27 T5N R73W below the elevation of 8,000 feet.

To add certain portions of the Kawuneeche Valley and MacGregor Ranch to the park.

To operate the Hidden Valley Ski Area as a family-type area for the wholesome recreation it affords until alternate facilities are available to nearby communities.

## **2. Resource Management**

To provide management for the soil, water, flora, and fauna, native to this portion of the Rocky Mountains, so as to minimize the impact of man, and where desirable and feasible restore those ecosystems altered by man. Restoration will be aimed at presenting as close an approximation of primitive conditions as is possible.

To provide opportunities for understanding and appreciation of the ecological and geological processes that have created this segment of the Colorado Rockies and of the floral, faunal, and geological forms now present in the park being mindful to provide only the means of access and facilities necessary to meet the needs of the area purpose and protect the park ecosystems.

To permit no use of sand, gravel, and other borrow material obtained from inside the boundary.

To manage the fishery resource to preserve native populations and provide quality angling for wild trout in a natural environment. To preserve their unique scientific values the West Creek, Specimen Mountain, and Paradise Park will be managed as research natural areas, and be open to day-use, foot traffic only.

To pursue all possibilities of removing water rights and storage facilities, and utilize the authority of the Secretary of the Interior to ensure that those persons and/or companies having water rights will manage their collection and reservoir systems to provide maximum protection to the natural resources. Wherever possible, water right holders will be encouraged to relocate reservoirs outside the park boundary and to eliminate comparable storage rights within the interior of the park.

### **3. Visitor Use**

To improve and extend the number of day-use picnic facilities available in the park.

To restrict the use of oversnow vehicles to the west side of the park on unplowed roadways and other designated routes now in use.

No increase in horse use by concessioners or permit should be allowed. Glacier Creek and Moraine Park liveryes will be considered for elimination at the expiration of the current contract in December of 1979.

To give high priority to trail maintenance and reconstruction, and to determine what can be done to minimize horse and pedestrian use conflicts.

To increase the enjoyment of Bear Lake and other heavily used areas by the improvement of circulation, methods of transportation, and the dissemination of visitor information.

### **4. Interpretation**

To develop an ecosystem and environment-centered theme that will leave park visitors with a deep and lasting understanding of the natural forces and historic resources in the park. Through personal contact with visitors, the principal thrust will be to relate what the visitor sees here to what he sees at home and while traveling.

To determine alternate activity sites or interpretive techniques to reduce visitor pressures on areas such as Bear Lake - Dream Lake.

To develop interpretive devices and methods that will allow close association with and better understanding of the tundra, but will not allow further destruction of this unique feature-

To keep abreast of the latest innovations and newest interpretive devices in order to provide the finest possible interpretive program.

To give new dimension to the off-site interpretive program with the environmental story of parks and our heritage taken to the urban populations in the vicinity of Rocky Mountain National Park.

To increase the interpretive opportunities in the off-season periods.

To consider and develop other ways in which to further the environmental education program.

## VISITATION

### 1972 Travel Summary and Comparisons

Month	1972 Visitors	% of Total	% Change from 1971	1971 Visitors	1970 Visitors	1969 Visitors
January	45,122	1.8	+ 8.0	41,771	31,926	29,617
February	47,390	1.9	+ 51.9	31,207	37,166	34,791
March	55,203	2.1	+ 24.7	44,264	42,254	34,870
April	49,753	2.0	+ 2.4	48,571	33,534	35,063
May	125,079	5.0	+ 23.0	101,709	98,512	104,061
June	413,377	16.4	+ 3.0	401,457	387,084	323,612
July	647,891	25.7	- 3.3	670,120	665,531	622,902
August	642,794	25.5	- 9.0	704,470	688,028	678,183
September	283,796	11.3	+ 21.3	234,008	237,275	249,818
October	94,551	3.8	- 2.8	97,242	65,946	39,788
November	43,536	1.7	+ 41.0	30,891	29,426	33,298
December	71,130	2.8	+ 37.8	51,617	41,227	31,214
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>2,519,622</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>+ 2.5</b>	<b>2,457,327</b>	<b>2,357,909</b>	<b>2,217,217</b>

	1972	% of total	1971	1970	1969
Tent campers	122,887	46	125,180	110,377	146,853
Trailers and Pickup campers	111,192	41	115,675	142,572	96,731
Backcountry	36,132	13	27,129	21,058	13,795
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>270,211</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>267,984</b>	<b>274,007</b>	<b>257,379</b>

1972 Visitors recorded by entrance stations:	Number	% of Total
Fall River (U.S. 34)	981,354	39.0
Beaver Meadows (Colo. 66)	891,562	35.4
Grand Lake (U.S. 34)	464,708	18.4
Other	181,998	7.2
	<b>2,519,622</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Greatest single day's travel each year	August 13, 1972 28,591	July 4, 1971 28,201	August 9, 1970 26,296
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## LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY

Act of January 26, 1915: An act that established Rocky Mountain National Park in the State of Colorado. (38 Stat. 798).

Act of February 14, 1917: Added certain lands to Rocky Mountain National Park.

Act of March 1, 1919: Repealed last proviso of Section 4 of the act of January 26, 1915, relative to limitation on appropriation for Rocky Mountain National Park.

Act of September 18, 1922: Authorized the acceptance of a certain tract of land donated as a site for an administrative building for Rocky Mountain National Park.

Act of June 2, 1924: Transferred certain lands of the United States from Rocky Mountain National Park to the Colorado National Forest.

Act of February 24, 1925: Authorized the exchange of certain patented lands in Rocky Mountain National Park for Government lands in the park.

Act of June 9, 1926: Eliminated certain privately owned lands from Rocky Mountain National Park and transferred certain other lands from Rocky Mountain National Park to the Colorado National Forest.

Act of the Legislature of the State of Colorado ceded to the United States exclusive jurisdiction over Rocky Mountain National Park.

Act of March 2, 1929: Accepted cession by Colorado of exclusive jurisdiction over lands embraced within Rocky Mountain National Park.

Act of June 21, 1930: Provided for addition of certain lands to Rocky Mountain National Park.

Proclamation Number 1917 of July 17, 1930: An act that provided for the addition of certain lands to Rocky Mountain National Park.

Proclamation Number 1985 of January 11, 1932: An act that provided for the addition of certain lands to Rocky Mountain National Park.

Proclamation Number 2160 of March 5, 1936: An act that provided for the addition of certain lands to Rocky Mountain National Park.

Act of July 14, 1945: Authorized an exchange of certain lands with William W. Kiskadden in connection with Rocky Mountain National Park.

Act of August 24, 1949: Added certain lands to Rocky Mountain National Park.

Proclamation Number 3144 of June 27, 1956: An act that provided for the addition of certain lands to Rocky Mountain National Park.

Proclamation Number 3374 of September 23, 1960: An act that provided for the addition of certain lands to Rocky Mountain National Park.

Act of August 17, 1961: Authorized the Secretary of the Interior to exchange certain property in Rocky Mountain National Park with the Colorado Transportation Company.

Act by Colorado State Legislature ceded jurisdiction to the National Park Service of lands added to Rocky Mountain National Park since February 19, 1929. Jurisdiction accepted by the Secretary of the Interior January 22, 1962.

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Publication services were provided by the graphics and editorial staffs of the Denver Service Center,

United States Department of the Interior / National Park Service NPS 824

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

\*U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE: 1976-677-346/52