

Past the Shoreline

The Administrative History of
WHISKEYTOWN NATIONAL RECREATION AREA



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PAST THE SHORELINE:

The Administrative History of Whiskeytown National Recreation Area

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List of Acronyms

ABC – Alcoholic Beverage Control
AML – Abandoned Mine Lands
AAR – After-Action Review
BAER Team – Burned Area Emergency Response Team
BCMC – Brandy Creek Marina Corporation
BLM – Bureau of Land Management
CA-DBW – California Division of Boating and Waterways
CAL FIRE – California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection
CAMP – Campaign Against Marijuana Planting
CCCC – Crystal Creek Conservation Camp
CCCSD – Clear Creek Community Services District
CDFG – California Department of Fish and Game
CHP – California Highway Patrol
CLI – Cultural Landscape Inventory
CPUC – California Public Utilities Commission
CRM – Cultural Resource Management
CVP – Central Valley Project
CVPIA – Central Valley Project Improvement Act
DOI – Department of the Interior
DTO – Drug Trafficking Organization
EA – Environmental Assessment
EIS – Environmental Impact Statement
EPA – Environmental Protection Agency
ESA – Endangered Species Act
ESAs – Environmental Study Areas
e-TIC – Electronic Technical Information Center
FEMAT – Forest Ecosystem Management Assessment Team
FHA – Federal Highway Administration
FMP – Fire Management Plan
FTE – Full-time Equivalent
GIA – Government Improvement Account

LIST OF ACRONYMS

GIS – Geographic Information System
GLO – General Land Office
GMP – General Management Plan
GSA – General Services Administration
HRS – Historic Resource Study
IDA – Interpretive Donation Account
IRMA – Integrated Resource Management Applications
LIFE Center – Local Indians for Education Center
MMP – Mineral Management Plan
MMS – Maintenance Management System
MOA – Memorandum of Agreement
NARA – National Archives and Records Administration
NEED – National Environmental Education Development
NCPE – National Council for Preservation Education
NEPA – National Environmental Policy Act
NHPA – National Historic Preservation Act
NORBA – North American Off Road Biking Association
NPS – National Park Service
NRCS – Natural Resources Conservation Service
NRHP – National Register of Historic Places
OHV – Off Highway Vehicle
PEPC – Planning, Environment, and Public Comment
PG&E – Pacific Gas & Electric
PGSO – Pacific Great Basin Support Office
PWC – Personal Watercraft
PWR – NPS Pacific West Region
RIP – Road Inventory Program
ROW – Right-of-way
SPMA – Southwest Parks and Monuments Association (in 2002 renamed Western National Parks Association)
TCP – Traditional Cultural Property/Place
THHD – Tower House Historic District
TMP – Trails Management Plan
USBR – US Bureau of Reclamation

USDA – US Department of Agriculture
USFS – US Forest Service
USFWS – US Fish and Wildlife Service
USGS – US Geological Survey
VA&RM – Visitor Activities and Resources Management
VIP – Volunteers in Parks
WACC – Western Archeological and Conservation Center
WAPA – Western Area Power Administration
WASO – NPS Washington Office
WES – Whiskeytown Environmental School
WHIS – Whiskeytown National Recreation Area
WNPA – Western National Parks Association
WSI – Whiskeytown Services, Inc.
YCC – Youth Conservation Corps

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Whiskeytown National Recreation Area (WHIS), located in the rugged Klamath Mountains of Northern California, is one of twelve reservoir-based recreation areas managed by the National Park Service (NPS). Established in 1965, WHIS represents a unique intersection of conservation, recreation, and resource management. The park's origins lie in the Central Valley Project (CVP) and the construction of Whiskeytown Dam, a federally funded water conservation initiative completed in 1963. Over the decades, WHIS has evolved to meet the challenges of managing a complex landscape that includes a reservoir, oak woodlands, extensive forests, and significant natural and cultural resources, all while providing recreational opportunities for millions of visitors.

This administrative history examines more than five decades of development at WHIS, beginning with the park's establishment in 1965 and extending through the Carr Fire of 2018 and its immediate aftermath. Drawing on archival records, planning documents, annual reports, and oral histories, the study analyzes management strategies, partnerships, and responses to evolving federal mandates and societal priorities. While the primary interpretive arc concludes in 2018, selected materials dated after that year are incorporated where necessary to document recovery efforts, clarify the outcomes of earlier policies, or provide administrative continuity. The history serves as both narrative and analytical framework, offering context for understanding the park's achievements, challenges, and adaptations. It also provides a baseline for future planning and decision-making, consistent with NPS Director's Order 28: Cultural Resource Management Guidelines.

The history of WHIS is shaped by the park's multifaceted mission, which balances water-based recreation, land-based recreation, cultural resource preservation, and environmental stewardship alongside power generation, utility corridors, and telecommunication sites. The park has faced significant challenges, including wildfire management, changing environmental conditions, and issues stemming from illegal marijuana cultivation. Additionally, WHIS has managed increasing visitation while addressing the resource limitations typical of NPS units. Despite these obstacles, the park has demonstrated resilience through collaborative partnerships with federal agencies, universities, local communities, and private stakeholders. Key themes and challenges addressed in this administrative history include:

- **Recreation Management:** Balancing the reservoir's draw for water-based activities with the need to expand recreational opportunities to the surrounding backcountry.
- **Cultural Resource Stewardship:** Preserving and interpreting the Tower House Historic District (TTHD), Wintu archeological sites, and other cultural resources while integrating Indigenous perspectives.

- **Natural Resource Management:** Addressing wildfire mitigation, habitat maintenance and restoration and inventory and study of a rich biodiversity of plants and animals while managing the legacies of mining, logging, and dam construction.
- **Visitor Engagement and Education:** Expanding interpretive programming and fostering environmental awareness through initiatives like the Whiskeytown Environmental School (WES).
- **Collaborative Partnerships:** Navigating relationships with the US Bureau of Reclamation (USBR), concessionaires, and local law enforcement to address resource protection and operational challenges.

This administrative history highlights the adaptability of WHIS staff and leadership, from navigating regional reorganization to managing crises such as the Carr Fire of 2018. It brings into focus the park's evolving role as both a recreational landscape and a steward of significant natural and cultural resources, illustrating how management has responded to shifting public expectations and federal priorities. Completed as a task agreement under Master Cooperative Agreement Number P19AC00619, *Past the Shoreline* documents the park's administrative evolution, major decisions, and institutional lessons in order to support informed planning and management moving forward.

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PART I

CHAPTER 1.1: INTRODUCTION

In 1963, President John F. Kennedy delivered a speech celebrating the completion of Whiskeytown Dam, the final component of the ambitious Trinity River Project. Addressing a crowd against the scenic backdrop of the newly formed Whiskeytown Lake reservoir, Kennedy emphasized the enduring value of conservation efforts. His remarks articulated 1960s federal priorities regarding conservation, development, and public access:

Every time we make a determination to set aside a seashore for the use of future generations, every time we build these great projects, we develop the water resources, we set aside recreational areas, we can be sure they are going to be used. ...If we make the right decisions now, they will be as grateful to us as we were and are to Gifford Pinchot and Theodore Roosevelt for the things they did 45 and 50 years ago.¹

Kennedy's remarks acknowledged the historic significance of the project and foreshadowed the central themes of Whiskeytown National Recreation Area's (WHIS) history. Established just two years later, WHIS would become a microcosm of the challenges and opportunities faced by National Park Service (NPS) units tasked with balancing recreation and conservation. WHIS is one of nine national recreation areas that incorporate hydroelectric power generation—a subset of the NPS's twelve reservoir-based recreation areas—operating in this case as part of the US Bureau of Reclamation's (USBR) Central Valley Project (CVP).² From its earliest years, WHIS has embodied the complexities of that multipurpose mission, as the management of its reservoir, landscape, and infrastructure has evolved in response to shifting federal priorities and public expectations.

Past the Shoreline examines how WHIS has navigated these complexities, offering insights into the park's development and evolution. While Whiskeytown Lake has always been a focal point, the park's mission has extended far past its shoreline, encompassing the management of land, water, minerals, and fire, as well as the preservation of cultural and natural resources. Over time, these responsibilities have demanded increasing specialization and adaptation from park leadership and staff, shaping WHIS into a multifaceted hub of conservation, recreation, and education.

¹ John F. Kennedy, "Remarks at the Dedication of the Whiskeytown, California, Dam and Reservoir," September 28, 1963, transcript accessed November 2024, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-dedication-the-whiskeytown-california-dam-and-reservoir>.

² The other national recreation areas that include hydroelectric power include Amistad, Bighorn Canyon, Chattahoochee River, Curecanti, Glen Canyon, Lake Mead, Lake Roosevelt, and Ross Lake. In 2026, there are eighteen NPS-administered national recreation areas, twelve that have reservoirs, while only nine include hydroelectric power.

CHAPTER 1.1: INTRODUCTION

WHIS's history is also defined by its partnerships and collaborative efforts. From its early agreements with USBR to its ongoing relationships with local concessionaires, educational institutions, and Indigenous communities, WHIS's administrative record documents the role of cooperative management in achieving its goals. These partnerships were, and continue to be, central to managing the park's resources, addressing challenges like illegal marijuana cultivation and wildfire management, and expanding environmental education programs such as the Whiskeytown Environmental School (WES).

This history documents the development of WHIS within the federal statutory, policy, and environmental contexts that shaped its management. As one of the twelve NPS-administered national recreation areas centered on reservoirs, WHIS has operated where water management, resource protection, and public recreation merge. The chapters that follow trace the administrative history of WHIS from its establishment in the 1960s to the present day. They examine the park's organizational structure, the roles of its superintendents, its approaches to managing natural and cultural resources, and its relationships with surrounding communities. The volume also situates these developments within federal land management concerns, including access and preservation, infrastructure coordination, environmental risk, regional community relationships, and public engagement.

Methodology

This history primarily examines the development of WHIS from its establishment in 1965 through the Carr Fire of 2018 and the early stages of post-fire recovery. The interpretive scope centers on this period. However, where later planning documents, reports, or data clarify the implementation or consequences of earlier policies, materials dated through 2023 have been incorporated for documentation purposes. The use of these later sources does not extend the chronological focus of the study but provides context for understanding administrative continuity and change. As a result, readers may encounter references to post-2018 documents that support analysis rooted in the period under review.

Our research drew on a range of primary and secondary sources, many of which were digital scans of original records, or digitally born. We conducted research in the physical copies of archival materials located at WHIS in June 2023. These records were partly processed and located in bankers' boxes that were primarily housed in the headquarters building, but also in the interpretation garage, maintenance building, museum storage, and at Oak Bottom. The bankers' boxes were labelled with temporary notes indicating their box number. We have used these box numbers when citing materials and have recorded folder names faithfully as written on folders. In addition, as we are uncertain of the ultimate filing scheme and location of these records we have provided detailed information about each document in citations.

Late during project research, we were able to access digital scans of WHIS archival materials that had been partially processed by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). These materials use different code and series labels than those that had been partially processed in the bankers' box archives at the park. Here, too, we

have cited code numbers, box numbers, and series numbers exactly as were given by NARA, and provided detailed descriptions of documents.

In addition to physical archival materials, WHIS generously provided us access to an enormous number of more recently produced, but unarchived, digital files. These materials exceeded 100 GB of data. As we have done for physical archival materials, our citations to digital material represent faithfully the organizational structure as given to us.

In addition to digital materials provided by the park, we accessed digital reports, planning documents, and architectural drawings via the NPS's Electronic Technical Information Center (e-TIC), the Integrated Resource Management Applications (IRMA) portal, and the NPS History E-Library.

At WHIS, as at many national parks, institutional knowledge resides within the staff. Throughout this project, we benefitted from the generosity and expertise of park personnel, who shared insights through conversations, email exchanges, and draft comments.

Some of the materials consulted during this research were in temporary locations or in the process of being archived, and their filing structures may have since changed. Recognizing that future researchers may encounter challenges locating these documents, we have compiled a digital appendix providing detailed citations to assist in tracing all referenced files. This appendix is housed at WHIS to support long-term access and preservation of the research record. These methods provide the evidentiary foundation for this administrative history, grounded in both archival records and institutional knowledge.

Organizational Structure and Part Summaries

This administrative history of WHIS is organized into nine parts, each addressing a distinct aspect of the park's development and management. Collectively, these sections examine the unit's history in relation to its statutory responsibilities for conservation and public recreation. The volume is structured both chronologically and thematically, presenting a documented account of policy decisions, operational developments, and management conditions over time. The following overview summarizes the content of each part.

Part I introduces the historical, environmental, and cultural context that shaped the establishment of WHIS. This section begins with an overview of the park's creation, emphasizing the key federal and local forces, such as the CVP and the Mission 66 initiative, that led to its designation as a national recreation area in 1965. It also explores the region's Indigenous heritage, the impacts of European American settlement, and the environmental transformations driven by mining, dam construction, and the logging industry. These chapters provide the context for the park's subsequent administrative development.

Part II examines the park's administrative development and the role of leadership in shaping its trajectory. The chapters trace the evolution of WHIS's organizational structure, from its initial generalist framework to a more

CHAPTER 1.1: INTRODUCTION

specialized and professionalized system. The section documents the contributions of individual superintendents and how leadership responded to shifting federal priorities, environmental pressures, and public expectations. It also analyzes parkwide planning efforts, focusing on long-term strategies for managing resource protection and visitor use.

Focusing on the physical landscape of WHIS, *Part III* explores park roads and trails as infrastructure central to both accessibility and environmental stewardship. Chapters trace the development and maintenance of scenic routes, backcountry trails, and transportation corridors, documenting the park's efforts to integrate modern infrastructure with natural and cultural preservation. This section also addresses challenges posed by debris flows, fires, and flooding, recording WHIS's operational responses to maintaining access while protecting its ecosystems.

Part IV examines the governance of land and environmental systems at WHIS. It addresses land acquisition, watershed administration, and the management of environmental legacies associated with historic mining. Fire management constitutes a recurring administrative responsibility, including wildfire preparedness, response, and mitigation planning. Together, these chapters describe how land, water, and fire management functions have operated within the unit's obligations related to resource protection and visitor safety.

Part V focuses on WHIS's dual responsibility to preserve its natural and cultural resources. Chapters examine the park's initiatives to monitor endangered species, restore habitats, and manage wildlife, including bear and bald eagle populations. Cultural resource management efforts, such as the preservation of the Tower House Historic District (THHD) and the interpretation of Wintu archeological sites, are also discussed. This section describes the park's efforts to protect both its ecological and historical treasures, even in the face of limited resources and staffing.

Part VI examines visitor use, interpretation, and education at WHIS. The chapters record visitor management practices, interpretive programming, relationships with surrounding communities, and the administration of WES. This section documents adjustments in recreational services, interpretive priorities, and educational programming in response to shifting visitation patterns and administrative directives related to resource protection and public access.

Part VII records WHIS's partnerships with federal, state, and local entities, documenting collaborative arrangements used to carry out management responsibilities. Chapters cover the park's relationships with agencies like the USBR, local concessionaires, and law enforcement, as well as its efforts to address issues such as illegal marijuana cultivation. This section describes interagency coordination processes and community engagement mechanisms used in park administration.

Part VIII synthesizes administrative themes identified across the preceding chapters and assesses recurring patterns in planning, staffing, interagency coordination, and resource management. This concluding section situates WHIS within NPS agency-level administrative practice and summarizes structural constraints, statutory obligations, and operational conditions that have shaped management decisions over time.

Finally, *Part IX* includes supporting materials, such as a bibliography, index, and appendices.

Conclusion

President Kennedy's 1963 remarks at Whiskeytown Dam placed recreation, water development, and conservation in the same frame of public purpose. WHIS was created within that same policy and planning landscape, where reservoir-based recreation, interagency coordination, and resource protection were treated as linked responsibilities rather than separate domains. The administrative record that follows tracks how those responsibilities were assigned, interpreted, and carried out by staff working within shifting legal, fiscal, and environmental conditions.

The chapters ahead document decisions and constraints that shaped WHIS's work across planning, operations, visitor services, resource management, and partnerships. They also clarify how a reservoir-centered unit administered alongside major federal infrastructure required continuous coordination with other agencies and with surrounding communities. *Past the Shoreline* offers a detailed account of how the NPS pursued its obligations in a complex, multiuse setting where recreation, conservation, and infrastructure have remained in regular contact.

CHAPTER 1.2: UNIT OVERVIEW

Whiskeytown National Recreation Area (WHIS) spans approximately 42,000 acres in Shasta County, California, west of Redding. Established in 1965, WHIS forms part of the larger Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area. WHIS is administered by the National Park Service (NPS), while the Shasta and Trinity units fall under the jurisdiction of the US Forest Service (USFS). WHIS staff oversee recreational activities, educational programs, and the preservation of natural and cultural resources within the unit's boundaries. The US Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) manages the lake level, dam, and powerhouse.

Whiskeytown Lake, formed by the construction of the Clair A. Hill Whiskeytown Dam, serves as the park's central recreational feature. With a storage capacity exceeding 240,000 acre-feet, the lake is jointly managed by WHIS staff and USBR. Together with concessionaires, NPS facilitates a wide array of recreational opportunities including land-based activities such as camping and picnicking, as well as water-based activities such as boating, swimming, and sport fishing. For residents of Redding and nearby communities, the lake serves as a regional recreation destination during summer months. Although recreational resources are distributed throughout the park, visitor activity is heavily concentrated at the developed sites around the shoreline of the lake.

In addition to the lake, WHIS offers visitors access to shaded canyons, dense forests, streams, and waterfalls that contribute to the park's appeal as a refuge from seasonal heat. Since its establishment, recreational programming has broadened significantly from its original emphasis on automobile- and water-based experiences. Today, the park supports a diverse range of activities, including hiking, horseback riding, camping, and mountain biking, enabled by its varied terrain. Forested lands account for over 90 percent of WHIS's territory, encompassing mixed conifer forest, riparian corridors, oak woodlands, and chaparral communities that support diverse plant and animal life.

The terrain of WHIS ranges from 425 feet along Lower Clear Creek to 6,209 feet at the summit of Shasta Bally.¹ This elevational gradient contributes to the park's ecological diversity, supporting a wide array of flora and fauna, including rare species such as Howell's alkali grass (*Puccinellia howellii*), found here in its only known global location.²

The region's flora, fauna, topography, and watershed have been shaped by a long history of human activities and by fire. Fire management has been a central concern for WHIS since its establishment, assuming greater administrative

¹ *Resources Management Plan for Whiskeytown National Recreation Area*, August 1997, p. 5, subfolder "ADMIN_PLANS," subfolder "Not_Accessioned," folder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF.

² WHIS, *Foundation Document: Whiskeytown National Recreation Area*, July 2014, pp. 3-4, subfolder "ADMIN_PLANS," folder "LIBRARY-REPORTS," WHIS-DF.

priority as warming temperatures and intense droughts have caused more destructive wildfires.³ The Carr Fire of 2018 burned 97 percent of the park and was the most destructive wildfire in the history of the National Park System.

Context and Purpose of Unit's Founding

The establishment of WHIS aligned with mid-twentieth-century federal priorities in land and water development, conservation, and public recreation. Created at a moment when large-scale reclamation projects and outdoor leisure both enjoyed strong public support, Whiskeytown emerged from these national investments.⁴ Its founding also aligned with the NPS's Mission 66 initiative, which sought to modernize infrastructure and reorganize visitor services in response to rising post–World War II visitation. As part of the agency's fiftieth anniversary program, Mission 66 addressed aging facilities while reshaping how visitors experienced park landscapes.⁵

WHIS's early development coincided with the surge of federal environmental and preservation legislation that reshaped public land management in the late 1960s and early 1970s. This period—often described as the “era of environmental reform”—produced landmark laws including the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA; 1966), the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA; 1970), the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA; 1970), the Clean Air Act (1970), the Clean Water Act (1972), and the Endangered Species Act (ESA; 1973).⁶

As former WHIS Superintendent James Milestone explained in *From the White House to Whiskeytown*, planning for recreational development in what would become WHIS began in earnest in 1956, driven by a growing regional demand for outdoor recreation.⁷ The establishment of national recreation areas during the mid-twentieth century

³ Ibid.

⁴ For scholarship on post–World War II environmentalism and the expansion of public concern for conservation, quality of life, and outdoor recreation in the 1950s–1970s, see, for example, Samuel P. Hays, *Beauty, Health, and Permanence: Environmental Politics in the United States, 1955–1985* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); and Mark W. T. Harvey, *A Symbol of Wilderness: Echo Park and the American Conservation Movement* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994).

⁵ On Mission 66, see, for example Ethan Carr *Mission 66: Modernism and the National Park Dilemma*, (University of Massachusetts press, 2007).

⁶ National Historic Preservation Act, 16 U.S.C. § 470 (1966); National Environmental Policy Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 4321–4347 (1970); Clean Air Act, 42 U.S.C. § 7401 (1970); Clean Water Act, 33 U.S.C. § 1251 (1972); Endangered Species Act, 16 U.S.C. § 1531 (1973). For discussion of this period as an era of environmental reform, see Hal K. Rothman, *The Greening of a Nation? Environmentalism in the United States since 1945* (Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace, 1998); Adam Rome, *The Genius of Earth Day: How a 1970 Teach-In Unexpectedly Made the First Green Generation* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2013).

⁷ James Milestone, *From the White House to Whiskeytown: An Administrative History of the Creation of Whiskeytown National Recreation Area*, Whiskeytown National Recreation Area (WHIS), 2003, pp. 13-15, e-TIC filename “WHIS_611_166062_0001_of_0055.pdf” accessed November 2024.

was part of NPS efforts to accommodate expanding postwar recreation while incorporating reservoir landscapes and multiple-use settings into the system. Unlike traditional national parks, many national recreation areas were created in partnership with federal water and power projects, resulting in shared jurisdiction and ongoing interagency coordination.⁸ As the following chapters demonstrate, interagency collaboration—spanning federal, state, and local jurisdictions—became a defining feature of WHIS’s administration.

The primary purpose of WHIS, as stated in Public Law 89-336, is to:

[P]rovide, in a manner coordinated with the other purposes of the Central Valley project, for the public outdoor recreation use and enjoyment of the Whiskeytown, Shasta, Clair Engle, and Lewiston reservoirs and surrounding lands in the State of California by present and future generations and the conservation of scenic, scientific, historic, and other values contributing to public enjoyment of such lands and waters ...⁹

Although recreation is central to its mandate, WHIS, like all NPS units, was also charged with conserving natural and cultural resources for the benefit of future generations. Importantly, WHIS was established in a historical moment when Americans negotiated tensions among the burgeoning needs for water and electricity, interest in outdoor recreation, and a growing environmental movement that sought to respond to the ecological consequences of industrialization. These pressures—industry, agriculture, pest control, energy development—intensified the need for thoughtful public land stewardship.¹⁰ WHIS’s history developed alongside the federal government’s increasing professionalization and expansion of resource management practices.

The park preserves resources that document both the enduring presence of Indigenous communities and the significant landscape and settlement changes associated with the California Gold Rush. The land upon which WHIS is located has been used and inhabited by Indigenous peoples for thousands of years. Part of the traditional territorial boundaries of the Wintu are within park boundaries. As part of this mission, the unit protects numerous Native American archeological sites and artifacts. Among its most prominent cultural resources is the Tower House Historic District (THHD), which preserves the California Gold Rush era through the Camden family’s buildings. In addition to the THHD, abandoned mines, water conveyance systems, homesteads, and their infrastructure connect the park to California Gold Rush history. The unit also maintains archival documents and museum collections of more than 200,000 items related to the park’s history and natural resources.

⁸ For the development of national recreation areas, see Douglas W. Dodd, “Boulder Dam Recreation Area: The Bureau of Reclamation, the National Park Service, and the Origins of the National Recreation Area Concept at Lake Mead, 1929-1936,” *Southern California Quarterly* Vol. 88 (Winter 2006-2007): pp. 431-432; and Richard West Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), especially discussion of postwar recreation policy and reservoir-based recreation areas.

⁹ Public Law 89-633, November 8, 1965.

¹⁰ On American environmental problems that prompted new approaches to land stewardship, see Douglas Brinkley, *Silent Spring Revolution: John F. Kennedy, Rachel Carson, Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon, and the Great Environmental Awakening* (New York: Harper Collins, 2022); Randall K. Wilson, *America’s Public Lands, From Yellowstone to Smokey Bear and Beyond* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2014); Kate Brown, *Plutopia: Nuclear Families, Atomic Cities, and the Great Soviet and American Plutonium Disasters* (University of Oxford Press, 2013); Adrian Howkins, Jared Orsi, and Mark Fiege, eds., *National Parks Beyond the Nation: Global Perspectives on “America’s Best Idea”* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2016); and Paul Sutter, *Driven Wild: How the Fight Against Automobiles Launched the Modern Wilderness Movement* (University of Washington Press, 2002).

CHAPTER 1.2: UNIT OVERVIEW

Environmental education has long been a defining feature of WHIS programming. In the early 1970s, the NPS established the Whiskeytown Environmental School (WES) under the short-lived National Environmental and Educational Development (NEED) Program. Although the federal program was discontinued shortly thereafter, the school—often still referred to as “NEED Camp”—continued under a partnership with the Shasta County Office of Education. Through this collaboration, WHIS has sustained environmental education efforts into the present. WES is recognized as one of the longest-running outdoor environmental education centers in the National Park system.¹¹

Given the multiple cultural, natural, educational, and recreational resources it protects—and its role within California’s Central Valley Project (CVP)—WHIS relies on extensive federal, state, and local partnerships to manage its operations. For example, the USBR monitors lake level and flow rates, administers the Clair A. Hill Whiskeytown Dam and Judge Francis Carr Powerhouse, and coordinates with California Division of Boating and Waterways (CA-DBW). WHIS also partners with other agencies for fire, law enforcement, and transportation.

Conclusion

Whiskeytown’s enabling legislation and subsequent management responsibilities require park staff to provide for recreation while conserving scenic, scientific, historic, and other values, in coordination with the purposes of the CVP. The unit’s terrain, ecological communities, cultural resources, and developed lakefront areas create a management setting where visitor use, infrastructure coordination, and protection of natural and cultural resources converge in routine operations.

¹¹ WHIS, *Foundation Document*, 2014, p. 3.

CHAPTER 1.3: EARLY AREA HISTORY AND FOUNDING

Whiskeytown National Recreation Area (WHIS) was established in 1965 within a landscape already shaped by long-term Indigenous stewardship, nineteenth-century extraction and settlement, and mid-twentieth-century federal water development. Long before a national recreation area existed here, Wintu communities and neighboring Indigenous peoples lived in and managed these lands through practices that included seasonal use, trade, and cultural burning. European American exploration and the fur trade introduced new diseases and new pressures in the early nineteenth century, while the Gold Rush and subsequent mining and timber economies drove more intensive ecological change and dispossession. By the 1940s–1960s, the Central Valley Project (CVP) and Trinity River Division remade regional waterways and created Whiskeytown Lake as a reclamation reservoir whose recreational potential quickly drew local and federal planning attention.

This chapter provides the early area history necessary for understanding WHIS’s founding and initial development. It summarizes Indigenous habitation and land use; traces the arrival of explorers, trappers, and settlers and the demographic ruptures that followed; outlines the Gold Rush era and the mining landscape that persisted into the twentieth century; and explains how the CVP infrastructure and interagency arrangements set the stage for a new kind of federal unit—one organized around reservoir recreation within a heavily engineered watershed. The chapter then follows the immediate pathway to designation, including the growth of recreation planning at reclamation reservoirs, local and national political advocacy, and the early planning documents and interagency agreements that guided WHIS’s first facilities, visitor services, and administrative footprint.

Indigenous Inhabitants and Users

In the twenty-first century, WHIS is best known for its natural resources, including the recreational lake and scenic landscapes. However, the region also possesses a deep human history, with occupation dating back thousands of years. Whiskeytown lies within traditional Wintu territory.¹ Archeological evidence from Indigenous sites and oral histories suggest continuous human presence in the region for at least 8,000 years.² The Wintu and their ancestors

¹ Geri D. Emberson, *Ethnographic Overview and Traditional Use Study of American Indian Affiliations Within the Whiskeytown National Recreation Area California*, US Department of the Interior (DOI), May 2000, p. 2, WHIS-DF.

² Douglas Deur, Rochelle Bloom, Katie Wynia, Jamie Hebert, *The Wintu Homelands of Clear Creek: Ethnographic Accounts of Whiskeytown National Recreation Area*, 2020, National Park Service (NPS) and Portland State University, cooperative agreement No. H8W07110001, p. 1, subfolder “AAA_BASELINE_DOCUMENTS,” folder “Administrative_History,” WHIS-DF; and NPS, *Cultural Landscape Inventory, Camden House Historic District, Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area*, 2003, p. 8 accessed November 2025, <https://npshistory.com/publications/whis/cli-camden-house-hd.pdf>.

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established villages composed of bark houses and subsisted through hunting, gathering, fishing, managing plants, and participating in an extensive trade network across present-day California.³ These communities maintained organized political structures led by a head chief or headman. Regional trade facilitated not only material exchange but also the development of economic stability and cultural resilience.⁴

The Wintu language reveals the connection of the Wintu with other Indigenous groups in the region. The language belongs to the Wintuan stock within the Penutian language family. Wintuan speakers have three sub-linguistic families, including the Wintu people in the north, the Nomlaki in Central California, and the Patwin further south. These sub-linguistic families are also referred to as Northern, Central, and Southern dialects.⁵

Archeological investigations have identified over 500 sites within the present-day boundaries of WHIS, many of which predate European American contact. One village, Soo-Yeh-Choo-Pus, was inhabited by the Wintu for millennia.⁶ These sites have yielded midden deposits, camps, house pits, and artifacts such as stone tools.⁷ Wintu settlements were typically seasonal, expanding to populations of fifty to five hundred individuals during the winter months.

Whiskeytown lies within the traditional homeland of the Wintu people. Other tribes, including Pit River Tribe, Hoopa Valley Tribe, the Klamath Tribes, Quartz Valley Indian Tribe, Karuk Tribe, and Round Valley Indian Tribe, have also expressed cultural and historical interests in the area. The NPS consults with these groups on matters related to cultural resources and traditional use.⁸ Indigenous peoples actively managed the landscape, including the use of cultural burning to enhance desirable plant and animal species.⁹ Archeologists categorize what they call “prehistoric” sites into four chronological phases based on evolving cultural traits: the Borax Lake Pattern (8,000–5,000 B.P.), Squaw Creek Pattern (5,000–3,000 B.P.), Whiskeytown Pattern (3,000–1,700 B.P. or 4,000–1,500 B.P.), and the Tehama Pattern (1,800–700 B.P.) and Augustine Pattern (1,500–150 B.P.), which are often associated together.¹⁰

Wintu communities relied on a rich array of seasonal plant and animal resources including acorns, greens, bulbs, tubers, manzanita berries, blackberries, serviceberries, buckeye, hazelnuts, and wild onion. The collection of these foods was primarily undertaken by women, with men occasionally assisting in harvesting acorns from black oak trees.¹¹

³ Other sites are areas of spiritual importance, see Deur et al., *The Wintu Homelands of Clear Creek*, p. 15.

⁴ Deur et al., *The Wintu Homelands of Clear Creek*, p. 1; Redding Rancheria, “Tribal History,” accessed May 25, 2025, <https://www.reddingrancheria-nsn.gov/tribal-history/>; April Farnham, “‘Their Sleep is to Be Desecrated’: The Central Valley Project and the Wintu People of Northern California, 1938-1943,” *Ethnic Studies Review* 30, no. 1 (2007): pp. 136-137; and Stephen Powers, *Tribes of California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), p. 231 (note, this source was originally published in 1877 by the USGS).

⁵ Deur et al., *The Wintu Homelands of Clear Creek*, p. 4.

⁶ Scott Einberger, “The Wintu,” December 14, 2023, NPS, accessed November 2024, <https://www.nps.gov/whis/learn/historyculture/the-wintu.htm>; Roger E. Kelly, “National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form: Tower House; See-Yeh-Choo-Pus,” September 27, 1985, p. 9, accessed November 2024, <http://nps.history.com/publications/whis/nr-tower-house-ad.pdf>.

⁷ Deur et al., *The Wintu Homelands of Clear Creek*, p. 36.

⁸ Ibid., p. 4.

⁹ Ibid.; and Whiskeytown National Recreation Area (WHIS), *Long-Range Interpretive Plan*, NPS, June 2017, p. 17, subfolder “ADMIN_PLANS,” subfolder “Not_Accessioned,” folder “Administrative_History,” WHIS-DF.

¹⁰ Deur et al., *The Wintu Homelands of Clear Creek*, pp. 16-18.

¹¹ Emberson, *Ethnographic Overview and Traditional Use Study*, pp. 20-21.

In addition to gathering, the Wintu relied heavily on hunting—particularly deer—using arrows, traps, and snares. Black bears were also hunted for meat, while grizzly bear hides were valued for practical and ceremonial use.¹² Fishing was a mainstay of the Wintu diet, particularly Chinook salmon, trout, and suckerfish, which were plentiful in Clear Creek. In the summers, when the Chinook salmon swam in dense populations up the watershed, the Wintu would host fish drives, where multiple villages communally fished together.¹³ Access to this seasonal abundance enabled Wintu communities to sustain themselves in the region for centuries.

Beginning in the 1820s, however, the arrival of fur trappers marked the first sustained incursions by European Americans into Wintu homelands. Although traders and trappers arrived gradually, their presence introduced deadly disease vectors to Native populations. John Work's Hudson's Bay Group, for example, introduced malaria into the area, which killed an estimated 75 percent of those living in the central and upper Sacramento Valley by the 1830s.¹⁴ By one estimation, California's Indigenous population had fallen to 50,000 by 1877, or approximately 16 percent of its precontact size.¹⁵ While fur trappers physically altered the landscape less than the waves of European American colonists who followed in the 1850s, they nonetheless altered the health and social structure of Indigenous communities by introducing new diseases and initiating new forms of territorial control, including strict property boundaries, fences, and roads that increasingly restricted access to traditional resources.

The effects of these disruptions extended far beyond the initial displacement and loss of life. Contemporary Wintu descendants face challenges rooted in these historical events, including limited access to ancestral lands, struggles for cultural preservation, and the need to assert treaty rights and sovereignty. Efforts to revive traditional ecological knowledge and reclaim stewardship of the region highlight ongoing resilience, as well as the lasting consequences of colonial policies and resource exploitation.¹⁶

Wintu descendants reside in Shasta County and surrounding areas, sustaining deep ecological knowledge of Northern California's landscapes grounded in millennia of lived experience. As the primary Indigenous inhabitants of the Whiskeytown area, Wintu communities maintained place-based practices and stewardship traditions that long predate the establishment of WHIS. In 2026, Winnimum Wintu descendants are affiliated with contemporary tribal entities including the Redding Rancheria, the Nor Rel Muk Wintu Nation, and the Wintu Tribe of Northern California.¹⁷

“Other Indigenous communities maintain cultural and historical connections to the broader region, including the Pit River Tribe of California, Hoopa Valley Tribe, the Klamath Tribes, Quartz Valley Indian Community, Round Valley Indian Tribes, Karuk Tribe, Shasta Indian Nation, and Greenville Rancheria. These connections reflect patterns of movement, trade, and seasonal use rather than permanent settlement within the Whiskeytown area. Contemporary tribal entities with ongoing ties to the region include the Nor Rel Muk Wintu Nation, Winnemem Wintu Tribe, United Tribe of Northern California, Inc., Wintu Tribe of Northern California, Redding Rancheria, Greenville Rancheria, and the

¹² Ibid., pp. 21-23.

¹³ Ibid., p. 25.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 42.

¹⁵ Powers, *Tribes of California*, cited in Deur et al., *The Wintu Homelands of Clear Creek*, p. 36.

¹⁶ Emberson, *Ethnographic Overview and Traditional Use Study*, pp. iv, 53-54, 55-57.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 42.

Shasta Indian Nation. Across these communities, cultural practices such as prescribed burning, selective harvesting, and traditional ecological knowledge have shaped the landscape over time. Indigenous presence—often minimized in earlier historical narratives—is essential to understanding the long-term human history of what is now the Whiskeytown area.

European Explorers, Trappers, and Settlers

The North American fur trade arrived in Northern California beginning in the late 1820s. By the early nineteenth century, the fur trade was already a three-hundred-year-old enterprise, characterized by small groups of trappers and explorers moving through remote landscapes in search of fur-bearing animals. Jedediah Strong Smith entered present-day Shasta County in 1826 while traveling a new trail between northern California and southern Oregon. Another newcomer to the region was Peter Skene Ogden, who arrived in 1827 while leading an expedition for the Hudson’s Bay Company.¹⁸ Others followed, including John Work with the Hudson’s Bay Company in 1832, Ewing Young in 1837, and Pierson B. Reading in the early 1840s.¹⁹ As one researcher noted, “the intrusions into Wintu territory were brief and the activities undertaken by non-Native people had little far-reaching impact on the Wintu, particularly when compared to the events which took place in later periods of times.”²⁰

Between the 1830s and 1840s, European Americans began driving cattle into the area, cutting new emigrant routes into Oregon, and gradually displacing the Wintu and other Indigenous groups from their traditional homelands and food sources.²¹ In 1843, Reading established the “Reading Route,” which generally followed Hudson’s Bay Company trails originating in Fort Hall, Idaho. The following year, Reading received a Mexican land grant of 26,600 acres along the west bank of the Sacramento River—between Salt and Cottonwood Creeks—where he established a settlement that later became present-day Redding. Reading’s efforts were part of European American expansion into Northern California, with settlers relying on Indigenous labor for their ranching and settlement activities.²² Trapping in the area peaked between 1834 and 1845, a relatively short period.²³ Despite the industry’s brevity in the area, these early fur trappers laid the groundwork for subsequent European American colonization.

¹⁸ Emberson, *Ethnographic Overview and Traditional Use Study*, p. 42; and Theodore Catton and Diane Krahe, *The Shaping of a Natural and Industrial Landscape: Whiskeytown National Recreation Area Historic Resource Study*, (Washington, DC: National Park Service, US Department of the Interior and Organization of American Historians, 2025), p. 47, accessed November 2024, <https://npshistory.com/publications/whis/hrs-2025.pdf>.

¹⁹ Emberson, *Ethnographic Overview and Traditional Use Study*, p. 42.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 14.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid., p. 42.

²³ Ibid.

California Gold Rush Era and Subsequent Mining

The late 1840s ushered in a period of rapid political and demographic transformation in Northern California. Following the Mexican–American War and the 1848 signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, vast tracts of land (including present-day California) were transferred from Mexico to the United States. While international treaties redefined national boundaries and land control, a single discovery along the American River would soon eclipse diplomatic developments in popular imagination. In 1848, John Marshall found gold. The discovery reverberated across the United States and around the world. Gold seekers and miners flocked to California territory in search of a fortune.²⁴ Within two years, the relatively small number of American and white settlers had grown to approximately 50,000. One researcher likened the region’s gold rush to a sickness: “...the quest for gold is consuming and infectious; it can cause blister and sores, delirium, disorientation, and even death.”²⁵

In 1848, Reading discovered gold on Clear Creek, a tributary of the Sacramento River. In the years following, miners flocked to the region and established small towns and camps throughout Wintu territory, including what would later be called French Gulch, Shasta, and Whiskeytown.²⁶ In 1850, the same year California achieved statehood, two new arrivals came to Shasta County.²⁷ Becoming close friends and business partners in the process, Levi Tower and Charles Camden followed the trail of other miners and began looking for gold. The men soon shifted from mining to other pursuits that supported the growing European American community, including the establishment of a hotel, orchard, roads, trails, sawmill, and additional services. Tower and Camden were not the only miners to establish businesses and families in the region, but their enterprises would later become significant historic sites within WHIS.²⁸

Although Tower and Camden primarily served a growing European American population, they remained entangled with the region’s Indigenous communities. Kate Camden, for example, was an Indigenous child brought into the Camden household as a domestic servant under conditions shaped by mid-nineteenth-century labor practices. Under the *1850 Act for the Government and Protection of Indians*, white settlers could legally place Indigenous children into systems of guardianship or indenture, which in practice often resulted in coerced and unpaid domestic labor. Contemporary accounts and later scholarship emphasize that these arrangements frequently functioned as forms of unfree labor or de facto slavery, even when framed within legal structures of care or employment.²⁹

²⁴ Anna Coxe Toogood, *Historic Resource Study: Whiskeytown National Recreation Area*, National Park Service, October 1978, p. 1, subfolder “1978,” folder “1970-1979,” WHIS-DF.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. iv.

²⁶ Emberson, *Ethnographic Overview and Traditional Use Study*, pp. 43-45; Toogood, *Historic Resource Study: Whiskeytown National Recreation Area*, pp. 1-2; and *Laws of the State of California an act for the government and protection of Indians, Chapter 133*, California Statutes, April 22, 1850, accessed November 2024, https://www.aclunorcal.org/docs/FINAL_Act_for_Government_and_Protection_of_Indians.pdf.

²⁷ Toogood, *Historic Resource Study: Whiskeytown National Recreation Area*, p. 4.

²⁸ Deur et al., *The Wintu Homelands of Clear Creek*, p. 4.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 193-194; Catton and Krahe, *Shaping of a Natural and Industrial Landscape*, p. 269; and Laura Christman, “The Story of Kate Camden: Native American in a Gold Rush Family,” NPS, March 8, 2025, accessed November 2024, <https://www.nps.gov/whis/kate-camden.htm>.

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Other marginalized communities also experienced discrimination in the developing social and economic order of Shasta County during the Gold Rush era. Chinese workers, who arrived in the 1850s to work in the mines, were frequently confined to camps on the margins of the county and were often restricted to reworking the tailings of placer sites abandoned by white miners. Their presence provoked hostility and exclusion, and was an example of anti-Chinese sentiment in California that would later be formalized in federal policy through measures such as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882.³⁰ Although a small number of Chinese men remained in Shasta County into the 1870s, most were eventually pushed into other forms of labor, including railroad construction, as opportunities in mining declined.³¹

After the region's gold rush declined in the 1860s and 1870s, mining in Shasta County largely shifted to copper, granite, iron ore, and talc. To procure the materials, miners used a variety of methods including sluicing, panning, dredging, hydraulic mining, and hard rock mining.³² By the late 1890s and into the early 1900s, copper emerged as the dominant mineral commodity, followed by other ores. In 1902, just over fifty years after Redding first discovered gold on Clear Creek, the Register of Mines and Minerals recorded at least forty-nine mines within the boundaries of what later became WHIS.³³ Despite the growth of other types of mining, miners continued to find and sell gold from quartz mines into the early 1940s.³⁴ Some mines persisted even longer. The El Dorado Mine, for example, operated from 1885 to 1968. Its last owner and operator, Frank C. Bickford, sold the mine directly to the NPS. The sale also included a residence, stamp mill, shed, and greenhouse.³⁵

While most mining laborers were transitory, their impact on the region's environment was lasting and profound. As an industry, mining became so embedded in the region that it permanently altered the landscape. For those familiar with the signs, evidence of historical mining is visible throughout Shasta County. According to the WHIS Trail Management Plan (2022), there are 154 documented mine features within the park's boundaries, with additional sites likely present but not yet formally identified.³⁶ Chemical tailings from these mines released toxins into the Clear Creek watershed during the nineteenth century and have affected water quality in subsequent decades.³⁷ In addition to the mines, workers constructed trails, roads, and irrigation ditches, many of which remain visible on the landscape.³⁸

³⁰ Anna Coxé Toogood, *Historic Resource Study: Whiskeytown National Recreation Area*, pp. 45-46; and WHIS, *Long-Range Interpretive Plan*, p. 23.

³¹ Toogood, *Historic Resource Study: Whiskeytown National Recreation Area*, p. 46.

³² US Geological Survey (USGS) and NPS, "Concentrations of Metals and Trace Elements in Aquatic Biota Associated with Abandoned Mine Lands in the Whiskeytown National Recreation Area and Nearby Clear Creek Watershed, Shasta County, Northwest California, 2002-2003," p. 2, folder "USGS Mine Contamination Study," WHIS-DF; Anna Coxé Toogood and David G. Henderson, *Historic Structure Report: Tower House Historic District, Historical and Architectural Data Section, Whiskeytown National Recreation Area*, May 1973, p. 42, subfolder "ADMIN_PLANS," folder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF; and Toogood, *Historic Resource Study: Whiskeytown National Recreation Area*, p. 48.

³³ Toogood, *Historic Resource Study: Whiskeytown National Recreation Area*, pp. 158-160.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 52, 58.

³⁵ Toogood and Henderson, *Historic Structure Report: Tower House Historic District*, pp. 3, 5.

³⁶ WHIS, *Trails Management Plan: Environmental Assessment*, February 2022, pp. 39-41, subfolder "Environmental Assessments," folder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF.

³⁷ USGS and NPS, "Concentrations of Metals and Trace Elements," pp. 1-3, 13-14, 15.

³⁸ Toogood and Henderson, *Historic Structure Report: Tower House Historic District*, pp. 1, 25.

Combined with the county's timber industry in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, these extractive pursuits not only transformed the environment but also reshaped the regional economy.³⁹ The Bureau of Outdoor Recreation estimated that gold, silver, and other mineral mines produced \$100 million in the Whiskeytown area alone between approximately 1848 and 1900.⁴⁰ However, this era of extraction could not continue indefinitely. As timber and mining declined in the mid-twentieth century, a new phase of federally driven water development and hydroelectric infrastructure emerged in Shasta County. Backed by substantial federal investment and large-scale construction plans, the US Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) would dramatically reshape the region's waterways.

The Central Valley Project

The CVP is a multi-purpose water resource project that employs dams, reservoirs, canals, and other infrastructure to deliver agricultural, industrial, and domestic water to the Central Valley. It also provides hydroelectric power and reduces the risk of floods in the region.⁴¹ In 1933, the California state legislature passed the California Central Valley Project Act, based on a water management plan prepared by the California Division of Water Resources.⁴² The federal government soon assumed responsibility for the project under the New Deal, initiating plans for two major dams: Shasta Dam near Redding and Friant Dam north of Fresno.

Construction of Shasta Dam began in 1938 and was completed in 1945. Standing at 602 feet, Shasta Dam was considered a "key component [of the CVP] from the beginning."⁴³ The dam created Lake Shasta, which would eventually be administered by the US Forest Service (USFS) as part of the Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area. However, the Shasta Dam was not intended to function in isolation. Beginning in the 1940s, support grew in Shasta County for the Trinity River Diversion Project, a component of the larger CVP. This initiative aimed to transfer a portion of the Trinity River's water into the Sacramento River drainage. Representative Clair Engle introduced a bill for the Trinity Project in the House, proposing the diversion of 600,000 acre-feet of water annually and guaranteeing Trinity County 25 percent of the new power generated.⁴⁴ After extensive debate, the House approved the Trinity Project in 1955, with construction commencing later that year.⁴⁵

³⁹ Anna Coxé Toogood notes that in the nineteenth century, "Almost no mention was made in the local press or records to the logging industry, although it definitely continued during the 1850s and 1860s, and until most of the timber had been exhausted." WHIS archival documents contain limited detailed information on the logging industry in the area, though available records indicate that logging occurred across significant portions of what later became park lands and resulted in the construction of an extensive network of logging roads. See Toogood, *Historic Resource Study: Whiskeytown National Recreation Area*, p. 14; and WHIS, *Whiskeytown Fire Management Plan*, 2022, p. 17, subfolder "ADMIN_PLANS," folder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF.

⁴⁰ Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, *A Report on the Proposed Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area*, April 1963, p. 23, folder "Unorganized Files," WHIS-DF.

⁴¹ US Bureau of Reclamation (USBR), "Central Valley Project," April 8, 2024, accessed November 2024, <https://www.usbr.gov/mp/cvp/>.

⁴² NPS, "Shasta Dam," January 13, 2017, accessed November 2024, <https://www.nps.gov/articles/california-shasta-dam.htm>.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Dane J. Durham, J.D., "How the Trinity River Lost its Water," 2005, California State Water Resources Control Board, p. 16, accessed November 2024, https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/waterrights/water_issues/programs/bay_delta/california_waterfix/exhibits/docs/FOTR_for_94.pdf.

⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 39-40.

The USBR completed the Trinity River Diversion Project in 1963, the same year Whiskeytown Dam—under construction since 1960—was finished. President John F. Kennedy formally dedicated the dam on September 28, 1963, although full operation of the diversion system and associated powerplants commenced in 1964. Water from the Trinity River Basin is first diverted to the Lewiston Dam, then conveyed through the 10.8-mile Clear Creek Tunnel to the Carr Powerhouse for hydroelectric generation, before being directed into Whiskeytown Lake.⁴⁶ Formed by the creation of Whiskeytown Dam, Whiskeytown Lake holds approximately 241,100 acre-feet of water and spans nearly 3,200 acres.⁴⁷

While the USBR developed the infrastructure for power generation and water supply, other stakeholders recognized the recreational potential of the newly formed reservoirs. Growing federal and state interest in using the Trinity River Diversion Project for both reclamation and recreation aligned with larger patterns in American environmental history. During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, labor-oriented landscapes were repurposed into spaces of leisure, and Whiskeytown Lake was no different.⁴⁸ Understanding the history of the CVP is essential to grasping the origins of WHIS and, more broadly, the development of other national recreation areas in the US West.

WHIS Founding and Early Development

For readers seeking a detailed account of WHIS's establishment, Superintendent James Milestone's administrative history, *From the White House to Whiskeytown*, provides a valuable resource. Milestone outlines five major themes in WHIS's development: (1) the construction of Whiskeytown Dam; (2) James Carr's advocacy for federal protection of the area; (3) local political efforts in Redding and Shasta County to secure federal support for power and recreation development; (4) the dam's completion as a milestone in the CVP, including recognition by President Kennedy; and (5) the NPS role in planning and managing recreation areas tied to the CVP in Northern California.⁴⁹ Milestone approached the unit's creation from a high-level perspective, examining developments from Redding to Washington, D.C. In this administrative history, a brief overview of WHIS's path to becoming an NPS site, situated within the development of national recreation areas, provides essential context.

The concept of a national recreation area originated in 1936, when the US Department of the Interior (DOI) partnered with the USBR to establish the Boulder Dam Recreation Area, now known as Lake Mead National Recreation Area. This designation stemmed from the Boulder Canyon Project Act of 1928, passed under the Hoover Administration,

⁴⁶ Ashley Harting, "Whiskeytown's Purpose: How it came to be and where the water comes from," *KRCR TV*, October 5, 2022, accessed November 2024, <https://krcrtv.com/news/local/whiskeytowns-purpose-how-it-came-to-be-and-where-the-water-comes-from>; and Durham, "How the Trinity River Lost its Water," p. 44.

⁴⁷ Deur et al., *The Wintu Homelands of Clear Creek*, p. 1.

⁴⁸ See, for example, Thomas Andrews, "Tourism, Labor, and the Construction of the Colorado Landscape, 1858-1917?" *Journal of American History* 92, no. 3 December 2005; and Hal K. Rothman, *Devils Bargain: Tourism in the Twentieth-Century American West* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1998).

⁴⁹ James Milestone, *From the White House to Whiskeytown: An Administrative History of the Creation of Whiskeytown National Recreation Area*, WHIS, 2003, pp. 46-47.

and from the federal government's effort to manage the unplanned recreational use that had developed around the reservoir.⁵⁰ Because the USBR had little interest in developing or managing recreation at Boulder Dam, the DOI turned to the NPS to assume responsibilities for recreational planning and amenities. Historian Douglas Dodd argued that assigning the NPS to manage recreation at dam sites under the national recreation area designation conflicted with the agency's core mission. Until that time, the NPS had actively opposed dam development across the US West, most famously at Hetch Hetchy Valley in Yosemite. Now, the agency was tasked with overseeing recreation at one of the largest reservoirs in the United States. NPS officials were reluctant to label the new recreational site a "national park," questioning how an agency dedicated to preservation could apply that title to such a heavily altered landscape. The solution, more rhetorical rather than practical, was to create the new designation of "national recreation area" rather than use "national park."⁵¹

By the mid-1930s, the federal government had expanded its efforts to create national recreation areas. In 1936, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 7496, assigning the NPS responsibility for acquisition and development of recreation demonstration areas. Congress provided funding to the NPS to acquire 397,00 acres of land for the establishment of recreation demonstration areas near urban centers. Ten years later, Congress authorized the NPS to manage recreation on lands held by other federal agencies through Public Law 633.⁵²

Whiskeytown's designation as a national recreation area resulted from a decade of shifting jurisdictional studies and interagency negotiations. NPS involvement in administering USBR reservoirs in California for recreation began in 1945 at nearby Shasta Lake.⁵³ In 1948, administration of Shasta Lake was transferred to the USFS. From 1947 to 1957, the NPS conducted fourteen studies on potential reservoir recreation sites. Around the same time, California State Parks conducted a study of the recently established Whiskeytown Lake. Despite the lake's thirty-six miles of shoreline, the State Park study concluded that Whiskeytown Lake did not meet the criteria to become a state park because it lacked "scenic qualities."⁵⁴ Notably, the study evaluated only the lake and shoreline for state park designation, excluding the 42,000 acres that later comprised WHIS. After the State of California declined to pursue the site, Shasta County identified the reservoir as a potential county park in 1958. County planners developed a master plan and enlisted the help of the NPS to imagine a recreation site that went beyond the shoreline around Whiskeytown Lake.

In the summer of 1958, NPS representatives began planning and estimating the costs for constructing public use facilities at Whiskeytown Lake. Each year, the NPS and the county moved closer to creating a recreation area at the reservoir. In 1959, George Collins, the NPS Chief Recreation Resource Planner, drafted and submitted three alternative plans for a Whiskeytown County Park to the USBR.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ Douglas W. Dodd, "Boulder Dam Recreation Area: The Bureau of Reclamation, the National Park Service, and the Origins of the National Recreation Area Concept at Lake Mead, 1929-1936," *Southern California Quarterly* Vol. 88 (Winter 2006-2007): pp. 431-432.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 434, 440, 431. Today, the DOI defines national recreation areas as "lands near large reservoirs that offer visitors a chance to experience water-based outdoor activities." US DOI, "America's Public Lands Explained," January 2023, accessed November 2024, <https://www.doi.gov/blog/americas-public-lands-explained>.

⁵² NPS, "Administrative Policies for National Recreation Areas of the National Park system," June 5, 2007, accessed November 2024, http://npshistory.com/publications/admin_policies/policy3-general.htm.

⁵³ Milestone, *From the White House to Whiskeytown*, p. 13.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 4; and NPS, "Narrative: Part of the Master Plan, Whiskeytown Reservoir Recreation Area, California," October 1964, p. 2, file, "1964_Land_Preservation_Plan_Narrative_WHIS_611_3045," subfolder "ADMIN PLANS," folder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF.

⁵⁵ Milestone, *From the White House to Whiskeytown*, p. 17.

CHAPTER 1.3: EARLY AREA HISTORY AND FOUNDING

The final push toward establishing a national recreation area at Whiskeytown Lake came through a series of national and state elections that placed WHIS advocates in decision-making roles. When President Kennedy was elected in 1960, he appointed Stewart Udall as Secretary of the Interior. Udall, in turn, hired James K. Carr, a Redding local, as Under Secretary of the Interior. In that same election cycle, Northern California voters elected Harold “Bizz” Johnson to Congress. Johnson was “a champion for Northern California and later sponsored two different bills to establish Whiskeytown Lake as a National Recreation Area.”⁵⁶ Clair Engle, a former Northern California congressman, was elected to the Senate and remained a strong advocate for conservation in the region. With Carr, Engle, and Johnson in Washington, and with a supportive Interior Secretary, the prospects for a federally designated recreation area in Whiskeytown grew.

In 1961, discussions about establishing a recreation area at the reservoirs in Northern California gained momentum. Carr advocated for a Whiskeytown National Recreation Area that extended beyond the lake and shoreline to include what is now the full acreage of WHIS. Simultaneously, Carr encouraged NPS Director Conrad Wirth to foster national recreation areas across the country.⁵⁷

The idea of establishing a federal national recreation area at Whiskeytown also garnered significant local support. However, this support initially encountered opposition from a vocal group of individuals being displaced by the reservoir’s construction. To resolve the issue, Shasta County decided to hold a referendum. In 1962, voters were asked whether to seek federal assistance in creating a recreation area at Whiskeytown Lake or to raise local taxes to fund a county-managed recreation area. In a landslide decision, the county overwhelmingly voted in favor of federal involvement.⁵⁸

At the federal level, agencies sought to address the growing public demand for outdoor recreation. In 1962, the DOI established a new agency for outdoor recreation planning and development: the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation. That same year, President Kennedy enacted Executive Order 11017, which established a Recreation Advisory Council to advise federal agencies on matters of outdoor recreation.⁵⁹ As Edward Crafts, the bureau’s first director, later explained, the country faced a “crisis in outdoor recreation,” as a “surging demand for opportunities to enjoy outdoor activities presses upon natural resources which are shrinking under the impact of our rapidly expanding population and economy.”⁶⁰ To address the “crisis,” the federal government undertook several major initiatives to expand recreation-based programs. Soon after, in 1963, the DOI and the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) entered an agreement to “remove all possible roadblocks to the [Kennedy] administration’s outdoor recreation program.”⁶¹ As a result of the

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 19.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 20.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 24.

⁵⁹ Executive Order 11017, accessed November 2024, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/executive-order-11017-providing-for-coordination-with-respect-outdoor-recreation-resources>.

⁶⁰ Edward C. Crafts, *Trails for America: Report on the Nationwide Trails Study*, Washington DC: US Department of the Interior, 1966, p. 20, accessed November 2024, <https://ia802908.us.archive.org/25/items/trailsforamerica00unse/trailsforamerica00unse.pdf>.

⁶¹ Stewart L. Udall, *The Race to Inner Space* (Washington DC: US Department of the Interior, 1964), p. 9.

agreement, the DOI and the USDA outlined new initiatives, joint proposals for national recreation areas (including WHIS), support of the President's Recreation Advisory Council, and guidelines for managing national recreation areas.⁶²

In 1963, the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation published "A Report on the Proposed Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area," which detailed its vision for the joint USFS-NPS administered recreational reservoirs in Northern California. The report avowed that the reservoirs could "provide some of the finest recreation waters in California in a setting of outstanding mountain scenery. They provide an excellent base on which to develop a diversified and balanced recreation program...to help meet the recreation demand...in Shasta and Trinity Counties..."⁶³ Similarly, USBR recreation planners promoted Whiskeytown Lake's potential for water-based recreation, fish spawning, and land-based activities such as hiking. Planners also lauded Whiskeytown Lake's accessible location both to people as close as Redding and to those as far away as Portland, Oregon, or Seattle, Washington.⁶⁴ Excitement for the new recreation area led to more concrete planning efforts.

The NPS regional office established a master plan for Whiskeytown in 1964, ahead of the unit's formal congressional authorization. The plan guided the park through its early years and included five main goals: 1) establishing a park organizational structure, 2) building partnerships for the joint management of the recreation area, 3) creating visitor services, 4) laying out an interpretive agenda, and 5) starting and completing the construction of administrative buildings, including limited staff housing and headquarters.

Before drafting the master plan, the NPS entered into a 1962 memorandum of agreement (MOA) with the USBR granting the NPS "responsibility for the recreational planning, development, administration, and management of the Whiskeytown Reservoir Area." The USFS and USBR signed similar MOAs regarding the administration of Trinity and Lewiston Reservoirs as separate management units under the supervision of the Shasta-Trinity National Forest. Soon after, NPS planned and requested \$400,000 to support construction of public recreation facilities at Whiskeytown Lake. NPS representatives cautioned the USBR that without visible facility development, public support for the proposed national recreation area could waver.⁶⁵ The NPS wanted Whiskeytown to work closely with Trinity and Shasta Recreation Area managers to coordinate and develop integrated management. WHIS also pursued partnerships, including fire control with the California State Division of Forestry and law enforcement coordination with state and county agencies. Permanent rangers were to be deputized as state game wardens to enable law enforcement capabilities in the area.⁶⁶

Since a directive of the NPS at Whiskeytown was to provide recreation at the reservoir, the unit's first master plan also laid out basic visitor services and concessions. The NPS selected Oak Bottom, Whiskey Creek, and Brandy Creek for recreational development because these sites offered "ease of access, relatively flat topography," and favorable lakeshore locations.⁶⁷ Concessionaires were to operate at these developed recreational sites. NPS contracted construction

⁶² Ibid., p. 11.

⁶³ Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, "A Report on the Proposed Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area," p. 1.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 2

⁶⁵ Milestone, *From the White House to Whiskeytown*, pp. 25-26.

⁶⁶ Whiskeytown Unit, "The Staff: Narrative, Master Plan Whiskeytown Reservoir Recreation Area Drawings," October 1964, p. 10, Sheet 4 of 4, subfolder "Facilities_Planning_Maps," folder "FACILITIES," WHIS-DF.

⁶⁷ Memo, Leon J. Mitchell to Chief, Office of Resource planning, General Development Plan, Whiskeytown, July 8, 1966, subfolder "D18-010," subfolder "WHIS_0148_Cat9018_D_Box 1 of 2," folder "Accessioned," WHIS-DF.

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and initiated major development of the three recreation areas beginning in 1964. At Whiskey Creek, WHIS constructed a comfort station and gangway ramp for launching boats. At Oak Bottom, the NPS built a bath house with concession facilities, four comfort stations (two for day use and two at a campground), a picnic shelter, a contact station, a swim beach, and a gangway for boats. At Brandy Creek, WHIS established a bath house with concession facilities, a comfort station, a contact station, a swim beach, and a gangway for boats.⁶⁸ Additionally, WHIS built a water and wastewater system in all three areas to support the comfort station and concessionaire buildings.

NPS constructed a visitor center on Highway 299 in 1965.⁶⁹ NPS designers Marc Malik and A.C. Kuehl designed the visitor center in a Mission 66 style.⁷⁰ The Modern-style station included restrooms, an office, an outdoor walkway, and a lobby. The building also featured a walkway with plant beds and pyramid-roofed shelters overlooking the reservoir and Shasta Bally mountain. At this newly constructed information station, park planners directed that “interpretative activities should be minimal as compared with those of a national park,” since recreation was the focus, though this did not mean visitor services should be lacking.⁷¹ The interpretation section of the 1964 Master Plan emphasized a “balanced program of education and interpretation along with the recreational activities,” focusing on the region’s natural resources and engineering of the dam and reservoir.⁷²

The Whiskeytown Visitor Center was well-aligned with the Mission 66 building type. As Architectural Historian Sarah Allaback has documented, the NPS introduced visitor centers as central elements in park development, embodying the Park Service Modern architectural style. These centers consolidated various functions—interpretive exhibits, administrative offices, restrooms, and other visitor services—into a single facility, enhancing operational efficiency and visitor experience. This approach marked a departure from the earlier decentralized “park village” model, where facilities were spread across multiple rustic buildings. By centralizing services, the NPS aimed to manage increasing visitor numbers more effectively and minimize environmental impact. The strategic placement of visitor centers facilitated visitor flow and concentrated activities, thereby protecting less developed park areas. The Mission 66 visitor centers not only transformed park planning and design but also influenced the development of state parks and international park systems.⁷³ The Whiskeytown Visitor Center was the most “complete and significant expression” of Mission 66 ethos.⁷⁴

⁶⁸ Whiskeytown Unit, “B-7 Completion Report, May 25, 1964,” subfolder “Oak Bottom,” folder “FACILITIES,” WHIS-DF; and Whiskeytown Unit, B-8 Completion Report, December 11, 1964, subfolder “Oak Bottom,” folder “FACILITIES,” WHIS-DF.

⁶⁹ Whiskeytown Unit, “Information Station and Overlook as Constructed Drawing,” August 23, 1965, Sheet 1 of 13, subfolder “HQ,” folder “FACILITIES,” WHIS-DF.

⁷⁰ For a complete and comprehensive history of the WHIS Visitor Center see Sigel & Strain Architects, *Whiskeytown Visitor Center, Historic Structure Report, Vol 1*, August 2022, accessed November 2024, <http://npshistory.com/publications/whis/hsr-whiskeytown-vc-v1.pdf>.

⁷¹ Whiskeytown Unit, “The Visitor: Narrative, Master Plan Whiskeytown Reservoir Recreation Area,” October 1964, p. 8, Sheet 3 of 4, subfolder “Facilities_Planning_Maps,” folder “FACILITIES,” WHIS-DF. At the time, the NPS had not yet conducted cultural resource surveys within the proposed boundaries or acquired lands containing the prominent cultural resources that would later fall within the boundaries of the national recreation area.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ For more on visitor centers, see Sarah Allaback, *Mission 66 Visitor Centers: The History of a Building Type* (Washington D.C 2000); and Ethan Carr *Mission 66: Modernism and the National Park Dilemma*, (University of Massachusetts press, 2007).

⁷⁴ Allaback, *Mission 66 Visitor Centers*, pp. 24-26.

In addition to its new visitor center and other Mission 66–style buildings, WHIS also constructed a day-use area near the Carr Powerhouse, which included a memorial to Judge Francis Carr. The day-use area featured a comfort station, lawn, and pavilion commemorating Judge Carr.⁷⁵ The memorial, however, developed differently than other areas at WHIS. In 1964, Representative Harold “Bizz” Johnson urged Interior Secretary Stewart Udall to establish a “rest-picnic area on the west side of the Powerhouse along the entrance road and lake,” believing it to be an ideal location for such a facility.⁷⁶ The DOI, while noting that a day-use area near the Carr Powerhouse was not part of the master plan, supported the concept and directed its field offices to study its feasibility.⁷⁷ In March 1965, the NPS stated that the “memorial area can be developed under the existing authority,” with a budget of \$150,000, emphasizing that “it should not be considered as a part of H.R. 797,” the act that established WHIS.⁷⁸

The development of park infrastructure included provisions for employee housing and administrative headquarters. The 1964 Master Plan called for limited employee housing at the reservoir, restricting accommodations to just five staff members. The availability of housing in nearby communities dissuaded planners from including more accommodations on park grounds. Staff who were expected to live on site included the chief ranger, maintenance supervisor, and rangers assigned to Oak Bottom, Brandy Creek, and Whiskey Creek.⁷⁹ In 1964, the regional director approved plans for employee housing in the headquarters area, including three residences: two duplex units located behind the administrative building to the west and a third residence on the road leading to the boat docks.⁸⁰

NPS administrative staff offices moved from a temporary workspace in a former Bureau of Land Management (BLM) office in Redding into a building once inhabited by the USBR’s field office in 1964.⁸¹ The USBR field office building, constructed in 1960, had been used for operation and administration in the Whiskeytown Lake’s construction.⁸² After the move in 1964, National Recreation Area Project Manager Samuel A. King ordered several improvements to the new headquarters facility. Updates included painting the metal siding and roof, constructing a canopy over the main entrance, pouring concrete porches at the entrances and sidewalks around the building, adding new partitions, interior

⁷⁵ US DOI, NPS, “Judge Carr Memorial, Powerhouse, Whiskeytown Reservoir R.A. Shasta,” Drawing No. RA-WHIS-3104-4, Sheet 1 of 1, July 8, 1965, subfolder “Carr_Powerhouse,” folder “FACILITIES,” WHIS-DF.

⁷⁶ Letter from Harold T. (Bizz) Johnson to Stewart L. Udall, September 2, 1964, p. 5 of “Judge_Carr_Memorial.pdf,” subfolder “D18_001_Background_Book,” subfolder “WHIS_1480_Cat9018_D_Box1of2,” folder “Accessioned,” WHIS-DF.

⁷⁷ Letter from J.E.N. Jenson to Harold T. Johnson, September 18, 1964, p. 4 of “Judge_Carr_Memorial.pdf,” subfolder “D18_001_Background_Book,” subfolder “WHIS_1480_Cat9018_D_Box1of2,” folder “Accessioned,” WHIS-DF.

⁷⁸ No Author, “Judge Carr Memorial,” March 15, 1965, p. 1 of “Judge_Carr_Memorial.pdf,” subfolder “D18_001_Background_Book,” subfolder “WHIS_1480_Cat9018_D_Box1of2,” folder “Accessioned,” WHIS-DF.

⁷⁹ Whiskeytown Unit, “The Staff: Narrative, Master Plan Whiskeytown Reservoir Recreation Area,” October 1964, p. 10, Sheet 4 of 4, subfolder “Facilities_Planning_Maps,” folder “FACILITIES,” WHIS-DF.

⁸⁰ Whiskeytown Unit, “Employee Residence, Headquarters, Whiskeytown Recreation Area Working Drawings,” Architectural Drawings, June 20, 1963, subfolder “HQ,” folder “FACILITIES,” WHIS-DF. The employee residences are now used as division offices for Interpretation and Resource Management.

⁸¹ Memo, Samuel King to Chief WODC, Master Plan Narrative, October 18, 1962, sub-subfolder “D18-010,” subfolder “WHIS_0148_Cat9018_D_Box 1 of 2,” folder “Accessioned,” WHIS-DF.

⁸² US DOI, NPS, Administration Buildings, Headquarters, Whiskeytown NRA, Individual Building Data Sheet, November 15, 1968, subfolder “HQ,” folder “FACILITIES,” WHIS-DF. The later management document cited here referred to this admin building as a Butler Building, which is a common prefabricated metal building, see David Pugh to Regional Director, Pacific West Region, “Administrative Facilities,” March 12, 1998, folder “D34 Buildings General,” box HQ8, WHIS-AF.

paint, and floor covering, updating the electrical wiring, and adding a women's restroom.⁸³ The administration building also included a space for visitor contact and information.⁸⁴ As of 2026, the building continues to serve as WHIS's headquarters.

As the recreation area began to take physical shape, it also gained an official designation: Congress passed WHIS's enabling legislation, Public Law 89-336, on November 8, 1965. The law established the Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area to provide "outdoor recreation use and enjoyment...and the conservation of scenic, scientific, historic and other values contributing to public enjoyment of such lands and waters," assigning NPS to administer the Whiskeytown Unit and USFS to oversee the other two units.⁸⁵ As an official NPS unit, WHIS would begin to face both the challenges and opportunities of managing a national recreation area.

Conclusion

This chapter summarizes the long human and environmental history of the Whiskeytown area and the mid-twentieth-century developments that led to WHIS's establishment. The administrative record situates WHIS within Indigenous homelands and within nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century patterns of extraction and settlement that altered land use, watersheds, and local communities. It also documents the role of federal water infrastructure—especially the CVP and Trinity River Division—in reshaping the Clear Creek watershed and creating Whiskeytown Lake as a reservoir with substantial recreational use.

WHIS emerged from local conditions and federal recreation planning at reclamation reservoirs. As planning and facility development accelerated in the late 1950s and early 1960s, NPS assumed responsibility for recreational planning and visitor facilities at Whiskeytown Reservoir under interagency agreements and local support. The Master Plan established early administrative priorities and set in motion the initial development of front-country recreation areas, headquarters functions, employee housing, and visitor contact facilities. Congressional authorization in 1965 formalized WHIS's status as a federal unit, establishing the framework for subsequent planning, administration, and resource management discussed in later chapters.

⁸³ Whiskeytown Unit, "Rehab of the Administration Building: Preliminary Drawings," Architectural Drawings, June 10, 1964, subfolder "HQ," folder "FACILITIES," WHIS-DF.

⁸⁴ Whiskeytown Unit, "The Visitor: Narrative, Master Plan," p. 8.

⁸⁵ US Congress, Public Law 89-336: An Act to Establish the Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area in the State of California and for Other Purposes, 85th Cong., November 8, 1965, accessed August 2023, <https://www.congress.gov/89/statute/STATUTE-79/STATUTE-79-Pg1295.pdf>.

PART II

CHAPTER 2.1: ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

The administrative structure of Whiskeytown National Recreation Area (WHIS) developed alongside institutional changes within the National Park Service (NPS), shifting from mid-twentieth-century generalist management toward increasingly specialized operations shaped by expanding regulatory requirements and compliance responsibilities. In its early years, WHIS functioned under a compact organizational model in which a small staff carried wide-ranging responsibilities across visitor protection, maintenance, and administration. As visitation increased, regulatory obligations expanded, and expectations for resource stewardship and wildfire preparedness intensified, the park's internal organization adjusted accordingly.

Although WHIS has consistently followed the standard NPS hierarchical framework—anchored by a superintendent—the number, scope, and specialization of subordinate divisions changed significantly over time. In the mid-1960s, the park operated with three primary divisions: Ranger Activities, Maintenance and Operations, and Administration. By the early twenty-first century, that structure had expanded to five divisions, with distinct lines of work in interpretation, law enforcement, cultural resource compliance, natural resource management, and an increasingly robust fire management program.

Structural expansion, however, did not eliminate persistent constraints. Even as staffing levels and program areas grew, annual reports and planning documents repeatedly identified gaps between operational demands and available personnel, funding, and facilities. The administrative history of WHIS is therefore one of incremental specialization, periodic reorganization, and continual adaptation to rising expectations within relatively small unit and its correspondingly limited budget.

A Growing National Recreation Unit, 1960s–1970s

The initial master plan for WHIS, covering operations from 1964 to 1972, proposed a relatively simple organizational structure. At its inception, the plan called for a modest staff of six: a Project Manager (GS-13), Supervisory Park Ranger (GS-9), Park Ranger (GS-7), Administrative Assistant (GS-7), Clerk-Typist (GS-4), and a Maintenance Worker (ungraded). These positions were assigned across three divisions: Ranger Activities, Maintenance and Operations, and Administration (Figure 1).¹ While the original planning documents called for a “minimum” staffing

¹ Whiskeytown Unit, “The Staff: Narrative, Master Plan Whiskeytown Reservoir Recreation Area Drawings,” October 1964, p. 10, Sheet 4 of 4, subfolder “Facilities_Planning_Maps,” folder “FACILITIES,” WHIS-DF.

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level, the NPS anticipated that the workforce would expand to include fifteen permanent employees, with no seasonal staff initially anticipated. Despite its minimal staffing, the NPS projected 750,000 annual visitor days at WHIS, placing substantial operational demands on the six permanent employees. In practice, the park's natural features—its forests and creeks—along with the reservoir, functioned as the primary setting for visitor activity, compensating for the small staff during the park's early years.² This modest structure proved adequate only temporarily, as increasing visitation and evolving resource management needs prompted organizational adjustments.³

Whiskeytown's administrative structure differed slightly from that of the US Forest Service (USFS), a distinction noted in co-management documents produced by the two agencies. While the NPS and USFS both employed district rangers, those stationed at WHIS bore greater responsibility for visitor engagement and interpretive services. This emphasis aligned with the NPS's mission to foster "enjoyment, education, and inspiration," whereas the USFS's mission prioritized ecological stewardship, aiming to sustain "the health, diversity, and productivity of the nation's forests and grasslands."⁴ Although their missions varied, both agencies maintained a hierarchical structure: within the NPS, the superintendent functioned similarly to the USFS's forest supervisor, with each overseeing long-term planning and the functional supervision of unit operations.⁵

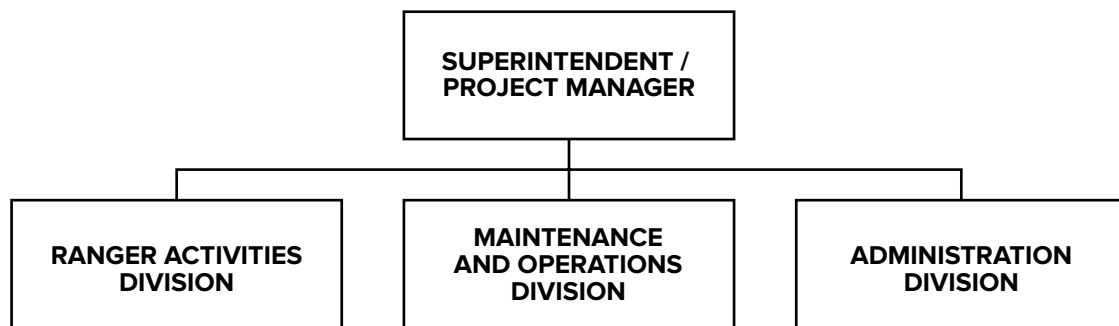


Figure 1. 1964 Master Plan Organizational Structure.
Source: Designed by Mike Solo.⁶

² National Park Service (NPS), "Narrative: Part of the Master Plan, Whiskeytown Reservoir Recreation Area, California," October 1964, p. 3, file, "1964_Land_Preservation_Plan_Narrative_WHIS_611_3045," subfolder "ADMINS PLANS," folder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF.

³ Whiskeytown Unit, "Staff: Narrative, Master Plan," p. 10.

⁴ NPS, "About Us," updated September 20, 2024, accessed November 2024, <https://www.nps.gov/aboutus/index.htm>; US Forest Service (USFS), "Meet the Forest Service," n.d., accessed November 10, 2024, <https://www.fs.usda.gov/about-agency/meet-forest-service>.

⁵ NPS and USFS, *Master Coordination Plan for Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area*, August 3, 1971, pp. 7-8, folder "1970s," WHIS-DF.

⁶ Based on information from Whiskeytown Unit, "Staff: Narrative, Master Plan."

After the unit's first superintendent, Leon J. Mitchell, assumed his role in 1966, WHIS evaluated visitor patterns and expanded programs over the following decade. Mitchell retained a similar organizational structure but renamed and expanded the Ranger Activities branch to Visitor Activities and Resource Management (VA&RM). Meanwhile, the administrative and maintenance branches remained largely unchanged.⁷ Through the 1970s, the park's core organizational structure remained stable, though division titles evolved. In 1979, the Position Management Plan identified three core divisions for WHIS's approximately sixty employees (including permanent and temporary staff): the Division of Maintenance, Division of VA&RM, and the Division of Administration.⁸

VA&RM assumed growing responsibilities in the 1970s, well beyond the ranger duties outlined in 1964. These responsibilities included stewardship of cultural, historical, and natural resources, as well as oversight of visitor safety, including lifeguarding operations.⁹ Despite the division's responsibilities over the park's extensive historical and cultural assets, it did not have a designated cultural resource manager position. Instead, the Branch of Interpretation within the Division of VA&RM consisted of a Supervisory Park Ranger, a seasonal Park Technician, and Park Aide.¹⁰ Planning documents identified this concentration of responsibilities as administratively inefficient. The Position Management Plan indicated that that VA&RM had "an excessive amount of layering and overlapping of duties."¹¹ Recognizing administrative inefficiencies in planning documents proved easier than resolving them since Position Management Plans and structural changes required approval from the NPS Western Regional Director.¹²

The administrative structure at WHIS remained largely intact into the 1980s, even as staff faced increasing demands. Nonetheless, superintendents periodically modified individual roles or added new positions to more efficiently address emerging needs. For example, in 1979, one year after his arrival, Superintendent Ray Foust transferred the Secretary-Stenographer and Project Clerk from the Maintenance Division to Administration, renaming the stenographer position "Administrative Clerk."¹³

These adjustments, however, did not fully resolve ongoing administrative challenges. For example, the Maintenance Division—one of WHIS's largest—reported "an insufficient number of supervisory personnel for effective span of control over employees."¹⁴ Additionally, several maintenance employees encountered difficulties stemming from outdated or inaccurate position descriptions.¹⁵ Such staffing and organizational challenges were common across

⁷ Western Region Ad Hoc Management Consultation Team, "Whiskeytown National Recreation Area Management Consultation Report," November 11-14, 1975, p. 1, folder "1970s", WHIS-DF.

⁸ Ray Foust, "Position Management Plan, FY 1979," Whiskeytown National Recreation Area (WHIS), p. 3, folder "Pos Mgmt Plan_4 of 4," box HQ 9, WHIS-AF.

⁹ Ray Foust, "Position Management Plan FY 1982," October 30, 1981, p. 5, folder "Pos Mgmt Plan_4 of 4," box, "HQ 9," WHIS-AF.

¹⁰ Foust, "Position Management Plan, FY 1979," p. 5.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

¹² Letter from Acting Regional Director, Western Region to Ray Foust, Superintendent, "Position Management Plan," April 5, 1982, folder "Pos Mgmt Plan_4 of 4," box HQ 9, WHIS-AF.

¹³ Foust, "Position Management Plan, FY 1979," p. 1.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 3-5.

¹⁵ Foust, "Position Management Plan, FY 1982," p. 1.

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federal land management agencies, dating back to the early twentieth century. One employee preserved a satirical “Help Wanted” cartoon for a park technician, in which applicants were required to have a proficiency in “lawn crochet, five years’ experience operating a crane, their own dog sled team, and some knowledge of bird calls.”¹⁶ WHIS employees carried the burden of positions that demanded a wide range of skills, often without sufficient resources.

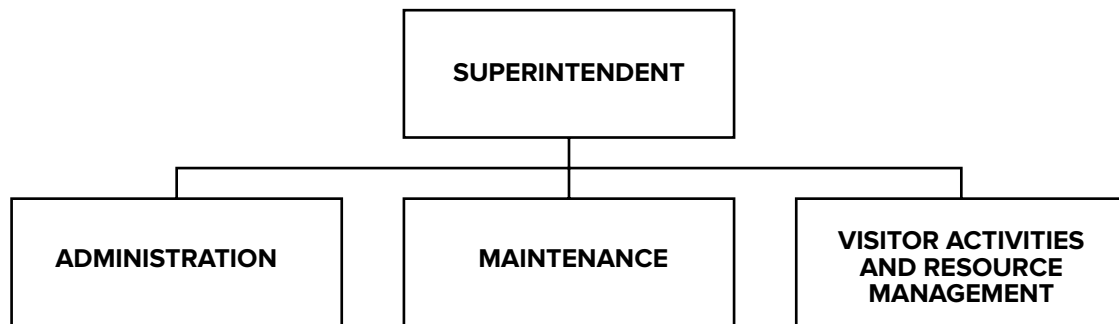


Figure 2. Organizational Structure, ca. 1975–1982.
Source: Designed by Mike Solo.¹⁷

The Administrative Structure Expands, 1980s–1990s

At the end of the 1970s, WHIS employed approximately sixty permanent full-time, permanent part-time, and seasonal staff—substantially more than the six employees originally projected to operate the recreation area in 1965 (Fig. 2).¹⁸ This growth paralleled rising visitation, which reached 1,171,443 in 1979.¹⁹ Yet even with expanded staffing, park leadership repeatedly reported insufficient personnel to meet operational demands. The Division of Maintenance and VA&RM were the largest departments, but both struggled with staffing shortages. In 1981, the Maintenance Division again cited an “insufficient number of supervisory personnel,” echoing concerns raised in the 1979 Position Management Plan.²⁰

¹⁶ “Help Wanted: Park Technician,” undated, folder “Leon Mitchell,” WHIS-DF.

¹⁷ Based on information from Western Region Ad Hoc Management Consultation Team, “Whiskeytown National Recreation Area Management Consultation Report,” p. 1; Foust, “Position Management Plan FY 1979,” pp. 3-5; and Foust, “Position Management Plan FY 1982,” pp. 3.

¹⁸ NPS, “Narrative: Part of the Master Plan,” pp. 3-4.

¹⁹ WHIS, “Interim Interpretive Plan,” NPS, June 1981, p. 5, folder “Unorganized Files,” WHIS-DF.

²⁰ Foust, “Position Management Plan FY 1979,” pp. 4-5; and Foust, “Position Management Plan FY 1982,” p. 1.

In response, Superintendent Foust initiated structural reform. In 1982, he reorganized the VA&RM into three separate divisions: Interpretation, Recreation Activity, and Resource Management.²¹ According to his annual Position Management Plan, the restructuring sought to “eliminate the ‘layering’ effect as well as improve communication and production”; Foust expressed hope that morale would improve.²² The reorganization clarified lines of authority but staffing gaps remained acute, especially in maintenance, where the need for more supervisory oversight continued to affect operational efficiency.²³

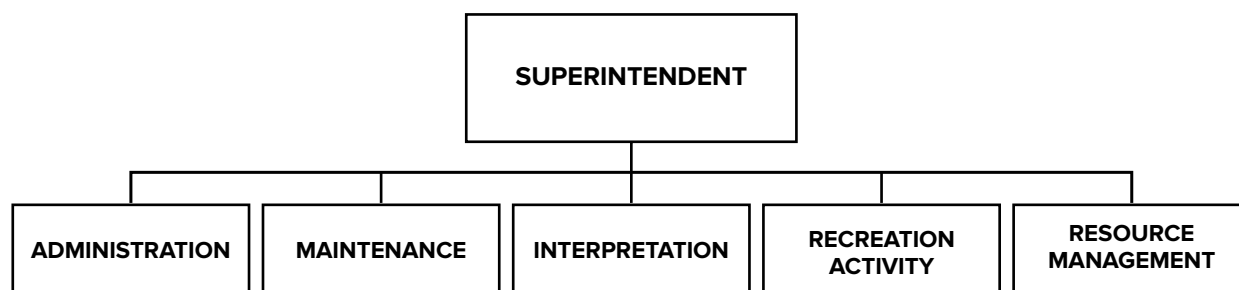


Figure 3. Organizational Structure, 1982–1988.
Source: Designed by Mike Solo²⁴

Foust again revised the administrative structure in 1988, refining division titles to clarify functional responsibilities.²⁵ The Interpretation Division assumed responsibility for on-site interpretation, off-site programming, and staffing the Overlook Contact Station (commonly referred to in documentation as the Whiskeytown Visitor Center).²⁶ At the same time, newly listed historic districts on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) increased compliance

²¹ Foust, “Position Management Plan FY 1982,” p. 5.

²² Ibid., p. 3; and Letter from Ray Foust to Regional Director Western Region, “Revised FY83 Position Management Plan,” folder “Pos Mgmt Plan_4 of 4,” box HQ9, WHIS-AF.

²³ Foust, “Position Management Plan FY 1979,” p. 1.

²⁴ Based on information from Foust, “Position Management Plan FY 1982,” p. 1; and Foust, “Position Management Plan FY 89 - Whiskeytown Unit,” October 3, 1989, p. 1, folder “Pos Mgmt Plan_4 of 4,” box HQ9, WHIS-AF.

²⁵ Foust, “Position Management Plan FY 89 - Whiskeytown Unit,” p. 1.

²⁶ Between the 1960s and the 1980s, WHIS documents sometimes referred to the Whiskeytown Visitor Center by various names, including the Overlook Information Station, Overlook Contact Station, and the Overlook and Visitor Information Center. See “Master Plan: Draft,” WHIS, April 1975, p. 14, subfolder “ADMIN_PLANS,” subfolder “Not_Accessioned,” folder “Administrative_History,” WHIS-DF; “Cultural Resources Management Program: An Addendum to the Cultural Resources Plan,” WHIS, January 1985, pp. 68, 80, 83, subfolder “1985,” folder “Cultural_Resource_Reports-PRIVILEGED,” WHIS-DF; and Foust, “Position Management Plan FY 89 - Whiskeytown Unit,” p. 3.

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and interpretive demands.²⁷ Despite these expanded responsibilities, the Interpretation Division consisted of only two employees throughout much of the decade.²⁸

This five-division structure, reporting directly to the superintendent, remained in place into the late 1990s. Within that framework, staffing levels varied considerably. The Division of Maintenance, with twenty-five employees, remained the park's largest unit, while the Division of Administration consisted of only five employees. Despite its expanded organizational structure, WHIS staff operated at capacity and continued to face high operational demand.²⁹

During the same period, visitation remained high. In 1987, WHIS recorded 1.75 million visits, placing sustained demand on facilities, maintenance crews, and interpretive staff. Even after later methodological revisions adjusted estimated annual visitation downward, use levels throughout the 1980s and 1990s continued to exceed what existing staffing patterns were designed to support. High public use, combined with limited personnel, shaped many of the administrative pressures documented during this period.³⁰

By the mid-1990s, WHIS again adjusted its administrative structure. In 1995, the park reported five divisions: Administration; Visitor Services and Law Enforcement; Resource Management; Interpretation; and Maintenance. More than eighty positions were listed, including permanent and seasonal employees.³¹ For the first time since 1990, all permanent positions were filled. With staffing stabilized, leadership consolidated emergency services—including law enforcement—under the Division of Ranger Activities, absorbing functions previously assigned to Natural Resources Management.³²

Despite structural adjustments and improved hiring stability, internal assessments increasingly identified imbalance among programs. By 1997, WHIS dedicated 4.0 full-time equivalents (FTE) to natural resource management while cultural resources received only 0.2 FTE. The disparity affected not only cultural resource stewardship but also intersecting programs such as fire management. The Resources Management Plan (1997) noted, “The preservation of recreation values, the natural setting, and the natural and cultural resources deserve equal consideration.” Yet the same report acknowledged that cultural resource projects were often “minimally executed,” resulting in “inconsistent compliance or lack of compliance.”³³

²⁷ By 1988, three historic properties within WHIS had been either listed on or determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP): T. Ross Holland Jr., “National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form: Tower House Historic District,” May 24, 1971, accessed November 2024, <https://npshistory.com/publications/whis/nr-tower-house-district.pdf>; Janet P. Eidsness, “Report on 1986–1987 Archaeological Fieldwork Conducted by National Park Service Staff in Whiskeytown Unit, Whiskeytown–Shasta–Trinity National Recreation Area, Shasta County, California,” February 1988, p. 2, subfolder “1988,” folder “1980–1989,” WHIS-DF; and Roger E. Kelly, “National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form: Soo-Yeh-Choo-Pus Archaeological District,” September 27, 1985, accessed November 2024, <https://npshistory.com/publications/whis/nr-tower-house-ad.pdf>.

²⁸ Foust, “Position Management Plan FY 89 - Whiskeytown Unit,” pp. 2-3; and WHIS, “Whiskeytown/Shasta/Trinity, Whiskeytown Unit Master Plan,” 1976, p. 7, folder “Admin Plans,” WHIS-DF.

²⁹ Foust, “Position Management Plan FY 89 - Whiskeytown Unit,” pp. 4, 6.

³⁰ Visitation estimates were revised in the early 1990s when passenger-per-vehicle assumptions were reduced from 4.0 to 2.5, suggesting that annual visitation beginning in the early 1980s may have been closer to approximately 786,000. An internal study later estimated an overall decline of approximately 3 percent between the early 1980s and early 2000s. Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity-National Recreation Area, “Statement for Management,” NPS, January 1990, p. 11, folder “Unorganized Files,” WHIS-DF; and “Whiskeytown National Recreation Area: Business Plan,” August 2003, p. 14, filename “WHISBIZPlanprintquality,” subfolder “ADMIN_PLANS,” folder “LIBRARY-REPORTS,” WHIS-DF.

³¹ “Whiskeytown Unit: Personnel Management Plan, FY 95,” April 20, 1995, folder “Pos Mgmt Plan_1 of 4,” box HQ 9, WHIS-AF.

³² David Pugh, “The Year in Review, 1995,” p. 1, submitted as part of the “1994/95 Annual Narrative Report of Superintendents,” March 1996, folder “A2621 Reports Superintendents,” box HQ6, WHIS-AF.

³³ *Resources Management Plan for Whiskeytown National Recreation Area*, August 1997, pp. 1, 121-122, subfolder “ADMIN_PLANS,” subfolder “Not_Accessioned,” folder “Administrative_History,” WHIS-DF.

To address these issues, WHIS established a Chief of Interpretation and Cultural Resources Management position in 1997. The chief supervised four rangers, coordinated cultural resource compliance, provided curatorial oversight, and managed archives and library collections.³⁴ In 1998, Superintendent David Pugh proposed adding thirteen additional positions to the division, including an historian, museum technician, education specialist, cultural and natural resources liaison, and six additional rangers.³⁵ Notably, no permanent archeologist position was proposed; archeological support continued to be provided by the Redwood National Park archeologist in coordination with the Pacific–Great Basin Support Office.³⁶ Although the 1990s saw meaningful expansion of interpretation and cultural resource management, staffing needs continued to outpace available resources.

A draft of the General Management Plan (1998; GMP) formalized WHIS’s administrative structure into five divisions: Administration; Ranger Activities; Natural Resource Management and Fire Protection; Interpretation and Cultural Resource Management; and Facility Management. The GMP reported 56.3 FTE employees—modest given the park’s 42,000 acres and its combined recreational and resource responsibilities. It observed that funding for natural and cultural resource programs remained focused on “the most pressing and immediate issues,” resulting in management that was “reactive rather than proactive.”³⁷

Administrative constraints were compounded by aging infrastructure. Administrative offices constructed by the US Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) during dam construction in the early 1960s continued to serve as headquarters more than three decades later, despite their intended temporary function. By the 1990s, NPS documentation described the buildings as “dilapidated” and “inadequate.”³⁸ The physical condition of park facilities mirrored broader structural limitations: both infrastructure and administrative capacity required sustained investment that exceeded available funding.

³⁴ Ibid., pp. 68, 121-122.

³⁵ Due to a gap in the 1996 digitized records, it is unclear whether the Chief of Interpretation and Cultural Resources Management position was created in 1996 or 1997. The position does not appear in the 1995 Personnel Management Plan. Instead, the plan lists a “Chief, Division of Interpretation.” After 1997, the position’s title is sometimes referred to as “Chief of Cultural Resources Management and Interpretation.” See “Whiskeytown Unit: Personnel Management Plan, FY 95,” p. 12; “Position Management Plan: Whiskeytown National Recreation Area,” September 9, 1998, pp. 3, 9, folder “Pos Mgmt Plan_1 of 4,” box HQ 9, WHIS-AF; *Resources Management Plan for Whiskeytown National Recreation Area*, title page.

³⁶ *Resources Management Plan for Whiskeytown National Recreation Area*, p. 68.

³⁷ The Draft General Management Plan defines full-time equivalents as one person working full time annually or multiple people working full time for a few months of the year. In 1998, that broke down by division as: Superintendent and Administration: 5.0; Visitor Services 13.0; Natural Resources Management & Fire Protection: 9.8; Interpretation & Cultural Resources Management: 3.5; Maintenance: 24. See WHIS, *Draft General Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement*, August 1998, pp. 12, 15, e-TIC filename “WHIS_611_98036_0122pg.pdf” accessed November 2024.

³⁸ WHIS, *Draft General Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement*, 1998, p. 31; and David Pugh, “The Year in Review, 1995,” pp. 1-2, submitted as part of the “1994/95 Annual Narrative Report of Superintendents,” March 1996, folder “A2621 Reports Superintendents,” box HQ6, WHIS-AF.

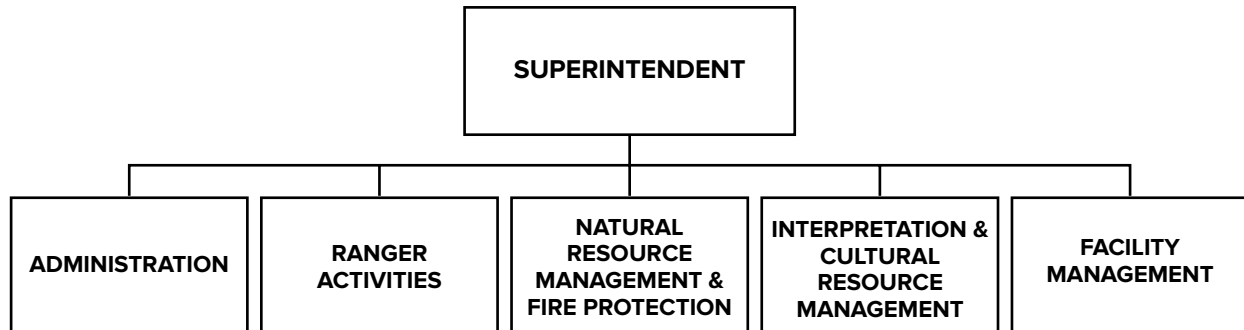


Figure 4. Organizational Structure, 1998.
Source: Designed by Mike Solo³⁹

A New Structure for a New Century, 2000s

Even into the twenty-first century, the services WHIS provided to its more than 700,000 annual visitors continued to expand, but the park's budget—while increasing—was still not keeping pace with the costs of operating Whiskeytown. “Our dedicated park staff is challenged financially as we strive to make Whiskeytown one of the best recreational areas in the nation,” wrote Superintendent James Milestone in 2003. The park, with 40 percent more staff in 2003 than just eight years earlier in 1995, was spending 82 percent of its base budget on staff salaries and benefits, which left WHIS with over four million dollars in “unmet operations and maintenance” needs.⁴⁰

Meanwhile, administrative structure maintained five divisions: Ranger Activities, Natural Resource Management (which included the Fire Management Division), Interpretation and Cultural Resources, Facilities Management, and Administration, as it did in 1998 (Figure 5).⁴¹ While the structure remained the same, staff size slowly increased. By 2002–2003, WHIS had fifty-one permanent employees and seventeen seasonals (which was subject to change).⁴² The Strategic Plan (2003) also noted specialized positions, including a botanist, wildlife biologist, ecologist, geologist, and a resource specialist. Those positions were also supported by five park rangers and four seasonal park

³⁹ Based on information from WHIS, *Draft General Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement*, 1998, pp. 12, 15.

⁴⁰ “Whiskeytown National Recreation Area: Business Plan,” pp. 4, 11, 12.

⁴¹ The 2002 Strategic Plan refers to the “Natural Resources Management” division but does not include Fire Management in the division titles. The Plan notes that the Fire Management Division remained under the Natural Resource Management. Earlier reports do refer to the “Natural Resource Management & Fire Protection” division. See WHIS, “Strategic Plan for Whiskeytown National Recreation Area Fiscal Year 2002 (October 1, 2001–September 30, 2002),” 2001, p. 6, subfolder “Admin Plans,” folder “LIBRARY-REPORTS,” WHIS-DF; “Position Management Plan,” 1998.

⁴² WHIS, “Strategic Plan: Fiscal Year 2003,” NPS, p. 6, folder “Unorganized Files,” WHIS-DF.

rangers. Unlike the continually shifting titles of WHIS's divisions and positions, the superintendent's position as the park's top leadership position had remained consistent since the 1960s.⁴³

Within this stable five-division structure, the Division of Natural Resource Management experienced notable internal growth, particularly in fire management. For example, the Division of Natural Resource Management included a growing Fire Management Program. As a designated Wildland Urban Interface Initiative Park for the Pacific West Region, WHIS's Fire Management Program supported twenty-six employees and five seasonal firefighters. Fire-related staff was not the only group expanding under the Division of Natural Resource Management. Under the Student Career Experience Program and the Resource Careers Initiative, multiple employees shifted into permanent park positions.⁴⁴ By 2003, WHIS's growing workforce included over 115 permanent, seasonal, and term positions.⁴⁵

Although fuels management activities had been underway at WHIS since at least the late 1990s, fire-management documentation in the early twenty-first century increasingly described these efforts as a distinct program area in response to growing wildfire risks..” The program worked to reduce and remove hazardous ground fuels—particularly around structures and buildings—and establish fuel breaks around roads and strategic ridgelines. WHIS relied on its new Fire Information Officer position to communicate with staff, nearby residents, and the media in cases of wildfire. WHIS also hired a Fire Program Archeologist to perform Section 106 and NHPA compliance before the park implemented fuels treatments.⁴⁶ This increase in fire-related personnel formed part of a federal emphasis on wildfire management and preparedness—a strategic shift in response to worsening wildfires in California and the US West in the early twenty-first century.⁴⁷

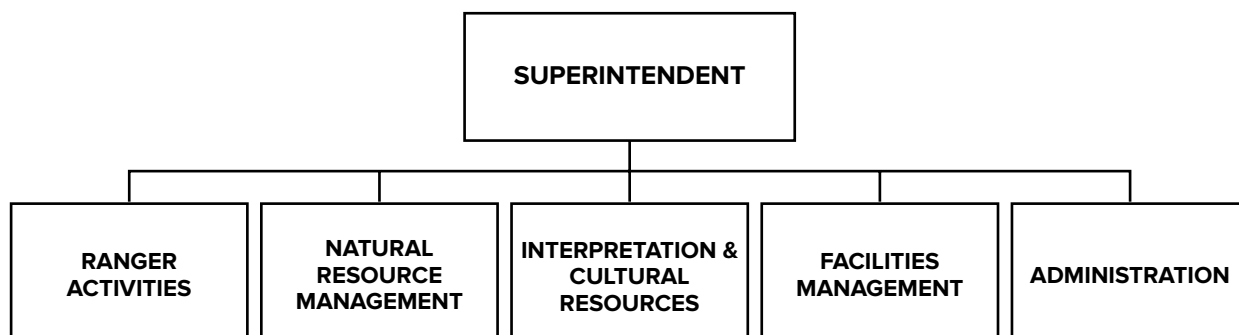


Figure 5. Organizational Structure, 2003.
Source: Designed by Mike Solo.⁴⁸

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ These included the aforementioned ecologist, wildlife biologist, botanist, and geologist. Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, “Annual Report,” 2000, p. 2, subfolder “2000,” folder “Cultural_Resources_Reports-PRIVILEGED,” WHIS-DF.

⁴⁵ WHIS, “Strategic Plan: Fiscal Year 2003,” NPS, p. 6, folder “Unorganized Files,” WHIS-DF.

⁴⁶ “Superintendent’s 1998 Annual Narrative Report,” p. 8, folder “A2621 Superintendents Report,” box HQ 6, WHIS-AF; and “Superintendent’s Annual Report for Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, 2008-2009,” October 2009, pp. 40, 45, subfolder “Superintendents_Annual_Report,” subfolder “ADMIN_PLANS,” subfolder “Not_Accessioned,” folder “Administrative_History,” WHIS-DF.

⁴⁷ James Milestone to Congressman Wally Herger, US House of Representatives, December 5, 2008, pp. 1-2, folder “L3027 Land Use Roads and Road Right of Ways,” box HQ 11, WHIS-AF; “Wildland Fire Management: The National Fire Plan,” US Department of the Interior and US Department of Agriculture, 2007, accessed June 10, 2025, https://www.forestsandrangelands.gov/documents/resources/reports/2007/nfp2007_budget_justification.pdf.

⁴⁸ Based on information from WHIS, “Strategic Plan: Fiscal Year 2003,” p. 6.

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In 2009, WHIS reported six division heads: Chief Administrative Officer, Chief of Maintenance, Chief of Interpretation, Chief of Resources, Chief of Fire Management, and Chief Ranger.⁴⁹ The placement of fire within the park's administrative structure evolved during this period. Although the Fire Management Plan (2008) identified the Chief of Natural Resources Management and Fire as responsible for fire activities under the superintendent, by 2009 the park's annual report referenced a distinct Chief of Fire Management, indicating a clearer separation of functions.⁵⁰ The Fire Management Plan (2011) further defined the Fire Management Officer as responsible and accountable for leadership of the fire program at the local level, with the Chief of Natural Resources referenced primarily in consultative contexts.⁵¹ Subsequent fire management plans (FMPs), including the 2022 edition, describe the "Whiskeytown Fire Management Division" as managed by a Fire Management Officer and supervised directly by the Superintendent, indicating the formalization of fire as a standalone division.⁵² Documentary evidence therefore suggests that fire management transitioned from being housed within natural resources to an independent division between 2008 and 2011.

These structural adjustments coincided with significant workforce expansion. By 2010, WHIS's number of employees had climbed to between 100 and 149, including full time, part time, and seasonal staff—an increase in staff of over 2,000 percent from the park's opening in the mid-1960s.⁵³ Also in 2010, WHIS hired Danica Willis, archeologist, in the park's first Cultural Resource Management (CRM) Specialist role.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ WHIS, "Superintendent's Annual Report, 2008–2009," p. 2.

⁵⁰ WHIS, *Fire Management Plan*, 2008, p. 57, subfolder "FMP," subfolder "ADMIN_PLANS," subfolder "Not_Accessioned," folder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF; and WHIS, "Superintendent's Annual Report, 2008–2009," title page.

⁵¹ WHIS, *Fire Management Plan*, 2011, pp. 32, 34, 47, 51, 63, subfolder "FMP," subfolder "ADMIN_PLANS," subfolder "Not_Accessioned," folder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF.

⁵² WHIS, *Fire Management Plan*, 2022, p. 4, subfolder "FMP," subfolder "ADMIN_PLANS," subfolder "Not_Accessioned," folder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF.

⁵³ The precise size and composition of Whiskeytown's workforce in 2010 is somewhat difficult to reconstruct—underscoring the absence of a single, consistent personnel record for the period. A review of the cited 2010 Superintendent's Annual Report yields eighty-one identifiable employees by name or position, including six members of park leadership (the superintendent and five division chiefs), four administrative staff, fourteen in Maintenance and Facilities, six in Interpretation, five in Resource Management, five in Visitor Protection, five in Fire Management, nine in the Student Career Employment Program, twenty-three from the Student Conservation Association (SCA) or Youth Conservation Corps (YCC), and four lifeguards at Brandy Creek swim beach. Yet the same 2010 annual report also notes that "the park had 150 employees working at the peak of the summer season, many of whom were high school and college students," while elsewhere describing 149 total employees—full-time, part-time, and seasonal—as a record high. A contemporaneous 2010 Environmental Assessment similarly reported "70 permanent and approximately 40 seasonal staff members," suggesting a base staffing level of roughly 110 employees outside peak summer hiring. These figures indicate that while permanent staffing hovered around seventy positions, Whiskeytown's workforce expanded dramatically during the summer months through seasonal, student, and youth conservation hires, reaching approximately 149–150 employees at peak—an unprecedented level of personnel growth compared to the park's early decades. WHIS, "Annual Report 2010," NPS, p. 2, folder "Unorganized Files," WHIS-DF; and WHIS, "Environmental Assessment Abandoned Mine Lands Safety Installations and Crystal Creek Quarry Site Reclamation Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, California," April 2010, p. 83, filename "2010_EA_Crystal_Creek_Quarry_Site_Abandoned_Mine_Safety_Install," WHIS-DF.

⁵⁴ WHIS, "Annual Report, 2010," p. 9.

The configuration of resource and interpretation divisions also shifted during this period. In 2009, the park identified a Chief of Interpretation and Cultural Resources Management, a position held by Steve Thede until his promotion to Deputy Superintendent of Badlands National Park in April of that year.⁵⁵ By 2010, the Superintendent's Annual Report listed Sean Denniston as Chief of Interpretation and Resources Management.⁵⁶ Although no formal reorganization memorandum has been located in the administrative record, changes in division titles between 2009 and 2010, combined with informal interviews of former WHIS staff, indicate a consolidation of natural resources, cultural resources, and interpretation into a single division. As former Chief of Resources and Interpretation Jennifer Gibson recalled, the consolidation occurred in 2010 following a period of leadership transition, when vacancies in both divisions prompted the park to combine supervision of resources and interpretation under a single chief. This reorganization coincided with the separation of fire management into its own division, elevating the Fire Management Officer to a division chief role and reflecting both operational needs and cost-saving considerations.⁵⁷

Despite this expanded organizational structure, staffing depth within individual programs remained uneven. By 2017, the Division of Interpretation and Resource Management had seven positions dedicated to interpretation. Of the seven positions, only the Supervisory Park Ranger (Interpretation) held a permanent full-time position. WHIS categorized two of the positions as career seasonal and the remainder as temporary seasonal.⁵⁸ The Long-Range Interpretive Plan (2019) described the interpretive staff as small, noting that the park nonetheless offered an array of personal interpretation and prioritized critical messaging and visitor safety. The plan's characterization of staffing constraints reveals the continued uneven distribution of personnel resources within the division during this period.⁵⁹

Planning documents throughout the twenty-first century continued to reference capacity limitations and workload strain.⁶⁰ In 2007, for instance, the unit considered preparing a Visitor Experience and Resource Protection report as part of its backcountry management planning but ultimately decided, "we don't have the time or staff at Whiskeytown to do this preliminary step." Similarly, when evaluating the addition of new campsites to the backcountry, the planning committee expressed concern that "we are proposing too many new campsites for Maintenance staff to handle."⁶¹ An internal document described the resulting strain on Natural Resource Management staff: "Everyone gets burned out; nothing is done well."⁶²

⁵⁵ WHIS, "Superintendent's Annual Report, 2008–2009," p. 25.

⁵⁶ WHIS, "Annual Report 2010," p. 27.

⁵⁷ Jennifer Gibson (WHIS Chief of Resources and Interpretation, 2016-2020), written responses to interview questions, email correspondence with authors, April 2026.

⁵⁸ WHIS, *Trails Management Plan: Environmental Assessment*, February 2022, p. 57, subfolder "Environmental Assessments," folder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF; WHIS, *Fire Management Plan*, 2022, appendix; and Foust, "Position Management Plan FY 1982," p. 1.

⁵⁹ WHIS, *Long-Range Interpretive Plan*, NPS, June 2017, p. 65, subfolder "ADMIN_PLANS," subfolder "Not_Accessioned," folder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF.

⁶⁰ WHIS's 2010 annual report listed 149 employees, although it does not specify if that number includes both seasonal and permanent full-time staff. See WHIS, "Annual Report 2010," p. 2.

⁶¹ WHIS, "Backcountry Management Plan Committee Meeting," June 19, 2007, p. 33, folder "Backcountry_Management," WHIS-DF.

⁶² WHIS, "RM 77 - Backcountry Recreation Management," n.d., folder "Backcountry_Management," WHIS-DF.

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Frustration over mounting workloads and employee burnout remained an issue. In 2017, an NPS survey compared WHIS employee feedback to that of other national parks. When asked “I recommend my organization as a good place to work,” 55 percent of WHIS’s staff responded positively, slightly below the median of 61 percent across surveyed parks. WHIS employees rated the park more favorably in areas such as information flow, teamwork, and cooperation—results that remained comparatively strong in a subsequent 2019 survey. However, perceptions of resource sufficiency remained low. In response to the statement, “I have sufficient resources (for example, people, materials, budget) to get my job done,” only 9 percent of respondents answered positively in 2017, compared to a systemwide median of 30 percent. Although this figure increased to 23 percent in 2019, it continued to lag behind the NPS average. Survey responses therefore indicate persistent concern among WHIS staff regarding available resources.⁶³

Visitor surveys from the same period provide additional context for operational outcomes. In 2019, 78 percent of visitors surveyed rated assistance from park employees as “very good,” and 71 percent evaluated ranger programs similarly. These results suggest that, despite reported resource constraints, frontline services continued to receive strong visitor ratings.⁶⁴

Post–Carr Fire planning documents illustrate how the park’s administrative structure evolved in response to the 2018 disaster. Fire management plans issued after the fire, including the 2022 edition, describe a Fire Management Division led by a Fire Management Officer and supervised by the Superintendent, with nineteen positions including specialized roles such as a Geographic Information System (GIS) Specialist and Supervisory Fire Management Specialist. These documents indicate the extent to which wildfire management had become a central organizational priority in the aftermath of the fire.⁶⁵

Conclusion

From the mid-1960s through the early 2000s, WHIS’s organizational structure expanded from three core divisions into a multi-division framework with specialized functions. As staffing levels grew, responsibilities that had been concentrated within ranger functions in the 1960s and 1970s were reorganized into distinct lines of work, including interpretation, resource management, cultural resources compliance, law enforcement, and fire management. Planning documents, position management materials, and internal assessments repeatedly identified the same limiting factors across decades: staffing levels that did not keep pace with workload, reliance on seasonal or term appointments in key programs, and facilities and administrative capacity that lagged operational needs. By the 2010s, and as reflected in post–Carr Fire administrative documentation, WHIS maintained a division structure that reflected these expanded program areas, with fire management and associated compliance functions comprising a substantial portion of the unit’s staffing and organizational attention.

⁶³ NPS, “2017 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey Results for: Whiskeytown,” December 2017, pp. 2-4, subfolder “Not_Accessioned,” folder “Administrative_History,” WHIS-DF; and NPS, “2019 OPM Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey Results For: Whiskeytown,” December 2019, pp. 4-5, subfolder “Not_Accessioned,” folder “Administrative_History,” WHIS-DF.

⁶⁴ NPS, “Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity NRA 2019 Visitor Survey Card Data Report,” p. 3, subfolder “Visitor_Surveys,” subfolder “Not_Accessioned,” folder “Administrative_History,” WHIS-DF.

⁶⁵ WHIS, Whiskeytown Fire Management Plan, 2022, p. 4, appendix.

CHAPTER 2.2: SUPERINTENDENTS AND THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS

“I think that almost everybody in the Park Service has some source of inspiration or some person who does that thing to him, that makes him admire the service and want to be in it and contribute to it,” reflected Leon J. Mitchell, Whiskeytown National Recreation Area’s (WHIS) first superintendent.¹ Mitchell’s observation points to the personal dimension of leadership within the National Park Service (NPS), yet superintendent authority is exercised within a defined institutional framework shaped by federal law, regional oversight, budget allocations, staffing capacity, and evolving servicewide priorities. Authority at WHIS was also mediated by the composition, expertise, and stability of the park’s staff, whose numbers, specialization, and institutional memory influenced how policies were implemented in practice. At WHIS, leadership functioned not as unilateral direction but as an administrative nexus through which national policy, local conditions, and internal workforce realities intersected.

Since the early 1960s, WHIS has been guided by six superintendents and one formative project manager, each serving during distinct periods of organizational development, fiscal constraint, environmental risk, and changing public expectations. Project Manager Samuel A. King’s early tenure coincided with the transition from US Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) oversight to NPS administration and the establishment of foundational interagency agreements and facilities. Mitchell’s administration emphasized formal planning, boundary adjustments, and the integration of natural and cultural resource management within an expanding recreation unit. Subsequent superintendents confronted rising visitation, marijuana eradication efforts, concessionaire management challenges, infrastructure deficiencies, wildfire risk, budget instability, and, in the twenty-first century, large-scale disaster recovery following the Carr Fire.

This chapter approaches each superintendent’s tenure not as a biographical profile but as a distinct phase in WHIS’s administrative development. Brief career summaries provide context, but the focus rests on how leadership decisions shaped organizational structure, planning priorities, compliance practices, interagency coordination, and relationships with surrounding communities. Across these administrations, the park’s core stewardship responsibilities remained constant even as regulatory requirements, environmental pressures, and operational demands shifted.

¹ Leon J. Mitchell, Oral History Interview by Bill Ingersoll, February 4, 1973, transcript p. 3, NPS Oral History Collection, Harper’s Ferry Center for Media Development, Harper’s Ferry, WV.



Figure 6. Samuel A. King, no date.
Source: Photograph on file at WHIS Archives.

Samuel A. King, 1962–1965

Samuel A. King served as Whiskeytown’s first leader during its formative years, from 1962 to 1965, in the role of Project Manager (Fig. 6).² Though not technically a superintendent, King played a pivotal role in establishing the foundations of WHIS as it transitioned from a USBR reservoir to an NPS-administered unit.³

King’s tenure included the development of partnerships that contributed to coordinated management of the area. His work involved negotiating Memorandums of Agreement (MOAs) with federal and state agencies, establishing interagency frameworks for managing Whiskeytown’s resources. These agreements structured administrative relationships that shaped subsequent recreation and conservation planning (see Chapter 1.3: Early Area History and Founding).

In addition to his administrative responsibilities, King oversaw early infrastructure improvements that shaped the park’s initial operations. During this period, the park adapted an existing USBR building for use as its administrative headquarters and made improvements to support basic operations. Development focused on establishing shoreline

² Whiskeytown Unit, “Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area,” April 6, 1963, subfolder “Admin Plans,” folder “LIBRARY-REPORTS,” WHIS-DF; James Milestone, *From the White House to Whiskeytown: An Administrative History of the Creation of Whiskeytown National Recreation Area*, Whiskeytown National Recreation Area (WHIS), 2003, p. 29, e-TIC filename “WHIS_611_166062_0001_of_0055.pdf” accessed November 2024; and Telegraph from Regional Director to Director NPS, August 23, 1962, folder “FACILITIES,” WHIS-DF.

³ Mitchell would comment on King’s critical role in setting up the unit for success, see Mitchell, Oral History Interview, pp. 36-37.

recreation areas and constructing key visitor-use facilities, including the overlook site along Highway 299. Completed prior to Whiskeytown's official designation as a national recreation area in 1965, these efforts established the physical framework for subsequent park management and visitor services. Although King's tenure was brief, his administrative actions coincided with the transition of Whiskeytown from a recreational reservoir into a federally managed recreation area.

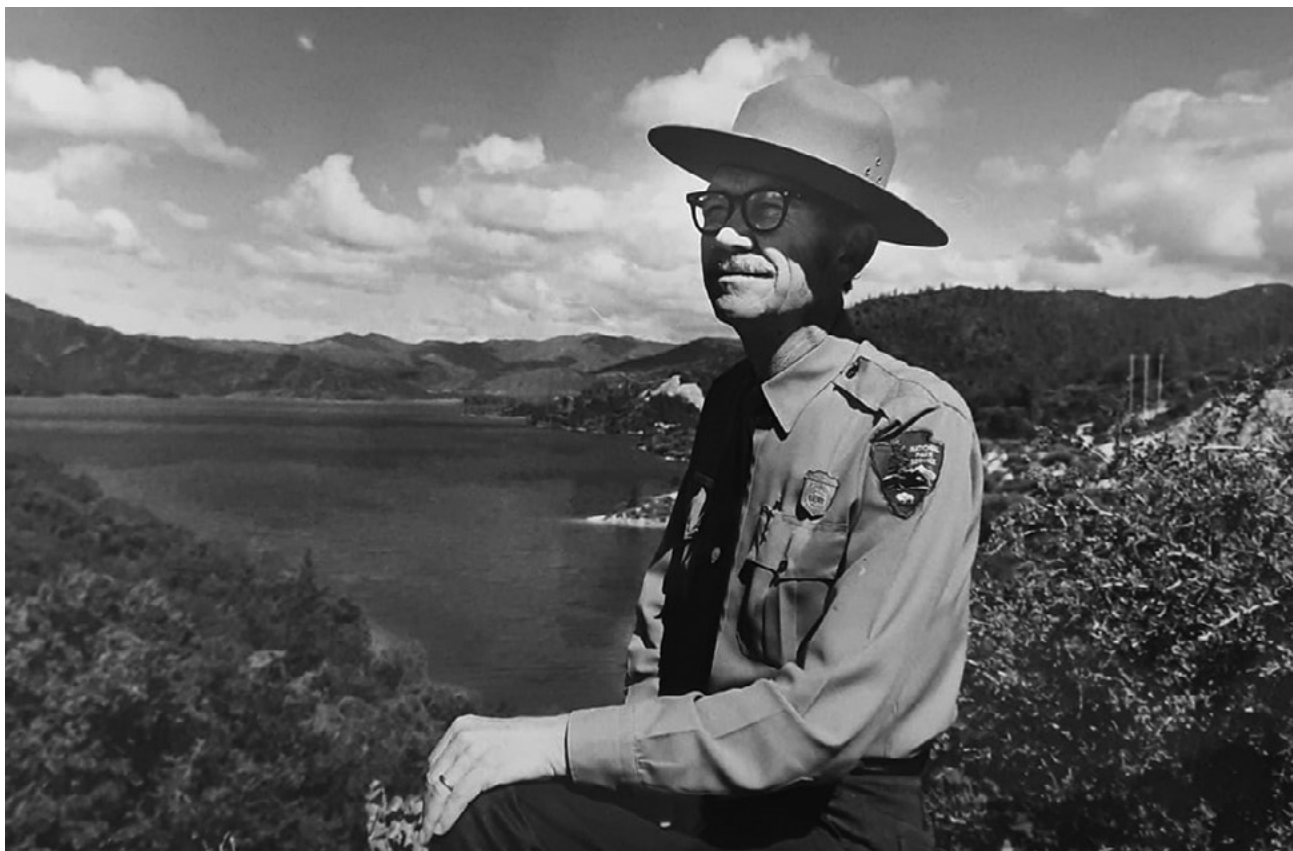


Figure 7. Leon J. Mitchell at Whiskeytown Lake, ca. 1977.
Source: Photograph on file at WHIS Archives.⁴

Leon J. Mitchell, 1966–1977

Leon J. Mitchell became WHIS's first superintendent in January 1966, following its official designation as a national recreation area (Fig. 7). With decades of NPS experience, Mitchell was certainly qualified to guide the young park through its foundational years. His administration marked Whiskeytown's transformation from a local recreational site into a nationally recognized NPS unit.

Mitchell had a thirty-year tenure with the NPS. After graduating high school, Mitchell joined the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) with a first assignment at Zion National Park, working as a museum aide and then as a seasonal ranger. Mitchell then went to college for a year at the University of Utah before enlisting in the Marines during

⁴ Photograph in folder "Leon Mitchell," WHIS-DF.

CHAPTER 2.2: SUPERINTENDENTS AND THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS

the start of the United States' involvement in World War II. Mitchell returned to Utah to study forestry at Utah State University. During his summers, he worked at Zion as a seasonal naturalist, a ranger, and in the museum; at Bryce Canyon National Park as an interpreter and a naturalist; then at Timpanogos Cave National Monument while he awaited a permanent position. Finally, in 1948, Mitchell got a permanent appointment at Lake Mead National Recreation Area. Mitchell spent nine years at Lake Mead as a “buck” ranger, working his way up to manage different districts in the park and eventually becoming an assistant chief ranger. After Lake Mead, Mitchell worked for eight years in Alaska as superintendent of what was then known as Glacier Bay and Sitka National Monuments (which during the 1950s and 1960s were under the same administration). Mitchell later recalled that the NPS's Alaska Regional Office thought, “eight years in one place was long enough.” The Southwest Regional Office offered Mitchell the superintendency at the newly formed Amistad National Recreation Area on the United States–Mexico Border. Mitchell toured the site and turned down the position. The regional office accepted Mitchell's decision to decline the Amistad position but still required that he transfer out of Alaska. Mitchell understood his directive and in December of 1965 received his orders to go to WHIS.⁵

Mitchell's leadership emphasized the development of comprehensive resource management and interpretive programs that would serve as a model for future park operations. One of his achievements was expanding the park's boundaries and securing early planning documents, including an updated Master Plan to guide the park's growth and management (see Chapter 2.3: Parkwide Planning).⁶

Mitchell also played a central role in establishing natural and cultural resource management programs. Under Mitchell, access to Whiskeytown Falls was limited and its location not widely publicized in order to reduce potential resource degradation (see Chapter 5.2: Cultural Resources and their Management). During his tenure, the park completed the Natural Resource Management Plan (1975), its first such plan, outlining priorities such as vegetation management, wildlife preservation, and water quality monitoring.⁷

Historic sites received administrative attention during Mitchell's tenure. In a local newspaper interview, his wife described one of his major projects as “developing the historical aspects of the area.”⁸ During this period, the park acquired the El Dorado Mine and completed a Historic Structure Report for the Tower House Historic District (THHD), formalizing management and documentation of these properties (see Chapter 5.2: Cultural Resources and their Management).⁹

Mitchell's tenure coincided with the establishment of the National Environmental Education Development (NEED) Camp, later known as Whiskeytown Environmental School (WES). As an early adopter of environmental education programming, Mitchell directed efforts to launch the camp, which became a cornerstone of the park's educational programming. This initiative demonstrated Mitchell's commitment to engaging youth and fostering environmental stewardship (see Chapter 6.3: National Environmental Education Development Camp).

⁵ Mitchell, Oral History Interview, pp. 3–4, 7, 12, and *passim*.

⁶ Milestone, *From the White House to Whiskeytown*, p. 29; and Whiskeytown National Recreation Area (WHIS), “Master Plan for Whiskeytown National Recreation Area,” June 18, 1976, p. 25, WHIS-DF.

⁷ WHIS, *Natural Resources Management Plan and Environmental Assessment*, October 1975, accessed November 2024, <http://purl.clemson.edu/FBF9AEE967484A71C23DED19D7BF6BAC>; and WHIS, “Master Plan,” 1976, p. 25.

⁸ “Whiskeytown chief Mitchell dies,” *Redding Searchlight*, November 19, 1977, newspaper clipping, folder “Leon Mitchell,” WHIS-DF.

⁹ Anna Cox Toogood and David G. Henderson, *Historic Structure Report: Tower House Historic District, Historical and Architectural Data Section, Whiskeytown National Recreation Area*, NPS, May 1973, p. 5, subfolder “ADMIN_PLANS,” subfolder “Not_Accessioned,” folder “Administrative_History,” WHIS-DF.

During Mitchell's tenure, visitor services and infrastructure were expanded in response to increasing visitation. The park upgraded its sewage and water treatment systems and improved recreational facilities.¹⁰ He also bolstered the park's interpretive efforts by enhancing trails and introducing programs to better engage the public.¹¹

Mitchell passed away in November 1977 at the age of fifty-seven, bringing an early end to a distinguished career.¹² At the time of his death, the park operated under established planning documents, maintained an expanding environmental education program, and had completed substantial infrastructure improvements. These administrative and operational structures shaped subsequent management under his successors. In later years, colleagues recalled that Mitchell "saw the area through the turbulent years of land acquisition and development describing his role in guiding Whiskeytown from early planning stages to an established NPS unit."¹³

Following Mitchell's passing, Chief Ranger Virgil Leimer stepped in as acting superintendent until the arrival of Ray Foust, the park's new permanent superintendent. On Mitchell's impact, Foust remarked that the inaugural superintendent had "got the area off to an outstanding start."¹⁴ Upon his death, a group of Mitchell's NPS and Shasta County colleagues created the L. J. Mitchell Memorial Committee. The committee collected donations to mount a flagpole and plaque at the entrance to Whiskeytown Cemetery, where Mitchell was interred. With the new superintendent, Ray Foust, in attendance, the committee dedicated the memorial on July 4, 1980. Mitchell and his wife, Gene Mitchell, rest in Whiskeytown Cemetery.¹⁵

¹⁰ Mitchell, Oral History Interview, pp. 36-37; NPS, "IRMA Visitation Statistics viewer Whiskeytown NRA," National Park Service, accessed November 2024, [https://irma.nps.gov/Stats/SSRSReports/Park%20Specific%20Reports/Annual%20Park%20Recreation%20Visitation%20\(1904%20-%20Last%20Calendar%20Year\)?Park=WHIS](https://irma.nps.gov/Stats/SSRSReports/Park%20Specific%20Reports/Annual%20Park%20Recreation%20Visitation%20(1904%20-%20Last%20Calendar%20Year)?Park=WHIS); and Leon J. Mitchell, "1972 Superintendent's Annual Report," 1973, p. 1, subfolder "Superintendent Annual Reports," subfolder "ADMIN_PLANS," subfolder "Not_Accessioned," folder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF.

¹¹ Western Region Ad Hoc Management Consultation Team, "Whiskeytown National Recreation Area Management Consultation Report," November 11-14, 1975, pp. 18, 19, 22-24, folder "1970s," WHIS-DF.

¹² Ray Foust, "Late Super gets Whiskeytown honors," *NPS Courier*, October 1980, p. 10, accessed November 2024, https://images.findagrave.com/photos/2015/149/69706827_1433042387.jpg; and "Whiskeytown chief Mitchell dies," *Redding Searchlight*, November 19, 1977.

¹³ NPS, Press Release, "Mitchell Memorial Dedication," June 24, 1980, folder "Leon Mitchell," subfolder WHIS-DF.

¹⁴ Memo, Ray Foust to Gene Mitchell, Leon Mitchell dedication, July 8, 1980, folder "Leon Mitchell," WHIS DF.

¹⁵ "Whiskeytown chief Mitchell dies," *Redding Searchlight*, November 19, 1977; Foust, "Late Super Gets Whiskeytown Honors," *Courier: The National Park Service Newsletter*, p. 9; Joan Siddens to "Friend," June 20, 1980, folder "Leon Mitchell." For grave locations, see Find a Grave, "Val Gene Olsen-Mitchell-Foster," no date, accessed February 2025, https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/148975178/val_gene-olsen-mitchell-foster; and "Leone James Mitchell," no date, accessed February 2026, https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/69706827/leone_james-mitchell.

Ray Foust, 1978–1995

Ray Foust brought extensive experience from a wide-ranging NPS career to his tenure as Whiskeytown’s second permanent superintendent (Fig. 8). Serving from 1978 until 1995, Foust’s leadership coincided with a period of complex federal land management debates, shifts in NPS priorities, and increasing public use of the park. His administration took a strategic approach to administration, resource management, and visitor safety.

Superintendent Foust began his thirty-six-year-long career with the NPS in 1958. He served two seasons as a fire guard in Saguaro National Monument (later changed to Saguaro National Park). In 1960, Foust took a seasonal position at Mesa Verde National Park where he gained law enforcement experience as a ranger. He went back to Saguaro in 1962 as the Rincon district ranger. From 1966 to 1968, he worked as chief ranger of Muir Woods National Monument. Foust moved to Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area in 1968 where he served as chief ranger until 1971 when he took a position in Manhattan as a law enforcement specialist, which included work at Statue of Liberty National Monument.¹⁶ Foust was called back west to the Regional Office in San Francisco to serve as a special assistant to the regional director in 1974. After four years serving at the regional office, Ray Foust became the second superintendent of WHIS. His tenure from 1978 until his retirement in 1995 made him one of WHIS’s longest-serving superintendents.



Figure 8. Ray Foust speaking at the groundbreaking of Whiskeytown Hydropower, ca. 1985.
Source: Photograph on file at WHIS Archives.

¹⁶ Mark Foust, email message to Dillon Maxwell, August 23, 2013; Dylan Darling, “Area loses positive force in Ray Foust,” *Redding Record Searchlight*, June 2, 2011, accessed November 2024, <https://archive.redding.com/news/area-loses-positive-force-in-ray-foust-ep-375699499-354797541.html>.

Foust emphasized systematic operations, initiating “basic procedures” to streamline planning, programming, and purchasing activities. He required divisions to align their procurements with project timelines to clarify budgetary needs and improve efficiency.¹⁷ This focus on administrative rigor contributed to significant staff growth; by 1988, the park had twenty-nine permanent employees and implemented measures to promote equal opportunity in hiring practices (see Chapter 2.1: Administrative Structure).¹⁸ Foust also expanded the use of inmate labor and Volunteers-In-Parks (VIP) programs, which proved critical in maintaining the park’s infrastructure during an era of constrained resources.¹⁹

Foust implemented several policy and operational changes related to visitor safety, particularly at the park’s swim beaches. In 1980, he prohibited alcohol consumption at Whiskeytown Lake swim areas in response to documented alcohol-related incidents. Park staff paired the policy with targeted law enforcement efforts, and subsequent reporting indicated declines in DUI rates and alcohol-related citations.²⁰ Foust also coordinated with the California Department of Boating and Waterways to improve facilities, including the installation of floating restrooms and the replacement of public launch docks.²¹

In addition to safety improvements, Foust prioritized visitor engagement through expanded interpretive and educational programming. He oversaw the launch of new initiatives such as the Junior Ranger program, living history demonstrations, and the creation of the park’s visitor newspaper, *The Whiskeytown Generator* (later renamed *The Whiskeytown Nugget*).²² These efforts enhanced visitors’ understanding of the park’s natural and cultural resources while strengthening its connection to the local community.

During Foust’s tenure, the park also expanded attention to resource management. He directed rehabilitation efforts for historic properties, strengthened maintenance procedures, and addressed emerging issues, including illegal marijuana cultivation on park lands. These administrative actions coincided with continued increases in visitation and operational complexity. Superintendent James Milestone later recalled that Foust “cleaned the place up” and “made life a lot easier for managers who followed.”²³

Foust retired in 1995. By the end of his superintendency, the park had implemented revised safety policies, completed facility improvements, and formalized several resource management and maintenance procedures that remained in place under subsequent superintendents.

¹⁷ Ray Foust to All Division/Branch Chiefs, “Planning, Programming and Purchase Activities- 1979 FY,” October 6, 1978, folder “A5639 Instructions and Orders Whiskeytown 1978-1999 (3 of 3),” box HQ5, WHIS-AF.

¹⁸ Ray Foust, “Whiskeytown Unit, Superintendent’s Annual Report for 1987,” July 7, 1988, p. 5, folder “A2621 Reports Superintendents,” box HQ6, WHIS-AF.

¹⁹ Ray Foust, “Whiskeytown Unit, Superintendent’s Annual Report for 1986,” March 13, 1987, p. 3, 5-7, folder “A2621 Reports Superintendents,” box HQ6, WHIS-AF.

²⁰ Whiskeytown Unit, “Annual Statement for Interpretation and Visitor Services,” August 1981, p. 9, WHIS-DF; Ray J. Foust to Regional Director of Western Region, “Appropriations for Drug Interdiction,” November 29, 1988, folder “W34 Drugs,” box HQ14, WHIS-AF; and Ray Foust, “Whiskeytown Unit, Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area, Superintendent’s Annual Narrative Report for 1988,” March 10, 1989, p. 3, folder “A2621 Reports Superintendents,” box HQ6, WHIS-AF.

²¹ Foust, “Whiskeytown Unit, Superintendent’s Annual Report for 1986,” p. 7; and Foust, “Whiskeytown Unit, Superintendent’s Annual Report for 1987,” p. 3.

²² Foust, “Whiskeytown Unit, Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area, Superintendent’s Annual Narrative Report for 1988,” pp. 1, 3-5.

²³ Darling, “Area loses positive force in Ray Foust,” *Redding Record Searchlight*, June 2, 2011; WHIS, “Request for Drug Enforcement Program Funding- Non-Reoccurring project/activity,” 1991, folder “W34 Drugs,” box HQ14, WHIS-AF.



Figure 9. David Pugh (center) at a National Park Foundation Awards Ceremony, ca. 1999.
Source: Photograph on file at WHIS Archives.

David Pugh, 1995–2000

David Pugh served as WHIS superintendent from 1995 to 2000, the shortest tenure among the park’s leaders (Fig. 9). Despite this brevity, Pugh made notable contributions that advanced Whiskeytown’s resource management and educational initiatives while setting the stage for long-term developments. His efforts to reorganize staff structure, respond to budgetary crises, improve facilities, lead major planning and resource management initiatives, and strengthen WHIS concessions reshaped park operations and administration.

Pugh’s career took him from Chiricahua National Monument and Katmai National Park to Cape Hatteras National Seashore. It was at Cape Hatteras National Seashore where Pugh had his first permanent position. He served as a chief naturalist at the West District of Yellowstone National Park and in the interpretation division at Point Reyes National Seashore from 1977 to 1985.²⁴ In 1988, Pugh served as acting superintendent of North Cascades National Park.²⁵ A year later, the NPS assigned him the superintendency of the newly created Hagerman Fossil Beds National Monument in Idaho where he served until 1994.²⁶

²⁴ Longfellow Finnegan Riddle Funeral Home, “Ida Jane “Jenne (Eckler) Pugh,” Online Obituary, accessed November 2024, <https://www.longfellowfinneganriddle.com/obituary/IdaJaneJenne-Pugh>; Paul Schullery, *Mountain Time: A Yellowstone Memoir* (Boulder, Co: Roberts Rinhart Publishers, 1995), p. 180; and Paul Sadin, *Managing a Land in Motion: An Administrative History of Point Reyes National Seashore*, (Seattle: National Park Service, 2007), p. 333, accessed November 2024, <https://npshistory.com/publications/pore/adhi.pdf>.

²⁵ NPS, “Historic Listing of NPS Officials: Superintendents of National Park System Areas,” accessed November 2024, <http://npshistory.com/publications/tolson/histlist7.htm>.

²⁶ Hagerman Fossil Beds National Monument, *General Management Plan*, September 1996, p. 49, accessed November 2024, <http://npshistory.com/publications/hafo/gmp-1996.pdf>.

Pugh joined the team at WHIS during a period of relatively strong economic growth in the United States, when federal land agencies were recovering from the budgetary austerity of the Reagan era. However, this period also experienced two lengthy government shutdowns, with devastating effects on many park units including WHIS. Pugh responded by streamlining, cutting, and reorganizing as best he could to mitigate staff shortages and budget shortfalls.²⁷

Pugh's leadership emphasized the integration of cultural and natural resource management into park operations. Transformative for WHIS management was the Resources Management Plan (1997), which set forth a coordinated, action-based effort to "identify, protect, preserve, and enhance the natural and cultural resources of Whiskeytown."²⁸ The plan was developed in coordination with the Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior's National Fire Plan, a joint initiative of the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Department of the Interior (DOI) to guide federal wildland fire management and budget justification.²⁹ Because of this national emphasis on resource management, combined with resources from programs such as the Resource Careers Initiative and the NPS Servicewide Comprehensive Call, WHIS's resource management moved forward an impressive array of natural and cultural resources projects (see Part V).³⁰

Under Pugh's tenure, Whiskeytown's educational programs, particularly WES, continued to thrive. Pugh supported efforts to modernize WES facilities and expand its curriculum, reinforcing the park's reputation as a leader in environmental education. His commitment to youth engagement paralleled NPS initiatives to cultivate the next generation of park stewards (see Chapter 6.3: National Environmental Education Development Camp). Pugh also prioritized partnerships and interagency collaboration, which were critical for managing WHIS resources. His tenure saw improvements in cooperative efforts for fire management, infrastructure maintenance, and watershed health. These partnerships strengthened the park's capacity to address challenges, including resource degradation and increasing visitation.³¹

He also navigated contentious issues with park concessionaires, working to align private operations with the park's goals of providing visitor services while maintaining environmental and recreational standards (see Chapter 7.2: Concessionaire Visions and Realities). Superintendent Pugh supported the implementation of a ban on personal watercraft, a decision aimed at reducing noise, pollution, and safety hazards on Whiskeytown Lake, thereby preserving the park's family-friendly atmosphere and natural tranquility.³² Like Foust's earlier decision to ban alcohol at Whiskeytown Lake, the ban on motorized watercraft was controversial among the public and earned Pugh praise from some and disdain from others.

²⁷ On Pugh's measures to address budget shortfalls in the aftermath of the shutdown, see David Pugh, "Whiskeytown National Recreation Area Annual Report, Fiscal Year 1996," February 27, 1997, pp. 1-2, folder "A2621 Reports Superintendents," box HQ6, WHIS-AF.

²⁸ WHIS, "Whiskeytown Resources Management Plan," August 1997, p. 9, subfolder "Admin Plans," subfolder "Not_Accessioned," folder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF.

²⁹ US Departments of Agriculture and Interior, *The National Fire Plan: Budget Justification and Annual Performance Plan FY 2007*, accessed November 2024, https://www.forestsandrangelands.gov/documents/resources/reports/2007/nfp2007_budget_justification.pdf.

³⁰ Pugh, "Whiskeytown National Recreation Area Annual Report, Fiscal Year 1996," p. 9; David Pugh, "The Year in Review," 1995, p. 1, submitted as part of the "1994/95 Annual Narrative Report of Superintendents," March 1996, folder "A2621 Reports Superintendents," box HQ6, WHIS-AF; WHIS, *Whiskeytown Resources Management Plan*, p. 9; Forests and Rangelands, "Previous Wildland Fire Management Initiatives," US Department of the Interior & US Department of Agriculture, accessed June 11, 2025, <https://www.forestsandrangelands.gov/resources/overview/>; WHIS, "Annual Report, 2000 Whiskeytown National Recreation Area," 2000, p. 2, subfolder "2000," folder "Cultural_Resources_Reports-PRIVILEGED," WHIS-DF; "Natural Resources Research Coordination," NPS, accessed March 19, 2025, <https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1027/rescoord.htm>.

³¹ David Pugh, "Annual Narrative Report Fiscal Year 1995 (and 1994), Whiskeytown NRA," March 1996, p. 6, folder "A2621 Reports Superintendents," box HQ6, WHIS-AF.

³² WHIS, *Whiskeytown Unit General Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement*, July 1999, p. ii, subfolder "ADMIN_PLANS," folder "LIBRARY-REPORTS," WHIS-DF.

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Pugh's tenure at WHIS from 1995 to 2000 coincided with infrastructure upgrades, expanded resource planning, and policy implementation. During this period, the park renovated headquarters and other facilities to address documented maintenance deficiencies and improve operational capacity. The Resources Management Plan (1997) established a coordinated framework for natural and cultural resource stewardship, while additional initiatives expanded educational programming and addressed concessionaire management issues. The ban on personal watercraft was implemented as part of efforts to manage visitor use and reduce safety and environmental concerns associated with motorized recreation. Although the superintendency was brief, planning documents and policies developed during this period remained in place in subsequent years.



Figure 10. James Milestone, no date.
Source: Photograph on file at WHIS Archives.³³

James Milestone, 2000–2018

James Milestone's tenure as superintendent of WHIS from 2000 to 2018 marked a period of growing connections to the regional community and improving visitor experience (Fig. 10). Prior to his appointment at WHIS, Milestone held a series of assignments across major NPS units, including Yosemite, Golden Gate, Redwood, Mount Rainier, and Crater Lake, as well as positions in regional offices in Seattle and Portland. He began his career in the 1970s

³³ Photograph in subfolder "Jim Portfolio," subfolder "Jim-Photos," folder "Supt," WHIS-DF.

as a volunteer naturalist and interpreter and later worked as a backcountry ranger at Mount Rainier, experiences that grounded his early engagement with both visitor services and resource stewardship. By the late 1980s, he was serving as a natural resource specialist and biologist at Crater Lake National Park. His career included a broad operational background spanning resource management, visitor services, and park administration, preparing him to lead a complex recreation area with both high visitation and significant natural and cultural resource responsibilities.³⁴ Milestone sought to elevate WHIS from a regional recreation site to a nationally recognized destination. His efforts paralleled NPS priorities of the 2000s, including a renewed emphasis on relevancy, outdoor recreation, and public engagement.³⁵

Milestone prioritized improving visitor experiences and access to park resources. He championed projects that enhanced recreation opportunities, such as expanding the trail network, including the construction of the popular James K. Carr Trail to Whiskeytown Falls in 2006, and he supported ranger-led kayak tours on Whiskeytown Lake (see Chapter 3.2: Trails and Chapter 6.2: Interpretive Planning & Programs).³⁶ These initiatives aligned with Milestone's philosophy that "through appreciation there comes value," underscoring his belief in the importance of fostering connections between visitors and the park's resources.³⁷

A central theme of Milestone's tenure was promoting recreation while reducing the environmental impact of traditional activities.³⁸ For instance, his leadership saw the introduction of smoking bans on WHIS beaches in 2010, later expanded to trails in 2016, making Whiskeytown the first smoke-free NPS unit. These policies, along with the park's earlier ban on personal watercraft, reinforced Milestone's focus on creating a safer and more serene environment for visitors.³⁹

Milestone also worked to connect the local community with the park through innovative initiatives such as establishing a public bus route from Redding to WHIS.⁴⁰ This effort was part of a strategy to increase accessibility and build support for WHIS among underserved populations. Additionally, he emphasized public engagement through events and scholarly contributions, including his co-authored articles on park management and his book, *From the White House to Whiskeytown*, which chronicled the park's founding and growth.

³⁴ Leadership Redding, "Speaker Bios: Recreation & Environment Session," May 5, 2011, accessed November 2024, <https://leadershipredding.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/2010-2011-Recreation-Bios.pdf>; "Yosemite Nature Notes," 47, no. 5, accessed March 2026, https://www.yosemite.ca.us/library/yosemite_nature_notes/47/47-5.pdf; Hal K. Rothman, *The Park That Makes Its Own Weather: An Administrative History of Golden Gate National Recreation Area*, NPS Golden Gate National Recreation Area, January 2002, p. 118; and Stephen R. Mark, "Crater Lake National Park Administrative History: Chapter 18: Research," DOI NPS, 2003, accessed March 2026, <https://npshistory.com/publications/crla/adhi/chap18.pdf>.

³⁵ James Milestone to Whiskeytown Backcountry Committee, Backcountry Development, Enjoyment and Use, January 21, 2008, folder "CR61," WHIS-DF; and Milestone, et al., "Smokey Says, 'Get Your Ash Off My Beach,' Implementing a Smoke-free Beach Policy at Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, *George Wright Forum*, 27 no 3 (2010): pp. 292-302.

³⁶ WHIS, "James K Carr Trail to Whiskeytown Falls," WHIS NPS, accessed November 2024, <https://www.nps.gov/whis/planyourvisit/james-k-carr-trail-to-whiskeytown-falls.htm>. Ranger-led kayak programming was supported during Milestone's tenure; according to Jennifer Gibson (WHIS Chief of Resources and Interpretation, 2016–2020), personal communication with authors, fall 2024 and April 2026, the program was developed by Carol Jandrall of the Interpretation Division with the support of her supervisor and the park's leadership team.

³⁷ James Milestone to Whiskeytown Backcountry Committee, Backcountry Development, Enjoyment and Use, January 21, 2008.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Milestone, et al., "Smokey Says, 'Get Your Ashe Off My Beach,'" pp. 292-302.

⁴⁰ WHIS, *Whiskeytown Nugget Newspaper*, 2017 Official Guide to WHIS, p. 4, accessed March 2026, <https://npshistory.com/publications/whis/newspaper/2017.pdf>.

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Beyond visitor engagement, Milestone oversaw significant highpoints for the park, including the 40th and 50th anniversaries of President John F. Kennedy's dedication of Whiskeytown Dam. These celebrations highlighted the park's historical significance and reinforced its identity as both a recreational and cultural resource (see Chapter 6.2: Interpretive Planning & Programs).

Despite his successes and efforts to make WHIS a place for visitors to have a "premier park experience," Milestone's final years in the position were marked by a DOI Office of Inspector General investigation into multiple allegations, including ethical violations and misconduct. In 2016, WHIS had some of the lowest scores from the Employee Viewpoint Survey in the region and an anonymous employee brought a series of complaints against Milestone to the DOI's Office of Inspector General.⁴¹

Following these complaints, the Inspector General investigated multiple allegations, including improper solicitation and collection of donations for Friends of Whiskeytown; inappropriate use of park services and resources in support of Friends of Whiskeytown fundraising events; misuse of deferred maintenance project funds; failure to comply with cultural resource requirements; unprofessional conduct; and misuse of a government-owned vehicle. Dozens of current and former NPS employees were interviewed as part of the investigation. The Inspector General's report concluded that Milestone had "routinely violated various Federal regulations and NPS policies and demonstrated questionable leadership practices during his tenure as WHIS superintendent." The report also substantiated allegations of inappropriate gender-based comments, identifying them as inconsistent with professional standards.⁴²

Amidst the controversy, the regional office reassigned Milestone from his post at WHIS to work on a detail assignment for the regional office.⁴³ Craig Ackerman from Crater Lake National Park and Patrick Gubbins, Deputy Superintendent at Lake Mead National Recreation Area, served as acting superintendents during this period, with Gubbins in the role during the Carr Fire. As the investigations continued, several community members came out in support of Milestone, including Paul Davis of Friends of Whiskeytown and Judy Salter, former CEO of the Turtle Bay Exploration Park in Redding. Salter provided an interview to the local paper and wrote editorials that touted Milestone's achievements at WHIS and stood in his defense.⁴⁴ Although Milestone retained support from some community members, ultimately, the DOI investigation found: "Given the credibility of testimonial evidence, we determined that Milestone demonstrated a lack of candor when he denied allegations against him."⁴⁵ The US Attorney's Office for the Northern Division of California declined to prosecute Milestone for providing false statements during the investigation.⁴⁶

⁴¹ Office of Inspector General, US Department of the Interior (DOI), "Allegations of Ethical Violations and Misconduct by NPS Superintendent," Report Number: 17-0883, June 4, 2018, pp. 2-3, accessed November 2024, https://www.doiioig.gov/sites/default/files/2021-migration/WebRedacted_NPSWhiskeytown.pdf.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Jessica Skopanic and Damon Arthus, "Whiskeytown superintendent Jim Milestone Reassigned," *Redding Records Searchlight*, March 28, 2018, accessed November 2024, <https://www.redding.com/story/news/2018/03/27/whiskeytown-superintendent-jim-milestone-reassigned/464508002/>.

⁴⁴ David Benda, Alayna Shulman, and Damon Arthur, "UDPATE: Supporters defend Whiskeytown's Jim Milestone against 'misconduct accusations,'" *Redding Record Searchlight*, June 4, 2018, accessed November 2024, <https://www.redding.com/story/news/2018/06/04/whiskeytowns-milestone-accused-misconduct/671032002/>.

⁴⁵ Office of Inspector General, "Allegations of Ethical Violations and Misconduct," pp. 2-3.

⁴⁶ John Ross Ferrara, "Superintendent of Whiskeytown National Recreation Area Investigated for Array of Allegations, Including Misuse of Government Funds, Sexual Harassment," June 5, 2018, *Lost Coast Outpost*, accessed November 2024, <https://lostcoastoutpost.com/2018/jun/5/superintendent-whiskeytown-national-recreation-area/>.

Milestone's tenure was contradictory in its influence. While his initiatives to expand recreation, enhance accessibility, and elevate the park's national profile achieved lasting successes, the controversies of his final years reveal the administrative and workplace challenges that accompanied his tenure.

Josh Hoines (Appointed 2018)

The following section provides a limited overview of Hoines's initial tenure to situate the park's administrative condition at the time of the 2018 leadership transition.⁴⁷ Josh Hoines assumed the role of superintendent WHIS in December 2018, stepping into leadership during one of the park's most challenging periods.⁴⁸ Following the Carr Fire, which devastated over 97 percent of WHIS lands and severely damaged infrastructure, Hoines faced the challenging task of recovery while charting a course for the park's future.

Hoines brought extensive expertise in ecological restoration and disaster recovery from his previous roles as chief of resources at Death Valley National Park, where he led flood recovery efforts, and as a vegetation branch chief at Joshua Tree National Park.⁴⁹ His experience proved invaluable in navigating the complex interagency partnerships and securing funding required to rehabilitate WHIS's damaged resources.



Figure 11. Josh Hoines, ca. 2018.
Source: Photograph courtesy WHIS.

⁴⁷ This administrative history examines park administration through 2018. Later documents are cited where necessary to document policy outcomes or provide administrative context.

⁴⁸ "Hoines Tapped to head Whiskeytown Recovery," *Red Bluff Daily News*, December 11, 2018, accessed November 2024, <https://www.redbluffdailynews.com/2018/12/11/hoines-tapped-to-head-whiskeytown-recovery/>

⁴⁹ Ibid.; and "Whiskeytown Welcomes New Superintendent in the Midst of Carr Fire Crisis," *Active Norcal*, December 4, 2018, accessed November 2024, <https://www.activenorcal.com/whiskeytown-welcomes-new-superintendent-in-the-midst-of-carr-fire-crisis/>.

CHAPTER 2.2: SUPERINTENDENTS AND THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS

A central focus of Hoines's tenure has been balancing recovery efforts with long-term resilience planning. He prioritized initiatives to restore trails, rehabilitate burned landscapes, and enhance fire management protocols.⁵⁰ This work aligned with NPS goals to address the increasing threat of wildfires exacerbated by worsening environmental hazards. Additionally, Hoines implemented measures to improve visitor safety and accessibility as areas reopened, facilitating the resumption of public use while restoration efforts continued.⁵¹

Hoines emphasized community engagement during this period.⁵² He expanded coordination with local stakeholders, including Indigenous communities, and formalized partnerships with volunteer organizations and academic institutions. These collaborations supported recovery projects and incorporated cultural and ecological perspectives into management discussions. During this period, WHIS initiated additional interpretive and educational programming focused on the park's ecological and cultural history, including outreach to schools and underserved communities.⁵³ His administration prioritized recovery following the Carr Fire and institutional adjustments to emerging challenges. Because this study concludes near the beginning of Hoines's tenure, its long-term outcomes cannot yet be evaluated.

Conclusion

Across successive administrations, management at WHIS has demonstrated both continuity in core stewardship responsibilities and adaptation to shifting institutional, environmental, and fiscal conditions. The formative decades aligned with the mid-twentieth-century expansion and modernization of the NPS, as interagency agreements, infrastructure construction, and boundary adjustments established the recreation area's administrative and physical foundations. As national environmental policy frameworks matured in the 1960s and 1970s, planning processes, environmental compliance, and integrated natural and cultural resource management assumed greater prominence within park operations.

⁵⁰ WHIS, "National Park Service Releases Interagency Review of 2018 Carr Fire," April 16, 2019, accessed March 2026, <https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1319/national-park-service-releases-interagency-review-of-2018-carr-fire.htm>; WHIS, "Goats to be used to Manage Vegetation and Fuels at Whiskeytown National Recreation Area," April 24, 2020, accessed March 2026, <https://www.nps.gov/whis/learn/news/goats-at-whiskeytown-nra.htm>; and Jessica Skropanic, "After the Carr Fire: When will Whiskeytown complete park's restoration?" *Redding Record Searchlight*, April 7, 2021, accessed March 2026, <https://www.redding.com/story/news/2021/04/07/carr-fire-damage-greater-than-predicted-restoration-goals-delayed/7092948002/>.

⁵¹ Multiple new releases between the Carr Fire and early 2020 before the COVID-19 Pandemic discuss the reopening of areas impacted by the Carr Fire. See WHIS, "News Releases," n.d. accessed March 2026, <https://www.nps.gov/whis/learn/news/newsreleases.htm>; see, for example, "Whiskeytown's South Shore Drive to re-open Thursday, September 26," September 25, 2019, accessed March 2026, <https://www.nps.gov/whis/learn/news/whiskeytown-s-south-shore-drive-to-re-open-thursday-september-26th.htm>; "James K. Carr Trail to Whiskeytown Falls Reopened to the Public," February 16, 2020, accessed March 2026, <https://www.nps.gov/whis/learn/news/whiskeytown-falls-reopens.htm>; and "Whiskeytown National Recreation Area Announces the Re-Opening of the Princess Ditch Trail," November 24, 2019, accessed March 2026, <https://www.nps.gov/whis/learn/news/re-opening-of-the-princess-ditch-trail.htm>.

⁵² In the 2019 Leadership Charter, there is a section called "Covenant," which states that park staff should "apply core values of Respect, Engage, and Communicate with each other, staff partners, and visitors." It goes on to state: "We choose to operate collaboratively with an operating goal of 'no surprises.' We will operate collaboratively with a proactive approach." WHIS, "Leadership Charter," August, 2019, p. 2, subfolder "ADMIN_PLANS," subfolder "Not_Accessioned," folder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF.

⁵³ See WHIS, "Whiskeytown NRA Redbud Recovery Project," July 20 2019, accessed March 2026, <https://www.nps.gov/whis/learn/news/whiskeytown-nra-redbud-recovery-project.htm>; WHIS, "New Year, New Virtual Education Programs!" January 4, 2021, accessed March 2026, <https://www.nps.gov/whis/learn/news/new-year-new-virtual-education-programs.htm>; WHIS, "The Wintu of Whiskeytown," October 6, 2021, accessed March 2026, <https://www.nps.gov/whis/learn/news/the-wintu-of-whiskeytown.htm>; and WHIS, "Whiskeytown announces April 2022 Public Program Schedule," April 6 2022, accessed March 2026, <https://www.nps.gov/whis/learn/news/whiskeytown-announces-april-2022-public-program-schedule.htm>.

In the late twentieth century, leadership at WHIS navigated rising visitation alongside tightening federal budgets. Administrative systems became more formalized, volunteer engagement expanded, and visitor safety and operational efficiency received heightened attention. During the 1990s, management increasingly integrated cultural and natural resource planning, paralleling servicewide shifts toward interdisciplinary resource stewardship and action-oriented management documents.

Entering the twenty-first century, WHIS leadership confronted new pressures: expanding recreation demands, heightened public engagement expectations, and growing organizational complexity. These years illustrate both the opportunities and vulnerabilities that accompany programmatic expansion within a highly regulated federal framework. Most recently, large-scale wildfire and disaster recovery efforts have required extensive interagency coordination, ecological restoration planning, and climate adaptation strategies, situating WHIS within the NPS's evolving emphasis on resilience and hazard mitigation.

The leadership history at WHIS mirrors institutional patterns within the NPS. Decision-making frameworks and management priorities have been shaped less by individual personality than by prevailing servicewide policies, regional directives, fiscal realities, and national environmental and recreational trends. Rather than a linear progression, the park's administrative history reveals continuity and recalibration: enduring responsibilities of stewardship, visitor service, and interagency coordination carried forward under changing external conditions. Through successive administrations, WHIS evolved from a newly authorized recreation area into a mature NPS unit whose policies, programs, and infrastructure were shaped by both local circumstance and servicewide dynamics.

CHAPTER 2.3: PARKWIDE PLANNING

Planning has structured administrative decision-making at Whiskeytown National Recreation Area (WHIS) since before the unit's formal designation in 1965. Over time, a succession of master plans, resource-specific management documents, compliance frameworks, and strategic initiatives established how WHIS balanced recreation development, resource protection, and interagency coordination. These documents did not remain static; they were revised, supplemented, or replaced as federal legislation expanded, visitation patterns shifted, and administrative responsibilities grew more complex.

Across the 1960s and 1970s, planning centered on recreation development while gradually incorporating formal natural and cultural resource management guidance. By the 1980s and 1990s, planning became more specialized and increasingly responsive to regulatory requirements, including environmental compliance and mineral leasing restrictions. In the 2000s and 2010s, the park adopted more integrated and performance-oriented planning instruments, including comprehensive management plans, strategic benchmarks, foundation documentation, and issue-specific plans addressing invasive species, wildlife, accessibility, wildfire impacts, and visitor use.

This chapter traces these planning efforts chronologically, examining how individual documents structured administrative decision-making, reshaped land use priorities, and formalized compliance obligations. The record shows an incremental shift from general recreation frameworks toward increasingly specialized and integrated management instruments within the administrative structure of the National Park Service (NPS).

Early Planning Documents

The first planning document for WHIS, completed in 1964, provided a framework for the park's operations. Drafted a year before the unit's official designation, the 1964 Master Plan had three categories: "The Land," "The Visitor," and "The Staff." Under "The Land," the plan inventoried natural resources, proposed development areas, and addressed legal considerations. "The Visitor" section projected visitation patterns, identifying potential sources of visitors and how they would interact with the park's recreational offerings. Lastly, "The Staff" outlined the initial administrative structure for WHIS.¹

While comprehensive in scope, the 1964 plan was primarily a foundational document rather than a detailed operational guide. It provided a baseline inventory of the park's resources and a vision for how they might be managed,

¹ Branch of Landscape Architecture, Western Office of Design and Construction, "Narrative, Part of the Master Plan: Whiskeytown National Recreation Area," January 16, 1964, sheets 1-4, subfolder "Facilities_Planning_Maps," folder "FACILITIES," WHIS-DF.

but it left room for subsequent revision as the park's needs changed. The plan's primary focus was recreation and lacked specific provisions for the environmental and cultural resource challenges that would later emerge.

Early operational experience exposed limitations in the 1964 Master Plan and prompted administrators to initiate updated planning efforts in the early 1970s. In 1972, WHIS released a revised master plan with support from NPS service centers. Drawing on nearly a decade of visitation data and resource observations, the plan incorporated greater attention to resource management while retaining recreation as the dominant priority. The document's stated "prime goal" was to "integrate the development and broaden the recreation options of the entire unit by providing improved access, services, and facilities in the backcountry as well as around the perimeter of the lake not heretofore possible."²

From Generalists to Specialists

By the mid-1970s, public land management was undergoing a significant transformation. The passage of environmental protection laws such as the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in 1969 marked a shift toward increased environmental awareness and regulatory oversight. For WHIS, this shift appeared in the publication of its first Natural Resource Management Plan in 1975. This plan, alongside a new resource-focused chapter in the Master Plan, represented a growing commitment to environmental stewardship.³ For the first time, WHIS began systematically addressing the management and protection of its natural resources.

In 1982, WHIS published its first Cultural Resource Management Plan, which laid out strategies for preserving the newly established Tower House Historic District (THHD). This plan provided a roadmap for protecting WHIS's historical assets, emphasizing both documentation and proactive preservation efforts.⁴

That same year, WHIS updated its 1975 Natural Resource Management Plan, incorporating an addendum that introduced more advanced monitoring initiatives, enhanced fire management protocols, and a series of ecological studies aimed at better understanding and protecting the park's environment.⁵ In addition to advanced monitoring strategies, WHIS continued to pursue more traditional methods to protect its natural resources. For example, in 1990 WHIS's fire unit located and eradicated tamarisk—an invasive shrub—from any known location in the park. The process included pulling or cutting the shrubs and then applying Garlon 4, an herbicide, to any stump left behind. The fire unit applied a second round of Garlon 4 a few months later. This labor proved fruitful as the team found no new shoots in spring 1992.⁶

² Whiskeytown National Recreation Area (WHIS), "Master Plan for Whiskeytown National Recreation Area," June 18, 1976, p. 25, folder "Unorganized Files," WHIS-DF.

³ Whiskeytown Unit, "An Addendum to the Natural Resources Management Plan for the Whiskeytown Unit of the Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area, California," March 1982, p. Aii, folder "Unorganized Files," WHIS-DF.

⁴ Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, "Whiskeytown Resources Management Plan," August 1997, pp. 9, 122, subfolder "ADMIN_PLANS," subfolder "Not_Accessioned," subfolder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF.

⁵ Whiskeytown Unit, "An Addendum to the Natural Resources Management Plan," 1982.

⁶ See three memos, all authored by Robert P. Cherry, "Tamarisk Control," WHIS, dated July 5, 1990, October 15, 1990, and May 18, 1992, all in folder "Plants," WHIS-DF.

Specialization continued to shape planning efforts throughout the decade. In 1988, WHIS staff amended the Master Plan to significantly reduce the acreage available for mineral leasing within park boundaries.⁷ The amendment marked a clearer administrative position on mineral activity within the recreation area and was evidence of a narrowing of allowable uses in favor of resource protection. More broadly, the revision illustrates the park's increasing reliance on targeted planning tools to address specific management issues.

By the 1990s, WHIS had begun to adopt a more integrated approach to resource management, bringing together natural, cultural, and recreational priorities under a unified framework. This approach culminated in the Whiskeytown Resources Management Plan (1997), which was the first document to comprehensively coordinate the management of the park's diverse resources. The plan also described the 170 invasive and exotic plants competing for space and resources with the approximately 662 native plant species growing within the park. To control these invasive species, the plan suggested WHIS staff hire seasonal biological technicians to perform the additional work of inventorying and mapping the species.⁸ The plan emphasized collaboration between park divisions and sought to create a more holistic strategy for addressing WHIS's management challenges.

At the close of the decade, WHIS undertook another major planning initiative: the drafting of a new General Management Plan (GMP). Required under Public Law 95-625, the GMP was intended to guide the park's operations over a fifteen-year period. Finalized in 2000, the GMP acknowledged that the park needed a more up-to-date plan than the 1976 Master Plan and incorporated relevant elements from earlier plans into an updated framework.⁹ This comprehensive document addressed the park's evolving priorities and introduced strategies for managing contemporary issues, from increased visitation to resource conservation.

In 2001, WHIS built on the GMP's foundation by drafting a strategic plan in accordance with the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993. This plan established measurable goals and benchmarks intended to align WHIS's actions with its management objectives.¹⁰ Together, the GMP and Strategic Plan guided park operations throughout the 2000s, balancing its recreational mission with its commitment to preserving natural and cultural resources. Additionally, in 2001, two summer Biological Science Technicians published an "Exotic Plant Management" planning document for the park. The technicians also began to build maps using ArcView, a Geographic Information System (GIS) program and new technology for natural resource management. Of the many dozens of invasive species growing within the park, the plan's targeted species included Spanish broom, Scotch broom, French broom, yellow star thistle, giant reed, Himalayan blackberry, tree of heaven, mullein, puncture vine, and Jimson weed. To remove these invasives, WHIS staff relied on various treatments including pulling weeds, applying herbicide, and mulching.¹¹

⁷ WHIS, *Environmental Assessment: Amendment to the 1976 Master Plan*, August 1988, subfolder "ADMIN_PLANS," folder "LIBRARY-REPORTS," WHIS-DF.

⁸ WHIS, *Resources Management Plan for Whiskeytown National Recreation Area*, August 25, 1997, pp. 43-44, subfolder "ADMIN_PLANS," folder "LIBRARY-REPORTS," WHIS-DF.

⁹ WHIS, *Whiskeytown Unit General Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement*, July 1999, p. 8, subfolder "ADMIN_PLANS," folder "LIBRARY-REPORTS," WHIS-DF.

¹⁰ WHIS, "Strategic Plan for Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, Fiscal Year 2002," November 15, 2011, subfolder "ADMIN_PLANS," folder "LIBRARY-REPORTS," WHIS-DF.

¹¹ WHIS, *Exotic Plant Management*, September 26, 2001, p. 2, folder "Plants," WHIS-DF.

CHAPTER 2.3: PARKWIDE PLANNING

WHIS also produced several other parkwide plans in the 2000s. This included an Ethnographic Overview and Assessment (2000), which identified Native American groups historically associated with the area, documented patterns of land use, assessed the potential for continued traditional practices within park boundaries, and outlined tribal concerns related to WHIS management.¹² In addition, WHIS advanced natural resource planning and management during this period, including invasive species management efforts and a Draft Vegetation Management Plan (2005).¹³ These initiatives focused on providing guidance for managing plant communities in WHIS. The park also continued in its longtime tradition of partnering with other agencies or universities to research the region's natural resources. In 2006, for example, WHIS worked with the US Geological Survey's (USGS) Forest and Rangeland Ecosystem Science Center to study the populations of invasive wildlife in the park, including bullfrogs, red-eared sliders, brook trout, and centrarchid fishes.¹⁴ In 2009, WHIS adopted a Climate Friendly Parks Action Plan committing the park to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, energy consumption, and waste across the unit by 2016.¹⁵

Modern Planning Efforts

In 2013, WHIS embarked on an intensive planning process to draft its first *Foundation Document*. Developed with funding and support from the Pacific West Regional Office and Denver Service Center, the Foundation Document became a central planning reference for the park.¹⁶ Released in 2014, it articulated WHIS's purpose, identified fundamental resources and values, and documented administrative and resource challenges at that time. The park identified ecosystem diversity, *Puccinellia howellii*, the Whiskeytown Environmental School (WES), outdoor recreation, Gold Rush-era historical sites, Wintu archeological sites, and its role in the Central Valley Project (CVP) as fundamental to its significance.¹⁷

The Foundation Document also introduced a more forward-looking perspective to WHIS's planning portfolio. It addressed emerging issues such as climate resilience, visitor management, and cultural resource preservation, positioning the park to adapt to the evolving needs of both its resources and its visitors.¹⁸ By emphasizing collaboration and adaptability, the document was a culmination of decades of planning evolution at WHIS.

¹² Geri. D Emberson, Ethnographic Overview and Assessment and Tradition Use Study of American Indian Affiliation within the Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, California, May 2000, subfolder "AAA_BASELINE_DOCUMENTS," folder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF.

¹³ WHIS, "Draft Vegetation Management Plan," May 2005, subfolder "ADMIN_PLANS," folder "LIBRARY-REPORTS," WHIS-DF.

¹⁴ "Impact of Recreation and Invasive Species on Resident Aquatic Species and Survey of Surrounding Area," Scientific Research and Collecting Permit, Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, Study # WHIS-00023, February 27, 2006, subfolder "Bruce," folder "Research and Collection Permits," WHIS-DF.

¹⁵ WHIS, *Climate Friendly Parks: Whiskeytown National Recreation Area Action Plan*, 2009, subfolder "ADMIN_PLANS," folder "LIBRARY-REPORTS," WHIS-DF.

¹⁶ James Milestone, "Whiskeytown National Recreation Area's Annual Report 2013," n.d., p. 1, folder "A2621 WHIS Annual Report 13," box HQ6, WHIS-AF.

¹⁷ WHIS, *Foundation Document: Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, California*, July 2014, subfolder "ADMIN_PLANS," folder "LIBRARY-REPORTS," WHIS-DF.

¹⁸ Ibid.

In the final years of the period under review and in immediate post-fire documentation, WHIS issued several planning documents addressing accessibility, wildlife management, and trail rehabilitation. In 2016, the park released an Accessibility Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan Overview to identify areas for improving compliance with accessibility standards.¹⁹ In 2019, WHIS issued a Bear Management Plan outlining strategies to balance recreation, visitor safety, and black bear protection.²⁰ A Trails Management Plan, issued in 2022, documented strategies for restoring and maintaining the trail system following the Carr Fire and addressing increased backcountry use (see Chapter 3.2 Trails for more information).²¹

Conclusion

Over time, planning at WHIS became more structured, more technical, and more administratively consequential. What began as development-oriented master planning expanded into a layered system of resource plans, compliance documents, and strategic frameworks that increasingly shaped day-to-day management decisions.

By the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, planning documents did more than articulate goals; they defined program boundaries, clarified interdivisional responsibilities, and formalized how the park responded to fire, visitation pressure, environmental regulation, and funding constraints. The Foundation Document and subsequent technical plans did not represent a departure from earlier efforts so much as a consolidation and refinement of existing administrative practice. The planning record points to the institutional maturation of WHIS: an incremental shift from infrastructure planning toward integrated management tools designed to operate within legal mandates, interdisciplinary coordination, and long-term operational realities.

¹⁹ WHIS, "Accessibility Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan Overview," March 2016, accessed November 2024, https://pubs.nps.gov/eTIC/WEPO-WI/WHIS_611_131985_0001_of_0136.pdf.

²⁰ WHIS, *Bear Management Plan*, June 14, 2019, folder "Bear Management Plan," WHIS-DF.

²¹ WHIS, *Trails Management Plan: Environmental Assessment*, February 2022, subfolder "Environmental_Assessments," folder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF.

PART III

CHAPTER 3.1: ROADS AND RIGHT-OF-WAYS

Road systems at Whiskeytown National Recreation Area (WHIS) are records of both long-standing National Park Service (NPS) design principles and the unit's distinctive multi-jurisdictional setting. By the mid-twentieth century, NPS road planning emphasized alignment, grading, and materials that minimized visual intrusion and followed existing topography. Curvilinear routes, relatively narrow lanes, and integration with surrounding vegetation distinguished park roads from higher-speed state and interstate corridors. When WHIS was established in 1965, these design standards were already embedded in NPS practice and informed decisions about new construction, inherited roadways, and scenic access within the recreation area.¹

Unlike many park units, however, WHIS does not control the entirety of its transportation network. The NPS owns and maintains only a portion of the roads within park boundaries; other segments are owned or maintained by Shasta County and the California Department of Transportation. Roadway planning and maintenance therefore involve sustained coordination among the NPS, the State of California, Shasta County, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), private landowners, timber companies, and external utility providers. Some arrangements involve routine intergovernmental administration, while others—particularly those concerning private inholdings or formal easements—entail extended negotiation and documented agreements.

More than 17 miles of paved roads and 47 miles of unpaved roads traverse WHIS lands, totaling approximately 64 miles, of which roughly 42.2 miles are administrative roads.² The system includes paved, dirt, and gravel routes serving operational, emergency-response, and visitor-access functions. Roads remain the primary means of circulation for visitors and staff and serve as critical infrastructure during wildfire response, flood recovery, and utility maintenance.³ This chapter examines inherited roadways at the time of designation, major maintenance and reconstruction efforts, right-of-way (ROW) administration, storm- and fire-related damage, and backcountry road planning within a multi-owner landscape. Road coordination, infrastructure upkeep, and environmental mitigation have remained recurring administrative responsibilities throughout the park's history.

¹ Laura E. Soullière, "Historic Roads in the National Park System: A Special History Study," October 1995, pp. 1-3, accessed November 2024, <https://npshistory.com/publications/transportation/historic-roads.pdf>.

² Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity-National Recreation Area, "Statement for Management," National Park Service, January 1990, p. 22, folder "Unorganized Files," WHIS-DF; and Whiskeytown National Recreation Area (WHIS), *Trails Management Plan: Environmental Assessment*, February 2022, p. 14, subfolder "Environmental_Assessments," folder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF.

³ WHIS, *Trails Management Plan: Environmental Assessment*, p. 43-44.

Highway 299

In the years before 1965, NPS planners deemed Whiskeytown Lake's location near California State Route (SR) 299 (also called Highway 299) an asset to establishing the recreation area. NPS planners forecasted that the site's location near Highway 299 would place the new reservoir within a one- to two-day drive for motorists traveling from Washington, Oregon, and southern California.⁴ Since then, this century-old highway has continued to be the primary means by which visitors access the park.

The California Highway Commission first drew up plans for the state highway in 1919, just eleven years after Henry Ford's Model T automobile first arrived on the scene.⁵ Although the automobile was still relatively new, the State of California had already committed substantial resources to road construction to accommodate increasing travel. State investment in road building, including in rural areas, dated to the nineteenth century. In 1856, the Bureau of Highways reported that Shasta County boasted 1,500 miles of road, some of which were toll roads regulated by the county.⁶ When the California Highway Commission planned a route for the new Highway 299 in the years following World War I, it represented a long history of road development in both Shasta County and across the state. State Road 299 ultimately extended 306 miles, linking Nevada's eastern border to the Pacific coastline and embedding the Whiskeytown area within a larger state transportation network.

Highway 299 underwent multiple realignments within WHIS boundaries. The original highway ran parallel to Clear Creek, which resulted in sharp curves. In 1947, the California Division of Highways planned to straighten sections of the highway between Tower House and Schilling.⁷ In 1959, the State first approved a plan to realign Highway 299 to make room for the planned Whiskeytown Lake. The 5.1-mile-wide realignment project shifted the old road northeast from its original location, further away from what would become the edge of Whiskeytown Lake.⁸ Since the early 1960s, the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) undertook additional realignment work along Highway 299 within WHIS boundaries, most notably the Crystal Creek Curves project in the late 1980s and early 1990s, requiring ongoing coordination between NPS and the State of California.

Most of the Highway 299 roadway realignments took place during the late 1970s into the 1980s. In 1979, Caltrans realigned and widened a "windy segment" of the route between postmiles 6.6 and 7.85.⁹ Larger projects took place in the 1980s. These projects included the realignment of Highway 299 near Tower House Historic District (THHD)

⁴ Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, "A Report on the Proposed Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area," April 1963, pp. 2-3, folder "Unorganized Files," WHIS-DF.

⁵ State of California, Department of Engineering California Highway Commission, "Plan and Profile of Proposed State Highway," March 15, 1919, subfolder "HWY_299_AS_Built," folder "CaltransMaps," WHIS-DF.

⁶ Russel Beville and Elena Nilsson, Cultural Resources Overview of the Whiskeytown Unit, Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area, Shasta County, California, Mountain Anthropological Research, May 2001, p. 123, subfolder "2001," folder "Cultural_Resources_Reports-PRIVILEGED," WHIS-DF.

⁷ State of California, Department of Public Works, Division of Highways, "Plan and Profile of State Highway," October 17, 1947, subfolder "HWY_299_AS_Built," folder "CaltransMaps," WHIS-DF.

⁸ State of California, Department of Public Works, "Plans for Construction on State Highway in Shasta County," November 16, 1959, subfolder "1959_AsBuilt," subfolder "HWY_299_AS_Built," folder "CalTransMaps," WHIS-DF.

⁹ Cynthia J. Adams, "Archeological Survey Report for a Proposed Highway Realignment on 02-Sha-299 P.M 6.6./7.85," October 1979, subfolder "1979," folder "1970-1979," WHIS-DF.

in 1987, during which Caltrans added a new bridge across Clear Creek and realigned the road to improve motorists' approach to the bridge.¹⁰ The road project had a major effect on WHIS's visitors by shutting down visitor access to THHD for the 1987 season.¹¹ This project also had an adverse effect on National Register of Historic Places (NRHP)–eligible archeological resources (CA-SHA-192/479) and prompted mitigation efforts, which NPS and Caltrans decided would take the form of excavations.¹² The following year, a 1988 realignment project spurred the classification of a new grass species, *Puccinellia howellii* (see Chapter 5.1: Natural Resources and their Management).

Caltrans again adjusted the highway's route near Willow Creek and Clear Creek in 1991.¹³ The project required 15.5 acres of ROW to facilitate the sizable project, which included realigning the road, installing new culverts, building new draining structures, and dismantling the bridge over Willow Creek.¹⁴ Construction on a 1.3-mile section of the route posed a threat to wetlands near Whiskeytown Lake. As a result, the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG; now California Department of Fish and Wildlife) became involved in the project, working to mitigate its environmental impacts by establishing new wetlands.¹⁵ In addition to acquiring approval from NPS and CDFG, Caltrans also required approval from the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) due to the highway's proximity to the reservoir and dam.¹⁶ As with most road projects within WHIS boundaries, multiple agencies participated in project planning and review. However, because Highway 299 is owned by the State of California rather than the NPS, Caltrans funded the realignment.¹⁷

Even as the state retained ownership of Highway 299, rising traffic volumes intensified its administrative significance for WHIS. In 1934, California's Highway Transportation Survey estimated that approximately 100 vehicles used the road daily; traffic levels appeared similar in 1963.¹⁸ After 1965, however, traffic volumes increased substantially. By 2010, annual traffic on Highway 299 through WHIS reached approximately 1.9 million vehicles.¹⁹ Increased traffic

¹⁰ In the early 1970s, NPS historians opposed a Caltrans proposal to expand Highway 299 into a four-lane road and construct a large interchange at French Gulch Road, citing concerns about increased noise pollution at THHD. See Anna Cox Toogood and David G. Henderson, *Historic Structure Report: Tower House Historic District, Historical and Architectural Data Section, Whiskeytown National Recreation Area*, National Park Service (NPS), May 1973, p. 6, subfolder "ADMIN_PLANS," folder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF.

¹¹ Ray Foust, "Superintendent's Annual Report, 1987," July 7, 1988, p. 5, folder "A2621 Reports Superintendents," box HQ6, WHIS-AF.

¹² NPS and State of California Department of Transportation (CalTrans), Unsigned, n.d. Memorandum of Understanding for replacement of Clear Creek Bridge, 1986, subfolder "H4217-53," subfolder "WHIS_1048_Cat9018_H_Box3of3," subfolder "Accessioned," folder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF.

¹³ CalTrans, "Project Plans for Construction on State Highway in Shasta County," September 16, 1991, folder "CalTransMaps," WHIS-DF.

¹⁴ CalTrans and the US Department of Transportation (DOT), "Initial Study/Environmental Assessment," October 31, 1988, p. 1, folder "Road Construction," WHIS-DF.

¹⁵ Ray Foust to CalTrans, December 7, 1988, folder "Road_Construction," WHIS-DF; CalTrans, "Negative Declaration," n.d., folder "Road_Construction," WHIS-DF. The California Department of Fish and Game was renamed the California Department of Fish and Wildlife in 2012.

¹⁶ Larry French, CalTrans, to Ray Faust, October 29, 1990, subfolder "Road_Construction," WHIS-DF.

¹⁷ CalTrans and US DOT Federal Highway Commission, "Initial Study/Environmental Assessment: Proposed Curve Correction, Within the Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, on State Route 299, in Shasta County, California," October 1988, p. 2.

¹⁸ State of California, Department of Public Works, Division of Highways, "Highway Transportation Survey of 1934," folder "County Maps," WHIS-DF; and Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, "A Report on the Proposed Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area," 1963, p. 11.

¹⁹ WHIS, "Annual Report 2010," NPS, p. 22, folder "Unorganized Files," WHIS-DF; and WHIS, "Superintendent's Annual Report for Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, 2008-2009," October 2009, p. 29, folder "Unorganized Files," WHIS-DF.

brought corresponding management responsibilities, including coordination with state transportation officials, accident response, and law enforcement concerns. Although Highway 299 remains a two-lane road, it continues to function as the primary transportation corridor through the park.²⁰

Scenic Roads

Agency guidance in the 1920s and 1930s treated roads as functional infrastructure that required careful visual integration into surrounding landscapes. Although planners described roads as a “necessary evil,” they adopted design standards intended to reduce visual contrast and maintain scenic qualities.²¹ This approach shaped road planning at WHIS, where staff sought to align road corridors with adjacent forests, wetlands, and mountain terrain.

A 1971 WHIS Master Interpretive Plan cautioned that a “solid timber border” along the roadside could create visual monotony for drivers. The plan therefore recommended selective tree removal to create intermittent openings and views. Rather than allowing forest growth to extend directly to the pavement edge, planners proposed maintaining areas of “transition vegetation,” including shrubs and smaller trees, to moderate the visual boundary between roadway and forest. These planning decisions linked roadside vegetation management to visitor experience and scenic presentation.²²

Winding roads were characteristic of the NPS’s aesthetic—an approach that set the national parks apart from other federal lands. In WHIS, Highway 299’s offered layered views: forested mountains in the distance, chaparral foothills in the middle ground, and lighter vegetation along the road’s edge. However, it was possible for the park road to be *too* winding. One Caltrans report noted that most drivers miss the beauty of WHIS’s surrounding landscape because they must “focus their attention on the narrow winding road.”²³

As roadside design standards matured, roads were no longer treated solely as infrastructure to be concealed within the landscape. They increasingly functioned as scenic corridors. In 1991, the US Department of Transportation designated a 130-mile stretch of Highway 299 as the Trinity Scenic Byway, including the segment passing through WHIS.²⁴ The designation formally recognized the highway’s scenic value and reinforced its role in shaping visitors’ experience of the recreation area. The road thus operated not only as an access route but also as a primary interpretive and visual framework for the park.

Scenic roadway management also carried economic implications. As architectural historian Laura E. Soullière observes, while park records often emphasized aesthetic and inspirational qualities, federal policymakers likewise understood automobile access as a mechanism for stimulating tourism and regional economic activity. Road access facilitated visitation, and visitation levels influenced planning priorities, funding allocations, and infrastructure investment.²⁵ At WHIS, maintaining visual quality and roadway access therefore involved operational and fiscal considerations.

²⁰ CalTrans and the US DOT, “Initial Study/Environmental Assessment,” 1988, p. 1.

²¹ Soullière, “Historic Roads in the National Park System: A Special History Study,” p. 1.

²² NPS and US Forest Service (USFS), *Master Coordination Plan for Whiskeytown-Shasta Trinity National Recreation Area*, August 3, 1971, p. Appendix G, folder “1970s,” WHIS-DF.

²³ CalTrans and the US DOT, “Initial Study/Environmental Assessment,” 1988, p. 7.

²⁴ USFS, “Trinity Scenic Byway,” n.d., accessed March 2026, <https://www.fs.usda.gov/r05/shasta-trinity/recreation/trinity-scenic-byway>.

²⁵ Soullière, “Historic Roads in the National Park System: A Special History Study,” p. 1.

Yet increased access introduced new pressures. By the 1970s, visitor traffic included not only passenger vehicles but also trailers and recreational vehicles that required expanded parking, utility hookups, and sanitary facilities.²⁶ Campgrounds originally designed for smaller-scale use—such as Oak Bottom and Dry Creek—experienced soil compaction and vegetation damage.²⁷ As vehicle size and visitor expectations shifted, WHIS staff repeatedly modified roads, parking areas, and campgrounds to address capacity and resource impacts.

Rights-of-Way & Ownership

When WHIS was established in 1965, the NPS assumed responsibility for a network of existing roads within its boundaries, including historical mining and logging routes, while state and county roads remained under their respective jurisdictions.²⁸ Many of these roads were now under the ownership of the NPS, while others remained under the control of Shasta County, Caltrans, or the BLM. Regardless of ownership, roads provided essential access to all corners of the park for both staff and visitors. In the years leading up to the creation of the national recreation area in 1965, the NPS prioritized resolving rights-of-way (ROW) issues. A ROW is a formal agreement between parties that permits public access to an existing road.²⁹ In 1964, WHIS sought approval from various state and federal agencies to create ROWs. One of the first rights-of-way granted by the State of California to WHIS occurred in the summer of 1964 and was the intersection of Highway 299 and the Whiskeytown Dam access road, which was renamed John F. Kennedy Memorial Drive in October 1964.³⁰ WHIS needed access to this intersection to construct the Overlook Visitor Center (later called the Whiskeytown Visitor Center). In 1965, California Division of Highways granted NPS an encroachment permit to “relocate and reconstruct the public road approach for John F. Kennedy Memorial Drive to State Highway Route 299.” The permit included acceleration, deceleration, and “all other necessary pertinent items to provide adequate, efficient, and safe handling of highway traffic.”³¹ This agreement between WHIS and the State of California was evidence of a professional and routine partnership between the two agencies.

²⁶ NPS and USFS, Master Coordination Plan for Whiskeytown-Shasta Trinity National Recreation Area, 1971, p. 35.

²⁷ WHIS, *Draft General Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement*, NPS, August 1998, p. 6, e-TIC filename “WHIS_611_98036_0122pg.pdf” accessed November 2024.

²⁸ For maps of historic roads and trails, see Anna Cox Toogood, *Historic Resource Study: Whiskeytown National Recreation Area*, NPS, October 1978, pp. 101-102, subfolder “1978,” folder “1970-1979,” WHIS-DF.

²⁹ Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, “A Report on the Proposed Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area,” 1963, Appendix p. 18.

³⁰ Letter from H.S. Miles (State of California, Division of Highways) to Samuel King (WHIS-NPS), July 31, 1964, folder L3027 “Road Right of Way-State of California HWY 299 Kennedy Memorial Drive Cal Trans 2 of 2,” box HQ11, WHIS-AF; and WHIS, “Kennedy Memorial,” August 25, 2020, accessed November 2024, <https://www.nps.gov/whis/planyourvisit/kennedy-memorial.htm>.

³¹ California Division of Highways, “Encroachment Permit No. 265-E-760265,” July 14, 1965, folder “Road_Construction,” WHIS-DF (NARA citation: box 1.A1 Box 2, series “Encroachments, Road Construction”).

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In 1967, Superintendent Leon J. Mitchell wrote to the regional office asking for advice about WHIS's authority in granting a ROW to the State of California through WHIS to realign the "old state highway which was inundated by the lake."³² NPS's field solicitor explained that "although these agencies have the responsibility to administer these lands, they apparently do not have direct authority to convey or transfer parcels to the State for the purpose of highways." This parcel conveyance was a responsibility that fell to the Secretary of Commerce, via a state request through the BLM.³³ WHIS's first attempts at securing rights-of-way were often met with temporary roadblocks, a common problem for managers as they navigated the authority of multiple agencies.

In addition to resolving rights-of-way within its boundaries, WHIS also undertook construction of new internal roads. The park's first master plan (1964) emphasized expanding road access to key visitor areas, including Brandy Creek, Oak Bottom, and Whiskey Creek. The Bureau of Outdoor Recreation was tasked with constructing a primary access road beginning at Highway 299, crossing the dam, passing the administrative offices, and terminating at Brandy Creek, where the NPS would develop additional circulation roads and visitor facilities.³⁴ A road to Whiskey Creek already existed and had been transferred by the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation to Shasta County; the NPS subsequently constructed internal roads to serve the site.³⁵

WHIS constructed South Shore Drive in 1965. The five-mile unpaved route linked Carr Powerhouse Road, Highway 299, and Kennedy Memorial Drive, completing a continuous loop around Whiskeytown Lake.³⁶ The drive expanded shoreline access and established the automobile as another means of experiencing the reservoir landscape. Over time, however, increased traffic and larger vehicles strained the road's original design. A 1998 draft General Management Plan (GMP) observed that "portions of the route are too narrow to accommodate safe two-way traffic for the range of visitor vehicles using the park."³⁷

³² Letter from Field Solicitor, San Francisco to Regional Director, Western Region, "Application by State, highway right of way," June 16, 1967, folder "L3027 Road Right of Way-State of California HWY 299 Kennedy Memorial Drive Cal Trans 2 of 2," box HQ11, WHIS-AF.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ NPS, "1963-64 Draft Master Plan," 1964, p. 2, folder "FACILITIES," WHIS-DF; and Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, "A Report on the Proposed Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area," 1963, Appendix p. 18.

³⁵ NPS, "1963-64 Draft Master Plan," 1964, p. 2.

³⁶ WHIS, *Environmental Assessment: Proposed Washout Repairs, South Shore Drive*, September 1995, p. 1, folder "L7617 EA South Shore Road," box HQ2, WHIS-AF.

³⁷ WHIS, *Draft General Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement*, 1998, p. 7.

By the 1970s, WHIS managed a network of forty-seven miles of vehicular roads, though only a portion of that mileage was under direct NPS ownership. Of these, twenty-two miles were designated for administrative use rather than public access.³⁸ As the system expanded in scope and complexity, the park turned toward more formal evaluation tools. In the late 1970s, the NPS and the Federal Highway Administration entered into a memorandum of understanding establishing the Road Inventory Program (RIP), which provided standardized surveys and condition assessments for park roads.³⁹ WHIS received its RIP documentation in 1979, generating a comprehensive baseline record of road locations, conditions, and maintenance needs.⁴⁰ This inventory data informed planning and budgeting decisions into the 1980s, particularly as park operations and visitation patterns extended beyond the immediate shoreline areas.

Because WHIS is interwoven with surrounding private lands, road access frequently raised jurisdictional and property-rights questions. Private landowners surround the majority of WHIS's forty-six-mile border, which means they often need access to the roads that move in and out of the unit.⁴¹ South Fork Mountain Lookout Road provides an example. South Fork Mountain Lookout Road is a small dirt road that also serves as a trail. The road attracts cyclists, runners, and equestrians. In 2004, a private sale of land just outside of park boundaries put Superintendent James Milestone into conflict with at least one private landowner seeking to use the road to access her private property. While the NPS does grant Use Permits on WHIS roads, Milestone explained to her in a letter, those users must 1) provide proof of deed reservation and 2) show that accessing the road will not impact the park and its resources. Because the private landowner seeking a Use Permit on South Fork Mountain Lookout Road could not demonstrate either point, Superintendent Milestone denied her application.⁴²

This landowner's request was not unique. For WHIS's superintendents, negotiating which private landowners had legal rights to access NPS roads occupied a substantial portion of superintendent and staff time.⁴³ There was precedent for private landowners taking control of nearby roads: in the nineteenth century, individuals built and maintained their own roads, particularly in areas where Shasta County did not want to deal with the rough terrain.⁴⁴

³⁸ WHIS, "Master Plan for Whiskeytown National Recreation Area," 1972, p. 41.

³⁹ Federal Highway Commission Road Inventory Program, "The Road Inventory of Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area: WHIS-8750," 2007, p. 1-1, folder "Roads_and_Trails," WHIS-DF (NARA citation: box 4.A Box 3, series "Roads and Trails [non-historic]").

⁴⁰ See Federal Highway Commission, "Road Inventory and Needs Study for Whiskeytown National Recreation Area," 1979, folder "Roads_and_Trails," WHIS-DF (NARA citation: box 4.A Box 3, "Roads and Trails [non-historic]").

⁴¹ WHIS, *Whiskeytown Fire Management Plan, 2022*, April 2022, p. 75, subfolder "Not_Accessioned," subfolder "ADMIN_PLANS," folder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF; WHIS, *Resources Management Plan for Whiskeytown National Recreation Area*, August 1997, p. 2, subfolder "ADMIN_PLANS," subfolder "Not_Accessioned," folder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF.

⁴² James Milestone to Nancy L. Polk, Shasta County Department of Resource Management, July 19, 2024, pp. 1-2, folder "L3027 Land Use Roads and Road Right of Ways," box HQ 11, WHIS-AF.

⁴³ David Pugh to Bob Cousins, Realty Specialist, Pacific Land Resources Program Center, July 22, 1996, folder "L3027 Land Use Roads and Road Right of Ways," box HQ 11, WHIS-AF; and Ray Foust to George Belden, Consulting Forester, August 21, 1990, folder "L3027 Land Use Roads and Road Right of Ways," box HQ 11, WHIS-AF.

⁴⁴ Bevill and Nilsson, *Cultural Resources Overview of the Whiskeytown Unit*, 2001, p. 120.

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Even in the twenty-first century, the co-management of roads within WHIS's boundaries continued to be complex. By 2003, WHIS had seventeen miles of paved roads and forty-nine miles of unpaved roads within the park—a total of sixty-six miles of roads that needed to meet the demands of many users.⁴⁵ In 2003, Superintendent Milestone contacted Shasta County to initiate transfer of county-owned roads to the NPS including roads located near the park entrance, where the NPS envisioned constructing a more prominent gateway to the park. He proposed that the NPS would purchase the roads outright for a “token nominal fee” or seek an easement from the county for full or partial control. Transferring the roads also meant transferring responsibility onto the NPS for any road maintenance, thus saving Shasta County money.⁴⁶

ROW agreements required sustained coordination among WHIS and external utility providers. In 2005 and 2006, for example, WHIS raised concerns regarding Western Area Power Administration's (WAPA) management of high-voltage transmission lines within park boundaries. Superintendent Milestone wrote to WAPA's representatives, “On behalf of the National Park Service (NPS), I cannot stress enough how concerned we are over...the initial draft of the Environmental Assessment.” WAPA's plans, he feared, would cause “long-term and major negative impacts” to Whiskeytown's landscape.⁴⁷

By 2007, a series of letters, emails, and revised plans show improved coordination between WHIS and WAPA. Milestone later wrote: “Significant progress has been made in coordinating with staff at WAPA and Aspen Environmental Group and we sincerely appreciate their efforts to accommodate the National Park Service's mission for activities within the park boundary.”⁴⁸ That correspondence marked a point of alignment rather than a final resolution. In 2014, WHIS continued to negotiate ROW plans with WAPA and the Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E). Internal planning documents dated through 2022 indicate that ROW agreements with both entities required periodic review and updating, an indication of the complexity of these arrangements.⁴⁹

ROW administration at WHIS required sustained coordination with external utility providers. Correspondence between WHIS, WAPA, and PG&E documents recurring review of access terms, environmental compliance, and maintenance obligations. These exchanges represent routine management of large-scale infrastructure within park boundaries rather than discrete disputes. WAPA and PG&E rights-of-way occupy approximately 1,140 acres of WHIS's roughly 42,000 acres, necessitating periodic access for inspection, repair, and system upgrades. Documentation dated through 2022 indicates continued administrative oversight intended to maintain consistency with statutory responsibilities and operational requirements.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ “Whiskeytown National Recreation Area: Business Plan,” August 2003, p. 7, filename “WHISBIZPlanprintquality,” subfolder “ADMIN_PLANS,” folder “LIBRARY-REPORTS,” WHIS-DF.

⁴⁶ James Milestone to Karen Keating Jahr, County Counsel, County of Shasta, May 19, 2003, pp. 1-2, folder “L3027 Land Use Roads and Road Right of Ways,” box HQ 11, WHIS-AF.

⁴⁷ James Milestone to Tom Murphy, Aspen Environmental Group, December 29, 2006, filename “1961-2007_WAPA_ROW,” WHIS-DF.

⁴⁸ James Milestone to Thomas Boyko, Western Area Power Administration, June 29, 2007, filename “1961-2007_WAPA_ROW,” WHIS-DF.

⁴⁹ WHIS, *Foundation Document: Whiskeytown National Recreation Area*, July 2014, p. 15, subfolder “ADMIN_PLANS,” folder “LIBRARY-REPORTS,” WHIS-DF.; and WHIS, *Trails Management Plan: Environmental Assessment*, 2022, p. 27.

⁵⁰ WHIS, *Trails Management Plan: Environmental Assessment*, 2022, p. 39.

Backcountry Roads

Whiskeytown categorizes nearly 37,000 acres of the park as the “Backcountry Zone,” while 900 acres encompass the “Frontcountry Zone.”⁵¹ Unpaved roads are the primary means of backcountry access. In 1990, an NPS document recorded that WHIS had 17.65 miles of paved roads and 47.43 miles of unpaved roads. Therefore, while Highway 299 supports the most traffic, WHIS’s backcountry roads require a large portion of the park’s attention and maintenance.⁵²

The Whiskeytown Unit Design Guidelines for developing or maintaining roads organized the unit’s roads into five categories: Type I, II, III, IV, or V. Type I roads were paved, twenty-two feet in width with a three-foot shoulder, and supported heavier traffic. Type II and III roads were still paved but narrower at twenty feet and hosted less traffic. Type IV roads were one-way, circular roads with a pavement width of twelve feet. The NPS considered Type V roads to be residential lanes with a pavement width of eighteen feet.⁵³ No matter the location or size of the road, its purpose was to “interfere the least” with the landscape views.⁵⁴ Timber roads were also present within the WHIS unit and branch through the park’s backcountry. The NPS described such roads as “put to bed,” meaning they had been decommissioned, with drainage structures removed, surfaces stabilized, and the roadway effectively closed. One WHIS planning document suggested that neglected roads should be “sacrificed and returned to their natural condition.” Instead of being returned to their natural condition, however, many of these old roads were designated as trails.⁵⁵ While beneficial for wildlife habitat, road removal in the backcountry is an expensive and equipment-intensive process and therefore uncommon in WHIS’s history. Roads-turned-trails are numerous and include but are not limited to Mt. Shasta Mine Loop and Brandy Creek Trail. These two trails have high levels of soil erosion due to the original roadway’s poor design as well as lack of maintenance.⁵⁶

One of WHIS’s most important backcountry roads is Shasta Bally Road. This road is a winding, unpaved corridor that starts near Salt Gulch and Brandy Creek, where it branches from Brandy Creek Road. At its start, near Sheep Camp Campground, Shasta Bally Road’s elevation sits at 1,829 feet. When the road terminates at the top of Shasta Bally, the elevation has increased to approximately 6,200 feet.⁵⁷ The route includes sustained grades that exceed the 5 to 8 percent maximum grade referenced in standard NPS road guidance.⁵⁸ On twenty-first-century maps, WHIS marks Shasta Bally Road with “4WD,” indicating that drivers should use a four-wheel-drive or all-wheel-drive vehicle due to the road’s steep terrain, unpaved surface, and potential for snow and ice.⁵⁹

⁵¹ WHIS, *Draft General Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement*, 1998, p. 29.

⁵² Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity-National Recreation Area, “Statement for Management,” NPS, January 1990, p. 22, folder “Unorganized Files.” The 1998 draft of the general management plan suggested WHIS re-pave its seventeen miles of paved roads, see WHIS *Draft General Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement*, 1998, p. 14.

⁵³ NPS and USFA, Master Coordination Plan for Whiskeytown-Shasta Trinity National Recreation Area, 1971, Appendix L.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 37; and NPS, “Construction of the Shasta Trinity Trail,” April 1, 2005, p. 2, subfolder “2000-2005 Shasta Trinity Trail,” subfolder “FM Box 3,” folder “FACILITIES,” subfolder “Not_Accessioned,” folder “Administrative_History,” WHIS-DF.

⁵⁶ WHIS, Trails Management Plan: Environmental Assessment, 2022, pp. 27, 32.

⁵⁷ WHIS, “Accessibility Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan,” March 2016, p. 27, subfolder “ADMIN_PLANS,” folder “LIBRARY-REPORTS,” WHIS-DF; and WHIS, “Hiking,” accessed February 2025, <https://www.nps.gov/whis/planyourvisit/hiking.htm>.

⁵⁸ Soulière, “Historic Roads in the National Park System: A Special History Study,” p. 51.

⁵⁹ NPS, “Maps,” n.d., accessed November 2024, <https://www.nps.gov/whis/planyourvisit/maps.htm>.

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By the 1990s, Shasta Bally Road had become a recurring management concern for WHIS and some local residents. The steep route proved difficult and costly to maintain. Its alignment posed risks to watershed stability by contributing to erosion, landslides, and altered drainage patterns on Shasta Bally's slopes. At the same time, those geomorphic processes periodically damaged the road itself, creating an ongoing cycle of maintenance and environmental impact. In 1999, the Backcountry Committee acknowledged in a memorandum that "the road is a maintenance problem, true," but recommended keeping it open to visitors under a Special Use Permit until WHIS completed a Backcountry Road Plan.⁶⁰

Shasta Bally Road required sustained maintenance into the twenty-first century because it served as the sole access route to the Shasta Bally Telecommunications Site (as of 2026, it still does). Located on the summit, the site hosted infrastructure operated by nearly twenty telecommunications, radio, television, and emergency service providers. In addition to supporting critical communications, these operators paid ROW and occupancy fees that contributed to park revenue; in 2010, such fees totaled \$84,000, funding maintenance of the site, the road, and other administrative needs.⁶¹ PG&E also maintained a power line extending from the TTHD to the summit, necessitating periodic access.⁶² Following the 2018 Carr Fire, dead and downed trees repeatedly obstructed the steep roadway. Because heavy equipment could not safely remove all debris, some material was cut and left to decompose along the roadside.⁶³ Despite these recurring maintenance challenges, the road remained operationally indispensable due to its role in supporting regional communications infrastructure.

Maintenance pressures were not confined to Shasta Bally. By the 1990s, several backcountry roads at WHIS were experiencing "slides, slumps and erosion." The deterioration prompted the Western Region's Chief of Maintenance, Engineering and Design to request emergency assistance from the Federal Highway Administration to stabilize and repair the affected routes.⁶⁴

Backcountry roads have also served as recreational routes for cyclists. In the 1980s, WHIS hosted the Whiskeyhill Downhill, a thirty-six-mile bicycle race from Buckhorn Summit to Horse Camp. The route became well known among mountain bikers and was later described by participants as recalling the "glory days" of riding at Whiskeytown. For cyclists seeking a less demanding option, one experienced rider recommended parking at the TTHD, traveling along Highway 299, and after several turns and a three-mile climb, reaching what he described as "sacred Whiskeytown Downhill dirt."⁶⁵ (See Chapter 6.1: Visitor Management and Recreation.)

⁶⁰ Memo, Backcountry Committee to David Push, Shasta Bally Road, May 6, 1999, subfolder "A5639 Instructions and Orders Whiskeytown 1978-1999 (1 of 3)," folder "HQ5," WHIS-AF; and Memo, James Milestone to Whiskeytown Backcountry Committee, Backcountry Development, Enjoyment and Use, January 21, 2008, folder "CR61," WHIS-DF.

⁶¹ WHIS, "Annual Report 2010," p. 6, folder "Unorganized Files," WHIS-DF. For a brief history of the legal struggles between NPS and the California Oregon Broadcasting Company over Shasta Bally Telecommunications Site, see WHIS, "Superintendent's Annual Report for Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, 2008-2009," October 2009, pp. 7-8, folder "Unorganized Files," WHIS-DF.

⁶² WHIS, "Shasta Bally Communications Summit," NPS, accessed November 3, 2024, <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/projectHome.cfm?ProjectID=17624>.

⁶³ WHIS, "2019 Carr Fire Burned Area Emergency Response: Annual Accomplishment Report," December 21, 2020, subfolder "Not_Accessioned," folder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF.

⁶⁴ Jack Williams to Larry Smith, Federal Highway Administration, April 17, 1995, subfolder "1996_South_Shore_Drive_Boulder_Creek_JFK_Memorial_Drive_culvert_Part_1," subfolder "FM_Box_1," folder "FACILITIES," WHIS-DF.

⁶⁵ Jim Dyar, "Whiskeytown ride harks back to glory years," *Redding Record Searchlight*, June 13, 1999, subfolder "Trails_3," subfolder "FM_Box_4," folder "FACILITIES," WHIS-DF.

By the twenty-first century, the NPS's historical emphasis on building, maintaining, and recreating on roads had shifted to make room for other environmental factors. Roads still mattered, but their presence sometimes undermined the health of the landscape. Old logging and mining roads could be particularly problematic since they were hastily constructed and not built to grade. Over time, these abandoned roads deteriorate, which causes sediments from the road to flow into the watershed.⁶⁶ Wherever they exist, these roads can heavily increase soil erosion. For WHIS, logging and mining roads "underlie the entire national recreation area," meaning soil erosion is a problem throughout the unit.⁶⁷

Debris Flows, Fires, and Floods

Every year the region's natural elements threaten the structure and integrity of WHIS's roads. These forces range from wildfire and floods to snowstorms and falling trees. Unlike other elements of Whiskeytown's management, in which NPS can prepare for change, natural disasters force WHIS's managers to react quickly during the aftermath. South Shore Drive is an unpaved road that branches off from JFK Memorial Drive near Brandy Creek and follows the southern boundary of the lake before concluding at the Carr Powerhouse. Due to its proximity to waterways and wetlands, floods have repeatedly damaged this WHIS-owned road. During the rainy winter months of 1982–1983, floods washed out portions of the road. Disaster struck again in January 1995, when forty-eight inches of rainfall caused floods to again severely damage sections of South Shore Drive, forcing the road to close.⁶⁸ WHIS contracted with local companies to perform repairs to multiple damaged culverts.⁶⁹ These floods and debris flows are extremely dangerous; for example, in the mid-1980s a debris flow rushed onto Crystal Creek Road, killing a county employee who was conducting repair work alongside California Department of Forestry personnel and inmate crews.⁷⁰

Debris flows and floods are not only costly in terms of human life, but they also create major construction issues. In April 1996, nine months after the floods washed out South Shore Drive, WHIS was still negotiating an initial agreement with the contractors. Due to severe winter weather conditions, work did not begin until spring 1996, over a year following the initial floods.⁷¹ Severe weather prevented the repairs of a road that was originally damaged by severe weather—a common cycle for NPS managers. While motorists could not access South Shore Drive, the closure did not interrupt the flow of traffic through busier areas of the park.⁷² Even as WHIS staff worked with contractors to

⁶⁶ WHIS, Whiskeytown Fire Management Plan, 2022, p. 75.

⁶⁷ WHIS, Trails Management Plan: Environmental Assessment, 2022, p. 27.

⁶⁸ WHIS, "Environmental Assessment: Proposed Washout Repairs, South Shore Drive," September 1995, p. 1, folder "L7617 EA South Shore Road," box HQ2, WHIS-AF.

⁶⁹ WHIS, "Summary of Negotiations: Whiskeytown Washout Repairs," September 18, 1995, subfolder "1996_South_Shore_Drive_Boulder_Creek_JFK_Memorial_Drive_culvert_Part_1," subfolder "FM_Box_1," folder "FACILITIES," WHIS-DF. See also Kleinfelder Inc., "Geotechnical Investigation Report, Whiskeytown National Park Road Washout Repairs," June 23, 1995, subfolder "1996_South_Shore_Drive_Boulder_Creek_JFK_Memorial_Drive_culvert_Part_1," subfolder "FM_Box_1," folder "FACILITIES," WHIS-DF.

⁷⁰ James Milestone to Congressman Wally Herger, US House of Representatives, December 5, 2008, pp. 1-2, folder "L3027 Land Use Roads and Road Right of Ways," box HQ 11, WHIS-AF.

⁷¹ Steve Shongood to WHIS, "Request for Time Extension," April 2, 1996, subfolder "1996_South_Shore_Drive_Boulder_Creek_JFK_Memorial_Drive_culvert_Part_1," subfolder "FM_Box_1," folder "FACILITIES," WHIS-DF.

⁷² Psomas and Associates, "Contract Documents for Whiskeytown units Road Washout Repairs," July 1995, section 01010-1, subfolder "1996_South_Shore_Drive_Boulder_Creek_JFK_Memorial_Drive_culvert_Part_1," subfolder "FM_Box_1," folder "FACILITIES," WHIS-DF.

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repair South Shore Drive, multiple winter storms in 1997 caused extensive damage to park infrastructure, including the destruction of the bridge to Sheep Camp and the bridge providing access to the National Environmental Education Development (NEED) Camp, along with additional impacts to backcountry roads.⁷³

Seasonal weather patterns have repeatedly tested the durability of WHIS's road infrastructure. As one NPS historian phrased it, "the forces of nature sometimes overtook the forces of development."⁷⁴ Within WHIS's boundaries, with its heavy rainfall, steep terrain, erosive soil, and fire-prone landscape, those forces of nature are in continual action. Most winter damage results when the park's streams and creeks experience flooding beyond their typical channels. In 1997, flooding damaged multiple areas of the park southwest of Whiskeytown Lake, leading to closures on South Shore Drive, Peltier Valley Road, Shasta Bally Road, Crystal Creek Road, Brandy Creek Water Tank Road, Mill Creek Road, the Paige-Boulder Creek bridge near WES camp, and Dry Creek Road.⁷⁵

Whiskeytown's landscape is naturally adapted to experiencing periodic fires. However, decades of fire suppression as well as climactic changes have caused wildfires to become more severe in the twenty-first century. The increasing presence of wildfire has fundamentally changed WHIS's response to infrastructure management. By 1993, WHIS had established a Fire Management Plan (FMP) in preparation for such an event.⁷⁶ Included in that plan were mitigations to protect the unit's roads from wildfires. For example, WHIS staff established preventative fuel breaks around the edges of roads.⁷⁷ Fuel breaks are bare or low-vegetation areas of land that may stop a fire from advancing across it, thereby protecting the road to halt a fire hopping across to the other side.

WHIS also expanded fire prevention treatment by introducing prescribed burns and mechanical fuel reduction (removing dense vegetation and tree limbs that increase fire) alongside roadways.⁷⁸ WHIS managers must prevent wildfires from crossing road corridors and spreading into other areas of the park, while also protecting road infrastructure from fire-related damage. Roads serve as primary evacuation routes for staff and visitors and as access routes for firefighting personnel responding to incidents.⁷⁹ In wildfire planning and response, road conditions and accessibility are central operational considerations.

⁷³ Milestone to Congressman Herger, 2008, pp. 1-2; NPS, "Incident Report: 96-707 Western Areas- Follow-up on Storm Impacts," January 3, 1997, accessed March 2026, <https://npshistory.com/morningreport/incidents/whis.htm>.

⁷⁴ Soullière, "Historic Roads in the National Park System: A Special History Study," p. 2.

⁷⁵ Mill Creek Road was originally referred to as Tenant House Road. The following are all in subfolder "1997_NEED_Camp_road_repairs_and_Brandy_Creek_storm," subfolder "FM_Box_1," folder "FACILITIES," WHIS-DF: Federal Highway Administration (FHA), Central Federal Lands Highway Division, Damage Site Report, "Road Closures," March 28, 1997; FHA, Central Federal Lands Highway Division, Damage Site Report, "Shasta Bally Road," n.d.; FHA, Central Federal Lands Highway Division, Damage Site Report, "Whiskeytown Road," March 28, 1997, (note, this source may be incorrectly referring to Whiskeycreek Road); FHA, Central Federal Lands Highway Division, Damage Site Report, "Tenant House Road," n.d.; FHA, Central Federal Lands Highway Division, Damage Site Report, "Need Camp Road," February 14, 1997; and FHA, Central Federal Lands Highway Division, Damage Site Report, "Dry Creek Group Camp Rd," March 10, 1997.

⁷⁶ James Milestone to Dr. Knox Mellon, Office of Historic Preservation, California Department of Parks and Recreation, October 16, 2002, subject "Environmental Assessment, South Shore Drive Shaded Fuel Break and Research Project," folder "L7617 EA South Shore Road," box HQ2, WHIS-AF.

⁷⁷ Milestone to Congressman Herger, December 5, 2008, pp. 1-2; and WHIS, *Whiskeytown Fire Management Plan*, 2022, p. 3, 21.

⁷⁸ WHIS, *Whiskeytown Fire Management Plan*, 2022, p. 87.

⁷⁹ By 2022, WHIS has established fuel breaks on the following roads: Kennedy Memorial Drive, Muletown Road, Pioneer Road, North Muletown Road, Paige Bar Road, Post Office Road, and South Shore Drive. See WHIS, *Whiskeytown Fire Management Plan*, 2022, p. 30, 33.

Despite years of planning for fire—planning documents, road breaks, warning signage for visitors, and well-staffed fire departments—the actual effects of wildfire are difficult for any plans to forecast. In June 2008, thousands of lightning storms ignited fires across California, seven within WHIS’s park boundaries. The smaller fires within the park later merged into one larger fire, referred to as the Whiskeytown Complex Fire, which alongside the Moon Fire ultimately burned 22 percent of the park.⁸⁰ Following the June 2008 fires, the scorched landscape responded dramatically. Erosive soil began cascading down the steep slopes of Shasta Bally. With much of the vegetation—nature’s primary defense against erosion—destroyed by the fire, debris flows surged unchecked, crashing into roads and bridges.⁸¹

The June 2008 fires would compare little to the devastating effects of the 2018 Carr Fire, which burned approximately 39,000 acres within park boundaries.⁸² Sadly, what was ultimately destructive to the region’s most important thoroughfare started on the road itself. A vehicle driving on Highway 299 near Carr Powerhouse accidentally sparked the fire, which grew to almost 230,000 acres.⁸³ Eight people died due to the fire, with one death occurring within the park.⁸⁴

Drought conditions and rising temperatures have extended the duration and intensity of wildfire activity in California beyond what was historically considered a discrete “fire season.” After the Carr Fire, Caltrans observed that “defending the State Highway System against destructive wildfires, and their aftermath, is no longer a three- to four-month exercise.”⁸⁵ WHIS planning and operational records from the post-2018 period show similar adjustments, with fire preparedness, suppression coordination, and rehabilitation efforts increasingly structured as year-round responsibilities. By contrast, early administrative records from the 1960s emphasize infrastructure development and visitor services rather than sustained emergency response. In the twenty-first century, wildfire management became a central and continuous administrative function. Within this evolving context, transportation infrastructure assumed heightened operational importance.

Conclusion

Since its establishment in 1965, WHIS has relied on an extensive system of paved and unpaved roads to support visitor access, operational movement, emergency response, and utility infrastructure. Highway 299, park-owned circulation roads, administrative roads, and backcountry routes together form a transportation network that has required continual maintenance, periodic reconstruction, and ongoing coordination with Caltrans, Shasta County, federal agencies, utilities, and adjacent landowners through ROWs and encroachment agreements.

⁸⁰ WHIS, “Superintendent’s Annual Report for Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, 2008-2009,” 2009, pp. 3-5, 39.

⁸¹ Milestone to Congressman Herger, December 5, 2008, pp. 1-2.

⁸² WHIS, Whiskeytown Fire Management Plan, 2022, p. 3.

⁸³ CalTrans, “Signs of Fiery Times Ahead,” Winter 2019, p. 36, accessed November 2024, <https://dot.ca.gov/-/media/dot-media/programs/risk-strategic-management/documents/mm-2019-winter-fires-a11y.pdf>.

⁸⁴ Marie Estrada, “Carr Fire: Remembering Victims, Firefighters, Rebuilding Efforts,” *ABC10*, July 23, 2019, accessed November 2024, <https://www.abc10.com/article/news/one-year-since-carr-fire/103-f194ce79-620b-4b1a-be9e-31246733628a>.

⁸⁵ CalTrans, “Signs of Fiery Times Ahead,” Winter 2019, p. 36.

CHAPTER 3.1: ROADS AND RIGHT-OF-WAYS

Whiskeytown's road system was shaped by its statutory identity as a national recreation area. Unlike congressionally designated wilderness areas—where the Wilderness Act of 1964 prohibits permanent roads and mechanized access—WHIS was established with the expectation of automobile-based visitation.⁸⁶ Planning documents, master plans, and infrastructure investments consistently assumed that visitors would arrive by vehicle and that roads would provide primary access to shoreline recreation areas, campgrounds, historic districts, telecommunications sites, and backcountry trailheads. Road development and maintenance were therefore not incidental features of park management but core administrative responsibilities.

Over time, storms, debris flows, flooding, and wildfire—including the 2008 fires and the 2018 Carr Fire—repeatedly damaged roads, bridges, and associated infrastructure, reinforcing the central role of transportation corridors in both visitor services and emergency operations. As the documentary record demonstrates, the history of roads at WHIS is closely linked to questions of interagency negotiation, environmental risk, and infrastructure upkeep within a multi-owner landscape. In this national recreation area, roads have remained a primary mechanism through which access, co-management, and administrative authority are exercised.

⁸⁶ Wilderness Act of 1964, 16 U.S.C. §§ 1131–1136. On the historical roots of roadless advocacy and the role of anti-automobile activism in shaping modern wilderness policy, see Paul S. Sutter, *Driven Wild: How the Fight against Automobiles Launched the Modern Wilderness Movement* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002), pp. 15–20.

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Trails at Whiskeytown National Recreation Area (WHIS) function as both transportation infrastructure and recreational amenities, extending visitor access beyond shoreline destinations into the unit’s forested uplands, historic districts, and backcountry zones. Since the park’s establishment in 1965, the National Park Service (NPS) has expanded and formalized a trail network that, by the early twenty-first century, totaled approximately seventy miles (Fig. 12).¹ Much of that system draws on inherited corridors—Indigenous footpaths and later mining routes, logging roads, utility alignments, and water-conveyance ditches—that were repurposed to support hiking, equestrian use, cycling, and environmental education. The resulting network includes routes ranging from steep, minimally developed paths to paved and accessible segments designed for higher-volume use.²

Although trails have not equaled Whiskeytown Lake as the park’s primary visitor draw, they have remained a recurring focus of planning and investment. Trail development at WHIS proceeded in distinct phases, including early post-authorization planning in the 1960s, renewed attention in the late 1970s, major expansion in the early 2000s, followed by post-Carr Fire planning and rehabilitation efforts. These periods produced both high-profile projects—such as the James K. Carr Trail to Whiskeytown Falls—and new planning frameworks that evaluated additions, reroutes, and the role of backcountry access within a recreation-area setting where lake-based use has historically dominated.

Trail management at WHIS has also required ongoing design, maintenance, and regulatory oversight. NPS standards shape trail class, tread specifications, drainage, and vegetation clearance, while user patterns—including multiuse cycling and the emergence of e-bikes—have introduced additional management questions regarding speed, safety, and accessibility. Environmental conditions increasingly drive administrative decisions as well, particularly wildfire impacts, erosion hazards, and storm-related damage that have triggered extended closures and proposals for decommissioning or rerouting segments after the 2018 Carr Fire. As the documentary record shows, trail planning and upkeep at WHIS involves budget constraints, interagency coordination, stakeholder consultation—including with tribal governments and local recreation groups—and continual adaptation to changing risk conditions on a heavily used landscape.

¹ There is some discrepancy in Whiskeytown National Recreation Area (WHIS) documentation about the number of miles of trails within the park. One trail report from 2019 records 72 miles, while other reports variously mention 70, 66, or 79.8. WHIS, “Whiskeytown’s Trail Categories,” 2019, p. 3, folder “Land_Use_General_Correspondence,” WHIS-DF (72 miles of trails); WHIS, “Strategic Plan: Fiscal Year 2003,” National Park Service (NPS), p. 6, folder “Unorganized Files,” WHIS-DF (70 miles); WHIS, *Trails Management Plan: Environmental Assessment*, February 2022, p. 2, subfolder “Environmental_Assessments,” folder “Administrative_History,” WHIS-DF (66 miles); WHIS, “National Park Service: 1980 Trail Study Questionnaire,” subfolder “Trails_1,” subfolder “FM_Box_4,” folder “FACILITIES,” WHIS-DF; NPS, “Whiskeytown Unit, Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area; Bicycling,” December 30, 2024, accessed June 14, 2025, <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2024/12/30/2024-31207/whiskeytown-unit-whiskeytown-shasta-trinity-national-recreation-area-bicycling> (79.8 miles).

² WHIS, *Trails Management Plan: Environmental Assessment*, 2022, p. 2.

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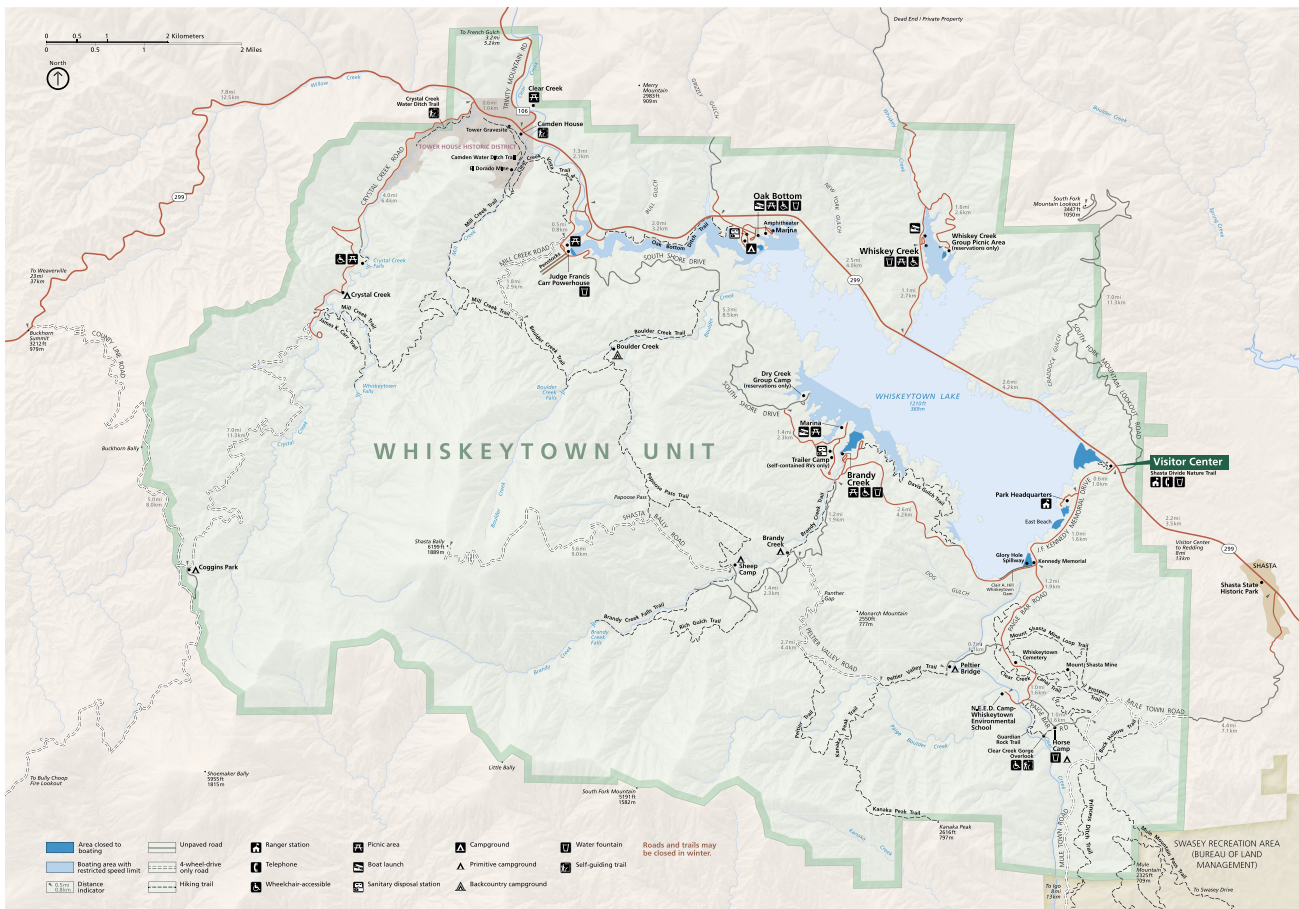


Figure 12. Map of all WHIS Trails.
Source: Courtesy of WHIS.

Historic Transportation Routes

Before Whiskeytown ever had wagon trails, roads, or automobiles, humans navigated the region by foot on walking trails. The trails were created by Wintu people and their ancestors, who for thousands of years walked through the area for hunting, fishing, and trading. Archeological research revealed one historic pathway that started near Clear Creek, crossed the mountainous divide near French Gulch or Tower House Historic District (THHD), and ended near Lewiston Valley.³ Following the 1848 Gold Rush, European and American colonists expanded this trail system and added wagon trails, roads, and water conveyance ditches.⁴ While Shasta County was an established governmental body by the mid-nineteenth century, the remoteness of the area meant local miners and business owners maintained their own trails and roads. The hotel owner Levi H. Tower and businessman Charles Camden, for example, partnered with other

³ Suzanne Baker, "Archaeological Excavations at CA-SHA-479 CA-SHA 195, Shasta County, California," April 1990, p. 19, folder "1990-1999," WHIS-DF; WHIS, "Master Plan: Draft," NPS, April 1975, p. 10, subfolder "ADMIN_PLANS," subfolder "Not_Accessioned," folder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF; and S. Magee and K. McClure, "Finding Aid: Ann King Smith Archeology Records, 1967-2001 (bulk dates: 1982-2000)," NPS, January 2014, p. 1, folder "finding aids," WHIS-DF.

⁴ Anna Cox Toogood, *Historic Resource Study: Whiskeytown National Recreation Area*, NPS, October 1978, p. 107, subfolder "1978," folder "1970-1979," WHIS-DF.

local merchants to improve a road that connected Shasta and Whiskey Creek.⁵ The toll route became a county-owned road after Camden's death.⁶ The roughness of the roads meant it was difficult to differentiate between what was a road and what was a trail. One trail-road that ran adjacent to Oak Bottom, for instance, was "improved" to facilitate freight wagons. Other road-trails connected mining camps at Oak Bottom, Tower House, French Gulch, and Whiskey Creek. Despite their roughness, these paths provided critical arteries between the county's remote locations.

While some historical transportation routes shifted in function over time—from footpaths and wagon roads to recreational trails—others gradually disappeared from regular use and became difficult to identify. Archaeological investigations have documented that "numerous uncharted and abandoned trails and roads still exist" within the park.⁷ Many of these routes survive only as subtle landscape features, such as shallow depressions, altered drainage patterns, or faint alignments obscured by vegetation. A 2001 cultural resource management report observed that identification is "difficult from aerial photographs, particularly routes that were ephemeral to begin with."⁸

When the Congress designated WHIS in 1965, the NPS assumed responsibility for both visible and obscured historic routes within the park boundaries. Some former roads were reclassified as trails, defined by the NPS as "a man-made path developed to permit human use and enjoyment of park resources."⁹ Examples include the James K. Carr Trail, the Mt. Shasta Mine Loop Trail, and the Lower Brandy Creek Trail.¹⁰ In addition, several historic water-conveyance ditches constructed during the mining era were adapted for recreational use. The Oak Bottom Water Ditch Trail and Princess Ditch now serve hikers, cyclists, and equestrians, illustrating how earlier routes of movement were incorporated into contemporary recreational infrastructure.¹¹

Trail Planning

Early planners expressed interest in developing trail-based recreation within the unit. Initially, the NPS proposed establishing approximately eighty miles of trails for hiking and horse riding and twenty-five miles of trails for fishermen; a figure the park had not fully achieved by the end of the period examined in this study.¹² In addition to developing an extensive trail system, planners aimed to design trails that would connect visitors to the park's most stunning features, including its creeks, forests, waterfalls, and scenic vistas.¹³

⁵ Toogood, *Historic Resource Study: Whiskeytown National Recreation Area*, 1978, pp. 25-26.

⁶ Russel Bevill and Elena Nilsson, *Cultural Resources Overview of the Whiskeytown Unit, Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area, Shasta County, California, Mountain Anthropological Research*, May 2001, p. 123, subfolder "2001," folder "Cultural_Resources_Reports-PRIVILEGED," WHIS-DF; and WHIS, *Foundation Document: Whiskeytown National Recreation Area*, July 2014, p. 2, subfolder "ADMIN_PLANS," folder "LIBRARY-REPORTS," WHIS-DF.

⁷ Bevill and Nilsson, *Cultural Resources Overview of the Whiskeytown Unit*, 2001, p. 151.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ WHIS, "National Park Service: 1980 Trail Study Questionnaire," subfolder "Trails_1," subfolder "FM_Box_4," folder "FACILITIES," WHIS-DF.

¹⁰ WHIS, *Trails Management Plan*, 2022, p.28.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 41-42.

¹² Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, "A Report on the Proposed Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area," April 1963, Appendix p. 18, folder "1960s," WHIS-DF.

¹³ NPS, "1963-64 Draft Master Plan," 1964, p. 3, folder "FACILITIES," WHIS-DF.

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Despite extensive trail proposals in planning documents, early WHIS planners and managers expressed mixed priorities regarding backcountry development. They generally characterized the lands surrounding Whiskeytown Lake as a “supplemental recreational resource.”¹⁴ In 1963, for example, the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation stated that Whiskeytown and Lewiston should direct visitors toward day-use activities at the lakes rather than overnight use in backcountry areas.¹⁵ Planning documents positioned Whiskeytown Lake as the primary recreational focus of the unit. In these early years, trail development followed that hierarchy. A 1967 WHIS brochure noted that “trails created by work equipment will be kept cleared, as they are excellent for horseback riding and hiking.”¹⁶ Although a network of trails and backcountry roads existed at the park’s opening in 1965, they remained secondary to water-based recreation in both design emphasis and visitor messaging.

In the decades that followed, visitors continued to prioritize recreation at the lake over Whiskeytown’s 42,000 acres of forested terrain. One US Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) document reported that in 1974, WHIS recorded 804,846 visitor days. Reported activities included sightseeing (199,076), picnicking (32,389), camping (79,630), swimming (159,281), water skiing (53,087), boating (106,147), fishing (159,281), hunting (7,964), and other activities (7,964).¹⁷ Later visitor studies and planning documents indicate that trail-based activities—including hiking, running, dog walking, and cycling—became more prominent components of recreational use in subsequent decades.¹⁸ In 1974, however, those activities were not identified among the primary reported categories.

The trail system at WHIS has grown through periodic bursts of development. Although the NPS did not appear to inventory WHIS’s trail system in the 1960s, the number of designated trail miles was likely around a dozen. The next period of trail growth arrived in the late 1970s, when WHIS planners reengaged with earlier plans to bolster the park trail system, which had an estimated 13.25 miles of designated trails and approximately 22,340 people visiting its trails every year.¹⁹ One major addition opened in 1978, when WHIS converted an old USBR road near the visitor center into the Upper Shasta Divide Trail, which continues to function as a utility access road in concurrent use.²⁰ The trail supported WHIS’s master plan goal to add trails to the unit and expand backcountry access. This method of converting existing roads into trails—whether they were created by the USBR, the mining or logging industries—became common practice for WHIS.²¹ The placement of the Upper Shasta Divide Trail in an easily accessible location, without extending too far into the backcountry, is an example of WHIS’s efforts to provide a gradual introduction to backcountry exploration for visitors.

¹⁴ US Department of the Interior (DOI), NPS, “Narrative: Part of the Master Plan, Whiskeytown Reservoir Recreation Area, California,” October 1964, p. 2, file, “1964_Land_Preservation_Plan_Narrative_WHIS_611_3045,” subfolder “ADMIN_PLANS,” subfolder “Not_Accessioned,” folder “Administrative_History,” WHIS-DF.

¹⁵ Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, “A Report on the Proposed Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area,” 1963, p. 9.

¹⁶ US DOI and US Bureau of Reclamation (USBR), “Whiskeytown Lake,” 1967, accessed November 2024, <https://npshistory.com/publications/whis/brochures/1967.pdf>.

¹⁷ USBR to Interested Agencies and Field Offices, “Total Water Management Study – Recreation Enhancement Study,” December 1, 1975, filename “1960-1980_Water_Rights_WHIS_NRA,” folder “Water_Matters,” WHIS-DF.

¹⁸ WHIS, *Trails Management Plan: Environmental Assessment*, 2022, p. 48.

¹⁹ WHIS, “National Park Service: 1980 Trail Study Questionnaire.”

²⁰ Letter from Chief, Western Archaeology Center to Superintendent, Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity, “Archaeological Clearance,” and attached Archaeological Clearance Survey Form, May 25, 1978, subfolder “ADMIN_PLANS,” subfolder “Not_Accessioned,” folder “Administrative_History,” WHIS-DF.

²¹ NPS, “Construction of the Shasta Trinity Trail,” April 1, 2005, p. 2, subfolder “2000-2005 Shasta Trinity Trail,” subfolder “FM Box 3,” folder “FACILITIES,” WHIS-DF.

WHIS proposed developing “trails to give access to the lake, streams, and interesting or useful geographic features.”²² During the 1970s, staff also explored broader regional connectivity, proposing potential trail links between WHIS, the Shasta and Trinity Recreation Areas, and even the Pacific Crest Trail to the east. Planning materials suggested that “horse and hiking trails connecting the three units are possible and should be studied for future development.”²³ Ultimately, however, these regional trail connections were not realized by the end of the decade.²⁴

Trail development in the 1980s focused less on expansion and more on maintaining existing infrastructure. Limited staffing and constrained budgets required departments to prioritize upkeep rather than growth. After its creation in 1982, the Division of Interpretation expressed interest in converting additional historic water ditches into trails and developing interpretive programming around them. With only one full-time staff member, however, implementation proved difficult.²⁵ In 1987, Superintendent Ray Foust reported fifty miles of unpaved trails and three miles of paved trails, though totals varied slightly between internal documents. Most trails were classified in “fair” condition, indicating a need for maintenance.²⁶ In response, WHIS directed funds toward repairs; in 1988, the park invested thousands of dollars in work on seventeen trails, including tread stabilization, drainage improvements, brush clearing, signage installation, and efforts to bring routes “up to Park Standards.”²⁷

In the late 1990s, WHIS renewed planning efforts related to trail expansion and improvement. The 1999 General Management Plan (GMP) stated that “opportunities for expanding the park trail system and for linking park trails with regional trails need to be considered... The need for and feasibility of establishing this trail needs to be evaluated.”²⁸ Under James Milestone’s superintendency, WHIS set out to expand recreational access, most notably to Whiskeytown’s backcountry trails by encouraging human-powered recreation in WHIS.

One significant trail initiative during this period was the Shasta-Trinity Trail. Beginning in the late 1990s, WHIS staff worked with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the City of Redding, the California Conservation Corps, and other regional partners to plan a multi-jurisdictional trail connection linking Redding to the Trinity Alps Wilderness through WHIS. Planning discussions began in 1999 and resulted in a draft concept plan in 2000. The 2000 GMP noted that backcountry access at WHIS was limited and that much of the existing trail system relied on former logging and mining roads that did not consistently provide high-quality visitor experiences.²⁹ Two years later, WHIS and partner

²² WHIS “Draft Master Plan for Whiskeytown National Recreation Area,” September 1, 1972, p. 2, folder “FACILITIES,” WHIS-DF.

²³ Ibid., p. 47.

²⁴ Letter from Chief, Western Archaeology Center to Superintendent, Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity, “Archaeological Clearance,” May 25, 1978.

²⁵ WHIS, “Interim Interpretive Plan,” NPS, June 1981, p. 20, folder “Unorganized Files,” WHIS-DF; Ray Foust, “Position Management Plan FY 1982,” October 30, 1981, p. 5, folder “Pos Mgmt. Plan_4 of 4,” box HQ9, WHIS-AF.

²⁶ Ray Foust to Chief, Maintenance and Engineering Services, Western Region, “Trails Inventory,” December 11, 1987, subfolder “Trails_3,” subfolder “FM_Box_4,” folder “FACILITIES,” WHIS-DF. A 1990 source reported two miles of paved trails and 43.40 miles of unpaved trails. See Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity-National Recreation Area, *Statement for Management*, NPS, January 1990, p. 22, folder “Unorganized Files,” WHIS-DF.

²⁷ WHIS, “Trails 88, (Trails Budget for FY88)” n.d., subfolder “Cyclic_trails,” subfolder “FM_Box_4,” subfolder “FACILITIES,” folder “Administrative_History,” WHIS-DF.

²⁸ WHIS, *Whiskeytown Unit General Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement*, July 1999, p. 8, subfolder “ADMIN_PLANS,” subfolder “Not_Accessioned,” folder “Administrative_History,” WHIS-DF.

²⁹ WHIS, *General Management Plan*, 2001, p. 8, WHIS-DF.

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agencies coordinated trail alignments, including new construction and the formal connection of existing segments.³⁰ In 2003, the NPS and BLM contracted the California Conservation Corps to construct approximately 4.4 miles of new trail from the BLM's Swasey Recreation Area to WHIS and an additional 1.1 miles connecting to the Salt Creek Trail within the park.³¹ The 2005 Shasta-Trinity Trail Plan and Environmental Assessment framed the project as both a regional trail connection and an effort to create a more coordinated WHIS trail system, noting that existing trails had developed piecemeal from logging roads, mining roads, water ditches, and utility corridors and often failed to lead visitors to the park's "special little places."³² The initiative advanced ongoing efforts to improve land-based recreational access, connect WHIS to regional trail networks, and shift the park's trail system from inherited roads and utility corridors toward more intentional recreational planning.³³

The Shasta-Trinity Trail was marked as complete in August 2009 with a ribbon-cutting ceremony.³⁴ The project linked new and previously existing trail segments to create a continuous route across multiple jurisdictions. Park leadership described the trail as a purpose-built recreational corridor distinct from many earlier routes that had originated as mining or logging roads. The initiative advanced ongoing efforts to improve land-based recreational access and to strengthen regional trail connectivity across federal lands.³⁵

While the Shasta-Trinity Trail resulted from regional coordination, other projects focused on developing access to previously underutilized features within the park. The James K. Carr Trail to Whiskeytown Falls trail was completed in 2006.³⁶ Nearly four decades before, in 1967, two rangers reported a special waterfall feature to the superintendent at the time, Leon J. Mitchell. Instead of constructing a formal, Superintendent Mitchell limited public information about the falls' location to avoid degradation.³⁷ Planners saw the old trail system at WHIS as one that "often does not take the visitor to the park's 'special little places' that should be the destinations of a trails system."³⁸ According to an

³⁰ WHIS, *Shasta Trinity Trail Plan and Environmental Assessment*, June 30, 2005, p. 59, subfolder "Resource Management Archives," folder "STNF Projects," WHIS-DF.

³¹ NPS, "Construction of the Shasta Trinity Trail," April 1, 2005, p. 2, subfolder "2000-2005 Shasta Trinity Trail," subfolder "FM Box 3," folder "FACILITIES," WHIS-DF.

³² WHIS, *Shasta-Trinity Trail Plan and Environmental Assessment*, June 30, 2005, pp., 5, 10.

³³ US DOI, NPS, "FONSI – Shasta-Trinity Trail Plan, Whiskeytown Unit, Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area," Shasta County, CA, 2005, WHIS-DF.

³⁴ David Benda, Ceremony Marks Completion of Shasta-Trinity Trail in Whiskeytown," *Redding Record Searchlight*, August 16, 2009, accessed November 2024, <https://archive.redding.com/news/ceremony-marks-completion-of-shasta-trinity-trail-in-whiskeytown-ep-377447224-355567821.html/>; and WHIS, "Superintendent's Annual Report for Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, 2008-2009," October 2009, p. 13, subfolder "Unorganized Files," folder "Admin-History 7.22.22," WHIS-DF.

³⁵ WHIS, "Superintendent's Annual Report for Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, 2008-2009," p. 13; WHIS, *Shasta Trinity Trail Plan and Environmental Assessment*, 2005, p. 10; NPS, "Construction of the Shasta Trinity Trail," 2005, p. 2. In the early 2000s, other trail plans included a new access trail to Brandy Creek Falls and a new one-mile trail to connect with Westside Trail, see WHIS, *Strategic Plan: Fiscal Year 2003*, NPS, p. 13, folder "Unorganized Files," WHIS-DF.

³⁶ WHIS, "James K Carr Trail to Whiskeytown Falls," NPS, accessed September 1, 2023, <https://www.nps.gov/whis/planyourvisit/james-k-carr-trail-to-whiskeytown-falls.htm>.

³⁷ Memo, James Milestone to Whiskeytown Backcountry Committee, Backcountry Development, Enjoyment and Use, January 21, 2008, folder "CR61," WHIS-DF.

³⁸ WHIS, *Shasta Trinity Trail Plan and Environmental Assessment*, 2005, p. 5.

Associated Press account, in 2004 a WHIS wildlife biologist located a rough map indicating the waterfall's location, a site not previously documented in his materials. He used the map to locate the feature on the ground, bringing renewed administrative attention to a place that staff had discussed informally for years.³⁹

When WHIS staff reidentified the falls in 2004, they pursued a different management strategy than Superintendent Mitchell had adopted in the late 1960s. Rather than limiting public knowledge of the site, staff secured funding to construct the James K. Carr Trail and formally open the falls to visitors.⁴⁰ Increased visitation followed. During a 2007 Backcountry Management Plan Committee meeting, Steve Femmel observed that "the Whiskeytown Falls publicity blitz has had various negative effects on the trail such as a great increase in the number of social trails, litter, poop, invasive plants, etc." In contrast, Tricia Ford noted that "Whiskeytown Falls...has made the park a 'destination' for travelers."⁴¹

Despite the benefits and challenges associated with increased visitation at Whiskeytown Falls, Superintendent Milestone articulated a clear rationale for expanding access: "Visitors from around the world are now hiking our trails to view the park's waterfalls. Through appreciation there comes value, and people will protect things they value."⁴² The Carr Trail became the park's most heavily used route, receiving more than 18,000 visitors annually.⁴³ Its development marked a shift in WHIS's recreation management priorities, expanding institutional capacity for trail planning and increasing emphasis on land-based recreation beyond Whiskeytown Lake.

While expansions to WHIS's trail system occurred during Superintendent Milestone's tenure, he still lamented that "visitors have always found Whiskeytown Lake the centerpiece of recreational opportunities within the national recreation area."⁴⁴ In Milestone's own administrative history of WHIS's creation, he discusses Whiskeytown Lake dozens of times. By comparison, he mentions WHIS's trails in just seven instances. Even for trail champions like Milestone, Whiskeytown Lake has defined the unit's recreational history.

By the 2010s, WHIS's annual visitor numbers exceeded 800,000, straining its 1960s-era infrastructure, which the NPS acknowledged was "not designed to accommodate current levels of visitation."⁴⁵ As visitor numbers continued to grow, the trail system needed to expand accordingly. Along with constructing new trails, the park advocated for the development of updated trail standards and a comprehensive backcountry management plan. With frankness, WHIS admitted in its Foundation Document (2014): "Having never looked systematically at its backcountry use, Whiskeytown National Recreation Area lacks general direction on backcountry management."⁴⁶ Because WHIS has relatively short

³⁹ "Giant waterfall discovered in California," *Associated Press*, August 12, 2005, subfolder "Trails_1," subfolder "FM_Box_4," folder "FACILITIES," WHIS-DF; Milestone to Whiskeytown Backcountry Committee, "Backcountry Development, Enjoyment and Use," 2008.

⁴⁰ WHIS, "James K Carr Trail to Whiskeytown Falls."

⁴¹ WHIS, "Backcountry Management Plan Committee Meeting," June 19, 2007, subfolder "Backcountry_Management," folder "Files From WHIS 6.26.24 NARA spreadsheet," WHIS-DF; "Tricia's Response to Milestone's Hiker's Hut Memo," Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, document undated, folder "Backcountry_Management," WHIS-DF.

⁴² Milestone to Whiskeytown Backcountry Committee, "Backcountry Development, Enjoyment and Use," 2008.

⁴³ WHIS, *Trails Management Plan: Environmental Assessment*, 2022, p. 46.

⁴⁴ James Milestone, *From the White House to Whiskeytown: An Administrative History of the Creation of Whiskeytown National Recreation Area*, Whiskeytown National Recreation Area (WHIS), 2003, p. 5, e-TIC filename "WHIS_611_166062_0001_of_0055.pdf" accessed November 2024.

⁴⁵ WHIS, *Foundation Document*, 2014, p. 11.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

trails—its longest trail is just 7.25 miles—there are few options for multi-day backcountry hikers. Addressing a backcountry deficit, however, has only recently appeared on WHIS’s priority list.⁴⁷ The historical gap between WHIS’s visitors and its backcountry access may be attributed to the unit’s smaller size. In contrast, Yosemite National Park, a much larger NPS unit in California, boasts 750 miles of trails within its vast backcountry wilderness. However, Yosemite spans 747,956 acres compared to WHIS’s 42,000, providing significantly more land for staff to manage and visitors to explore.⁴⁸

Post–Carr Fire planning documents show renewed attention to the park trail system, particularly in planning for repair, redesign, and long-term resilience. The Trails Management Plan (2022) proposed adding 32.8 miles of new trails and removing or restoring 15.3 miles of existing trail, representing over forty-eight miles of potential trail work at an estimated cost of \$21,617,471. Proposed projects included an eight-mile Whiskeytown Lake Trail, a seven-mile trail to the Shasta Divide, the Camden Water Ditch Trail Extension, and the Clear Creek Picnic Trail.⁴⁹ The plan also formally recognized approximately one mile of “social trails”—informal routes created by visitors and later incorporated into the managed trail network—bringing previously unofficial routes into the park’s formal trail system.⁵⁰

As with other significant projects within WHIS boundaries, proposed trail development required consultation with governmental agencies and community stakeholders. These included the public, the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), the National Marine Fisheries Service, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. WHIS also consulted with multiple tribal entities, including the Shasta Nation, the Winnemem Wintu Tribe, the Wintu Tribe of Northern California, the Nor Rel Muk Wintu Nation, and the Redding Rancheria.⁵¹ Because park lands and infrastructure intersect with multiple jurisdictions and interests, trail planning required interagency coordination and tribal consultation prior to implementation. Such consultation shaped project scope, environmental compliance measures, and alignment with cultural resource responsibilities.

Trail Design and Maintenance

While most of Whiskeytown’s trails are old logging roads, mining roads, and ditches, the park is still responsible for building new trails.⁵² Trail design demands a unique skillset, which includes mapping, engineering, and on-the-ground labor. Like its roads, NPS has approached trail design with specific parameters and a unique aesthetic. In the 1960s, those standards emphasized trails that not only blended with the landscape but provided a bridge between visitors and the park’s scenic landscapes. Like all effective infrastructure, well-designed trails fit almost seamlessly into the environment—an approach that NPS adopted throughout the twentieth century. A 1971 planning document co-written

⁴⁷ WHIS, *Trails Management Plan: Environmental Assessment*, 2022, p. 48-49; WHIS, *Foundation Document*, 2014, p. 18.

⁴⁸ Yosemite National Park, “Foundation Document Overview,” NPS, n.d., accessed October 2024, https://www.nps.gov/yose/getinvolved/upload/yose_foundationdocument.pdf; and Yosemite National Park, “Trail Descriptions,” accessed August 2024, <https://www.nps.gov/yose/planyourvisit/trails.htm>.

⁴⁹ WHIS, *Trails Management Plan: Environmental Assessment*, 2022, p. 6.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 1, 5, 16, F-5 and Appendix C-3.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 2.

by the NPS and USFS laid out the rules of good trail design: begin with a detailed reconnaissance of the potential path, including research into maps and photographs, and on-the-ground surveying. The trail's grade should not exceed nine percent unless the ascent requires it. A grade of fifteen percent, they concluded, is "excessive."⁵³

Trail planning extended beyond visual alignment with the landscape. Designers were required to address functional elements such as safety berms, tread stabilization, drainage control, bridges, and the addition of materials such as gravel to reinforce the soil base.⁵⁴ In addition to physical construction considerations, planners needed to secure funding and obtain deeds or easements when routes crossed private property or existing structures. A 1971 planning document observed that "rights-of-way problems for trails are usually simpler than for roads."⁵⁵ (See Chapter 3.1: Roads and Right-of-Ways.)

Once a route was established, construction involved clearing vegetation, grading tread, installing footbridges, erecting wayfinding signage and trailhead kiosks, and reshaping terrain by hand or with mechanical equipment. Standard design guidance generally called for trail widths between eighteen and twenty-four inches and sought to limit unnecessary switchbacks.⁵⁶ Planners also worked to reduce visual contrast between trail corridors and surrounding terrain. As with road construction, the goal was to provide durable access while minimizing ecological disturbance and visual intrusion. The finished trail often concealed the labor and engineering required for its creation.



Figure 13. NPS staff supervise volunteers in trail maintenance. June 1, 2024.
Source: Photograph courtesy of NPS.⁵⁷

⁵³ NPS and US Forest Service (USFS), *Master Coordination Plan for Whiskeytown-Shasta Trinity National Recreation Area*, August 3, 1971, Appendix K, folder "1970s," WHIS-DF.

⁵⁴ WHIS, *Trails Management Plan: Environmental Assessment*, 2022, pp. D-11–D13.

⁵⁵ NPS and USFS, *Master Coordination Plan for Whiskeytown-Shasta Trinity National Recreation Area*, 1971, Appendix K.

⁵⁶ Ibid.; David Pugh, "Trail Standards," email to staff, June 27, 1999, subfolder "Trails_3," subfolder "FM_Box_4," folder "FACILITIES," WHIS-DF; and WHIS, *Strategic Plan: Fiscal Year 2003*, p. 13.

⁵⁷ Photograph accessed April 2026, <https://www.nps.gov/media/photo/view.htm?id=67489416-8B37-4E9C-8425-F15793E128DA>.

CHAPTER 3.2: TRAILS

To standardize maintenance and visitor use, the NPS established a formal classification system for trails across its units. Like its roads, the NPS categorizes trails into five classes, with Class 1 representing minimal development and Class 5 representing fully developed, paved surfaces. Planning documents indicate that trails at WHIS ranged from Class 2 to Class 5, each category carrying parameters for permitted uses. “Pedestrian Only” trails were designated for walkers, hikers, runners, and on-leash dogs, while “Multiuse” trails permitted walkers, hikers, equestrians, and bicycles. “Accessible” trails were designed to meet Architectural Barriers Act Accessibility Standards.⁵⁸

Documentation dated 2022 indicates that WHIS maintained forty-seven trails (including segments). Of those, forty were designated “multiuse.” Four were classified as Class 2; thirty-two as Class 3; eight as Class 4; and three as Class 5. These figures suggest that the majority of the park’s trails occupied a middle position between minimally developed and highly engineered infrastructure. While visitors may perceive WHIS’s scenic trails as natural features, the NPS classification system underscores their status as regulated infrastructure comparable to roads, dams, pipes, and buildings.⁵⁹

Trail infrastructure requires continuous maintenance following construction. NPS maintenance protocols are highly specific, governing vegetation clearance, tread standards, and corridor dimensions in precise detail. For example, when tree branches or brush fall into a trail, WHIS requires that “all trees and brush more the [sic] 12” above the ground would be cut to a 2- to 4-inch stump from within 4’ of the centerline of the trail tread.” For brush, vegetation is to be “cut to a 2- to 4-inch stump within 1’ of the trail tread.”⁶⁰

Some trail advocacy groups value this level of detail required to design and maintain good trails. WHIS visitors consistently provide NPS staff with feedback about the trails, offering both praise and constructive suggestions. In 2003, for example, Tom and Shelley Nelson of Redding wrote to Superintendent Milestone after an endurance ride in the park. “We especially want to acknowledge the fine job of clearing the trails that Wayne and his group performed,” they wrote, “we received many compliments from the ride participants on the superb condition of these trails.”⁶¹

Visitors not only pay close attention to trail maintenance, but they also scrutinize the details of trail design. In 2003, two women wrote to WHIS to provide their input on three proposed creek crossings near Brandy Creek Falls Trail. “There is really only one needed crossing—just before the falls,” they wrote. “It would be much nicer to keep the trail and crossings as natural as possible.”⁶²

Feedback about WHIS’s trails has come not only from individuals but also from organized community groups. In comments submitted in response to WHIS’s 2022 Trails Management Plan, the Redding Trail Alliance wrote: “Trail layout and construction has a lot to do with how enjoyable it is for all trail users.” The group further observed that “The trail is no longer just a means to get somewhere but it is the experience itself,” and encouraged WHIS to hire a

⁵⁸ WHIS, *Trails Management Plan: Environmental Assessment*, 2022, pp. 11-13.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 11-13.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. D9.

⁶¹ Tom and Shelley Nelson to James Milestone, April 30, 2003, subfolder “FM_Box_4,” folder “FACILITIES” WHIS-DF.

⁶² Kay Koshr and Ilene English to Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, June 3, 2003, subfolder “Trails_3,” subfolder “FM_Box_4,” folder “FACILITIES,” WHIS-DF.

professional trails consultant who values “user experience” alongside resource conservation and construction efficiency. These comments illustrate the degree to which regional recreation groups have expressed investment, pride, and interest in the park’s trail system.⁶³

In the early 2000s, WHIS staff recruited the community to become involved in trail maintenance. In addition to “Adopt a Trail” activities for local high school students, in June 2001 WHIS hosted a National Trails Day event, during which participants could participate in trail maintenance with “a little sweat and elbow grease.” The event also included a hike on Brandy Creek Trail with a park ranger, ideal for visitors wanting to “learn about Whiskeytown’s scenic natural resources and what needs to be done to maintain and protect them.”⁶⁴ In 2009, WHIS worked with volunteers from the Redding Mountain Bike Club to complete the Shasta-Trinity Trail.⁶⁵ Park staff have also partnered with community youth groups to perform trail maintenance, including the Youth Conservation Corps, Smart Business Center Summer Interns, and the Student Conservation Association Summer Interns.⁶⁶

Community investment in WHIS trails sometimes blurred the line between authorized volunteerism and independent action. In 2001, for example, a local couple took it upon themselves to clear debris on Crystal Creek Trail after a winter storm without first notifying NPS staff. After an “encounter” on the trail with Superintendent Milestone, during which he scolded the do-gooders, the couple wrote him an apology letter. “I simply thought, not having heard otherwise, that the trail needed attention and we had the time to do it,” they explained. They concluded, “my love for the trails is great and I look forward to laboring on them [in the future].”⁶⁷ More than other types of infrastructure, community members develop a close relationship—and sometimes a strong sense of personal investment—with WHIS’s trail system.

Bicycles On Trails

Cycling emerged as a significant recreational use at WHIS over time. Bicycle touring clubs explored Shasta County’s rough roads as early as the 1890s. Since the twentieth century, three primary types of bicycles have traveled on WHIS trails and roads: mountain bikes, road bikes, and gravel bikes. Mountain bikes arrived at WHIS in the 1980s, when the sport was increasing in popularity (see Chapter 6.1: Visitor Management and Recreation).⁶⁸ Although WHIS

⁶³ Redding Trail Alliance, “Whiskeytown NRA Trails Management Plan,” n.d., accessed October 26, 2024, <https://www.reddingtrailalliance.org/news-and-updates/whiskeytown-nra-trails-management-plan>.

⁶⁴ WHIS, “Trail Condition/Maintenance Report,” May 20, 2000, subfolder “Trails_3,” subfolder “FM_Box_4,” folder “FACILITIES,” WHIS-DF; and WHIS, “Join Us for National Trails Day!,” NPS Flyer, June 2, 2001, subfolder “Trails_3,” subfolder “FM_Box_4,” folder “FACILITIES,” WHIS-DF.

⁶⁵ WHIS, “Superintendent’s Annual Report for Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, 2008-2009,” 2009, p. 2, WHIS-DF. The Shasta-Trinity Trail, completed in 2009, connected existing trail segments rather than representing a newly constructed standalone trail corridor, see David Benda, “Ceremony marks completion of Shasta-Trinity Trail in Whiskeytown,” August 16, 2009, *Redding Record Searchlight*, accessed November 2024, <https://archive.redding.com/news/ceremony-marks-completion-of-shasta-trinity-trail-in-whiskeytown-ep-377447224-355567821.html/>.

⁶⁶ WHIS, “Annual Report 2010,” p. 20, folder “Unorganized Files,” WHIS-DF.

⁶⁷ Ron and Marge Dunlap to Superintendent James Milestone, September 7, 2001, subfolder “Trails_3,” subfolder “FM_Box_4,” folder “FACILITIES,” WHIS-DF.

⁶⁸ WHIS, *Trails Management Plan: Environmental Assessment*, 2022, p. 2.

planning documents referenced “trail bikes” as early as 1972, the NPS did not issue its first formal bicycle policy until 1987, when bicycle use expanded across the National Park System.⁶⁹ WHIS designates bicycle-friendly trails as “multiuse,” permitting cyclists to recreate alongside hikers, dog walkers, and equestrians. By contrast, “Pedestrian Only” trails are limited to foot travel.

By the 2010s, electrically assisted bicycles (e-bikes) emerged as a new category of recreational use. E-bikes resemble traditional bicycles but include an electric motor that assists pedaling. NPS policy distinguishes among three classes based on motor function and speed: Class 1 provides pedal assistance only; Class 2 includes a throttle option; and Class 3 allows higher assisted speeds.⁷⁰ The introduction of e-bikes generated policy discussion within the National Park System regarding visitor safety, accessibility, and potential resource impacts.⁷¹

In 2020, the NPS issued systemwide guidance addressing e-bike use within national park units. The policy permitted superintendents to authorize e-bikes where traditional bicycles are allowed, while retaining local discretion over specific trail and road access. NPS regulations clarified that electric bicycles must be pedaled while the motor is engaged and may not be operated exclusively by motor power.⁷²

At WHIS, implementation of the 2020 NPS guidance resulted in authorization of Class 1 e-bikes on designated multiuse trails and roads, with more limited access for Class 2 and Class 3 e-bikes. Administrative documentation indicates that approximately 46.2 miles of trails were designated for e-bike access under this framework. Internal planning materials from this period do not characterize bicycle use as a primary resource-management concern. Trail impact assessments indicated that regional rainfall contributed more significantly to erosion than recreational use, and visitor-use data showed that hikers constituted most trail users, while mountain bikers represented a smaller proportion.⁷³

Trail Closings & Restrictions

Trail decommissioning became a management tool at WHIS in response to environmental conditions and infrastructure assessments. The NPS typically closes trails for one of three reasons: redundancy with an existing route, hazardous conditions that make maintenance or public access impractical, or documented impacts on surrounding ecosystems.⁷⁴ One of the most significant drivers of prolonged closures at WHIS was the aftermath of the 2018 Carr Fire, which burned approximately 39,000 of the park’s 42,000 acres. The fire left extensive areas unstable, with erosion, hazard trees, and compromised trail infrastructure limiting safe public access. In response, the Trails Management

⁶⁹ WHIS, *Master Plan*, 1972, p. 47; and WHIS, *Trails Management Plan: Environmental Assessment*, 2022, p. 25.

⁷⁰ WHIS, *Trails Management Plan: Environmental Assessment*, 2022, p. 13.

⁷¹ Larry Desjardin, “Does the E-Bike Invasion Represent a Menace to Wildlife and Character of Public Lands?” *Mountain Journal*, September 25, 2019, accessed November 2024, <https://mountainjournal.org/do-ebikes-represent-a-menace-to-wildlife-in-thebackcountry#:~:text=If%20grizzlies%20and%20other%20wildlife,Bernhardt's%20order%20if%20it%20stands>.

⁷² 36 CFR 4.30(i). See WHIS, *Trails Management Plan: Environmental Assessment*, 2022, p. 13.

⁷³ WHIS, *Trails Management Plan: Environmental Assessment*, 2022, p. 48; and 36 CFR § 4.30 - Bicycles, accessed November 2024, <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/document.cfm?documentID=115627>.

⁷⁴ WHIS, *Trails Management Plan: Environmental Assessment*, 2022, p. 2.

Plan (TMP; 2022) recommended decommissioning or rerouting 15.3 miles of trail to address fire-related erosion, soil compaction, steep alignments, and other conditions that contributed to both resource damage and diminished visitor experience. The plan proposed permanent closures for several trails, including Horsetail Canyon, Kanaka Cutoff, Salt Creek, and Salt Creek Mine.⁷⁵

Wildlife protection has also led to trail closures and restrictions at WHIS. Proposed reroutes and closures in the TMP aim to reduce erosion and sedimentation, thereby protecting fragile aquatic species such as the foothill yellow-legged frog, which are highly sensitive to habitat disturbances.⁷⁶ Seasonal or temporary closures are sometimes implemented to shield nesting or breeding wildlife from disruptions.

Human use patterns and behaviors are another factor influencing trail closure decisions. Off-leash dogs on WHIS trails present a recurring issue despite regulations requiring dogs to be leashed. Enforcing these rules remains challenging and roaming pets often disrupt wildlife during sensitive breeding or nesting periods. To mitigate these impacts, park staff occasionally resort to temporary trail closures to protect wildlife from pet-related disturbances.⁷⁷ Another challenge stems from unsanctioned, visitor-created paths, often referred to as “social trails.” These unstable, unauthorized trails not only degrade the environment but also complicate management efforts. The TMP recommended formalizing three social trails to improve oversight and sustainability.⁷⁸

WHIS has four trails totaling 5.2 miles that are reserved for use by participants in the Whiskeytown Environmental School (WES) program (see Chapter 6.3: National Environmental Education Development Camp). These include the Horsetail Canyon Trail, Ladybug Lane Trail, Martha’s Ditch Trail, and Ridge Trail.⁷⁹ Reserving these routes indicates continued administrative support for structured environmental education programming, even as planning efforts have emphasized expanded public access in other areas of the park.⁸⁰

Conclusion

WHIS’s trail system reveals the layered history of the landscape itself. Many routes originated as Indigenous pathways, mining corridors, logging roads, or water-conveyance ditches before being incorporated into a managed recreational network after 1965. Over time, the NPS formalized these inherited corridors through classification standards, maintenance protocols, and planning documents that increasingly treated trails as regulated infrastructure rather than incidental footpaths. Although lake-based recreation has consistently dominated visitation patterns, trails remained a recurring focus of planning, expansion, and administrative debate.

⁷⁵ Ibid., pp. 16-17, Appendix E.

⁷⁶ Ibid., pp. 5-6, 38, 36, and *passim*.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 5.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 2 and Appendix E.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 11; and “Whiskeytown Unit, Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area; Bicycling,” National Park Service, December 30, 2024, accessed June 2025, <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2024/12/30/2024-31207/whiskeytown-unit-whiskeytown-shasta-trinity-national-recreation-area-bicycling>.

⁸⁰ WHIS, *Trails Management Plan: Environmental Assessment*, 2022, pp. 11-13.

Trail development proceeded unevenly. Early proposals emphasized access, but subordinated backcountry use to shoreline recreation. Later decades introduced renewed investment, regional coordination efforts such as the Shasta-Trinity Trail, expanded access to destinations like Whiskeytown Falls, and more systematic evaluation through the 1999 GMP and the 2014 Foundation Document. Trail planning also became more structured, incorporating design standards, interagency consultation, tribal engagement, volunteer programs, and formalized management of multiuse recreation, including bicycles and e-bikes. Community participation—both authorized and informal—demonstrated the degree to which trails fostered local investment in park infrastructure.

Environmental conditions have repeatedly reshaped the system. The 2004 French Fire contributed to invasive plant growth requiring sustained maintenance, and administrative reporting noted that “natural disasters seem to serve as benchmarks for history.”⁸¹ When 2009 passed without a catastrophic event, the annual report observed that WHIS had “hummed through the year” without “dramatic wildfires, floods or significant traumatic events.”⁸² Such language illustrates how natural disturbances structured administrative memory.

The 2018 Carr Fire had a particularly substantial impact, burning approximately 39,000 of the park’s 42,000 acres and closing an estimated 55 percent of the trail network.⁸³ Beyond immediate burn damage, the fire destabilized soils, increased erosion hazards, and altered vegetation patterns, complicating rehabilitation efforts.⁸⁴

Post-fire planning incorporated projections from the NPS Climate Change Response Program’s 2021 Climate Change Hazards Summary Report, which anticipated increased variability in precipitation, more intense storm events described as “whiplash hydrology,” longer drought periods, and more frequent extreme heat days.⁸⁵ These projections informed the 2022 TMP, which proposed adding 32.8 miles of trail and removing or restoring 15.3 miles, combining expansion and contraction within a single planning framework.⁸⁶

WHIS’s trails have required periodic expansion, rerouting, rehabilitation, restriction, and decommissioning. The documentary record demonstrates that trails—whether historical inheritances or newly constructed corridors—are subject to regulatory standards, budget limitations, stakeholder consultation, visitor behavior, and environmental disturbance. While never fully supplanting Whiskeytown Lake as the park’s primary attraction, the trail network has evolved into a managed system that reveals the administrative complexity of sustaining land-based recreation within a dynamic and fire-prone landscape.

⁸¹ WHIS, “Final Report: French Fire Burned Area Rehabilitation Fiscal Year 2006,” August 21, 2006, p. 1, subfolder “French_Fire,” subfolder “FIRE_HISTORY,” subfolder “Not_Accessioned,” folder “Administrative_History,” WHIS-DF; WHIS, “Fire Rehabilitation,” NPS, March 1, 2015, accessed March 2026, <https://www.nps.gov/whis/learn/nature/firerehab.htm>; and Bevill and Nilsson, *Cultural Resources Overview of the Whiskeytown Unit, Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area, Shasta County, California*, p. 123. For quote, see WHIS, “Superintendent’s Annual Report for Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, 2008-2009,” p. 4.

⁸² WHIS, “Annual Report 2010,” p. 2.

⁸³ WHIS, *Trails Management Plan: Environmental Assessment*, 2022, pp. 43, 47.

⁸⁴ WHIS, *Whiskeytown Fire Management Plan*, 2022, April 2022, p. 39, subfolder “Not_Accessioned,” subfolder “ADMIN_PLANS,” folder “Administrative_History,” WHIS-DF.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 39, 57; Bevill and Nilsson, *Cultural Resources Overview of the Whiskeytown Unit, Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area, Shasta County, California*, p. 123; and NPS Climate Change Response Program, “Climate Change Hazards Summary Report for Facility Investment Planning: Whiskeytown National Recreation Area,” February 2021, p. 3, 5, subfolder “ADMIN_PLANS,” folder “Administrative_History,” WHIS-DF.

⁸⁶ WHIS, *Long-Range Interpretive Plan*, June 2017, pp. 98, 112, subfolder “ADMIN_PLANS,” subfolder “Not_Accessioned,” folder “Administrative_History,” WHIS-DF.

PART IV

CHAPTER 4.1: LAND ACQUISITIONS

When Congress authorized Whiskeytown National Recreation Area (WHIS) in 1965, the National Park Service (NPS) entered a landscape that was neither empty nor administratively simple. The area had first been proposed as a 5,828-acre state park and then as a county park before federal designation expanded the unit to approximately 42,000 acres, including roughly 3,200 acres of reservoir surface.¹ By the early 1960s, roads wound through the valley; private homes and commercial establishments were established; reclamation infrastructure—including pipes, canals, and the dam itself—structured the terrain; and land speculation had accelerated in anticipation of increased recreation at the newly formed lake.² The NPS therefore began its tenure at WHIS within a landscape already subdivided, developed, and partially committed to other uses.

Early planning documents anticipated near-total federal ownership within the legislated boundary. One report stated that “all lands within the boundaries of the Whiskeytown Unit, except certain improved property, will be acquired by the United States...as rapidly as appropriated funds are made available,” indicating an expectation of “total Federal ownership.”³ Yet consolidation proved gradual. Although land acquisition peaked in the 1960s, when the park moved to purchase private parcels before land values escalated further, complete federal ownership was neither immediate nor absolute. Highway 299, for example, runs through the center of the unit but remains owned and maintained by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). Other inholdings, rights-of-way, and state-owned parcels persisted for decades.

Over time, acquisition shifted from large-scale consolidation to targeted purchases, exchanges, and reacquisitions. This chapter traces how WHIS assembled its territorial footprint from the reservoir planning era through twenty-first-century land transactions, demonstrating that ownership patterns—negotiated incrementally and dependent on appropriations, exchanges, and interagency coordination—shaped the scope of administrative authority within the recreation area.

¹ James Milestone, *From the White House to Whiskeytown: An Administrative History of the Creation of Whiskeytown National Recreation Area*, Whiskeytown National Recreation Area (WHIS), 2003, p. 7, e-TIC filename “WHIS_611_166062_0001_of_0055.pdf” accessed November 2024; WHIS, *Foundation Document: Whiskeytown National Recreation Area*, July 2014, pp. 3 and 14, subfolder “ADMIN_PLANS,” folder “LIBRARY-REPORTS,” WHIS-DF.

² Milestone, *From White House to Whiskeytown*, p. 7; and WHIS, *Foundation Document*, 2014, pp. 12-13.

³ National Park Service (NPS) and US Forest Service (USFS), *Master Coordination Plan for Whiskeytown-Shasta Trinity National Recreation Area*, August 3, 1971, pp. 6, 10, and Appendix G, folder “1970s,” WHIS-DF.

The Making of a National Recreation Area, 1950s–1960s

The US Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) announced its plans to build Whiskeytown Dam in March 1956. At the time, lands surrounding the proposed reservoir were managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and private landowners.⁴ News of the large federal water project quickly reshaped regional expectations. Land speculators began purchasing property near the future lake, while county and state park officials recognized the site's recreational potential. Although the NPS was already providing "interim management" to facilitate public access to the reservoir, the agency had not committed to assuming full responsibility for a new unit, leaving open the possibility of county or state administration.⁵

There was federal support for such an idea: President Dwight D. Eisenhower's administration was "encouraging state and local counties to take over the recreation programs at various [federal] facilities." The California State Parks considered a 5,828-acre park around Whiskeytown Lake's shoreline but ultimately turned down the project in 1957. Next in line was Shasta County, which immediately began to develop plans to create a Whiskeytown County Park.⁶

James Carr's appointment as Under Secretary of the Interior in the Kennedy Administration proved decisive in elevating plans for Whiskeytown Lake from a proposed county park to a national recreation area. Although the NPS had been cautious about expanding the national recreation area designation, Carr persuaded the agency's director and senior leadership to support federal designation. With Shasta County voters favoring federal management over a locally funded alternative, the NPS moved forward with land acquisition and formal planning for the new unit.⁷

A 1963 report from the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation suggested that the Whiskeytown unit needed to acquire another 29,400 acres of surrounding lands to establish "protection zones" in preparation for increased recreation at the lake. The federal government could acquire the titles to these lands outright (using eminent domain, payments, or issuing permits), or they could acquire easements on certain acreage.⁸ In 1971, the agencies reiterated that both the NPS and USFS had the authorization to "acquire lands, waters and other property" as needed to manage the national recreation area. The NPS made it clear that it preferred to acquire lands outright rather than seek easement or leases, particularly in areas of high recreational or preservation value.⁹

⁴ Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, "A Report on the Proposed Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area," April 1963, p. 3, folder "1960s," WHIS-DF.

⁵ Ibid., p. 3.

⁶ Milestone, *From White House to Whiskeytown*, p. 7; and WHIS, *Foundation Document*, 2014, pp. 12-13, 15, 17.

⁷ Milestone, *From White House to Whiskeytown*, p. 7; and WHIS, *Foundation Document*, 2014, p. 24.

⁸ Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, "A Report on the Proposed Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area," 1963, p. 7.

⁹ NPS and USFS, *Master Coordination Plan for Whiskeytown-Shasta Trinity National Recreation Area*, 1971, p. 10.

In 1964, the boundaries set forth in the NPS's original proposition totaled 37,000 acres, 10,000 of which was already owned by the US government.¹⁰ The USBR administered approximately 7,000 acres within the Whiskeytown Lake area but retained only 515 acres associated with engineering features necessary for continued water distribution operations.¹¹ These figures represented only the initial federal holdings. As a 1966 WHIS planning document observed: "It appears to have been the intent of Congress that all the private lands within the Whiskeytown Unit be acquired."¹² Indeed, in the immediate years following the creation of the unit, WHIS would acquire much of the private and state lands within its boundaries. These lands were mostly checkerboarded private and railroad grant parcels of land bordering federal parcels.¹³

Highway 299 not only promised to deliver visitors to the potential national recreation area, but it also seemed like a reasonable boundary for the north side of the unit, at least from the county's perspective. In a 1963 letter from Shasta County Board of Supervisors to the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, they suggested the highway "appeared appropriate" as the northernmost boundary of the unit.¹⁴ Ultimately, however, the federal government sought to extend the northern boundary beyond Highway 299, an addition that the Shasta County Board of Supervisors found to have "no real advantages for public recreation." From the county's perspective, land north of Highway 299 was better suited for private and commercial development, and the federal WHIS boundary limited those opportunities.¹⁵

Land acquisition during the unit's early years proved more complicated than anticipated. In 1965, NPS Project Manager Samuel A. King encountered obstacles with land acquisitions involving private developers. On Section 29, T32, R6W, private developers had cleared land to establish a subdivision and a shopping center named "Kennedy Shores," which directly conflicted with plans to develop recreational sites at WHIS.¹⁶ The developers had secured the necessary county permits and begun clearing before the NPS initiated construction of its own facilities. The situation threatened to disrupt planned development and raised the possibility that additional funds would be required to complete land purchases.¹⁷ Compounding the problem, the original \$18 million appropriated by Congress for land acquisition proved insufficient, forcing WHIS to consider alternatives to outright purchase.¹⁸

¹⁰ Milestone, *From White House to Whiskeytown*, p. 7; and WHIS, *Foundation Document*, 2014, p. 22.

¹¹ US Department of the Interior (DOI), NPS, Division of Landscape Architecture Western Office Design and Construction, "The Visitor: Narrative Part of the Master Plan, Whiskeytown Reservoir Recreation Area," October 1964 drawing RA-WHI 3045, p. 8.; and "Narrative Part of the Master Plan: The Land," Drawing RA-WHI 3045, October 1964, p. 2, both in subfolder "Facilities_Planning_Maps," folder "FACILITIES," WHIS-DF.

¹² WHIS, "Land and Water Use Plan," July 1966, p. 1, folder "Water_Matters," WHIS-DF.

¹³ 89th Congress, First Session, "Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area, Calif," Senate Report No. 922, October 20, 1965, p. 3, subfolder "Miscellaneous," folder "WHIS LandsNet," WHIS-DF.

¹⁴ Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, "A Report on the Proposed Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area," 1963, p. 30.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Letter from Samuel A King to Director, "Kennedy Shores Subdivision," August 13, 1965, p. 3 of "Data_On_Subdivisions.pdf," subfolder "D18-010," subfolder "WHIS_0148_Cat9018_D_Box 1 of 2," folder "Accessioned," WHIS-DF.

¹⁷ Letter from Jackson E. Price to Director of Western Region, "Subdivision Activity- Whiskeytown," September 2, 1965, p. 1 of "Data_On_Subdivisions.pdf," subfolder "D18-010," subfolder "WHIS_0148_Cat9018_D_Box 1 of 2," subfolder "Accessioned," folder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF.

¹⁸ WHIS, "Land and Water Use Plan," July 1966, p. 1, folder "Water_Matters," WHIS-DF.

CHAPTER 4.1: LAND ACQUISITIONS

The regional office directed WHIS Project Manager King to work with the county to “use every effort available to us to persuade the county to control future activity detrimental to the proposed recreation area.”¹⁹ King suggested that NPS act fast to purchase the land before developers made “substantial improvements on these lands” or consider deleting them from the proposed recreation area.²⁰ In August 1965, Frank E. Harrison, Chief of the Division of Legislation and Regulations, along with several representatives from the NPS Regional Office, met with the Western Evangelical Association, the developers behind the Kennedy Shores project. Harrison informed the developers that if WHIS’s bill passed in the House, their land would be subject to acquisition by the NPS. He further explained that their proposed development was not considered compatible with the intended use of the recreation area. Harrison suggested that it would be in both parties’ “mutual benefit if the United States did not have to acquire the property.”²¹ Ultimately, the development did not proceed, and the park’s establishment and land acquisitions proceeded.

In 1965, WHIS had a total of 38,737 acres of land, with over 2,000 acres of private and state land remaining within its boundaries.²² As set forth in H.R. 797, WHIS was able to acquire this land by purchase, donation, or condemnation, with funds available from the Land and Water Conservation Fund.²³ The Land and Water Conservation Fund, a program established by Congress in 1964, used money earned from offshore oil and gas leasing to acquire lands with natural, cultural, or recreational value.²⁴ Congress also stated that it was critical to acquire lands “beyond the present Bureau of Reclamation project take line” to protect the watershed supporting Whiskeytown Lake and associated water infrastructure.²⁵ WHIS would require far more backcountry lands than the area immediately surrounding the lake’s shoreline.

¹⁹ Price to Director of Western Region, “Subdivision Activity- Whiskeytown,” September 2, 1965, p. 1.

²⁰ Letter from Samuel A King to Director, “Development on Section 29, T32, R 6 W by Western Evangelical Association (Kennedy Shores Subdivision),” August 9, 1965, p. 7 of “Data_On_Subdivisions.pdf,” subfolder “D18-010,” subfolder “WHIS_0148_Cat9018_D_Box 1 of 2,” subfolder “Accessioned,” folder “Administrative_History,” WHIS-DF.

²¹ Frank Harrison, “Meeting with Whiskeytown Developers,” August 9, 1965, p. 5 of “Data_On_Subdivisions.pdf,” subfolder “D18-010,” subfolder “WHIS_0148_Cat9018_D_Box 1 of 2,” subfolder “Accessioned,” folder “Administrative_History,” WHIS-DF.

²² 89th Congress, First Session, “Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area, Calif,” Senate Report No. 922, October 20, 1965, p. 3.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ NPS, “Land and Water Conservation Fund: Protecting Lands and Giving Back to Communities,” December 15, 2022, accessed November 2024, <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/lwcf/index.htm>.

²⁵ 89th Congress, First Session, “Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area, Calif,” Senate Report No. 922, October 20, 1965, p. 10.

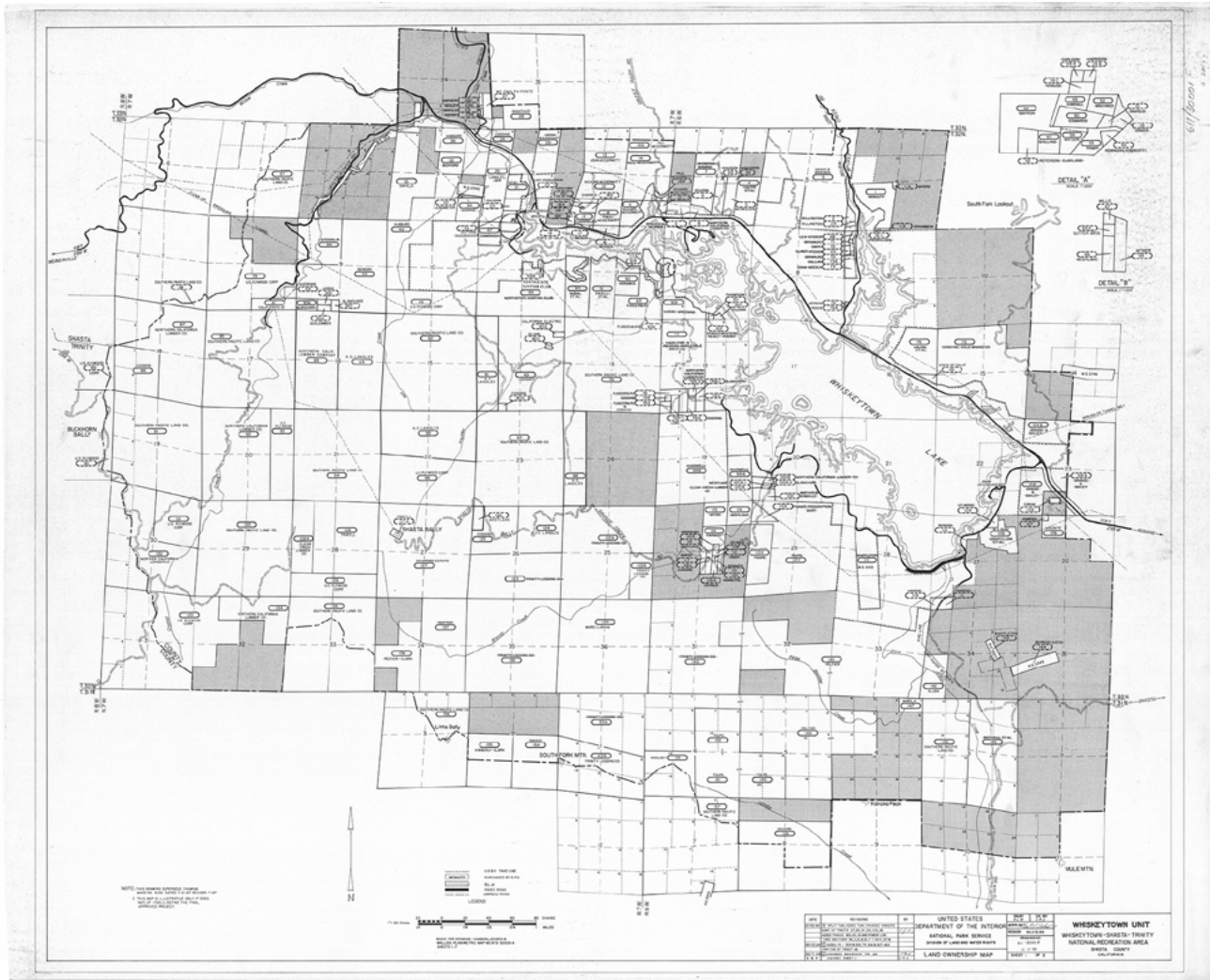


Figure 14. 1968 Land Ownership Map, December 9, 1969.
Source: Map on file at WHIS Archives.²⁶

A 1967 map revealed that several portions of land remained outside NPS ownership, primarily located south and west of the lake, with additional large parcels surrounding areas to the north and east.²⁷ It was the superintendent's job to acquire many of those parcels. When Superintendent Leon J. Mitchell arrived at WHIS in 1966, he noted that "the only land we [NPS] had around here at the time I came here, was what the USBR had withdrawn. That was the land that was covered by the lake and a few hundred feet around the perimeter of the lake."²⁸ The new superintendent's main task was to purchase land within WHIS's boundaries so the unit could reach the anticipated 42,000 acres.²⁹

²⁶ Map in folder "NPS Ownership," WHIS-DF.

²⁷ US DOI, NPS, Office of Land and Water Rights, prepared by Whiskeytown Office, "Land Ownership Base Map Whiskeytown National Recreation Area," March 6, 1967, folder "FACILITIES," WHIS-DF.

²⁸ Leon J. Mitchell, Oral History Interview by Bill Ingersoll, Redding California, February 4, 1973, transcript p. 32, NPS Oral History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center.

²⁹ Ibid.; and Whiskeytown Unit, "The Land: Narrative, Master Plan Whiskeytown Reservoir Recreation Area Drawings," October 1964, p. 2, Sheet 2 of 4, subfolder "Facilities_Planning_Maps," folder "FACILITIES," WHIS-DF.

CHAPTER 4.1: LAND ACQUISITIONS

Individual land acquisitions during WHIS's early years often carried distinct operational and historical significance. In the 1960s, for example, WHIS acquired the El Dorado Mine, which operated from 1885 to 1968. Its last owner and operator was Frank C. Bickford, who sold the mine directly to the NPS. The sale also included a residence, stamp mill, shed, and greenhouse. Later, WHIS would include the property within the Tower House Historic District (THHD), recognizing the importance of these land acquisitions for the park's cultural and historical resources.³⁰ Likewise, in 1968, the NPS purchased the National Environmental Education Development (NEED) Camp. The Northern Valley Baptist Church originally built the camp around 1960. The NEED Camp, renamed Whiskeytown Environmental School (WES) in the late 1970s, has become a significant resource for WHIS's educational programs.³¹ In this way, acre-by-acre, WHIS began to plug in the pieces of its land acquisition puzzle. WHIS would continue to acquire these internal parcels past the 1960s. By the end of the park's first decade, the general shape of its boundaries had been established.³²

Small Acquisitions, 1970s–1990s

By the 1970s, the amount of non-NPS land within WHIS's borders had significantly decreased. The remaining inholdings consisted of the Whiskeytown Store and about half a dozen scattered residences, each under three acres in size and considered to pose “no threat to the park's character.”³³ Six private holdings totaled 15.23 acres, five of which qualified as “improved properties” that WHIS could not acquire without the consent of the owner. In 1976, the State of California retained approximately 60 acres within the park's boundaries, a figure that had decreased to about 40 acres by 1986. That same year, with an acquisition budget of \$14,431,049, WHIS planned to acquire additional portions of the state-owned tract. According to the 1986 Land Protection Plan, the “exchange is in progress” and was expected to be finalized “in the near future.”³⁴ By the mid-1970s, WHIS encompassed 42,000 acres. Superintendent Mitchell acknowledged with pride, “we have just about accomplished our [land acquisition] mission.”³⁵

The NPS adopted more explicit, purpose-driven guidelines for land acquisition, shifting away from broad expansion toward strategic consolidation. For Whiskeytown, the agency identified specific criteria to justify additional purchases: (1) providing “high quality land” for recreational use; (2) preventing “incompatible uses” by private development; (3) preserving land adjacent to the lake for “waterfront protection” and “aesthetic reasons”; (4) seizing

³⁰ Anna Coxé Toogood and David G. Henderson, *Historic Structure Report: Tower House Historic District, Historical and Architectural Data Section, Whiskeytown National Recreation Area*, NPS, May 1973, pp. 3, 5, subfolder “ADMIN_PLANS,” folder “Administrative_History,” WHIS-DF.

³¹ Anna Coxé Toogood, *Historic Resource Study: Whiskeytown National Recreation Area*, National Park Service, October 1978, p. 82, subfolder “1978,” folder “1970-1979,” WHIS-DF; Christy Avery, “Determination of Eligibility: Whiskeytown Environmental School Whiskeytown National Recreation Area Shasta County, California,” December 1, 2022, p. 18, WHIS-DF.

³² WHIS, *Final Master Plan*, July 1976, p. 25, subfolder “ADMIN_PLANS,” folder “LIBRARY-REPORTS,” WHIS-DF.

³³ Whiskeytown Unit, “Preliminary Review Draft, Master Plan for Whiskeytown National Recreation Area,” September 1, 1972, p. 6, folder “FACILITIES,” WHIS-DF.

³⁴ Whiskeytown Unit, “Land Protection Plan,” February 1986, p. 2, Appendix 9-1, “Land Protection Summary,” folder subfolder “ADMIN_PLANS,” subfolder “LIBRARY-REPORTS,” WHIS DF; WHIS, *Final Master Plan*, 1976, p. 37.

³⁵ Mitchell, Oral History Interview, p. 32.

opportunities to purchase or exchange land if it became available at favorable terms; (5) protecting public rights-of-way; and (6) ensuring land conservation to “assure conservation and enhancement of scenic, aesthetic, and historic values.”³⁶ In practice, these criteria positioned the NPS to shape development patterns at the unit’s margins and reinforce the long-term integrity of the recreation area.

In the years before WHIS’s formal designation in 1965, federal planning and land acquisition policies for the recreation area precluded new private development within the unit. As WHIS entered the 1970s and 1980s, the NPS maintained this approach: private homes, resorts, and other developments were not permitted within park boundaries, while private enterprise was encouraged to provide visitor services outside the park.³⁷ Land exchanges with private owners, however, were permitted. A 1971 Master Coordination Plan prepared by the NPS and USFS noted that “some land exchanges have been completed in the Whiskeytown Unit,” although it did not specify which exchanges had taken place.³⁸

In 1971, the Master Coordination Plan organized WHIS’s lands into three management zones. The first, the Public Use and Development Zone, encompassed the reservoir, its inflow streams, and adjacent shoreline areas where recreational use was most concentrated. The plan described this zone as illustrative of “the prime purpose of the area.” Lands beyond the immediate reservoir corridor were assigned different functional roles within the unit’s overall framework. The second zone, the Preservation Zone, included lands set back from the reservoir to provide “watershed protection” and, notably, a “scenic backdrop” to the lake. The third category, the Private Use and Development Zone, comprised areas “inconspicuous from the intense use areas,” where timber, grazing, and mining activities continued as working landscapes.³⁹

By 1986, WHIS had implemented a more detailed system for categorizing its existing and potential new lands. The classifications were as follows: Class I lands encompassed high-density recreational areas; Class II lands included two-way roads and were designated for “less dense” recreational use, often suitable for administrative or interpretive purposes; Class III, which comprised the majority of Whiskeytown’s lands, were designated as “natural environment” areas, such as forests; Class IV included areas with special natural features, such as creeks and waterfalls; Class V, described as “primitive” areas, did not exist within WHIS’s boundaries; and Class VI covered areas of cultural and historic significance.⁴⁰

Beyond the 1980s, Shasta County, the California Department of Transportation, and the California Department of Forestry continued to own and maintain roads within Whiskeytown. These remaining non-federal land tracts were deemed to pose no significant “threat to the park’s character,” making their acquisition a lower priority.⁴¹

³⁶ NPS and USFS, *Master Coordination Plan for Whiskeytown-Shasta Trinity National Recreation Area*, August 3, 1971, pp. 10-11, Appendix G.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 16; and Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, “A Report on the Proposed Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area,” 1963, pp. 7-8.

³⁸ NPS and USFS, *Master Coordination Plan for Whiskeytown-Shasta Trinity National Recreation Area*, 1971, p. 14.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.

⁴⁰ WHIS, *Final Master Plan*, 1976, p. 12.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

Land Acquisitions in the 21st Century

WHIS significantly slowed its land acquisition program compared to the pace of the mid-twentieth century. Contemporary acquisitions have tended to be smaller in scale and more procedurally complex. Between 2008 and 2010, WHIS acquired several properties, including the Autore Property near Highway 299, a 1.5-acre parcel containing the original Whiskeytown Store (a detailed history of this property appears in Chapter 7.2: Concessionaire Visions and Realities). The structure, one of the remaining buildings from the original Whiskeytown townsite, had been relocated to the Autore parcel in advance of the valley's inundation in 1963. After functioning for decades as a store and post office, it was abandoned in 2005 and suffered deterioration and vandalism. The McConnell Foundation purchased the property for \$430,000 on behalf of the NPS, with the intent that the NPS would subsequently acquire it, which it did in 2010.⁴² Additionally, the NPS acquired the McDermott property, which included three acres. The NPS purchased the property for \$380,000. The house on the property became the official residence for the Oak Bottom Marina Manager.

Few properties within WHIS better demonstrate the shifting jurisdictional arrangements that accompanied boundary consolidation than the Crystal Creek Conservation Camp. Beginning in 1957, the State of California originally leased the twenty-nine-acre property from the Southern Pacific Land Company to operate the camp, which was dedicated to housing minimum security inmates. The Shasta County Sheriff's Office and the California Department of Forestry co-operated the camp, and they often partnered with WHIS to send the inmates on work duty within the park.⁴³ In 1970, the NPS purchased the property from the Southern Pacific Land Company. After purchasing the property, WHIS maintained a lease with the California Department of Forestry, which continued to operate the camp.⁴⁴ By late 1990s, the camp had shifted into the Crystal Creek Regional Boys Camp, a "minimum security youth penal institutions."⁴⁵ In 1988, WHIS deeded the camp's 28.93 acres of land and buildings to the State of California in exchange for 11.07 acres of state land.⁴⁶ Due to a severe budget shortfall, the State closed the camp and transferred the property to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE), established in 1978 as the successor to the California Department of Forestry, which had little interest in the property. Fearful of vandalism, the NPS sought to take ownership of the land and its multiple

⁴² James F. Milestone, Memorandum, "Future Plan and Facility Assessment Regarding the Autore Property at Whiskeytown National Recreation Area," June 1, 2010, p. 1, folder "Buildings," WHIS-DF; and Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, "Superintendent's Annual Report for Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, 2008-2009," October 2009, pp. 18-19, folder "Unorganized Files," WHIS-DF.

⁴³ Requisition Form D1-1, US Department of the Interior, March 28, 1974, folder "Agreements," WHIS-DF; and Memo, "Summary Sheet on Crystal Creek Conservation Camp Crews-1983," January 11, 1984, folder "Agreements," WHIS-DF.

⁴⁴ Memo, "Summary Sheet on Crystal Creek Conservation Camp Crews-1983," January 11, 1984; WHIS, *Environmental Assessment: Amendment to the 1976 Master Plan*, August 1998, p. 36, subfolder "ADMIN_PLANS," subfolder "Not_Accessioned," folder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF.

⁴⁵ WHIS, *General Management Plan & Environmental Impact Statement*, July 1999, p. 86, subfolder "ADMIN_PLANS," subfolder "Not_Accessioned," folder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF; WHIS, *Resources Management Plan for Whiskeytown National Recreation Area*, August 1997, p. 58, subfolder "ADMIN_PLANS," subfolder "Not_Accessioned," folder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF.

⁴⁶ WHIS, "Addendum to Land Protection Plan for Whiskeytown Unit, Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area," February 6, 1991, subfolder "ADMIN_PLANS," subfolder "Not_Accessioned," folder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF.

buildings via a land swap between NPS, USFS, and CAL FIRE.⁴⁷ In 2017, the NPS paid \$58,000 to purchase the land back from CAL FIRE.⁴⁸ These small acquisitions strengthened WHIS's ability to manage every acre of the park.

Conclusion

The lands surrounding WHIS remain predominantly in private or state ownership, and park administrators have long monitored how activities beyond the boundary—such as timber harvest, mining operations, residential subdivision, and associated road and utility development—may affect unit resources.⁴⁹ Development in areas such as upper Clear Creek near French Gulch has raised concerns about downstream impacts on water quality within the park.⁵⁰ The NPS has no regulatory authority over these external lands, and the administrative record demonstrates the limits of federal control beyond the unit's legislated boundary.⁵¹

Within those boundaries, however, WHIS has largely fulfilled Congress's directive to consolidate ownership.⁵² Since its establishment in 1965, the park has moved from a landscape defined by checkerboarded private parcels, state lands, railroad grants, and reclamation withdrawals to one characterized by near-total federal ownership. By the mid-1970s, WHIS encompassed approximately 42,000 acres, a figure that remains largely consistent through the period under review, with only small inholdings and transportation corridors under non-NPS ownership.⁵³ In subsequent decades, land acquisition shifted from large-scale consolidation to targeted purchases, exchanges, and reacquisitions designed to resolve inholdings, protect watershed resources, and prevent incompatible development.

The land acquisition record at WHIS indicates that the NPS entered a region already shaped by reclamation infrastructure, transportation corridors, private development, and speculative activity. The resulting acquisition process unfolded incrementally, dependent on congressional appropriations, negotiations with private owners, land exchanges with state agencies, and, at times, strategic restraint. Through incremental purchases and exchanges, WHIS assembled the territorial foundation necessary to manage recreation, watershed protection, cultural resources, and infrastructure within its boundaries.

While the NPS cannot dictate development beyond its borders, the consolidation of ownership within the unit has provided the administrative authority required to manage its resources, regulate use, and adapt to changing environmental and recreational pressures. The history of land acquisition at WHIS is therefore not merely a story of acreage totals, but of federal presence—established gradually, negotiated locally, and maintained through sustained administrative effort.

⁴⁷ WHIS, "Superintendent's Annual Report for Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, 2008-2009," pp. 19-21.

⁴⁸ Quitclaim Deed, State of California and the United States of America, Tract 03-185, APN 011-290-038, March 20, 2017, pp. 1-2, filename "2017_Tract_03-185_Notification_of_Closing," WHIS-DF.

⁴⁹ Whiskeytown Unit, "Land Protection Plan," February 1986, p. 2, subfolder "ADMIN_PLANS," subfolder "Not_Accessioned," folder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF.

⁵⁰ Brian Crowley, "Watershed Protection Strategy for Whiskeytown National Recreation," Draft, January 1, 2012, pp. 11, 15, folder "Unorganized Files," WHIS-DF.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁵² NPS and USFS, *Master Coordination Plan for Whiskeytown-Shasta Trinity National Recreation Area*, 1971, pp. 6, 10, Appendix G.

⁵³ NPS, "Management," Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, updated October 1, 2024, accessed November 2024, <https://www.nps.gov/whis/learn/management/index.htm>.

CHAPTER 4.2: WATERSHED HEALTH

Whiskeytown National Recreation Area (WHIS) is situated within the Clear Creek drainage, making water quality and upstream land use central administrative concerns since the park's establishment.¹ Park planning and reporting consistently tied visitor use and resource protection to hydrological conditions, recognizing that sediment movement, contaminants, and vegetation change beyond park boundaries directly influence streams, the reservoir, and downstream systems.

Watershed stewardship at WHIS operates within a multi-jurisdictional framework. Although the National Park Service (NPS) manages substantial acreage within the drainage, the US Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) operates Whiskeytown Lake and Dam as part of the Central Valley Project (CVP), and additional state and federal agencies hold authority over lands, waters, and species across the basin. Monitoring, restoration, and regulatory compliance therefore depend on coordination, shared data, and negotiated responsibilities rather than unilateral control.

This chapter examines watershed conditions through several recurring administrative challenges: contamination associated with historic and active mining; chronic erosion and stabilization linked to soils and prior land uses; contrasting conditions in the upper and lower Clear Creek sub-basins; and the growing influence of wildfire and post-fire hydrology on water quality and habitat. The documentary record demonstrates that watershed management at WHIS has required continual alignment of scientific assessment, infrastructure protection, recreational access, and interagency coordination within an interconnected hydrological system.

Watershed Setting and Governance Context

The Clear Creek watershed originates in the Klamath Mountains, where tributaries—including Paige-Boulder Creek, Brandy Creek, Mill Creek, Crystal Creek, Whiskey Creek, Boulder Creek, and Grizzly Gulch—converge to form Clear Creek. Clear Creek flows eastward into the Sacramento River near Redding, linking the inland watershed to the larger Sacramento River system and ultimately the Pacific Ocean.²

¹ David A. Pugh to Lester Snow, CALFED, July 17, 1998, file, "1997-2003_Water_Reports_Correspondence," subfolder "Water_Matters," WHIS-DF; and 89th Congress, First Session, "Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area, Calif," Senate Report No. 922, October 20, 1965, p. 10, subfolder "Miscellaneous," folder "WHIS LandsNet," WHIS-DF.

² The National Park Service (NPS) defines watersheds as "areas of land where all water drains to a common waterway, such as a lake, river, or ocean." NPS, "Wetland and Watershed Restoration," December 9, 2021, accessed November 2024, [https://www.nps.gov/subjects/oceans/wetland-watershed.htm#:~:text=Watersheds%20are%20areas%20of%20land,present%20in%20the%20drainage%20basin](https://www.nps.gov/subjects/oceans/wetland-watershed.htm#:~:text=Watersheds%20are%20areas%20of%20land,present%20in%20the%20drainage%20basin;); and James Milestone, *From the White House to Whiskeytown: An Administrative History of the Creation of Whiskeytown National Recreation Area*, Whiskeytown National Recreation Area (WHIS), 2003, p. 5, e-TIC filename "WHIS_611_166062_0001_of_0055.pdf" accessed November 2024.

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Seven streams from the Clear Creek watershed flow directly into Whiskeytown Lake. In addition to local runoff, the reservoir also receives imported Trinity River water delivered from Lewiston Lake through CVP infrastructure. Whiskeytown Lake's roughly 3,200-acre surface area therefore functions within two overlapping systems: the natural Clear Creek watershed and the federally engineered CVP, a network of dams, reservoirs, powerplants, and canals extending more than 400 miles across California.³

WHIS encompasses a substantial portion of the watershed within its legislated boundaries—about 28 percent (roughly 40,525 acres) by some estimates.⁴ Yet the park does not control the watershed in its entirety, nor does it operate the reservoir itself. The USBR manages Whiskeytown Dam and lake levels as part of the CVP's water delivery and power generation system. Additional lands and resource responsibilities within the watershed are held by the US Forest Service (USFS), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), US Geological Survey (USGS), and California Department of Fish and Wildlife.⁵

This shared governance structure has shaped how watershed information is gathered and used. In 1997, when the NPS Chief of the Water Resources Division requested water-quality data from Whiskeytown, Superintendent David Pugh responded, “Unfortunately, we have little to offer.” While WHIS had monitored bacteria levels at designated swim beaches since 1988, more extensive reservoir data were primarily collected and managed by the USBR and local water districts.⁶ In that instance, the Clear Creek Community Services District ultimately provided the laboratory report.⁷ The episode illustrates a recurring administrative reality: watershed management at Whiskeytown depends on interagency coordination and shared data systems.

Water quality within the Clear Creek watershed carries implications beyond park boundaries. Whiskeytown Lake supplies domestic water to nearby communities including Redding, Shasta, Centerville, Keswick, and Happy Valley.⁸ The watershed also supports diverse plant and wildlife communities documented within the park. In 2003, WHIS recorded 828 plant species, 45 mammal species, 152 bird species, 31 species of reptiles and amphibians, and 20 fish species; four of these species were listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) as threatened.⁹ As a result, watershed health at WHIS depends on ecological processes, infrastructure management, and municipal reliance.

³ Richard Golightly, Christine Hamilton, and Sharon Kramer, *Assessment of Natural Resource and Watershed Condition: Redwood National and State Parks, Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, Oregon Caves National Monument*, NPS National Resource Program Center, 2011, p. 97, accessed March 2026, <https://npshistory.com/publications/redw/nrr-2011-335.pdf>. One report states that five creeks, not seven, flow into the lake, see NPS and US Forest Service (USFS), *Master Coordination Plan for Whiskeytown-Shasta Trinity National Recreation Area*, August 3, 1971, p. 2, folder “1970s,” WHIS-DF.

⁴ Golightly et al., *Assessment of Natural Resource and Watershed Condition*, p. 97.

⁵ US Geological Survey (USGS) and NPS, “Concentrations of Metals and Trace Elements in Aquatic Biota Associated with Abandoned Mine Lands in the Whiskeytown National Recreation Area and Nearby Clear Creek Watershed, Shasta County, Northwest California, 2002-2003,” Reston, Virginia: US Geological Survey, 2015, p. 2, folder “USGS Mine Contamination Study,” WHIS-DF; and Brian Crowley, “Watershed Protection Strategy for Whiskeytown National Recreation,” Draft, January 1, 2012, pp. 13-14, folder “Unorganized Files,” WHIS-DF; and US Bureau of Reclamation (USBR), “Central Valley Project,” updated April 8, 2024, accessed November 2024, <https://www.usbr.gov/mp/cvp/>.

⁶ Memorandum from David A. Pugh to Dan Kimball, March 25, 1997, filename “1997-2003_Water_Reports_Correspondence,” folder “Water_Matters,” WHIS-DF.

⁷ Fax from Bill Suppa, Clear Creek Community Services District, to Dave Pugh, March 31, 1997, filename “1997-2003_Water_Reports_Correspondence,” folder “Water_Matters,” WHIS-DF.

⁸ USGS and NPS, “Concentrations of Metals and Trace Elements in Aquatic Biota,” p. 2.

⁹ “Whiskeytown National Recreation Area: Business Plan,” August 2003, p. 7, filename “WHISBIZPlanprintquality,” subfolder “ADMIN_PLANS,” folder “LIBRARY-REPORTS,” WHIS-DF.

The Clear Creek watershed spans a large area—about 242 square miles, or 154,820 acres. Because of its size, land managers often divide the watershed into the Upper Clear Creek and Lower Clear Creek.¹⁰ Whiskeytown Lake sits at the boundary between the two and “effectively divides the watershed into two parts,” according to one report.¹¹ In the Lower Clear Creek watershed, which spans approximately 31,302 acres, management objectives and conservation concerns include maintaining salmon populations, supporting recreation in the watershed while encouraging restoration and stewardship, mitigating fire risk, reducing erosion, and managing for mercury contamination.¹² In the Upper Clear Creek watershed, management priorities include reducing fuel loads to mitigate the risk of major wildfires; addressing water quality issues such as erosion, arsenic, cadmium, and other metal contamination from abandoned mines; and managing recreational activities to prevent harm to sensitive ecosystems.¹³ While mining within Whiskeytown’s borders ended decades ago, the industry’s presence lingers in the watershed.

Mine and Sewage Pollution

Between approximately 1850 to the 1960s, American and European miners extracted resources from the Clear Creek watershed. In doing so, they altered not only the region’s economic trajectory but also the hydrological systems and ecological conditions of the landscape. Miners removed a range of valuable minerals from the Whiskeytown area, including gold, copper, granite, and talc, employing methods such as sluicing, panning, dredging, hydraulic mining, and hard rock mining.¹⁴

In 1902, the Register of Mines and Minerals recorded at least forty-nine mines just within what would become the boundaries of WHIS.¹⁵ Many of these sites remained in deteriorated or abandoned condition. Over subsequent decades, the NPS and partner agencies located, studied, and secured a portion of them, while others were incorporated into historic interpretation.¹⁶ Documentation suggests, however, that additional mine features likely remain unidentified within the park’s boundaries.¹⁷

¹⁰ Western Shasta Resource Conservation District, “Lower Clear Creek Watershed Analysis,” January 1996, p. 1-12, accessed November 2024, https://web.archive.org/web/20250324172240/http://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb5381063.pdf; and Crowley, “Watershed Protection Strategy for Whiskeytown National Recreation,” p. 9.

¹¹ Western Shasta Resource Conservation District, “Lower Clear Creek Watershed Analysis,” pp. 1, 8; and Sacramento River Watershed Program, “Clear Creek Watershed,” n.d., p. 51, accessed November 2024, <https://sacriver.org/explore-watersheds/westside-subregion/clear-creek-watershed/>.

¹² Sacramento River Watershed Program, “Clear Creek Watershed,” p. 51; Western Shasta Resource Conservation District, “Lower Clear Creek Watershed Analysis,” p. 1-13; and Goolrick Interpretive Group with Harpers Ferry Center Interpretive Planning for WHIS, *Long-Range Interpretive Plan: Whiskeytown National Recreation Area*, National Park Service, June 2017, p. 20, subfolder “ADMIN_PLANS,” subfolder “Administrative_History,” folder “Admin-History Zip 6.22.22,” WHIS-DF.

¹³ USGS and NPS, “Concentrations of Metals and Trace Elements in Aquatic Biota,” p. 16.

¹⁴ Mining had largely concluded by the 1960s, but some gold mines were still active into the 1970s, including the Sunshine Mine. See Anna Cox Toogood, *Historic Resource Study: Whiskeytown National Recreation Area*, NPS, October 1978, p. 65, subfolder “1978,” folder “1970-1979,” WHIS-DF; USGS and NPS, “Concentrations of Metals and Trace Elements in Aquatic Biota,” p. 2.

¹⁵ Toogood, *Historic Resource Study: Whiskeytown National Recreation Area*, pp. 158-160.

¹⁶ WHIS, *Long-Range Interpretive Plan*, 2017, p. 72; and WHIS, *Draft General Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement*, National Park Service, August 1998, p. 4, e-TIC filename “WHIS_611_98036_0122pg.pdf” accessed November 2024.

¹⁷ WHIS, *Whiskeytown Fire Management Plan, 2022*, April 2022, p. 663, subfolder “Not_Accessioned,” subfolder “ADMIN_PLANS,” folder “Administrative_History,” WHIS-DF.

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Some regional mines retained environmental or regulatory significance into the late twentieth century. The Iron Mountain Mine, located less than a mile outside the park boundary, was designated an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Superfund National Priorities List site in 1983.¹⁸ One hydrologist noted that its acidic drainage “flows away from the park.” Other mine sites, including the Lone Star Mine, drain toward park waters. WHIS staff collected drainage samples from that site, though it was not listed by the EPA as a Superfund site.¹⁹

An estimated one hundred sites within the park’s borders threaten to leach metals into the park’s waterways.²⁰ In the early 2000s WHIS adopted a more systematic approach to tracking and quantifying pollutants from active and abandoned mines. In 2001, 2002, and 2003, the USGS, BLM, and the University of Montana partnered with WHIS staff, including ecologist Jennifer Gibson, to collect data on trace elements and metals in the waterways around Whiskeytown Lake. WHIS often partnered with other agencies and regional universities to address resource-management questions. The study determined that arsenic, cadmium, copper, zinc, mercury, lead, and nickel had bioaccumulated to toxic levels in multiple species of fish, amphibians, and aquatic macroinvertebrates. The concentrations of each metal varied by location. Arsenic, copper, lead, and mercury existed in highest quantities in the Upper Clear Creek watershed. The immediate waterways around Whiskeytown Lake, by comparison, showed higher levels of cadmium, lead, zinc, mercury, and selenium.²¹ These “hotspots,” the researchers concluded, “are located downstream of active mines or tailings piles, which are likely sources of contamination.”²²

In 2004, the French Fire burned 13,323 acres in the Upper Clear Creek watershed, intensifying existing concerns about contaminants and invasive species.²³ The fire occurred in areas where a 2001–2003 study had already documented elevated levels of metals bioaccumulating in water and aquatic wildlife. As a result, managers anticipated that post-fire erosion and runoff could mobilize additional contaminants, particularly near Scorpion Gulch, French Gulch, and Cline Gulch.²⁴ Runoff from abandoned mines, fire-related disturbance, salvage logging, and increased sediment loads from the region’s steep terrain posed risks of further degrading already “highly contaminated streams.”²⁵

¹⁸ US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), “Iron Mountain Mine: Redding, CA,” accessed March 5, 2025, <https://cumulis.epa.gov/supercpad/SiteProfiles/index.cfm?fuseaction=second.Cleanup&id=0901755#bkground>.

¹⁹ Memorandum, Richard Inglis, Hydrologist, WOB, WRD, to James Milestone, October 5, 2000, file, “1997-2003_Water_Reports_Correspondence,” subfolder “Water_Matters,” WHIS-DF.

²⁰ “Whiskeytown National Recreation Area: Business Plan,” August 2003, p. 16, filename “WHISBIZPlanprintquality,” subfolder “ADMIN_PLANS,” folder “LIBRARY-REPORTS,” WHIS-DF.

²¹ For the results of the original 2002 study, see J.N. Moore and D. Hughes, “Trace Metals in Sediments of a Mine Impacted River Basin: Clear Creek, California Project,” Final Report, Department of Geology, University of Montana, Missoula, MT, December 30, 2003, accessed March 2026, https://files.cfc.unt.edu/cesu/NPS/UMT/2003/Moore_WhiskeytownReport2003.pdf; Roger L. Hothem, Jason T. May, Larry R. Brown, Johnnie Moore, Jennifer Gibson, and Brian Rasmussen, “Mobilization and Bioaccumulation of Metals and Trace Elements in Aquatic Biota from the Upper Clear Creek Watershed and Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, California, Following the French Fire,” USGS, 2008, p. 5, subfolder “French_Fire,” subfolder “FIRE_HISTORY,” subfolder “Not_Accessioned,” subfolder “Administrative_History,” WHIS-DF; “Final Report: French Fire Burned Area Rehabilitation, Fiscal Year 2006,” WHIS, August 21, 2006, p. 16, subfolder “French_Fire,” subfolder “FIRE_HISTORY,” subfolder “Not_Accessioned,” folder “Administrative_History,” WHIS-DF.

²² Moore and Hughes, “Trace Metals in Sediments,” p. 2. In addition to the aquatic species tested in the Upper Clear Creek watershed, WHIS staff installed monitoring stations at Paige-Boulder Creek and Willow Creek to track pH, dissolved oxygen, temperature, and other contaminants in the water. Additionally, in 2000, WHIS implemented new methods to reduce road erosion at stream crossings and the removal of wheel ruts. Memorandum, Richard Inglis to James Milestone, October 5, 2000; “Whiskeytown National Recreation Area: Business Plan,” p. 17.

²³ Hothem et al., “Mobilization and Bioaccumulation of Metals,” pp. 5-6, 8.

²⁴ “Final Report: French Fire Burned Area Rehabilitation, Fiscal Year 2006,” p. 16.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 16-17, 18.

These contaminants were not confined to aquatic species. Movement through the food web presented potential risks to bald eagles, foothill yellow-legged frogs, western pond turtles, and humans consuming fish from the watershed.²⁶ A 2008 data report summarized the management challenge: “Although wildfires play an important natural role in structuring riparian ecosystems, areas with a legacy of historical mining present difficult challenges.”²⁷ In this context, while wildfire represented a natural process within a fire-adapted landscape, the mobilization of mining-related toxins did not.

In the months after the 2004 fire, the NPS and BLM created the Interagency Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) Team to analyze the increased threats to watershed health.²⁸ After multiple years of sampling the regions affected by the French Fire, the BAER team reported in 2006, “preliminary conclusions to date indicate that there seems to be no general trend regarding most metal concentrations.” The toxins already identified in the watershed from the 2001–2003 data collection were still present, but the French Fire had not appeared to amplify the problem as researchers initially suspected it might.²⁹

In 2006, WHIS, USGS, and the University of Montana secured BAER funding to continue monitoring post-fire conditions in the Clear Creek watershed following the French Fire.³⁰ This interagency research collaboration—characteristic of WHIS’s approach to complex natural resource issues—produced several significant findings, including more precise identification of pollutant sources within the drainage. Researchers determined that French Gulch and Cline Gulch were primary contributors of arsenic and mercury, Whiskey Creek carried the highest cadmium concentrations, and Willow Creek contained elevated levels of copper. They also concluded that Whiskeytown Lake “acted as a sink for dissolved arsenic, with much less leaving the reservoir than was supplied.”³¹

Mining-related discharges, however, posed additional and more immediate water-quality concerns. In 2006, testing at Scorpion Gulch revealed elevated arsenic concentrations. Subsequent investigation traced the contamination to the Bullion River Gold Corporation, which in July 2006 had released rock and waste tailings directly into the gulch. Measured arsenic levels exceeded drinking water standards and “greatly exceeded the toxic threshold levels for aquatic life.” The EPA initiated enforcement action against the company’s owner, Peter Martin Kuhn, who was reported to have left the country during the investigation.³²

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Hothem et al., “Mobilization and Bioaccumulation of Metals,” p. 10.

²⁸ “Final Report: French Fire Burned Area Rehabilitation Fiscal Year 2006,” p. 1.

²⁹ “*Ibid.*,” pp. 23–24; Hothem et al., “Mobilization and Bioaccumulation of Metals,” p. 5.

³⁰ “Final Report: French Fire Burned Area Rehabilitation Fiscal Year 2006,” pp. 23–24.

³¹ Johnnie Moore, Heiko Langer, and Jennifer Gibson, “Interagency Burned Area Stabilization and Rehabilitation Plan for the French Fire: Contaminants Sampling and Analyses for 2007: Data Report, continuation of UMT-8/90, J8750050210,” Rocky Mountain Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit, October 2, 2007, p. 2 subfolder “University of Montana_2007,” folder “Mercury,” WHIS-DF.

³² “French Fire Burned Area Rehabilitation Funding Request for FY07 Funds,” WHIS, September 22, 2006, p. 29, subfolder “French Fire,” subfolder “FIRE_HISTORY,” subfolder “Not_Accessioned,” folder “Administrative_History,” WHIS-DF; “Wanted Poster, Peter Martin Kuhn,” US EPA, accessed June 19, 2025, <https://19january2017snapshot.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2013-08/documents/kunh-11-wanted-poster.pdf>.

Approximately 150 years after mining began in the region, WHIS staff documented an unusually high number of dead American bullfrog tadpoles in Whiskey Creek, one of seven streams feeding Whiskeytown Lake. Although the American bullfrog is an invasive species, the mortality event suggested the presence of hazardous conditions within the aquatic system. As one team of researchers observed, “larval amphibians may be useful indicators of ecosystem contamination.”³³ In response, the NPS partnered again with the USGS and the University of Montana to determine whether mercury, cadmium, zinc, iron, copper, and other elements associated with abandoned mines were entering Whiskey Creek and adjacent wetlands.³⁴

Subsequent analysis identified several toxic “hotspots” within the Clear Creek watershed, both inside WHIS boundaries and upstream. Aquatic invertebrates in Whiskey Creek exhibited elevated metal concentrations, and water samples showed increased levels of zinc and copper. In other locations, including Mad Ox Gulch, mercury was detected in sediments. Although the study did not establish a definitive causal link between heavy metals and the tadpole mortality, it confirmed the continued presence of mining-related contaminants within the watershed.³⁵ Abandoned mine features also provided incidental habitat; for example, Pacific western big-eared bat (*Corynorhinus (=Plecotus) townsendii*) were documented roosting in some sites.³⁶ The 2015 study, however, emphasized assessment and monitoring rather than large-scale remediation strategies.

Mine tailings were not the only contributors to water-quality concerns in the Clear Creek drainage. In the early 1960s, the Central Valley Regional Water Pollution Control Board reported that approximately seventy homes in French Gulch discharged untreated sewage directly into Clear Creek. In the absence of centralized infrastructure, waste flowed downstream past the Carr Powerhouse (formerly the Clear Creek Powerplant) and into Whiskeytown Lake. Board officials concluded that “dilution should be great if adequate mixing is achieved.”³⁷ At the time, documented water-quality concerns centered primarily on localized sewage discharge rather than on the legacy of mining-related contamination that would later draw sustained administrative attention.

Erosion and Stabilization

From its establishment, WHIS managers identified erosion as a persistent landscape concern. A 1964 study of the Whiskeytown Lake area observed that “the soils are largely of granitic origin and are quite subject to erosion.”³⁸ Within the Clear Creek watershed, porous granitic soils receive approximately sixty inches of precipitation annually,

³³ USGS and NPS, “Concentrations of Metals and Trace Elements in Aquatic Biota,” p. 4.

³⁴ Ibid., pp. 1-3, 13-14, 15.

³⁵ Ibid. WHIS routinely tests the water quality at its swimming beaches, particularly looking for “fecal indicators” that might require a beach closure. See WHIS, “Annual Report 2010,” NPS, p. 11, folder “Unorganized Files,” WHIS-DF; and USGS and NPS, “Concentrations of Metals and Trace Elements in Aquatic Biota,” pp. 4, 7, 17.

³⁶ WHIS, *Whiskeytown Fire Management Plan*, 2022, p. 159.

³⁷ Central Valley Regional Water Pollution Control Board, “Policy for Waste Discharges to Surface Water, Whiskeytown Lake,” October 17, 1963, filename “1960-1980_Water_Rights_WHIS_NRA,” subfolder “Water Matters,” WHIS-DF.

³⁸ NPS, “Narrative: Part of the Master Plan, Whiskeytown Reservoir Recreation Area, California,” October 1964, p. 2, subfolder “ADMIN_PLANS,” folder “Administrative_History,” WHIS-DF.

much of it delivered in intense winter rain and snowfall. Runoff from higher elevations, including Shasta Bally's 6,200-foot peak, gains velocity as it descends toward lower reaches such as Clear Creek below Whiskeytown Dam at roughly 800 feet in elevation, increasing the potential for sediment transport and slope failure.³⁹

One major source of erosion in Whiskeytown is the area surrounding Shasta Bally batholith. Created by volcanic activity millions of years ago, the batholith is an igneous rock feature that stretches over 6,200 feet into the sky. The batholith's materials significantly inform the composition of the soils in the nearby area, which are "coarse-textured" and "lack cohesiveness"—traits that cause erosion.⁴⁰ The 1972 WHIS master plan draft noted that the soil surrounding the batholith is made of decomposed granite, meaning it is "very prone to erosion."⁴¹ A 1976 "Unstable Soil Map," designates nearly one-third of the park, the region surrounding Shasta Bally, as "highly unstable."⁴² Not every section of WHIS has decomposed granite. The soils surrounding the reservoir, which sits approximately two miles from the edge of the batholith, are less erosive.⁴³

Past logging practices compounded the erosion risks already present in WHIS's granitic soils. The Shasta Bally batholith supported extensive conifer forests, including ponderosa pine, Jeffrey pine, and white fir.⁴⁴ Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, European American settlers logged Shasta County's commercially valuable timberlands.⁴⁵ Areas surrounding the Shasta Bally batholith were likely harvested into the mid-twentieth century, ceasing only after WHIS was designated a national recreation area.⁴⁶ As the Resources Management Plan (1997) noted, "logging has occurred on most commercially available timberland," indicating that few stands remained undisturbed when the NPS assumed management in the 1960s.⁴⁷

The environmental consequences of that logging became increasingly apparent in subsequent decades. By the 1970s, park managers were documenting erosion-related impacts associated with poorly managed timber harvest and road construction. Planning documents described Shasta Bally as "scarred" by "badly-managed logging," linking those

³⁹ Milestone, *From the White House to Whiskeytown*, p. 5.

⁴⁰ David Biek, "Flora of the Whiskeytown National Recreation Area," June 30, 1988, no page numbers, folder "Plants," WHIS-DF.

⁴¹ WHIS, "Preliminary Review Draft Master Plan," September 1, 1972, p. 17, subfolder "FACILITIES_RECORDS," folder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF.

⁴² NPS, *Environmental Review: Master Plan, Whiskeytown Unit*, July 1976, p. 22-23, subfolder "ADMIN_PLANS," subfolder "Not_Accessioned," folder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 22-23; and WHIS, "Preliminary Review Draft Master Plan," 1972, p. 17.

⁴⁴ Biek, "Flora of the Whiskeytown National Recreation Area."

⁴⁵ Toogood, *Historic Resource Study: Whiskeytown National Recreation Area*, p. 14.

⁴⁶ It is unclear from the record which companies logged around Shasta Bally batholith and during what period. An Excel spreadsheet from the WHIS digital files lists US Plywood Corp., Northern California Lumber Company, Clear Creek Lumber Company, Kimberley Clark Corp., Trinity Logging Co., and Olney Creek Lumber Co., as active. See "Property Map: Whiskeytown N.R.A.," filename "1965 Landholders," subfolder "Historic Record," subfolder "Desired Futures Conditions," subfolder "Historic Vegetation Project," subfolder "VEGETATION_PROJECTS," folder "LIBRARY-REPORTS," WHIS-DF.

It is possible that the Trinity Loggins Company, owned by Clinton Peltier, logged the area around 1952, when he filed a ROW for his company with Shasta County. In 1970, Peltier's heir sold 1,927 acres of the land to the NPS. See First American Title Insurance & Trust Company, "Policy of Title Insurance," March 18, 1968, file, "1959-1972_WR11_Peltier_Diversion," folder "Water_Matters," WHIS-DF; and US DOI, NPS, "Offer To Sell Real Property," May 5, 1970, pp. 1-2, folder "Water_Matters," WHIS-DF.

⁴⁷ NPS, *Resources Management Plan for Whiskeytown National Recreation Area*, October 1997, p. 6, subfolder "ADMIN_PLANS," subfolder "Not_Accessioned," folder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF.

disturbances to erosion, road and trail washouts, reservoir and stream siltation, and declining water quality.⁴⁸ Hundreds of miles of logging roads continued to shed sediment into adjacent drainages. Compacted and disturbed soils reduced infiltration capacity, producing rapid runoff during storm events and increasing sediment delivery to Clear Creek and its tributaries.⁴⁹ Once mobilized, sediments degraded spawning habitat for anadromous fish and aquatic invertebrates.⁵⁰ As one report observed, “water quality goes hand in hand with forest health,” underscoring the connection between upland disturbance and downstream conditions.⁵¹

Vegetation shifts following timber harvest further altered watershed dynamics. In heavily logged areas surrounding the Shasta Bally batholith, greenleaf manzanita and other chaparral species gradually replaced conifer stands.⁵² Managers expressed concern that these shrub-dominated landscapes increased surface fuel loads, potentially intensifying wildfire behavior.⁵³ In this way, earlier logging practices contributed not only to erosion and sedimentation but also to long-term changes in vegetation structure and fire risk.

Livestock grazing represented an additional, though comparatively limited, factor in watershed conditions. Cattle grazing had a long history in Shasta County; in 1959, the US Census Bureau reported livestock and dairy sales among the county’s primary agricultural revenues.⁵⁴ Within the Whiskeytown and Shasta units, however, grazing permits were relatively few. The 1971 Master Coordination Plan for Whiskeytown-Shasta Trinity National Recreation Area noted that the Bureau of Land Management administered grazing allotments both inside and outside park boundaries, with grazing within WHIS required to meet “National Park Service standards.” Although livestock numbers were modest, some managers remained attentive to potential grazing-related erosion, particularly in nearby portions of the Shasta-Trinity National Forest where soil conditions were similarly vulnerable.⁵⁵

References to erosion in WHIS records were typically accompanied by proposed stabilization measures. Stabilization efforts may involve constructing terraces, planting vegetation, applying mulch, or implementing other natural or engineered measures to slow soil loss. One of WHIS’s earliest soil stabilization initiatives aimed at improving watershed health took place in the 1970s. Collaborating with the Soil Conservation Service, WHIS developed a soils guide and identified highly eroded areas for restoration. The restoration plan included “mechanical efforts” such as constructing check dams, installing brush riprap, and creating diversion ditches to control erosion, followed by the

⁴⁸ WHIS, “Preliminary Review Draft: Master Plan,” 1972, p. 13.

⁴⁹ NPS, *Environmental Review: Master Plan*, Whiskeytown Unit, 1976, p. 23.

⁵⁰ NPS, *Resources Management Plan for Whiskeytown National Recreation Area*, 1997, p. 6.

⁵¹ “Whiskeytown National Recreation Area: Business Plan,” p. 16.

⁵² Biek, “Flora of the Whiskeytown National Recreation Area”; NPS, *Resources Management Plan for Whiskeytown National Recreation Area*, 1997, p. 12.

⁵³ “Whiskeytown National Recreation Area: Business Plan,” p. 17; NPS, *Resources Management Plan for Whiskeytown National Recreation Area*, 1997, pp. 6-7.

⁵⁴ Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, “A Report on the Proposed Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area,” 1963, Appendix 4.

⁵⁵ Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, “A Report on the Proposed Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area,” 1963, Appendix p. 23; NPS and USFS, *Master Coordination Plan for Whiskeytown-Shasta Trinity National Recreation Area*, 1971, p. 25; Chester Miller, Acting Chief, Interpretation and Resource Management, to L. C. Spencer, State Water Resources Control Board, September 3, 1970, filename “1959-1972_WR11_Peltier_Diversion,” folder “Water_Matters,” WHIS-DF.

planting of ryegrass. Between 1971 and 1979, the soil stabilization project also required park staff to plant multiple native and hybrid tree species, including ponderosa pine, Jeffrey pine, knobcone pine, sugar pine, Douglas fir, and a knobcone-Monterey pine hybrid.⁵⁶

In the 1980s, WHIS staff released an updated *Natural Resource Management Plan*. WHIS sought to improve watershed health through a ten-year soil stabilization project that built upon similar projects from the 1970s.⁵⁷ WHIS noted that watershed problems resulted from soil and vegetative disturbances caused by logging, road construction, and mining. Of particular concern were “drainages with highly erosive soils affecting Whiskeytown Lake,” as soil erosion across much of the watershed during the rainy season had “a deleterious influence on many of the park’s resources.” Park staff would continue with mechanical efforts of soil stabilization, attempt to divert water to vegetated areas, and plant ground cover and brush to retain soils.⁵⁸

In January of 1995, severe rain and wind damaged infrastructure across WHIS. The park incurred over \$300,000 in damages. Winds more than eighty miles per hour uprooted hundreds of trees; damaged buildings, power lines, roads, trails, and campgrounds; and deposited debris onto the lakeshore. The park received \$862,300 in emergency funds to address the damaged roads, bridges, trails, and lakeshore. According to Superintendent Pugh’s annual report, storms continued into March and dropped over 120 inches of precipitation—double the amount of the park’s typical annual rainfall.⁵⁹ After the devastating storms, the park received not only financial support, but also community support. The Private Industry Council of Redding volunteered \$50,000 worth of labor to help with the cleanup efforts. However, the damage and cleanup were so extensive that park staff had no other choice but to postpone routine maintenance projects.⁶⁰

Erosion has been a significant challenge to watershed health in the twenty-first century. A 2022 report notes that highly erosive soils underlie the entire national recreation area, posing moderate to very high erosion hazards.⁶¹ Eroded soil from heavily used trails contributes additional sediment to creeks, degrading water quality and reducing the likelihood that fish species, including multiple salmonids, can successfully survive and reproduce. Monitoring documentation from this period indicates that these conditions were tracked in coordination with the USFWS, a key partner in watershed management.⁶²

⁵⁶ WHIS, “Natural Resources Management Program: An Addendum to the Natural Resources Management Plan,” March 1982, A6-A7, accessed November 2024, <https://irma.nps.gov/DataStore/Reference/Profile/83036>.

⁵⁷ Ibid., A6-A10.

⁵⁸ Ibid., A6, A8.

⁵⁹ David Pugh, “The Year in Review, 1995,” p. 1, 6, submitted as part of the “1994/95 Annual Narrative Report of Superintendents,” March 1996, folder “A2621 Reports Superintendents,” box HQ6, WHIS-AF.

⁶⁰ David Pugh, “Annual Narrative Report Fiscal Year 1995 (and 1994), Whiskeytown NRA,” March 1996, p. 6, folder “A2621 Reports Superintendents,” box HQ6, WHIS-AF.

⁶¹ WHIS, *Trails Management Plan: Environmental Assessment*, February 2022, p. 27, subfolder “Environmental_Assessments,” folder “Administrative_History,” WHIS-DF.

⁶² Ibid., p. 31.

The Upper and Lower Clear Creek Watersheds

In addition to hydrology and water delivery infrastructure, Clear Creek watershed management turns on habitat conditions, species protections, and invasive pressures. The watershed's wildlife ranges from cougars and river otters to flickers and salmon. Some species have been federally protected under the 1973 ESA, including the northern spotted owl, steelhead trout, and the bald eagle, which was delisted in 2007.⁶³ Whiskeytown also contains unwanted non-native species, also called invasives, which undermine the health of the ecosystem. Those include plants such as scotch broom and star thistle. Invasive wildlife like bullfrogs, crayfish, and red-eared sliders are an established problem in the twenty-first century as they displace native species.⁶⁴ A 2013 study revealed that 43 percent of the roads and trails sampled within the park were "infested" with nonnative and invasive plant species, a problem occasionally made worse when forces such as wildfire disturb the watershed's ecosystems.⁶⁵ When making decisions for the health of the watershed, land managers must take into account these thousands of living and non-living elements, a complex and difficult task.

Long before federal managers developed an ecosystem approach to land management, they more often saw the region's watersheds through the lenses of sport fishing and profit. At the time that USBR constructed Shasta Dam (1945) and Keswick Dam (1950), hundreds of thousands of fish migrated to the higher stretches of the Sacramento River to reach their spawning grounds. The Bureau of Outdoor Recreation estimated those salmon and steelhead runs to be worth \$6.1 million in 1963. Sport and commercial fishing delivered economic opportunity in the region.⁶⁶ The waters around Whiskeytown Lake, too, promised to be a fisherman's dream. In 1963, the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation anticipated that Clear Creek below Whiskeytown Dam not only hosted salmon and steelhead spawning grounds, but the agency also hoped that recreational trout fishing would be popular. The agency estimated the economic value of recreational fishing in Whiskeytown Lake to be \$272,000 annually, a significant portion of WHIS's earliest operating budget.⁶⁷ The Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife also considered creating an experimental fish hatchery on Clear Creek below Whiskeytown Dam, but the idea never came to fruition.⁶⁸ During WHIS's earliest decades, leadership often approached watershed health in terms of recreation and fish population numbers, focusing far less on the function of the entire ecosystem.

⁶³ WHIS, *Draft General Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement* p. 4, 12. While there are not any listed plant species within park boundaries, the "blue elderberry is host to the federally listed threatened valley elderberry longhorn beetle, and the elderberry must be protected as if it were listed." See WHIS, *Whiskeytown Fire Management Plan, 2022*, p. 67.

⁶⁴ WHIS, *Draft General Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement*, p. 37; and US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFW), "Final Barred Owl Management Strategy," August 2024, pp. 270-271, accessed November 2024, https://www.fws.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2024-08/final-barred-owl-management-strategy-2024_508.pdf.

⁶⁵ WHIS, *Trails Management Plan, 2022*, pp. 31, 35; "French Fire Burned Area Rehabilitation Funding Request for FY06 Funds," Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, July 7, 2006, no pg. number, subfolder "French Fire," subfolder "FIRE_HISTORY," subfolder "Not_Accessioned," folder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF.

⁶⁶ Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, "A Report on the Proposed Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area," 1963, Appendix p. 20.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 2, Appendix 21-22.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, Appendix p. 9.

WHIS shifted its focus toward the health of wildlife populations in both the Lower and Upper Clear Creek watersheds in the early 1990s. After the USFWS's 1989 decision to list the northern spotted owl under the ESA, public lands, including Whiskeytown, came under heightened scrutiny from federal, state, and public stakeholders, especially as the elusive northern spotted owl was known to inhabit the park's Upper Clear Creek watershed.⁶⁹ Likewise, the Central Valley Project Improvement Act (CVPIA) of 1992 granted the CVP authority to take stronger efforts to protect and restore fish and wildlife habitat within the project area, which includes Whiskeytown Lake.⁷⁰ Importantly, the CVPIA determined that these wildlife and habitat restoration efforts supported power generation, irrigation, and domestic water supplies for the area, marking a significant shift in the CVP's mission.⁷¹ Likewise, by 1998, WHIS had full-time staff within the Division of Natural Resource Management and Fire Protection who could dedicate attention to long-term study and care of the watershed, including a GS-7 Wildlife Biologist and GS-7 Botanist. Combined, the ESA listing of the Northern Spotted Owl in 1989, the 1992 CVPIA, and a new biologist on staff coalesced into a stronger focus on the health of wildlife and habitat in the park.⁷²

Federal scrutiny of forest and watershed conditions expanded in the early 1990s, drawing WHIS into ecosystem assessments. In 1993, the NPS participated in an interagency commission to study "a set of alternatives" for managing ecosystems where the northern spotted owl and other endangered species existed. Mandated by President Bill Clinton, the Forest Ecosystem Management Assessment Team (FEMAT) analyzed places where an overall decline in watershed health was potentially affecting the northern spotted owl and other species, including fish. The Clear Creek watershed was one of those places.⁷³

One outcome of the FEMAT analysis was a report published by the Western Shasta Resource Conservation District and BLM in 1996. The "Lower Clear Creek Watershed Analysis" was specifically concerned with the health of anadromous fish populations.⁷⁴ Anadromous fish are those species, including salmon and steelhead, that return to freshwater streams from the ocean to spawn; they live in both freshwater and saltwater. While Whiskeytown is an inland park, the landscape is still connected to the Pacific Ocean via the Lower Clear Creek watershed and the Sacramento River. And no wildlife is more important to the region than Chinook salmon and steelhead, particularly in light of the significant decline in California's aquatic habitats during the twentieth century.⁷⁵ Before private individuals built the McConnick-Saeltzer Dam around 1908, and the USBR built Whiskeytown Dam in 1963, Chinook salmon and steelhead

⁶⁹ Western Shasta Resource Conservation District, "Lower Clear Creek Watershed Analysis," pp. 1-5.

⁷⁰ The CVPIA, authorized on October 30, 1992 (Public Law 102-575, Title 34) and administered by the USFWS, was to "mandate changes in the management of the Central Valley Project to dedicate some of the water for the protection, restoration, and enhancement of fish and wildlife." USFWS, "Central Valley Project Improvement Act," n.d., accessed November 2024, <https://www.fws.gov/project/CVPIA>.

⁷¹ WHIS, *Resources Management Plan*, August 1997, p. 6, subfolder "ADMIN_PLANS," subfolder "Not_Accessioned," folder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF.

⁷² WHIS, "Position Management Plan," September 1998, p. 2, folder "Pos Mgmt Plan_1 of 4," box HQ 9, WHIS-AF.

⁷³ Western Shasta Resource Conservation District, "Lower Clear Creek Watershed Analysis," p. 1.8.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid., pp. 2-11.

likely spawned higher in the watershed.⁷⁶ But by the mid-twentieth century, the dams relegated all Chinook and steelhead populations to the area below Whiskeytown Lake, making the Lower Clear Creek watershed one of the important spawning sites.⁷⁷

Recognizing the environmental significance of the Lower Clear Creek watershed as critical salmon habitat, the 1993 report identified several major stressors affecting the area. These included “chronic misuse” of both private and public lands, such as wildlife harassment, fire incidents, drug activity, illegal shooting and camping, and unregulated vehicle use.⁷⁸ These activities, combined with decades of dam construction, mining, and logging, contributed to reduced stream flows and degraded riparian habitats.⁷⁹ Properly functioning riparian zones—vegetated areas along streams and riverbanks that are neither overly dense nor excessively sparse—are essential for sustaining aquatic species.

The Whiskeytown Dam complex substantially reduced flows to the Lower Clear Creek watershed. Before 1963, approximately 260,000 acre-feet entered the lower watershed annually; after construction of the dam, flows declined to roughly 42,000 acre-feet.⁸⁰ In addition to altering flow volume, the dam affected water temperature regimes and the availability of spawning gravel. The 1993 analysis concluded that the dam “permanently eliminated approximately 12 miles of spring-run Chinook and steelhead habitat” and resulted in a “90 percent reduction in spawning habitat in the first ten miles below the dam.”⁸¹ Regionally, dams throughout the Central Valley blocked an estimated 95 percent of historical salmon habitat.⁸² Although these structures significantly altered the Clear Creek and Sacramento River watersheds, the USBR implemented mitigation measures. In 1993, the agency installed temperature-control curtains at Whiskeytown Dam to release cooler water downstream for Chinook salmon.⁸³ Federal managers therefore operated within a framework that required balancing ecological restoration goals with the continued operation of irrigation, drinking water, hydroelectric, and flood-control infrastructure.

Dam removal presented the most direct means of restoring anadromous fish passage. Although there was no indication that large structures such as Whiskeytown Dam would be removed, the USBR began targeting smaller barriers. The McCormick-Saeltzer Dam, located approximately eight miles downstream from Whiskeytown Lake and

⁷⁶ Crystal Simons, Katelyn Walker, and Mark Zimring, *Saeltzer Dam Removal on Clear Creek 11 Years Later: An Assessment of Upstream Channel Changes since the Dam’s Removal* (UC Riverside: Water Resources Collections and Archives, 2011), p. 4, accessed March 2026, <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/3x08s6th>; Western Shasta Resource Conservation District, “Lower Clear Creek Watershed Analysis,” pp. 2-21; WHIS, *Trails Management Plan: Environmental Assessment*, 2022, p. 31; and WHIS, “Paige Boulder Watershed Recreation Project,” n.d., accessed November 2024, <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/showFile.cfm?sfid=188070&projectID=53726>.

⁷⁷ Sacramento River Watershed Program, “Clear Creek Watershed,” n.d., p. 51, accessed November 1, 2024, <https://sacriver.org/explore-watersheds/westside-subregion/clear-creek-watershed/>; and Western Shasta Resource Conservation District, “Lower Clear Creek Watershed Analysis,” pp. 2-21.

⁷⁸ Western Shasta Resource Conservation District, “Lower Clear Creek Watershed Analysis,” pp. 1-18.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 1-19.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 2-5.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 2-11, 2-12.

⁸² Simons et al., *Saeltzer Dam Removal*, p. 1.

⁸³ WHIS, *Resources Management Plan for Whiskeytown National Recreation Area*, 1997, p.18.

constructed in the early twentieth century, had long blocked upstream fish migration and sediment transport.⁸⁴ After unsuccessful attempts to install fish ladders, the USBR fully removed the dam in 2000, reopening approximately twelve miles of Clear Creek for salmon spawning. Within two years of removal, roughly 70 percent of spring-run Chinook salmon migrated upstream beyond the former dam site.⁸⁵

While federal debates over dams and fish passage addressed watershed conditions at a regional scale, WHIS simultaneously pursued on-the-ground restoration within its own boundaries. In 1996, the park entered into a cooperative agreement with Shasta College's Center for Science, Technology, and Natural Resources to support applied watershed restoration.⁸⁶ Shasta College developed a curriculum in Watershed Restoration and Ecosystem Management, and WHIS provided project sites within the park to serve as a field laboratory for hands-on training.

The pilot effort focused on a 300-acre erosion control project at Paige Boulder Creek. The project established methodologies for conducting road erosion inventories at WHIS, installed seven culverts, reestablished proper out-sloping, and regraded swale crossings along 1.5 miles of Peltier Valley Road to improve drainage and reduce future maintenance demands. Additional measures included construction and monitoring of a temporary sediment pond and the decommissioning of a one-mile abandoned mining road.⁸⁷

The pilot program proved to be a success and WHIS sought grant funding through the CVPIA in 1998. The grant would cover two phases of work. The first part focused on identifying, inventorying, and analyzing the Paige Boulder Creek watershed with work being performed by students at Shasta College. The second phase would use funds from the grant to complete restoration work, including continuing work on Peltier Valley Road and decommissioning more abandoned roads and converting them into backcountry trails.⁸⁸ The project received recognition from the NPS's Washington Support Office for achievement in natural resource management, with WHIS botanist Gretchen Ring among those recognized for her role in advancing the work.⁸⁹

During the 1990s and early 2000s, while the BLM conducted research on anadromous fish habitat restoration in the Lower Clear Creek watershed, the park evaluated the health of the Upper Clear Creek watershed above the dam.⁹⁰ In 1996, as the Lower Clear Creek analysis neared completion, WHIS collaborated with USBR, BLM, USFS, USFWS, and NRCS to analyze the entire Clear Creek watershed. The analysis aimed to establish "a framework for future management within the Upper Clear Creek watershed."⁹¹ The report formed a foundation for developing desired future

⁸⁴ One report places the dam's construction in 1912 and located twelve miles downstream from Whiskeytown Lake, see Simons et al., *Saeltzer Dam Removal*, p. 4. Another source says the Saeltzer Dam was constructed in 1903 and existed eight miles downstream from Whiskeytown Lake. See WHIS, "Paige Boulder Watershed Recreation Project."

⁸⁵ Simons et al., *Saeltzer Dam Removal*, p. 5.

⁸⁶ David Pugh, "Paige Boulder Creek CVPIA Shasta College Proposal Park A," June 3, 1998, pp. 1-2, subfolder "Paige Boulder Creek CVPIA Shasta College proposal," subfolder "1997-2000 Paige Bar Logging camp road (Shasta College) part 6," subfolder "FM Box 1," folder "FACILITIES," WHIS-DF.

⁸⁷ Ibid., pp. 1-2.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 4.

⁸⁹ "Interagency Meeting Summary," Shasta College, October 16, 1997, p. 1, folder "Agreements," WHIS-DF; Jennifer Gibson, written responses to interview questions, email correspondence with authors, April 2026 (noting Washington Support Office recognition for the project).

⁹⁰ Western Shasta Resource Conservation District, "Lower Clear Creek Watershed Analysis," p. 2-13.

⁹¹ Bureau of Land Management (BLM), USFWS, NPS, Natural Resources Conservation Service, USBR, and the USFS of the US Department of Agriculture, "Interagency Agreement No 97-IA-14_010," September 19, 1997, p. 2, folder "A44 MOA Forest Service USDA 2 of 4," box HQ9, WHIS-AF.

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watershed conditions and other natural resource projects within WHIS. According to the agreement, the NPS would contribute \$5,000 to the study and supplement the funding with technical and staff assistance.⁹² This collaborative effort not only established a strategic framework for the Upper Clear Creek watershed but also laid the groundwork for future restoration and management initiatives across the watershed.

The 1999 General Management Plan (GMP) set forth several goals for watershed management. These goals included continuing restoration projects, conducting further research, continuing a partnership with Shasta College's restoration program, and establishing a field station devoted to watershed projects at the National Environmental Education Development (NEED) Camp site. Additionally, the GMP called for a restoration of the park's forests to an 1850's landscape, meaning a region free from the scars inflicted by 150 years of mining and logging.⁹³ Reversing the ecological effects of more than a century of resource extraction presented substantial practical and conceptual challenges, particularly given that the GMP did not propose altering other post-1850 developments, including Whiskeytown Lake and its associated infrastructure.

In the early 2000s, WHIS undertook several initiatives to continue to improve watershed health and accomplish goals stated in the GMP. These included the Pope-Ericson Road Removal Project in 2000; the Peltier Valley Road and Peltier Trail restoration project in 2001; and, in 2003, work on the Orofino and Salt Creek Watersheds, which are both sub-watersheds of Clear Creek. Each of the projects sought to improve watershed health in WHIS by reducing erosion and improving salmon habitat.⁹⁴

Illegal marijuana cultivation posed not only law enforcement challenges at WHIS but also environmental risks to the Clear Creek watershed. Beginning in 2001, park staff conducted repeated raids on cultivation sites, many of which were reportedly associated with Mexican drug trafficking organizations. Despite enforcement efforts, sites were often reestablished in subsequent seasons.⁹⁵

Environmental impacts sometimes drew attention before cultivation sites were formally identified. In 2000, an unusually high number of dead frogs, fish, and invertebrates were observed in Whiskeytown Lake near Whiskey Creek—separate from the bullfrog tadpole mortality event in Whiskey Creek during the same period that was linked to mining-related contaminants. Investigation of the lake die-off revealed a nearby marijuana cultivation site discharging nitrogen-based fertilizers and the insecticide Malathion into the drainage.⁹⁶ Similar sites elsewhere in the park resulted in vegetation clearing for cultivation plots; application of herbicides, rodenticides, pesticides, and fertilizers; diversion or manipulation of small streams; introduction of invasive species; and wildlife poaching.⁹⁷

⁹² The USFS and BLM contributed \$20,000 each, while the USFWS contributed \$10,000, respectively. See "Interagency Agreement No. 97-IA-14_010," pp. 3-4.

⁹³ WHIS, *General Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement*, 1999, p. 14; "Whiskeytown National Recreation Area: Business Plan," p. 16.

⁹⁴ WHIS, "Watershed Restoration and Trail Improvement Environmental Assessment," April 2003, p. 9, subfolder "2003 Watershed Restoration and Trail Improvement EA," subfolder "FM Box 3," folder "FACILITIES," WHIS-DF.

⁹⁵ WHIS, "Superintendent's Annual Report for Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, 2008-2009," p. 22.

⁹⁶ WHIS, "Superintendent's Annual Narrative Report: Fiscal Year 2001," p. 4, subfolder "2001final," subfolder "2001," folder "Cultural_Resource_Reports-PRIVILEGED," WHIS-DF; and USGS and NPS, "Concentrations of Metals and Trace Elements in Aquatic Biota," p. 4.

⁹⁷ WHIS, "Superintendent's Annual Report for Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, 2008-2009," p. 22.

Following California's legalization of marijuana in 2016, and after the 2018 Carr Fire reduced dense vegetative cover in portions of the park, documented illegal grow sites within WHIS declined. This reduction corresponded with decreased localized exposure to certain contaminants, including nitrogen-based fertilizers and Malathion (see Chapter 7.3: Law Enforcement and Crime).⁹⁸

Wildfires and Watershed Health

Wildfire has been one of the most consequential forces shaping watershed health at Whiskeytown. Fire alters vegetation cover, soil stability, runoff patterns, and sediment transport—each of which directly affects water quality in the Clear Creek drainage. Because WHIS contains steep terrain, erosive soils, and a legacy of logging and mining disturbance, wildfire effects extend beyond burned vegetation and into aquatic systems downstream.

WHIS lies within a mixed fire regime. Chaparral and knobcone pine communities historically burned at intervals of approximately twenty to fifty years, while oak woodlands experienced more frequent fire cycles of two to eight years.⁹⁹ Higher-elevation mixed-conifer forests burned at variable intervals ranging from three to fifty years.¹⁰⁰

When the NPS evaluated Whiskeytown in the early 1960s, it recognized that it was inheriting a landscape already altered and vulnerable to fire. A 1964 planning document observed that “most of the area south of Whiskeytown Reservoir has been logged of merchantable timber within the past twenty years,” and that the “underbrush that has grown up, plus the slash and debris left from the logging operations, present a high fire hazard.”¹⁰¹ Superintendent James Milestone later emphasized that much of the forest consisted of second-growth stands less resistant to wildfire than earlier mature timber.¹⁰² Scholars and park planning documents identified “active fire exclusion” as a principal human impact on these forests.¹⁰³

Fire suppression beginning in the late nineteenth century altered forest composition and structure. Research on fire-excluded relict forests in the southeastern Klamath Mountains documented increased fuel accumulation, encroachment of species such as white fir and Douglas-fir, and greater vulnerability to high-severity fire.¹⁰⁴ These changes increased the likelihood that fires would transition from surface to crown events, producing higher mortality and exposing soils to erosion.

⁹⁸ WHIS, “Superintendent’s Annual Narrative Report: Fiscal Year 2001,” p. 4.

⁹⁹ WHIS, *2014 Fire Management Plan*, May 2014, p. E1-15, subfolder “FMP,” subfolder “ADMIN_PLANS,” folder “LIBRARY-REPORTS,” WHIS-DF.

¹⁰⁰ NPS and USFS, *Master Coordination Plan for Whiskeytown-Shasta Trinity National Recreation Area*, 1971, p. 2; and WHIS, “2014 Fire Management Plan,” p. E1-15.

¹⁰¹ NPS, “Narrative: Part of the Master Plan, Whiskeytown Reservoir Recreation Area, California,” 1964, p. 2.

¹⁰² Milestone, *From the White House to Whiskeytown*, p. 5.

¹⁰³ Carlos M. Leonzo and Christopher R. Keyes, “Fire-Excluded Relict Forests in the Southeastern Klamath Mountains, California, USA,” *Fire Ecology* 6, no. 3 (2010): 63; WHIS, *Resources Management Plan for Whiskeytown National Recreation Area*, 1997, p. 335.

¹⁰⁴ Danny L. Fry and Scott L. Stephens, “Influence of Humans and Climate on the Fire History of a Ponderosa Pine-Mixed Conifer Forest in the Southeastern Klamath Mountains, California,” *Forest Ecology and Management* 223 (2006): 434; Leonzo and Keyes, “Fire-Excluded Relict Forests in the Southeastern Klamath Mountains, California, USA,” pp. 62-63, 72.

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By the late twentieth century, park administrators increasingly connected wildfire to watershed risk. The 2008 Fire Management Plan (FMP) recorded that since 1929 the area experienced a Class C fire (10–99 acres) every 4.5 years and a Class F fire (1,000–5,000 acres) every 13.75 years.¹⁰⁵ Fires during the 1990s and 2000s—including the Kanaka (1990), Spring #5 (1999), Shu East (1999), Sheep #1 (1999), French (2004), and Whiskeytown Complex, Moon, and Motion Fires (2008)—demonstrated increasing fire activity in and around the park.¹⁰⁶ A 2012 watershed report cautioned that “such catastrophic fires can cause severe pulses of sediment delivery downslope (and downstream) when winter rains arrive.”¹⁰⁷ Even fires burning outside park boundaries influenced sediment and water conditions within the unit.

The 2018 Carr Fire marked the most extensive fire in WHIS history.¹⁰⁸ Planning documents described the post-fire environment as a “changed landscape” and “more unstable environment.”¹⁰⁹ The fire caused approximately 75 percent overstory mortality and extensive understory loss, exposing bare soil to winter precipitation.¹¹⁰

During the winter of 2018–2019, above-average precipitation generated elevated runoff across slopes stripped of vegetation. Increased erosion washed out roads and trails and delivered sediment downslope into tributaries.¹¹¹ Sediment derived from slate, shale, granodiorite, and rhyolite entered waterways, affecting riparian habitats and increasing turbidity.¹¹² These post-fire erosion pulses intensified longstanding watershed management concerns.

In historically mined portions of the watershed, wildfire also increased the potential mobilization of heavy metals. Two years after the Carr Fire, the NPS partnered with the USGS to conduct a bioassessment. Researchers found cadmium, chromium, copper, and zinc exceeding guideline levels at multiple sampling sites. At the same time, comparative surveys showed limited variation in certain fish species and invertebrate communities, and in sediment-size characterization values between pre- and post-fire assessments, suggesting uneven fire effects across the watershed.¹¹³

¹⁰⁵ WHIS, *Fire Management Plan*, undated, likely 2008, p. 19, subfolder “FMP,” subfolder “ADMIN_PLANS,” folder “LIBRARY-REPORTS,” WHIS-DF.

¹⁰⁶ California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, “Fire History Map: Carr Incident,” August 4, 2018, accessed November 2024, https://ftp.wildfire.gov/public/incident_specific_data/calif_n/CALFIRE/2018_Incidents/CA-SHU-007808_Carr/GIS/Products/20180804/FireHistory_E_land_20180804_Carr_CASHU007808.pdf; “Superintendent’s Annual Report for Whiskeytown National Recreation Area,” October 2009, p. 3, subfolder “Annual 2008,” subfolder “Park_annual reports,” subfolder “Superintendents_Annual_Report,” subfolder “ADMIN_PLANS,” subfolder “Not_Accessioned,” folder “Administrative_History,” WHIS-DF; Jennifer Gibson, “FY09 Accomplishment Report: Whiskeytown Complex and Motion Fires: Burned Area Rehabilitation Plan,” September 15, 2009, p. 8, subfolder “Motion Fire-Whiskeytown Complex,” folder “Fire History,” WHIS-DF; James Milestone to Congressman Wally Herger, United States House of Representatives, December 5, 2008, pp. 1-2, folder “L3027 Land Use Roads and Road Right of Ways,” box HQ 11, WHIS-AF; WHIS, “Superintendent’s Annual Report for Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, 2008-2009,” p. 5.

¹⁰⁷ Crowley, “Watershed Protection Strategy for Whiskeytown National Recreation,” p. 17.

¹⁰⁸ WHIS, *Whiskeytown Fire Management Plan, 2022*, p. 3; WHIS, *Trails Management Plan: Environmental Assessment, 2022*, p. 4; “Superintendent’s Compendium,” WHIS, September 24, 2021, pp. 16, 17, 21, subfolder “Compendium,” subfolder “ADMIN_PLANS,” subfolder “Not_Accessioned,” folder “Administrative_History,” WHIS-DF.

¹⁰⁹ WHIS, *Trails Management Plan: Environmental Assessment, 2022*, p. 2; NPS Climate Change Response Program and NPS Sustainable Operations and Maintenance Branch, “Climate Change Hazards Summary Report for Facility Investment Planning,” WHIS, February 2021, p. 5, subfolder “ADMIN_PLANS,” subfolder “Not_Accessioned,” folder “Administrative_History,” WHIS-DF.

¹¹⁰ WHIS, *Trails Management Plan: Environmental Assessment, 2022*, p. 4.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 28; “Climate Change Hazards Summary Report for Facility Investment Planning,” 2021, p. 5.

¹¹² WHIS, *Trails Management Plan: Environmental Assessment, 2022*, p. 28; WHIS, *Whiskeytown Fire Management Plan, 2022*, p. 4, 40, 75.

¹¹³ M. L. Wulff, L. R. Brown, and V. L. Violette, “Post Carr Fire Bioassessment Data Report, WHIS, Shasta County, California: US Geological Survey Data Report 1201 (2024), p. 1, accessed November 2024, <https://pubs.usgs.gov/dr/1201/dr1201.pdf>.

Although high-severity fires produced destabilizing impacts, they also generated ecological responses consistent with fire-adapted systems. Species such as manzanita rely on fire to scarify seeds and stimulate germination. Post-fire monitoring documented understory regeneration and increased native shrub succession in some burned areas.¹¹⁴

Wildfire has functioned as both an ecological process and a watershed stressor. Fire suppression, logging legacies, fuel accumulation, and high-severity burns have all influenced erosion, sediment delivery, contaminant mobilization, and riparian habitat conditions. As park planning and monitoring documents repeatedly demonstrate, watershed health at Whiskeytown has been inseparable from the fire regimes shaping the landscape above Clear Creek.

Conclusion

WHIS's approach to managing the Clear Creek watershed has shifted in emphasis and method. Early planning materials frequently framed watershed-related decisions through the visitor's experience of the landscape—viewsheds, “interesting openings,” and the visual management of vegetation—often treating elements such as snags, stumps, dying trees, and downed wood primarily as aesthetic problems to be removed or screened.¹¹⁵ In later decades, as ecological science reshaped land-management practice and as federal environmental law expanded the NPS's obligations, those same features were increasingly understood as functional components of habitat, erosion control, and watershed processes rather than visual liabilities.

By the early twenty-first century, watershed stewardship at Whiskeytown was defined less by a single management objective than by the need to reconcile multiple mandates within a shared hydrological system. WHIS managers accounted for visitor use and infrastructure, municipal water supply concerns, cultural resources, and the ecological conditions that sustain aquatic and riparian habitat. They did so within a governance framework in which no single entity controlled the entire watershed or reservoir system: WHIS managed roughly a quarter of the Clear Creek watershed, the USBR operated Whiskeytown Lake and Dam as part of the CVP, and additional state and federal agencies maintained responsibilities for lands, waters, and species throughout the drainage.

This interagency reality has shaped Whiskeytown's watershed work at every scale—from data collection and monitoring to restoration and compliance. As the administrative record shows, water quality and aquatic habitat management require coordination not only with partner agencies but also with downstream users and local communities that depend on the lake for domestic supply. At the same time, WHIS holds clear legal responsibilities where protected species and critical habitat are present. Anadromous fish populations in Clear Creek below Whiskeytown Dam—including ESA-listed salmonids—have become a focal point of cooperative management and restoration investment.¹¹⁶ By the 2010s, WHIS described Clear Creek below the dam as the park's primary area of active native fisheries management and emphasized its ongoing cooperation with partner agencies in habitat restoration efforts.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ WHIS, *Whiskeytown Fire Management Plan*, 2022, p. 15-16.

¹¹⁵ NPS and USFS, *Master Coordination Plan for Whiskeytown-Shasta Trinity National Recreation Area*, 1971, Appendix G.

¹¹⁶ WHIS, *Trails Management Plan: Environmental Assessment*, 2022, p. 30.

¹¹⁷ WHIS, “Paige Boulder Watershed Recreation Project”; and WHIS, *Foundation Document: Whiskeytown National Recreation Area*, July 2014, p. 14, subfolder “ADMIN_PLANS,” folder “LIBRARY-REPORTS,” WHIS-DF.

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Wildfire sharpened these watershed pressures by accelerating erosion, increasing sediment delivery, and heightening the risk that legacy contaminants from mined landscapes would be mobilized into tributaries and the reservoir. Fire-related disturbance—especially when followed by intense winter precipitation—linked upland vegetation loss to downstream turbidity, habitat disruption, and infrastructure vulnerability. In this sense, watershed health provided an administrative bridge between WHIS’s fire management responsibilities and its water-quality and habitat obligations. In this context, watershed health functioned as a unifying framework for Whiskeytown’s natural resource management: it linked upstream legacies of mining and logging to downstream habitat conditions; it connected wildfire and erosion to water quality, sedimentation, and infrastructure vulnerability; and it made visible the park’s dependence on sustained partnerships across jurisdictional lines. As climate-driven fire severity, storm intensity, and ecological disturbance continue to reshape the region, WHIS’s watershed work will remain a practical test of collaborative governance—balancing recreation and water delivery systems with ecological resilience and legal conservation obligations.

CHAPTER 4.3: MANAGING THE MINERAL LEGACY

Whiskeytown National Recreation Area (WHIS) inherited a substantial mineral legacy: dozens of historic mine sites and a long paper trail of claims, policy disputes, and cleanup responsibilities. Although the park has not hosted active mineral leasing since the 1990s, abandoned mine lands (AMLs) remained an enduring management issue—driving work in resource protection, compliance, cultural-resource evaluation, and visitor safety.

WHIS's approach to mining evolved in distinct phases. In the 1970s, rising gold prices and new federal requirements pushed the park into claim inventories, validity examinations, and contested cases in coordination with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and, at times, the courts. During the 1980s, mine management shifted from adjudicating claim legitimacy to defining where (and whether) mining-related activity could occur at all through superintendent-level policy clarifications, the Mineral Management Plan, and a sharp reduction in acreage available for mineral leasing.

From the 1990s forward, the center of gravity moved to legacy treatment and risk reduction. Regional AML directives drove systematic inventory, prioritization, and remediation planning for high-impact sites, while selected mines entered cultural-resource workflows through National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) eligibility evaluations. In the 2000s and 2010s, wildfire exposure and episodic funding made hazard mitigation more urgent, accelerating mine closures and prompting access restrictions where safety and liability concerns outweighed educational or interpretive use. This chapter traces that administrative trajectory—showing how WHIS moved from managing active mining claims to managing the durable afterlife of extraction on a landscape increasingly governed by restoration, protection, and public safety.

Twentieth-Century Mining History Overview

Gold was not the only mineral prospectors sought in the hills of Northern California. In the early 1900s, prospectors also looked for quartz around Redding to aid in copper smelting.¹ Mining between 1900 and 1950 in the area that later became WHIS was largely small-scale and intermittent. The history of mining in and near the national recreation area is covered in depth in Theodore Catton and Diane Krahe's Historic Resources Study of the unit. As they note, in the early twentieth century, approximately fifty mines were identified within park boundaries, but production was relatively low compared to nearby districts like French Gulch-Deadwood. Many of these mines relied on modest

¹ Alvin H. Lense, "Mineral Report for Placer and Quartz Mining Claims Located in the Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, California," p. 9, June 1, 1973, subfolder "1973," folder "1970-1979," WHIS-DF.

equipment, with three-stamp mills operating in the area by 1902.² During the 1920s, “pocket mining” became a prominent activity. This practice, exemplified by the El Dorado Mine near the Tower House, involved targeting small, high-grade deposits of free gold. The El Dorado Mine operated intermittently during this period, using simple equipment such as a two-stamp mill and generating limited but valuable outputs.³

The Great Depression saw a resurgence of placer mining as individuals sought supplemental income. At least one “Hooverville” camp emerged near Whiskeytown; among the “campers” were, according to historical newspaper accounts, over one hundred gold panners along Clear Creek and Whiskey Creek. Many of these miners were desperate to escape the ravages of the depression and were inexperienced and had little success.⁴

By the mid-twentieth century, only a few operations remained active, including the Sunshine, Index, the El Dorado Mine, and North Star Mines. The North Star Mine continued to function until 1993. Most sites were abandoned, leaving a landscape marked by mining scars that would influence later resource management strategies. In the late 1990s, for example, WHIS determined the North Star Mine and Ganim Mine required treatment plans, National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance, and rehabilitation.⁵

Modern-era Mining

Although a 1962 mineral report concluded that the Whiskeytown District had limited future gold potential compared to nearby districts, rising gold prices in the early 1970s renewed interest in prospecting within WHIS. Hobbyists and “weekend prospectors” staked claims and engaged in recreational gold panning, blending historical mining traditions with modern recreational use despite the area’s relatively modest mineral prospects.⁶

After its first five years, the staff of the national recreation area extended their responsibilities beyond recreation and resource management to address additional projects within WHIS. One key initiative was the management of active and abandoned mines within the park. This shift coincided with the enactment of two landmark federal mining policies in the 1970s. The Mining and Minerals Policy Act of 1970 (30 U.S.C. § 21a) reaffirmed the federal government’s commitment to fostering private enterprise in developing a stable domestic mineral industry. Similarly, the Federal Land

² Theodore Catton and Diane Krahe, *The Shaping of a Natural and Industrial Landscape: Whiskeytown National Recreation Area Historic Resource Study*, February 2025, p. 106, see also chapters 3 and 4, accessed November 2024, <https://npshistory.com/publications/whis/hrs-2025.pdf>. A 1978 Historic Resource Study narrows the number to forty-nine mines. See Anna Cox Toogood, *Historic Resource Study: Whiskeytown National Recreation Area*, National Park Service, October 1978, pp. 158-160, subfolder “1978,” subfolder “1970-1979,” WHIS-DF.

³ Catton and Krahe, *The Shaping of a Natural and Industrial Landscape: Whiskeytown National Recreation Area Historic Resource Study*, 2025, pp. 126-127.

⁴ Ibid., pp. 128-129.

⁵ Ibid., p. 158-63; National Park Service (NPS), *Resources Management Plan for Whiskeytown National Recreation Area*, August 1997, pp. 90-91, 120, subfolder “ADMIN_PLANS,” subfolder “Not_Accessioned,” folder “Administrative_History,” WHIS-DF.

⁶ Lense, “Mineral Report for Placer and Quartz Mining Claims Located in the Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, California,” pp. 11-12.

Policy and Management Act of 1976 (Public Law 94-429) sought to enhance oversight of public lands by requiring agencies to collect more precise information on the location and status of unpatented claims and to address the cleanup of abandoned claims.⁷

In 1973, WHIS launched a detailed investigation into quartz and placer claims within its boundaries, initiating nearly a decade of efforts to inventory and assess the validity of mining claims. That August and October, Alvin H. Lense of the National Park Service's (NPS) Office of Mining and Minerals, along with Henry J. LaSala and Galen Marr of WHIS, examined a group of fifteen mining claims for their validity. Their findings were clear: Lense recommended initiating contests against the claims, deeming them "non-mineral in character," while LaSala and Marr reported no minerals within the claims' boundaries in sufficient quantities to constitute valid discoveries.⁸

The Fuzzy and Oris Claims

In the mid-1950s, a California couple, the Fazzinos, purchased a mining claim from a prospector in what would later become the boundaries of WHIS. These claims came to be referred to as "The Fuzzy Claims" in park documents—a play on the owners' surname, but also an allusion to the ambiguous legitimacy of the claims. As unpatented claims, the land could only be used for mining or prospecting purposes, with all activities strictly tied to those objectives under mining law.⁹ Unpatented claims were notoriously speculative, often leading to financial losses for investors.

By the late 1960s, the Fazzinos expressed interest in moving onto the land. However, mining laws required them to demonstrate that they were actively mining and producing minerals to maintain the claim's validity. According to WHIS realty assistant C.R. Johnson, "if they decide to move on to the claims, the Superintendent will have to move in and stop any activity and go through the process of evaluating the minerals to see if Mr. and Mrs. Fazzino had an actual claim."¹⁰ This marked the beginning of nearly a decade of disputes and negotiations between WHIS and the Fazzinos over the future of their claims.

In 1971, the Fazzinos sought assistance by writing to a public service column in the *Oakland Tribune*.¹¹ However, their request confused both the newspaper staff and the NPS. After Doug Eaton of the *Oakland Tribune* contacted the NPS, it became clear that the Fazzinos were seeking advice on how to recover their investment in the

⁷ Bureau of Land Management (BLM), "About Mining and Minerals," accessed November 2024, <https://www.blm.gov/programs/energy-and-minerals/mining-and-minerals/about>.

⁸ Lense, "Mineral Report for Placer and Quartz Mining Claims Located in the Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, California," p. 4.

⁹ Letter from Theodore Owings (Acting Director Western Region) to Doug Eaton (Oakland Tribune), March 23, 1971, folder "L3020 Fazzino WM Fuzzy 1 and 2," box HQ11, WHIS-AF.

¹⁰ Memorandum, CR Johnson to File, May 29, 1969, folder "L3020 Fazzino WM Fuzzy 1 and 2," box HQ11, WHIS-AF.

¹¹ Letter from Doug Eaton (Oakland Tribune) to Western Regional Director US Department of the Interior, March 4, 1971, folder "L3020 Fazzino WM Fuzzy 1 and 2," box HQ11, WHIS-AF.

Fuzzy Claims—specifically from the government.¹² In response, Joseph C. Rumberg Jr., Director of the NPS Western Regional Office, explained: “Unfortunately more than a few have made investments in ‘claims’ that can never be validated, and therefore are valueless.”¹³ The government, he clarified, would not be able to reimburse their losses.

Superintendent Leon J. Mitchell’s investigation into the claims revealed that the Fazzinos were likely victims of fraudulent or misrepresented claims sold by the Towell Brothers, prospectors who had “sold worthless and perhaps even nonexistent claims to those who believe either that they have an inside opportunity for a legitimate mining venture or an opportunity to obtain land for other uses such as cabin sites.”¹⁴

In 1973, the Fazzinos approached Mitchell again, asking if they could sell their claim to a friend who intended to use it as a “recreational home site” upon their retirement and departure from California.¹⁵ Mitchell explained that they could not sell the claim for non-mining purposes unless they first proved its validity through a mineral investigation.¹⁶ By the end of the conversation, Mitchell observed that the Fazzinos appeared resigned to losing their investment rather than pursuing the mineral examination and subsequent sale.¹⁷

In 1976, Public Law 94-429 required the recordation of all unpatented claims on NPS lands. Under the new law, WHIS requested that the Fazzinos record the Fuzzy Claims. However, the Fazzinos failed to do so within the required time. As a result, the NPS sought a determination from the BLM to declare the claims null and void.¹⁸ The Regional Office urged Superintendent Ray Foust to contact the Fazzinos, requesting any information they might have about the claims to facilitate their evaluation for validity.¹⁹ In 1979, Foust informed the Fazzinos that the matter would be referred to the BLM, which would either declare the claims null and void or request additional information and schedule a validity examination.²⁰ Within a month, the BLM determined that the claims were null and void.²¹

The Fuzzy Claims episode signaled a shift in WHIS’s priorities from accommodating speculative mining ventures to enforcing stricter oversight and adhering to evolving federal land-use policies. Cases like this not only tested the park’s administrative capacity but also reinforced its role in transitioning the landscape from extractive use to conservation-focused management, setting a precedent for future interactions with claim holders. Similar challenges arose with the Oris Claims, where questions of legitimacy and land use once again brought WHIS into conflict with mining claimants.

¹² Letter from Joseph C. Rumberg (Director, Western Region NPS) to Doug Eaton (Oakland Tribune), March 10, 1971, folder “L3020 Fazzino WM Fuzzy 1 and 2,” box HQ11, WHIS-AF.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Letter from Leon J. Mitchell to Director, Western Region, “Public Inquiry-Mr. Doug Eaton, Oakland Tribune,” March 10, 1971, folder “L3020 Fazzino WM Fuzzy 1 and 2,” box HQ11, WHIS-AF.

¹⁵ Memorandum, Leon J. Mitchell to File, “Mineral Claims,” April 9, 1973, folder “L3020 Fazzino WM Fuzzy 1 and 2,” box HQ11, WHIS-AF.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Letter from Ralph G. Mihan (Field Solicitor, US Department of The Interior, San Francisco Field Office,) to State Director, BLM, September 26, 1979, folder “L3020 Fazzino WM Fuzzy 1 and 2,” box HQ11, WHIS-AF.

¹⁹ Letter from Acting Regional Director to Superintendent Whiskeytown, “Unpatented mining claims- The Fuzzy No 1 and The Fuzzy No 2,” September 12, 1979, folder “L3020 Fazzino WM Fuzzy 1 and 2,” box HQ11, WHIS-AF.

²⁰ Letter from Ray Foust to William Fazzino, September 20, 1979, folder “L3020 Fazzino WM Fuzzy 1 and 2,” box HQ11, WHIS-AF.

²¹ BLM, “Decision: ‘The Fuzzy’ No 1 Placer Mine Claim and The Fuzzy No 2 Placer Mine Claim,” October 23, 1979, folder “L3020 Fazzino WM Fuzzy 1 and 2,” box HQ11, WHIS-AF.

In the early 1970s, the NPS pursued legal action against a group of mining claim holders within WHIS. The claimants, the LeRoy and Hoyer families, held two claims: the Oris #4 Claim, and the Oris #5 Claim. In 1973, the BLM filed a formal complaint against the claimants, and the NPS requested a court proceeding to address the claims' legitimacy. According to court documents, the complaint alleged:

The land embraced within the ORIS #4 and ORIS #5 Lode Mining Claims was not mineral in character, and that there were not disclosed within the boundaries of the mining claims, minerals of a variety subject to the mining laws sufficient in quantity, quality, and value to constitute a discovery.²²

Following legal proceedings, the charges against the Oris #4 Claim were dropped, and the LeRoy and Hoyer families agreed to file relinquishments for the Oris #5 Claim.²³ The case was ultimately dismissed by the court.

Cases like the Oris and Fuzzy Claims became less frequent after the mid-1970s, following significant legislative reform. In 1976, Congress passed Public Law 94-429, which established stricter regulations for mining activities within National Park System units and repealed the application of traditional mining laws to these areas.²⁴ NPS Acting Director John E. Cook issued a directive requiring: "All unpatented mining claims which lie within the boundaries of units of the National Park System shall be recorded with the Superintendent of the Unit in which they are located on or before September 28, 1977."²⁵ The law aimed to inventory all unpatented claims on Department of the Interior (DOI) land and take steps to either manage or remove invalid or abandoned claims.

At WHIS, this policy prompted an immediate effort to contact prospectors holding unpatented claims without legal title. Claimants were asked to be present—or send a representative—at their claims for assessment.²⁶ However, WHIS, along with four other NPS units in the region, did not complete its claim assessments within the first year.²⁷ The Regional Office instructed superintendents to reach out to claim holders for any documentation of recordation, which would then be forwarded to the BLM for a determination of validity.²⁸ Ultimately, only one claim within WHIS, the North Star Mine's lode mining claim north of Whiskeytown Lake near Grizzly Gulch, achieved satisfactory recordation

²² US Department of the Interior (DOI) Office of Hearings and Appeals, "Order of Dismissal: Contest CA-715, United States vs. Paul R. Hoyer, Eleanor P. Hoyer: Elden L. LeRoy and Dorothy LeRoy," April 4, 1974, folder "L3023 Paul Hoyer and Elden LeRoy Oris 4 and Oris 5 (1 of 4)," box HQ11, WHIS-AF.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ 94th Congress, "Public Law 94—429," September 28, 1976, p. 1, accessed November 2024, <https://www.congress.gov/94/statute/STATUTE-90/STATUTE-90-Pg1342.pdf>.

²⁵ John E Cook, "Notice to Claimants of Mining Claims which lie within the Boundaries of Units of the National Park System," October 13, 1976, folder "L3023 Paul Hoyer and Elden LeRoy Oris 4 and Oris 5 (1 of 4)," box HQ11, WHIS-AF.

²⁶ Letter from L.S. Zetner (Chief, Division of Mining and Minerals, Western Region) to Elden LeRoy, August 4, 1978, folder "L3023 Paul Hoyer and Elden LeRoy Oris 4 and Oris 5 (1 of 4)," box HQ11, WHIS-AF.

²⁷ Letter from Regional Director, Western Region to Superintendents, Death Valley, Organ Pipe, Lake Mead, Whiskeytown, and Joshua Tree, "Incomplete Mining Recordation on Units of the National Park Service," November 25, 1977, folder "L3023 Paul Hoyer and Elden LeRoy Oris 4 and Oris 5 (1 of 4)," box HQ11, WHIS-AF.

²⁸ Ibid.

under Mining the Park Act (PL 94-429).²⁹ By the late 1970s, attention shifted from determining claim validity to establishing clearer internal management frameworks for mining-related activities within the park.

Developing Internal Plans

Gold prices surged in the late 1970s and early 1980s, leading to heightened interest in recreational gold panning at WHIS.³⁰ In response, Superintendent Foust restated park policy, limiting gold panning to non-mechanical, historically accurate tools. Foust explained that “first and foremost, gold panning is strictly for recreational purposes,” and that commercial gold removal was not permitted.³¹ He noted that upon his arrival in 1978, visitors had been removing gold on a commercial basis using various means, a practice he deemed inappropriate because it prioritized commercial benefit over recreational enjoyment.³² Federal policy would soon align with these local regulations, as a 1983 federal regulation prohibited “rockhounding and gold panning in recreational units such as Lake Mead and Whiskeytown NRA,” citing damage to watersheds and creek beds as a primary concern.³³

Mining within WHIS raised management concerns that extended well beyond recreational gold panning, particularly where former extraction sites created safety and environmental hazards. The Crystal Creek Quarry pile, for example, was closed to visitors after live blasting caps were discovered. Roads and trails created by miners also posed ongoing threats to watershed stability (see Chapter 4.2: Watershed Health).³⁴

Meanwhile, specific claims continued to create controversy. In 1983, prospector Steve Mayberry applied for a claim to operate a 6-to-8-inch suction dredge in Clear Creek. This application prompted internal review among WHIS staff, the regional office, and the BLM regarding permissible mining methods within the park.³⁵ Ultimately, Mayberry’s request was denied on several grounds.³⁶ Federal regulations under 43 CFR 3566.2-2(b) prohibited mineral leasing on lands within

²⁹ C. Keith Miller and Luther S. Clemmer, *Mineral Resources Inventory: Whiskeytown Unit, Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area, Shasta County California*, May 31, 1984, p. 8, folder “1984_Minerals_Resource_Inventory,” (NARA citation 1A1 box 1, series “Land Use, Mining and Minerals”), WHIS-DF; WHIS, *Environmental Assessment Amendment to the 1976 Master Plan*, August 1988, pp. 36, 40, 47, 51, subfolder “ADMIN_PLANS,” subfolder “Not_Accessioned,” folder “Administrative_History,” WHIS-DF; Anna Cox Toogood, *Historic Resource Study: Whiskeytown National Recreation Area*, NPS, October 1978, pp. 60, 108, subfolder “1978,” folder “1970-1979,” WHIS-DF.

³⁰ Michael G. Martin, “The Changing Gold Market, 1979-1980,” *Finance and Development*, December 1980, November 2024, <https://www.elibrary.imf.org/view/journals/022/0017/004/article-A011-en.xml?ArticleTabs=fulltext>.

³¹ Memo, Ray Foust to All Employees, “Recreational Gold Panning,” October 29, 1981, folder “A5639 Instructions and Orders Whiskeytown 1978-1999 (3 of 3),” box HQ5, WHIS-AF.

³² Letter from Superintendent, Whiskeytown, to Regional Director, Western Region, folder “Position on Mineral Leasing,” September 8, 1983, “L3023 Mayberry-Jennings_1 of 2,” box HQ11, WHIS-AF.

³³ US DOI, NPS, Denver Service Center, *Environmental Assessment: Gold Panning Whiskeytown/Shasta/Trinity, Whiskeytown National Recreation Area*, July 1987, p. 1, subfolder “ADMIN_PLANS,” subfolder “Not_Accessioned,” folder “Administrative_History,” WHIS-DF.

³⁴ Ray Foust, “Superintendent’s Annual Report, 1987,” 1989, p. 5, folder “A2621 Reports Superintendents,” box HQ6, WHIS-AF; and Glendee Ane Osborne (WHIS cultural resources manager), personal communication with authors, comment matrices draft manuscript, July 2024 and March 2026. Osborne stated that “the Crystal Creek Quarry pile is not the result of historic mining. It is the result of the BOR digging out a relief channel for the Trinity River flumes that bring water from the Trinity River system through the mountain to the Carr Powerhouse. This pile was constructed in the 1960s.” See also report on subsequent work completed by the park, 2010–2012.

³⁵ Letter from Superintendent, Whiskeytown to Regional Director, Western Region, “Significant Events Report,” March 13, 1984, folder “L3023 Mayberry-Jennings_1 of 2,” box HQ11, WHIS-AF.

³⁶ Ibid.

one mile of Whiskeytown Lake or areas designated for high-density recreation, general outdoor recreation, or outstanding natural or historic value.³⁷ The proposed dredging site near the National Environmental Education Development (NEED) Camp and Paige Bar area, classified as high-recreation density, fell within these restricted zones.³⁸

During a meeting with WHIS leadership in August 1983, Mayberry was presented with the applicable laws and policies, including WHIS's Master Plan, Public Law 89-336 (WHIS's Establishing Act), and federal regulations governing mining claims.³⁹ While acknowledging Mayberry's efforts to select remote areas that would minimize disturbance, WHIS staff and the Associate Regional Director upheld the denial, concluding that approving dredging would require changes to existing regulations.⁴⁰ Mayberry initially accepted this decision but later contested it, arguing that the denial contradicted the congressional intent of WHIS's enabling legislation, which he claimed required NPS and BLM coordination on mineral management.⁴¹ After review, the DOI Board of Land Appeals affirmed the denial.⁴²

In the mid-1980s, WHIS was moving from case-by-case oversight of mining activity toward a more formalized, policy-driven approach to mineral management. A 1984 NPS mineral resource inventory, prepared by NPS mining engineers, provided a comprehensive assessment of mining activity within the park, detailing applicable regulations, active claims, and the potential for metallic, nonmetallic, and energy resources.⁴³ During this period, Superintendent Foust also emphasized the park's increasing efforts to balance resource preservation with existing land-use practices.⁴⁴ In 1987, a further regulation defining and allowing recreational gold panning within WHIS boundaries was approved for publication in the *Federal Register* and finalized the following year.⁴⁵ This shift continued with the 1988 Environmental Assessment: Amendment to the 1976 Master Plan, which reevaluated mineral leasing policies and incorporated mineral management into broader land-use planning through revised management zoning.⁴⁶ At that point, the North Star Lode remained the only claim within WHIS deemed valid.

³⁷ US DOI, Office of Hearings and Appeals Interior Board of Land Appeals, "IBLA 38-636, 83-839," September 12, 1984, p. 2, "L3023 Mayberry-Jennings_1 of 2," folder box HQ11, WHIS-AF.

³⁸ Letter from Ray Foust to Joan B. Russell (Chief, Leasable Minerals Section), September 7, 1983, folder "L3023 Mayberry-Jennings_1 of 2," box HQ11, WHIS-AF.

³⁹ Letter from District Manager, Ukiah (BLM) and Deputy State Director, Operations, to State Director, August 24, 1983, "Report of Meeting with Steve Mayberry and the National Park Service at Whiskeytown National Recreation Area," August 24, 1983, folder "L3023 Mayberry-Jennings_1 of 2," box HQ11, WHIS-AF.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Letter from Associate Regional Director, Operations, Western Region, to Regional Director, Western Region, "Meeting with BLM, Western Mining Council and Lease Applicant on Whiskeytown Leasing Regulations," August 8, 1983, folder "L3023 Mayberry-Jennings_2 of 2," box HQ11, WHIS-AF; and US Department of the Interior, Office of Hearings and Appeals Interior Board of Land Appeals, "IBLA 38-636, 83-839," September 12, 1984, p. 3, folder "L3023 Mayberry-Jennings_1 of 2," box HQ11, WHIS-AF.

⁴² US DOI, Office of Hearings and Appeals Interior Board of Land Appeals, "IBLA 38-636, 83-839," September 12, 1984, p. 5, folder "L3023 Mayberry-Jennings_1 of 2," box HQ11, WHIS-AF.

⁴³ Miller and Clemmer, *Mineral Resources Inventory: Whiskeytown Unit, Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area, Shasta County California*, 1984, p. 3.

⁴⁴ Ray Foust, "Superintendent's Annual Report, 1986," 1987, p. 4, folder "A2621 Reports Superintendents," box HQ6, WHIS-AF.

⁴⁵ Ray Foust, "Superintendent's Annual Report, 1987," p. 4. A regulation on gold panning was approved for publication in the *Federal Record* 1987 and finalized the next year, defining and allowing for recreational gold panning within the unit's boundaries.

⁴⁶ NPS, *Environmental Assessment: Amendment to the 1976 Master Plan, Whiskeytown Unit, Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area, California*, August 1988, p. 4, and *passim*, folder "1984_Minerals_Resource_Inventory," (NARA citation code 1.A.1, box 1, series "Land Use, Mining and Minerals"), WHIS-DF. Although planning documents referenced the potential development of a Minerals Management Plan, the 1988 EA notes that "there is currently no approved minerals management plan" and concludes that a separate plan would not be required given the limited acreage open to leasing (p. 4).

By 1989, the amendments to the 1976 Master Plan were finalized, significantly reducing the area available for mineral leasing. The amendment designated only 1,575 acres—approximately 4 percent of WHIS—for leasing, down from the previous 25,430 acres, or 60 percent of the park. Peer agencies expressed differing views on this reduction; while the BLM advocated for leasing alternatives, the USBR favored a complete closure to protect water quality.⁴⁷

As the decade ended, WHIS's mining policy had shifted from questions of claim validity to questions of resource management. With active operations largely absent, attention turned to rehabilitating mine-disturbed areas and evaluating abandoned mines as potential cultural resources—priorities that continued to shape mine management into the 1990s.

Abandoned Mine Land Management

In 1990, the NPS Mining and Minerals Branch conducted a validity examination of the North Star Quartz Lode Mining Claim and recommended that the Regional Office work with the BLM to declare it “null and void.”⁴⁸ By this point, WHIS's focus had shifted decisively from active claim oversight to AML management.

In 1992, the NPS enacted the Western Regional Directive WR-085 for the management AMLs. This directive required western parks to establish AML programs and prioritize the inventory and assessment of abandoned mine sites.⁴⁹ In response, WHIS identified 166 abandoned mine sites within its boundaries and began efforts to assess and remediate these areas.⁵⁰

As part of the AML initiative, the NPS Mining and Minerals Branch worked with WHIS to explore reclamation strategies for three specific former mining operations: the North Star Quartz Mine, Clear Creek Dredge Tailings, and Crystal Creek Quarry. For the North Star Quartz Mine, three remediation alternatives were proposed:

Alternative 1: Restore the site to its original contours, focusing on road and stream channels, and reseed the area with native grasses and straw mulch to reduce erosion.

Alternative 2: Install cross-road drains to mitigate erosion.

Alternative 3: Take no action.⁵¹

⁴⁷ Whiskeytown Unit, “Finding of No Significant Impact, Amendment to the 1976 Master Plan,” March 1989, subfolder “ADMIN_PLANS,” subfolder “Not_Accessioned,” folder “Administrative_History,” WHIS DF.

⁴⁸ Whiskeytown Unit, “Addendum to Land Protection Plan for Whiskeytown Unit, Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area,” February 6, 1991, p. 1, subfolder “ADMIN_PLANS,” subfolder “Not_Accessioned,” folder “Administrative_History,” WHIS DF.

⁴⁹ NPS, Mining and Minerals Branch-Land Resource Division- WASO, “Monthly Report,” June 1993, p. 6, accessed November 2024, <http://npshistory.com/publications/mines/ann-rpt/jun-1993.pdf>.

⁵⁰ WHIS, Abandoned Mines Asset Details v.2_20220602 spreadsheet, subfolder “LOCATIONS-ASSETS,” folder “FACILITIES,” WHIS-DF.

⁵¹ David L Steensen, “Reclamation Alternatives for North Star, Clear Creek, and Crystal Creek Whiskeytown Unit, Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area, Shasta County California,” Mining and Minerals Branch, Land Resources Division, National Park Service, 1992, pp. 8, 16 18, subfolder “ADMIN_PLANS,” subfolder “Not_Accessioned,” folder “Administrative_History,” WHIS-DF.

The preferred plan included measures such as closing two adits and shafts to prevent vandalism and allow for drainage, as well as camouflaging the openings to obscure their access points. At the Clear Creek Dredge Tailings site, the Mining and Minerals Branch wanted to reduce the visual impact of the tailings and improve natural vegetation and hydraulic processes of Clear Creek where the tailings impacted them.⁵² Finally NPS called for reworking the Crystal Creek Quarry site's drainage structure to stabilize it to prevent mass-scale erosion in a worst case scenario and to eventually seed with native grasses or plant trees.⁵³

While many mining sites were rehabilitated for natural resource purposes in the 1990s, others were evaluated for their historical significance. In 1997, WHIS contracted Applied Earthworks of Sacramento to assess the eligibility of eighteen abandoned mines for the NRHP. Five mines were found eligible: Mount Shasta Mine, Oro Fino/Gentle Annie Mine, Monitor Mine, Desmond Mine, and Ganim Mine.⁵⁴ Although these reports covered only a portion of WHIS's abandoned mines, they supported two parallel work streams: remediation and evaluation for historic significance.

By 1999, no active mineral leases remained within WHIS, although a small portion of the park was still technically available for mineral leasing.⁵⁵ WHIS staff focused their efforts on mitigating the environmental impacts of mining and identifying potential historic sites, and noted that staffing and funding constraints limited treatment and interpretation across all sites. Instead, the park sought to develop a strategy for evaluating, classifying, and prioritizing treatment of these sites.⁵⁶

Visitor Safety and Expanded Mine Closures

In the 2000s, WHIS increased attention to visitor safety at abandoned mine sites, particularly after the 2008 Motion Fire exposed features including hidden shafts, adits, and other structures.⁵⁷ Over the next two years, WHIS conducted an intensive inventory of these features and developed plans to close them for public safety.⁵⁸ By 2010, funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act allowed WHIS to close fourteen mines, reducing identified safety hazards.⁵⁹

⁵² Ibid. p. 22.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 25.

⁵⁴ Blossom Hamusek-McGann, Sandra S. Flint, Melinda Peak, and Barry A Price, "Evaluation of 18 Historic Mines in the Whiskeytown Unit," May 1999, p. 7.10, folder "WHIS Historic Mines Study May 1999," WHIS-DF.

⁵⁵ WHIS, *General Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement*, NPS, Pacific West Region, July 1999, p. 2, subfolder "ADMIN_PLANS," subfolder "Not_Accessioned," folder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 4.

⁵⁷ WHIS, "Whiskeytown Burned Area Emergency Stabilization Plan, Motion Fire, Mine Safety," n.d., subfolder "Rich," subfolder "Motion Fire BAER Plan," subfolder "Motion Fire BAER," subfolder "BAER," subfolder "BAER & Rehab," subfolder "CA-WNP-4715Whiskeytown Complex," folder "Fire 2008," WHIS-DF.

⁵⁸ Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, "Whiskeytown Burned Area Emergency Stabilization Plan, Motion Fire, Mine Safety," n.d., subfolder "Rich," subfolder "Motion Fire BAER Plan," subfolder "Motion Fire BAER," subfolder "BAER," subfolder "BAER & Rehab," subfolder "CA-WNP-4715Whiskeytown Complex," folder "Fire 2008," WHIS-DF.

⁵⁹ James Milestone, "Annual Report 2010: Whiskeytown National Recreation Area," 2011, p. 13, subfolder "Superintendents_Annual_Report," subfolder "ADMIN_PLANS," subfolder "Not_Accessioned," folder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF.

In 2016, Superintendent James Milestone addressed ongoing safety concerns by issuing a directive to Nate Fairchild, Science Coordinator of the Whiskeytown Environmental School (WES) program, to cease student tours at the Salt Creek Mine. Milestone cited a combination of serious risks—such as structural instability and poisonous gases—alongside natural hazards like rattlesnakes and potential unexploded ordnance, as justification for ceasing student tours. He recommended safer alternative mine tours in the region, aligning with WHIS’s commitment to visitor safety and responsible mine management.⁶⁰

Conclusion

WHIS’s relationship to mining illustrates how a national recreation area built around water-based visitation also inherited—and then had to manage—the durable afterlife of extractive land uses. Across the second half of the twentieth century, the park’s responsibilities shifted from monitoring contemporary prospecting activity and evaluating claim legitimacy to addressing the physical and administrative legacies of AMLs. That evolution tracked changes in federal land policy and in the park’s own capacity: as new mining-related reporting and recordation requirements emerged in the 1970s, WHIS staff devoted substantial effort to inventories, administrative contests over the validity of mining claims, and interagency coordination with the BLM and the courts. Disputes such as the Fuzzy and Oris cases reveal the practical work of translating federal mining law into on-the-ground management, particularly when claimants sought residential or recreational uses that mining statutes did not allow.

By the 1980s, WHIS’s mining-related work was increasingly framed as resource management rather than claim adjudication. Superintendent-level policy clarifications on recreational gold panning, combined with the development of the MMP and subsequent reductions in land available for mineral leasing, signaled a deliberate narrowing of mining’s footprint within the recreation area. In administrative terms, the park moved from asking whether claims were valid to determining where mining-related activity could occur at all—and under what conditions—given recreation density, watershed concerns, and protection priorities.

The 1990s and 2000s then expanded the center of gravity again, from policy and planning to treatment and risk reduction. Western Regional directives for AML programs pushed WHIS toward systematic inventory, prioritization, and remediation. All mine sites were incorporated into cultural resource compliance workflows, including evaluation under Section 106 and consideration of NRHP eligibility or project effects. At the same time, management addressed immediate concerns such as public safety, erosion, and watershed impacts. Because WHIS could not rehabilitate, preserve, or interpret every site to the same degree, mine management often operated as a form of prioritization—ranking hazards and impacts, selecting feasible treatments, and revisiting priorities as conditions changed, while maintaining sites through a combination of active and passive preservation strategies.

⁶⁰ Letter from James Milestone to Nate Fairchild, June 24, 2016, subfolder “Official Letters,” subfolder “Press Official Docs,” subfolder “2021097,” folder “FACILITIES,” WHIS-DF.

Fire and exposure events made that work more urgent. As wildfires revealed or re-exposed shafts and adits, WHIS's mine management increasingly intersected with visitor safety, driving closures and hazard mitigation projects supported by episodic funding. Superintendent Milestone's decision to halt student tours at Salt Creek Mine was shaped by educational use, safety considerations, and liability concerns, particularly where structural instability and atmospheric hazards were possible. Over time, WHIS's mining story became less about renewed extraction and more about the continuing administrative obligation to inventory, assess, and manage a dispersed set of legacy features—features that remained vulnerable to disturbance, constrained by limited resources, and periodically redefined by changing policy, funding, and fire-driven landscape change.

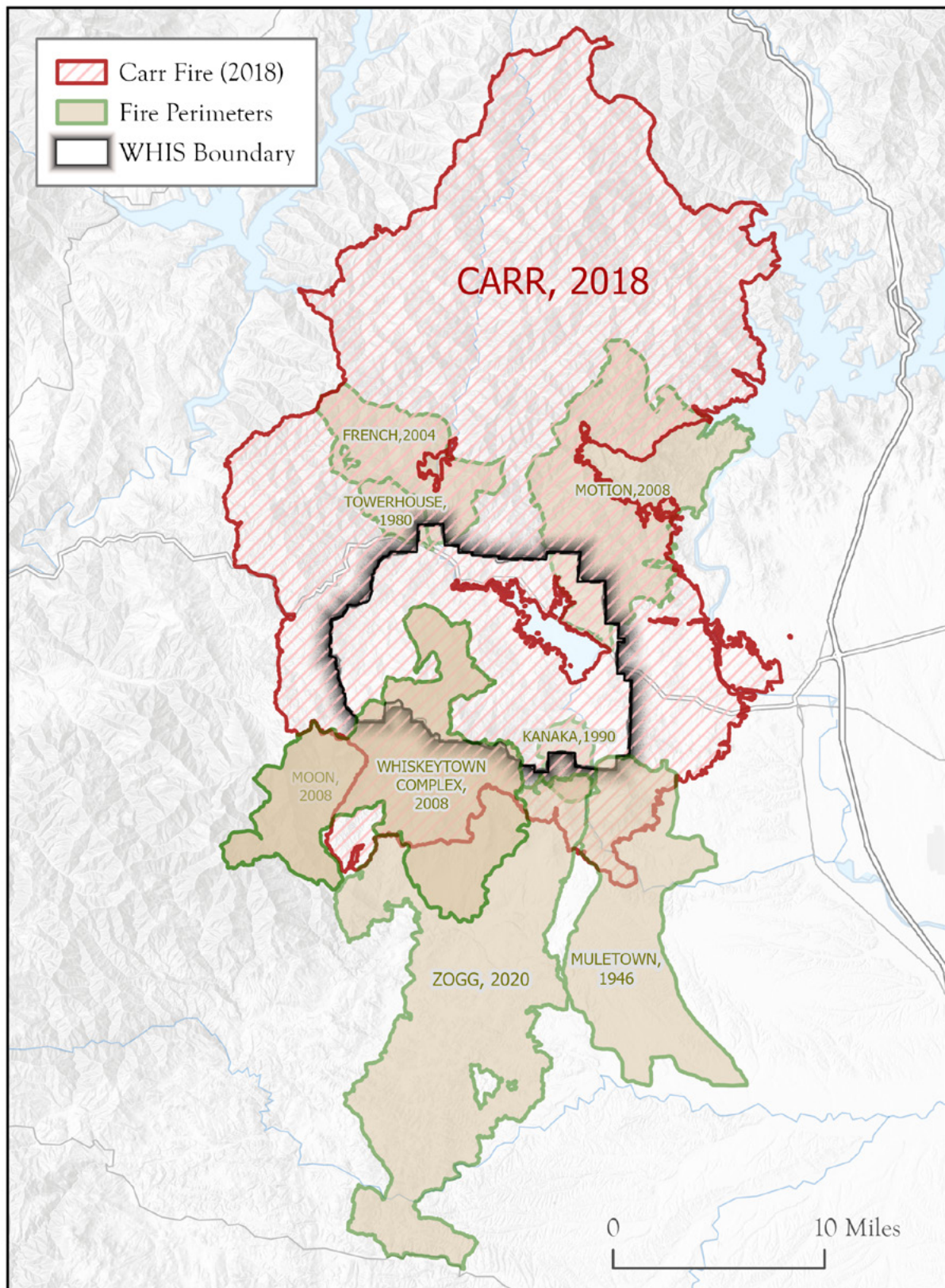


Figure 15. Map of WHIS fire history, ca. 1980–2020.
Source: Map by Sophia Linn, CSU Geospatial Centroid, 2026.

CHAPTER 4.4: FIRE MANAGEMENT AND ADAPTATION

Whiskeytown National Recreation Area (WHIS) is characterized by fire-adapted vegetation communities—including chaparral, knobcone pine, mixed oak woodlands, and scattered ponderosa pine—that have historically supported recurring wildfire as an ecological process.¹ At the same time, the park’s location along the Highway 299 corridor and within a wildland–urban interface has made fire a persistent operational risk to life, infrastructure, and adjacent communities. Since the unit’s establishment, WHIS fire management has therefore balanced ecosystem function, public safety, and interagency response capacity.

Over the administrative record, WHIS’s fire program evolved in step with federal policy shifts: from suppression-dominant approaches inherited from early twentieth-century public-land fire doctrine, to increasing use of prescribed fire and fuels treatment, to a more integrated framework shaped by formal fire management plans, to national-level reforms (including the National Fire Plan) and changing expectations following major fire events. Locally, that evolution was driven as much by episodic incidents as by planning cycles—among them the regional “Fire Siege” of 1987, the Kanaka Fire (1990), the French Fire (2004), the 2008 lightning-sparked Whiskeytown Complex fire, and the Carr Fire (2018).

This chapter traces that trajectory across federal policy shifts, WHIS’s evolving local program (suppression, prescribed fire, and fuels work), and the operational lessons of major incidents—especially the French Fire, the Whiskeytown Complex, and the Carr Fire—including recovery and post-fire hazards. These histories frame fire management at WHIS as a long-term adaptation challenge—one that increasingly required sustained planning, staffing and qualification, and coordinated interagency action rather than episodic suppression alone.

Federal Fire Policy Context

In the United States, the “suppression era” of fire management began in 1905 with the establishment of the US Forest Service (USFS), then known as the Forest Reserve. The agency advanced a “systematic” fire protection strategy centered on rapid suppression, supported by formal planning and administrative coordination.² The catastrophic fires of 1910 in the Northern Rockies solidified the USFS’s role as the primary firefighting authority on public lands and reinforced suppression and prevention as its central objectives.³ Shortly thereafter, the newly established National

¹ Author Unknown, “Fire Regimes of Whiskeytown,” n.d., p. 1, subfolder “Motion_Fire-Whiskeytown_Complex,” folder “FIRE_HISTORY,” WHIS-DF.

² Stephen Pyne, “Fire Policy and Fire Research in the US Forest Service,” *Journal of Forest History*, Vol. 25, No. 2, (April 1981): p. 68.

³ Forest History Society, “US Forest Service Fire Suppression,” accessed November 2024, <https://foresthstory.org/research-explore/us-forest-service-history/policy-and-law/fire-u-s-forest-service/u-s-forest-service-fire-suppression/>.

Park Service (NPS) adopted a similar approach, prohibiting and suppressing all fires within park boundaries—a stance reflected in early NPS policy following the NPS Organic Act of 1916.⁴ In 1935, the USFS formalized its commitment to aggressive suppression through the “10 a.m. policy,” which aimed to control all fires by 10 a.m. the day after their discovery. Over subsequent decades, both agencies modified their fire management strategies in response to major fire events, evolving scientific understanding, and shifting public expectations.⁵

For WHIS, these early fire policies were foundational but created implementation challenges due to the park’s unique topography and vegetation. Suppression-focused strategies often overlooked the ecological role of fire in chaparral and pine ecosystems, which depend on periodic burns for regeneration. Misalignment between national policies and local conditions created long-term fuel build-ups that would exacerbate fire intensity in later decades.

The NPS revised its fire policy in 1955 following the McGee Fire near Kings Canyon National Park in California, which burned over 10,000 acres within hours and threatened giant sequoias. The incident spurred the agency to conduct deeper research into fire regimes and post-fire forest regeneration.⁶ In the 1960s, the NPS began permitting lightning-caused fires to “burn under specified conditions” in Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks. Similar programs were introduced in seven additional parks between 1968 and 1972. Over the following decade, twenty-six more parks adopted elements of the prescribed fire program.⁷

The USFS’s 10 am policy remained in effect for over three decades until it was revised in the 1970s. In 1971, the USFS adopted a policy allowing naturally occurring fires caused by lightning to burn in designated wilderness areas under controlled conditions. Additionally, the 10 am policy was replaced by the “10 Acre Policy,” which aimed to contain all fires to ten acres or less, regardless of fuel type or resources at risk.⁸ In 1978, the USFS revised its fire policy to adopt a de facto “fire by prescription” approach. Fires were classified as either wildfires, which required suppression, or prescribed (management) fires, which were allowed to burn under controlled conditions.⁹

In the late 1980s, the NPS re-evaluated its fire management strategy, moving away from its 1968 suppression policy to permit “a more natural role for fire in park ecosystems,” including allowing lightning-caused fires to burn within park boundaries.¹⁰ Similarly, federal agencies throughout the 1970s maintained a policy of reintroducing fire to landscapes.¹¹ However, this approach shifted in 1988 when the NPS recorded 1,333 wildfires—more than in any year since 1981. Most notably, the 1988 Yellowstone Fires burned more acreage in a single event than the total NPS acreage burned in previous years combined.¹²

⁴ Bruce M Kilgore, “Wildland Fire History—The History of National Park Service Fire Policy,” National Park Service, April, 1989, no page numbers, accessed November 2024, <https://www.nps.gov/articles/the-history-of-national-park-service-fire-policy.htm>.

⁵ Kilgore, “Wildland Fire History—The History of National Park Service Fire Policy.”

⁶ Yosemite Conservancy, “Fighting Fire with Fire,” n.d., accessed November 2024, <https://yosemite.org/fighting-fire-with-fire/>; and Kilgore, “Wildland Fire History—The History of National Park Service Fire Policy.”

⁷ Kilgore, “Wildland Fire History—The History of National Park Service Fire Policy.”

⁸ Pyne, “Fire Policy and Fire Research in the US Forest Service,” p. 76.

⁹ Ibid., p. 77.

¹⁰ Kilgore, “Wildland Fire History—The History of National Park Service Fire Policy.”

¹¹ Stephen J. Pyne, *America’s Fires: Management on Wildlands and Forest*, (Durham, NC: Forest History Society: 1997), p. 23.

¹² Judi Zuckert, “National Park Service Wildland Fire Report 1988,” National Park Service Branch of Fire Management, Boise, Idaho, February 1988, accessed November 2024, <http://npshistory.com/publications/fire/wildland-fire-reports/1988.pdf>.

In response to the catastrophic fires of 1988, the NPS began to refine its fire management strategies to integrate ecological benefits while addressing the growing social and economic risks of wildfires.¹³ These strategies did not unfold without difficulty. In 2000, for example, a prescribed burn at Bandelier National Monument escaped control and became the Cerro Grande Fire. The fire destroyed structures in Los Alamos, New Mexico, and prompted widespread public and political scrutiny of the agency.¹⁴ As Superintendent James Milestone noted in the 2000 Annual Report, the Cerro Grande Fire “effectively shut down the NPS prescribed fire program nationally.”¹⁵ In addition to halting or delaying the season’s prescribed burns across NPS lands—including burns planned for WHIS—the Cerro Grande Fire contributed to the Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior to create a National Fire Plan (NFP) in 2000. The NFP focused on interagency collaboration to “reduce damage caused by wildland fires, restore and maintain ecosystem health, and deliver cost-effective programs to the public.”¹⁶ Echoing this national shift, WHIS also adopted a proactive approach to manage its lands in the face of worsening wildfires.

1960s–Early 1970s: Initial Coordination and Small Incidents

Since its founding, WHIS has contended with a mix of naturally occurring and human-caused wildfires. While smaller incidents were common in the park’s early years, major fires began to shape WHIS’s fire management strategies by the 1960s. Reliable fire data at WHIS dates to 1969.¹⁷ Between 1969 and 2018, WHIS experienced nearly 200 recorded fires events ranging in size and intensity.¹⁸ Of those, humans have caused 117 fires, 21 were caused by lightning, 36 had unknown causes, and power lines caused 12. According to NPS and California Department of Forestry, “Class C (10-99 acres) wildland fires occurred in the park on an average of every 4.5 years, and a size class F (1000-5000 acres)...occurred on an average of every 13.75 years.”¹⁹ Fire records indicate that the number of documented fire events increased over successive decades within the period under review. WHIS’s evolving approach to wildfire management paralleled national shifts in federal fire policy and practice.²⁰

¹³ Kilgore, “Wildland Fire History—The History of National Park Service Fire Policy.”

¹⁴ National Wildlife Coordinating Group, “Staff Ride to the Cerro Grande Fire,” accessed October 7, 2025, <https://www.nwccg.gov/wfldp/toolbox/staff-ride/library/cerro-grande-fire>.

¹⁵ “Annual Report: 2010,” Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, p. 4, subfolder “Superintendents_Annual_Report,” subfolder “ADMIN_PLANS,” subfolder “Not_Accessioned,” folder “Administrative_History,” WHIS-DF; National Wildlife Coordinating Group, “Staff Ride to the Cerro Grande Fire.”

¹⁶ US Department of the Interior (DOI) and US Forest Service (USFS), “National Fire Plan: FY 2022 Budget Justification,” p. 3-1, accessed October 7, 2025, https://www.fs.usda.gov/database/budgetoffice/NFP_final32601.pdf.

¹⁷ WHIS, *Fire Management Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Statement*, February 2003, p. 63, accessed November 2024, https://pubs.nps.gov/eTIC/WEPO-WI/WHIS_611_03017_0346pg.pdf; and WHIS, “Fire Data” spreadsheet, subfolder “Fire History,” subfolder “Fire History-20200117T013029Z-001,” folder “FIRE_HISTORY,” WHIS-DF.

¹⁸ WHIS, “Fire Data” spreadsheet.

¹⁹ WHIS, *Fire Management Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Statement*, 2003, p. 63.

²⁰ WHIS, “Fire Data” spreadsheet.

WHIS's fire records from its designation into the early 1970s are spotty at best. From 1969 to 1972, WHIS had 16 fires, all under an acre, mostly human caused, in developed areas.²¹ In WHIS's first master plan, fire was noted as a major worry, especially along the southern border of WHIS which contained significantly dry underbrush in old slash piles left over from logging operations.²²

In 1963, the California Division of Forestry, and NPS managed fire in the area that would become WHIS. The California Division of Forestry was responsible for the "area around Whiskeytown Reservoir" and for fires on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land. The NPS had a fire crew in the area that responded to fires on a "first attack" basis and would later be backed up by California Division of Forestry crews.²³

1970s: External Threats and Early Fuel Mitigation

In the early 1970s, two large wildfires burned just outside WHIS's boundaries. In April of 1972, the Old Shasta Fire burned 1,720 acres east of WHIS's boundary.²⁴ The fire prompted an evacuation of 1,500 people from the community of Old Shasta and injured five firefighters.²⁵ Following the Old Shasta Fire, the Lower Springs Road Fire burned 1,400 acres outside the park near Organ Gulch Road in 1973. Both fires showed the threat of large fires on the outside of WHIS that could spread to the inside.

Although the Old Shasta Fires and Lower Springs Road Fire both burned outside WHIS, they helped inform fire management in the 1970s. WHIS leadership worked with California Division of Forestry on fire management and mitigation in WHIS. California Division of Forestry proposed cutting a "100-foot-wide fuel break with fire trails on the southern and western portions of the park boundary to ease the threat of fire coming in or leaving the park."²⁶ It was apparent at this time that the threat of fire was from outside of WHIS, as a majority of fires started within the park had yet to grow past an acre.²⁷ WHIS also wanted to mitigate fuels by thinning vegetation without "denuding" the natural beauty of WHIS.²⁸ These approaches suggest that WHIS prioritized maintaining the aesthetic character of the landscape, even as it began to engage more actively with fire management.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Whiskeytown Unit, "The Land: Narrative, Master Plan Whiskeytown Reservoir Recreation Area Drawings," p. 2, October 1964, Sheet 2 of 4, subfolder "Facilities_Planning_Maps," folder "FACILITIES," WHIS-DF.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ WHIS, "Fire Data" spreadsheet; and WHIS, "Wildland Fire History of Whiskeytown NRA: 1970-1979," Map, n.d., subfolder "Fire History," subfolder "Fire History-20200117T013029Z-001," folder "FIRE_HISTORY," WHIS-DF.

²⁵ No Author, "Town Evacuated in Fire," *The New York Times*, August 13, 1972, accessed November 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/1972/08/13/archives/town-evacuated-in-fire.html>.

²⁶ WHIS, *Final Master Plan*, July 1976, p. 50, subfolder "ADMIN_PLANS," subfolder "Not_Accessioned," folder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF.

²⁷ WHIS, "Fire Data" spreadsheet.

²⁸ WHIS, *Final Master Plan*, 1976, p. 50.

The 1975 Management Consultation Group laid out three recommendations for WHIS's fire management. First, it advised revisiting the agreement with California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) to authorize the use of heavy equipment within the park. Second, it recommended that WHIS staff obtain "red cards" to increase the number of qualified fire personnel. Finally, the group suggested collaborating with the Regional Office to study upgrades for structural fire equipment.²⁹

After the Old Shasta Fire and Lower Springs Fire to the end of the 1970s, WHIS had 46 fires. These fires, as with ones in the 1960s, were mostly less than an acre and human caused.³⁰ This would change in the 1980s as fire activity increased and grew in intensity.

1980s: Drought, Larger Fires, and Prescribed Burning Expansion

WHIS had sixty-eight fires within its boundaries from 1980 to 1989, most of which were human caused.³¹ Drought conditions from the mid-1980s to the end of the decade put tremendous pressure on the unit's fire management efforts. California Water Resource Division considered the drought in that period to be the state's "first extended dry period since the 1920s-1930s, and the closest analog to extended drought conditions under a modern level of development."³²

In 1980, the Tower House Fire burned 2,349 acres along Brunswick Ridge and Yankee Gulch, extending into the northernmost portion of the park.³³ Although most of the acreage burned outside park boundaries, it was the largest fire affecting WHIS lands up to that time. In the years that followed, WHIS expanded its use of prescribed burning; by 1982, the park was conducting fuel-reduction burns in areas such as Grizzly Gulch and South Fork Mountain to establish fuel breaks. These early prescribed burn efforts showed a growing recognition of the need to address accumulated fuel loads through proactive management rather than reactive suppression. By targeting high-risk areas, WHIS not only reduced the immediate threat of wildfires but also set a precedent for integrating fire as a tool for ecosystem health—a shift that would gain even greater urgency following the fire events of the late 1980s. Fire activity increased further in the late 1980s. In 1986 alone, the unit recorded nine fires within recreation area boundaries and responded to three additional incidents nearby. That year also included multiple human-caused ignitions clustered on the north end of the park, which staff treated as suspected arson.³⁴

²⁹ Western Region Ad Hoc Management Consultation Team, "Whiskeytown National Recreation Area Management Consultation Report," November 11-14, 1975, pp. 10-11, folder "1970s", WHIS-DF.

³⁰ WHIS, "Fire Data" spreadsheet.

³¹ Ibid.

³² California Department of Water Resources, "California's Most Significant Droughts: Comparing Historical and Recent Conditions," February 2015, p. 53, accessed November 2024, https://water.ca.gov/-/media/DWR-Website/Web-Pages/What-We-Do/Drought-Mitigation/Files/Publications-And-Reports/CalSigDroughts19_v9_ay11.pdf.

³³ WHIS, "Fire Data" spreadsheet.

³⁴ Ray Foust, "Superintendent's Annual Report, 1986," 1987, p. 5, folder "A2621 Reports Superintendents," box HQ6, WHIS-AF.

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Fire season started early in 1987, with the first of numerous fires at WHIS erupting in May. Crews attempted to mitigate the threat of fire the best they could and relied on help from staff outside the NPS, such as inmates from the Crystal Creek Conservation Camp who completed fire line construction and boundary work.³⁵ WHIS position-management records from the 1980s do not identify dedicated fire staffing at WHIS. By 1987, however, the park had “a new wildfire engine in operation,” and, as early as 1990, WHIS planning documents called for a park Fire Management Officer to properly address the park’s “extensive workload involving wildland fire, prescribed burns, etc.”³⁶

In the 1980s, fires outside WHIS had a greater impact on the park than those within its boundaries. Events such as the 1987 “Siege of Fire” in Northern California and southern Oregon and the 1988 Yellowstone fires, though not burning within WHIS, influenced conditions in the park and shaped fire policy across public land agencies. In the summer of 1987, dry conditions and lightning strikes caused a relentless fire season in California and Oregon, mainly in the Klamath National Forest.³⁷ By October of that year, 775,000 acres burned in Northern California from the Sierra Nevada to the coastal ranges.³⁸ Though outside of WHIS’s boundaries, these fires had an impact on WHIS and foreshadowed the intensity of fire events in the coming decades.

Superintendent Ray Foust sent twenty permanent WHIS staff to help with fire efforts.³⁹ In total, the Fire Siege of 1987 brought out 14,000 fire personnel to battle the blazes from across the country.⁴⁰ The Fire Siege of 1987 killed 11 people, destroyed 40 homes and burned an “estimated value of \$240 million” in timber.⁴¹ Ninety-six percent of the fires in the siege occurred on USFS land.⁴²

WHIS staff were dispatched to help fight large-scale fires across the west in the late 1980s.⁴³ As aforementioned, NPS realigned its fire policy after the large fire events of the 1980s. This new approach to fire coincided with the end of Foust’s superintendency. He enlisted the help of fire crews from other western parks to execute prescribed fires in WHIS.⁴⁴ Foust ordered two controlled burns in 1987, one around the Headquarters area and the other at Grizzly Gulch.⁴⁵ Despite Foust’s efforts to manage through regular prescribed burns, NPS staff identified that WHIS was “sorely in need of prescription burning” and that “monies to perform prescription burning should go a long way toward curing these problems” in 1990.⁴⁶

³⁵ Ray Foust, “Superintendent’s Annual Report, 1987,” 1988, p. 3, folder “A2621 Reports Superintendents,” box HQ6, WHIS-AF. Conservation Camps were joint facilities operated by the California Department of Corrections to house inmates, who also serve on Division of Forestry work crews for fire suppression, prevention, and conservation projects.

³⁶ Judy Bushy, “Fire Siege of 1987 Remembered,” August 28, 2007, accessed November 2024, <https://happycampnews.com/fire-siege-of-1987-remembered/>.

³⁷ Ray Foust, “Superintendent’s Annual Report, 1987,” 1989, p. 4, folder “A2621 Reports Superintendents,” box HQ6, WHIS-AF; and Roy Foust, “Position Management Plan FY 90,” 1990, p. 2, folder “Pos Mgmt Plans_4 of 4,” box HQ 9, WHIS-AF.

³⁸ Byron D. Sher, “Briefing Paper For Hearing On Watershed Rehabilitation and Reforestation Needs on Private And National Forest Land: 1987 Fire Season,” October 23, 1987, p. 1, accessed November 2024, https://digitalcommons.law.ggu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1289&context=caldocs_assembly.

³⁹ Foust, “Superintendent’s Annual Report, 1987,” p. 3.

⁴⁰ Sher, “Briefing Paper For Hearing On Watershed Rehabilitation and Reforestation Needs on Private And National Forest Land: 1987 Fire Season,” p. 1a.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid., p. 2a.

⁴³ Foust, “Superintendent’s Annual Report, 1987,” p. 3; and Ray Foust, “Superintendent’s Annual Report, 1988,” p. 4.

⁴⁴ Foust, “Superintendent’s Annual Report, 1987,” p. 3.

⁴⁵ Whiskeytown Unit, “WHIS 1987 Clearances,” subfolder “1987,” folder “Cultural Resource Reports Privileged,” WHIS-DF.

⁴⁶ Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity-National Recreation Area, *Statement for Management*, National Park Service, January 1990, p. 45, folder “Unorganized Files,” WHIS-DF.

1990s: Increased Fire Activity and Formalized Planning

By the early 1990s, WHIS's fire program was increasingly defined by planning cycles, qualification requirements, and interagency agreements—administrative infrastructure that would prove essential as incident complexity increased. WHIS recorded 171 fires throughout the 1990s.⁴⁷ This represented a substantial increase in overall fire activity in WHIS from the previous decade. Fires were more frequent and larger than in previous decades. Subsequent decades also recorded higher fire frequency and larger incidents. As a response to the devastating fires of the late 1980s, WHIS put together a five-year prescribed burn plan in accordance with Regional Office directives. From 1991 to 1996, WHIS executed twenty-three planned burns ranging from 10 to 300 acres in various areas of WHIS with dense vegetation.⁴⁸ During this period, fire staffing and planning capacity also expanded. Although fire management remained administratively housed within the Resource Management Division through much of the decade, WHIS supported fire operations through a combination of permanent staff, seasonal crews, and specialized fire positions, including a Fire Management Officer (added in 1996), engine crew personnel, and prescribed fire staff shared with other northern California parks.

In 1990, a lightning strike ignited the Kanaka Fire, which burned 3,070 acres within WHIS.⁴⁹ At the time, it was the largest fire recorded within the park's boundaries and was described by planners as an “infrequent, large, unwanted fire event.”⁵⁰ Beyond the immediate destruction, the fire underscored the substantial financial costs and logistical complexities associated with managing large-scale wildfire incidents.⁵¹

In the early 1990s, WHIS produced its first Fire Management Plan (FMP). This came after the Western Regional Office issued a policy for individual park fire units to review their fire management plans every January.⁵² WHIS's 1993 plan served to “supplement the fire management sections” of the natural resource management plan and master plan from 1976.⁵³ WHIS's 1993 fire management goal was to “manage wildland fire in manner that protects life, property, and unit resources and yet encourages as much as possible the natural role of fire to perpetuate unit ecosystems through the application of management ignited prescribed fire.”⁵⁴ The 1993 plan formalized a dual objective: protecting life and property while encouraging the natural role of fire through management-ignited prescribed burning where feasible. Implementation depended on staffing, qualifications, interagency support, and funding capacity as fire activity increased

⁴⁷ WHIS, “Fire Data” spreadsheet.

⁴⁸ On prescribed burns see Letter from Ray Foust to Regional Director Western Region, “Five Year Burning Plan,” August 12, 1991, folder “Y14 Forest Fires Control Fire Management Plan,” box HQ6, WHIS-AF. On staffing see, “Resources Management Plan for Whiskeytown National Recreation Area,” August 1997, 117, subfolder “ADMIN_PLANS,” subfolder “Not_Accessioned,” subfolder “Administrative_History,” folder “Admin-History Zip 6.22.22,” WHIS-DF.

⁴⁹ WHIS, “Fire Data” spreadsheet.

⁵⁰ WHIS, *Fire Management Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Statement*, February 2003, p. 96, accessed November 2024, https://pubs.nps.gov/eTIC/WEPO-WI/WHIS_611_03017_0346pg.pdf.

⁵¹ WHIS, *Fire Management Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Statement*, 2003, p. 96.

⁵² Regional Director, Western Region to All Areas and Offices, Western Region, “Revision of Fire Management Plans,” March 2, 1992, folder “Y14 Forest Fires Control_Fires Management Plan,” box HQ6, WHIS-AF.

⁵³ WHIS, “Finding of No Significant Impact: Fire Management Plan: Wildfire Suppression and Management, Ignited Prescribed Fire,” June 1993, p. 6, subfolder “WHIS Fire Management Plans,” folder “FIRE_HISTORY,” WHIS-DF.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

through the decade. In 1995, the Northern California Prescribed Fire Module was established at WHIS to assist smaller parks with prescribed burn planning and implementation. The following year, a Fire Management Officer position appeared on the park's organizational chart for the first time, indicating a growing administrative distinction between general resource management functions and dedicated fire-management responsibilities.⁵⁵

In 1997, WHIS implemented a prescribed burn at the 120-hectare Coggins IV burn unit near Crystal Creek's headwaters. While the burn was effective, "high fire intensity resulted in high overstory tree mortality in several areas." A few years later, WHIS partnered with scientists from University of California Berkeley to study the history of fire within the unit. They determined that the site had historically experienced frequent small groundfires. Those fires declined significantly starting in 1850 and ceased completely between 1925 and the park's prescribed burn in 1997. Therefore, by setting prescribed burns, WHIS's natural resource managers were taking a significant step in returning the unit's forestlands to its historical state.⁵⁶

Although not in WHIS's boundaries, the Jones Fire started in October 1999, burned 25,826 acres, and destroyed 1,000 structures.⁵⁷ The Jones Fire was one of the largest fires to ever burn in Shasta County and burned near Shasta Lake, part of the larger Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area. It ushered in an era of larger fires in the twenty-first century.

2000s: Wildland–Urban Interface and Complex Fire Seasons

In the 2000s, WHIS, Northern California, and the entire nation experienced more frequent and larger fires. In response to increasing wildfire risk, Congress directed federal agencies operating in the wildland–urban interface to strengthen risk-reduction measures for life and property.⁵⁸ Therefore, as a park existing within the wildland-urban interface, WHIS published the Urban Interface Initiative Plan, in 2000-2001, which looked at how WHIS would deal with fires in the twenty-first century. The plan acknowledged that "the exclusion of fire" along with other land use disturbances like grazing, timber, and mining created conditions for "the destructions of our forest with a twentieth century fire regime composed of large catastrophic crown fires either alone or in combination with large insect and disease epidemics."⁵⁹ The Urban Interface Plan aimed to prepare WHIS for an era of frequent fires. Its goals included minimizing wildfire risks through education, prescribed burns, and the creation of fuel breaks in strategic locations.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ On creation of the Northern California Prescribed Fire Module, see David Pugh, "Annual Narrative Report of Superintendent, 1995 (and 1994)," March 14, 1996, p. 8, folder "A2621 Superintendents Report," box HQ 6, WHIS-AF. For new FMO position, see David Pugh, "Annual Narrative Reports of Superintendents," February 27, 1997, p. 6, folder "A2621 Superintendents Report," box HQ 6, WHIS-AF.

⁵⁶ Danny L. Fry and Scott L. Stephens, "Influence of Humans and Climate on the Fire History of a Ponderosa Pine-Mixed Conifer Forest in the Southeastern Klamath Mountains, California," *Forest Ecology and Management* 223 (2006): 432, 430.

⁵⁷ WHIS, "Fire Data" spreadsheet; and Zach O'Brien, "Reflecting on Past Wildfires to Predict the 2023 Fire Season in Northern California," July 321, 2023, accessed November 2024, <https://www.activenorcal.com/reflecting-on-past-wildfires-to-predict-the-2023-fire-season-in-northern-california/>.

⁵⁸ Task Agreement No. J8530030078 to Cooperative Agreement No. H8530010095 between the NPS and Humboldt State University Foundation, September 30, 2004, p. 1, folder "Agreements," WHIS-DF.

⁵⁹ WHIS, "Urban Interface Initiative Plan," October 2000, p. 3, subfolder "2000 Urban Initiative Plan," subfolder "WHIS General Projects," folder "Resource Management Archives," WHIS-DF; and WHIS, "Urban Interface Initiative Plan," February 2001, subfolder "Unorganized Files," WHIS-DF.

⁶⁰ WHIS, "Urban Interface Initiative Plan," October 2000, pp. 3-4.

Starting in 2001, WHIS's fire and resource management staff began the process of creating an updated FMP. To update the FMP, staff needed to establish a timeline for writing the plan, conducting an environmental impact survey, holding public meetings, and getting a record of decision.⁶¹ The new FMP sought to: (1) ensure firefighter and public safety for all fire management activities, (2) use fire to improve the ecosystem and "restore circa 1800 landscapes," (3) suppress unwanted fires, (4) reduce hazard fuels, (5) continue interagency fire partnerships, and (6) develop staff expertise in all aspects of fire management.⁶² By the early 2000s, the park's Wildland Fire Management program was setting prescribed burns on approximately 2,200 acres a year. These steps illustrated a changing attitude toward fire that acknowledged its threat to safety, but also its necessity in ecosystem health. It was more than attitudes toward fire that were shifting. So, too, was the funding. In 2002, WHIS distributed \$959,000 in external fire contracts for fuels treatments—even so, the program was underfunded.⁶³ Money, staff time, and attitudes were all shifting not only to restore fire to the landscape, but also to better prepare for the wildfires that would inevitably impact the park in the future.

On August 14, 2004, the French Fire started along Trinity Mountain Road within WHIS's borders. The fire spread quickly northward and burned nearly 3,000 acres in three hours and prompted officials to evacuate French Gulch.⁶⁴ The fire then turned southwest where it made its way towards the Tower House Historic District (THHD). Initially, the USFS's Shasta Trinity Unit commanded the fire. They were relieved on August 15 by CAL FIRE Incident Command Team #3.⁶⁵ Crews fought the fire under two branches with eight divisions, cut forty miles of dozer line, seven miles of hand line, and used existing roads to contain the fire.⁶⁶ Crews contained the fire at 100 percent on August 20, six days after it started. The French Fire was highly destructive, burning 13,328 acres (407 within WHIS), destroyed twenty-six homes and two commercial buildings, including a historical Odd Fellows Lodge in French Gulch.⁶⁷

According to the Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) report, one of the main reasons for the fast spread of the French Fire was abundant fuels. This consisted of "primarily grass and scattered brush. The fire spotted quickly into old, dense stands of chaparral (including manzanita, chamise, poison oak, ceanothus and blackberries) with a discontinuous over story of grey pine, knobcone pine and live oak".⁶⁸

⁶¹ WHIS, *2002 Fire Management Plan*, p. 8, subfolder "WHIS Fire Management Plans," folder "FIRE_HISTORY," WHIS-DF.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 1.

⁶³ "Whiskeytown National Recreation Area: Business Plan," August 2003, pp. 13, 16, 17, filename "WHISBIZPlanprintquality," subfolder "ADMIN_PLANS," folder "LIBRARY-REPORTS," WHIS-DF.

⁶⁴ WHIS, "French Fire August 14, 2004" pamphlet, August 2004, subfolder "FRENCH FIRE," folder "FIRE_HISTORY," WHIS-DF.

⁶⁵ WHIS, "Final Report: French Fire Burned Area Emergency Response, Fiscal Year 2005," September 2005, p. 1, subfolder "FRENCH FIRE," folder "FIRE_HISTORY," WHIS-DF.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

⁶⁷ WHIS, "French Fire August 14, 2004."

⁶⁸ WHIS, "Final Report: French Fire Burned Area Emergency Response, Fiscal Year 2005," p. 1.

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Another concern from the French Fire was its impacts to watershed health. This was due to metal contamination from mines in the burn area that could impact water quality and aquatic life.⁷⁰ Cooperating land management agencies were troubled by the potential for mineral contaminants in Scorpion Gulch, French Gulch, and Cline Gulch to flow into Clear Creek and eventually into Whiskeytown Lake after heavy rain events.⁷¹ After three sampling periods, scientists determined that mercury increased right after the fire but declined almost a year later and arsenic trended the opposite, with lower levels after the fire and higher levels roughly a year later.⁷² The French Fire exposed escalating challenges in wildfire management at WHIS.

On June 21, 2008, a severe lightning storm ignited more than 2,000 fires across California, including the Bally, Boulder, Brandy, and Mary/Little Bally Fires, which merged to form the Whiskeytown Complex.⁷³ The complex burned in the southwestern portion of WHIS. During the first week, the fire was managed under a Type 3 incident management organization, a mid-level team typically used for moderate-complexity incidents. However, due to the intensity of the Whiskeytown Complex Fire and the demands of simultaneous wildland fires across California, WHIS leadership transitioned command to a Type 2 Incident Command Team led by Glen McNitt of the USFS Northern Rockies Incident Command.⁷⁴ The team implemented a combination of direct and indirect fire lines and employed Minimum Impact Suppression Tactics. These approaches proved effective until July 6, when declining relative humidity, temperatures exceeding 100 degrees, and increasing wind gusts intensified fire behavior.⁷⁵

While the Whiskeytown Complex Fire burned within the park, the Moon Fire, which also ignited on June 21, burned south of WHIS's borders. During its northward movement, the Moon Fire "exhibited extreme fire behavior, several times compromising substantial dozer lines."⁷⁶ Eventually, the Moon Fire merged with the Whiskeytown Complex near WHIS's southern border. CAL FIRE crews working the Moon Fire received authorization from Superintendent Milestone to cut additional dozer lines to stop its spread into WHIS's east side.⁷⁷ Nearly a week later, on July 13, cooler temperatures, increased humidity, and a wind shift diminished fire activity on the Whiskeytown Complex and the Moon Fire.⁷⁸

⁷⁰ Johnnie Moore and Heiko Langner, "Final Data Report: Interagency Burned Area Stabilization and Rehabilitation Plan for the French Fire," October 2, 2007, pp. 2-3, subfolder "FRENCH FIRE," folder "FIRE_HISTORY," WHIS-DF.

⁷¹ Roger L. Hothem, Jason T. May, Larry R. Brown, Johnnie Moore, Jennifer Gibson, and Brian Rasmussen, "Mobilization and bioaccumulation of metals and trace elements in aquatic biota from the Upper Clear Creek Watershed and Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, California, following the French Fire," USGS and National Park Service, Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, 2008), p. 5, subfolder "FRENCH FIRE," folder "FIRE_HISTORY," WHIS-DF.

⁷² Jason May, Larry Brown, Roger Hothem, Johnnie Moore, Jennifer Gibson, "French Fire Contaminants Assessment: Preliminary Report," September 2005, p. 12, subfolder "FRENCH FIRE," folder "FIRE_HISTORY," WHIS-DF.

⁷³ Jennifer Gibson, "FY09 Accomplishment Report: Whiskeytown Complex and Motion Fires: Burned Area Rehabilitation Plan," September 15, 2009, p. 8, subfolder "Motion Fire-Whiskeytown Complex," folder "FIRE_HISTORY," WHIS-DF.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ For more on Minimum Impact Suppression Tactics see Ozark-St Francis National Forest, "Appendix C: Minimum Impact Suppression Tactics," in "Revised Land and Resource Management Plan," accessed November 2024, <https://www.fs.usda.gov/sites/nfs/files/legacy-media/ozark-stfrancis/2005%20Forest%20Plan.pdf>, and Gibson, "FY09 Accomplishment Report: Whiskeytown Complex and Motion Fires: Burned Area Rehabilitation Plan," p. 8.

⁷⁶ NPS Motion Fire BAER Team, "Burned Area Emergency Response Plan: Motion Fire: Whiskeytown National Recreation Area," August 2008, pp. 8-9, subfolder "Motion Fire-Whiskeytown Complex," folder "FIRE_HISTORY," WHIS-DF.

⁷⁷ Gibson, "FY09 Accomplishment Report: Whiskeytown Complex and Motion Fires: Burned Area Rehabilitation Plan," p. 8.

⁷⁸ Gibson, "FY09 Accomplishment Report: Whiskeytown Complex and Motion Fires: Burned Area Rehabilitation Plan," p. 8.

The Whiskeytown Complex Fire and Moon Fire were not the only fires burning in the vicinity. On June 21, lightning sparked the Motion Fire outside the northeastern boundary of Whiskeytown. CAL FIRE took command of the Motion Fire. After it spread into WHIS, the Incident Command Teams and Superintendent Milestone authorized the CAL FIRE team to stay in command of the Motion Fire.⁷⁹ On July 11, the fire crossed over the WHIS boundary. Over the next two days, CAL FIRE crews began a burnout operation to quell the fire inside of WHIS with a perimeter along State Highway 299 and Whiskeytown Lake. The crews aimed to keep the fire east of Whiskey Creek. They accomplished this goal by reinforcing and cutting dozer lines along the Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E) transmission line corridor north of Highway 299 and along existing dirt roads, and by creating fuel breaks and cutting old dozer lines west of Whiskey Creek and north of Highway 299. The burnout, using a combination of aerial and ground ignition methods, was successful. The crews contained the Motion Fire north of Highway 299 and east of Whiskey Creek within the boundaries of WHIS.⁸⁰

A combination of aerial and ground firefighting, working with PG&E to de-energize and douse transmission lines, and changing weather patterns ultimately led to the fires' containment.⁸¹ The Whiskeytown Complex Fire was contained on July 14. The Moon Fire was contained on July 25. The Motion Fire was declared contained on July 26 and burned a total of 28,308 acres, of which 2,454 were inside WHIS.⁸² These 2008 incidents fall into a larger moment in California's history during which thousands of lightning flashes caused over 800 wildfires in Northern California and western Nevada.⁸³

2010s: Catastrophic Fire and Recovery

In 2018, the most devastating wildfire in WHIS's history ignited on July 23, when a flat tire on a travel trailer sent sparks onto the roadside between Carr Powerhouse Road and the THHD parking lot off Highway 299. That summer, the region was experiencing a record-tying heat wave in which afternoon high temperatures topped out at 111 degrees at park headquarters. Given the dry conditions and abundant fuels, three separate fires broke out from the initial flat tire incident. Fire crews labeled them Fires A, B, and C.⁸⁴ Fire A spread rapidly and quickly encompassed five acres and was located on the north side of Highway 299. Fire B was less than an acre and ignited roughly 650 feet west of Fire A. Fire C was a spot fire on the south side of Highway 299, about 340 feet southwest of Fire B. Quickly, the three fires merged into the single Carr Fire.

⁷⁹ NPS Motion Fire BAER Team, "Burned Area Emergency Response Plan: Motion Fire: Whiskeytown National Recreation Area," 2008, p. 4.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ WHIS, "Burned Area Emergency Response Plan: Whiskeytown Complex," August 2008, p. 15, subfolder "ADMIN_PLANS," subfolder "Not_Accessioned," folder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF.

⁸² Gibson, "FY09 Accomplishment Report: Whiskeytown Complex and Motion Fires: Burned Area Rehabilitation Plan," p. 9.

⁸³ Hiroshi Hayasala and Carl Skinner, "2008 Forest Fires in the Northern California, USA," Conference Paper from The Eight Symposium on Fire and Forest Meteorology, Kalispell, Montana, October 13-15, p. 1, accessed November 2024, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/288320089_2008_Forest_fires_in_the_Northern_California_USA; NPS Motion Fire BAER Team, "Burned Area Emergency Response Plan: Motion Fire: Whiskeytown National Recreation Area," 2008, pp. 8-9.

⁸⁴ USFS, "Wildland Fire Origin and Cause Supplemental Incident Report," July 23, 2018, p. 6, accessed November 2024, https://www.nps.gov/aboutus/foia/upload/Carr-Fire-USFS-Supplemental-FSFINAL-2-7-21_Redacted.pdf; and NPS, "The Carr Fire of 2018 and Ongoing Recovery," updated November 15, 2024, accessed March 2026, <https://www.nps.gov/whis/learn/news/carrfire.htm>.



Figure 16. Carr Fire, ca. 2018.
Source: Photograph courtesy of CalFire.⁸⁷

Soon after the three fires erupted, citizens driving down Highway 299 called emergency services to report the fires. A fire fighter from USFS's Shasta-Trinity Forest Battalion 52, serving as WHIS's acting fire manager, took command of the incident.⁸⁵ Whiskeytown's Engine 4 was the first engine to arrive on scene. CAL FIRE crews, including a dozer that happened to be on its way back from the field, also responded to the fire.⁸⁶ Despite the quick firefighting response, the fire engulfed almost twenty acres within the first hour. In response, WHIS Law Enforcement Rangers evacuated visitors, staff, and staff housing from the west side of the park to the Oak Bottom. Rangers also assisted local authorities with evacuations of the town of French Gulch.

Weather and fuels played a major factor in the fire's rapid spread. At the onset of the fire, high temperatures with a relative humidity of 28 percent and south/southeast winds at two miles per hour with six-mile-per-hour gusts assisted the fire's spread. Winds pushed Fire A into a swath of dry grasses. Fire B, however, was sheltered from the winds and burned downslope, creating conditions for a slower burn. Fire B eventually spread to a flat, dry area where it connected with Fire A and grew together. Fire C's spread was limited as fuels were sparse and much of the surrounding area was rocky.

Despite crews cutting containment and dozer lines, on July 24 the fire took off and burned its way to Grizzly Gulch and Whiskey Creek. Over the next two days, conditions intensified. Although crews worked tirelessly to protect infrastructure at Oak Bottom and to attempt to contain the burn, extreme fire behavior persisted. On July 26, the fire

⁸⁵ WHIS-Carr Fire After Action Review, (NPS Division of Fire and Aviation: 2018), p. 6, accessed November 2024, <https://lessonslearned-prod-media-bucket.s3.us-gov-west-1.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2023-02/CARR%20Fire%20AAR-final.pdf>.

⁸⁶ USFS, "Wildland Fire Origin and Cause Supplemental Incident Report," 2018, p. 6.

⁸⁷ Photograph accessed April 2026, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Carr_Fire_27_July_2018_a.jpg

made its way into Redding city limits. A dangerous combination of weather, fuel conditions, and topography produced a fire vortex, with winds reaching 165 miles per hour, an estimated height of 40,000 feet, and a base width of nearly 300 feet.⁸⁸ The powerful vortex pushed the fire over the Sacramento River, killing two firefighters, and four civilians, and prompting officials to call for the evacuation of 38,000 residents.⁸⁹ The aggressive fire spawned smaller spot fires that spread and burned towards THHD by July 27. Fire crews saved the Camden House, barn, and tenant house, but lost all wooden components of the El Dorado Mine and 60 percent of the historic fruit trees in the THHD orchard.⁹⁰

The fire spread to the southwestern corner of WHIS and onto USFS land at the end of July. Into the first few days of August, the fire slowed as it hit areas where WHIS fire staff had conducted prescribed burns in previous seasons. The prescribed burns leading up to the Carr Fire in 2017 included two (sixty-six acres and fifty-four acres) on the eastern boundary near the town of Shasta and controlled burns in Coggins Park, and Brandy Creek.⁹¹ By mid-August, fire crews had the Carr Fire 83 percent contained and other park staff were able to start assessing damage and reopen areas of the park. On August 30, just over a month after the flat tire had sparked devastation, crews declared the Carr Fire 100 percent contained.

Initially, the NPS and CAL FIRE lead the unified response. As the fire grew and spread into different jurisdictions, other agencies entered unified command. On July 27, the City of Redding Fire Department entered into unified command. On July 31, USFS joined the unified command when the fire entered national forest land.⁹² With a variety of agencies being involved with incident command of the Carr Fire, the After Action Report recommended that “when feasible, a single federal IC should be delegated authority to represent all of the affected federal agencies in unified command.”⁹³

The Carr Fire burned 229,651 acres of land, destroyed 1,079 residences, 100 buildings, killed eight people (including three firefighters, a PG&E lineman, a contract bulldozer operator, and three civilians), and caused \$1.6 billion in damages. The Carr Fire burned 39,000—or 97 percent—of WHIS’s total 42,000 acres.⁹⁴ The blaze became one of the most destructive fires in California and NPS history.⁹⁵ Within that acreage, the Carr Fire destroyed numerous cultural resources and NPS-owned infrastructure and caused widespread damage to utility systems, including overhead electrical lines and wood pole structures that required extensive repair and replacement during post-fire recovery. These losses included five employee residences, the remnants of the historic Whiskeytown Store and Post Office, ten camper cabins

⁸⁸ David Benda, “Destructive and deadly, yes. But unprecedented? Trying to understand the Carr fire twister,” *Redding Record Searchlight*, August 23, 2018, accessed November 2024, <https://www.redding.com/story/news/local/2018/08/24/carr-fire-tornado-fast-fierce-but-not-first-and-maybe-not-tornado/1052343002/>.

⁸⁹ WHIS-Carr Fire After Action Review, (NPS Division of Fire and Aviation: 2018), p. 4.

⁹⁰ NPS, “The Carr Fire of 2018 and Ongoing Recovery,” n.d., accessed November 2024, <https://www.nps.gov/whis/learn/news/carrfire.htm>.

⁹¹ Whiskeytown News Releases, “Buck Prescribed Burn Project at Whiskeytown National Recreation Area,” May 1, 2017; “Fall Prescribed Burning at Whiskeytown National Recreation Area,” October 5, 2016; and “Fall Prescribed Burning at Whiskeytown National Recreation Area,” October 3, 2017, all in subfolder “Press Releases,” subfolder “PRESS OFFICIAL DOCS,” subfolder “20210927,” folder “FACILITIES,” WHIS-DF.

⁹² WHIS-Carr Fire After Action Review, (NPS Division of Fire and Aviation: 2018), p. 4.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁹⁴ NPS “The Carr Fire of 2018 and Ongoing Recovery.”

⁹⁵ BLM Redding Office, NPS, WHIS, USDA Forest Service, Shasta-Trinity National Forest, “Carr Fire Burned Area Emergency Response Plan Executive Summary,” August 2018, pp. 1 and 3, subfolder “Other,” subfolder “BAER,” subfolder “Post-Carr,” subfolder “Carr Fire,” subfolder “Natural Disasters IAP’s,” subfolder “20210927,” folder “FACILITIES,” WHIS-DF; Western Fire Chiefs Association, “History of California Wild Fires,” November 17, 2022, accessed November 2024, <https://wfca.com/articles/history-of-california-wildfires/>; and Cal Fire, “Carr Fire,” accessed November 2024, <https://www.fire.ca.gov/incidents/2018/7/23/carr-fire>.

at National Environmental Education Development (NEED) Camp, trailhead signs, wayside exhibits, nine buildings at Crystal Creek Boys Camp, a search-and-rescue cache, and several bridges throughout the park. In total, the park lost 154 buildings and structures, 28 of which were later identified for hazardous waste cleanup in 2020. At Whiskey Creek and Brandy Creek, the fire damaged the water treatment systems. At Oak Bottom, the Carr Fire destroyed the marina store, office, and concessions residence. In the immediate months following the fire, WHIS's staff worked to reestablish normal operation. The park opened some of the most popular areas to the public in September, including facilities at Whiskey Creek and Carr Powerhouse Picnic Area.⁹⁶

The Carr Fire is part of a twenty-first-century pattern of more frequent and destructive wildfires in the US West, as well as in Northern California. Alongside the Camp and Woolsey Fires, the Carr Fire was one of numerous devastating fires in 2018, driven by multiple environmental factors. Post-fire analyses situated the Carr Fire within a larger pattern of increasingly severe wildfire in the US West, shaped by interacting factors that included extreme heat, drought conditions, and accumulated fuels associated with long-term fire exclusion. Historian Stephen Pyne argues that “antifire policies arose from good intentions, poor understanding, and elitist assumptions, including that the Indigenous practice of controlled burns was primitive and harmful.”⁹⁷

The damages did not end with the fire's containment. That following winter, the park experienced torrential rain and snows that led to flooding and destruction of numerous backcountry trails and roads.⁹⁸ Beginning in November 2018, WHIS warned the public about potential dangers from heavy rain in burn areas and temporarily closed parts of the park. WHIS closed pull-offs, trails, and parking lots located along Kennedy Memorial Drive, Paige Bar Road, and Mule Town Road, but the county kept these roads open to traffic.⁹⁹ In December 2018, following initial repairs and rehabilitation efforts, WHIS reopened trails on the east side of the park, including the Mt. Shasta Mine Loop, Guardian Rock, Buck Hollow, Mule Mountain Pass, and Clear Creek Canal Trails.¹⁰⁰ However, this was limited due to a government shutdown that lasted into 2019. When the government resumed operations in February 2019, another natural disaster soon struck the Redding area. In the middle of the month, a series of high winds, rain, and heavy snowfall prompted the Shasta County Sheriff's Office to declare a local state of emergency. The weather event took down power for nearly 30,000 people in Shasta County.¹⁰¹

⁹⁶ NPS, “Carr Fire Site Bulletin” (Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, updated July 2020), accessed March 2026, https://www.nps.gov/whis/upload/Carr-Fire-site-bulletin_updated-July-2020.pdf; NPS, “Remove and Safely Dispose of 36 Destroyed Buildings from the Carr Fire,” Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, US DOI, accessed March 2026, <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/projectHome.cfm?projectID=83254>; and “Carr Fire Burned Area Emergency Response Plan Executive Summary,” 2018, p. 2.

⁹⁷ Stephen Pyne, “Pyrocene Park,” *American Scientist*, 111 No. 3, (May-June 2023): p. 176, accessed November 2024, <https://www.americanscientist.org/article/pyrocene-park>.

⁹⁸ NPS “The Carr Fire of 2018 and Ongoing Recovery.”

⁹⁹ Whiskeytown Press Release, “Rain Increases Risk for Flooding Landslide, and Debris Flow in Burned Areas,” November 16, 2018, subfolder “Press Releases,” subfolder “Press Official Docs,” subfolder “20210927” folder “FACILITIES,” WHIS-DF.

¹⁰⁰ Whiskeytown Press Release, “Whiskeytown National Recreation Area Will Reopen Trails on the East Side of the Park-First Week in December,” November 28, 2018, subfolder “Press Releases,” subfolder “Press Official Docs,” subfolder “20210927” folder “FACILITIES,” WHIS-DF.

¹⁰¹ April Ehrlich, “Thousands Without Power After Snowfall In Redding,” *Jefferson Public Radio*, February 13, 2019, accessed November 2024, <https://www.ijpr.org/2019-02-13/thousands-without-power-after-snowfall-in-redding>.

In the spring of 2019, WHIS and NPS released their After-Action Review (AAR) findings, which looked at successes and areas to improve in preparation for another large-scale fire event. Representatives from NPS, BLM, CAL FIRE, and the USFS met in November 2018 for a one-day work session to prepare the Carr Fire AAR. Although AARs for fires of this scale are often more extensive, the agencies elected to conduct a more focused review. The resulting report organized findings into four primary categories: Interagency Cooperation, Interagency Management, Incident Administration and Finance, and Post-Fire Response. Each category included both assessments of operational performance and recommendations for future incidents.¹⁰²

The Carr Fire also presented an opportunity for researchers to study the impacts of high intensity events. Following the fire, researchers from the US Geologic Survey (USGS) partnered with WHIS to study the effects of the Carr Fire on conifer stands in the park. The USGS report explained that old growth forests at WHIS were greatly impacted by the fire and that another major wildfire had the potential to change WHIS's overall vegetation composition. It urged "actions that minimize the likelihood of occurrence or reduce the severity of future disturbances. The use of fuel treatments, such as mechanical thinning and prescribed fire, may reduce future fire severity and allow greater flexibility in the management of future fires."¹⁰³

Conclusion

Fire management at WHIS has been shaped by the tension between two realities that have coexisted since the unit's establishment: fire is an ecological process embedded in chaparral and pine systems, and it is also a recurring threat to life, infrastructure, and adjacent communities along the Highway 299 corridor. Over time, WHIS's approach moved away from an assumption that suppression alone could protect park resources toward a more operationally complex program that paired suppression capability with proactive fuels treatment and prescribed fire, supported by formal planning (including periodic Fire Management Plans) and by interagency agreements that made large incidents manageable in practice.

The park's fire chronology demonstrates how local operations tracked—and were constrained by—national shifts in policy and public expectations. In the 1970s, WHIS leadership navigated fuel-break proposals and equipment-use questions while the unit's internal fires largely remained small. By the 1980s and 1990s, drought conditions, larger incidents, and Regional Office expectations pushed WHIS toward more systematic planning, qualification of personnel, and prescribed burning, even as outcomes could be mixed (including episodes of high-intensity effects in some burn units). The 2000–2001 Urban Interface Initiative Plan marked a further turn toward risk reduction in a landscape where past fire exclusion and other land-use disturbances were understood to have increased the likelihood of severe fire behavior, and where preparedness increasingly required staff capacity, outside contracts, and coordinated response frameworks rather than ad hoc suppression.

¹⁰² WHIS-Carr Fire After Action Review, (NPS Division of Fire and Aviation: 2018), p. 8.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 20.

CHAPTER 4.4: FIRE MANAGEMENT AND ADAPTATION

The French Fire (2004) and the 2008 lightning-sparked fires reinforced two themes that would define twenty-first-century fire management at WHIS: major incidents routinely exceeded the unit's independent capacity, and fire effects extended beyond burn perimeters into watershed conditions, cultural resources, and public access. The Carr Fire (2018) expanded those conditions in scope and operational impact. Burning nearly the entire recreation area, the Carr Fire produced extensive losses to facilities, staff housing, concession-related infrastructure, and cultural resources, while also demonstrating how quickly incident command must adapt as fires crossed jurisdictions. In the fire's aftermath, WHIS entered a second operational phase—distinct from suppression but equally demanding—focused on hazard assessments, area closures, infrastructure repair, and the phased reopening of trails and visitor nodes across a landscape destabilized by vegetation loss and subsequent storms.

If the earlier decades of WHIS fire management can be read as a gradual incorporation of prescribed fire and fuels work into routine operations, the post-2018 period shares a different administrative lesson: large-fire response and recovery have become recurring managerial conditions rather than rare exceptions. WHIS's after-action review process, its coordination with multiple agencies, and its reliance on external scientific assessment and post-fire monitoring indicate an increasingly compressed cycle of learning, implementation, and re-evaluation. In that environment, the park's core fire-management challenge is not choosing between ecology and protection, but sustaining a program capable of doing both—maintaining staff readiness and interagency partnerships; investing in fuels treatments where feasible; and managing visitor use and infrastructure in ways that acknowledge fire, and post-fire hazards, as durable elements of Whiskeytown's operating landscape.

PART V

CHAPTER 5.1: NATURAL RESOURCES AND THEIR MANAGEMENT

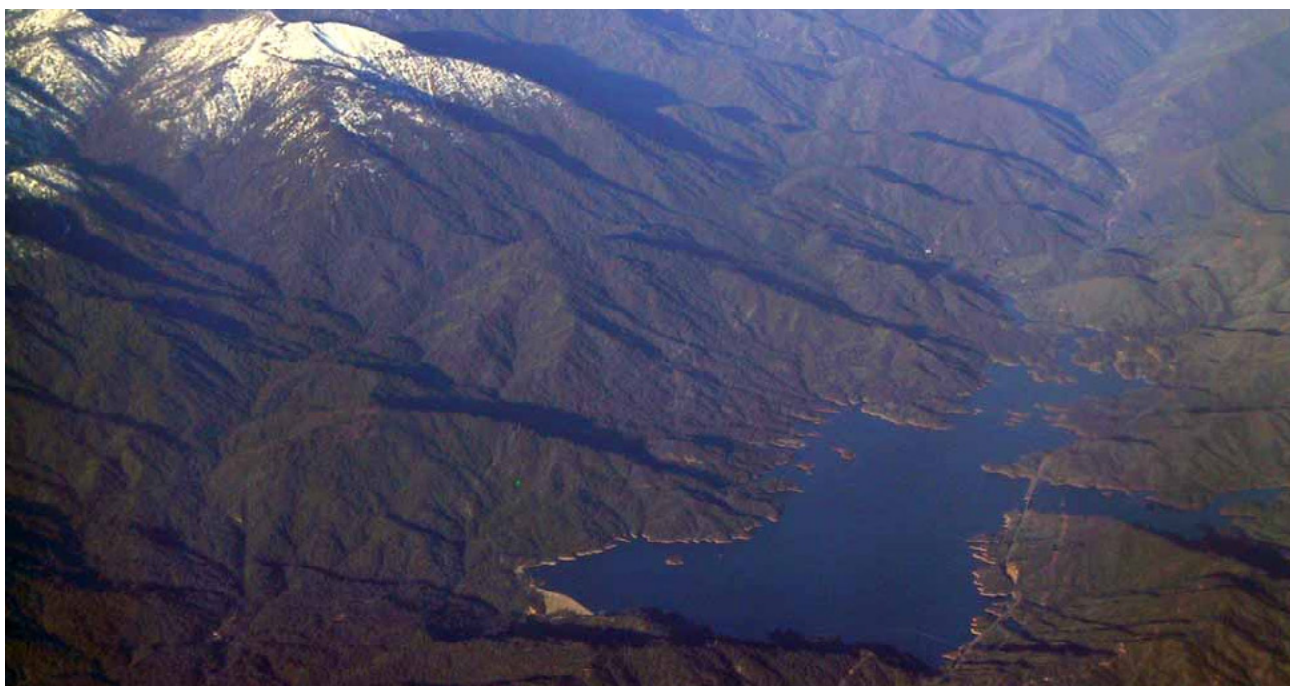


Figure 17. Aerial Photo of WHIS, no date.
Source: Photograph on file at WHIS Archives.¹

Natural resource management at Whiskeytown National Recreation Area (WHIS) did not begin with a dedicated division or formal scientific framework. Early planning documents addressed vegetation, wildlife, soils, and fire within broader development prospectuses tied to recreation infrastructure and site preparation. Over time, these categories evolved into formal resource management plans, addenda, baseline inventories, staffing reorganization, and standardized monitoring protocols.

Administrative records from the 1960s through the early twenty-first century document how WHIS moved from broad landscape treatments—such as reforestation and site landscaping—toward specialized programs addressing wildlife conflicts, endangered species monitoring, rare plant protection, and backcountry zoning. This shift involved not only new planning instruments but also the creation of a standalone resource management division, participation in

¹ Photograph in subfolder “Elevation,” subfolder “GeographyandGeology,” subfolder “PhotosAccordingtoChapter,” subfolder “Virtual Tour,” folder “Virtual Tour,” WHIS-DF.

regional inventory networks, collaboration with volunteer organizations and universities, and coordination with state and federal agencies where jurisdictional boundaries intersected park lands.

This chapter traces that administrative progression, examining how plan-making, staffing structures, interagency agreements, and project-level interventions shaped the park's approach to vegetation management, wildlife protection, rare flora conservation, and backcountry oversight. The record reveals how resource management responsibilities expanded and became more formalized within the operational realities of a recreation-oriented unit.

Early Views on Natural Resources

In the 1964 Master Plan, planners laid out an analysis of existing conditions for wildlife, vegetation, soils, climate, and “special protection considerations” of fire and invasive species.² Planners took those same existing condition categories and laid out a management prospectus for each, acknowledging that while the lake would be a primary focus of recreation, “the lands surrounding the reservoir will receive heavy use.”³ The management prospectus outlined fairly simple, high-level management steps for WHIS's natural resources: invasive species should be controlled, disturbed areas should be reseeded, fish populations should be stocked, and a soil program should be developed to help restore vegetation in degraded areas.⁴ Though broad, the park's first management document would guide efforts into the 1970s.

The regional office developed a Reforestation and Landscaping Plan in 1964, featuring detailed illustrations of planting and landscaping proposals for Oak Bottom, Whiskey Creek, and Brandy Creek.⁵ Planners selected nine Californian plant species to landscape around the three new recreation sites. The landscaping plans called for 800 knobcone pines, 400 ponderosa pines, 15 sweet gum trees, 15 scarlet oak trees, 10 California live oak trees, 10 Modesto ash trees, 1,200 Stanford manzanita, 1,200 California hollies, and 40,000 red bearberries. Of the nine selected species, only the knobcone and ponderosa pines are native to WHIS, with the others sourced from wider California ecosystems. In the mid-twentieth century, however, planners were more focused on selecting plant species native to California rather than maintaining regionally specific gene pools and genotypes.⁶

These reforestation efforts supported NPS's dual mission of public enjoyment and resource preservation. Visitors to WHIS's new recreation sites encountered designed landscapes intended to create the appearance of a natural outdoor setting. The early landscaping program represents one of WHIS's first sustained efforts at planned vegetation management using California-native species.

² Whiskeytown Unit, “The Land: Narrative, Master Plan Whiskeytown Reservoir Recreation Area,” October 1964, p. 8, Sheet 3 of 4, subfolder “Facilities_Planning_Maps,” folder “FACILITIES,” WHIS-DF.

³ Whiskeytown Unit, “The Visitor: Narrative, Master Plan Whiskeytown Reservoir Recreation Area,” October 1964, p. 2, Sheet 2 of 4, subfolder “Facilities_Planning_Maps,” folder “FACILITIES,” WHIS-DF.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Branch of Landscape Architecture, Western Office of Design and Construction, “Reforestation and Landscaping: Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, Drawing RA-WHIS 3032” January 16, 1964, pp. 1-8, “Facilities_Planning_Maps,” folder “FACILITIES,” WHIS-DF.

⁶ Kevin Potter, Valerie Hipkins, and Robert Means, “Genetic Assessment of Ponderosa Pine (*Pinus ponderosa*) within Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area, California,” US Forest Service (USFS), July 23, 204, p. 3, subfolder “NB Bib,” folder “LIBRARY-REPORTS,” WHIS-DF.

Nearly a decade later, external NPS staff members conducted a site visit, offering a range of program recommendations to WHIS staff. For natural resource management, the Western Region Management Consultation Team recommended a natural resource manager be hired as “environmental concerns appear to be ignored in the activities of the entire division and to some extent, by the staff of the park.”⁷ After the mid-1970s, WHIS started to develop a formal natural resource program.

In 1975, WHIS published their first Natural Resources Management Plan. Though the plan was much more detailed than what was laid out in the 1964 management prospectus, it followed a similar approach in categorization of projects with vegetation, soils, and wildlife. Following the Natural Resources Management Plan, WHIS published its 1976 Master Plan. Both plans laid out nine main natural resource goals framed around human recreational use and enjoyment. Paraphrased, the master plan called to (1) preserve natural resources with “special or scientific value;” (2) provide environmental education; (3) initiate programs to streamline vegetation management; (4) restore streams to as near natural conditions as possible; (5) preserve black bear populations; (6) develop water sources for visitors and wildlife in the backcountry, (7) control “nuisance species” in developed areas to protect visitors; (8 and 9) manage renewable and non-renewable resources in a way with no “adverse effect on recreation activities.”⁸ Both plans sought to foster healthy outdoor spaces that provided “an environment for visitor recreation use in a healthful, pleasant outdoor setting.”⁹ These early initiatives laid the foundation for more specialized programs that would emerge in subsequent decades, another example of the shift from generalist strategies to targeted resource management efforts.

In 1982, WHIS’s Superintendent Ray Foust created a standalone Division of Resource Management.¹⁰ Soon after, park staff amended their 1975 Natural Resource Management Plan. This addendum strategized natural resource management initiatives for the next five years. WHIS sought to expand natural resource management to include wildlife inventorying, stream ecology, evaluation of mineral resources, a backcountry management plan, boundary line maintenance, control of rodent populations, and fisheries-related research, including study of introduced threadfin shad as part of wider efforts to understand and manage aquatic ecosystems.¹¹ The 1982 Management Addendum marked WHIS’s pivot to a specialized approach, moving beyond the generalist model of the 1970s.

Into the mid-1980s, NPS director William Penn Mott, Jr. and the NPS Western Regional Office issued a directive on natural resource management in 1986. Mott’s directive tasked parks with conducting baseline inventories, establishing a budget formulation process for project prioritization, having more environmental education in interpretive divisions, starting cave management programs where applicable, training maintenance personnel on natural resource

⁷ Western Region Ad Hoc Management Consultation Team, “Whiskeytown National Recreation Area Management Consultation Report,” November 11-14, 1975, p. 13. folder “1970s,” WHIS-DF.

⁸ Whiskeytown National Recreation Area (WHIS), *Whiskeytown/Shasta/Trinity, Whiskeytown Unit Master Plan*, July 1976, p. 52, folder “ADMIN_PLANS,” folder “LIBRARY-REPORTS,” WHIS-DF.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ray Foust, “Position Management Plan FY 1982,” October 30, 1981, p. 5, folder “Pos Mgmt Plan_4 of 4,” box HQ9, WHIS-AF,

¹¹ Whiskeytown Unit, “An Addendum to the Natural Resources Management Plan for the Whiskeytown Unit of the Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area, California,” March 1982, pp. Aiii and A32, folder “ADMIN_PLANS,” folder “LIBRARY-REPORTS,” WHIS-DF.

subjects, seeking outside assistance from volunteers and Cooperative Park Studies programs at universities and other parks, and developing regional resource management teams.¹² WHIS implemented these directives over the remainder of the 1980s.

A major moment for WHIS's natural resource management came in 1986. The California Native Plant Society, led by Volunteers-In-Parks (VIP) participant and amateur botanist David Biek, assisted WHIS in establishing their first baseline inventory and documentation for its plant populations.¹³ The NPS featured the effort in its national newsletter *The Courier*. The project was lauded by Superintendent Foust as "a success story for the Volunteers in the Park Program."¹⁴ The information Biek and the Native Plant Society gathered went on to form the basis of WHIS's herbarium. Biek's work also informed a report listing WHIS plant species, their extent within the unit, and recommendations for how WHIS should manage vegetation. The collaboration with the California Native Plant Society is an example of the park's increasing reliance on partnerships and volunteer expertise in late twentieth-century resource management. These efforts expanded the park's capacity for baseline data collection and informed subsequent vegetation management planning.

In 1988, WHIS laid out a three-year plan for its natural resource goals. Goals included protecting and managing endangered species; implementing vegetation management strategies; monitoring visitor impacts; monitoring effects from "mineral extraction and geothermal activities;" and addressing additional administrative, abiotic resource, and fire mitigation concerns. These goals further demonstrate WHIS's commitment during the 1980s to expanding and professionalizing its natural resource division.¹⁵

WHIS established two wildlife programs in the late 1980s. These programs focused on bald eagle and bear populations (discussed below). The initiative combined both grassroots efforts and top-down directives. Park staff noticed more bear and eagle activity and took steps to manage it while also following Mott's directive in establishing baselines and working with maintenance staff in natural resource management.

WHIS's resource management programs (along with many other programs) took a hit in 1996 when a greatly reduced budget forced program cuts.¹⁶ However, WHIS continued to expand and upgrade its natural resource management positions by making use of NPS's Resource Careers Program.¹⁷ In addition to investing in its natural resource staffing, the 2000 General Management Plan (GMP) aimed to restore the "physical and biological systems of

¹² Letter from Regional Director, Western Region to All Areas and Offices, Western Region, "Director Mott's Initiatives in Natural Resource Management," May 5, 1986, folder "N26 Management of Natural Resources and Area 3 of 3," box HQ 3, WHIS-AF.

¹³ "Park Briefs, Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity NRA," *NPS Courier*, 31, no. 3 (March 1986): p. 13, accessed November 2024, <http://npshistory.com/newsletters/courier/courier-v31n3.pdf>.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ WHIS, "Attachment D: Brief Description of Three-Year Program," 1988, p. 1, folder "N16 Management of Natural Resources and Area 3 of 3," box HQ3, WHIS-AF.

¹⁶ David Pugh, "Whiskeytown National Recreation Area Annual Report, Fiscal Year 1996," 1997, p. 1-2, folder "A2621 Reports Superintendents," box HQ6, WHIS-AF.

¹⁷ "Annual Report," Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, 2000, p. 2, subfolder "2000," folder "Cultural_Resource_Reports-PRIVILEGED," WHIS-DF; Bob Stanton, Memorandum, "Implementation of Resources Careers," December 17, 1999, accessed October 9, 2025, <https://npshistory.com/publications/training/resource-careers/director.htm>.

the undeveloped portions of the park to approximate early 1800 conditions and processes.”¹⁸ Planners outlined initiatives including water quality improvement, fire program expansion, invasive species reduction, and plant and animal protection efforts.¹⁹

One approach WHIS adopted when restoring undeveloped areas to early nineteenth-century conditions was the use of environmental history methodology. Staff gathered General Land Office (GLO) field notes, maps, oral histories, historical photographs, and park records to reconstruct baseline conditions and inform restoration targets. They also used these materials in public presentations and interpretive displays.²⁰ After assembling a working reconstruction of early nineteenth-century conditions in 2006, natural resources staff partnered with university researchers in 2007 to support related studies. Collaborations with the University of Montana examined metal contamination in water and sediment, while work with Humboldt State University analyzed second-growth encroachment in relict forest ecosystems.²¹ These efforts integrated historical documentation with ecological research to guide restoration planning into the twenty-first century.²²

In addition to employing historical methodologies to tackle contemporary resource management issues, WHIS staff have routinely partnered with other agencies and regional universities to study the park’s natural resources. These partnerships have resulted in scientific studies that inform WHIS’s approach to active restoration projects. In 2010, for example, WHIS partnered with foresters at the University of Montana to implement a forest restoration treatment at Brandy and Boulder Creeks. The project used selective thinning to reduce species such as Douglas fir and canyon live oak while retaining unique and legacy species, including black oak, sugar pine, incense-cedar, and ponderosa pine. The logged trees would be harvested while the thinned forest would have a healthier density of trees.²³

¹⁸ WHIS, *Whiskeytown Unit General Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement*, July 1999, p. 16, subfolder “ADMIN_PLANS,” subfolder “Not_Accessioned,” folder “Administrative_History,” WHIS-DF.

¹⁹ WHIS, *General Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement*, 1999, pp. 16-17.

²⁰ WHIS, “Historic Vegetation of Whiskeytown: An analysis of General Land Office Survey Data 1866-1882,” January 12, 2006, folder “Desired Future Conditions,” WHIS-DF; and Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, “Whiskeytown: An Environmental History,” PowerPoint Presentation slides, n.d., subfolder “Final Presentation,” subfolder “Desired Future Conditions,” folder “Desired Future Conditions,” WHIS-DF.

²¹ WHIS, “Natural Resources Management Accomplishments-FY07,” 2008, p. 1, WHIS-DF.

²² For example, WHIS’s restoration of the historic apple orchard after the 2018 Carr Fire which drew on multiple disciplines, “Whiskeytown News Release: An Historic Orchard is Restored,” November 19, 2021, subfolder “Unorganized Files,” folder “Cultural_Resource_Reports-PRIVILEGED,” WHIS-DF.

²³ Thomas E. Perry and Christopher R. Keyes, “Whiskeytown National Recreation Area (Whiskeytown, California): Phase II Forest Restoration Activities. Applied Forest Management Program, Montana Forest and Conservation Experiment Station,” University of Montana, Missoula, MT, pp. 2-4, subfolder “UofM,” subfolder “NR Bib,” folder “LIBRARY-REPORTS,” WHIS-DF; and Thomas E. Perry and Christopher R. Keyes, “Boulder Creek Forest Restoration Activities—2012 Summary: Whiskeytown National Recreation Area; Whiskeytown, California,” University of Montana, Missoula, MT, p. 2, subfolder “Boulder Oak Woodland Restoration,” subfolder “VEGETATION_PROJECTS,” folder “LIBRARY-REPORTS,” WHIS-DF.

Bear Management

The lands within and surrounding WHIS have long provided suitable black bear habitat, where bears subsist on native plant and animal species. As visitation increased in the second half of the twentieth century, bear-human interactions increased as bears sought out human food sources. As WHIS land managers noted, “once bears discover human food,” they often alter their natural foraging behavior to obtain it.²⁴ In the late 1980s, WHIS staff actively addressed the increasing issue of bears raiding trash cans and threatening visitor safety. In 1988, WHIS staff trapped and relocated twenty bears—Superintendent Foust reported “this is the first time bears have been a real nuisance in the Unit” and blamed the drought conditions for bear proliferation within unit boundaries.²⁵ In addition to threatening visitor safety and complicating wildlife management, bears disrupted other park staff operations. The bears damaged trash cans and scattered refuse. Resource management staff allocated a great deal of time trapping and relocating bears after they ate from trash cans, at which point they had become a further risk to visitors and themselves.²⁶ Foust asked all staff to report bear sightings and incidents involving bears getting into trash, and instructed uniformed staff needed to convey proper bear safety protocol to visitors.²⁷ In light of these growing incidents, Foust also asked staff to track where incidents occurred, how much time was spent addressing them, and what tasks were completed on new computer systems, stating that these data would inform a bear management program.²⁸

In the 1990s, WHIS installed bear-proof garbage cans and food storage lockers in developed recreation areas, which “significantly decreased” bear-related incidents and aided in the park not having any bear-related injuries.²⁹ WHIS continued managing bear incidents on a case-by-case basis over the next several decades. In 2018, WHIS published a Bear Management Plan. The plan organized bear management into two categories: preventative management and responsive management. Preventative measures focused on visitor education about being “bear aware,” as well as the provision of signage, food storage requirements, and bear-resistant trash receptacles throughout the park. Responsive management outlined protocols for staff response in the event of a bear-related incident.³⁰

WHIS’s bear management illustrates the park’s shift from reactive response to structured prevention. The installation of bear-resistant trash receptacles and food storage lockers, systematic incident tracking, and expanded visitor education reduced conflicts in developed areas. These measures formalized bear management as an ongoing operational responsibility shaped by visitation levels, drought conditions, and evolving National Park Service (NPS) policy.

²⁴ WHIS, *Bear Management Plan*, 2018, p. 4, subfolder “ADMIN_PLANS,” subfolder “Not_Accessioned,” folder “Administrative_History,” WHIS-DF.

²⁵ Ray Foust. “Superintendent’s Annual Report, 1988,” 1989, p. 4, folder “A2621 Reports Superintendents,” box HQ6, WHIS-AF.

²⁶ Letter from Ray Foust to All Employees, “Bear,” October 12, 1989, folder “N16 Management of Natural Resources and Area 3 of 3,” box HQ3, WHIS-AF.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ WHIS, *Bear Management Plan*, 2018, p. 5.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 4.

Bald Eagle Monitoring Program

The first recorded bald eagle at WHIS was reported in 1967. Through the 1970s, WHIS staff spotted more eagles throughout WHIS. By the 1980s, park staff had found nesting sites in addition to sightings. In 1987, WHIS initiated a Bald Eagle nesting study to assess the species' historical and current status within the park. The report stated that WHIS's location is near some of the most populated concentrations of Bald Eagle nesting sites in the region and it should be studied to determine the locations and extent of nesting within WHIS. The report also outlined immediate and long-term recommendations for staff to implement to protect bald eagle populations within WHIS. The most immediate concern in 1987 was the protection of a nesting site in Brandy Creek, one of the most popular recreation areas in WHIS. This posed a difficult task as the eagle nests needed to be protected without drawing unneeded attention to them. The long-term recommendations in the report were for WHIS to establish an annual inventorying program, conduct studies on visitation and boating on eagle populations, conduct a pesticide analysis, and look at ways to foster and expand territory for the eagle populations.³¹

In their three-year plan for natural resource goals beginning in 1988, WHIS staff identified endangered species management, with a focus on eagle populations, as their second priority. Staff wanted to keep monitoring populations, tracking their extent, and developing programs to protect eagles in places with high visitation.³²

Eagle management remained a priority into the 1990s. In 1991, WHIS submitted a funding proposal to hire a GS-7 wildlife biologist to work on developing a bald eagle management initiative. This included authoring a management plan, meeting with other agencies to "discuss management strategies," continuing inventorying and monitoring efforts, and compiling literature on bald eagles in and around WHIS.³³ WHIS established a monitoring schedule for staff with dedicated locations to watch for eagles across the park's front and backcountry in 1992.³⁴

The Bald Eagle monitoring program linked ecological stewardship and public perception in endangered species management. As a charismatic and iconic species, the eagle symbolizes conservation efforts and helped to galvanize public and institutional support for wildlife protection. At the same time, the program illustrates the practical challenges of balancing species recovery with recreational demands, particularly in high-use areas like Brandy Creek. This initiative illustrates a commitment within the NPS to prioritize flagship species as indicators of ecosystem health and drivers of public engagement.

³¹ Marcy Atkinson, "Bald Eagle Management Study, Whiskeytown Unit, Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area," spring 1987, pp. 1-2, 3, 8-11, subfolder "Bald Eagles," folder "Resource Management Archives," WHIS-DF.

³² WHIS, "Attachment D: Brief Description of Three-Year Program," 1988, p. 1, folder "N16 Management of Natural Resources and Area 3 of 3," box HQ3, WHIS-AF.

³³ WHIS, "FY 91 RRB Project Proposal, preparation of Bald Eagle Management Plan for Whiskeytown National Recreation Area," 1991, folder "N16 Management of Natural Resources and Area 3 of 3," box HQ3, WHIS-AF.

³⁴ WHIS, "1992 Bald Eagle Monitoring Training," n.d., pp. 1-10, subfolder "Bald Eagles," folder "Resource Management Archives," WHIS-DF.

Rare Flora

WHIS is home to a variety of rare plants, some of which are species of concern. Their protection is mandated by NPS policy alongside multiple state and federal laws.³⁵ Each of these species faces various threats, including illegal collection by rare plant enthusiasts and the impacts of habitat loss and shifting climatological patterns. One of WHIS's rare plants, *Puccinellia howellii*, or Howell's Alkali Grass, is endemic to the park, meaning it grows within WHIS and nowhere else in the world.

WHIS management of plants dates to 1986, with David Biek and the California Native Plant Society's survey of WHIS to gather an inventory of flora in WHIS. Biek's survey identified seven plants listed on the California Native Plant Society's (CNPS) Inventory of Rare and Endangered Vascular Plants. Biek also compiled management recommendations for WHIS on how to protect the seven species.³⁶ Between 1988 and 2003, WHIS staff conducted targeted surveys for *Arnica venosa* and *Puccinellia howellii* populations, alongside intermittent surveys for other rare plants thought to inhabit the park.³⁷

The Klamath Inventory and Monitoring Network (Klamath I&M) program is a collaborative program among six NPS units in Northern California and southern Oregon, including Crater Lake National Park, Lassen Volcanic National Park, Lava Beds National Monument, Oregon Caves National Monument, Redwood National and State Parks, and WHIS. In 2003, Klamath I&M conducted an extensive survey of the historical locations of twelve rare plants.³⁸ The Klamath I&M is one of thirty-two inventorying and monitoring networks across the NPS that provides parks with scientific information and assistance. Over two field visits, the Network staff "focused on relocating sites of historic plant populations and collecting current data on species presence and abundance," one in the low country and the other in the high elevations of Coggins Park and Shasta Bally. The Network identified the following rare plants: Sanborn's onion (*Allium sanbornii* var. *sanbornii*), Salmon Mountains wakerobin (*Trillium ovatum* ssp. *oettingeri*), blue elderberry (*Sambucus mexicana*), and the Shasta County arnica (*Arnica venosa*). The Shasta County arnica, Klamath I&M noted, "was more extensive than previously recorded, suggesting the population may be expanding."³⁹ However, Klamath I&M's survey located less than one-third of the rare plant species thought to occur in Whiskeytown, according to WHIS staff.⁴⁰ The Klamath I&M recommended resurveying WHIS in a drier year as they had experienced an unseasonably wet early May in 2003.⁴¹

³⁵ Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, "Rare Plants of Whiskeytown as of March, 2010," March 2010, pp.1-19, subfolder "Old Stuff," folder "Puccinellia2," WHIS-DF.

³⁶ David Biek, "Management Recommendations for the Botanical Resources of the Whiskeytown National Recreation Area," March 30, 1988, folder "VEG_Special Status Species," WHIS-DF.

³⁷ Windy Bunn, Jennifer Gibson, and Laura Green, "Survey of Rare Plant Populations, Whiskeytown National Recreation Area," August 2005, p. 1, subfolder "2005," subfolder "Surveys," folder "VEG_Special Status Species," WHIS-DF.

³⁸ NPS, "Klamath Inventory & Monitoring Network: Science for Informed management," December 12, 2018, accessed November 2024, <https://www.nps.gov/im/klmn/index.htm>; Bunn et al., "Survey of Rare Plant Populations, Whiskeytown National Recreation Area," 2005, p. 1.

³⁹ Sean Smith, Jules Filipowski, Brian Basor, Daniel Sarr and Erik S. Jules, "Annual Report for the Klamath Network Inventory and Monitoring Program: FY 2003 Rare Plant Inventory," 2003, pp. 2, 7, subfolder "I&M," subfolder "Surveys," folder "VEG_Special Status Species," WHIS-DF.

⁴⁰ Bunn, et al., "Survey of Rare Plant Populations, Whiskeytown National Recreation Area," 2005, p. 1.

⁴¹ Smith, et al., "Annual Report for the Klamath Network Inventory and Monitoring Program: FY 2003 Rare Plant Inventory," 2003, p. 10.

WHIS staff initiated a follow-up survey in the spring of 2005. The 2005 surveys focused on five areas in the park: Shasta Bally, Buckhorn Bally, Crystal Creek Road, Mill Ponds at Highway 299, and Trinity Mountain Road. WHIS staff selected these sites based on two criteria: “(1) a high likelihood that the historic population could be relocated with the area descriptions provided by Biek and (2) a lack of verifiable evidence for the plant population since Biek’s inventory.” The 2005 surveys relocated nine historic populations, confirmed four rare species, identified two related species, and found that three species require further verification. Park staff who conducted the survey also recommended work to “verify historic voucher specimens” and to resurvey populations the following year during a “more favorable time of year.”⁴²

In 2010, WHIS staff compiled a document titled “Rare Plants of Whiskeytown as of March 2010.” The document was intended to highlight rare plants at WHIS whose populations were at risk from threats of shifting climate patterns and illegal plant collecting. Regarding a warming climate, WHIS staff worried about rare plant species in high elevations of WHIS that “may get forced out” due to hotter temperatures or fragmented habitats. Without these high-elevation habitats, researchers feared that the rare plants would face extinction. In addition to habitat loss, WHIS staff had to also contend with visitors illegally collecting the plants, a real problem as seven of the plant species had their location information posted on the internet.⁴³



Figure 18. *Puccinellia howellii* spring complex, 2003.
Source: Photograph on file at WHIS Archives.⁴⁴

⁴² Bunn, et al., “Survey of Rare Plant Populations, Whiskeytown National Recreation Area,” 2005, pp. 1, 11.

⁴³ WHIS, “Rare Plants of Whiskeytown as of March, 2010,” March 2010, pp. 2-4, subfolder “Old Stuff,” folder “Puccinellia2,” WHIS-DF.

⁴⁴ Photograph in subfolder “1.7.03,” subfolder “2003,” subfolder “Photos,” folder “Veg_Puccinellia howellii,” WHIS-DF.

Perhaps the most notable rare plant in the park is Howell's alkaligrass (*Puccinellia howellii*). The only place the plant occurs in the world is in a natural spring complex in WHIS, meaning the plant is endemic to Shasta County. The complex is composed of three salt springs near Crystal Creek. The springs, listed by the State of California as a Significant Natural Area (SHA□41), both support Howell's alkali grass and are also important to wildlife populations.⁴⁵

Due to its rarity, the scientific classification of Howell's alkaligrass took a circuitous route. In 1954, botanist John Thomas Howell and Lewis S. Rose came first across an unusual variety of *Puccinellia*. Collecting a specimen, Howell brought the grass to Jason Swallen, a grass specialist at the Smithsonian Institution. Swallen agreed with the botanists that the grass was "'curious.'" But neither Swallen nor Howell and Rose created a new taxon for the unique specimen at that moment in time.⁴⁶ It was not until thirty years after Howell and Rose's discovery that the grass would earn classification as a new species. In 1987 the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) realigned a portion of Highway 299 inside of WHIS. During the environmental assessment (EA) process, Caltrans environmental specialists found what they believed to be *Puccinellia pumila* growing in a mineral spring complex in the project area.⁴⁷ *Puccinellia pumila* was uncommon in California and prompted Caltrans to reach out to Professor Emeritus Jerrold I. Davis, at Cornell's School of Integrative Plant Science Plant Biology Section. Davis's work focused on the phylogenetic relationships of grasses (*Poaceae*) and other monocots and species-level studies. He was a leading expert on the grass genus *Puccinellia*.⁴⁸

In 1988, Davis visited WHIS to collect and observe the grass. Davis remarked that the "plants are unusual," and that initially he believed they were closer to Lemmon's alkaligrass (*Puccinellia lemmonii*).⁴⁹ Upon hearing that the grass was potentially *Puccinellia lemmonii*, Craig Martz, a Caltrans planner with a background in biology, urged that no changes be made to the EA his team was preparing for the road realignment and that it was "beginning to look like... less of a problem" since *Puccinellia lemmonii* was common to alkali sites in California.⁵⁰ In 1988, Martz contacted Davis again regarding the grass. Davis noted that the plant might represent an "atypical population" and expressed plans to return to WHIS that summer for further study, suggesting the possibility of a new species.⁵¹ Interestingly, David Biek visited the site during his 1986 survey of plants at WHIS and did not notice the grass, but did acknowledge in his recommendations that the alkali seep in which the grass grows should be protected as it was a "special habitat."⁵²

⁴⁵ WHIS, "Rare Plants of Whiskeytown as of March, 2010," 2010, p. 4.

⁴⁶ Jerrold I. Davis, "Puccinellia Howellii (Poaceae), A New Species from California," *Madroño* 37, no. 1 (January-March 1990): p. 55, accessed November 2024, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41424787>.

⁴⁷ Letter from Craig Martz (Caltrans Associate Environmental Planner) to Jerrold I. Davis (Cornell University), November 16, 1987, folder "Puccinellia," WHIS-DF.

⁴⁸ Cornell College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, "Jerrold Davis," University of Cornell, n.d., accessed November 2024, <https://cals.cornell.edu/jerrold-i-davis>.

⁴⁹ Postcard from Jerrold I. Davis to Craig Martz, n.d., folder "Puccinellia," WHIS-DF.

⁵⁰ Notes from Craig Martz Re: Postcard from Jerrold I Davis to Craig Martz, n.d., folder "Puccinellia," WHIS-DF.

⁵¹ Record of Conversation to Larry French from Craig Martz, "Status of Puccinellia Pumila at Crystal Creek," April 5, 1988, "Puccinellia" folder WHIS-DF.

⁵² Biek, "Management Recommendations for the Botanical Resources of the Whiskeytown National Recreation Area," 1988, p. 4.

After his field visit and research, Davis contacted Martz to notify him that the grass in question was “a previously undescribed species” that exists at just one location: a one-and-a-half-acre salt spring within WHIS.⁵³ In 1990, Davis published a paper that officially classified the grass as a new species and named the species *Puccinellia howellii*, after Howell.⁵⁴ Crews conducted field surveys at similar mineral springs throughout WHIS and did not find any other occurrence of *P. howellii*.⁵⁵

In 1991, after Davis published his findings, the State of California pushed for the inclusion of *P. howellii* as endangered on the State of California Fish and Game Commission’s list of endangered and threatened species. That same year, Caltrans submitted their proposed mitigation for realigning the road and maintaining the *P. howellii* population. The project would impact 1,200 square feet of mineral spring-fed habitat where the grass occurred.⁵⁶ Caltrans’s mitigation included a four-method plan. The first of these methods was “avoidance and minimization” of any damage to the spring habitat by designing retaining walls and adjusting fill slope grades. The second method was to employ “protection” by designating springs as Environmentally Sensitive Areas that were fenced off to access by all except for authorized personnel, adding a guard rail to the road to protect from vehicle-related damage, and finally by having the Center for Plant Conservation gather *P. howellii* seeds to ensure the species would survive in case of an “unforeseen catastrophic occurrence.” The third method was “restoration.” Caltrans selected a nearby site believed to have once supported the grass, disturbed and restored it to suitable habitat conditions, and then seeded it with *P. howellii*. The fourth mitigation effort was doing an “in-kind, on-site replace” at three areas along Willow Creek, reconstructing and relocating the existing channel and replanting cuttings from damaged areas to the new sites. All mitigation actions were to be monitored for success. If mitigation efforts failed, they were to be corrected and remedial actions put in place.⁵⁷ Ultimately, Caltrans realigned the highway in 1992, removing 1,200 square feet of the grass’s habit. To mitigate the habitat loss, in 1993 the agency restored a neighboring area that was thought to be historic habitat for *P. howellii*. Multiple *P. howellii* were transplanted to the restoration site.⁵⁸

⁵³ Letter from Jerrold I. Davis to Craig Martz, January 4, 1989, folder “Puccinellia,” WHIS-DF.

⁵⁴ Davis, “Puccinellia Howellii (Poaceae), A New Species From California,” pp. 55-58; and David J. Cooper and Evan C. Wolf, “A Restoration and Monitoring Plan for Puccinellia howellii, Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, California,” (Department of Forest, Rangeland and Watershed Stewardship: Colorado State University, 2007), p. 2, accessed November 2024, <http://sites.warnercnr.colostate.edu/davidcooper/wp-content/uploads/sites/15/2017/02/Restoration-Report-CooperWolf-FINAL.pdf>.

⁵⁵ Letter and listing form James R. Nelson (Natural Heritage Supervisor, Region 1) to Sharon Villa (Caltrans), “Review of Listing for Proposal for Puccinellia Howellii,” August 22, 1991, folder “Puccinellia,” WHIS-DF.

⁵⁶ Sharon Villa and Craig Martz, “Mitigation and Monitoring Plan: For 1.3 Miles of Realignment on Route 299, In Shasta County from 1.4 Miles West of Trinity Mountain Road to 0.2 Mile West of Clear Creek Bridge (Crystal Creek Curves Project),” March 1991, p. 1, folder “Puccinellia,” WHIS-DF.

⁵⁷ Sharon Villa and Craig Martz, “Mitigation and Monitoring Plan: For 1.3 Miles of Realignment on Route 299, In Shasta County from 1.4 Miles West of Trinity Mountain Road to 0.2 Mile West of Clear Creek Bridge (Crystal Creek Curves Project),” March 1991, pp. 1-6, 10, folder “Puccinellia,” WHIS-DF. In addition to the mitigation measures, scientists from the Rangeland Resources program at Humboldt State University also conducted “a broader study of the entire site including water chemistry, soil, and vegetation analyses, greenhouse experiments, and establishment of monitoring plots to track vegetation changes.” See K. O. Fulgham, “Autecological Study of *Puccinellia Howellii*,” March 1995, folder “Puccinellia,” WHIS-DF; Letter from Mary Bacca to Charlene Fain, “Soils samples for cation work,” February 1, 1994, folder “Puccinellia,” WHIS-DF; and Cooper and Wolf, “A Restoration and Monitoring Plan for Puccinellia howellii, Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, California,” p. 2.

⁵⁸ “Developing a Restoration Plan for the Rare Saltgrass, *Puccinellia howellii*, at Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, Continuation of CSURM-71,” Project Cover Sheet, Rocky Mountains Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit, Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, 2008, pp. 1, 3-4, subfolder “2008,” subfolder “CESU Agreement,” subfolder “Colorado State University,” folder “VEG_Puccinellia howellii,” WHIS-DF.

In 1999, Chief of Natural Resource Management, Bud Ivey, collaborated with the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to secure funding to protect the grass.⁵⁹ USFWS deemed *P. howellii* a “highly rare” plant, qualifying it for funding under the Wildlife and Natural Areas Conservation Act.⁶⁰ The following year, WHIS specialists Gretchen Ring (botanist) and Jennifer Gibson (ecologist) prepared a draft petition for *P. howellii* to be included as an endangered species under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA), though the park did not ultimately submit the petition.⁶¹ In March of 2004, WHIS/NPS, Caltrans, California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG), and USFWS entered into a conservation agreement for *P. howellii*.⁶² The agreement outlined threats, goals, and action items for each party. For WHIS, the agreement stated that while the grass was not yet listed as an endangered species by either the State of California or the federal government, the NPS should still manage it “as if they were listed species.”⁶³ As Gibson later recalled, participating agencies determined that collaborative management through the conservation agreement reduced the need for formal listing and allowed greater flexibility in implementing restoration actions.⁶⁴

In 2005, WHIS contracted Colorado State University professor David J. Cooper and two master’s students at the Warner College of Natural Resources to study the grass’s ecological role and needs to better inform management decisions. Cooper compiled a site history, an analysis of plant sensitivity to water geochemistry; and an analysis of monitoring, management, and mitigation options.⁶⁵ In 2007, Cooper’s published his report, which recommended six extensive restoration projects. Those included extending a freshwater discharge pipe to allow water to enter Willow Creek; removing a berm at the highway pull-off near Spring 1 to allow groundwater to flow to the eastern side; preventing freshwater from flowing into Spring 2; removing sediment and fill from the *Juncus* marsh, Spring 2, and Spring 3; and removing the alluvial fan and stream channel from the culvert to Willow Creek. Cooper urged that this work to be completed in collaborations with Caltrans, CDFG, and the USFWS.⁶⁶

While *P. howellii* survived for some time at the Spring 2 restoration site, another native grass, *Distichlis spicata*, overtook the *P. howellii*.⁶⁷ NPS staff wondered if they should take steps to “interfere” in the area.⁶⁸ From 2010 to 2014, ecologist Jennifer Gibson and other WHIS staff collaborated with Colorado State University scientists to perform a

⁵⁹ Bud Ivey retired in 2001 after working at WHIS for twenty-seven years. Within WHIS documentation, “Resource” in this position title is sometimes plural: Chief of Natural Resources Management. See “Annual Report: 2010,” WHIS, p. 4, subfolder “Superintendents_Annual_Report,” subfolder “ADMIN_PLANS,” subfolder “Not_Accessioned,” folder “Administrative_History,” WHIS-DF.

⁶⁰ Email from Ron Clementsen to Bud Ivey, “PUHO,” November 24, 1999, folder “Puccinellia,” WHIS-DF; and WHIS, *General Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement*, 1999, p. 109.

⁶¹ Gretchen Ring and Jennifer Gibson, “A Petition to the US Fish and Wildlife Service for Howell’s Alkali Grass *Puccinellia howellii* Davis,” 2000, p. 6, folder “Puccinellia,” WHIS-DF.

⁶² “Draft Conservation Agreement for *Puccinellia howellii*,” March 2004, folder “Puccinellia,” WHIS-DF.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁶⁴ Jennifer Gibson, written responses to interview questions, email correspondence with authors, April 2026.

⁶⁵ Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, “Scope of Work for the Second Phase of Assessing the Hydraulic, Geochemical, and Sediment Flux Impacts to *Puccinellia howellii*, Whiskeytown National Recreation Area (Cont. of CSU-92),” 2007, pp. 2-4, folder “Puccinellia,” WHIS-DF.

⁶⁶ Cooper and Wolf, “A Restoration and Monitoring Plan for *Puccinellia howellii*, Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, California,” pp. 1, 2, 21.

⁶⁷ Ring and Gibson, “A Petition to the US Fish and Wildlife Service for Howell’s Alkali Grass *Puccinellia howellii* Davis,” 2000, p. 6.

⁶⁸ Email from Gretchen Ring (WHIS/NPS) to Ron Clementsen (USFWS), “*Puccinellia howellii* meeting,” December 22, 1998, folder “Puccinellia,” WHIS-DF.

control study on *D. spicata* using herbicides. The herbicides successfully killed the *D. spicata*, but unfortunately also killed the *P. howellii* as well. Ultimately, the study revealed that finding, restoring, and preparing suitable habitat for *P. howellii* to thrive would continue to be “the most complicated component.”⁶⁹

The history of *P. howellii* is characteristic of Whiskeytown’s evolving approach to resource management within complex administrative and ecological contexts. As a species endemic to a single location within the park, its survival required collaboration across multiple agencies and stakeholders, including Caltrans, state and federal wildlife services, and academic institutions. In 2008 and 2009, for example, WHIS worked with Caltrans to create an underdrain below Highway 299 to move “mineralized spring water” to habitat where *P. howellii* grows.⁷⁰ This case highlights the challenges of managing resources situated in jurisdictional grey areas, where land ownership and administrative responsibilities intersect. The identification and conservation measures for *P. howellii* required coordination between access management and resource protection. The species’ management incorporated scientific research into resource planning, consistent with NPS policy and practice.

Backcountry Management

Though comprising most of WHIS’s land area, the backcountry at WHIS did not see much attention from resource managers until the 1970s. Management of the backcountry was also largely framed in terms of recreation. The 1964 Master Plan stated that outside of the developed front-country areas, WHIS’s backcountry was “generally rough and broken and access will be difficult for both protection and public use.”⁷¹ In the 1970s, the backcountry of WHIS started to receive more attention from planners as more visitors came to WHIS and showed interest in places beyond the lakeshore.

The 1975 Management Consultation Team called for WHIS to author a “Backcountry Use Plan,” and develop management standards and plans to manage visitor use beyond the developed areas of the lakeshore.⁷² The 1976 Master Plan stated that the “backcountry forms the greatest area of the Whiskeytown unit, yet it is the least understood and least used by the visitor,” but that development of the backcountry could offer visitors some respite from crowds at the lake.⁷³ Despite the park’s desire to foster more backcountry use, visitors tended to stick to the front country through the 1990s, with only 4 percent of visitors venturing away from the lakeshore.⁷⁴

⁶⁹ “Developing a Restoration Plan for the Rare Saltgrass, *Puccinellia howellii*, at Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, Continuation of CSURM-71,” pp. 1, 3-4; “Monitoring the Second Phase of Salt Spring Habitat Restoration for the Rare Salt Grass *Puccinellia howellii* at Whiskeytown National Recreation Area,” Rocky Mountains Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit and Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, 2014, p. 4, subfolder “2008,” subfolder “CESU Agreement,” subfolder “Colorado State University,” subfolder “VEG_ *Puccinellia howellii*,” folder “Digital Files Sent by GA post Research Trip,” WHIS-DF.

⁷⁰ WHIS, “Superintendent’s Annual Report for Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, 2008-2009,” October 2009, p. 37.

⁷¹ US DOI, NPS Division of Landscape Architecture, Western Office, Design and Construction, “Narrative: Part of the Master Plan Whiskeytown Reservoir Recreation Area, California,” October 10, 1964, Sheet 0 of 4, drawing RA-WHI 3045, p. 2, file, “1964_Land_Preservation_Plan_Narrative_WHIS_611_3045,” subfolder “ADMIN_PLANS,” subfolder “Not_Accessioned,” folder “Administrative_History,” WHIS-DF.

⁷² “Whiskeytown National Recreation Area Management Consultation Report,” 1975, p. 14.

⁷³ WHIS, *Final Master Plan*, 1976, p. 19.

⁷⁴ WHIS, “FY90 Statement for Interpretation,” 1990, p. 29, folder “1990s,” WHIS-DF.

In the 2000s, Superintendent James Milestone pushed for more backcountry access and amenities. Initially, WHIS staff worked to write EAs for individual backcountry trails. Ultimately, the NPS Pacific West Region (PWR) requested a comprehensive backcountry management plan in substitution for standalone EAs.⁷⁵ WHIS staff responded accordingly and spent two years researching, planning, and drafting a plan before submitting it to PWR for review.⁷⁶ To organize the plan, WHIS staff categorized park lands into different use-type “zones.” The committee defined three zones: (1) the Solitude Zone, the least developed parts of WHIS where seeing another person or signs of people seldom occurred; (2) the Medium Use Zone, with some established recreational amenities (trails, hike-in campsites, bear boxes), and the presence of “a few other people...although still quiet;” and (3) the High Use Zone, with drive-in access and numerous amenities (tent pads, fire pits, tables, vault toilets). By defining use zones, WHIS staff could manage backcountry areas more efficiently.⁷⁷ By 2012, WHIS had uploaded a draft of the plan for public review and comment.⁷⁸

The zoning strategy adopted by WHIS in the 2000s structured visitor access and resource protection through designated areas of solitude, medium use, and high use. This framework allocated management attention according to anticipated use patterns and documented resource conditions. The approach corresponded with public land management practices that organized recreation according to capacity and impact considerations. Within this structure, zoning functioned as a planning mechanism for administering conservation and recreation objectives within a single unit.

Conclusion

Natural resource management at WHIS developed gradually through the establishment of formal programs, the increasing specialization of staff roles, and a growing reliance on interagency and university partnerships. Early planning documents treated “natural resources” largely as an adjunct to site development and visitor use—emphasizing landscaping, basic protection measures, and recreational amenities—while acknowledging that intensive lake-focused recreation would generate the most immediate management demands. Over time, however, WHIS’s resource work moved beyond broad prospectuses toward defined programs supported by inventories, monitoring protocols, and project planning tied to regional and national NPS directives.

By the mid-1970s and especially the 1980s, the establishment of a dedicated resource management division, the production of baseline inventories, and the use of volunteers and partner organizations (including the California Native Plant Society) signaled a shift toward more systematic and data-driven stewardship. In subsequent decades, WHIS’s natural resource portfolio expanded into sustained monitoring and targeted management problems—human–bear conflicts in developed areas, bald eagle nesting in high-visitation zones, rare flora conservation, and backcountry planning and zoning—each of which required park staff to integrate wildlife protection, visitor management, and operational capacity within a single administrative framework.

⁷⁵ Jennifer Gibson (Chief of Resources and Interpretation, WHIS, 2016–2020), personal communication with authors, fall 2024.

⁷⁶ “Superintendent’s Annual Report for Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, 2008-2009,” p. 36.

⁷⁷ Tricia Ford, “Backcountry Management Plan Committee Meeting” notes, June 19, 2007, folder “CR61” WHIS-DF.

⁷⁸ “Proposed Backcountry Management Plan Topics for Scoping,” WHIS, accessed October 21, 2025, <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/document.cfm?documentID=45483>.

Several of the chapter's cases also illustrate how WHIS resource management repeatedly unfolded in jurisdictional and infrastructural "in-between" spaces. The long-running stewardship of *Puccinellia howellii*—an endemic species located in a corridor shaped by highway design, mitigation obligations, and multi-agency conservation agreements—illustrates how WHIS's resource responsibilities often depended on coordination with Caltrans, state and federal wildlife agencies, and academic specialists. More broadly, WHIS's ability to move from identifying resource issues to implementing durable solutions was shaped by funding cycles, staffing capacity, and the persistent imbalance between concentrated lakeshore visitation and the park's statutory responsibility to steward the full landscape. The record shows an institution building resource-management capacity over time—shifting from generalized goals to programmatic practice—while operating within the practical constraints of a recreation-centered unit. WHIS's experience demonstrates that natural resource stewardship in a national recreation area was less the product of a single turning point than an accretion of plans, positions, partnerships, and protocols that gradually extended NPS management attention from the lake's intensively used nodes into the larger, more complex ecological systems of the backcountry.

CHAPTER 5.2: CULTURAL RESOURCES AND THEIR MANAGEMENT

Cultural resource management (CRM) at Whiskeytown National Recreation Area (WHIS) did not begin as a central administrative priority. The 1964 Master Plan explicitly deemphasized historical and archeological interpretation, directing that such subjects were to be “subordinated since the area is not rich in those resources.”¹ Early planning documents show the park’s primary orientation toward recreation infrastructure and reservoir development, and formal preservation frameworks were limited in scope.

By the late 1970s, however, cultural resource documentation and compliance responsibilities began to assume greater administrative visibility. In 1978, National Park Service (NPS) historian Anna Coxe Toogood published a Historic Resource Study (HRS) that provided the first systematic historical synthesis of the area.² That study, along with subsequent cultural resource management plans and preservation compliance requirements, introduced a more structured approach to identifying, evaluating, and protecting historic and archeological assets within the unit. Within little more than a decade, WHIS had documented, evaluated, and begun interpreting a wider range of cultural resources than earlier planning documents anticipated, effectively revising the 1964 Master Plan’s assessment of their scope.

Over time, cultural resource responsibilities expanded through the production of management plans, compliance reviews, historic district documentation, and coordination with regional specialists and partner agencies. These developments layered preservation obligations into the park’s administrative framework without displacing its recreation-oriented planning priorities. This chapter traces how WHIS moved from the early marginalization of historical interpretation to a more formalized cultural resource program shaped by federal preservation law, NPS policy, and site-specific management needs.

Cultural Resources Below Whiskeytown Lake

When the US Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) created Whiskeytown Lake in 1963 by damming and flooding the valley floor, the agency submerged more than trees, grasses, and other vegetation. Significant cultural resources existed there, too. Several important Wintu historical sites now exist below the water. In 1958, five years before the USBR

¹ US Department of the Interior (DOI), National Park Service (NPS) Division of Landscape Architecture, Western Office, Design and Construction, “The Staff: Narrative, Master Plan Whiskeytown Reservoir Recreation Area Drawings,” October 1964, p. 10, Sheet 4 of 4, subfolder “Facilities_Planning_Maps,” folder “FACILITIES,” WHIS-DF.

² Anna Coxe Toogood, *Historic Resource Study: Whiskeytown National Recreation Area*, National Park Service, October 1978, subfolder “1978,” folder “1970-1979,” WHIS-DF.

completed Whiskeytown Lake and seven years before the NPS developed WHIS's first master plan, Adan E. Treganza conducted an archeological survey of the land that would become part of the national recreation area, including areas destined to be submerged by Whiskeytown Lake. During the survey, the crew found "35 prehistoric sites along creek terraces, including 'about 24' within the 1250-foot level flood zone." Additionally, the archeologists examined two village sites, a sweat house, and a dance house. Even with these significant findings, the authors reported that other archeological sites "were probably overlooked or unrecorded."³ Although this information was readily available to WHIS's planners, it did not factor into their language in that first master planning document.⁴

The Whiskeytown Cemetery originally served the mining community of Whiskeytown.⁵ In the early 1960s, officials moved the cemetery in preparation for the valley's flooding. The cemetery is now located near the Mount Shasta Mine Loop Trail.⁶ Approximately sixty to eighty individuals were interred and subsequently identified in the new cemetery, including men, women, and children. The cemetery has remained in use and is now managed by Shasta County. In addition to the cemetery, Whiskeytown's schoolhouse was moved to Shasta to avoid the valley's flooding.⁷ The Post Office was also moved to a site on Whiskey Creek Road (see Chapter 7.2: Concessionaire Visions and Realities). While some residents moved their buildings to new sites, other buildings were torn down in preparation for the reservoir.⁸

³ Janet P. Eidsness, "Report on 1986-1987 Archaeological Fieldwork conducted by National Park Service Staff in Whiskeytown Unit, Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area, Shasta County California," February 1988, p. 2, subfolder "1988," subfolder "1980-1980," WHIS-DF. Also see, Adan E. Treganza, "Salvage archaeology in the Trinity Reservoir area, Northern California, field season 1958," Berkeley: University of California Department of Anthropology, 1959 accessed November 2024, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.31210001232147&seq=7>.

⁴ Whiskeytown Unit, "The Visitor: Narrative, Master Plan Whiskeytown Reservoir Recreation Area," October 1964, p. 8, Sheet 3 of 4, subfolder "Facilities_Planning_Maps," folder "FACILITIES," WHIS-DF.

⁵ Whiskeytown National Recreation Area (WHIS), "Cultural Resources Management Program: An Addendum to the Cultural Resources Management Plan," January 1985, p. 178, subfolder "ADMIN_PLANS," subfolder "Administrative_History," folder "Admin-History Zip 6.22.22," WHIS-DF.

⁶ It is unclear in the primary sources which group or agency moved the cemetery and schoolhouse. NPS, *Whiskeytown/Shasta/Trinity, Whiskeytown Unit Final Master Plan*, July 1976, p. 6, subfolder "ADMIN_PLANS," subfolder "Administrative_History," folder "Admin History 6.22.22," WHIS-DF.

⁷ Toogood, *Historic Resource Study: Whiskeytown National Recreation Area*, 1978, pp. 79, 151.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 82. According to WHIS staff, the historic post office burned down in the Carr Fire.



Figure 19. Camden House, 1993.
Source: Photograph on file at WHIS Archives.⁹

Tower House Historic District

Through the 1960s, WHIS pursued few (CRM) projects. At the time, staff at the new unit were focused on administering recreation and tracking patterns of use. By the 1970s, however, WHIS pursued listing the Tower House Historic District (THHD) to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP).¹⁰ The district is named after Levi H. Tower, who established a hotel at the site during the 1850s. The Tower House Hotel was three stories tall and surrounded by orchards and gardens, providing a small oasis in a dry landscape. For miners and travelers, the hotel, a twenty-one-room establishment constructed in 1853, served as a vital hub. While the original Tower House Hotel did not survive the twentieth century (it burned down in 1919), other buildings in the district remained, including the Camden family house, tenant house, servants' quarters, a barn, a carriage house, orchards, the Levi Tower graveyard, and other outbuildings.¹¹ Additionally, the El Dorado Mine, which operated from 1885 to 1968, also survived. Its last owner and operator, Frank C. Bickford, sold it to directly to the NPS.¹²

⁹ Photograph in subfolder "THHD," folder "FACILITIES," WHIS-DF.

¹⁰ WHIS, *Final Master Plan*, 1976, p. 7.

¹¹ Anna Coxe Toogood and David G. Henderson, *Historic Structure Report: Tower House Historic District, Historical and Architectural Data Section, Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, National Park Service*, May 1973, pp. 1, 3, 6, subfolder "ADMIN_PLANS," subfolder "Administrative_History," folder "Admin-History Zip 6.22.22," WHIS-DF

¹² Toogood and Henderson, *Historic Structure Report: Tower House Historic District, Historical and Architectural Data Section, Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, National Park Service*, 1973, pp. 3, 5.

WHIS enlisted the help of Historian F. Ross Holland to prepare the NRHP nomination. The nomination argues the district is significant under Criteria A for European American Settlement in Northern California during the Gold Rush. The original proposed district boundaries encompassed twenty acres and fourteen resources. The Keeper of the NRHP accepted the nomination in July 1973.¹³ Initially, the district's historic irrigation ditches were not included in the nomination but were considered eligible.¹⁴ The successful nomination marked WHIS's first NRHP listing and formalized its preservation responsibilities. Although the remaining structures are more closely associated with Charles Camden, the district retained the Tower House name, referencing Levi Tower's earlier hotel at the site.¹⁵

Stabilization and Rehabilitation at THHD

In 1973, one year after its listing, the NPS described THHD as “a fragile community of abandoned structures” that “stand in a precarious location and in a jeopardized condition.”¹⁶ Decades of neglect had left the buildings deteriorated and structurally vulnerable. Park officials also noted that the district's deteriorated condition did not clearly convey its historical significance.¹⁷ The same year, WHIS and the regional office developed a historic structure report to inventory and create a preservation plan for THHD's buildings and grounds.¹⁸ In 1975, Robert M. Cox, historic architect at the Western Region, also assessed the buildings in THHD and provided a list of recommendations to stabilize the Camden House, its outbuildings, and the Mill Creek Tenant House and barn.¹⁹ Together, the two reports suggested analyzing historical photographs and other records to recreate fences, reestablish trees and orchards, rehabilitate building interiors and exteriors, rehabilitate the El Dorado Mine, build a new footbridge, build a corral adjacent to the barn, and perform archeological inspections on foundations known to exist around the area, including the Tower House Hotel, a blacksmith shop, and a sawmill.²⁰ The Camden House required significant work. Words such as dry rot, buckling,

¹³ F. Ross Holland for NPS, “National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form: Tower House Historic District,” July 2, 1973; and WHIS, *Final Master Plan*, 1976, p. 7.

¹⁴ Whiskeytown Unit, *Statement for Management*, December 1983, p. 23, subfolder “Superintendents Annual Report,” folder “Admin Plans,” WHIS-DF; WHIS, *Final Master Plan*, 1976, p. 7. The fourteen resources included in the 1973 Tower House District nomination were: The Tower House Hotel site; Camden House; Camden House outbuildings (including garage and carriage house); foot bridge behind the Camden House; apple orchard; Levi Tower grave; open pasture; barn; Mill Creek tenant farm house; vehicle bridge remnants over Clear Creek; El Dorado/Bickford Mine; irrigation system from Crystal Creek to Camden House (listed separately as Irrigation System 165 & 166); Camden sawmill site; Camden grave. See Holland, NRHP Nomination Form: Tower House Historic District”; and WHIS, *Whiskeytown Fire Management Plan*, 2022, April 2022, p. 83, subfolder “Not_Accessioned,” subfolder “ADMIN_PLANS,” folder “Administrative_History,” WHIS-DF. WHIS nominated the Crystal Creek Water Ditch as part of a NRHP Historic District in 1983.

¹⁵ Toogood and Henderson, *Historic Structure Report: Tower House Historic District, Historical and Architectural Data Section, Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, National Park Service*, 1973, p. 6.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ In the early 1970s, the USBR proposed building a second reservoir above Whiskeytown Lake, which would flood THHD entirely. That outcome would make any restoration efforts moot since THHD would “simply disappear.” That reservoir did not come to be. See Toogood and Henderson, *Historic Structure Report: Tower House Historic District, Historical and Architectural Data Section, Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, National Park Service*, 1973, pp. 6-7; and Western Region Ad Hoc Management Consultation Team, “Whiskeytown National Recreation Area Management Consultation Report,” November 11-14, 1975, p. 17, folder “1970s,” WHIS-DF.

¹⁹ Robert M. Cox, “Tower House Historic District, Whiskeytown National Recreation Area,” NPS Western Region, September 3, 1975, pp. 1-3, subfolder “ADMIN_PLANS,” subfolder “Not_Accessioned,” folder “Administrative_History,” WHIS-DF.

²⁰ Toogood and Henderson, *Historic Structure Report: Tower House Historic District, Historical and Architectural Data Section, Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, National Park Service*, 1973, pp. 6-7.



Figure 20. Camden House prior to restoration, ca. 1981.
Source: Photograph on file at WHIS Archives.²¹

disintegration, hazard, bowed, vandalism, asbestos, falling, and collapsed were used to describe the condition of the main house, guest house, and servants' quarters. The buildings needed new porches, siding, structural supports, eaves, glass windows, roof shingles, chimney, fencing, paint, and weed removal.²² Photographs from the 1970s show the Camden House boarded up and overgrown, contrasting with its later restored appearance.²³

Although inspection reports from the mid-1970s called for emergency action to preserve the buildings at THHD, WHIS did not initiate stabilization efforts until 1981, at least six years later. Fortunately, Camden House and associated buildings were still standing. Stabilization efforts included many of the suggestions made by Robert M. Cox in 1975, including replacing the house's roof, removing a tree that was causing damage, and performing stabilization work on the house's foundation, which was in "an advanced state of deterioration."²⁴ In 1982, WHIS completed the restoration of the Camden House's front and back porches and a full rehabilitation of the Tenant House with foundation stabilization work, interior restoration, and the addition of a new waterline.²⁵ In 1985, with Camden House's exterior stabilized, staff looked toward interior fixes.²⁶ Over the next few years, WHIS wallpapered rooms, installed a new fire and intrusion alarm system, and repainted areas of the building.²⁷

²¹ Photograph filename "THHD_Preservation_Maintenance_Rehab_1981," subfolder THHD," subfolder "FACILITIES_RECORDS," folder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF.

²² Cox, "Tower House Historic District, Whiskeytown National Recreation Area," pp. 1-3.

²³ Ibid., pp. 8-9.

²⁴ WHIS, "Tower House District: A Partial Photo Records-Camden House: Foundation Stabilization, Arch. Monitoring, Finish Roof Replacement," Summer 1981, subfolder "THHD," folder "FACILITIES," WHIS-DF; and WHIS, "Tower House Historic District Post 1980 Restoration," n.d., pp. 1-4, subfolder "THHD," folder "FACILITIES," WHIS-DF.

²⁵ WHIS, "Tower House Historic District Post 1980 Restoration," n.d., pp. 1-4, subfolder "THHD," folder "FACILITIES," WHIS-DF.

²⁶ WHIS, "Cultural Resources Management Program: An Addendum to the Cultural Resources Management Plan," 1985, pp. 3-4.

²⁷ Ray Foust, "Superintendent's Annual Report, 1986," 1987, p. 4, folder "A2621 Reports Superintendents," box HQ6, WHIS-AF; and Ray Foust, "Superintendent's Annual Report, 1987," 1988, p. 2, 3, folder "A2621 Reports Superintendents," box HQ6, WHIS-AF.



Figure 21. Photo of Camden House interior after restoration, ca. 1998.
Source: Photograph on file at WHIS Archives.

Work on saving and restoring THHD continued into the mid-1990s. WHIS leadership authorized the use of Cultural Cyclic funds for new work on the Camden House, which included a new roof, carpet runners, and purchase of stanchions to protect collections.²⁸ The 1999 General Management Plan (GMP) called for the completion of a Historic Furnishings Report for the Camden House, which would inform interpretation for the site.²⁹ Nearly three decades after initial survey and preservation efforts began, the twenty-acre district encompassed sixteen sites and structures.³⁰ By the late 1990s, THHD functioned as both a preserved historic district and an interpreted visitor site.

The THHD Cultural Landscape

As WHIS staff shifted from structural stabilization toward interpretation, they began evaluating THHD within the framework of cultural landscape management. The NPS defines a cultural landscape is a historically significant property that shows evidence of human interaction with the physical environment.³¹ In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the NPS directed units to assess eligible landscapes for inclusion in the Cultural Landscape Inventory (CLI). Whiskeytown initiated this process for THHD during that period.³²

²⁸ David Pugh, "Whiskeytown National Recreation Area Annual Report, Fiscal Year 1996," 1996, p. 9. folder "A2621 Reports Superintendents," box HQ6, WHIS-AF.

²⁹ WHIS, *Whiskeytown Unit General Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement*, July 1999, p. 14, subfolder "ADMIN_PLANS," subfolder "Not_Accessioned," folder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF.

³⁰ "Whiskeytown National Recreation Area: Business Plan," August 2003, p. 7, filename "WHISBIZPlanprintquality," subfolder "ADMIN_PLANS," folder "LIBRARY-REPORTS," WHIS-DF

³¹ NPS, "Cultural Landscapes 101," updated July 12, 2023, accessed November 2024, <https://www.nps.gov/articles/cultural-landscapes-101.htm>.

³² NPS, "Cultural Landscapes in the National Park Service: Good Root Stock," September 22, 2023, accessed November 2024, <https://www.nps.gov/articles/cultural-landscapes-good-root-stock.htm>.

Starting in 1998, practitioners completed a “Level II” inventory of THHD Cultural Landscape.³³ The inventory classified THHD as a rural vernacular landscape, in fair condition, which should be preserved and maintained because of its historical integrity.³⁴ A substantial portion of the recommended work focused on the historic Camden orchard within district boundaries. Although THHD includes additional landscape features such as forested areas and water conveyance systems, early preservation efforts concentrated on the orchard.³⁵ The orchard, composed of 167 fruit and nut trees, historically provided food and amenity value for guests of the Tower House Hotel and later residents of the Camden House. Levi Tower planted the first trees in 1853, and the Camden family maintained them into the mid-twentieth century. The orchard was described as among the oldest surviving remnants of Whiskeytown’s nineteenth-century settlement landscape and as a repository of heirloom fruit tree cultivars.³⁶

Preserving a nineteenth-century orchard required different management strategies than preserving historic structures. In the early 2000s, orchard rehabilitation initiatives began, receiving “considerable time, effort, and funding... after years of neglect.”³⁷ In 2005, the Tower House Historic District Cultural Landscape Report, Part I, set forth a series of projects to restore the cultural landscape. Crews planted grafted trees from the original trees that lived “in the Gold Rush days” to preserve their “rare genetic stock.”³⁸ In 2007, WHIS botanist Gretchen Ring and Rico Montenegro, certified arborist and consultant, conducted tree health and disease mitigation to save trees in the orchard. Ring and Montenegro focused on controlling fire blight, a destructive fruit tree disease.³⁹ Ring, Montenegro, and volunteers removed fire blight from thirty-five trees and pruned three trees near the Tenant House “for the first time since the NPS acquired the site.” Ring recommended regular pruning to maintain the orchard’s seedlings.⁴⁰ As former WHIS staff Jennifer Gibson recalled, Ring led the orchard’s restoration work from the 1990s into the early 2000s, working with Montenegro and volunteers, while subsequent program expansion depended on administrative coordination and external funding secured by park leadership.⁴¹ In 2013, WHIS staff performed additional work at the Camden Orchard funded by Cultural Cyclic Maintenance monies. The park hired an arborist for pruning, fertilizing, and mulching the trees to promote their health.⁴² Like other cultural resources within the district, the orchard required ongoing annual maintenance to sustain its health and historic character over time.⁴³

³³ Kathleen Fitzgerald, “Camden House Historic District, Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area Cultural Landscapes Inventory,” NPS, 2003, subfolder “Camden House,” folder “Cultural Resource Reports PRIVILEGED,” WHIS-DF.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. iii and 7.

³⁵ WHIS, *General Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement*, 1999, p. 14.

³⁶ NPS, Pacific West Region Cultural Landscapes Program, “Tower House Historic District Interim Orchard Management Plan,” July 2016, p. xiv, accessed November 2024, <https://npshistory.com/publications/whis/thhd-orchard-mgt-plan-2016.pdf>.

³⁷ WHIS, “SOW for Historic Orchard Treatments for Fireblight, Tower House Historic District, Whiskeytown National Recreation Area,” (filename “Gretchen SOW”), n.d., subfolder “Orchards,” subfolder “Camden House,” subfolder “ALBERTI,” folder “Supt,” WHIS-DF.

³⁸ James Milestone to Wayne Donaldson, Office of Historic Preservation, California Department of Parks and Recreation, “WHIS 50-2 Orchard Restoration at the Tower House Historic District, Whiskeytown Unit of the Whiskeytown Shasta-Trinity NRA, National Park Service,” February 9, 2005, p. 1, folder “Unmarked Folder_ Milestone Compliance Correspondence,” box HQ 6, WHIS-AF.

³⁹ WHIS, “SOW for Historic Orchard Treatments”; “Interagency Meeting Summary,” Shasta College, October 16, 1997, p. 1, folder “Agreements,” WHIS-DF; “Assessment of Actions Having an Effect on Historic Properties,” Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, June 30, 2018, p. 1 subfolder “2018,” folder “Cultural_Resource_Reports-PRIVILEGED,” WHIS-DF.

⁴⁰ Gretchen Ring, “Accomplishment Report, Whiskeytown Historic Orchard Fireblight removal,” September 9, 2007, subfolder “Orchards,” subfolder “Camden House,” subfolder “ALBERTI,” folder “Supt,” WHIS-DF.

⁴¹ Jennifer Gibson, written responses to interview questions, email correspondence with authors, April 2026.

⁴² James Milestone, “Whiskeytown National Recreation Area’s Annual Report, 2013,” p. 7, folder “Unnamed 5,” box HQ 2, WHIS-AF.

⁴³ NPS, Pacific West Region Cultural Landscapes Program, “Tower House Historic District Interim Orchard Management Plan,” 2016, p. xiv.



Figure 22. Arborist at work in the Orchard, ca. 2013.
Source: Photograph on file at WHIS Archives.⁴⁶

Despite sustained restoration efforts, wildfire risk remained a persistent management concern. In 2016, the NPS Cultural Landscapes Program noted in the Interim Orchard Management Plan that “the potential for wildfire at Whiskeytown NRA is omnipresent,” identifying the possible loss of the orchard as a significant risk.⁴⁴ That risk came to pass in 2018, when the Carr Fire burned through the park and damaged all four historic orchards within THHD. Of the 168 trees—including apple, cherry, cherry plum, crabapple, grape, hazelnut, pear, persimmon, quince, and walnut—sixty-eight were charred and dead, thirty-four were destroyed, fifty-seven were in poor condition, six were in fair condition, and three remained in good condition. The fire substantially altered the condition of a landscape that had been the focus of decades of rehabilitation work.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ NPS, Pacific West Region Cultural Landscapes Program, “Tower House Historic District Interim Orchard Management Plan,” 2016, p. 108.

⁴⁵ WHIS, “Post Fire Orchard Assessment,” 2018, p. 7, subfolder “AAA_BASELINE_DOCUMENTS,” folder “Administrative_History,” WHIS-DF.

⁴⁶ Photograph in folder “2013_Orchard,” WHIS DF.



Figure 23. Photo of orchard after Carr Fire, September 11, 2018. Source: Photograph by Damon Arthur, Redding Record Searchlight.⁴⁷

In the aftermath of the Carr Fire WHIS staff, including Jennifer Gibson, partnered with the Fruit Tree Foundation and Humboldt Cider Company to propagate surviving historic trees through grafting.⁴⁸ Approximately thirty historic apple trees were grafted onto new rootstocks and planted in Eureka. In 2021, the park worked with John Muir National Historic Site horticulturist Keith Park and the SMART Workforce Center to replant grafted trees within the THHD. Planning documents indicate that orchard rehabilitation required protective measures including mulching, irrigation, fencing, and phased reestablishment.⁴⁹

Post-fire management planning also addressed wildfire risk within THHD. Documentation from this period indicates an intent to avoid applying fire retardants directly to historic buildings or orchard landscapes unless necessary to protect human life. Instead, cultural and natural resource staff incorporated alternative mitigation strategies such as mechanical thinning, invasive species control, pile burning, and targeted grazing.⁵⁰ The rehabilitation of the orchard and THHD illustrates the level of coordination required to manage Whiskeytown's cultural landscapes.

⁴⁷ Photograph accessed April 2026, <https://www.redding.com/story/news/2018/09/11/whiskeytown-historic-apple-fruit-trees-burned-carr-fire-california/1202198002/>.

⁴⁸ "Humboldt Heritage Tree Repository," Scientific Research and Collecting Permit, WHIS, Study # WHIS-00142, March 31, 2019, subfolder "Humboldt, Cider Company," folder "Research and Collection Permits," WHIS-DF.

⁴⁹ Cultural Landscapes Program, NPS, "Orchard Rehabilitation Planting at Whiskeytown National Recreation Area," *Landscape Culture*, Winter 2022, folder "Cultural Resources Reports-PRIVILEGED," WHIS-DF.

⁵⁰ WHIS, *Whiskeytown Fire Management Plan*, 2022, April 2022, p. 21, subfolder "Not_Accessioned," subfolder "ADMIN_PLANS," folder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF; and NPS, Pacific West Region, Cultural Landscapes Program "Tower House Historic District Interim Orchard Management Plan," 2016, pp. 38-39, 76, 105-106.

Archeological Resources, 1970s–1980s

As previously noted, archeological investigations at Whiskeytown predated the formal establishment of the national recreation area. In 1958, Adan E. Treganza conducted fieldwork in the valley that would later be inundated by Whiskeytown Lake, documenting dozens of Indigenous sites. He returned in 1960 to examine two village sites near Clear Creek. Because those sites yielded comparatively fewer artifacts, Treganza characterized them as “marginal” in both historical significance and archeological potential. By 1963, many of the sites he recorded were submerged following completion of Whiskeytown Dam.⁵¹

Archeological work did not reemerge as a sustained administrative priority until the mid-1970s. The 1976 Master Plan called for additional inventory of both historic and archeological properties and required eligibility evaluations in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966.⁵² The plan also encouraged expanded interpretation and coordination with regional partners, including Shasta State Historic Park and the town of French Gulch. Subsequent federal legislation, including the 1979 Archeological Resources Protection Act, further formalized compliance and protection responsibilities.⁵³

As WHIS expanded its cultural resource program, staff initiated new archeological surveys across the unit. Early concerns that nineteenth-century placer mining had “almost entirely destroyed” significant sites proved overstated. Investigations conducted in the late 1970s demonstrated that the area contained evidence of long-term human occupation dating to at least 2,000 B.C., and possibly as early as 7,000 B.C.⁵⁴ During the decade, WHIS hosted at least seven major survey projects. Some were conducted by non-NPS archeologists, including researchers from California State University, Chico, and Caltrans.⁵⁵ Several surveys were associated with infrastructure projects such as the widening of Highway 299 and construction of afterbays, illustrating the continued intersection of development and compliance-driven archeology.

One significant outcome of this work was documentation of the Lower Clear Creek Archeological District. Field investigations in 1970 and 1971 surveyed the lower Clear Creek drainage between Whiskeytown Dam and Saeltzler Dam (removed by USBR in 2000).⁵⁶ The survey identified six Northern Wintu camps and village sites and yielded projectile

⁵¹ Adan E. Treganza and Martin H. Heicksen quoted in Eidness, “Report on 1986-1987 Archaeological Fieldwork conducted by National Park Service Staff in Whiskeytown Unit, Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area, Shasta County California,” 1988, p. 4 (see also p. 2).

⁵² WHIS, *Final Master Plan*, 1976, pp. 6, 52-53.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 52-53. folder “Admin Plans,” WHIS-DF.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁵⁵ In 1977, the NPS’s Western Archeological Conservation Center (WACC) and archeologists from California State University, Chico also conducted a reconnaissance survey of twelve proposed backcountry recreation sites. This was the first cultural resource survey in the mountainous area of WHIS away from streams or the lake. See Keith L. Johnson, “Final Report on the Archaeological Reconnaissance of Selected Backcountry Area, Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, Shasta County California,” National Park Service Western Archaeology and Conservation Center, 1977, p. 1, subfolder “1977,” folder “1970-1979,” WHIS-DF; and Eidness, “Report on 1986-1987 Archaeological Fieldwork conducted by National Park Service Staff in Whiskeytown Unit, Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area, Shasta County California,” 1988, pp. 2-4.

⁵⁶ Eidness, “Report on 1986-1987 Archaeological Fieldwork conducted by National Park Service Staff in Whiskeytown Unit, Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area, Shasta County California,” 1988, p. 2.; and Mike Ferry and Peter Miller, “The Removal of Saeltzler Dam on Clear Creek: An Update,” June 2, 2003, p. 1, University of California Riverside, Water Resources Collection and Archives, Hydrology, accessed November 2024, <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/9c6177m1>.

points, chipped tools, chipping debris, and carbonized seeds.⁵⁷ Naming it the Lower Clear Creek Archeological District, WHIS submitted determinations of eligibility and nomination materials to the NRHP in 1976–1977 and again in 1989. The Keeper of the National Register did not list the district.⁵⁸

Despite expanded survey activity, coverage remained limited relative to park acreage. By 1988, less than 2 percent of lands surrounding the reservoir had been surveyed, though that small percentage yielded sixty-two archeological sites.⁵⁹ By 1997, survey coverage had increased to approximately 8 percent of lands outside the reservoir, with eighty-four recorded sites.⁶⁰ While compliance performance was regarded positively within the NPS, the scale of unsurveyed acreage underscores the likelihood that additional archeological resources remain undocumented. Ongoing inventory efforts—particularly in the wake of the Carr Fire—continue to expand knowledge of these resources, though identification remains an iterative, long-term process.

The Division of Resources Management, 1980s–1990s

In 1982, Superintendent Ray Foust split the Visitor Activities and Resource Management Division into three new divisions, including a Division of Resource Management.⁶¹ With a new division dedicated to resource management, WHIS issued a cultural resource management plan that outlined the park’s objectives. The document would guide staff well into the twenty-first century.⁶² It identified two broad CRM objectives: continuing to “preserve, restore, maintain, protect, and use the Unit’s historical resources” in accordance with NPS policy and guidelines, and managing the unit’s museum collection to NPS standards.⁶³ In addition to those two broad CRM objectives, three other objectives were project specific. These project-based objectives included: (1) preserving the integrity of THHD and Lower Clear Creek Archeological District; (2) surveying, documenting, and preserving the Clear Creek Water Ditch from THHD to the unit’s south boundary; and (3) better interpreting the unit’s resources for public enjoyment.⁶⁴ WHIS staff revisited the cultural resource management plan in 1985 with an addendum.⁶⁵ The addendum committed staff to finish documenting archeological and water conveyance sites, wrapping up NRHP nominations, completing stabilization work and starting

⁵⁷ WHIS, *Cultural Resources Management Plan*, December 1982, p. 4-5, subfolder “ADMIN_PLANS,” subfolder “Not_Accessioned,” folder “Administrative_History,” WHIS-DF.

⁵⁸ WHIS, “An Addendum to the Cultural Resources Management Plan,” 1985, p. 15; and WHIS, *Cultural Resources Management Plan*, 1982, pp. 3, 15. In some instances, the district is referred to as Clear Creek Archeological District, with the “Lower” not included. Eidsness, “Report on 1986-1987 Archaeological Fieldwork conducted by National Park Service Staff in Whiskeytown Unit, Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area, Shasta County California,” 1988, p. 15.

⁵⁹ “Report on 1986-1987 Archaeological Fieldwork conducted by National Park Service Staff in Whiskeytown Unit, Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area, Shasta County California,” 1988, p. 11.

⁶⁰ NPS, *Resources Management Plan for Whiskeytown National Recreation Area*, August 1997, p. 68, subfolder “ADMIN_PLANS,” subfolder “Not_Accessioned,” folder “Administrative_History,” WHIS-DF.

⁶¹ Ray Foust, “Position Management Plan FY 1982,” October 30, 1981, p. 5, folder “Pos Mgmt Plan_4 of 4,” box HQ9, WHIS-AF.

⁶² WHIS, *Cultural Resources Management Plan*, 1982, p. 2. The 1982 Cultural Resources Management Plan is referenced nearly thirty years later in WHIS, “Scope of Collection Statement,” NPS, July 2010, p. 2, subfolder “Unorganized Files,” folder “Cultural_Resource_Reports-PRIVILEGED,” WHIS-DF.

⁶³ WHIS, *Cultural Resources Management Plan*, 1982, p. 2.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ WHIS, “An Addendum to the Cultural Resources Management Plan,” 1985.

interior fixes at the Camden House and other buildings at THHD, and continuing to improve interpretation.⁶⁶ WHIS leadership had placed a significant amount of work on available staff and supporting personnel; during the 1980s and 1990s, the park often relied on cultural resource professionals from other parks, including Redwood National and State Parks, to complete reviews and provide guidance.

In the mid-1980s, WHIS continued more archeological work in the THHD area. In 1985, this work culminated in a nomination to the NRHP to add 470 acres of archeological resources as the Soo-Yeh-Choo-Pus Archeological District.⁶⁷ The Soo-Yee-Choo-Pus Archeological District is also referred to as the Tower House Archeological District.⁶⁸ This district is composed of ten overlapping sites that “represent a broad spectrum of native cultural practices and patterns such as settlement, subsistence, and material culture.” The ten sites contained projectile points, middens, bifaces, and drills dating human habitation in the area from approximately 1300 B.C. to 600 A.D. Archeological documentation associates the district’s inhabitants with the Wintu, whose descendants are affiliated with contemporary tribal communities in Northern California.⁶⁹

The Division of Resource Management emerged at a time when the park’s historic and archeological responsibilities were expanding. By 1990, the park had a significant number of historic structures and “historic zones” to maintain. In that year, the NPS reported fifteen historic structures within THHD: Stamp Mill, Equipment Shed, Servants’ Quarters, Camden House, Guest House, Pump House, Wood Shed, Carriage House, Garage, Tenant House, Tenant House Barn, Wheelhouse, Water Take, Covered Bridge Supports, and the Camden Water Ditch.⁷⁰ Staff were also responsible for 944 acres of historic zones, including THHD and the Clear Creek Archeological District.⁷¹ Despite its growing list of archeological and historic resources, WHIS did not have dedicated cultural resource management staff during this period; instead, these responsibilities were assigned as collateral duties within interpretation and supported by specialists from other NPS units and regional offices.⁷²

As WHIS neared the end of the century, and with the publishing of an updated 1997 Resource Management Plan and GMP, WHIS created new CRM projects across the park.⁷³ New cultural projects and several long-term projects included a cultural landscape report for THHD, documentation of the historic Crystal Creek and Willow Creek irrigation

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 3.

⁶⁷ WHIS, “Tower House Historic District (THHD) Cultural Landscape Interim Treatment Recommendations Draft Report,” February 2008, p. 8, subfolder “Camden House Only,” subfolder “SHPO Package,” subfolder “Camden House,” subfolder “ALBERTI,” folder “Superintendent,” WHIS-DF; and Danica Willis, “BOR Bypass Event: Damage Assessment for Cultural Resources,” Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, August 12, 2013, p. 7, folder “2013,” WHIS-DF.

⁶⁸ WHIS, “Environmental Assessment and Assessment of Effect: Princess Ditch Trail Construction,” NPS, March 2014, p. 41, accessed November 2024, <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/document.cfm?documentID=58202>.

⁶⁹ Roger E. Kelly, “National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form: Tower House; See-Yeh-Choo-Pus,” September 27, 1985, p. 9, accessed November 2024, <https://npshistory.com/publications/whis/nr-tower-house-ad.pdf>; and Willis, “BOR Bypass Event: Damage Assessment for Cultural Resources,” 2013, p. 7.

⁷⁰ *Statement for Management*, 1990, p. p. 23.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 24.

⁷² *Resources Management Plan for Whiskeytown National Recreation Area*, 1997, pp. 68, 121, subfolder “ADMIN_PLANS,” subfolder “Not_Accessioned,” folder “Administrative_History,” WHIS-DF.

⁷³ WHIS, “Scope of Collection Statement,” 2010, p. 7.

systems, and restoration plans for the historic fruit orchard at THHD. The NPS also authorized the use of Cultural Cyclical funds to work on the Camden House, which was open to the public as a house museum. WHIS dedicated the funds to repair the roof, install carpet runners, and purchase stanchions to protect collections.⁷⁴

Despite notable progress in managing its cultural resources, the 1999 GMP acknowledged that many of the cultural sites already known to exist in the park had not been sufficiently studied to provide the basis for assessing significance, the need for preservation action, or their potential for visitor interpretation.⁷⁵ The GMP also called for WHIS to move into more specialized CRM, with goals of conducting a “parkwide cultural landscape inventory,” and identifying “traditional native cultural sites and manag[ing] to enhance cultural landscape values,” such as prescribed burning to increase acorn production and cultivating plants used for basket making.⁷⁶

Water Conveyance Resources

Originally constructed by miners in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, numerous water conveyance ditches run through WHIS’s boundaries. The 1982 Cultural Resource Management Plan called for surveying, documenting, and preserving the Clear Creek Ditch from THHD to the unit’s southern boundary.⁷⁷ The Crystal Creek irrigation system—comprising ditches, flumes, pipes, and associated features linked to the Camden family’s agricultural operations—was listed in the NRHP as a separate historic district, though it is closely associated with the THHD.⁷⁸ In the 1990s, WHIS staff continued to document irrigation systems across the park, including those at Crystal Creek and Willow Creek.⁷⁹ Documentation of these systems linked the park’s preservation responsibilities to the history of regional water management and agricultural development.

Maintaining historic water conveyance structures at WHIS has required ongoing maintenance and, at times, interagency coordination in response to external impacts. In 2013, for example, the USBR released 1,600 cubic feet per second (cfs) from the Crystal Creek Valve over an eleven-hour period, producing what park documentation described as a “hundred year [sic] flood event in mid-summer.”⁸⁰ The atypical release damaged the nineteenth-century Crystal Creek irrigation system, originally constructed by Charles Camden and listed on the NRHP as a separate historic district

⁷⁴ David Pugh, “Whiskeytown National Recreation Area Annual Report, Fiscal Year 1996,” 1996, p. 9, folder “A2621 Reports Superintendents,” box HQ6, WHIS-AF.

⁷⁵ WHIS, *General Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement*, 1999, p. 12.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁷⁷ WHIS, *Cultural Resources Management Plan*, 1982, p. 2.

⁷⁸ NRHP Nomination form, “Irrigation System (165 and 166),” registered May 22, 1974, WHIS-DF.

⁷⁹ Before 1997, WHIS did not have dedicated cultural resource management. Staff from the Division of Resources and Division of Interpretation likely performed the documentation for the Crystal Creek and Willow Creek irrigation systems. See “Whiskeytown Unit: Personnel Management Plan, FY 95,” April 20, 1995, subfolder “Pos Mgmt Plan_1 of 4,” box HQ 9, WHIS-AF. On nomination history, see also WHIS *Trails Management Plan: Environmental Assessment*, February 2022, p. 41, subfolder “Environmental_Assessments,” folder “Administrative_History,” WHIS-DF.

⁸⁰ James Milestone, “Whiskeytown National Recreation Area’s Annual Report, 2013,” p. 2, folder “Unnamed 5,” box HQ 2, WHIS-AF.

(Irrigation System [165 and 166]), closely associated with the THHD.⁸¹ The USBR's decision appeared to be a surprise to Superintendent James Milestone, who identified the incident as a significant impact on park resources.⁸² The USBR acknowledged responsibility for the release, and the NPS negotiated an agreement with the agency to address the approximately \$300,000 in damages.⁸³

Cultural Resource Management in the Twenty-First Century

By the turn of the century, WHIS had developed a foundational CRM program supported by four decades of fieldwork, restoration, and documentation. Still, the problems that challenged WHIS staff in the 1980s and 1990s continued to persist into the twenty-first century. Take, for example, that the 2003 Strategic Plan reported WHIS had 115 known archeological sites, with 85 having “adequate documentation.” Of those known sites, 36 percent were in good condition. “Our goal this year,” the document recorded, “is to assure that no sites will be significantly degraded due to human activity.”⁸⁴ A 2003 business plan also noted a budget shortfall needed to pay for archeological work, museum curation, rangers to patrol the park's cultural resources, and a Cultural Resource Program Manager—a yet-to-be filled role. It would not be until 2010 that WHIS hired its first archeologist at the park.⁸⁵ Whiskeytown's cultural resource management remained plagued by a workload dilemma common to the NPS and other federal agencies. While new documentation and archeological projects provide WHIS a stronger understanding of the area's cultural history, each new finding adds a heavier workload on WHIS's small CRM staff, who are expected to maintain and protect that cultural resource.

Despite limited baseline documentation, WHIS's cultural resource program continued to expand its survey efforts. The park's 2014 Foundation Document reported that archeological resources were in “good condition,” but noted that only 10 percent of park lands had been inventoried. “Currently, the Whiskeytown cultural resources program is operating with minimal baseline documentation of its cultural resources,” the document observed.⁸⁶ Later planning documentation provides additional context for these conditions. By 2022, WHIS had completed archeological inventories on approximately 8,900 acres, or 21 percent of park lands, and had identified at least 300 archeological sites, including an Indigenous archeological district at the Tower House Archeological District. These later data points help clarify the scope of survey efforts initiated during the period under study.⁸⁷

⁸¹ WHIS, *Trails Management Plan: Environmental Assessment*, 2022, p. 41; and NRHP Nomination form, “Irrigation System (165 and 166),” 1974.

⁸² Milestone compared the USBR's water release to a 2013 event when CAL FIRE “illegally bulldozed through archeological sites on the Coggins-Queen Mary trail and other roads during the Moon Fire event.” See James Milestone, “Whiskeytown National Recreation Area's Annual Report, 2013,” p. 2.

⁸³ Ibid.; and Willis, “BOR Bypass Event: Damage Assessment for Cultural Resources,” 2013. See also *Statement for Management*, 1990, p. 23.

⁸⁴ WHIS, “Strategic Plan: Fiscal Year 2003,” NPS, p. 11, folder “Unorganized Files,” WHIS-DF.

⁸⁵ “Whiskeytown National Recreation Area: Business Plan,” August 2003, file, “Whiskeytown National Recreation Area: Business Plan,” p.17; “Annual Report, 2010,” WHIS, p. 9, folder “Unorganized Files,” WHIS-DF.

⁸⁶ WHIS, *Foundation Document: Whiskeytown National Recreation Area*, July 2014, pp. 14, 45, subfolder “ADMIN_PLANS, folder “LIBRARY-REPORTS,” WHIS-DF.

⁸⁷ WHIS, *Trails Management Plan: Environmental Assessment*, 2022, p. 39.

WHIS maintains multiple resources that are eligible for listing on the NRHP, including historic districts and archeological districts. By the early 2000s, those NRHP resources included the THHD and the Tower House—Soo-Yeh-Choo-Pus Archeological District.⁸⁸ The Shasta Bally landform is considered ethnographically significant to Redding Rancheria and the greater Tribal community. Although Shasta Bally has not been formally evaluated for the NRHP as a Traditional Cultural Property/Place (TCP), Whiskeytown has agreed in writing during consultation for the Shasta Bally Telecommunications Site Environmental Assessment (EA) to the landform's cultural and ethnographic significance.

For decades, numerous inventories and studies have recognized the significance of Shasta Bally to the Wintu people. In 1985, an external contractor included Shasta Bally in a USFS ethnographic mapping project that documented its affiliation with the Wintu.⁸⁹ A 1988 NPS report mentioned that an Indigenous site located on Shasta Bally's summit could be a spiritual site based on its findings of a lithic scatter and other characteristics, like a "prayer seat."⁹⁰ In the 1999 GMP, WHIS planners stated that there was potentially a "spiritual site high on Shasta Bally with a view of Mount Shasta."⁹¹ During the EA process for Shasta Bally Telecommunications site in 2007, WHIS referred to Shasta Bally as an "ethnographic location."⁹² In 2011, WHIS worked with the Redding Rancheria to redefine the boundaries of what the tribe considered sacred atop Shasta Bally.⁹³ After Tribal consultation, they outlined the boundaries of the site but did not seek a designation. By 2014, WHIS stated that Shasta Bally would be, for planning purposes, considered and treated as a TCP, despite not carrying the formal designation as such.⁹⁴ As of spring 2026, Redding Rancheria had not yet requested a nomination of Shasta Bally as a TCP.⁹⁵

Museum and Archive Collections

From the establishment of WHIS in 1965 through the 1970s, the park did not have a formal collections management system, or employees trained to administer it. During that period, WHIS had 250 un-accessioned artifacts in a collection associated with mining and homesteading housed at the Brandy Creek Ranger Station, and several Wintu artifacts housed at San Francisco State and California State Chico Universities.⁹⁶ In 1982, under the new Resource Management Division, and with a new CRM plan, park staff called for the addition of a storage facility with climate

⁸⁸ WHIS, "Scope of Collection Statement," 2010, p. 6.

⁸⁹ Theodoratus Cultural Research, "Mapping Project Ethnographic Inventory, Shasta Trinity National Forest, Mendocino National Forest (Corning and Stonyford RD), Redding Resource Area, Bureau of Land Management, USDA, FS Contract #53-9A28-0-3130," p. 2, June 1985, subfolder "1985," folder "1980-1989, WHIS-DF.

⁹⁰ A.K. Smith and J.P. Eidsness, "Archaeological Site Record: CA-SHA-514" in "Eidsness 1987 Records Info Whiskeytown.pdf" June 1987, p. 110, subfolder "1987," folder "1980-1989," WHIS-DF.

⁹¹ WHIS, *General Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement*, 1999, p. 61.

⁹² Letter from James Milestone to Melissa R. Sherman, n.d., subfolder "2007," folder "2000-2009," WHIS-DF.

⁹³ "Park Service Broadens Sacred Tribal Area of Shasta Bally Towers," *A News Café*, August 23, 2011, accessed November 2024, <https://anewscafe.com/2011/08/23/redding/park-service-broadens-sacred-tribal-area-of-shasta-bally-towers/>.

⁹⁴ WHIS, *Foundation Document*, 2014, p. 45.

⁹⁵ Glendee Ane Osborne (WHIS) to authors, personal communication, June 11, 2024.

⁹⁶ WHIS, *1982 Cultural Resources Management Plan, Whiskeytown Unit*, February 1982, p. 14, subfolder "ADMIN_PLANS," subfolder "Not_Accessioned," folder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF.

control to store artifacts. The Brandy Creek Ranger Station, they argued, was an inadequate place for museum storage.⁹⁷ The problem of storage was so pronounced that WHIS staff listed proper museum storage as the third priority for the CRM program in 1982.⁹⁸ Over the next two years, WHIS staff accessioned the original 250 artifacts and obtained 6,000 more—all were stored in the Brandy Creek Ranger Station.⁹⁹ The ranger station faced multiple challenges as an archival storage space: it lacked sufficient room, had been a target of vandalism, and required CRM staff to travel a considerable distance from headquarters to access the collection.¹⁰⁰ The issues surrounding the museum collection exemplified another challenge at Whiskeytown: the unit struggled to allocate sufficient resources to its CRM program to meet professional standards. Between 1985 and 1986, WHIS staff, the regional office, and contractors developed a new collection management plan to address the growing number of artifacts that exceeded the available storage capacity.¹⁰¹

A 1988 directive from the Western Region allocated funds from the NPS Washington Office (WASO) Curatorial Services Division for the purchase of museum collection storage equipment.¹⁰² That same year, WHIS built a twenty-foot by twelve-foot museum storage building known as the “Bally Building.”¹⁰³ The new storage facility was a major improvement from the Brandy Creek Ranger Station. The Bally Building provided adequate storage space, was conveniently located near headquarters, and featured climate and pest controls. Additionally, its location was less vulnerable to vandalism.¹⁰⁴ WHIS also used Fee Enhancement funds to finance a large cataloging project, equipping the program with new computer technology and hiring a seasonal curatorial staff member to address a backlog of over 5,000 artifacts and specimens.¹⁰⁵ During the 1990s, cataloging efforts continued for items in WHIS’s care that had not yet been inventoried. In 1997 alone, staff successfully cataloged 2,907 objects, evidence of the ongoing progress staff made in managing the unit’s expanding collection.

Despite the improvements made during the 1980s and 1990s, many of the longstanding issues with Whiskeytown’s collection management persisted. A 1997 draft of the GMP bluntly stated, “Current storage facilities are inadequate to house the growing museum collection.” The report further noted, “Overall, the program has suffered from a lack of expertise, staff, funding, and attention since the establishment of the NRA.”¹⁰⁶

⁹⁷ Ibid., pp. 14-16.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 21.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 6.

¹⁰⁰ WHIS, “An Addendum to the Cultural Resources Management Plan,” 1985, p. 13.

¹⁰¹ See Geoffrey I. Brown and Kathryn R. Crabtree, “Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area, Whiskeytown Unit Collection Management Plan,” 1986, folder “1980s,” WHIS-DF.

¹⁰² Memorandum from Regional Director, Western Region to Superintendents, Death Valley, John Muir, Petrified Forest, Sequoia, and Kings Canyon, Whiskeytown, and Yosemite; General Superintendent, Golden Gate, “Purchase of Museum Storage Equipment, FY 1988,” February 18, 1988, folder “LIBRARY-REPORTS,” WHIS-DF.

¹⁰³ Memorandum from Chief, Western Archaeological and Conservation Center, to Superintendent, Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area, “Archaeological Clearance,” February 7, 1989, subfolder “1989,” folder “Cultural_Resource_Reports-PRIVILEGED,” WHIS-DF; and Mary Benterou, Kent Bush, H. Dale Durham, Clinton Kane, James O’Barr, *Whiskeytown National Recreation Area Museum Management Plan*, Pacific West Region, October 2002, p. 14, accessed November 2024, <http://npshistory.com/publications/whis/mmp-2002.pdf>.

¹⁰⁴ Benterou et al., *Whiskeytown National Recreation Area Museum Management Plan*, 2002, p. 14.

¹⁰⁵ NPS, “Federal Recreation Fee Report 1987: Including Federal Recreation Visitation and Fee Data, a Report to the Congress,” Washington, DC: US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1987. NPS approved an initiative that NPS should “benefit from fee revenues” that used to go to the Land and Water Conservation Fund and that fee money generated in generated in one year are allocated the following year for NPS units. Across all NPS units, \$15 million of a \$55 million budget was allocated from the Fee Enhancement program.

¹⁰⁶ WHIS, *Draft General Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement*, 1998, p. 5.

As WHIS approached its fifth decade, significant gaps remained. The museum management program required at least 1,500 additional square feet of storage, a security and fire plan for the collections, clear designation of staff responsible for preserving and managing those materials, and the cataloging of all objects awaiting formal accessioning.¹⁰⁷ While these shortcomings were well-documented in park planning documents and acknowledged by WHIS and NPS leadership, awareness did not necessarily translate into the resources and support needed to address them comprehensively.

By the early twenty-first century, WHIS staff had begun articulating a rationale for the museum collection's relevance to the park's mission. The 2010 Scope of Collection Plan sought to "ensure that the museum collection is clearly relevant to the park."¹⁰⁸ The document divided the collection into five broad categories: (1) cultural artifacts, including archeological specimens from the prehistoric era; (2) ethnology, focusing on objects related to the Northern Wintu; (3) history, such as items associated with Levi Tower, Charles Camden, the Gold Rush, and twentieth-century events; (4) archives and manuscripts, encompassing documents from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; and (5) natural history specimens, such as paleontological, botanical, and geological materials.¹⁰⁹

The plan also established clear accession criteria, defining what materials would—and would not—be incorporated into the collection.¹¹⁰ WHIS thereby limited acquisitions to items directly relevant to the park's interpretive and research priorities, signaling a more disciplined approach to stewardship of cultural resources.¹¹¹ These measures were intended to align preservation responsibilities with available staffing and funding. In doing so, WHIS shifted from collection growth toward strategic management grounded in mission and capacity.

Conclusion

Cultural resource management at WHIS evolved from a secondary consideration in early planning documents to a formalized administrative function shaped by federal preservation law, NPS policy, and unit-level planning. In WHIS's early years, planning documents emphasized recreation at Whiskeytown Lake and subordinated interpretation of history and archeology. Following passage of the NHPA and related federal statutes, WHIS increasingly aligned its management practices with evolving NPS policy and compliance requirements.

Beginning in the 1970s, the park established a more formal CRM framework through baseline studies, NRHP nominations, and the creation of a dedicated Division of Resource Management in 1982. The nomination and stabilization of the THHD marked a significant expansion of preservation activity, followed by cultural landscape

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., pp. 17-18.

¹⁰⁸ WHIS, "Scope of Collection Statement," 2010, p. 1.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., pp. 7-18.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 1.

¹¹¹ In 2010, WHIS hired Danica Willis, archeologist, in the park's first Cultural Resource Management Specialist role. See "Annual Report, 2010," p. 9; and "Superintendent's Annual Report for Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, 2008-2009," WHIS, October 2009, p. 2, folder "Unorganized Files," WHIS-DF.

inventory work, orchard rehabilitation, and additional documentation of water conveyance systems. Archeological investigations during the 1970s and 1980s identified dozens of sites, though inventory coverage remained limited relative to the park's total acreage. Subsequent decades saw continued survey work, additional nominations, and gradual increases in documented site counts.

Water conveyance features, including the Clear Creek, Crystal Creek, and Mill Creek ditches, became part of the park's preservation responsibilities and required ongoing maintenance and interagency coordination. The 2013 Crystal Creek valve release and the 2018 Carr Fire demonstrated the vulnerability of both built and landscape-based cultural resources, prompting recovery efforts, mitigation planning, and integration of cultural resource considerations into fire and trail management plans.¹¹²

Museum and archival collections followed a similar trajectory of incremental development. From informal storage conditions in the 1960s and 1970s, the park moved toward improved storage, accessioning, and cataloging procedures in the 1980s and 1990s, including construction of the Bally Building. Planning documents throughout the late twentieth century repeatedly identified staffing, storage, and funding constraints, even as collection holdings expanded. The 2010 Scope of Collection Plan further clarified acquisition priorities and aligned the museum program with the park's mission.

By the early twenty-first century, WHIS had established a multi-faceted CRM program encompassing archeological resources, historic structures, cultural landscapes, museum collections, water conveyance systems, and ethnographic sites, including consultation with the Redding Rancheria regarding Shasta Bally. Inventory data from 2003, 2014, and 2022 document both progress and ongoing limitations in survey coverage and documentation. Over the course of the study period, cultural resource management at WHIS shifted from limited early attention to an established administrative function embedded in planning, compliance, interagency coordination, and tribal consultation. The program's development parallels changes within the NPS, while also illustrating the persistent challenges of staffing, funding, environmental risk, and long-term stewardship within a multiuse recreation area.

¹¹² WHIS, *Trails Management Plan: Environmental Assessment*, 2022, p. 6; and WHIS, *Whiskeytown Fire Management Plan*, 2022, p. 21.

PART VI

CHAPTER 6.1: VISITOR MANAGEMENT AND RECREATION

From the earliest planning stages, Whiskeytown National Recreation Area (WHIS) was designed to accommodate high levels of outdoor recreation, particularly water-based, family-oriented use centered on the reservoir. Early projections anticipated substantial visitation, and by the 1970s and 1980s National Park Service (NPS) estimates placed annual visitation well above one million visitors.¹ Over time, administrative strategies were shaped by formal visitor studies that tracked demographic trends, patterns of use, emerging conflicts, and infrastructure strain. These studies provided park staff with data to adjust facility placement, staffing levels, and management responses as recreational behavior diversified.

While early planning emphasized boating, swimming, camping, and family recreation, subsequent decades saw the expansion of more specialized activities—including endurance events and backcountry recreation—that required new permitting systems, coordination across divisions, and reassessment of facility capacity. By the early twenty-first century, nearly six million people lived within a short drive of the park’s entrance, increasing pressure on access points, trail systems, and lake-centered infrastructure.²

Visitor numbers have fluctuated in response to environmental conditions and regional growth. In 2018, following the Carr Fire, visitation declined to 585,768—one of the lowest annual totals in decades—before rebounding as the landscape began to recover.³ Throughout these shifts, WHIS staff were required to reconcile projected demand, actual use patterns, safety obligations, and landscape constraints within a changing environmental and demographic context. This chapter examines how visitor studies, infrastructure planning, and adaptive administrative responses structured recreation management at WHIS across time.

¹ Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity-National Recreation Area, *Statement for Management*, National Park Service (NPS), January 1990, p. 11, folder “Unorganized Files.” Worth noting is that NPS methods for counting visitors-per-car has shifted since the 1980s, which may account for inflated numbers in the 1970s and 1980s. See “Whiskeytown National Recreation Area: Business Plan,” August 2003, p. 14, filename “WHISBIZPlanprintquality,” subfolder “ADMIN_PLANS,” folder “LIBRARY-REPORTS,” WHIS-DF.

² Whiskeytown National Recreation Area (WHIS), *Whiskeytown Fire Management Plan*, 2022, April 2022, p. 57, subfolder “Not_Accessioned,” subfolder “ADMIN_PLANS,” folder “Administrative_History,” WHIS-DF.

³ WHIS, *Trails Management Plan: Environmental Assessment*, February 2022, p. 43, subfolder “Environmental_Assessments,” folder “Administrative_History,” WHIS-DF.

Early Visitor Numbers

In advance of the unit's formal establishment, the NPS convened an "inter-departmental task force study" in coordination with the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation to estimate the number of visitors the new recreation area might see, where they would be coming from, and what features of WHIS they might visit. The task force projected that WHIS would attract 750,000 visitors in its inaugural year, surpass one million by 1975, and exceed three million by 2000—a number the park has never reached. It anticipated that most would be family or organized groups from nearby towns and cities, with approximately 15 percent traveling from out of state. The 1964 Master Plan divided visitor activities into two main categories: "Day Use" and "Overnight." Day-use activities include interpretation and sightseeing, water activities, and picnicking. Overnight activities describe visitors who are camping in developed areas.⁴

By 1969, WHIS welcomed over one million visitors—six years earlier than anticipated. This growth spurred planners and staff to devise strategies for managing the increasing demands of the 1970s.⁵ The 1976 Master Plan predicted that the reservoir would "remain the outstanding recreational attraction of the Whiskeytown Unit."⁶ The plan also anticipated that, despite WHIS's vast backcountry, it would be "the least used by the visitor."⁷ Though the backcountry did not see a great deal of visitor use, park staff saw high potential in encouraging backcountry use for visitors who might want to avoid the crowded lake sites.⁸ This emphasis on backcountry use marked an early administrative effort to redistribute visitation beyond heavily used lakeshore areas.

University of Oregon Recreation Patterns Studies, 1980s

In 1985, WHIS partnered with the Oregon State University (OSU) Department of Resource Recreation Management to conduct a comprehensive recreation pattern study, offering detailed insights into visitor behavior. Through multiple reports, OSU researchers documented recreational patterns at WHIS.⁹ It is worth noting that the study focused only on water-based front country recreation at WHIS and did not provide data or analysis for the burgeoning backcountry and trail-based recreation at WHIS in the mid-1980s.

⁴ US Department of the Interior (DOI), NPS, Division of Landscape Architecture Western Office Design and Construction, "The Visitor: Narrative Part of the Master Plan, Whiskeytown Reservoir Recreation Area," October 1964, drawing RA-WHI 3045, p. 8, subfolder "Facilities_Planning_Maps," folder "FACILITIES," WHIS-DF.

⁵ Integrated Resource Management Applications (IRMA), NPS, "Visitor Use Statistics: Whiskeytown NRA," February 16, 2024, accessed November 2024, [https://irma.nps.gov/Stats/SSRSReports/Park%20Specific%20Reports/Annual%20Park%20Recreation%20Visitation%20\(1904%20-%20Last%20Calendar%20Year\)?Park=WHIS](https://irma.nps.gov/Stats/SSRSReports/Park%20Specific%20Reports/Annual%20Park%20Recreation%20Visitation%20(1904%20-%20Last%20Calendar%20Year)?Park=WHIS).

⁶ NPS, *Whiskeytown/Shasta/Trinity, Whiskeytown Unit Final Master Plan*, July 1976, p. 19, subfolder "ADMIN_PLANS," subfolder "Not_Accessioned," folder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Marty E. Lee, Donald R. Field, Kristen Martinson, Alan Gross, "Whiskeytown—An Overview of the Visitor and Recreation Resources," December 1986, pp. 1-3, accessed November 2024, https://pubs.nps.gov/eTIC/WEPO-WI/WHIS_611_D43_0001_of_0110.pdf.

The first report focused on compiling a bibliography of water-based recreation, which served as a conceptual framework for understanding critical issues surrounding the use of water resources. This foundational document provided managers and researchers with essential context for the subsequent studies.¹⁰

In the second part of the study, OSU researchers looked at recreation patterns of visitors at WHIS to serve as a baseline to conduct further research. To gather this data, the research team administered a twenty-nine-question survey. The survey gathered demographic data, activity participation, length of stay, perceived conflicts, and evaluations of facilities and management.¹¹ From late May to early September 1985, OSU researchers conducted surveys at 16 sites, chosen based on natural boundaries, usage intensity, and habitat characteristics. They distributed 200 surveys per site.¹² In 1986, OSU published their first findings of their study which detailed the 16 different recreation sites they surveyed and assessed. This included “four beach locations, three boat launch sites and four shoreline locations...the Tower House Historical District and the Powerhouse area” to represent day users and “two RV camping area and the tent camping area” to represent overnight visitors.¹³ At each of the 16 sites, the OSU researchers described the area’s physical location, their social observations, and managerial practices.

The third report focused on identifying visitor demographics and recreational preferences. Its primary objectives were to document activity patterns at the lake and highlight areas of conflict among user groups.¹⁴ From this report, OSU summarized major findings useful to WHIS’s management. In describing who was coming to WHIS, researchers found that 90 percent of visitors were from California, half of those visitors lived within twenty miles of WHIS, and they were mostly day-users swimming at the lake.¹⁵ This report answered “who” for recreation at WHIS.

After studying the recreation sites and identifying the visitors who used them, OSU researchers started to delve into more complex issues. The fourth part of the study looked at the visitors’ view of WHIS management and environmental impacts of recreation at the recreation area. These insights were particularly valuable to WHIS managers, highlighting visitor priorities and areas for improvement. Key findings from Part 4 of the study revealed that 60 percent of visitors were dissatisfied with the lack of drinking-water sources, while 40 percent noted insufficient toilet facilities, garbage cans, and showers. These concerns were particularly prevalent among campground and shoreline visitors. Roughly half of those who took the survey noticed litter on the banks of the lake. On a more positive note, only 20 percent of visitors took issue with WHIS staff, and a third had issue with inconsiderate fellow visitors; most of which were overnight visitors complaining about noise at campgrounds.¹⁶ Based on their findings, OSU provided

¹⁰ Kristen S. Martinson and Donald R Field, “People, Human Behavior and Water-Based Recreation: A Working Bibliography,” 1985, p. 7, WHIS-DF.

¹¹ University of Oregon, “1985 Whiskeytown Visitor Study Questionnaire, Whiskeytown Unit, Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area,” accessed November 2024, https://pubs.nps.gov/eTIC/WEPO-WI/WHIS_611_125001_0001_of_0020.pdf.

¹² Kris S. Martinson and Donald R. Field, “Report No. 2 1985 Whiskeytown Visitor Study, Whiskeytown Unit, Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity NRA,” September 20, 1985, p. 2, accessed https://pubs.nps.gov/eTIC/WEPO-WI/WHIS_611_125149_0001_of_0006.pdf.

¹³ Randall Stark, Charles van Riper III, Martha E. Lee, Michael L. Avery, and Donald R. Field, “Recreation Places: A Description of Recreation Sites at Whiskeytown,” January 1, 1986, pp. 4-5, accessed November 2024, https://pubs.nps.gov/eTIC/WEPO-WI/WHIS_611_D54_0049pg.pdf.

¹⁴ Lee et al., “Whiskeytown—An Overview of the Visitor and Recreation Resources,” 1986, p. 1.

¹⁵ Ibid., “Executive Summary.”

¹⁶ Ibid.

WHIS with practical recommendations for addressing visitor management challenges. Recognizing the challenges of installing additional drinking water stations, OSU recommended that WHIS enhance public communication by improving interpretive and information kiosks within the park. OSU also suggested using external media, such as radio and newspaper PSAs, to remind visitors to bring sufficient water.¹⁷ They also recommended increasing shower facilities in overnight areas, providing portable toilets in places like Tower House Historic District (TTHD) and shoreline areas without toilets, and re-evaluating and increasing garbage can distribution.¹⁸ While implementation would require additional resources, the recommendations provided management with a clearer understanding of visitor concerns.¹⁹

The fifth report from OSU on recreation and visitors at WHIS looked at “crowding and conflict at Whiskeytown using carrying capacity as the organization framework.”²⁰ The study aimed to identify common sources of visitor conflict, assess crowding at WHIS, and outline “a process for monitoring use impacts over time.”²¹ From their research, the OSU team found that conflict mostly arose between motorized and non-motorized activities near shorelines. Likewise, OSU determined that crowding mostly occurred at areas in Oak Bottom and Brandy Creek.²² They went on to urge WHIS to develop a systematic approach to monitoring visitors and recreation to plan for the future. Earlier planning documents referenced a sixth and final report in the Oklahoma State University visitor experience study series; however, the introduction to the fifth report describes it as “the fifth and final in a series.”²³ Despite review of park archives and recently scanned materials, no sixth report could be located during research for this administrative history.

The early visitor studies and OSU research provide a valuable lens into the evolving dynamics of recreation at WHIS and its implications for park management. WHIS’s rapid surpassing of the inter-departmental task force’s projections highlighted both its growing popularity and the challenge of accommodating increasing visitation while preserving resource integrity. The OSU studies deepened this understanding by identifying specific patterns, visitor demographics, and sources of dissatisfaction, providing actionable insights to guide management strategies. These findings emphasized the necessity of adaptive approaches, particularly in addressing crowding, resource conflicts, and infrastructure deficits, while laying the foundation for balancing recreational access with sustainable resource stewardship.

Insights from the OSU studies directly informed future initiatives designed to improve visitor experiences and resource management. The identification of overcrowding hotspots at Oak Bottom and Brandy Creek, for example, prompted the expansion of recreational opportunities in less-visited areas. Trails such as the James K. Carr Trail to Whiskeytown Falls, created in the early 2000s, redirected visitor traffic away from heavily used lakeshore sites to the park’s backcountry. Similarly, the OSU studies’ recommendations for mitigating conflicts—such as those between motorized and non-motorized activities—influenced zoning strategies developed decades later, including the Backcountry Management Plan

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 21.

¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 21-23.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 26.

²⁰ Lee et al., “Visitor Crowding and Conflict at Whiskeytown: A Carrying Capacity Approach,” 1988, p. 2.

²¹ Marty E Lee, Donald R Field, Kristen Martinson, “Visitor Crowding and Conflict at Whiskeytown: A Carrying Capacity Approach,” October 1988, p. 3, accessed November 2024, https://pubs.nps.gov/eTIC/WEPO-WI/WHIS_611_D51_0059pg.pdf.

²² Ibid., pp. 33, 43.

²³ Ibid., p. 1.

under Superintendent James Milestone. These examples highlight WHIS's consistent alignment between data-driven insights and adaptive management strategies, demonstrating the park's ability to address evolving recreational demands while protecting its resources for future generations.

The Endurance Visitor

As recreation patterns diversified at Whiskeytown, a subset of visitors sought physically demanding experiences alongside lakeshore leisure. Endurance-oriented activities gained visibility in the administrative record by the 1980s, particularly through organized events such as the Whiskeytown Downhill mountain bike race.²⁴

In 1963, the Hayfork Hikers—thirty-two teenage girls—completed a nearly thirty-five-mile trek from the Hayfork turnoff on Highway 299 to Whiskeytown Dam to coincide with President John F. Kennedy's dedication appearance and his national call for physical fitness. Congressman Harold "Bizz" Johnson greeted the hikers at the dam and arranged seating for them behind the stage for the President's address. Although this event predated the creation of WHIS, it indicates early interest in strenuous recreation beyond reservoir-centered use.²⁵

Mountain biking emerged nationally in the 1970s through informal, grassroots riding cultures in places

SPONSORED BY:
THE CHAIN GANG BIKE SHOP and COORS BEER
SPECIAL THANKS TO WHISKEYTOWN NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

1ST ANNUAL WHISKEYTOWN DOWNHILL

SUNDAY, JUNE 7TH, 1981 (7:00AM.)

MAIL ENTRY BY: MAY 29TH, 1981 - \$5.00
POST ENTRY BY: JUNE 7TH, 1981 - (6:00AM) \$8.00

CLASSES - TROPHY'S

	1st Overall
Open/Expert	1st/2nd/3rd
Novice (Men)	1st/2nd/3rd
Novice (Women)	1st/2nd
Moto-X	1st/2nd/3rd

DEFINITION OF CLASSES:
A. Open/Expert: Licensed riders (USCF) & Club riders with experience
B. Novice: No previous trophies or wins in like events
C. Moto-X: One and Two speeds only
NOTE: Pick your class BUT! No Sand-bagging, PROTESTS will be considered
NOTE: Any size & type of bike is allowed BUT 90% of course is jeep/motorcycle dirt paths, heavy duty bikes recommended.

SIGN IN / FINISH AREA

TO: EUREKA
FROM: RED BLUFF RD.
WHISKEYTOWN NATIONAL PARK AREA

1. I-5 to Redding
2. Hwy 299 West approx. 10 miles to Shasta, CA
3. Left (or South) on Red Bluff Rd.
4. Third house on right (6-7-81 only)
5. On 6-6-81 or before:
Chain Gang Bike Shop
2655 Park Marina, Redding, CA
6. For more info: 243-7101 or 243-7765

NO RIDER INSURANCE—RIDE AT YOUR OWN RISK

COURSE: Course is approximately 30 miles long - BEAUTIFUL SCENERY - Start is at 5,000 foot elevation - end is at 1,000 foot elevation. YEP! OVER 4,000 FOOT ELEVATION DROP. Cardiac arrest downhills - gnarly uphill; wet and dry stream crossings. Course set up with Novice in mind, but very challenging for experts. Sag wagon will be provided, will try to have finisher buttons for all who complete established course and checkpoints. Camping is available at WHISKEYTOWN NATIONAL RECREATION AREA, on a first come, first serve basis.
-----PARTY AFTERSWARDS-----

ENTRY PROCEDURE:

1. Complete and sign entry & waiver form (at bottom)
2. Enclose with check or money order - NO CASH PLEASE!
3. Enclose two self-addressed/stamped envelopes
4. No one under 18 years of age unless accompanied by parent OR parental consent and waiver form signed AT CHAIN GANG IN PERSON.
5. Proof of age required at sign in.

MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE & MAIL TO
CHAIN GANG BIKE SHOP, 2655 Park Marina Drive, Redding, CA 96001

1ST ANNUAL WHISKEYTOWN DOWNHILL ENTRY BLANK

NAME _____ Date of birth _____
ADDRESS _____ AGE _____
TELEPHONE _____ Type of bike _____

RIDER CLASS

OPEN/EXPERT	☐
NOVICE (MEN)	☐
NOVICE (WOMEN)	☐
MOTO-X	☐

ASSUMPTION OF RISK AGREEMENT

I hereby acknowledge that I am aware of the dangers incident to this event and voluntarily and knowingly enter the event with said knowledge. I further acknowledge that I am aware of the fact that any injuries or damages sustained by me due to my participation in this event may be of a permanent and gross nature and I, nevertheless, voluntarily and knowingly enter said event.

I further acknowledge that during the course of said event there may be times at which though not actively participating in said event, I may be a spectator and that I may sustain permanent or grave injuries as a spectator and I, nevertheless, voluntarily and knowingly assume such risk.

I further acknowledge that any injuries or damages sustained by me due to my participation in this event may be of a permanent and gross nature and I, nevertheless, voluntarily and knowingly enter said event.

I have read this entry blank and agree to the above conditions

RIDER'S SIGNATURE _____ DATE: _____

Figure 24. Flyer from the 1981 Whiskeytown Downhill, ca. 1981.
Source: Flyer courtesy of the Marin Museum of Bicycling.

²⁴ *Statement for Management*, 1990, p. 11.

²⁵ "The Federal Government Takes on Physical Fitness," John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, updated December 15, 2021, <https://www.jfklibrary.org/learn/about-jfk/jfk-in-history/physical-fitness>; and James Milestone, *From the White House to Whiskeytown: An Administrative History of the Creation of Whiskeytown National Recreation Area*, Whiskeytown National Recreation Area (WHIS), 2003, pp. 36-37, e-TIC filename "WHIS_611_166062_0001_of_0055.pdf" accessed November 2024.

such as Marin County, California, and Crested Butte, Colorado, where riders modified cruiser bikes—often called “klunkers”—for steep fire roads and trails.²⁶ In Marin County, this culture fed into informal downhill competition, including the Repack Race begun in 1976, which attracted wider attention by the late 1970s.²⁷

Within this context, Whiskeytown became an early hub for organized competitive mountain biking. Beginning in 1981, the Whiskeytown Downhill Race ran as a short-lived but influential event (1981–1986). Race organizer Gary Larson, owner of the Chain Gang Bike Shop in Redding, promoted it as the first organized mountain bike race in the country. The course was approximately thirty miles with roughly 5,000 feet of elevation loss through WHIS.²⁸ Larson formalized the event through rules, sponsors, and an entry fee, while participants described it as retaining a high level of personal attention and care.²⁹ The race included categories for Open/Expert, Novice, and “Moto X” riders on one- or two-speed bikes; sponsors included Coors and the Chain Gang Bike Shop.³⁰ Fifty-seven riders participated in the first year, and Gary Fisher won the inaugural race.³¹

Hosting the event required close coordination with the park. WHIS granted permission for the route to use the unit’s road and trail system and allowed camping on a first-come, first-served basis; park staff also worked to bring the event into compliance with federal requirements while managing impacts on other visitors.³² In subsequent years, sponsorship expanded—by the second year, brands such as Pepsi and Specialized joined the sponsor roster—revealing the growing commercialization within the sport.³³

After 1983, the event influenced the organization of mountain bike racing more broadly. The newly formed National Off-Road Bicycle Association (NORBA) adopted Larson’s basic race rules, with modifications, as a standard format.³⁴ Participation expanded rapidly, reaching nearly 500 riders by 1986; Larson reported that the NPS sought to limit entries as the event increasingly strained the park’s capacity, and he ended the series that year.³⁵

Although brief, the Whiskeytown Downhill became part of mountain biking’s early competitive history and drew riders who later became prominent figures in the sport, including Gary Fisher, Charlie Cunningham, Joe Murray, Jacquie Phelan, and Joe Breeze.³⁶ Its cultural impact extended beyond the event itself; for example, Mountain Goat

²⁶ Charlie Kelley, *Fat Tire Flyer: Repack and the Birth of Mountain Biking* (Berkely, CA: Velo Press 2014).

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ David Benda, “Chain Gang Bike Shop has New Owner,” June 7, 2017, *Redding Record Searchlight*, accessed November 2024, <https://www.redding.com/story/news/local/2017/06/07/chain-gang-bike-shop-has-new-owner/376980001/>.

²⁹ Jacquie Phelan, “Bombed at Whiskeytown,” *Cyclist*, October 1985, p. 43.

³⁰ “1st Annual Whiskeytown Downhill,” flyer, 1981, Marin Museum of Bicycling.

³¹ Candace L. Brown, “Blazing the Trail: North State Riders Played an Early Role in Mountain Biking,” *Anewscafe.com: Northern California’s Premier Online News Magazine*, September 13, 2011, accessed November 2024, <https://anewscafe.com/2011/09/13/redding/blazing-the-trail-north-state-riders-played-an-early-role-in-mountain-biking/>. Gary Fisher—widely credited with coining the term *mountain bike*—would go on to have a distinguished career as both a rider and entrepreneur in the cycling industry.

³² “1st Annual Whiskeytown Downhill.”

³³ Chain Gang Bicycle Shop, flyer for Second Annual Whiskeytown Downhill, Marin Museum of Bicycling.

³⁴ Brown, “Blazing the Trail: North State Riders Played an Early Role in Mountain Biking.”

³⁵ “Cycling,” Newspaper clipping, Marin Museum of Bicycling; and Benda, “Chain Gang Bike Shop has New Owner.”

³⁶ Benda, “Chain Gang Bike Shop has New Owner”; Phelan, “Bombed at Whiskeytown”; Mountain Bike Roots, “1984 Race Results for Whiskeytown Downhill,” accessed November 2024, https://www.mountainbikeroots.com/images/W84_RN03_results.jpg; and Mountain Bike Roots, “1985 Race Results,” accessed November 2024, https://www.mountainbikeroots.com/images/W85_RN02_results.jpg.

Cycles of Chico, California, named a racing-focused model the “Whiskeytown Racer” in 1984.³⁷ After the race ended, WHIS continued to promote mountain biking as a non-competitive recreational activity, including through visitor information materials that described the Downhill routes and other riding options.³⁸

Visitor Studies, 1990s

During the 1990s, WHIS and neighboring agencies undertook a series of visitor studies to better understand regional recreation patterns. In 1995, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) partnered with the USFS’s Pacific Southwest Research Station to conduct a visitor study of the Redding area. Although the study was not centered on WHIS, it did look at recreation patterns at the Interlakes Special Recreation Management Area, which includes WHIS. The study revealed that visitors were mostly white middle-class males with some college education from a Pacific state.³⁹ These visitors were mostly engaging in a water-based recreational activity.⁴⁰

In 1998, WHIS conducted its own visitor study, which produced similar results. Most visitors were California residents engaged in boating, swimming, and other reservoir-centered activities at developed shoreline sites.⁴¹ The 1990s studies confirmed a consistent pattern of lake-oriented recreation concentrated at developed areas. In the following decade, park administration sought to diversify this use pattern by encouraging greater engagement with backcountry areas.

“A Premier Park Experience,” 2000s

During Superintendent Milestone’s tenure in the 2000s, he sought to take WHIS from a local attraction to a nationally renowned recreation area by providing visitors with a “premier park experience.”⁴² Milestone sought to reduce the proportion of visitors from California. He pursued this goal by expanding recreation opportunities through trail development, waterfall access, improved signage, and ranger-led kayaking.⁴³ At the same time, Milestone maintained an emphasis on local access. One way he did this was by helping to establish a bus route from Redding to Whiskeytown.⁴⁴

³⁷ Mountain Goat Cycles Catalogue, 1985, accessed November 2024, <https://theradavist.com/1984-mountain-goat-whiskeytown-racer-2/>.

³⁸ WHIS, “Mountain Bike Riding at Whiskeytown,” n.d., accessed November 2024, <https://npshistory.com/publications/whis/brochures/mtn-biking.pdf>.

³⁹ Patricia L Winter, “Visitor Research Case Study: The Redding Resource Area, Final Report,” June 21, 1995, pp. 11-15, folder “1990s,” WHIS-DF.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 15.

⁴¹ Chris Hoffman and Michael Meehan, “Whiskeytown National Recreation Area Visitor Study, Summer 1998,” June 1999, pp. 8, 11, 16, folder “1990s,” WHIS-DF.

⁴² James Milestone to Whiskeytown Backcountry Committee, Backcountry Development, Enjoyment and Use, January 21, 2008, folder “CR61,” WHIS-DF; and Milestone, et al, “Smokey Says, ‘Get Your Ash Off My Beach,’ Implementing a Smoke-free Beach Policy at Whiskeytown National Recreation Area,” *George Wright Forum*, 27, no. 3 (2010): pp. 292-302.

⁴³ WHIS, *Whiskeytown Nugget Newspaper*, 2017, p. 4, accessed November 2024, <https://npshistory.com/publications/whis/newspaper/2017.pdf>.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

CHAPTER 6.1: VISITOR MANAGEMENT AND RECREATION

In reference to expanding access to and within WHIS, Milestone stated that “through appreciation there comes value, and people will protect things they value. Without public support, without personal experiential connection with a place, people will not give us the support we need to protect Whiskeytown National Recreation Area from outside threats.”⁴⁵

Milestone’s emphasis on expanded recreation and a “premier park experience” aligned with shifts within the NPS during the 2000s, as the agency reassessed its mission and public engagement strategies in advance of the 2016 Centennial. This period also coincided with rising national participation in outdoor recreation.⁴⁶ Visitor management initiatives at WHIS under Superintendent Milestone followed these institutional priorities as the park sought to enhance access, diversify recreation, and strengthen public connection to the site.

During this period, WHIS expanded recreational trails, including the highly popular James K. Carr Trail to Whiskeytown Falls. Though management fostered the growth of trails within WHIS to allow visitation in the backcountry, they kept their sights on recreational opportunities at the reservoir. In 2001, for example, WHIS’s staff established an interpretive kayaking program for visitors (see Chapter 6.2: Interpretive Planning & Programs). With the kayak tours and waterfall trails established, Milestone still wanted to “move the park from ‘good’ to ‘great’ in terms of backcountry recreation for visitors.”⁴⁷ Milestone continued to push for more backcountry access and amenities at WHIS during his tenure in the 2000s. This included the development of a Backcountry Management Plan. As part of the planning process, WHIS staff divided the park into three zones based on usage intensity. The Solitude Zone encompassed the least developed areas, offering visitors a chance for near-complete isolation. The Medium Use Zone featured limited amenities, such as trails and hike-in campsites, while still maintaining a relatively quiet atmosphere. In contrast, the High Use Zone provided drive-in access and extensive facilities, including tent pads, fire pits, and vault toilets. By categorizing use zones, WHIS could better allocate staff time and resources to the management of backcountry areas.⁴⁸

WHIS held a public meeting for the Backcountry Management Plan in 2012. At the meeting, Superintendent Milestone and Chief of Maintenance David Larabee presented the plan’s goals and objectives. The public raised concerns regarding cost, long-term maintenance feasibility, and potential conflicts among trail user groups.⁴⁹ Although park staff initiated the process and drafted multiple versions of the document, the plan was not finalized. Backcountry visitation remained significantly lower than shoreline use, with approximately 93,000 visits in 2017–2018 compared to more than 800,000 total park visitors.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ James Milestone to Whiskeytown Backcountry Committee, Backcountry Development, Enjoyment and Use, 2008.

⁴⁶ Barry Mackintosh, Janet McDonnell, and John H. Sprinkle Jr., “The National Parks,” *The George Wright Forum*, 35, no. 2, special issue “The National Parks: Shaping the System” (2018): p. 77; and H. Ken Cordell, “The Latest Trends in Nature Based Outdoor Recreation,” *Forest History Today* (Spring 2008): p. 7 accessed November 2024, https://www.srs.fs.usda.gov/pubs/ja/ja_cordell021.pdf; Milestone, et al, “Smokey Says, ‘Get Your Ash Off My Beach,’” p. 296.

⁴⁷ James Milestone to Whiskeytown Backcountry Committee, Backcountry Development, Enjoyment and Use, 2008.

⁴⁸ Tricia Ford, “Backcountry Management Plan Committee Meeting,” notes, June 19, 2007, folder “CR61,” WHIS-DF.

⁴⁹ WHIS, “Backcountry Management Plan and Environmental Assessment Public Scoping Meeting,” February 29, 2012, subfolder “BMP EA,” subfolder “Environmental_Assessments,” folder “Administrative_History,” WHIS-DF.

⁵⁰ WHIS, *Trails Management Plan: Environmental Assessment*, 2022, p. 2, Appendix C-3; and WHIS, *Long-Range Interpretive Plan*, June 2017, p. 29, subfolder “ADMIN_PLANS,” subfolder “Not_Accessioned,” folder “Administrative_History,” WHIS-DF.

The severity of the summer 2018 Carr Fire required WHIS to close the park for the remainder of 2018, with certain areas remaining closed into the next year.⁵¹ Visitation patterns were further disrupted by the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in temporary closures or reduced operations at campgrounds, restrooms, and concession facilities. Administrative records indicate that visitation totaled 805,295 in 2020, increased to 816,608 in 2021, and rose to 1,505,134 in 2022. Post-fire planning documents, including the 2022 Trails Management Plan (see Chapter 3.2: Trails), were developed within this context of recovery and fluctuating visitation.⁵²

Conclusion

Visitor management at WHIS evolved in response to actual use patterns rather than early projections. Initial planning documents anticipated heavy shoreline use and substantial regional visitation, but the park exceeded one million annual visitors earlier than expected and continued to experience fluctuations shaped by infrastructure capacity, special events, fire, and broader social trends. Early management emphasized developed lakeshore facilities, reinforcing the reservoir as the park's primary recreational focus.

The Oregon State University studies of the mid-1980s marked a significant administrative moment by providing systematic data on visitor demographics, site use, crowding, and user conflict. Those reports documented persistent patterns—predominantly California-based, water-oriented recreation—as well as infrastructure deficiencies and shoreline congestion. The findings offered park managers a documented basis for decisions related to facilities, communication, and zoning. Subsequent visitor studies in the 1990s confirmed many of these patterns and demonstrated the durability of lakeshore-centered recreation.

At the same time, the park experimented with expanding recreational opportunities beyond the reservoir. The Whiskeytown Downhill and subsequent endurance events introduced new permitting, coordination, and capacity considerations, while also testing limits on event scale. In later decades, expanded trail systems, waterfall access, interpretive kayaking programs, and efforts toward a Backcountry Management Plan represented continued administrative attempts to diversify recreational use. Although the Backcountry Management Plan was never finalized, zoning concepts and trail development shaped ongoing management practice.

⁵¹ Area West Environmental to Shane Winton, Shasta County Department of Public Works, Subject, "Biological Survey Report for the Whiskey Creek Road Project," August 14, 2019, subfolder "2018," folder "Cultural_Resource_Reports-PRIVILEGED," WHIS-DF.

⁵² "Annual Visitation Report by Years: 2014 to 2024," NPS, accessed July 11, 2025, [https://irma.nps.gov/Stats/SSRSReports/National%20Reports/Annual%20Visitation%20By%20Park%20\(1979%20-%20Last%20Calendar%20Year\)](https://irma.nps.gov/Stats/SSRSReports/National%20Reports/Annual%20Visitation%20By%20Park%20(1979%20-%20Last%20Calendar%20Year)); "WHIS, *Trails Management Plan: Environmental Assessment*, 2022, p. C-5; Josh Hoines to Mike Light, "Notification of Changes to Concession Contract No. CC-WHIS001-09 Related to Whiskeytown National Recreation Area COVID-19 Adaptive Operations Recovery Plan," June 12, 2020, folder "Contracts_and_Permits," WHIS-DF. For visitation numbers and the change to car counting formula in 1992, see "Whiskeytown National Recreation Area: Business Plan," p. 14.

CHAPTER 6.1: VISITOR MANAGEMENT AND RECREATION

Visitation in the early twenty-first century was marked by both growth and disruption. The Carr Fire in 2018, temporary closures during the COVID-19 pandemic, and subsequent recovery periods demonstrated the sensitivity of visitation patterns to environmental and operational conditions. Planning documents such as the 2003 Business Plan and the 2022 Trail Management Plan reveal recurring concerns regarding staffing, infrastructure, visitor safety, and maintenance capacity.

Over time, visitor management at WHIS required periodic recalibration in response to changing use levels, shifts in recreation patterns, fiscal constraints, and environmental events. Although the reservoir has remained the primary draw, administrative efforts to manage crowding, address user conflict, and expand backcountry opportunities broadened the scope of recreation planning within a multiuse national recreation area.

CHAPTER 6.2: INTERPRETIVE PLANNING & PROGRAMS

Freeman Tilden described interpretation as a process of revelation rather than instruction—a way to provoke curiosity and connect personal experience to place.¹ At Whiskeytown National Recreation Area (WHIS), interpretation has served precisely that function: translating dams, the powerhouse, historic districts, and burned hillsides into stories about water development, recreation, fire, and the region’s layered human history. Yet from the outset, interpretation occupied an uncertain position within the park’s administrative priorities.

The 1964 Master Plan explicitly limited its scope. Planners advised that WHIS’s interpretation program “should be minimal as compared with those of a National Park” and that “interpretation and education should not be emphasized.”² This guidance stood in tension with both projections that anticipated the park would see millions of visitors and with the NPS’s philosophy that interpretation helps audiences care about—and ultimately support—the preservation of park resources.³ Even so, the plan did call for visitor services through person-to-person contact, literature, signage, recreational programming, and interpretive waysides.⁴

Over subsequent decades, WHIS’s interpretive program expanded unevenly. Annual reports and planning documents repeatedly cited insufficient staffing, unclear direction, and limited funding. In 1981, an interim interpretive plan acknowledged that “interpretive personnel have been hampered by a lack of purpose and direction.”⁵ More than three decades later, the 2014 Foundation Document echoed a similar concern, noting that “Whiskeytown is currently lacking overall guidance for interpretation and education.”⁶ Despite these recurring constraints, the interpretive division broadened its programming and outreach through the 1980s, 1990s, and early 2000s—often relying on partnerships, volunteers, and targeted initiatives rather than sustained base capacity. Although visitation never reached the 3.3 million annually predicted in 1964, WHIS’s interpretive efforts evolved in response to changing understandings of the park’s history, landscape, and audiences.

¹ Freeman Tilden’s *Interpreting our Heritage* was first published in 1957 and remains the foundation for interpretation within the NPS and National Association for Interpretation.

² US Department of the Interior (DOI), National Park Service (NPS), Division of Landscape Architecture Western Office Design and Construction, “The Visitor: Narrative, Master Plan Whiskeytown Reservoir Recreation Area Drawings,” October 1964, p. 8, Sheet 3 of 4, subfolder “Facilities_Planning_Maps,” folder “FACILITIES,” WHIS-DF.

³ US DOI, NPS, “Narrative: Part of the Master Plan, Whiskeytown Reservoir Recreation Area, California,” October 1964, p. 2, file, “1964_Land_Preservation_Plan_Narrative_WHIS_611_3045,” subfolder “ADMIN_PLANS,” subfolder “Not_Accessioned,” folder “Administrative_History,” WHIS-DF; and NPS, “Foundational Competencies for All Interpreters,” May 13, 2008, accessed November 2024, <https://web.archive.org/web/20250208040138/http://www.nps.gov:80/idp/interp/101/module.htm>.

⁴ US DOI, NPS, Division of Landscape Architecture Western Office Design and Construction, “The Visitor: Narrative, Master Plan Whiskeytown Reservoir Recreation Area Drawings,” 1964, p. 8.

⁵ Whiskeytown National Recreation Area (WHIS), “Interim Interpretive Plan,” NPS, June 1981, p. 1, folder “Unorganized Files,” WHIS-DF.

⁶ WHIS, *Foundation Document: Whiskeytown National Recreation Area*, July 2014, p. 15, subfolder “ADMIN_PLANS,” folder “LIBRARY-REPORTS,” WHIS-DF.

Interpreting without a Plan

During WHIS's first decades, interpretation focused on connecting visitors with the park's recreational opportunities created by Whiskeytown Lake and the dam. The 1964 Master Plan stated that WHIS had to meet an NPS-wide goal of communicating the "cultural, inspiration, and recreation significance of the American heritage as represented in the National Park system" by interpreting the "scenic, scientific, and historical resources within the area" along with the engineering features of "the Reclamation project."⁷ The Central Valley Project (CVP), rather than other histories, would be at the core of WHIS's interpretive history.

Although the 1964 Master Plan provided limited interpretive guidance, WHIS established a modest program by the 1970s, staffed by a Chief Interpreter and a seasonal summer employee. The two employees provided mostly safety programming at the lake and interpretive exhibits at the Carr Powerhouse, Kennedy Memorial, and Overlook Visitor Center.⁸ There was also a short-lived boat tour hosted by WHIS staff in the early 1970s that eventually became a self-guided boat tour.⁹

As Whiskeytown matured through the late 1960s and early 1970s, collaboration between agencies emerged as a strategy for addressing gaps in interpretive programming. In 1971, the NPS and USFS jointly planned for staff from both agencies to co-create interpretive information and public programs. Interpretive content would include maps and information about the other units within the national recreation area. They also expected the Whiskeytown Natural History Association to create more interpretive brochures using funds from the sale of maps and postcards.¹⁰ While these interpretive programs provided a degree of instruction and wayfinding for visitors, they did not spur "intellectual or emotional connection," the true goals of interpretation.¹¹ NPS staff visiting WHIS in the mid-1970s recommended that the new unit needed more attention on interpretive programming, more interpretive staff, and expanded interpretive offerings.¹² WHIS staff incorporated these recommendations into the 1976 *Master Plan*, which emphasized the need for the interpretive division "to increase understanding of the unit's natural resources, human impacts, educational opportunities, and local history."¹³ These recommendations were going to be accomplished through programming at the overlook visitor information center, creating programming at THHD, and designing self-guided tours and waysides.¹⁴

⁷ US DOI, NPS, Division of Landscape Architecture Western Office Design and Construction, "Narrative, Master Plan Whiskeytown Reservoir Recreation Area Drawings," October 1964, p. 1.

⁸ Western Region Ad Hoc Management Consultation Team, "Whiskeytown National Recreation Area Management Consultation Report," November 11-14, 1975, p. 20, folder "1970s," WHIS-DF.

⁹ Leon J. Mitchell, "Superintendent's Annual Report-1972," January 16, 1973, subfolder "Superintendents_Annual_Report," folder "ADMIN_PLANS," subfolder "Not_Accessioned," folder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF.

¹⁰ NPS and US Forest Service (USFS), *Master Coordination Plan for Whiskeytown-Shasta Trinity National Recreation Area*, August 3, 1971, p. 23, folder "1970s," WHIS-DF.

¹¹ NPS, "Foundational Competencies for All Interpreters," 2008.

¹² Western Region Ad Hoc Management Consultation Team, "Whiskeytown National Recreation Area Management Consultation Report," 1975, p. 19.

¹³ NPS, *Whiskeytown/Shasta/Trinity, Whiskeytown Unit Final Master Plan*, July 1976, p. 46, subfolder "ADMIN_PLANS," subfolder "Not_Accessioned," folder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF.

¹⁴ Ibid.

In the early 1980s, the interpretation department included one full-time position filled by Terry DiMattio, Chief of the Branch of Interpretive Activities (GS-9). The department looked forward to hiring a part-time interpreter and three seasonal park aids the following season. Underfunded and under-supported, these WHIS staff struggled to define Whiskeytown's interpretive goals and themes without more direction.¹⁵ WHIS was not only short staffed, it also did not have an approved interpretive plan. Due to the minimal support for interpretive planning, "personnel have been hampered by a lack of purpose and direction."¹⁶ However, staff worked in collaboration with specialists from Harpers Ferry Center to create an Interim Interpretive Plan. This plan provided a foundation for establishing a comprehensive interpretive program—a plan before a plan.¹⁷ In this interim plan, WHIS staff outlined three interpretive objectives:

1. "To inform visitors to the area and residents of the Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity region in an interesting and effective manner of the appropriate recreational activities available to them at Whiskeytown." This objective also included education about "cultural, historical, and natural resources," alongside recreation and management programs.
2. "To educate our visitors about unsafe acts and safety hazards that exist in the backcountry and on and around the lake in order to help insure a safe visit."
3. "To foster understanding of, and appreciation for, the historical, natural, cultural and recreational resources found in the area and throughout the National Park System."¹⁸

The plan also outlined proposed interpretive themes, including safe recreation; the history of the CVP; the role and function of Whiskeytown Dam; gold mining history; the histories of Levi Tower and Charles Camden; and the historical and contemporary experiences of the Wintu people.¹⁹ The broadness and repetitiveness of the three interpretive objectives and topics, however, were indications of a program still lacking in direction.²⁰ The report acknowledged that "the level of staffing, funding and interpretive services is now deficient." Staffing and funding constraints continued to limit implementation.²¹

While broad, the interim plan did provide some direction. WHIS staff were already providing summer weekend interpretive programming, including evening presentations at the Oak Bottom Amphitheater on topics such as history, natural resources, recreation, and fire management. Additional activities included historical walking tours of the Tower House Historic District (THHD) and El Dorado Mines, gold panning demonstrations, and educational sessions for students at National Environmental Education Development (NEED) Camp.²² Most of these programs occurred during

¹⁵ WHIS, "Interim Interpretive Plan," 1981, pp. 1, 10; and Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity-National Recreation Area, *Statement for Management*, NPS, January 1990, p. 11, folder "Unorganized Files," WHIS-DF.

¹⁶ WHIS, "Interim Interpretive Plan," 1981, p. 9.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 13.

the summer months and on Saturdays and Sundays, when visitation was highest.²³ Likewise, WHIS knew from surveys that the largest draw for visitors stopping at the THHD was panning for gold, and it was also the site where visitors were most eager to engage with ranger-guided activities.²⁴ WHIS staff were beginning to define and characterize their audiences, a foundational step in successful interpretation. In addition to these established programs, the interim plan proposed extending amphitheater programming beyond weekends and the summer season, offering specialized programs for “special populations” during summer months, renovating the information center and Oak Bottom Amphitheater, expanding interpretive displays throughout WHIS, and creating visitor guides and brochures focused on recreation and history. The plan also called for developing facilities at the Kennedy Memorial, NEED Camp, Davis Gulch and Shasta Divide Trails, and the Carr Memorial at the Powerhouse.²⁵ The plan encouraged collaboration with the City of Redding and Shasta County to develop off-site programs that would bring the park’s resources to surrounding communities.²⁶ Any one of these proposed projects would require significant staff time, expertise, and funding—resources WHIS was often lacking.

Despite the limitations of early plans, the park faced increasing pressure to meet the needs of a growing number of visitors. As visitation numbers grew in the late 1970s and 1980s, WHIS staff would have felt the lack of interpretive direction acutely. In 1979, WHIS reported 1,171,443 visitors.²⁷ In 1987, that figure climbed to 1.75 million.²⁸ By the early 1990s, visitation approached two million annually (WHIS revised its vehicle-counting formula in 1992, which may have inflated earlier totals).²⁹ Interpreting Whiskeytown’s layered histories for hundreds of thousands—and at times nearly two million—visitors each year posed an ongoing challenge for a comparatively small interpretive staff.

The Division of Interpretation

Recognizing the need for a more structured approach to interpretation, WHIS leadership took steps to formalize the division. In 1981–1982, Superintendent Ray Foust responded to the call for a dedicated interpretive program. He reorganized the Visitor Activities and Resource Management Division in 1982, creating three new divisions, including a standalone Division of Interpretation.³⁰ This restructuring allowed WHIS to actively pursue its interpretive goals. The division’s staff included one permanent full-time GS-9 Chief of Interpretive Activities, supplemented as funding allowed

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Marty E. Lee, Donald R. Field, Kristen Martinson, and Alan Gross, “Whiskeytown—An Overview of the Visitor and Recreation Resource,” NPS, December 1986, pp. 35, 81, folder “Unorganized Files,” WHIS-DF.

²⁵ WHIS, “Interim Interpretive Plan,” 1981, p. 1.

²⁶ Ibid., pp. 15-18.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 5.

²⁸ *Statement for Management*, 1990, p. 11.

²⁹ WHIS, *Long-Range Interpretive Plan*, June 2017, p. 29, subfolder “ADMIN_PLANS,” subfolder “Not_Accessioned,” folder “Administrative_History,” WHIS-DF. For visitor statistics, see Integrated Resource Management Applications (IRMA), NPS, “Visitor Use Statistics: Whiskeytown NRA,” February 16, 2024, accessed November 2024, [https://irma.nps.gov/Stats/SSRSReports/Park%20Specific%20Reports/Annual%20Park%20Recreation%20Visitation%20\(1904%20-%20Last%20Calendar%20Year\)?Park=WHIS](https://irma.nps.gov/Stats/SSRSReports/Park%20Specific%20Reports/Annual%20Park%20Recreation%20Visitation%20(1904%20-%20Last%20Calendar%20Year)?Park=WHIS). For visitation numbers and the change to car counting formula in 1992, “Whiskeytown National Recreation Area: Business Plan,” August 2003, p. 14, filename “WHISBIZPlanprintquality,” subfolder “ADMIN_PLANS,” folder “LIBRARY-REPORTS,” WHIS-DF.

³⁰ Ray Foust, “Position Management Plan FY 1982,” October 30, 1981, p. 5, folder “Pos Mgmt. Plan_4 of 4,” box HQ9, WHIS-AF.

by one GS-5 technician during the fall season and three GS-3 park aides during the summer.³¹ However, this staffing level only supported baseline operations, highlighting the need for additional personnel. WHIS identified the need for a permanent information specialist to staff the Overlook Information Station, as well as two additional summer interpreters to expand daytime and evening programming at the Oak Bottom Amphitheater.³²

Just as the Division of Interpretation was maturing and expanding, WHIS's interpretive planners were developing a better understanding of Whiskeytown's visitors. Staff felt that Whiskeytown's visitors held different motivations than typical national park visitors. Because the majority of WHIS's visitors were day-users from the nearby region—as much as 47 percent of visitors lived within twenty miles of WHIS—staff categorized them as “not attracted to the park because of its natural and cultural values.” Instead, “they come to Whiskeytown for different reasons”—namely, the waters of Whiskeytown Lake. “Enticing them out of their boats and off the beaches to attend nature walks, historical tours and demonstrations,” staff concluded, “may be difficult.”³³

While most of WHIS's visitors were attracted to recreating at the lake, not everyone entering the park came for the water. Interpretive planners identified a “sizeable number of senior citizens” who visited the park in the shoulder seasons, or on either side of the summer's busiest months. Unlike Whiskeytown's day-use visitors, these older visitors demonstrated a stronger curiosity about WHIS's natural history and cultural history. WHIS staff identified this senior community as an important group to engage with specifically designed programs.³⁴ To connect WHIS's day-use lake visitors and non-lake visitors to the park's interpretation, planners wanted to develop more self-guided interpretation opportunities, including signs, exhibits, and publications. Person-to-person interpretation would be reserved for school groups and “special populations.” But reaching these interpretive goals would be an uphill battle. As of the early 1980s, WHIS had no exhibit panels in the park except for two at the Carr Powerhouse.³⁵ WHIS interpreters needed many more signs, panels, and exhibits if they were going to successfully connect with visitors via written text.

The year 1986 marked a pivotal moment for the Interpretive Division. WHIS published the inaugural issue of its newspaper, *The Whiskeytown Generator*, which provided visitors with information about the park's natural and cultural resources as well as recreational opportunities on the lake. That same year, WHIS launched its first summer-long Junior Ranger program, introduced a living history program highlighting the region's hunters and trappers, and installed wayside exhibits throughout the park.³⁶ By the late 1980s, the division expanded its reach by offering off-site programs in local communities, further raising the profile of WHIS and the NPS in North-Central California.³⁷

³¹ WHIS, “Interim Interpretive Plan,” 1981, p. 10.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., p. 5; and Lee et al., “Whiskeytown—An Overview of the Visitor and Recreation Resource,” 1986, p. 25.

³⁴ WHIS, “Interim Interpretive Plan,” 1981, pp. 5, 24.

³⁵ Ibid., pp. 5, 8.

³⁶ Ray Foust, “Whiskeytown Unit Superintendent's Annual Report, 1986,” 1987, pp. 3-4, 5, folder “A2621 Reports Superintendents,” box HQ6, WHIS-AF.

³⁷ Ray Foust, “Whiskeytown Unit Superintendent's Annual Report, 1988,” 1989, p. 1, folder “A2621 Reports Superintendents,” box HQ6, WHIS-AF.

CHAPTER 6.2: INTERPRETIVE PLANNING & PROGRAMS

This surge in interpretive programming at WHIS during the mid-1980s was not just a ground-up effort. In 1985, President Ronald Reagan appointed William Penn Mott Jr. as the Director of NPS, who was, according to historians, “deeply interested in interpretation, [and] sought a greater NPS role in educating the public about American history and environmental values.”³⁸ Mott issued a 12-Point Plan to “expand the role of interpretation by telling people how each park’s features contribute to the values of the entire National Park System and to the quality of life.”³⁹ This national emphasis on interpretation coincided with WHIS’s efforts to enhance its programs, providing both guidance and momentum. Inspired by Mott’s vision, WHIS leveraged its unique natural and cultural resources to connect visitors to the mission of the National Park System. By linking local features to national values, the park not only deepened public appreciation of Whiskeytown but also reinforced the importance of environmental stewardship and historical education across all NPS sites.

The interpretive program at WHIS encountered significant challenges in the early 1990s as it attempted to sustain the expansion experienced during the 1980s. Staffing and funding shortages hindered its ability to expand and sustain its initiatives.⁴⁰ In a 1990 memo, WHIS’s Chief Interpreter acknowledged the program’s achievements, stating that WHIS should be “justly proud of the enormous accomplishments” of its interpretive efforts despite their “low profile.” At the same time, the memorandum indicated that continued institutional support would be necessary to maintain program operations.⁴¹ Base funding remained insufficient, leaving the division unable to deliver a “complete program” to visitors.⁴² To address these constraints, WHIS partnered with the Southwest Parks and Monuments Association, which donated funds during the 1990 season to hire a Student Conservation Association employee for 12 weeks to assist at the information center and with related interpretive projects.⁴³ WHIS also relied heavily on volunteer support to maintain programming amidst ongoing budget and staffing challenges.

As the interpretation division entered the 1990s, its goals included expanding the range of brochures, guides, handouts, and display boards; publishing another edition of the park’s newspaper; enhancing off-site interpretive programs, increasing sales and exhibit space at the Overlook Visitor Center; and recruiting a “reliable interpretive volunteer.”⁴⁴ Despite these ambitions, the division maintained the thematic focus outlined in the 1981 Interim Plan.⁴⁵

The interpretive program at WHIS expanded from its limited staffing and infrastructure in the 1960s to a more extensive range of initiatives by the 1990s. Although staffing and funding constraints persisted, the division increased

³⁸ Barry Mackintosh, Janet A. McDonnell, and John H. Sprinkle Jr., “The National Parks,” p. 60, *The George Wright Forum*, 35, no. 2. *The National Parks: Shaping the System* (2018), accessed November 2024, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26555016>.

³⁹ NPS, *12-Point Plan: The Challenge*, (US Department of the Interior: 1980) p. 11, accessed November 2024, <http://npshistory.com/publications/management/12-point-plan-challenge.pdf>.

⁴⁰ WHIS, “FY90 Statement for Interpretation,” 1990, p. 55, folder “1990s,” WHIS-DF.

⁴¹ WHIS, “FY90 Statement for Interpretation,” p. 55.

⁴² *Statement for Management*, 1990, p. 30.

⁴³ WHIS, “FY90 Statement for Interpretation,” p. 30.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

programming, improved facilities, and expanded outreach activities. Partnerships, volunteer support, and alignment with servicewide planning frameworks contributed to the program's structural development. By the 1990s, interpretation at WHIS had become more formally integrated into park planning, linking the unit's natural and cultural resources to the mission of the NPS.

Interpreting Indigenous History

One of the most significant areas of focus within WHIS's interpretive program has been the history of the Wintu people and their ancestors, whose presence in the region predates the park's establishment by millennia. WHIS's approach to interpreting Wintu history evolved over time. Early NPS planning documents show limited engagement with Indigenous history; the 1964 planning document omitted substantive discussion of Native presence. A decade later, the 1978 Historical Resource Study did not reference the Wintu by name, instead it used the generalized term "Indians" to describe Native inhabitants of the area.⁴⁶

By the early 1980s, park interpreters proposed presenting Wintu history from approximately 900 A.D. through the 1840s, including "the effect of the gold rush on the Wintu and their reaction to the miners."⁴⁷ This framing emphasized pre-contact and early contact periods while providing limited interpretive space for continuity into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Subsequent interpretive materials sought to present Indigenous histories as extending across time, including into contemporary periods.

The THHD provides an example of this evolving approach to interpreting Indigenous history. In 1973, WHIS successfully nominated THHD to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), which prompted the park's staff to develop updated interpretation for the site.⁴⁸ Initially, the THHD listing included the Camden family house, servants' quarters, barn, carriage house, orchards, the Levi Tower gravesite, and outbuildings. It also included the El Dorado Mine's residence, stamp mill, shed, and greenhouse, but it did not focus on archeological history at the site.⁴⁹ In 1973, the NPS completed an Historic Structure Report for THHD, with the period treated ranging from 1850 to 1913, the year following Charles Camden's death. Narrowing in even further, the report suggested that WHIS interpreters focus in on 1900 to 1913. They explained, "Nineteen hundred was the year when the major building, the Camden House, reached its final form as Camden, its builder and owner, last knew it."⁵⁰ Because THHD did not yet consider the Indigenous and precontact archeological resources around the site, the 1900–1913 period seemed appropriate.

⁴⁶ NPS, "Narrative: Part of the Master Plan, Whiskeytown Reservoir Recreation Area, California," 1964, p. 3; and Anna Cox Toogood, *Historic Resource Study: Whiskeytown National Recreation Area*, NPS, October 1978, pp. 5, 9, 44, 84, subfolder "1978," folder "1970-1979," WHIS-DF.

⁴⁷ WHIS, "Interim Interpretive Plan," 1981, p. 25.

⁴⁸ WHIS, *Final Master Plan*, 1976, p. 7.

⁴⁹ Anna Cox Toogood and David G. Henderson, *Historic Structure Report: Tower House Historic District, Historical and Architectural Data Section, Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, National Park Service*, May 1973, pp. 1, 3, 5-6, subfolder "ADMIN_PLANS," subfolder "Not_Accessioned," folder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 3, 4-5.

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In 1985, archeological field work within THHD resulted in a nomination to the NRHP to add 470-acres of archeological resources, called the Soo-Yeh-Choo-Pus Archeological District.⁵¹ The Soo-Yeh-Choo-Pus Archeological District is called the Tower House Archeological District in some documentation.⁵² Fieldwork identified evidence of human habitation in the area dating from approximately 1300 B.C. to 600 A.D., associated with ancestors of Indigenous communities that live in Northern California. The nomination enabled WHIS staff to integrate archeological research with interpretation, presenting a more comprehensive account of Indigenous history in the Whiskeytown area. Through interpretation, the district could “represent a broad spectrum of native cultural practices and patterns such as settlement, subsistence, and material culture.”⁵³

By the 1990s, WHIS interpretation staff wanted to develop further interpretation about the region’s Indigenous history. To accomplish that, the park’s leadership understood that WHIS must first build closer relationships with the regional tribes. The 1998 draft of the General Management Plan (GMP) acknowledged that even though the contemporary Wintu had “cultural interests in the lands of Whiskeytown both in terms of spiritual and religious values,” combined with “opportunities to interpret Wintu culture for the general park visitor,” the park had not “sufficiently investigated and pursued” those relationships. The final 1999 General Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement solidified the park’s goals. To foster partnerships with Native people in the region, for example, the document suggested building a roundhouse within the NEED Camp. It also suggested the “cultivation of native plants for traditional uses” alongside cultural education programs.⁵⁴ An Ethnographic Overview report published in 2000 noted that Native consultants representing the Wintu requested that WHIS further train staff around cultural sensitivity, form a Wintu community advisory council, and potentially construct a roundhouse within the park’s boundaries.⁵⁵

For several years, WHIS pursued plans to build a roundhouse near NEED Camp, at the same location where a previous roundhouse had stood. In 2002, representatives from WHIS and NPS including Karin Anderson, archeologist at Redwood National and State Parks; Steve Thede, Chief of Interpretation and Cultural Resources; Joe Svinarich, Fire Archeologist; Clinton Kane, Interpreter and Collections Manager; and Chief of Maintenance Jerry Wheeler, met with representatives of the Wintu and NEED Camp to discuss plans to build a 45-foot diameter building at the site.⁵⁶ Ultimately, WHIS did not construct the roundhouse due to local opposition.

⁵¹ WHIS, “Tower House Historic District (THHD) Cultural Landscape Interim Treatment Recommendations Draft Report,” February 2008, p. 8, subfolder “Camden House Only,” subfolder “SHPO Package,” subfolder “Camden House,” subfolder “ALBERTI,” folder “Superintendent,” WHIS-DF; and Danica Willis, “BOR Bypass Event: Damage Assessment for Cultural Resources,” Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, August 12, 2013, p. 7, folder “2013,” WHIS-DF.

⁵² WHIS, “Environmental Assessment and Assessment of Effect: Princess Ditch Trail Construction,” National Park Service, March 2014, p. 41, accessed November 2024, <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/document.cfm?documentID=58202>.

⁵³ Roger E. Kelly, “National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form: Tower House; See-Yeh-Choo-Pus,” September 27, 1985, p. 9, accessed November 2024, <https://npshistory.com/publications/whis/nr-tower-house-ad.pdf>; and Willis, “BOR Bypass Event: Damage Assessment for Cultural Resources,” 2013, p. 7.

⁵⁴ WHIS, *Draft General Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement*, NPS, August 1998, p. 19, 38, e-TIC filename “WHIS_611_98036_0122pg.pdf” accessed November 2024; WHIS, *Whiskeytown Unit General Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement*, July 1999, p. 18, subfolder “ADMIN_PLANS,” subfolder “Not_Accessioned,” folder “Administrative_History,” WHIS-DF.

⁵⁵ Geri D. Emberson, *Ethnographic Overview and Traditional Use Study of American Indian Affiliations Within the Whiskeytown National Recreation Area California*, US DOI, May 2000, pp. iii, iv, subfolder “AAA_BASELINE_DOCUMENTS,” folder “Administrative_History,” WHIS-DF; WHIS, *General Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement*, 1999, p. 18.

⁵⁶ Karin Anderson, “Trip Report for March 19, 2002,” Redwood National and State Parks, April 8, 2002, pp. 1-2, subfolder “2002,” folder “Cultural_Resource_Reports-PRIVILEGED,” WHIS-DF; Russel Bevil and Elena Nilsson, *Cultural Resources Overview of the Whiskeytown Unit, Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area, Shasta County, California*, Mountain Anthropological Research, May 2001, p. 86, subfolder “2001,” folder “Cultural_Resources_Reports-PRIVILEGED,” WHIS-DF.

By the late 2010s and in subsequent interpretive materials, WHIS's presentation of Indigenous history became more explicit. For example, park interpretive content highlights Kate Camden, an Indigenous child indentured to Charles and Philena Camden, alongside the histories of Levi Tower, the THHD, and Charles Camden.⁵⁷ A 2020 ethnographic study noted, "This document is in no way the 'final word' on Native American relationships with Whiskeytown's lands and resources, but rather a useful tool in understanding the context of these relationships."⁵⁸

The relationship between Whiskeytown and Native American communities is inherently complex, encompassing cultural preservation, collaboration, and education. Over the past few decades, WHIS leadership has focused on three priorities: 1) Conducting archeological surveys and site assessments in partnership with the Tribal community; 2) Strengthening relationships with contemporary tribal leadership and cultural experts while facilitating traditional uses of WHIS lands; and 3) Interpreting and sharing Wintu stories—both historical and contemporary—with park visitors to foster deeper understanding and respect.

Seasonal Programs and Events

In addition to its work on Indigenous history, WHIS has developed a series of seasonal programs that showcase the park's diverse resources and provide visitors with immersive experiences. While WHIS staff interprets a plethora of themes across multiple locations in the park, certain programs and events stand out as uniquely characteristic of the recreation area's identity. One of those characteristic Whiskeytown programs is the ranger-led interpretive kayaking program at Oak Bottom, which connects visitors to the park's most important resource, Whiskeytown Lake.⁵⁹ It also provides rangers with an opportunity to talk about the natural and cultural history of the Whiskeytown area. It emerged following the unit's ban on personal watercraft in the late 1990s. Small, motorized watercraft—also known as Jet Skis or PWCs—were causing "a major negative impact" on lake-based recreation.⁶⁰ After the ban, WHIS took advantage of the safer, quieter waters and came up with a creative, fun, and unique program on the lake.

The kayak program began in 2001 under the vision of Carol Jandrall, who worked in the park Interpretation Division. WHIS purchased five kayaks (three tandems and two singles) and launched a trial series of the ranger-led tours on the lake.⁶¹ From its inception, the program presented a win-win: it met the goals of the 2001 GMP to "expand the

⁵⁷ WHIS, "Tower House Historic District," updated January 5, 2021, accessed November 2024, <https://www.nps.gov/places/tower-house-historic-district.htm>.

⁵⁸ Douglas Deur, Rochelle Bloom, Katie Wynia, Jamie Hebert, *The Wintu Homelands of Clear Creek: Ethnographic Accounts of Whiskeytown National Recreation Area*, 2020, NPS and Portland State University, cooperative agreement No. H8W07110001, p. 1, subfolder "AAA_BASELINE_DOCUMENTS," folder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF.

⁵⁹ WHIS, *Whiskeytown Nugget Newspaper*, 2017, p. 4, accessed November 2024, <https://npshistory.com/publications/whis/newspaper/2017.pdf>.

⁶⁰ WHIS, *General Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement*, 1999, p. ii.

⁶¹ WHIS Interpretive Division, "Annual Review FY2001 Interpretation," 2001, pp. 1-2, subfolder "Dump," subfolder "2001," folder "2000-2009," WHIS-DF. According to Jennifer Gibson (Chief of Resources and Interpretation, WHIS, 2016–2020), personal communication with authors, fall 2024, Carol Jandrall of the Interpretation Division developed the program with support from her supervisor and the park's leadership team.



Figure 25. Kayak Tour, ca. 2003.
Source: Photograph on file at WHIS Archives.⁶²

interpretive program” as well as Superintendent James Milestone’s own vision to promote “human-powered” recreation at WHIS.⁶³ The trial effort proved successful and WHIS purchased more kayaks and expanded the program. By 2005, the four-year-old program had hosted over 4,000 participants.⁶⁴

Despite the program’s popularity, a threat arrived in 2005 when WHIS leadership reduced the park’s staffing. While other interpretive programs were on the chopping block, the kayak program’s popularity—and its embodiment of Whiskeytown’s core themes and values—saved it from elimination.⁶⁵ It was a productive choice that WHIS preserved the kayak program, for visitors continued to participate in the free program.⁶⁶ By 2011, ten years after the program’s start, the kayak tours had hosted 22,000 visitors.⁶⁷ Within that time frame, WHIS staff expanded tours to include moonlight

⁶² Photograph in subfolder “kayak photos,” subfolder “extra photos,” subfolder “PhotosAccordingtoChapter,” subfolder “Virtual Tour,” folder “Virtual Tour,” WHIS-DF.

⁶³ WHIS, *General Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement*, 1999, p. 10.

⁶⁴ Steve Thede, “Whiskeytown NRA Interpretive Program,” August 8, 2005, subfolder “2005 & Directors Visit,” subfolder “2005,” folder “2000-2009,” WHIS-DF.

⁶⁵ Thede, “Whiskeytown NRA Interpretive Program,” 2005.

⁶⁶ The program is free with a valid Parks pass. See WHIS, “Whiskeytown Nugget,” Summer 2003, p. 1, subfolder “A virtual Tour Stuff For Jen,” folder “Virtual Tour,” WHIS-DF.

⁶⁷ Letter from James Milestone to Erick Ammon, November 23, 2011, folder “Miscellaneous 3 of 8,” box HQ2, WHIS-AF.

tours and stand-up paddleboard tours at Brandy Creek.⁶⁸ For a shorter period, WHIS also supported a Special Access Kayak Program, which paired volunteers with visitors experiencing physical, mental, or developmental disabilities.⁶⁹

Other ranger-led tours have also been popular, including weekly Junior Rangers and Junior Firefighters summer programs. The Junior Firefighter program has helped children “discover the role that wildfire plays in our National Parks,” while providing critical fire safety education. The Junior Ranger program, intended for children ages seven to twelve, has helped young visitors explore “the special wonders of Whiskeytown.”⁷⁰ To increase interpretive offerings for visitors in the evenings, WHIS has offered a variety of night-time programs, which have shifted over the years. In the early 2000s, WHIS staff hosted Evening Astronomy Programs that introduced visitors to the night sky, covering topics ranging from ancient navigation to modern light pollution. In subsequent years, evening offerings expanded to include programs such as a Moonlight Kayak Tour and a Whiskeytown Night Sky star party. Many of these ranger-led programs are offered in both English and Spanish.⁷¹

WHIS’s staff have also developed significant interpretation around California’s Gold Rush, which provides context to the region’s history and is a core interpretive theme for the park. For example, WHIS developed a curriculum-based Gold Rush Program for fourth graders. The two-hour, ranger-led program includes visits to the Camden House, historic orchard, and El Dorado Mine, and concludes with gold panning in Clear Creek. While many of WHIS’s ranger-led programs occur during the busiest summer months, the Gold Rush programs serve regional schools during the spring season.⁷²

While the kayak and other ranger-led programs are recurring summer offerings, WHIS has also celebrated significant historical events as part of its interpretive approach. One of the most significant historical events was President John F. Kennedy’s September 28, 1963, dedication of the Whiskeytown Clair A. Hill Dam. Addressing thousands of spectators, Kennedy spoke about the benefits of conservation, proclaiming that “every time we develop the water resources, [or] we set aside recreation areas, we can be sure they will be used.”⁷³ Kennedy also visited Redding at the behest of Under Secretary of the Interior James Carr.⁷⁴ The speech would be Kennedy’s last in California, making it all the more revered in WHIS and Californian history. When President Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas just weeks later, a group of locals pooled resources to create a memorial site on the exact spot where Kennedy gave his speech. In 1964, Shasta County designated the road leading from Highway 299 to the dam as “John F. Kennedy Memorial Drive,” formally commemorating Kennedy’s association with the site and reinforcing his presence in WHIS interpretation.⁷⁵

⁶⁸ In 2016, WHIS moved their former kayak storage building from Oak Bottom to Brandy Creek for use with the Special Use Permit (SUP) program and built a new kayak storage building and restored the old site with “native materials.” WHIS, “PEPC Description OB Kayak Move to BC,” n.d., subfolder “PEPC Descriptions,” subfolder “Compliance,” subfolder “20210927,” folder “FACILITIES,” WHIS-DF.

⁶⁹ WHIS, “Annual Report 2010,” NPS, pp. 8-9, folder “Unorganized Files,” WHIS-DF.

⁷⁰ WHIS, *Fire Management Plan*, June 2011, pp. 11, 58, subfolder “FMP,” subfolder “ADMIN_PLANS,” subfolder “LIBRARY-REPORTS,” WHIS-DF; “Junior Ranger” and Junior Firefighter,” *Whiskeytown Nugget*, Summer 2003, p. 4, subfolder “Lake,” subfolder “Communities,” subfolder “PhotosAccordingtoChapter,” folder “Virtual Tour,” WHIS-DF.

⁷¹ WHIS, *Long-Range Interpretive Plan*, June 2017, p. 39, subfolder “ADMIN_PLANS,” folder “LIBRARY-REPORTS,” WHIS-DF; WHIS, “Ranger-Led Programs” updated September 27, 2024, accessed November 2024, <https://www.nps.gov/whis/planyourvisit/rangerprograms.htm>.

⁷² WHIS, “Ranger-Led Programs” updated September 27, 2024.

⁷³ John F. Kennedy, “Remarks at the Dedication of the Whiskeytown Dam and Reservoir” September 28, 1963, accessed November 2024, <https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/jfkwha-223-002>.

⁷⁴ WHIS, *Long-Range Interpretive Plan*, 2017, p. 9.

⁷⁵ NPS, “Kennedy Memorial at Whiskeytown NRA,” January 5, 2021, accessed November 2024, <https://www.nps.gov/places/kennedy-memorial-at-whiskeytown-nra.htm>.

CHAPTER 6.2: INTERPRETIVE PLANNING & PROGRAMS

In 2003, forty years after the Kennedy speech, WHIS held events to commemorate the President's dedication of the Whiskeytown Clair A. Hill Dam. Though the event focused on WHIS and Kennedy, it also served as an avenue to strengthen the relationship between the park and the surrounding communities. According to Milestone, the events sought to "draw attention and to honor the people who contributed to creating Whiskeytown NRA and made it a successful recreational site as President Kennedy predicted it would become back in 1963."⁷⁶ In partnership with other federal agencies, local foundations, and businesses, WHIS organized speakers and seminars, hosted a ceremony at the park, installed new exhibits, and conducted oral histories related to the park's history and the impact of Kennedy's presidency.⁷⁷

The fortieth anniversary of Kennedy's speech and dedication is not the only anniversary event that WHIS has hosted. In 2015, the park partnered with the Friends of Whiskeytown to host the fiftieth anniversary of the park's 1965 creation. The Friends of Whiskeytown is a non-profit organization founded in 2002. The organization's goal is to acquire private funding for value-added park projects and programs at WHIS.⁷⁸ The 2015 celebration included the "Symphony on the Beach!"—an ode to WHIS's most important resource. The evening included a performance by the Shasta Symphony, a candle luminary send off at Brandy Creek cove, and a time capsule filled with letters, which will be opened on the park's one-hundredth anniversary in 2065.⁷⁹ Beyond the fiftieth anniversary, the group has also supported other annual programs at Whiskeytown, such as the Harvest Fest and the Old Time Holiday celebration at the Camden House every December. The Old Time Holiday was disrupted due to the 2018 Carr Fire and COVID-19 but restarted in partnership with Shasta State Historic Park.⁸⁰ Special events and seasonal programs play an important role in Whiskeytown's interpretation. These programs provide WHIS staff an opportunity to shine a spotlight on unique areas of the park's history that are otherwise not interpreted during daily talks or on signage.

⁷⁶ Letter from James Milestone to Senator Edward M. Kennedy, September 27, 2002, "40th Anniversary of Kennedy Dedication Event" folder "JFK Dedication," WHIS-DF.

⁷⁷ Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, "Whiskeytown's 40th Anniversary" document, n.d., subfolder "40th Anniversary of Kennedy Dedication Event," folder "JFK Dedication," WHIS-DF.

⁷⁸ Friends of Whiskeytown, "About Us," n.d., accessed November 20, 2024, <https://friendsofwhiskeytown.org>.

⁷⁹ WHIS, "Symphony on the Beach – Whiskeytown's 50th Anniversary," August 14, 2015, accessed November 2024, <https://www.nps.gov/whis/learn/news/symphony-on-the-beach.htm>.

⁸⁰ Friends of Whiskeytown, "About Us," n.d., accessed November 20, 2024, <https://friendsofwhiskeytown.org/>; and Friends of Whiskeytown, "What We Do," n.d., accessed November 20, 2024, <https://friendsofwhiskeytown.org/what-we-do/>; WHIS, *Long-Range Interpretive Plan*, 2017, p. 40; and "Old Time Holiday Celebration," North State Parent, accessed July 25, 2025, <https://northstateparent.com/event/old-time-holiday-celebration>.

Conclusion

Planning documents and annual reports from the 1960s through the early twenty-first century reveal that interpretation at Whiskeytown operated within persistent administrative constraints while gradually formalizing its structure and scope. The 1964 Master Plan minimized interpretive emphasis relative to recreation, and for much of the park's early history interpretive programming relied on limited staffing, seasonal employees, and basic facilities. The 1981 Interim Interpretive Plan acknowledged that interpretive staff lacked clear direction and sufficient institutional support.

The 1982 reorganization that established a standalone Division of Interpretation marked a structural adjustment within park administration. Although staffing levels remained modest, the division expanded amphitheater programs, Junior Ranger activities, waysides, publications, and community outreach during the mid-1980s. Annual reports throughout the late 1980s and 1990s continued to identify funding shortfalls and the need for additional personnel, even as programming increased and partnerships with cooperating associations and volunteers supplemented base operations.

Interpretive content broadened over time as additional historical and ethnographic research informed programming. Early emphasis on recreational safety and the CVP expanded to include gold mining history, the THHD, and Indigenous histories. Planning documents in the late 1990s acknowledged insufficient engagement with contemporary Wintu communities, and subsequent ethnographic consultation shaped updated approaches to interpretation, even where proposed initiatives—such as construction of a roundhouse—were not implemented.

Programmatic initiatives in the early twenty-first century illustrate both expansion and vulnerability. The ranger-led kayak program, initiated in 2001, became a signature offering aligned with recreation planning and interpretive goals. The 2003 and 2008–2009 annual reports documented continued emphasis on outreach, publications, and seasonal programming. At the same time, the 2013 federal budget sequestration reduced interpretive staffing and cut school and visitor engagement activities by approximately 50 percent, demonstrating the division's sensitivity to fiscal conditions.⁸¹ Following the 2018 Carr Fire, interpretation temporarily ceased and then incorporated fire-focused programming, including the hiring of a TERM fire interpreter, providing an example of administrative adaptation to environmental events.

The 2017 Long-Range Interpretive Plan formalized five interpretive themes developed in consultation with multiple stakeholders and provided clearer guidance than earlier interim plans.⁸² Even so, the historical record shows recurring patterns: limited staffing relative to visitation levels, reliance on partnerships and volunteers, periodic restructuring, and adjustments in response to political and environmental disruptions. Interpretation at Whiskeytown has therefore been defined less by steady expansion than by cycles of constraint, reorganization, and targeted program development within the administrative framework of the park.

⁸¹ James Milestone, "Whiskeytown National Recreation Area's Annual Report, 2013," p. 3, subfolder "Unnamed 5," box HQ 2, WHIS-AF.

⁸² WHIS, *Long-Range Interpretive Plan*, 2017, p. 13.

CHAPTER 6.3: NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT CAMP

The National Environmental Education Development (NEED) Camp—later associated with the Whiskeytown Environmental School (WES)—operated at Whiskeytown National Recreation Area (WHIS) beginning in the 1970s. Established during a period when the National Park Service (NPS) sought to expand environmental education programming for youth, the camp represented an early implementation of the NEED initiative. After the NPS discontinued the NEED program in the 1970s, the educational program continued as WES, while the site itself remained known as NEED Camp. Located south of Whiskeytown Lake along Paige Bar Road, the facility included overnight cabins, a central hall, and an outdoor amphitheater designed to support multi-day residential educational programming. The overnight cabins were destroyed or damaged during the 2018 Carr Fire. Since its founding in 1971, more than 138,700 students have participated in camp programs.¹

NEED Camp developed during a period when the NPS placed greater emphasis on structured youth education. In addition to recreation and preservation, parks were increasingly used for formal school programming. At WHIS, NEED Camp functioned as a central site for partnerships with local schools and community organizations. Programming evolved in response to curricular requirements, staffing capacity, and internal administrative priorities. NEED's history documents both the programmatic aspirations and the operational limits of federally supported environmental education on public lands. This chapter traces the camp's origins, its administrative development, its partnerships, and its evolving role within the interpretive and educational mission of WHIS.

¹ National Park Service (NPS), *Environmental Assessment for the Whiskeytown Environmental School Rebuild, Whiskeytown National Recreation Area* (Washington, DC: National Park Service, 2026), p. 2, accessed March 2026, <https://npshistory.com/publications/whis/env-school-rebuild-ea-2026.pdf>.



Figure 26. NPS workers erecting the NEED Camp Sign, ca. 1970.
Source: Photograph on file at WHIS Archives.

Establishment of NEED Camp, 1969–1970

In September 1969, the NPS acquired eighty acres of land and associated structures from Sarah Jean Allen. Before selling the land to the Department of the Interior (DOI), Allen had leased it to the North Valley Baptist Church, which developed the Vision Valley Youth Camp on the site.² Between 1963 and 1966, church volunteers constructed infrastructure, including tent platforms, staff cabins, a lodge, and a road.³ Initially, Superintendent Leon Mitchell proposed that the North Valley Baptist Church continue operating the camp under a Special Use Permit or a leaseback arrangement. However, Mitchell soon recognized an opportunity to repurpose the existing facilities and land for a new NPS initiative: the National Environmental Education Development program.

The NPS-wide NEED program started in 1968 as the agency developed programming meant to plant the seeds of environmental stewardship among children.⁴ NPS hired biologist and educator Mario Menesini to craft a curriculum for NPS (and for the Bureau of Indian Affairs).⁵ The curriculum emphasized recognizing ecological relationships,

² James Milestone, *From the White House to Whiskeytown: An Administrative History of the Creation of Whiskeytown National Recreation Area*, Whiskeytown National Recreation Area (WHIS), 2003, p. 13, e-TIC filename "WHIS_611_166062_0001_of_0055.pdf" accessed November 2024.

³ Christy Avery, "Determination of Eligibility: Whiskeytown Environmental School Whiskeytown National Recreation Area Shasta County, California," December 1, 2022, p. 15, WHIS-DF.

⁴ Ronald F. Lee, *Family Tree of the National Park System*, online book, accessed November 2024, https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online_books/lee2/index.htm.

⁵ Julia Washburn, "Dynamic Learning Landscapes: The Evolution of Education in our National Parks," *Parks Stewardship Forum*, 36, no. 2 (2020): p. 218; and Mario Menesini Obituary, accessed November 2024, <https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/eastbaytimes/name/mario-menesini-obituary?id=18524583>.

fostering environmental awareness, and exploring the impacts of interactions between humans and nature on natural resources. An NPS document published in 1971 stated the agency-wide program's goal was to "to help the individual child come to grips with his own world by arriving at his own personal environmental ethic."⁶ Program developers wanted to bring children out of the classroom and into parks to facilitate interactive and immersive experiences that would help children develop their own understanding and appreciation for nature. The NPS encouraged park units to designate Environmental Study Areas (ESAs) where students could engage with the NEED curriculum. By 1970, sixty-three parks, including Appomattox Court House, Natchez Trace Parkway, Jefferson National Expansion Memorial, and Grand Teton, had established ESAs, with plans underway for an additional twenty-five sites.⁷ Among the NPS units moving toward establishing a NEED program was WHIS.

In 1968, Superintendent Mitchell proposed "The Clear Creek Nature Camp" to the NPS as a potential NEED site. He argued that a "laboratory" experience would provide an opportunity to connect students to their environment and motivate them to expand their awareness of environmental conditions.⁸ Mitchell described the location of WHIS's proposed NEED Camp as ideal, highlighting its main hall, kitchen, open areas, and student cabins that could accommodate up to 130 students, all bordered by two creeks and located near diverse natural and cultural resources.⁹ WHIS was accessible to multiple urban areas, allowing for a camp that could serve school communities as close as Redding (8 miles away) to communities as far as San Francisco (225 miles away).¹⁰ Superintendent Mitchell actively sought state-level support for the camp, including discussions with then-First Lady of California, Nancy Reagan.¹¹

Mitchell wanted the camp to work with local schools to connect the new recreation area with the surrounding communities. In the "Clear Creek Nature Camp" plan, Mitchell proposed a system whereby the WHIS and the local schools shared duties at the camp. School teachers would facilitate the camp's education based on the NEED curriculum while also incorporating presentations by WHIS staff. The schools handled transportation of students to the camp and provided food and kitchen staff. WHIS maintained the buildings, utilities, and grounds, and supplied the space for the students and staff.¹²

Before the NEED Camp could host schoolchildren, the unit made some improvements to the camp facilities. This included winterizing the sixteen camper cabins; making minor interior repairs to the bath house facility; adding heat to the main building; updating the floors in most of the buildings; updating electrical systems; painting interiors; and installing new appliances for the main area kitchen, pantry, and cold storage.¹³ These improvements for safety and comfort cost nearly \$50,000.¹⁴

⁶ US Department of the Interior (DOI), NPS, NEED program brochure, 1971, accessed November 2024, <http://npshistory.com/brochures/enviroman-1971.pdf>.

⁷ Barry Mackintosh, *Interpretation in the National Park Service: A Historical Perspective*, Chapter 3 "Environmental Interpretation," accessed November 2024, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.31210024880526&seq=1>.

⁸ Leon J. Mitchell, "Clear Creek Nature Camp, Whiskeytown National Recreation Area a proposed unit of the National Environmental Education Program," 1968, p. 5, subfolder "NEED camp," folder "FACILITIES," WHIS-DF.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ John Lawson, "County sponsors kids' nature camp," *Redding Record Searchlight*, March 17, 1970, folder "Leon Mitchell," WHIS-DF.

¹² Mitchell, "Clear Creek Nature Camp, Whiskeytown National Recreation Area a proposed unit of the National Environmental Education Program," 1968, pp. 1, 5.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Before its official opening, Shasta County Schools brought a trial group of fifth- and sixth-grade students to NEED for a week of interactive learning in March 1970.¹⁵ Then, in September 1970, the camp officially opened to host its first group of children. Using NPS's NEED curriculum, sixty-five sixth graders from Shasta County Schools received an introduction to environmental stewardship. The first NEED Camp staff consisted of two naturalists, four classroom teachers, a cabin counselor, kitchen staff, and rotating WHIS staff to provide specialized lessons on their subjects.¹⁶ Mitchell stated that the NEED Camp was "a source of pride to our staff.... It's beautiful."¹⁷ Despite the presence of qualified staff, WHIS's approach to operating the first NEED Camps was initially met with some opposition. Ray Darby, superintendent of Shasta County Schools, wrote to William Harger, a camp leader and naturalist, to express dissatisfaction with several issues during the 1971 season. These issues included a counselor using foul language around campers, inadequate chaperoning, and lesson content that conflicted with Darby's personal views.¹⁸ Darby raised issue with the ecocentric view of some of the lessons, the amount of "sensitivity training," and the promotion of a "generation gap" that alienated children from their parents.¹⁹ Darby's concerns occurred during a period of national debate over environmental education and generational change.²⁰ Despite these initial challenges, Shasta County Office of Education continued to partner with WHIS at the camp for decades to follow.

Transition from NEED to WES, 1971–1988

The NPS-wide NEED program was short lived, despite having grown quickly into a large program. By 1970, "eighty parks...had one or more ESAs, used by some 180,600 students from 202 school systems throughout the country."²¹ The NPS, however, shifted their focus in the 1970s away from environmental education and cut the NEED program in order to bolster programming around the Nation's upcoming bicentennial in 1976.²² In 1974, newly appointed NPS director under the Nixon Administration, Ronald Walker, began slashing programs like NEED. By 1976, NPS ceased creating and producing new materials for NEED programs.²³

¹⁵ John Lawson, "County sponsors kids' nature camp," *Redding Record Searchlight*, March 17, 1970, folder "Leon Mitchell," WHIS-DF.

¹⁶ Ray Darby, "Clear Creek Nature Camp Handbook for Parents and Students," n.d., p. 2, folder "WES Bill Harger Documents," WHIS-DF.

¹⁷ Leon J. Mitchell, Oral History Interview by Bill Ingersoll, February 4, 1973, transcript pp. 38, NPS Oral History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center.

¹⁸ Letter from Ray Darby to William Harger, June 11, 1971, folder "WES Bill Harger Documents," WHIS-DF.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ See, for example, Samuel P. Hays, *Beauty, Health, and Permanence: Environmental Politics in the United States, 1955–1985* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Adam Rome, *The Genius of Earth Day: How a 1970 Teach-In Unexpectedly Made the First Green Generation* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2013); and Andrew G. Kirk, *Counterculture Green: The Whole Earth Catalog and American Environmentalism* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2007).

²¹ Bob Huggins, "The Real Thing in the Right Place," *Creative Teaching With Historic Places: A Thematic Issue of CRM: Cultural Resource Management*, 23, no. 8, (2000); and Mackintosh, *Interpretation in the National Park Service: A Historical Perspective* (National Park Service, 1986), chapter 3, online book, accessed November 2024, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.31210024880526&seq=1>.

²² Huggins, "The Real Thing in the Right Place"; Avery, "Determination of Eligibility: Whiskeytown Environmental School Whiskeytown National Recreation Area Shasta County, California," 2022, p. 18.

²³ Avery, "Determination of Eligibility: Whiskeytown Environmental School Whiskeytown National Recreation Area Shasta County, California," 2022, p. 18.

Though NEED was no longer a nationwide program, WHIS staff continued to offer environmental education at the camp. WHIS maintained its partnership with Shasta County Office of Education, who took over the primary programming at the camp in 1973, while WHIS continued to maintain the infrastructure.²⁴ The partners renamed the school the Whiskeytown Environmental School in the late 1970s.²⁵ The continuation of the camp as an environmental education center fell in line with another shift at the director level in 1979. Following Walker's tenure, President Jimmy Carter appointed William J. Whalen as NPS director. Whalen saw the value in environmental education and, while not reviving NEED, did take steps to increase environmental education servicewide. Whalen encouraged individual parks to develop environmental education programs based on each park's individual needs and resources. The NPS director also encouraged units to "initiate cooperative education programs by encouraging educational institutions, and universities to use the park's resources for environmental education." WES provided an ideal example of "school system operated resident camps," a program that combined outdoor education and residential camps.²⁶

WHIS and Shasta County Office of Education renewed their agreement in 1983. The agreement included language that encouraged continuation of the NEED curriculum that had been used at the camp in the past. WHIS's responsibilities were to maintain the buildings and grounds and provide utilities to the camp. The superintendent was to serve as the main point of contact between NPS and Shasta County Office of Education, while the WHIS Chief of Maintenance would head operations to care for the buildings and grounds.²⁷ Shasta County was responsible for hiring a camp director, leading educational programs, preparing meals for students during their stay, and providing necessary provisions for week-long programs.²⁸

WHIS expanded WES's functions beyond environmental programming in the 1980s. Superintendent Ray Foust revised the guidelines for the area's use, categorizing it into two primary purposes: official functions and social functions.²⁹ Foust defined official functions of the camp to fit a "primary criteria...that relates to training or education in some form" and would be used by government agencies or select groups.³⁰ Social functions related to weddings or other receptions would be limited to the amphitheater and immediate area. Groups hosting social functions would not have access to any of the buildings; they were limited to weekends to avoid interference with official functions of the camp. Regardless of the function's type or location, WHIS required that groups submit a written application to the park.

WES represented the type of outdoor-education program that NPS's directorial leadership sought to foster at its parks. In the mid-1980s, for example, William Mott Jr. outlined interpretive and educational programs within the NPS. His twelve-point plan recommended that NPS units should, "promote the use of national park units as outdoor

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Director William J. Whalen, to WASO and Field Directorate, and All Park Superintendents, "Environmental Education in the National Park Service," October 25, 1979, accessed November 18, 2024, <https://npshistory.com/publications/interpretation/nps-ee-1979.pdf>.

²⁷ Unsigned Agreement between WHIS and Shasta County Schools, p. 3-9, 1983, part of "Whiskeytown Environmental School Documents.PDF," unfiled, WHIS DF.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Memorandum from Ray Foust to all Whiskey Town Personnel, "Use of NEED Camp Guidelines," March 24, 1981, folder "L30 NEED Camp Use," box HQ12, WHIS-AF.

³⁰ Ibid.

classrooms with a special emphasis on urban recreational areas as major educational centers.”³¹ With continued support for this type of program, WHIS made several improvements to the camp in the late 1980s. In 1987, camp leaders proposed constructing a replica of a Wintu village, including six structures such as a sweat house. It is unclear whether the village was ultimately constructed.³² WHIS continued to work on the camp. In 1988, WHIS rehabilitated the camper cabins, in part to remove bats roosting in cabin walls.³³ That same year, WHIS erected a prefabricated building at the camp north of the amphitheater to be used as a classroom.³⁴

Expansion and Facility Rehabilitation, 1990s

In 1995, WHIS leadership reexamined the operation of WES as part of Superintendent David Pugh’s internal reorganization. Responsibility for day-to-day camp operations was assigned to the Shasta County Office of Education.³⁵ This administrative shift allowed education programs at the camp to continue while reducing operational demands on park staff. WHIS personnel continued to support programming by providing ranger-led instruction, training for NEED Camp counselors, and maintenance and infrastructure assistance.³⁶

Although WHIS had transferred all operations to Shasta County Office of Education, WHIS undertook several initiatives in the 1990s to improve WES’s buildings. In 1996, the park sought to rehabilitate the main lodge to “correct health and safety hazards, improve energy efficiency and accessibility, and enhance the existing operation.”³⁷ WHIS obtained \$150,000 to help with the rehabilitation of the nearly forty-year-old building. The main lodge had received multiple improvements over the years, mostly completed by volunteers and park staff, but the building had never undergone a comprehensive rehabilitation project. Components of the project included replacing deteriorated wall framing and finishes, upgrading the existing electrical system, updating appliances, replacing windows, and expanding

³¹ NPS, *12-Point Plan: The Challenge*, (US Department of the Interior: 1980) p. 11, accessed November 2024, <http://npshistory.com/publications/management/12-point-plan-challenge.pdf>.

³² Ann K. Smith, “Archaeological Clearance Survey Form: Construction of a Wintu Indian Village, National Environmental Education Development (NEED) Camp, Whiskeytown Unit, Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area,” November 12, 1987, p. 1, subfolder “1987,” folder “Cultural Resource Reports-PRIVILEGED,” WHIS-DF. The community also opposed plans for a roundhouse near the WES camp around the year 2000. See Geri D. Emberson, *Ethnographic Overview and Traditional Use Study of American Indian Affiliations Within the Whiskeytown National Recreation Area California*, US DOI, May 2000, pp. iii, iv, subfolder “AAA_BASELINE_DOCUMENTS,” folder “Administrative_History,” WHIS-DF; WHIS, *Whiskeytown Unit General Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement*, July 1999, p. 18, subfolder “ADMIN_PLANS,” subfolder “Not_Accessioned,” folder “Administrative_History,” WHIS-DF.

³³ Ray Foust, “Whiskeytown Unit Superintendent’s Annual Report, 1988,” Report, 1989, p. 1, folder “A2621 Reports Superintendents,” box HQ6, WHIS-AF.

³⁴ Ann K. Smith, “Archaeological Clearance Survey Form, Project: Install prefabricated classroom at N.E.E.D Camp, Whiskeytown Unit, Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area, California,” October 25, 1988, subfolder “1988,” subfolder “1980-1989,” WHIS-DF.

³⁵ David Pugh, “1994-95 Superintendents Report,” p. 2 March 14, 1996, folder “A2621 Superintendents Report,” box HQ 6, WHIS-AF.

³⁶ “Superintendent’s 1998 Annual Narrative Report,” p. 8, folder “A2621 Superintendents Report,” box HQ 6, WHIS-AF.

³⁷ Scope of Work, “Rehabilitate Main Lodge Building at NEED Camp Whiskeytown Unit, Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity NRA,” December 9, 1996, folder “D34 Buildings General,” box HQ8, WHIS-AF.

existing bathrooms to meet accessibility standards.³⁸ Renovations continued in 1999 when WHIS performed updates to the lodge's exterior, HVAC, plumbing, and mechanical systems.³⁹

In 1996, WHIS began hosting the Pe'Lane Bos camp at WES.⁴⁰ The week-long Native American youth education camp occurred annually during June. The program was organized by the Indian Youth Education Program of the Gateway Unified School District of Redding.⁴¹ The Pe'Lane Bos camp goal was to teach Native youth about their heritage and traditions in the setting of WHIS. Superintendent Foust supported hosting the camp, consistent with NPS efforts in the 1990s to accommodate Native-led programming within park units.⁴² Eventually WHIS granted the Pe'Lane Bos camp a First Right of Refusal and waived their use fees for use of the WES camp in 1996.⁴³

Though WHIS was supportive of hosting the camp, an issue arose in 1996 when the scheduling coordinator from the Shasta County Office of Education, responsible for scheduling activities at WES, "overlooked" the Pe'Lane Bos camp "in site scheduling and replaced [their week of use at WES] with a paragliding group."⁴⁴ Radley Davis of the non-profit group Local Indians for Education Center (LIFE Center) wrote to Shasta County Office of Education in protest of the mistake saying that the "LIFE Center will continue to strongly oppose any measures that jeopardize education services fundamental to the health and well-being of American Indians."⁴⁵ Although it is unclear from the historical record if the Shasta County Office of Education was able to shift the paragliding group to accommodate the Pe'Lane Bos camp for the 1996 summer season, the next year the Shasta County Office of Education did confirm the Pe'Lane Bos camp for the group's regular use of WES during June 1997. While Pe'Lane Bos camp continued to use WES after the scheduling issue, according to the *Ethnographic Overview and Assessment* of WHIS produced in 2000, the incident raised concerns about equitable access for Indigenous groups.⁴⁶

Program Developments, 2000–2017

Into the 2000s, WHIS maintained their structure of providing "no funding support, but [playing] the role of facilitator" at WES.⁴⁷ While maintaining this structure, WHIS still sought to expand the camp's educational reach to include programs for college students. In 2000, NPS, Shasta County Office of Education, and the Shasta-Tehama-Trinity Joint Community College District entered into an agreement to "plan, develop, and operate the Clear Creek

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ For full work done in 1999, see US DOI, NPS Denver Service Center, "Rehab. Main Lodge at N.E.E.D Camp" Drawing No. 611, Sheet 1-27, subfolder "NEED Camp," subfolder "FACILITIES_RECORDS," folder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF.

⁴⁰ Letter from Radley Davis to James C. Gibson, Jr., March 22, 1996, folder "L30 NEED Camp Use," box HQ12, WHIS-AF.

⁴¹ Letter from Ray Foust to Rich Garcia, November 3, 1994, folder "L30 NEED Camp Use," box HQ12, WHIS-AF.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Letter from Michelle Noonan to Camp Coordinator of Whiskeytown Environmental School, September 9, 1996, folder "L30 NEED Camp Use," box HQ12, WHIS-AF.

⁴⁴ Davis to Gibson, Jr., March 22, 1996.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Emberson, *Ethnographic Overview and Traditional Use Study of American Indian Affiliations within the Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, California*, 2000, p. 53.

⁴⁷ David Pugh, "Superintendent's 1998 Annual Narrative Report," n.d., folder "A2621 Reports Superintendent's," box HQ6, WHIS-AF.

Field Station (CCFS) as a facility and program of environmental education outdoor science studies, and resource based investigation.⁴⁸ To create the field station, the partners planned for the Shasta College Construction Technology class to design and build a series of buildings in conjunction with a state licensed architect. The goal of this agreement was for the partners to establish another educational program at WES aimed at college students studying resource management and the life and earth sciences.⁴⁹ This program was to be “secondary” to the WES program and would operate when school programs were not in session.⁵⁰ Whenever possible, any research and teaching performed at the field station would be available as useful data for the partners. The Clear Creek Field Station initiative expanded the camp’s educational scope by introducing college-level programming alongside existing school programs. It built on earlier partnerships with Shasta College, including collaboration with the Center for Science, Technology, and Natural Resources to develop an outdoor restoration program at Paige Boulder Creek.⁵¹

Despite the success of college partnerships, WES continued to address longstanding concerns raised by Indigenous groups. In a 2000 meeting between Native community representatives and WHIS staff, participants discussed access to NEED Camp. Indigenous representatives identified several priorities, including continuation of the Pe’Lane Bos Camp under a permanent use agreement, construction of a traditional roundhouse nearby, expanded cultural education for Native youth, and incorporation of a stronger cultural component within NEED Camp programming.⁵²

In 2000, after Superintendent Pugh left and James Milestone assumed the position, Milestone wrote a letter introducing himself to Indigenous organizations, expressing his commitment to supporting and encouraging tribal use of the NEED Camp. Milestone penned:

The park supports the use of the NEED camp facilities by bona fide Wintu Indian Education groups from the local community such as the P’eleen Bos [sic]. While we are restricted from any agreement of this type lasting longer than five (5) years, we believe that this will not cause any planning problems or hardships. I am prepared to sign the first letter of agreement with P’eleen Bos [sic]. This agreement will be subject to renewal every five years. While I fully support the use of the NEED Camp by P’eleen Bos [sic], I want to ensure that requests for use are fair and equitable for all concerned. That could include other local Wintu Indian Education groups...It is important that all such groups have an opportunity to use the camp as well.⁵³

⁴⁸ NPS, Shasta County Office of Education and the Shasta-Tehama-Trinity Joint Community College District, “Agreement No. GA8750-00-001,” January 7, 2000, pp. 1, 3, subfolder “Agreements,” folder “Administrative_History,” WHIS-DF.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 2.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 3.

⁵¹ David Pugh, “Paige Boulder Creek CVPIA Shasta College Proposal Park A,” June 3, 1998, pp. 1-2, subfolder “Paige Boulder Creek CVPIA Shasta College proposal,” subfolder “1997-2000 Paige Bar Logging camp road (Shasta College) part 6,” subfolder “FM Box 1,” folder “FACILITIES,” WHIS-DF.

⁵² WHIS, “Wintun-Whiskeytown National Recreation Area Meeting NEED Camp,” February 26, 2000, folder “2000_Ethnographic Overview May 2000,” WHIS-DF.

⁵³ Letter from James Milestone to Wintun Organizations and Wintun Community, July 17, 2000, folder “2000_Ethnographic Overview May 2000,” WHIS-DF.

In the Milestone years, WHIS continued to improve infrastructure at the camp. This included a 2003 replacement of the Clear Creek Bridge, the main access point to the NEED Camp.⁵⁴

In 2007 and 2009, WES experienced budget reductions due to statewide fiscal cutbacks implemented by the State of California. The Shasta County Office of Education was also facing significant budget cuts.⁵⁵ The funding cut was a significant blow to WES's regular operations, which limited the camp to just a spring semester that served 2,220 students instead of the regular number of 3,500.⁵⁶ In 2011, community members founded the Whiskeytown Environmental School Community, a 501(c)(3) group dedicated to furthering the goals of WES and raising funds for the camp.⁵⁷ Money raised by WES Community went to support tuition for student groups and to operational amenities like buying appliances for the camp.⁵⁸ This funding offset operational shortfalls following reductions in state support. The group co-hosted a fortieth-anniversary event for the NEED Camp in 2011. The open house marked four decades of programming and, according to one contemporary account, approximately 70,000 student participants.⁵⁹

In 2016, WHIS and the Shasta County Office of Education updated their cooperative agreement to clarify off-season use, establish a fee structure, and define routine cleaning and maintenance responsibilities.⁶⁰ NPS retained control over cyclic maintenance, repairs, and rehabilitation of the buildings, grounds, and features, and inspection processes over the buildings.⁶¹ Despite a continued strong partnership between the organizations, WHIS noted a downtrend in WES's popularity. WHIS noted in the 2017 Long Range Interpretive Plan that "at this point in its lifespan, the camp's cabins and other facilities are in sore need of upgrading and preservation." In addition to the camp's physical condition, and possibly because of it, the Shasta County Office of Education "now struggles to fill spaces each semester." To address the camp's issues, the 2017 plan foresaw a long road ahead: "While the idea of investing \$4 or \$5 million or more and 15 years of work in the aging, largely inaccessible infrastructure of the WES Camp is daunting," it concluded the park still needed to provide "a realistic understanding of the project at hand." Shasta County anticipated that funds from the State of California could improve the camp's facilities.⁶²

⁵⁴ Ray Berelsen, Randy Luft, Jim Campbell, Wayne Pero, Jan Jackel, Jerry Wheeler, Mike McCarrol, "Meeting Notes," September 9, 2003, subfolder "2001-2003 NEED Camp Bridge Plans Part 1," subfolder "FM Box 3," folder "FACILITIES," WHIS-DF.

⁵⁵ James Milestone, "2008-2009 Superintendent's Annual Report," October 2009, p. 27, subfolder "Superintendents_Annual_Report," subfolder "ADMIN_PLANS," subfolder "Not_Accessioned," folder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ WES Community, "About Us," n.d., accessed November 2024, <https://www.wescommunity.org/about-us>.

⁵⁸ Sharon Brisolara, "Underground Good: Melinda Kashuba," *Shasta Scout*, July 5, 2023, accessed November 2024, <https://shastascout.org/underground-good-melinda-kashuba/>.

⁵⁹ "Whiskeytown's Environmental School Marks 40 Years," *A News Café*, April 12, 2011, accessed November 2024, <https://anewscafe.com/2011/04/12/redding/whiskeytowns-environmental-school-marks-40-years/#:~:text=NEED%20Camp%2FWhiskeytown%20Environmental%20School%20will%20be%20celebrating%20its%2040th,responsibility%20and%20promoting%20personal%20growth>.

⁶⁰ NPS, WHIS and Shasta County Office of Education, Whiskeytown Environmental School, "Cooperative Agreement to provide for Cooperative Environmental Education, Agreement No. H875103001," April 6, 2016, folder "WES camp," WHIS-DF.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² WHIS, *Long-Range Interpretive Plan*, June 2017, p. 81, 87, subfolder "ADMIN_PLANS," subfolder "Not_Accessioned," folder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF.

Carr Fire Impacts and Rebuilding

The 2018 Carr Fire destroyed seven WES buildings and damaged most of the other infrastructure at the site. The fire also heightened the flooding risk at the camp, which had experienced previous flood events.⁶³ WHIS closed the camp pending repairs and safety evaluations. In response, the nonprofit WES Community collaborated with NPS and the Shasta County Office of Education on a rebuild-and-repair campaign known as “Grow Back Stronger.”⁶⁴ By 2021, the campaign had raised approximately \$4.35 million to construct modern, fire-resistant, four-plex cabins to replace the original camper cabins destroyed in the fire. In 2021, WES resumed daytime programming for kindergarten through eighth-grade students.⁶⁵

In 2022, WHIS commissioned an assessment of the NEED Camp’s eligibility for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) by Seattle-based preservation firm Avery Historical Consulting. The consultant concluded that none of the buildings were eligible for listing because “only fifteen of the thirty-two resources built between 1963 and 1973 are extant. In addition, the remaining nine cabins and the main lodge, now called Hatcher Hall, have lost integrity due to alterations.”⁶⁶ The assessment informed subsequent planning considerations for the camp, including preparation of an Environmental Assessment.⁶⁷

Conclusion

The NEED Camp occupies a distinctive place within the administrative history of WHIS. Established in 1970 as part a national initiative, the camp connected WHIS to a broader NPS effort to use park landscapes as environmental classrooms. Although the servicewide NEED program was discontinued in the mid-1970s, the continuation of the camp under WES is an example of a sustained local commitment to environmental education through partnership with the Shasta County Office of Education.

The camp’s structure—NPS ownership and maintenance paired with county-led educational programming—proved durable across multiple decades of shifting federal priorities, leadership transitions, and fiscal constraints. Periodic formal agreements, including renewals in the 1980s and the revised 2016 agreement, clarified operational responsibilities and fee structures while preserving NPS control over long-term maintenance and rehabilitation. Episodes such as the 1996 scheduling conflict with the Pe’Lane Bos camp and subsequent correspondence with Wintu representatives demonstrate that access to the site carried cultural and political implications beyond routine educational

⁶³ KRCR online news report, Mike Mangas and Adam Robinson, “Whiskeytown Environmental School Rebuilds after devastating Carr Fire, Aims for stronger future,” November 3, 2023, accessed November 2024, <https://krcrtv.com/news/local/whiskeytown-environmental-school-rebuilds-after-devastating-carr-fire-aims-for-stronger-future>.

⁶⁴ WES Community, “Campaign Fund: Grow Back Stronger,” n.d., accessed November 2024, <https://www.wescommunity.org/rebuilding-plans>.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Avery, “Determination of Eligibility: Whiskeytown Environmental School Whiskeytown National Recreation Area Shasta County, California,” 2022, p. 4.

⁶⁷ Ibid., and Glendee Ane Osborn (WHIS), personal communication with authors, spring 2025.

programming. Superintendent Milestone's 2000 letter established a process for five-year renewable agreements for Indigenous education groups, clarifying terms of use within existing federal regulations.

Infrastructure condition emerged as a recurring concern. By 2017, the park's Long Range Interpretive Plan acknowledged that the cabins and associated facilities required significant upgrading and preservation, and that enrollment was declining. The Carr Fire in 2018 fundamentally altered the site, destroying multiple buildings and damaging most remaining infrastructure. The subsequent "Grow Back Stronger" campaign, supported by the WES Community nonprofit and local stakeholders, secured millions of dollars for fire-resistant cabin construction and site rehabilitation. Day-use programming resumed in 2021 while rebuilding continued. The 2022 eligibility assessment determined that the remaining structures lacked sufficient integrity for listing in the NRHP.

The administrative history of NEED/WES illustrates the challenges of sustaining residential environmental education on federal land. The camp required ongoing coordination among educational partners, tribal communities, park leadership, state funding structures, and federal maintenance authorities. Despite programmatic shifts, funding reductions, wildfire, and rebuilding, operations continued through adjustments to cooperative agreements, capital investment, and administrative oversight. Management considerations during the later years of the study period centered on long-term infrastructure needs, partnership structures, and the alignment of educational programming with resource conditions and community use.

PART VII

CHAPTER 7.1: UTILITIES

Whiskeytown National Recreation Area (WHIS) operates within an active federal water and power system whose infrastructure shapes both the park's landscape and its administration. Within WHIS's boundaries, hydroelectric facilities associated with the Central Valley Project (CVP), high-voltage transmission corridors, telecommunications installations, and water delivery and treatment systems operate alongside recreational and natural resource uses. These facilities support regional electricity generation and transmission, water storage and conveyance, and communications capacity extending well beyond the park's borders.¹

Utility infrastructure within WHIS falls into three broad categories: hydroelectric facilities associated with the CVP, electric transmission systems operated by Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) and the Western Area Power Administration (WAPA), and telecommunications infrastructure centered at the Shasta Bally site. Whiskeytown Lake, the dam, diversion tunnels, canals, and Judge Francis Carr Powerhouse function as components within the larger CVP network, linking the park to statewide water and power systems. Transmission lines owned by PG&E, a private utility, and WAPA, a federal agency within the US Department of Energy, traverse park lands under established rights-of-way, while the Shasta Bally communications complex operates as a regional broadcast and emergency-services hub on federally managed terrain.

Because most of this infrastructure predates the park's establishment, the National Park Service (NPS) has managed utilities not as incidental features but as embedded systems governed by longstanding agreements, rights-of-way, leases, and permitting frameworks. Access, maintenance, upgrades, and environmental compliance have required continual negotiation among utility operators, federal agencies, and park leadership—especially as wildfire risk and fuels management increasingly shape corridor work and operational priorities. This chapter examines the administrative frameworks through which WHIS has accommodated utility operations while meeting its recreation and resource protection responsibilities.

¹ US Bureau of Reclamation (USBR), "Central Valley Project," updated April 8, 2024, accessed November 2024, <https://www.usbr.gov/mp/cvp/>.

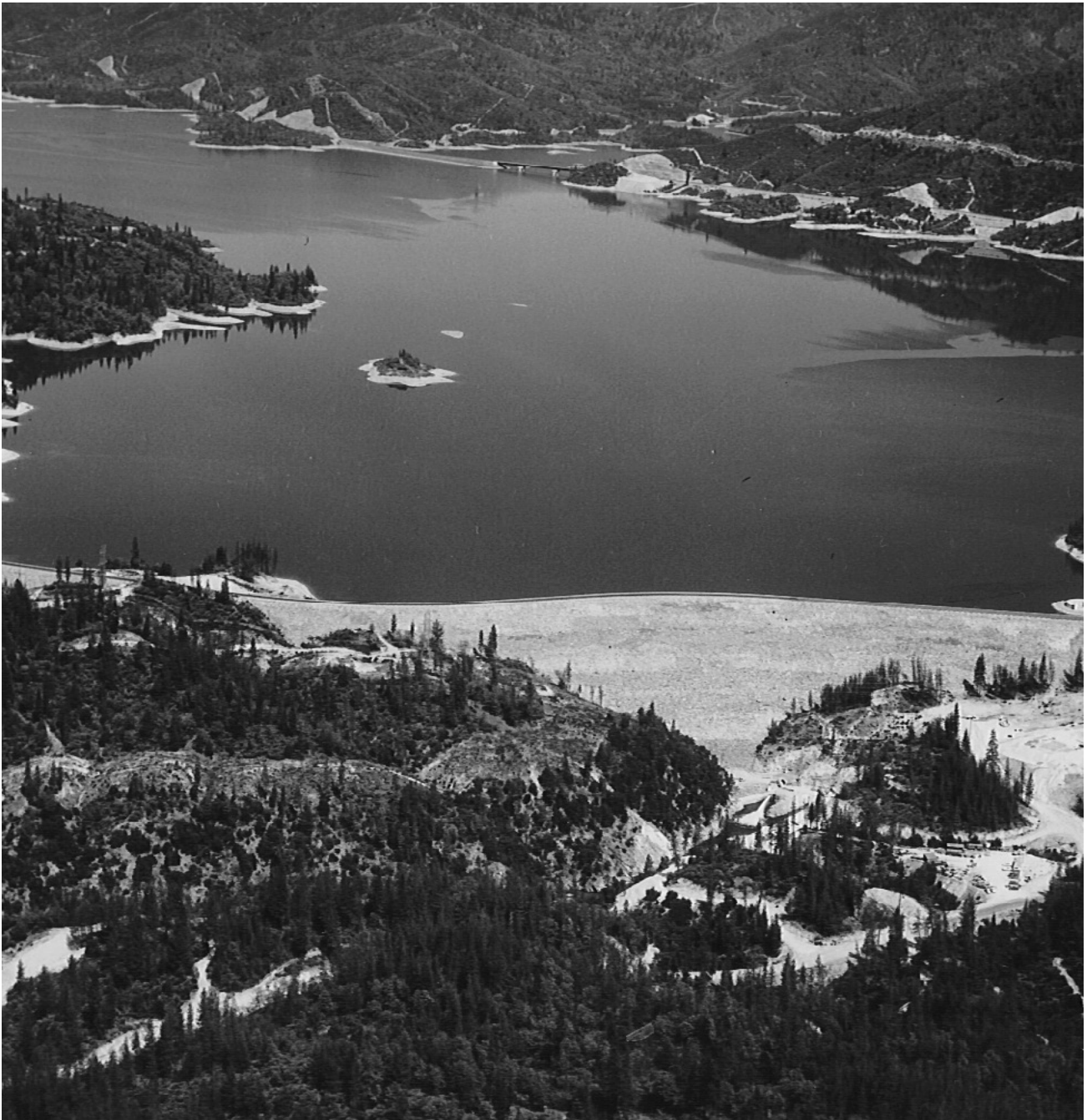


Figure 27. Whiskeytown Dam, April, 1966.
Source: Photograph on file at WHIS Archives.

The US Bureau of Reclamation's Trinity Division

In the late nineteenth century, Congress enacted legislation that encouraged irrigation development and settlement in arid regions of the West. The Desert Land Act of 1877 and the Carey Act of 1894 promoted private and state-led reclamation efforts, while the Reclamation Act of 1902 marked a decisive expansion of federal involvement. Signed by President Theodore Roosevelt, the 1902 act created the US Reclamation Service—renamed the Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) in 1923—to construct large-scale water infrastructure projects.² These projects, including dams, reservoirs, and irrigation canals, later integrated hydroelectric generation as part of a federal effort to store and distribute water and power across the Intermountain West. By the mid-twentieth century, Reclamation projects supported the expansion of irrigated agriculture, population growth, and water-intensive industries throughout the region, including Northern California.³

Two separate Interior Department bureaus appear in the administrative record and are sometimes abbreviated similarly, creating potential confusion. The USBR constructs and operates federal water and power projects, including the CVP and its Trinity River Division. A distinct agency, the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, established in 1962, coordinated federal recreation planning and administered Interior's responsibilities under statutes such as the Federal Water Project Recreation Act of 1965. Although both operated within the Department of the Interior (DOI) and intersected at multipurpose reservoirs like Whiskeytown Lake, their roles differed: Reclamation managed water and power infrastructure, while the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation focused on recreation policy and planning.

Built and operated by the USBR beginning in 1938, the CVP is a major water and power system extending roughly four hundred miles across central California. Comprising dams, reservoirs, powerplants, and canals, the CVP stores and delivers approximately twelve million acre-feet of water and generates hydropower through turbine facilities at its dams and powerhouses. Upon completion of its major construction phases, the CVP supplied water and electricity to users across twenty-nine California counties.⁴

Because the CVP spans much of California, the USBR constructed it in phases across multiple decades. One major component is the Trinity River Division—also known as the Trinity Unit—which Congress authorized under Public Law 386 on August 12, 1955.⁵ The Trinity Unit included three dams and reservoirs (Trinity, Lewiston, and Whiskeytown), two major tunnels, and associated powerplants. Like the broader CVP, it was designed both to transfer water from the Trinity River basin to the Sacramento River system and to generate hydroelectric power.⁶

² USBR, "Brief History Bureau of Reclamation," January 2011, pp. 2-3, accessed November 2024, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/GOVPUB-I27-PURL-gpo6027/pdf/GOVPUB-I27-PURL-gpo6027.pdf>.

³ The USBR's mission is to, "manage, develop, and protect water and related resources in an environmentally and economically sound manner in the interest of the American public." USBR, "Brief History Bureau of Reclamation," 2011, p. 5.

⁴ USBR, "Central Valley Project." WHIS has also relied on the Pacific Telephone Company to provide phone access in the park. Whiskeytown National Recreation Area (WHIS), "Master Plan: Draft," April 1975, p. 53, subfolder "ADMIN_PLANS," folder "LIBRARY-REPORTS," WHIS-DF; and 84th Congress, 1st Session, "Public Law 386," August 12, 1955, accessed November 2024, <https://www.congress.gov/84/statute/STATUTE-69/STATUTE-69-Pg719.pdf>.

⁵ 84th Congress, 1st Session, "Public Law 386," August 12, 1955.

⁶ Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, "A Report on the Proposed Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area" April 1963, Appendix p. 1, folder "Unorganized Files," WHIS-DF.

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Construction proceeded rapidly. Work began in 1955 with Trinity Dam, followed by Lewiston Dam. In 1960, the USBR initiated construction of Clair A. Hall Whiskeytown Dam and its associated facilities, including the Clear Creek Powerplant (later renamed the Judge Francis Carr Powerhouse). The system also incorporated the 10.8-mile Clear Creek Tunnel, which conveys water from Lewiston Lake to the Carr Powerhouse before discharge into Whiskeytown Lake, as well as the Spring Creek Tunnel, Spring Creek Powerplant, and Spring Creek Debris Dam. Full operation of the Trinity Unit's integrated dam, reservoir, tunnel, and powerplant system commenced in 1964.⁷

Whiskeytown Dam and Lake

The Whiskeytown Dam is 282 feet tall with a crest length of approximately 4,000 feet. The corresponding Whiskeytown Lake impounds water flowing from the Upper Clear Creek watershed, whose original source is the Trinity Mountains.⁸ Whiskeytown Lake impounds water from multiple waterways within the Upper Clear Creek watershed, including Boulder Creek, Brandy Creek, Mill Creek, Crystal Creek, Whiskey Creek, and Grizzly Gulch, all of which feed into Clear Creek.⁹ Before entering the lake, water from the Trinity River system flows through penstocks into the Carr Powerhouse, completed in 1963, and is discharged into Whiskeytown Lake via the powerhouse outflow/spillway. After passing through WHIS's boundaries, the Lower Clear Creek watershed connects with the Sacramento River near Redding.

Within the Trinity Unit, Whiskeytown Lake is intermediate in storage capacity. At 241,000 acre-feet, Whiskeytown Lake has more storage than Lewiston Reservoir's 14,660 acre-feet. Both reservoirs are smaller than Trinity

⁷ "Mid-Pacific Region: Trinity Division, Central Valley Project," USBR, July 2013, accessed November 2024, https://www.usbr.gov/mp/ncao/docs/trinity_division.pdf; Eric A. Stene, *Trinity Division: Central Valley Project*, USBR, 1996, p. 2, accessed November 2024, <https://www.usbr.gov/projects/pdf.php?id=108>; Dane J. Durham, J.D., "How the Trinity River Lost its Water," 2005, California State Water Resources Control Board, pp. 39-40, 44, accessed November 2024, https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/waterrights/water_issues/programs/bay_delta/california_waterfix/exhibits/docs/FOTR/for_94.pdf; USBR, "Evaluation of Environmental Water Program: Pilot Re-operation of Whiskeytown Dam," Technical Memorandum No. WHIS-8130-EI-2008-1, Denver: USBR Technical Service Center, January 2008, p. ES 3, accessed November 2024, <https://www.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/legacy/document/2020/Oct/07354626456.pdf>; and Ashley Harting, "Whiskeytown's Purpose: How it came to be and where the water comes from," *KRCR TV*, October 5, 2022, accessed November 2024, <https://krcrtv.com/news/local/whiskeytowns-purpose-how-it-came-to-be-and-where-the-water-comes-from>.

In the 1950s, the BOR made three applications to the California State Water Rights Board to draw a total of 7,200 cubic feet per seconds (cfs) of water from Clear Creek. See State of California Resources Agency, "State Water Rights Board: Memorandum Concerning Applications to Appropriate," December 6, 1967, enclosed within letter D. W. Sabiston, State Water Resources Control Board, to William E. Fields, US National Park Service (NPS), December 18, 1967, folder "Water_Matters," WHIS-DF.

⁸ USBR, "Whiskeytown Dam: Details," n.d., accessed November 2024, <https://www.usbr.gov/projects/index.php?id=90>; Water Education Foundation, "Whiskeytown Lake," n.d., accessed November 2024, <https://www.watereducation.org/aquapedia-background/whiskeytown-lake#:~:text=With%20its%20capacity%20of%20about,control%2C%20irrigation%20and%20hydroelectric%20power>.

⁹ James Milestone, *From the White House to Whiskeytown: An Administrative History of the Creation of Whiskeytown National Recreation Area*, Whiskeytown National Recreation Area (WHIS), 2003, p. 5, e-TIC filename "WHIS_611_166062_0001_of_0055.pdf" accessed November 2024.

Lake's 2,448,000 acre-feet.¹⁰ In addition to its scenic surroundings, Whiskeytown Lake possesses another characteristic that supports recreation: a water level that remains relatively consistent throughout the year. The Bureau of Outdoor Recreation—a now-defunct agency within the DOI—anticipated that Whiskeytown Lake's surface would only fluctuate about five feet every year, meaning it would provide an ideal site for summer recreators because the water never significantly dropped in the summer to support summer energy demands.¹¹ The Bureau of Outdoor Recreation confirmed those expectations in 1963, when its project construction engineer wrote to the project manager at Whiskeytown, “The reservoir will be held near the full stage at elevation 1210 [sic] during the summer months in order to enhance recreational activities.” During the fall and winter months, the season when Whiskeytown's visitation numbers would be lower, the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation expected to reduce the reservoir to 1,190 feet elevation, leaving space for storm runoff into the reservoir.¹² In the five decades since the USBR made this commitment, Whiskeytown Lake's stable water level in the summer months has been central to the park's summertime appeal. In dry years when other regional reservoirs have decreased water levels and reduced access to sandy beaches, WHIS visitation numbers correspondingly jump up.¹³

During the construction of the Trinity Unit, the USBR and NPS entered an agreement in 1962 that outlined each party's responsibilities for the new recreation area. The agreement gave recreational responsibilities to NPS, while the USBR would maintain responsibility for the water infrastructure.¹⁴ While the Whiskeytown Lake infrastructure sits within WHIS's boundaries, the USBR has continued to manage the dam and its related facilities since the 1960s. As a result, the two agencies must work closely together to manage different resources that share the same section of land. In the five decades since its original construction, the USBR has made improvements to the Whiskeytown Dam complex. In 1993, for example, the agency installed water temperature control curtains to reduce the mixing of cold water flowing from the Carr Powerhouse with warmer water flowing from the lake. The USBR anticipated that the curtains would provide cooler water for chinook salmon downstream.¹⁵

¹⁰ Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area, “Whiskeytown,” July 1970, accessed November 2024, <https://npshistory.com/publications/whis/brochures/1970.pdf>; USBR, “Central Valley Project”; and Stene, *Trinity Division: Central Valley Project*, 1996, p. 10. Some planning documents reflect original intentions for Whiskeytown Lake to impound 250,000-acre feet. See Central Valley Regional Water Pollution Control Board, “Policy for Waste Discharges to Surface Water, Whiskeytown Lake,” October 17, 1963, filename “1960-1980_Water_Rights_WHIS_NRA,” subfolder “Water Matters,” WHIS-DF.

¹¹ Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, “A Report on the Proposed Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area,” 1963, p. 2.

¹² Letter from Project Construction Engineer, USBR, to Samuel A. King, Project Manager, Whiskeytown, October 31, 1963, filename “1960-1980_Water_Rights_WHIS_NRA,” folder “Water Matters,” WHIS-DF. A 1991 unsigned draft of a memorandum of agreement between the USBR and NPS also states that the USBR would dedicate 75 acre-feet of reservoir water (February 1 through January 31) to WHIS for wildfire, concessionaries, offices, and maintenance. See Memorandum of Agreement, USBR and NPS, unsigned, 1991, filename “1983-1995_MOA_Central_Valley_Project,” folder “Agreements,” WHIS-DF.

¹³ “Whiskeytown National Recreation Area: Business Plan,” August 2003, p. 14, filename “WHISBIZPlanprintquality,” subfolder “ADMIN_PLANS,” folder “LIBRARY-REPORTS,” WHIS-DF.

¹⁴ “Memorandum of Agreement of May 31, 1962, between the National Park Service and Bureau of Reclamation Providing for Interim Administration of Public Use of Whiskeytown Reservoir Area,” May 31, 1962, subfolder “D18_001_Background_Book,” subfolder “WHIS_1480_Cat9018_D_Box1of2,” subfolder “Accessioned,” folder “Administrative_History,” WHIS-DF.

¹⁵ “NPS, *Resources Management Plan for Whiskeytown National Recreation Area*, August 1997, p. 18, subfolder “ADMIN_PLANS,” subfolder “Not_Accessioned,” folder “Administrative_History,” WHIS-DF.

For the USBR, the mid-twentieth century was an era of big dam building, and Trinity, Lewiston, and Whiskeytown were no different. The Trinity River Division appeared within the same historical window as the West's largest dams, such as the Grand Coulee (1942), Shasta Dam (1945), Glen Canyon (1966), Oroville (1968), and John Day (1971) dams. Massive water projects not only defined western history in the mid-twentieth century, but their relationship to politics, population booms, and the growing strength of the federal government represents a turning point for historians of the US West.¹⁶ Whiskeytown Lake is one reservoir, and one dam, in a much larger network of big reservoirs and big dams. By the time workers completed construction on Whiskeytown Dam in 1963, the federal government had already spent seven decades developing large-scale water projects in the West. Despite longstanding debates about the benefits and consequences of dams and other major water infrastructure, the USBR dedicated substantial resources to California's reclamation projects throughout the twentieth century and into the early twenty-first century. As documented in late-nineteenth- and early-twenty-first-century planning and operational materials, the CVP continued to play a significant role in energy production and watershed management in California.

The Carr Powerhouse and Clear Creek Tunnel

One of the USBR's key pieces of infrastructure within the Trinity Unit is the Judge Francis Carr Powerhouse, or the Carr Powerhouse for short. The powerhouse receives water from the Clear Creek Tunnel, which is a 10.7-mile-long and 17.5-foot-wide concrete-lined passageway that moves water from the Lewiston Lake to the Carr Powerhouse. The USBR completed construction on the tunnel in 1961.¹⁷ The Carr Powerhouse is located off Highway 299 in the northwestern part of what is now the recreation area.¹⁸ Originally designated as the Clear Creek Powerplant, Representative Harold "Bizz" Johnson introduced bill HJ 733 to rename the plant in honor of Judge Francis Carr, one of the leading supporters of the CVP and of WHIS. In August 1964, the Clear Creek Powerplant officially changed names to the Judge Francis Carr Powerhouse.¹⁹

The Carr Powerhouse, completed in 1963, is a "peaking plant," meaning it supplies energy during periods of high demand. The above-ground facility contains a Francis turbine, a type commonly used in nearby powerplants, including the Lewiston, Shasta, and Trinity powerplants.²⁰ When it opened in 1963, the powerhouse had a capacity of 143,680 kilowatts; later operational records indicate an increased generation capacity of 154,400 kilowatts.²¹ Energy

¹⁶ Norris Hundley, *The Great Thirst: Californians and Water, 1770s-1990s* (University of California Press, 1992); Donald J. Pisani, *To Reclaim a Divided West: Water, Law, and Public Policy, 1848-1902* (University of New Mexico Press, 1992); and Donald Worster, *Rivers of Empire: Water, Aridity, and the Growth of the American West* (Oxford University Press, 1992).

¹⁷ "Mid-Pacific Region: Trinity Division, Central Valley Project"; and Stene, *Trinity Division: Central Valley Project*, pp. 6-7.

¹⁸ USBR, "Judge Francis Carr Powerhouse: History," n.d., accessed November 2024, <https://www.usbr.gov/projects/index.php?id=532>.

¹⁹ Letter from Harold T. "Bizz" Johnson to Stewart L. Udall, September 2, 1964, p. 5 of "Judge_Carr_Memorial.pdf," subfolder "D18_001_Background_Book," subfolder "WHIS_1480_Cat9018_D_Box1of2," subfolder "Accessioned," folder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF; Central Valley Regional Water Pollution Control Board, "Policy for Waste Discharges to Surface Water, Whiskeytown Lake," October 17, 1963, filename "1960-1980_Water_Rights_WHIS_NRA," subfolder "Water Matters," WHIS-DF.

²⁰ "Trinity Powerplant: Details," USBR, accessed November 2024, <https://www.usbr.gov/projects/index.php?id=562>; "Shasta Powerplant: Details," USBR, accessed November 2024, <https://www.usbr.gov/projects/index.php?id=552>; "Lewiston Powerplant: Details," USBR, accessed November 2024, <https://www.usbr.gov/projects/index.php?id=557>; Stene, *Trinity Division: Central Valley Project*, p. 7.

²¹ "Judge Francis Carr Powerhouse: Plan."

generated at the Carr Powerhouse is dedicated first to operating Whiskeytown Dam and its associated facilities, with surplus electricity distributed to customers in Northern California. In this way, the reservoir has functioned not only as a recreational amenity but also as part of the region's electrical infrastructure. After passing through the Carr Powerhouse, water is impounded in Whiskeytown Lake.²²

Spring Creek Powerplant and Tunnel

When water leaves Whiskeytown Lake, much of it flows through the Spring Creek Tunnel and leaves WHIS's borders. The 2.4-mile Spring Creek Tunnel connects with the Spring Creek Powerplant, completed in 1964, which is located near Redding. Like the Carr Powerhouse, the Spring Creek Powerplant is a peaking plant that operates Francis turbines. Its generation capacity is 180,000 kW, which is dispersed via transmission lines that are operated by WAPA.²³ WAPA is a governmental agency located within the US Department of Energy. Originally created by Congress in 1977, the agency delivers "more than 25,000 gigawatt-hours of reliable, cost-based hydropower from power plants at 57 Federal dams" across fifteen western states. WAPA's customers include municipalities, irrigation districts, Native American tribes, public utilities, and electric cooperatives across the US West.²⁴ Water leaving Whiskeytown Lake through the Spring Creek Tunnel serves purposes beyond power generation. It flows into Spring Creek Reservoir, passes through the Spring Creek Powerhouse, and then enters the Sacramento River above Keswick Dam and Power Station.²⁵

City of Redding Power Plant

In the early 1980s, the City of Redding proposed a new power generation system within Whiskeytown that would partner one city and three federal agencies in the creation and delivery of electricity in the region: City of Redding, USBR, NPS, and the WAPA. By the mid-1980s, in response to the City of Redding's interest in building a new powerplant at the base of Whiskeytown Dam, WHIS, USBR, and WAPA began to discuss plans for WAPA to construct a substation and transmission line to transport electricity generated at the proposed Redding Power Plant into the CVP.²⁶

²² "Judge Francis Carr Powerhouse: Plan"; and "Mid-Pacific Region: Trinity Division, Central Valley Project."

²³ "Mid-Pacific Region: Trinity Division, Central Valley Project"; "Spring Creek Powerplant: History," USBR, accessed August 9, 2025, <https://www.usbr.gov/projects/index.php?id=556>.

²⁴ "Our Regions," Western Area Power Administration (WAPA), accessed August 13, 2025, <https://www.wapa.gov>; "North Area ROW Maintenance Program," WAPA and NPS, May 2008, p. 1-1, subfolder "Environmental_Assessments," folder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF.

²⁵ WHIS, *Whiskeytown Fire Management Plan*, 2022, April 2022, p. 75, subfolder "ADMIN_PLANS," subfolder "Not_Accessioned," folder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF.

²⁶ Letter from Nancy H. Weintraub to Ray Foust, subject, "Determination Memorandum for Whiskeytown Substations and Tap to Carr-Keswick Line No. 1," January 11, 1985, p. 2, filename "1984-2010_WAPA_MOA," subfolder "Agreements," WHIS-DF; "Memorandum of Agreement," Unsigned, USBR, NPS, WAPA, 1985, pp. 1-3, filename "1984-2010_WAPA_MOA," subfolder "Agreements," WHIS-DF.

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Consistent with prior utility coordination at WHIS, Superintendent Ray Foust wrote to the NPS Regional Director of the Western Region, “There is no question that this [project] will have to be done since the [City of Redding] power plant has official sanction from the Department of the Interior.”²⁷ WAPA’s new underground line would cross lands owned by the USBR and WHIS, therefore requiring the two agencies’ approval for WAPA to access those lands.²⁸

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission approved the final license for a 3.24 MW powerplant in March 1983. The City of Redding worked with WAPA to create a “power purchase proposal” to better integrate the new powerplant into the CVP.²⁹ Under their agreement, WAPA would transmit service between the new powerplant at Whiskeytown to the Keswick Substation and finally onto the City of Redding.³⁰ According to a 1983 agreement with the NPS and USBR, the USBR would be responsible for authorizing the project with the City of Redding since the powerplant did not relate to or impact the park’s recreation mission.³¹ Though USBR would handle the requests and authorizations, WHIS staff were concerned that the project would “create construction problems to deal with plus have a possible effect on the lake levels and recreation.”³² Regional utility partnerships remained significant to WHIS. Despite expressed concerns, the parties proceeded with the project following determinations that it would not affect “recreation or resource management activities” at WHIS.³³

The city completed the Redding Power Plant in 1986.³⁴ While the City of Redding benefits from the electricity produced at the plant, the plant’s single generator “operates at the discretion of the Bureau of Reclamation” when water is spilled from the reservoir or when “downstream flow and water delivery requirements equal or exceed the minimum flows required to operate the Project.”³⁵ In other words, the energy needs of the Trinity Unit precede those of the City of Redding. Operational records indicate that such conditions occurred infrequently. “There has been no recognizable effect on the lake and recreation with the advent of this plant,” the NPS reported in 1990, four years after the plant opened.³⁶

²⁷ Memorandum, Ray Foust to Regional Director, Western Region, “Proposed Memorandum of Agreement,” December 24, 1984, filename “1984-2010_WAPA_MOA,” folder “Agreements,” WHIS-DF.

²⁸ “Memorandum of Agreement,” Unsigned, USBR, NPS, WAPA, 1985, pp. 1-3.

²⁹ Letter from Nancy H. Weintraub to Ray Foust, “Determination Memorandum for Whiskeytown Substations and Tap to Carr-Keswick Line No. 1,” January 11, 1985, p. 3.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

³¹ Letter from James E. Turner to David G. Houston, “Whiskeytown Dam Powerplant Project No. 2888-002,” March 7, 1985, folder “A44 MOA City of Redding Hydroelectric Project,” box HQ9, WHIS-AF.

³² Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity-National Recreation Area, *Statement for Management*, NPS, January 1990, p. 21, folder “Unorganized Files,” WHIS-DF.

³³ Letter from James E. Turner to David G. Houston, “Whiskeytown Dam Powerplant Project No. 2888-002,” March 7, 1985.

³⁴ GridInfo, “Whiskeytown Dam,” n.d., accessed November 2024, <https://www.gridinfo.com/plant/whiskeytown/7189>.

³⁵ City of Redding, “Key Stakeholder Meeting: Introduction to Power Resources, 2024 Integrated Resource Plan Stakeholder Workshop No. 3,” slide 22, accessed November 2024, <https://files.cityofredding.gov/Document%20Center/Departments/Redding%20Electric%20Utility/About%20REU/Integrated%20Resource%20Plan/REU's%20IRP%20Stakeholder%20Workshop%203%20-%20Intro%20to%20Resources.pdf>.

³⁶ *Statement for Management*, 1990, p. 12.

Clear Creek Community Services District

In some instances, WHIS's utility partnerships include more than one party, as is the case with the Clear Creek Community Services District (CCCSD). The USBR first developed an agreement with the CCCSD in the early 1960s, just as WHIS's promoters were waiting for Congress to formally designate the national recreation area. In May 1963, USBR signed a contract with CCCSD to provide irrigation water from Whiskeytown Lake to Happy Valley via a 30-inch pipeline.³⁷ The CCCSD would be responsible for the costs of constructing the pipeline, which they alternatively called the Mule Town Conduit or Mule Town Aqueduct (records often refer to the conduit as one word, "Muletown"). The two parties hoped the conduit would be operational by 1964.³⁸

From the project's outset, NPS expressed interest in drawing water from the Muletown Conduit to supply water at certain sites within the newly forming park. Samuel A. King, the Whiskeytown Project Manager in 1963, hoped that the pipeline could also deliver water to future campgrounds and picnic areas along Clear Creek.³⁹ While King was hopeful that the conduit would supply water to camping areas, the connection would instead become critical to supplying water for WHIS's National Environmental Education Development (NEED) Camp. At some point after the camp opened in 1970, WHIS began relying on the Muletown Conduit to deliver water from Whiskeytown Lake to the site. An agreement between WHIS, USBR, and the CCCSD dictated that the USBR would supply the water that ran through the pipeline from Whiskeytown Lake, while WHIS was responsible for contracting and paying CCCSD directly for the "conveyance and treatment" of the water through the conduit.⁴⁰ WHIS was also responsible for recording the amount of water used at the NEED Camp to the USBR so the agency could subtract that amount from water conveyed to the CCCSD.⁴¹ In a 1993 draft of an agreement between WHIS and the USBR, WHIS reported having a right to use up to 43,000 acre-feet of water from Whiskeytown Lake, which not only flowed to the NEED Camp, but also "Park housing, concessions, Park administration/maintenance buildings, campgrounds, and all other existing and future services." WHIS and USBR relied on water meters to measure these diversions.⁴²

³⁷ Memorandum, Samuel A. King to the USBR's Chief, Shasta Field Division, May 17, 1963, filename "1960-1980_Water_Rights_WHIS_NRA," folder "Water Matters," WHIS-DF.

³⁸ Memorandum, Felix Dashen to Sam King, May 23, 1963, filename "1960-1980_Water_Rights_WHIS_NRA," folder "Water Matters," WHIS-DF; WHIS, "Master Plan: Draft," April 1975, p. 53.

³⁹ Memorandum, King to USBR's Chief, Shasta Field Division, May 17, 1963.

⁴⁰ This diversion is mentioned in an unsigned 1991 agreement between NPS and USBR. See Memorandum of Agreement, USBR and the NPS, unsigned, 1991, filename "1983-1995_MOA_Central_Valley_Project," folder "Agreements," WHIS-DF. A 2003 letter from James Milestone labels the Muletown Conduit "a Central Valley Project facility" and therefore the responsibility of the USBR. See James F. Milestone to Michael Ryan, USBR, May 22, 2003, filename "1984-2003_CDF_Crystal_Creek_Conservation_Camp," folder "Agreements," WHIS-DF. There is some ambiguity in the record about the contract between WHIS and Clear Creek Community Services District (CCCSD). In a 1995 draft of an Interagency Agreement between the USBR and WHIS, a WHIS staff member wrote on the agreement: "Do we actually 'contract' for H2O from the CCCSD?" See "Interagency Agreement Between the Bureau of Reclamation and the National Park Service," Draft, 1995, p. 12, filename "1983-1995_MOA_Central_Valley_Project," folder "Agreements," WHIS-DF.

⁴¹ Letter from J. Paul Capener, USBR, to William Suppa, CCCSD, "Water Delivery to the N.E.E.D. Camp—Muletown Conduit—Clear Creek South Unit—Trinity River Division—Central Valley Project (Water Delivery Contract)," February 7, 2025, filename "1983-1995_MOA_Central_Valley_Project," folder "Agreements," WHIS-DF.

⁴² Draft of Memorandum of Agreement between WHIS and USBR, April 21, 1993, p. 11, filename "1983-1995_MOA_Central_Valley_Project," folder "Agreements," WHIS-DF.

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While WHIS's agreement with the CCCSD and the USBR has been a longstanding and standard partnership, it still reflects the complexity of water and land management in the region. In the mid-1990s, for example, California's State Historic Preservation Officer sought Section 106 compliance under the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) for the CCCSD's new water treatment plant. The plant would sit within an area of WHIS's boundaries administered by the USBR. Therefore, Section 106 compliance would fall to the USBR and the NPS, not CCCSD, for the new construction project.⁴³ Similar co-management issues recurred periodically. In 2003, for example, the Muletown Conduit developed a leak, requiring excavation and repair on land owned by the NPS and administered by the USBR. The location of the Muletown Conduit and the CCCSD treatment plant illustrates the layered jurisdictional arrangements that characterize infrastructure management within WHIS.

Pacific Gas & Electric

Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) is a large, private utility company that provides natural gas and electricity to consumers throughout northern and central California.⁴⁴ Within WHIS's borders, PG&E owns and operates multiple low-voltage aboveground lines and two high-voltage transmission lines.⁴⁵ The transmission lines include the Keswick-Trinity-Weaverville 60-kV line and the Trinity-Cottonwood 115-kV line, which run in tandem along Highway 299 through the north side of the park.⁴⁶ The Keswick-Trinity-Weaverville is a twenty-six-mile transmission line that connects Keswick Substation near Redding to Weaverville Substation in Weaverville. The line crosses public and private lands in Shasta and Trinity Counties. Where the line runs through WHIS, it extends approximately seven miles adjacent to Whiskeytown Lake's eastern shore.⁴⁷ As two historians have noted, the two transmission lines are "bona fide historic resources."⁴⁸ Just to the east of Tower House Historic District (THHD), the lines diverge where one runs north along Trinity Mountain Road and exits the park's boundary. The other line continues west, briefly following Crystal Creek Road then splitting off west and exiting the park boundaries.

⁴³ David A. Pugh to Cheryllyn Widell, State Historic Preservation Officer, June 29, 1995, filename "1983-1995 MOA_Central_Valley_Project," folder "Agreements," WHIS-DF; Cheryllyn Widell, State Historic Preservation Officer, to Eihnard F. Diaz, Diaz Associates, June 20, 1995, filename "1983-1995 MOA_Central_Valley_Project," folder "Agreements," WHIS-DF.

⁴⁴ "Company profile: Fast facts about PG&E," Pacific Gas and Electric Company, accessed August 2025, <https://www.pge.com/en/about/company-information/company-profile.html>.

⁴⁵ "Environmental Assessment: Master Plan," WHIS, July 1976, p. 15, subfolder "1970s," WHIS-DF.

⁴⁶ Everett Bassett, "Cultural Resources Inventory Report for a Grant of Right-of-Way on the Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area, Whiskeytown Unit," Transcon Infrastructure, Inc., April 2004, p. 1, subfolder "2004," folder "Cultural_Resource_Reports-PRIVILEGED," WHIS-DF.

⁴⁷ "Notice of Proposed Construction of Facilities Pursuant to General Order 131-D, Keswick-Trinity-Weaverville 60kV Pole Replacement, Counties of Shasta and Trinity," PG&E, August 19, 2009, p. 1, accessed August 2025, https://www.pge.com/assets/rates/tariffs/assets/pdf/adviceletter/ELEC_3510-E.pdf.

⁴⁸ Theodore Catton and Diane Krahe, *The Shaping of a Natural and Industrial Landscape: Whiskeytown National Recreation Area Historic Resource Study*, Organization of American Historians/National Park Service, February 2025, p. 376, accessed August 15, 2025, <https://npshistory.com/publications/whis/hrs-2025.pdf>.

PG&E has a long history in Northern California. Understanding a brief history of PG&E's operations in California clarifies their role within WHIS. The company formed in 1905 as a merger between the San Francisco Gas Company (c. 1852) and California Electric Light (c. 1875) and quickly acquired smaller utility companies, growing into one of the largest utility companies in the United States. The company held a monopoly on California's power by 1930. Because of their broad service in the region, PG&E opposed the creation of the CVP because the company "did not want to see the state or the federal government involved in the public power business, then largely entrusted to private companies."⁴⁹

In the 1950s, PG&E supplied power to 46 of California's 58 counties and ventured into nuclear energy through a joint project with General Electric. However, public sentiment shifted against the company in the 1960s and 1970s, fueled by the rise of environmental and anti-nuclear movements. The presence of PG&E's power lines within the proposed recreation area highlighted an ongoing tension between preexisting private energy infrastructure and the recreational and scenic objectives associated with the new park unit. This tension between industrial development and natural preservation would persist throughout WHIS's history. In 1964, the NPS acknowledged PG&E's power line right-of-way (ROW) along Highway 299, recognizing that the company would need to maintain its access.⁵⁰ In addition to working with PG&E as a property owner that would require ongoing access to park lands, WHIS has also relied on PG&E to deliver electricity to various park facilities, including administrative buildings and the NEED Camp.⁵¹ In that sense, WHIS has represented both partner and customer in its relationship with PG&E.

Nearly a decade after WHIS's establishment, WHIS management expressed concern about PG&E's aesthetic impact on the park. The 1976 General Management Plan stated that the power lines were "easily noticed by the park users." PG&E's use of helicopters to check on its power lines (rather than creating new roads) "minimized their impact on the landscape," and was an example of the utility company's efforts to respect WHIS's ecological and aesthetic objectives.⁵² The USBR, on the other hand, has approached the issue of power lines differently. In 1976, WHIS's Master Plan reported that the USBR built and routinely graded its roads to access the high-voltage power lines adjacent to Carr Powerhouse (rather than using the preferred helicopter). WHIS's Master Plan also reported that the USBR's other facilities, including water conduits, towers, and transformer stations, were "quite obstructive." WHIS recommended that these structures be painted to blend more seamlessly with the surrounding landscape.⁵³

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 174; and Jim Doyle, "History/Utility Giant Grew from Gold Rush Roots. By 1930, PG&E had developed into a monopoly," *San Francisco Gate*, April 7, 2001, accessed November 2024, <https://www.sfgate.com/news/article/history-utility-giant-grew-from-gold-rush-roots-2934359.php>.

⁵⁰ NPS, "Narrative: Part of the Master Plan, Whiskeytown Reservoir Recreation Area, California," October 1964, p. 2, file, "1964_Land_Preservation_Plan_Narrative_WHIS_611_3045," folder "ADMINS PLANS," subfolder "Not_Accessioned," folder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF.

⁵¹ NPS, *Whiskeytown/Shasta/Trinity, Whiskeytown Unit Final Master Plan*, July 1976, p. 48, subfolder "ADMIN_PLANS," subfolder "Not_Accessioned," folder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF; and "Environmental Assessment: Master Plan," 1976, p. 15. Whiskeytown also relies on outside utility providers to serve the unit's staff housing. See WHIS, "Housing Management Program," February 28, 2018, pp. 6-12, 7-1, subfolder "ADMIN_PLANS," subfolder "Not_Accessioned," folder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF; and "Scoping Report for Whiskeytown N.E.E.D. Camp Main Lodge: Mechanical, Plumbing and Electrical Findings," Glumac International, p. 1.

⁵² WHIS, *Final Master Plan*, 1976, p. 48.

⁵³ Ibid.

Despite competing concerns over aesthetics, WHIS and PG&E routinely adjusted to each other's requests. In 1986, for example, PG&E's Division Electric Superintendent wrote to Superintendent Foust requesting that the company could provide electric service to Pacific Bell's (formerly called Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Company) proposed microwave facility near Highway 299 and Whiskey Creek Road.⁵⁴ By tapping into Pacific Bell's standing ROW easement—which the USBR had signed with the telephone company in 1967—PG&E could supply electricity to the facility without requiring new easements or ingress and egress routes.⁵⁵ Superintendent Foust responded within a few business days and “concur[red] with the plan as submitted.”⁵⁶

While WHIS maintained a strong working relationship with PG&E, the park's concerns over the visual impact of utility infrastructure persisted over the following two decades. In 1991, for example, WHIS requested that PG&E move a power line to improve the “visual quality for visitors using the new parking lot” at THHD. Once again, visual impacts mattered, particularly if they threatened the park's character. PG&E agreed and WHIS granted the electric company an easement to erect a new power line pole at the confluence of Clear and Willow Creek.⁵⁷ Three years later, in 1994, PG&E replaced another pole in THHD.⁵⁸ Rough and unsightly access roads also remained a source of contention between the NPS, PG&E, and other utility providers operating within WHIS boundaries. PG&E and WAPA hold road rights-of-way to maintain their power lines, which cover approximately 1,140 acres of Whiskeytown's 42,000 total acres. As a result, these companies require frequent access to substantial portions of WHIS throughout the year.⁵⁹

Into the mid-1990s, PG&E faced some major changes. In 1996, the State of California deregulated the electric industry to restructure three utility giants in California: PG&E, California Edison, and San Diego Gas and Electric.⁶⁰ The deregulation, along with an exceptionally hot summer that brought on high electricity consumption, forced PG&E to sell off assets to stay in business. Eventually, the company filed for bankruptcy in 2001.⁶¹ Emerging from bankruptcy in 2004, PG&E focused on repaying creditors and regaining financial stability, even as controversy surrounding the company persisted into the new century. The company's reputation suffered further damage in 2010 when a PG&E gas line exploded in San Bruno, California, killing eight people and destroying thirty-eight homes.⁶² The incident prompted the company to reexamine its vast and aging infrastructure. The pipeline that exploded had been installed in 1956 and

⁵⁴ J. D. Bledsoe, PG&E, to WHIS, “12KV Line Extension to Serve Pacific Bell's Proposed Micro-Wave Facility,” February 13, 1986, filename “1986_Pacific_Telephone_and_Telegraph_Co,” folder “Agreements,” WHIS-DF.

⁵⁵ USBR and the Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Company, “Easement to the Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Company,” August 9, 1967, filename “1986_Pacific_Telephone_and_Telegraph_Co,” folder “Agreements,” WHIS-DF.

⁵⁶ Ray Foust to J. D. Baldsoe, PG&E, February 18, 1986, filename “1986_Pacific_Telephone_and_Telegraph_Co,” folder “Agreements,” WHIS-DF.

⁵⁷ Letter from Ray Foust to Stan Phipps (PG&E), May 28, 1991, filename “1986_Pacific_Telephone_and_Telegraph_Co,” folder “L3027 Right of Way Easement (PG7E),” box HQ11, WHIS-AF.

⁵⁸ Letter from Alison MacDougall (PG&E) to Ann Smith (NPS), “PG&E Cottonwood-Humbolt 115kV Pole Line Restoration Project,” July 1, 1994, subfolder “1994,” folder “1990-1999,” WHIS-DF.

⁵⁹ WHIS, *Trails Management Plan: Environmental Assessment*, February 2022, p. 39, subfolder “Environmental_Assessments,” folder “Administrative_History,” WHIS-DF;

⁶⁰ Katherine Blunt, *California Burning: The Fall of Pacific Gas and Electric-and What it Means for America's Power Grid* (New York City: Portfolio/Penguin, 2022), pp. 50-51.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 65-83.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 108.

was found to have “poorly welded” sections.⁶³ In response to the disaster, PG&E conducted inspections of the gas lines across California. The company’s focus on gas lines meant its power line infrastructure, though out-of-date and prone to problems, received less attention than it required.⁶⁴

While PG&E was busy repairing gas lines across the state and attempting to restore its financial health, the company again faced new challenges concerning wildfire in California. During the dry summers of 2007 and 2008, California experienced two difficult fire seasons that resulted in over three million acres burned.⁶⁵ A power line owned by San Diego Gas and Electric started the Witch Fire, prompting the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) to “push the state’s utilities to address the threat of fire.”⁶⁶ Over the next three years, PG&E conducted an investigation into the fire risks associated with its power lines, discovering that between 2007 and 2010, 186 fires in California had been caused by power lines. In response to these fires, PG&E responded both locally and regionally. Within WHIS, PG&E performed repairs on transmission lines, which firefighters had doused with retardant during the 2008 fires. The company also evaluated its entire grid to identify and prioritize the lines that posed the greatest risk.⁶⁷ PG&E had begun trimming trees near power lines within WHIS boundaries as part of its fire risk mitigation efforts—a task the company had started by the 1990s, but increased in the 2000s.⁶⁸ In 2013, the company completed additional safety work at WHIS, securing a Special Use Permit to replace three utility poles and three X-arms—the horizontal crossarms supporting the power lines—using a helicopter in the Crystal Creek area.⁶⁹ As longstanding partners sharing both land and infrastructure, PG&E and WHIS worked collaboratively to reduce the risk of wildfire.

In 2014, amidst another dry fire-prone year, CPUC directed power companies to clear away trees from lines. PG&E began a line-clearing mission to get trees away from lines in high-risk areas, a demanding project considering the amount of line it administered against the number contractors the company hired to trim trees. In 2017, WHIS allotted PG&E a Special Use Permit to conduct operations and maintenance for fire mitigation on a 400-foot-wide corridor from the center of their lines.⁷⁰ Despite its tree-trimming efforts, PG&E reported approximately 1,550 fires caused by its equipment between 2014 and 2017.⁷¹

⁶³ Ibid., p. 109.

⁶⁴ Ibid., pp. 121.

⁶⁵ “California Wildfire and Acres for all Jurisdictions,” California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, n.d., accessed November 2024, <https://web.archive.org/web/20221228012125/https://www.fire.ca.gov/media/11397/fires-acres-all-agencies-thru-2018.pdf>.

⁶⁶ Blunt, *California Burning*, pp. 123.

⁶⁷ “Burned Area Emergency Response Plan: Whiskeytown Complex,” WHIS, August 2008, p. 15, subfolder “ADMIN_PLANS,” subfolder “Not_Accessioned,” folder “Administrative_History,” WHIS-DF; and Blunt, *California Burning*, pp. 184.

⁶⁸ WHIS, “Environmental Assessment of Bally Shasta Communication Facilities,” July 2009, p. 9, accessed November 2024, <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/document.cfm?parkID=345&projectID=17624&documentID=28365>; WHIS, *Resources Management Plan*, August 21, 1997, p. 104, subfolder “ADMIN_PLANS,” subfolder “Not_Accessioned,” folder “Administrative_History,” WHIS-DF.

⁶⁹ “Special Use Permit SPU-WHIS-2501-0514,” WHIS, 2013, subfolder “PG&E Flight Permits,” subfolder “Other Permits 2013,” subfolder “2013,” folder “Special Use Park Permits,” WHIF-DF.

⁷⁰ WHIS, “Special Use Permit #MISC-WHIS-5700-932,” subfolder “PG&E,” subfolder “Park Partners,” subfolder “20210927,” folder “FACILITIES,” WHIS-DF.

⁷¹ Blunt, *California Burning*, p. 192.

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The fire data reported from the 2014 to 2017 seasons informed PG&E's development of the Community Wildfire Safety Program, established in 2018 to reduce wildfire risk through infrastructure improvements. These measures included installing cameras and weather stations, expanding vegetation management along transmission and distribution lines, and implementing public safety power shutoffs during high-risk conditions. However, these mitigation efforts did not prevent large-scale fire events elsewhere in Northern California, including the Camp Fire in Butte County later that year.⁷²

That same year, the vehicle-ignited Carr Fire burned extensively within WHIS and caused significant damage to utility infrastructure. While metal transmission structures were generally less affected, overhead lines and wood pole structures sustained widespread damage, requiring inspection, repair, and in some cases full replacement. In the aftermath of the fire, PG&E undertook a substantial mobilization effort to restore transmission and distribution service across the park (see Chapter 4.4: Fire Management and Adaptation).

In 2019, PG&E and the NPS developed a Special Use Permit to facilitate wildfire mitigation activities across multiple NPS units, including WHIS. The permit authorized a defined set of operations and maintenance activities—ranging from routine inspections to more extensive vegetation management—while a longer-term operations and maintenance agreement remained under development. It also established procedures for ongoing coordination, including project-specific notification, environmental review, and resource monitoring. In the aftermath of the 2018 fire season—including the Carr and Camp Fires—both PG&E and NPS emphasized sustained interagency coordination as essential to managing infrastructure, vegetation, and wildfire risk. As WHIS expanded post-fire fuel mitigation efforts, coordination with PG&E and WAPA became increasingly necessary where treatments intersected utility corridors, illustrating a more integrated approach to wildfire risk reduction and infrastructure management.⁷³

As partners, PG&E and WHIS have addressed issues including visual impacts, easements and access, and wildfire risk associated with utility infrastructure. In recent decades, large wildfire events in California have heightened attention to vegetation management and fire mitigation along power line corridors. WHIS has worked with PG&E and other utility providers, including WAPA and USBR, to implement fire mitigation measures within the park.

The extent of PG&E's infrastructure within WHIS illustrates the administrative complexity associated with managing utility systems inside park boundaries. These issues were not limited to power lines but extended to other infrastructure within the unit. Among the most prominent is the Shasta Bally telecommunications site, which functions as a regional communications and emergency services facility. Located within the park, the site represents the co-location of modern infrastructure with areas of cultural and ecological significance. Its management requires coordination among multiple agencies and regulatory frameworks governing utility operations, cultural resources, and environmental protection.

⁷² PG&E, "Community Wildfire Safety Program," n.d., accessed April 7, 2026, <https://www.pge.com/en/outages-and-safety/safety/community-wildfire-safety-program.html>; California Public Utilities Commission, *PG&E Safety and Public Safety Power Shutoff Briefing* (Sacramento: California Public Utilities Commission, August 19, 2025); and Vanessa Romo, "PG&E Please Guilty on 2018 California Camp Fire: 'Our Equipment Started that Fire,'" June 16, 2020, *National Public Radio*, accessed November 2024, <https://www.npr.org/2020/06/16/879008760/pg-e-pleads-guilty-on-2018-california-camp-fire-our-equipment-started-that-fire>.

⁷³ NPS and PG&E, "Special Use Permit for Operation and Maintenance Activities Related to Electrical Transmission and Distribution Systems," 2020–2021 permit term (approved 2019), WHIS-DF; PG&E, "2023-2025 Wildfire Mitigation Plan," April 2, 2024, pp. 135-136, accessed November 2024, <https://www.pge.com/assets/pge/docs/outages-and-safety/outage-preparedness-and-support/pge-wmp-r5-redline-040224.pdf>; WHIS, *Whiskeytown Fire Management Plan*, 2022, p. 5, 25. WHIS also has its own Building and Utilities Crew, see WHIS, "Annual Report," 2010, p. 19, subfolder "Superintendents_Annual_Report," subfolder "ADMIN_PLANS," subfolder "Not_Accessioned," folder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF.



Figure 28. Shasta Bally Telecommunications Site, 2009.
Source: Photograph on file at WHIS Archives.⁷⁴

Shasta Bally Telecommunications Site

Superintendent James Milestone compared Shasta Bally to Yosemite’s Half Dome to convey its visual prominence. The summit has supported communications infrastructure since the 1950s, and its administration has required coordination among permittees, NPS compliance requirements, and consultation regarding culturally sensitive areas.⁷⁵ This site has evolved through complex negotiations between private entities and the NPS. Additionally, the mountain holds cultural significance for the Redding Rancheria and greater Tribal community, further highlighting its multidimensional importance. The following section explores the historical development, legal disputes, and contemporary management of this pivotal site.

Shasta Bally holds profound cultural significance for Indigenous peoples of the area, who regard the summit as a sacred site linked to their spiritual practices and oral histories. The park treats Shasta Bally as a Traditional Cultural Property (TCP), although it is not officially listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) as such. All parties

⁷⁴ Photograph in subfolder “2009,” folder “2000-2009,” WHIS-DF.

⁷⁵ Dylan Darling, “Shasta Bally Communication Towers May be Phased Out,” *Redding Record Searchlight*, December 9, 2008, accessed November 2024, <https://archive.redding.com/news/shasta-bally-communications-towers-may-be-phased-out-ep-377814545-355874521.html/>; and WHIS, “Site Plan Communications Site,” from Shasta Bally EA, subfolder “Title 2”, subfolder “Shasta Bally”, subfolder “Completed Project”, subfolder “20210972”, folder “FACILITIES,” WHIS-DF.

agree that the site is culturally and ethnographically significant.⁷⁶ Management planning therefore addresses both cultural resource considerations and natural resource protection. In addition to its cultural associations, Shasta Bally contains rare plant species, including the federally endangered Shasta snow-wreath, requiring coordinated management of ecological and cultural values within the area.

The communication towers and buildings on Shasta Bally pre-date the national recreation area. In 1955, the Shasta Telecommunication Corporation established a communications site on Shasta Bally, leasing the summit from the Crawford family to provide radio and television signals to Redding and nearby areas.⁷⁷ Following the creation of WHIS, the NPS purchased the land in 1970 and entered into a fifty-year lease agreement with Sacramento Valley Television (now California Oregon Broadcasting, Incorporated, or COBI) to maintain operations on five acres at the summit.⁷⁸

Although WHIS permitted a long-term lease for the communications site, planning documents indicate that park officials expressed concern about the visual impact of the structures on the summit. The 1975 Master Plan stated that the “television relay and transmission station situation on the summit... presents an intrusion to an otherwise remote and exciting termination to a mountain climb.”⁷⁹ At the same time, the lease granted the lessee “the right to construct and maintain any building or structures necessary to house its employees and electronic facilities on the premises covered by the lease,” subject to NPS approval of proposed construction.⁸⁰ Over time, the site expanded in response to regional population growth and increased communications demand. In 1988, Sacramento Valley Television constructed a two-story building to house radio equipment near the KRCR-TV facilities.⁸¹ In the 1990s, approximately a decade before COBI’s lease expiration, planning documents suggested that renewal was anticipated; however, the eventual renewal process proved more complex than earlier projections indicated.⁸²

⁷⁶ WHIS, “Shasta Bally Summit Communication Facilities Environmental Assessment,” July 2009, pp. 54-55, subfolder “2009,” folder “2000-2009,” WHIS-DF.

⁷⁷ WHIS, “Draft of Communication Site Management Plan, Shasta Bally, Whiskeytown NRA,” April 10, 2006, p. 5, subfolder “Brent McBeth,” subfolder “Shasta Bally Site Plan,” subfolder “ALBERTI,” folder “Supt,” WHIS-DF.

⁷⁸ Letter from James Milestone to Milford Wayne Donaldson (CA SHPO), April 28, 2009, subfolder “Shasta Bally Site Plan,” subfolder “ALBERTI,” folder “Supt,” WHIS-DF; WHIS, “Shasta Bally Briefing Paper” November 16, 2005, p. 1, subfolder “Shasta Bally Site Plan,” subfolder “ALBERTI,” folder “Supt,” WHIS-DF; WHIS, “Draft of Communication Site Management Plan, Shasta Bally, Whiskeytown NRA,” April 10, 2006, p. 5, subfolder “Brent McBeth,” subfolder “Shasta Bally Site Plan,” subfolder “ALBERTI,” folder “Supt,” WHIS-DF.

⁷⁹ WHIS, *Final Master Plan*, 1976, p. 20.

⁸⁰ Letter from Ray Foust to Keith Whisenhunt, “Radio Facility on Shasta Bally,” August 31, 1988, subfolder “historic docs,” subfolder “Shasta Bally Site Plan,” subfolder “ALBERTI,” folder “Supt,” WHIS-DF.

⁸¹ Letter from Keith Whisenhunt (Sarah Dunlap and Associates, Inc Engineering Planning Surveying) to Bud Ivey (WHIS), “Radio Facility on Shasta Bally,” August 25, 1988, subfolder “Historic Docs,” subfolder “Shasta Bally Site Plan,” subfolder “ALBERTI,” folder “Supt,” WHIS-DF.

⁸² WHIS, “1990 Statement for Management,” 1990, p. 13, WHIS-DF.

2006 COBI Lease Lawsuit and Settlement Agreement

In July of 2006, California Oregon Broadcasting's lease on Shasta Bally expired; in the ensuing years, communication companies and WHIS negotiated the future of the summit.⁸³ Initially, COBI sought to renew their fifty-year lease, but the NPS did not allow it. The NPS could not renew the lease under law but could offer COBI a utility right of way instead.⁸⁴ The NPS cited California case law in its decision not to renew COBI's lease, explaining that the original lease provided only a conditional right of first refusal, not an automatic renewal. As a result, the parties entered a "wind-down period" through a settlement agreement that ended on September 1, 2009, transferring management authority to the NPS.⁸⁵

WHIS began preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA), released in 2009, that explored five alternatives for the site's use after COBI's lease expired. During the public comment period for the EA, 95 percent of commenters spoke out in favor of keeping the towers in place.⁸⁶ The park chose a preferred alternative, Alternative F, which: "would allow all existing permit applicants to continue to use the site, new permittees would be able to co-locate on existing infrastructure, and installation of new infrastructure would be allowed within the existing site in recently disturbed areas not currently being utilized."⁸⁷ WHIS also determined that none of the buildings atop Shasta Bally were eligible for listing on the NRHP as well as sought the expansion of the boundaries of what could be a formally designated TCP atop Shasta Bally.⁸⁸ During consultation for the EA, Redding Rancheria and park staff discussed the Rancheria's desire "to ensure long-term access to the summit and protection of known spiritual sites in the park." Superintendent Milestone reported that out of consultation, the NPS agreed that "access to the summit will not change under any of the alternatives in this plan and the NPS will continue to preserve and protect all known cultural resources in the park."⁸⁹ Formal designation of the site as a TCP was not pursued.

After 2009, WHIS took over management of the telecommunications site, collecting \$21,000 per year from occupants of the site to go toward road maintenance to the site.⁹⁰ As of 2009, the site hosted permittees of Verizon, KRCR, PG&E, KIXE, and Calvary Chapel. Initial management actions included removing trash and hazardous materials and painting buildings and towers in neutral colors to reduce visual contrast.⁹¹ In addition to providing communication

⁸³ WHIS, "Shasta Bally Public Scoping," December 5, 2008, accessed November 2024, https://www.nps.gov/whis/learn/news/shasta_bally_summit_public_scoping.htm.

⁸⁴ WHIS, "Shasta Bally Briefing Paper" November 16, 2005, pp. 1-2, subfolder "Shasta Bally Site Plan," subfolder "ALBERTI," folder "Supt," WHIS-DF.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 1.

⁸⁶ Dylan Darling and Kimberly Ross, "Communications towers can remain on Shasta Bally," *Redding Record Searchlight*, March 11, 2009, accessed November 2024, <https://archive.redding.com/news/communications-towers-can-remain-on-shasta-bally-ep-377673887-355759841.html/>.

⁸⁷ WHIS, "Environmental Assessment of Bally Shasta Communication Facilities," July 2009, p. ii, accessed November 2024, <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/document.cfm?parkID=345&projectID=17624&documentID=28365>.

⁸⁸ "Pak Service Broadens Sacred Tribal Area of Shasta Bally Towers," August 23, 2011, accessed November 2024, <https://anewscafe.com/2011/08/23/redding/park-service-broadens-sacred-tribal-area-of-shasta-bally-towers/>.

⁸⁹ Letter from James Milestone to Milford Wayne Donaldson (California State Historic Preservation Office), April 29, 2009, subfolder "Shasta Bally Site Plan," subfolder "ALBERTI," subfolder "Supt," WHIS DF.

⁹⁰ Darling and Ross, "Communications towers can remain on Shasta Bally."

⁹¹ James Milestone, "Annual Report 2010: Whiskeytown National Recreation Area," 2011, p. 13, subfolder "Superintendents_Annual_Report," subfolder "ADMIN_PLANS," subfolder "Not_Accessioned," folder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF.

and television signals, the site serves as a law enforcement radio repeater for the National Park Service (NPS) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). In December of 2014, WHIS planned to replace the repeater on Shasta Bally with a stronger unit that would increase radio coverage in the park from 70 to over 95 percent.⁹²

Conclusion

WHIS contains a dense utility landscape embedded within a recreation area: USBR water and power infrastructure integral to the CVP, major transmission corridors operated by PG&E and WAPA, and a telecommunications complex on Shasta Bally that supports regional broadcast and emergency communications. Much of this infrastructure predates establishment of the park, and it continues to function as regional-scale public service even as WHIS manages visitor use, natural resources, and cultural responsibilities on the same lands.

Because these systems are owned and operated by external entities, utility management at WHIS is primarily an interagency and intergovernmental coordination function. The park's role has repeatedly centered on access, easements and rights-of-way, special use permits, and environmental compliance, including resolving operational conflicts where utility maintenance intersects with scenic values, visitor experience, and resource protection. The record shows routine accommodation of access needs paired with periodic efforts to reduce visual impacts and limit ground disturbance where feasible.

Fire risk has increasingly shaped this work. Vegetation management along transmission corridors, timing and methods of maintenance work, and the administrative pace of permitting and coordination have all been influenced by a landscape defined by severe wildfire seasons. In this context, utility corridors operate not only as infrastructure routes but also as recurring sites of fuels management and public safety concern—requiring ongoing coordination between WHIS and utility providers whose responsibilities and liabilities extend well beyond park boundaries.

Shasta Bally highlights the layered character of utility administration at WHIS. The mountain functions simultaneously as a communications hub, an iconic landscape feature, a rare-plant habitat, and a place of deep cultural and ethnographic significance for tribal communities. The post-2006 transition from a long-term lease to NPS-managed permitting and the subsequent planning process formalized the park's oversight role, while also clarifying that continued operations would depend on defined administrative frameworks, maintenance regimes, and ongoing consultation. The site's continued use responds to the practical realities of regional communications needs, even as WHIS works to protect culturally sensitive locations and ecological values.

Utilities at WHIS are best understood as a continuing administrative responsibility rather than a background condition. The park's history illustrates the challenge of managing essential regional infrastructure inside a unit established for recreation and resource stewardship: sustaining functional partnerships with outside operators while meeting compliance obligations, reducing risk, and protecting the natural and cultural values that define Whiskeytown's purpose.

⁹² WHIS, "Project: Radio Repeater on Shasta Bally," December 8, 2014, subfolder "Shasta Bally Coms," subfolder "FY 17 Call," subfolder "PMIS SCC(S)," subfolder "PMIS SCC 23," subfolder "20210927," folder "FACILITIES," WHIS-DF.

CHAPTER 7.2: CONCESSIONAIRE VISIONS AND REALITIES

Visitor services at Whiskeytown National Recreation Area (WHIS) relied heavily on concession operations. Mission 66-era planning envisioned concentrated hubs of recreation and commerce—marinas, campgrounds, stores, and food service—coordinated with National Park Service (NPS) development planning and managed within the constraints of a working reservoir landscape. In practice, concession operations repeatedly exposed a persistent gap between plan and performance: ambitious buildouts confronted limited capital, seasonal demand, fluctuating lake conditions and storm impacts, regulatory compliance requirements, and the logistical realities of building and maintaining facilities on federal land.

Over time, the park's most significant concession nodes—especially Oak Bottom and Brandy Creek—became focal points for negotiating that gap. Contract terms, phased construction schedules, compliance expectations, and maintenance obligations structured day-to-day relationships between WHIS and its operators, while changing visitation patterns and evolving management priorities shaped what services were feasible. These dynamics were especially visible during Ken and Cheryl Smith's long tenure operating Oak Bottom Marina, where expanded services and ongoing disputes over deadlines, rates, and unauthorized modifications culminated in contract termination in 2006 and a subsequent settlement.

A parallel set of challenges emerged outside the formal concessions program in community-driven efforts to reuse the Whiskeytown General Store/Post Office building through the proposed Bluegrass Historical Campground. There, the limiting factor was not concession feasibility but the strict legal boundaries governing expanded commercial activity on private inholdings within the recreation area. The project stalled, the building deteriorated amid mounting hazards and deferred maintenance pressures, and the resource was ultimately lost—illustrating how regulatory structure and implementation capacity could narrow outcomes even when a place held strong local meaning. Together, these episodes show that concessionaire operations and related visitor-service initiatives at WHIS were shaped less by linear “development” than by recurring cycles of aspiration, negotiation, constraint, and recalibration.

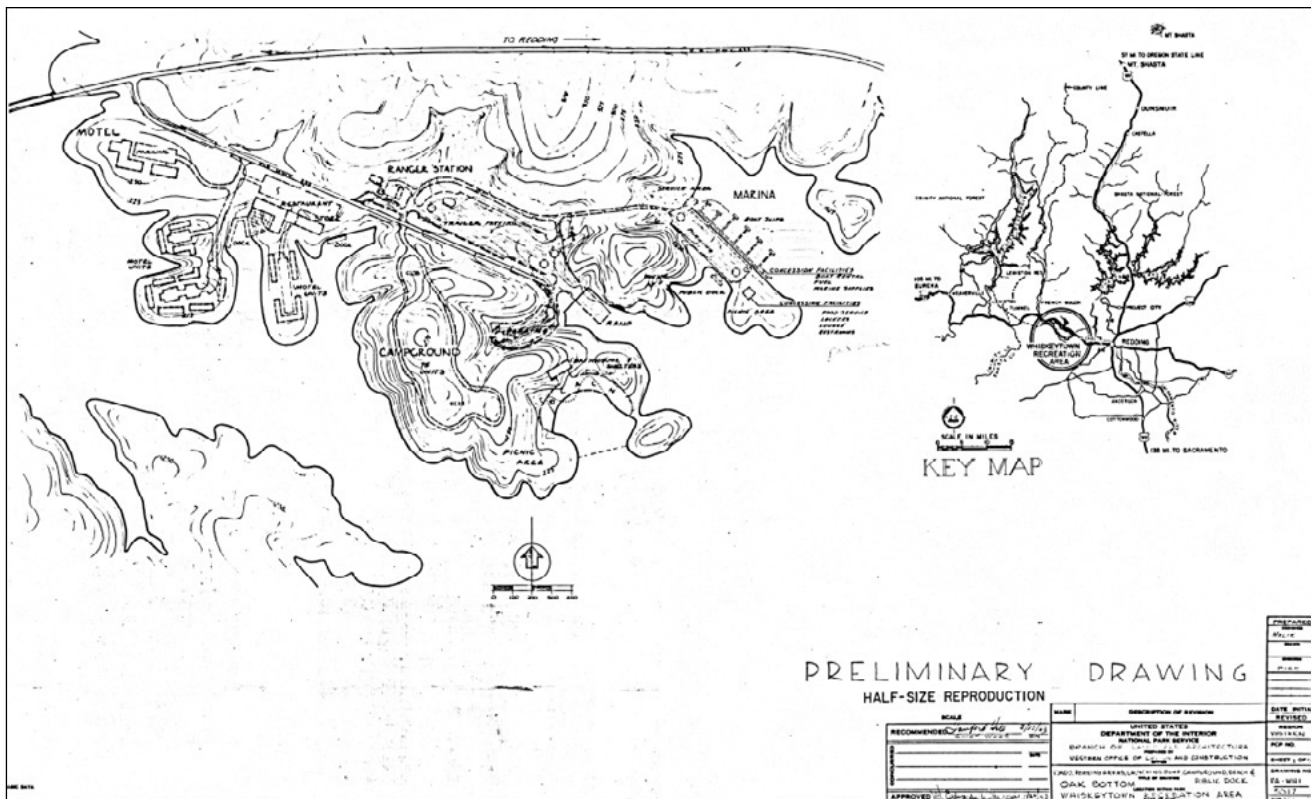


Figure 29. Plans for Oak Bottom. Preliminary Architectural Drawing, 1963.
Source: Drawings on file at WHIS Archives.¹

Mission 66 Planning and Early Construction

The original plans for concessions operations in WHIS were guided by public discussions that preceded the national recreation area's founding as early as 1962. Public discussions revealed a strong preference that the new park would provide opportunities for multiple concessionaires to operate at the developed areas within the new park. Although records of the first prospectuses for concessions at WHIS are scant, it appears that by September of 1963 the NPS had already developed two separate concessions prospectuses: one for Whiskey Creek and one for Brandy Creek concessions. Though bids were received, there is no evidence that contracts under these earliest prospectuses were ever let.²

By late 1962, NPS Director Conrad Wirth approved plans for the national recreation area that had been prepared by the Washington Office's Design and Construction department. The plans identified three major development sites around Whiskeytown Lake—Oak Bottom, Whiskey Creek, and Brandy Creek—selected for their accessibility from existing roads, favorable topography, and minimal anticipated impact on vegetation.³

¹ Drawings in subfolder "Oak_Bottom," subfolder "FACILITIES_RECORDS," folder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF.

² "Synopsis of Concession Planning History of Whiskeytown," Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, n.d., folder "FACILITIES," WHIS-DF.

³ "Rough Draft Narrative Master Plan," WHIS, 1963-63, subfolder "FACILITIES_RECORDS," folder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF.

These plans embodied the principles and goals of the Mission 66 program (1956–1966), which marked a significant turning point in NPS development. Beyond addressing decades of deferred maintenance, Mission 66 allocated over \$1 billion to modernize park infrastructure nationwide, constructing visitor centers, roads, park housing, campgrounds, and other facilities to accommodate postwar recreational demand.⁴ During WWII, parks had fallen victim to a lack of funding and attention; most units had gone without major maintenance undertakings since the New Deal's Civilian Conservation Corps and Works Progress Administration. Lacking amenities and well-maintained infrastructure to accommodate the masses of visitors, post-WWII park units were overwhelmed. NPS Director Conrad L. Wirth sought to remedy the situation by creating a ten-year plan called Mission 66 that was meant to upgrade infrastructure, programming, resource protection, and staffing across NPS units. Mission 66 also led, in part, to a dramatic increase in the number of NPS-administered sites. In 1964, George B. Hartzog Jr. succeeded Conrad Wirth as director. Sixty-eight park units were added under Director Hartzog. These units went beyond the traditional park designation and included national rivers, trails, and recreation areas—including Whiskeytown.⁵

At the new park, Mission 66 informed the design and plans for campgrounds, visitor services buildings, comfort stations, ranger stations, picnic shelters, and an amphitheater. The Mission 66 program's emphasis on marinas, utilities, and water-oriented recreation mirrored successes at other sites like Lake Mead and bolstering the growing importance of recreation areas in the NPS system.⁶ At Whiskeytown, this vision translated into a built environment with both government-constructed and concessionaire-built facilities. Concessionaires were expected to manage public services and marina operations at all three developed sites around Whiskeytown Lake, with additional responsibilities for saddle horse rentals at Brandy Creek and overnight accommodations at Oak Bottom.⁷

At WHIS, as elsewhere, implementation repeatedly ran up against seasonal demand, financing limits, and compliance requirements. The economic viability of concessionaire-operated facilities depended on fluctuating visitation levels, seasonal demand, and the willingness of private entities to invest in infrastructure. At the same time, shifting environmental values in the 1960s began to push against the expansive development plans initially envisioned in Mission 66. These tensions between economic aspirations, environmental stewardship, and visitor expectations shaped Whiskeytown's trajectory and the evolving role of national recreation areas within the park system.

While the plans for Whiskeytown's development laid out under the Mission 66 program outlined an impressive vision for the park's future, translating these ideas into reality required navigating significant logistical and financial challenges. As planners finalized details and identified key sites for development, the park moved toward the next phase of its evolution: implementing these designs on the ground.

⁴ Barry Mackintosh, Janet A McDonnell, and John H. Sprinkle, Jr. "The National Parks: Shaping the System," *The George Wright Forum* 35, no. 2 (2018): 40.

⁵ Mackintosh, McDonnell, and Sprinkle, "The National Parks: Shaping the System," p. 42.

⁶ Ethan Carr, *Mission 66: Modernism and the National Park Dilemma*, (Amherst, Mass.: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007), p. 320.

⁷ Branch of Landscape Architecture, Wester Office Division of Design and Construction, "General Development, Part of the Master Plan for Whiskeytown Recreation Area," Drawing No. RA_WHI-3001, sheet 1 of 1, page 2A, filename "1962_WHIS_611_3001_[id184994]," subfolder "FACILITIES_RECORDS," folder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF; and NPS Washington Office Division of Design & Construction, "Recreation Area Development, Part of the Master Plan for Whiskeytown Recreation Area," Drawing No. RA-WHI-1000A, December 11 1962, sheet 1 of 1, filename "1962_DEC_MasterPlan_WHIS_611_1000A_Z1[id185966]," subfolder "FACILITIES_RECORDS," folder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF.

In March 1963, the Western Office of Design and Construction approved the preliminary plans for developed areas at Whiskeytown. Construction commenced shortly thereafter at the three primary sites: Oak Bottom, Brandy Creek, and Whiskey Creek. To complete the necessary infrastructure and structures, the NPS engaged Trinity Construction Co. and C.L. Fogle, Inc., operating as a joint venture. Their contract, valued at just over half a million dollars, included roads, parking areas, campgrounds, picnic areas, docks, and utilities. The contract, initiated in July 1963, incorporated several small change orders and schedule adjustments before concluding a year later in August 1964.⁸

In 1964, the park's first *Master Plan* was finalized, reflecting an expanded vision for concessions compared to the initial plans discussed two years earlier. Consistent with earlier discussions, the *Master Plan* proposed three developed areas—Whiskey Creek, Brandy Creek, and Oak Bottom—each centered on water sports and supported by concessionaire-operated “marina type facilities.” These facilities were to include rental boats, fueling docks, boat storage and repair, mooring, and the sale of marine supplies, all located near NPS-constructed launching ramps and docks.⁹

The plan also called for concessionaire-operated stores and coffee shops or snack bars at each marina and beach site. While planners anticipated that overnight accommodations in nearby Redding and Shasta would suffice, they identified a site near Oak Bottom as a potential location for a motel and store, marking an addition to the earlier vision. The *Master Plan* specified that the concessionaire at Oak Bottom would be granted “preferential opportunity to construct and operate” such facilities if a need arose.¹⁰

Even with a strong concessionaire presence in WHIS, planners were clear that concessionaire property in the park should be limited, stating, “Lease lines should be drawn to include space for visitor use facilities only.” Concessionaire housing, storage, office space, and the like would not be part of the concessionaire operations at WHIS.¹¹ With these guidelines established to limit the scope of concessionaire property and prioritize visitor facilities, efforts quickly commenced to bring the envisioned infrastructure to fruition.

During the summer of 1964, construction continued as additional features were completed. This work included building beach areas at Oak Bottom and Brandy Creek with drainage systems to prevent erosion and concrete ramps to accommodate fluctuating water levels at the docks.¹² Under a separate contract, W.F. Imel Construction finished construction of critical visitor services buildings at Oak Bottom, Brandy Creek, and Whiskey Creek. Between May and December of 1964, over a dozen buildings and structures were erected. At Oak Bottom, these included a bath house with dressing rooms, toilet facilities, and a concession snack bar; a contact station (later used as a store); a day-use picnic

⁸ Completion Report, Work Order No. B-7-WHIS, Contract No. 14-10-0434-1432, various dates throughout 1964, filename “1964_OB-BC-WC_Gangway_Ramp-Beach_Development_Completion_Report,” subfolder “Oak_Bottom,” subfolder “FACILITIES_RECORDS,” folder “Administrative_History,” WHIS-DF.

⁹ US Department of the Interior (DOI), NPS Branch of Landscape Architecture Western Office Division of Design and Construction, Narrative, sheet 4 of 4, Drawing No. RA-WHI 3045, 1964, p. 10, filename “1964_WHIS_Master_Plans007,” subfolder “Facilities_Planning_Maps,” folder “FACILITIES,” WHIS-DF.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ US DOI, NPS Branch of Landscape Architecture Western Office Division of Design and Construction, Narrative, sheet 3 of 4, Drawing No. RA-WHI 3045, 1964, p. 8, filename “1964_WHIS_Master_Plans006,” subfolder “Facilities_Planning_Maps,” folder “FACILITIES,” WHIS-DF.

¹² Completion Report, Work Order No. B-7-WHIS, Contract No. 14-10-0434-1432, various dates throughout 1964, filename “1964_OB-BC-WC_Gangway_Ramp-Beach_Development_Completion_Report,” subfolder “Oak_Bottom,” subfolder “FACILITIES_RECORDS,” folder “Administrative_History,” WHIS-DF.

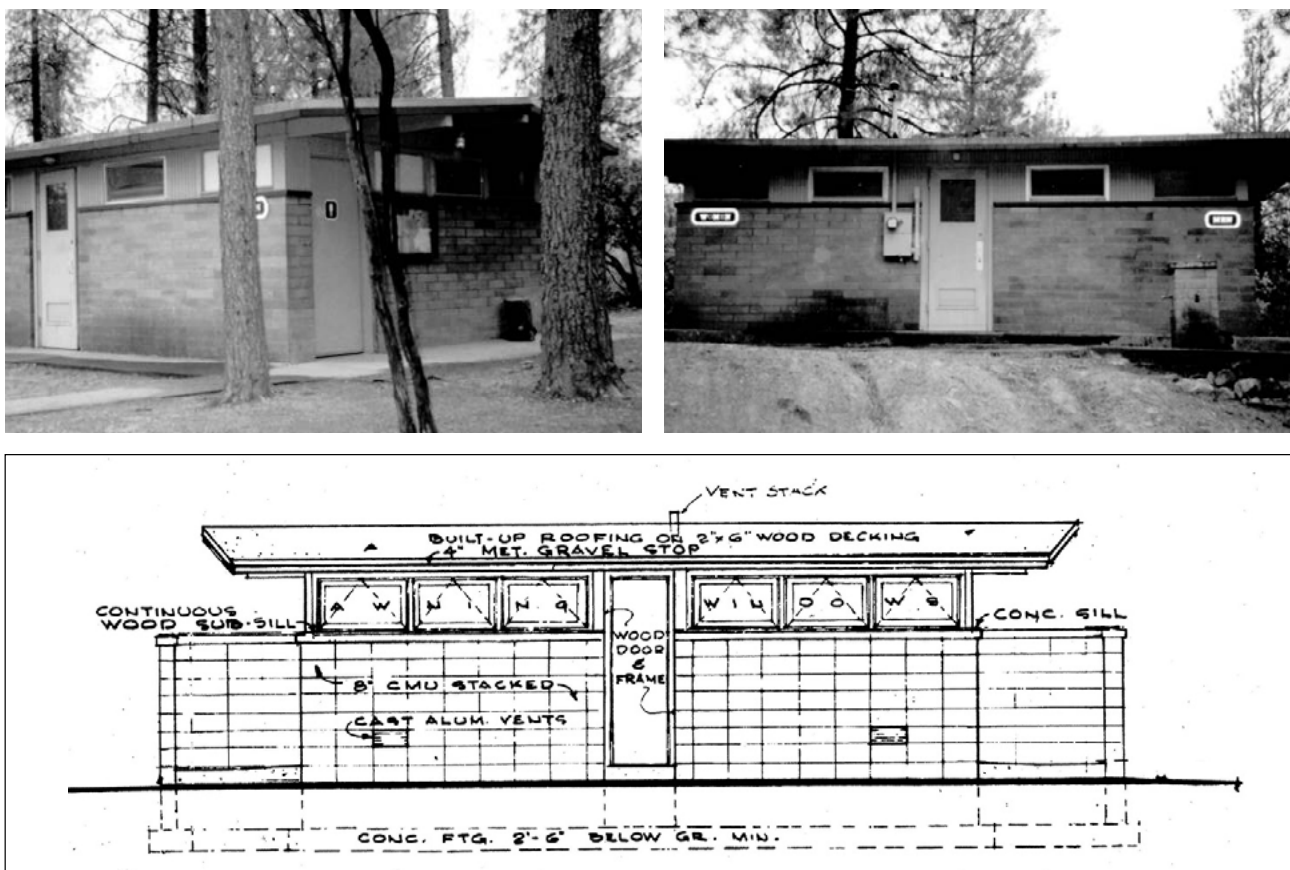


Figure 30. Oak Bottom Campground Comfort Station (Bldgs. 11 & 12), 1992, and Mission 66 standard plan drawing. Source: Photographs on file at WHIS Archives, drawing from Design and Maintenance Guidelines, Mission 66 Comfort Station.¹³

shelter; and four comfort stations located at the marina, parking lot, and campground. At Brandy Creek, a bath house, contact station, and one comfort station were constructed. At Whiskey Creek, one picnic shelter and one comfort station were built. The total cost for these Mission 66 buildings and structures was \$164,640.38.¹⁴

The most ambitious concession plans were centered at Oak Bottom. By the completion of the 1964 Master Plan, the NPS had already constructed much of the foundational infrastructure at this site. The “Design Analysis” section of the *Master Plan* highlighted this progress, noting, “The Oak Bottom area is being extensively developed and will soon be completed in its entirety except for the concession facilities proposed.”¹⁵

¹³ Photographs of buildings 11 and 12 are from 1992 Individual Building Data Forms located in subfolder “Oak_Bottom,” subfolder “FACILITIES_RECORDS,” folder “Administrative_History,” WHIS-DF. Mission 66 Type D Comfort Station Drawing is from Quinn Evans Architects, *Design and Maintenance Guide: Mission 66 Comfort Stations*, National Capital Region, NPS, September 2019, p. 14, accessed April 2026, <https://npshistory.com/publications/ncr/mission-66-comfort-stations.pdf>.

¹⁴ Completion report, Work Order No. B-8-WHIS, Contract No. 14-10-0434-1548, date completed and submitted December 11, 1964, filename “1964_OB-BC-WC_Comfort_Stations-Bath_House-Picnic_Shelters_Completion_Report,” subfolder “Oak_Bottom,” subfolder “FACILITIES_RECORDS,” folder “Administrative_History,” WHIS-DF. The CAC assessments on these buildings list later construction dates of 1967. But the buildings are shown on the 1964 master plan as completed, and individual building data forms list 1964 as construction date. Historic building numbers for these structures are as follows: Oak Bottom—bath house (Bldg. #4/307), contact station (#3/300), picnic shelter (#21/309), comfort stations (#5/OB-311, #6/310, #11/305, #12/306); Brandy Creek—bath house (#14), contact station (#15), comfort station (#13); Whiskey Creek—picnic shelter (#26), comfort station (#16).

¹⁵ US DOI, NPS Branch of Landscape Architecture Western Office Division of Design and Construction, Plan drawing for Oak Bottom, Drawing No. RA-WHI 3002, 1964, p. 12., filename “1964_WHIS_Master_Plans_OB_Design_Analysis,” subfolder “Facilities_Planning_Maps,” folder “FACILITIES,” WHIS-DF.

CHAPTER 7.2: CONCESSIONAIRE VISIONS AND REALITIES

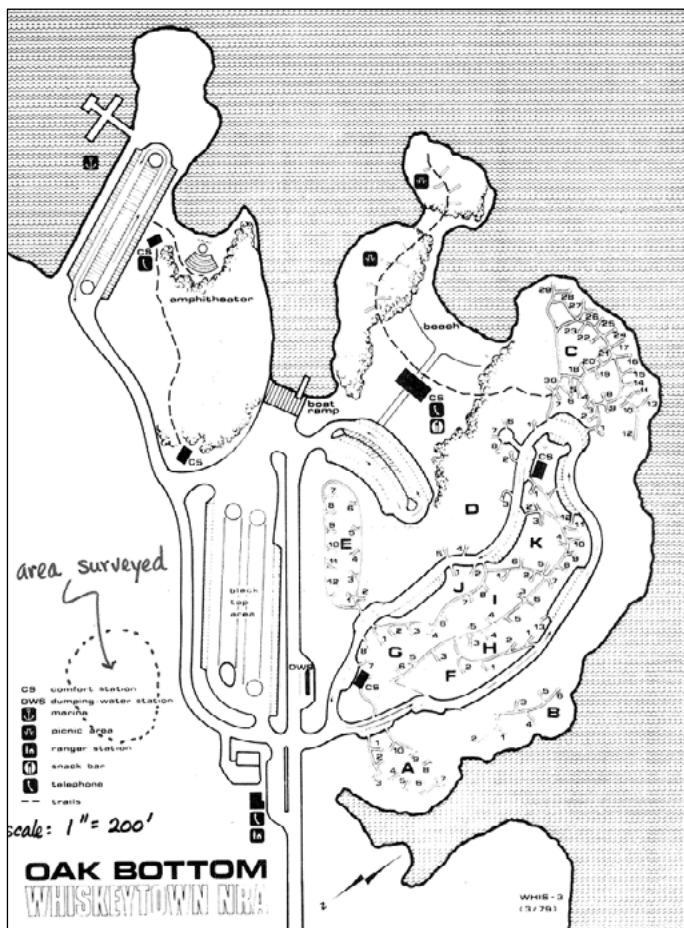
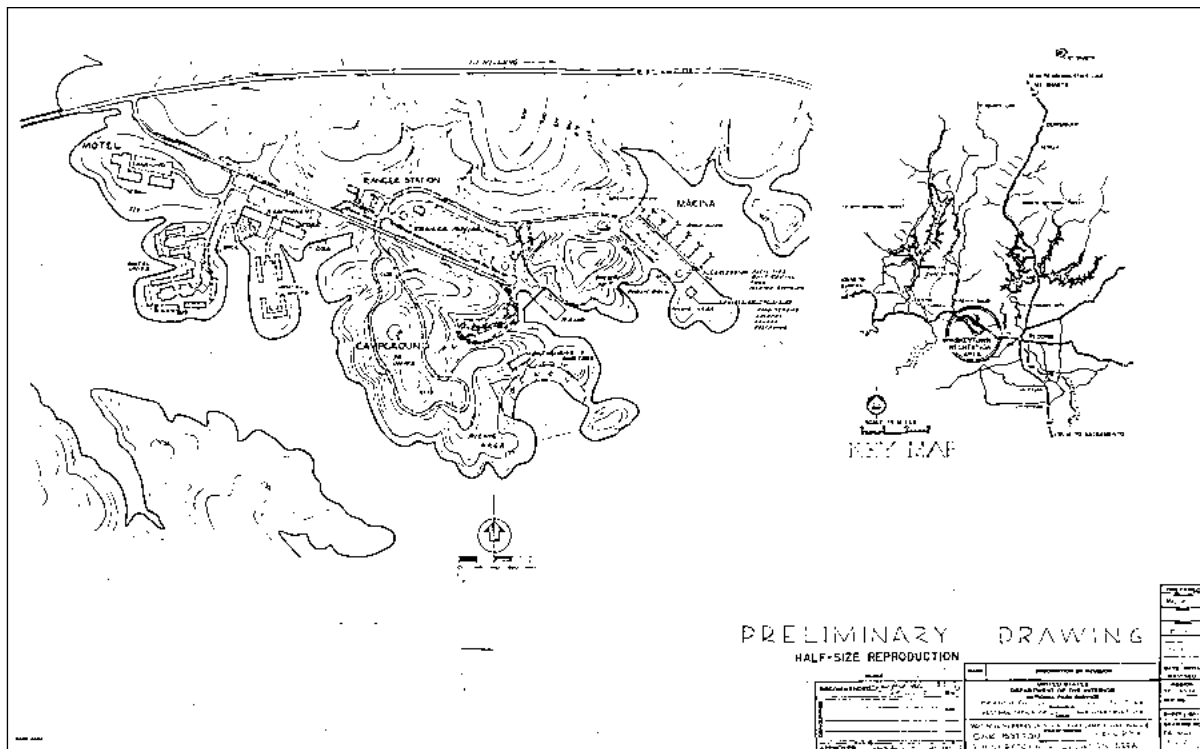


Figure 31. Plans for Oak Bottom 1964 and Map of Oak Bottom Campground 1979. Source: Plans and map on file at WHIS Archives.¹⁶

Developments included a ranger station at the area's entrance, roads designed to channel traffic by activity (campground, beach access, marina), a parking area and boat launch site, a beach with its own small parking lot and bathhouse, a campground with two comfort stations, a picnic area with its own comfort station, and a parking area for the planned marina. The *Master Plan* also envisioned additional features, such as an outdoor amphitheater and a concessions hub near the marina, which remained incomplete. Northwest of Oak Bottom, planners designated space for the concessions area that could potentially house a motel, store, coffee shop, and additional boat dock. Ultimately, however, these ambitious expansions northwest of Oak Bottom never materialized.¹⁷

Early Concession Operations at Oak Bottom and Brandy Creek

The early years of concessionaire operations at WHIS mixed optimism with recurring constraints. Seasonal demand, fluctuating lake conditions, storm impacts, and limited capital repeatedly slowed construction and reshaped service expectations, prompting successive prospectus revisions and contract adjustments.

Development at Oak Bottom highlights the complexities and setbacks that characterized WHIS's early concessionaire ventures. In March 1965, Whiskeytown Services, Inc. (WSI) became the first concessionaire contracted to operate at the site, tasked with ambitious plans that included developing marina docks and other facilities. The contract outlined an impressive construction program, including the development of marina docks and supporting facilities, with costs estimated at \$350,000 to be financed through concession earnings.¹⁸

Just months after the contract was finalized, Standard Oil Company of California installed a dock and gasoline facility, which WSI purchased under contract in July for just over \$14,000. The dock quickly became a popular feature with visitors, partly due to the site's convenient location off Highway 299W. However, WSI struggled to fully capitalize on this advantage. Seasonal fluctuations in water levels rendered the shallow docks unusable during lower water periods. WSI also failed to meet the expectations set forth in the 1964 Master Plan, which had envisioned additional dock fingers and numerous boat slips. Although WSI began constructing a dry dock area, the project stalled after only the foundation and pilings for a dry boat storage building were completed.¹⁹

By 1968, the limitations of the WSI operation had become apparent. With annual earnings totaling just \$20,000 and construction significantly behind schedule, the NPS determined that the contract was no longer viable. In April 1968, the agency terminated its agreement with WSI, marking the end of that concessionaire's tenure at Oak Bottom.²⁰

¹⁶ Plans for Oak Bottom and the 1979 map are both located in subfolder "Oak_Bottom," subfolder "FACILITIES_RECORDS," folder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ "Synopsis of Concession Planning History of Whiskeytown."

¹⁹ Memorandum, Superintendent Mitchell to Regional Director, Western Region, "Appraisal on concession assets – Whiskeytown Services, Inc., Oak Bottom Contract #NPS-WASO-IX-65-2," October 18, 1968, p. 8, filename "OakBottom1968Appraisal," subfolder "Oak_Bottom," subfolder "FACILITIES_RECORDS," folder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF.

²⁰ "Synopsis of Concession Planning History of Whiskeytown."

CHAPTER 7.2: CONCESSIONAIRE VISIONS AND REALITIES

Park staff acted quickly to address the crisis at Whiskeytown's most popular marina. Superintendent Leon Mitchell sought to protect the park from potential claims by WSI on Oak Bottom property by commissioning an appraisal of concession assets. The appraisal, completed in September 1968, evaluated equipment, supplies, floating facilities, marina equipment, foundations, piers, and plans, assigning a total value of \$27,280.²¹ To maintain operations, the NPS issued temporary permits to the Brandy Creek Marina Corporation (BCMC), enabling them to oversee facilities at both Oak Bottom and Brandy Creek.

In the wake of WSI's construction failures at Oak Bottom, a concession analyst audited prior operations and plans. In a report to the regional Chief of Concession Management in March 1969, the analyst highlighted significant concerns:

...poor concession financial reports do not enable evaluation of economic feasibility of their operations... [it is] questionable whether visitor demand can support two full-size marina concessions. I suggest that the master plan/developed area plans for Whiskeytown be re-assessed and possibly revised to ensure that proposed concession operations are feasible.²²

Responding to these findings, Whiskeytown issued a new prospectus for Oak Bottom. The new contract, spanning five years, required the timely rehabilitation of existing docks and facilities alongside the construction of thirty new boat slips. However, more ambitious proposals, such as a motel and restaurant, were deemphasized, leaving their feasibility to be determined by concessionaire earnings and visitor trends. By 1971, a new concession contract was awarded to the Froseth company to operate at Oak Bottom.²³

By the time WHIS completed its 1976 Master Plan, much of the Oak Bottom development was in place. The area featured a 105-site walk-in campground with parking for 75 vehicles, 100 trailer parking spaces, a 300-foot beach with an adjacent 88-space parking lot, a 19-site picnic area, seven land-launching ramps accommodating 136 single parking slots, 36 moorage spaces, and a snack bar, amphitheater, boathouse, tackle shop, and utilities. Annual reports recorded continued growth in visitation (exceeding 1.6 million in 1976), and the Oak Bottom facilities were nearing capacity.²⁴ The 1976 Master Plan proposed further expansion, including a 100-unit drive-in campground on undeveloped land west of Oak Bottom. To mitigate overuse, the existing campgrounds would rotate in and out of service, allowing time for recovery. Additionally, the Master Plan permitted the potential development of a concession-operated restaurant, contingent on future visitor demand, while explicitly avoiding commitments to economically unsound ventures.²⁵

²¹ Memorandum, Superintendent Mitchell to Regional Director, Western Region, "Appraisal on concession assets – Whiskeytown Services, Inc., Oak Bottom Contract #NPS-WASO-IX-65-2," October 18, 1968, filename "OakBottom1968Appraisal," subfolder "Oak_Bottom," subfolder "FACILITIES_RECORDS," folder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF.

²² H. Solomon, Concession Analyst to Western Region Office Chief of Concession Management, March 6, 1969, cited in "Synopsis of Concession Planning History of Whiskeytown."

²³ "Synopsis of Concession Planning History of Whiskeytown."

²⁴ Integrated Resource Management Applications (IRMA), NPS, "Visitor Use Statistics: Whiskeytown NRA," February 16, 2024, accessed November 2024, [https://irma.nps.gov/Stats/SSRSReports/Park%20Specific%20Reports/Annual%20Park%20Recreation%20Visitation%20\(1904%20-%20Last%20Calendar%20Year\)?Park=WHIS](https://irma.nps.gov/Stats/SSRSReports/Park%20Specific%20Reports/Annual%20Park%20Recreation%20Visitation%20(1904%20-%20Last%20Calendar%20Year)?Park=WHIS).

²⁵ NPS, *Whiskeytown/Shasta/Trinity, Whiskeytown Unit Final Master Plan*, July 1976, pp. 40-41, subfolder "ADMIN_PLANS," subfolder "Not_Accessioned," folder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF.

A 1976 concessions appraisal provided the basis for establishing rental prices for concession buildings at Oak Bottom and Brandy Creek. At Oak Bottom, the depreciated replacement costs for the snack bar building, shower building, covered patio, and picnic area totaled \$60,500, while the corresponding structures at Brandy Creek were valued at \$56,900.²⁶

By 1978, an additional appraisal was conducted to assess concessionaire-owned facilities and improvements at Oak Bottom. This evaluation, excluding NPS-built structures, documented the range of concessionaire facilities that supported marina operations and visitor services. Floating improvements included docks with boat slips and a floating store featuring a covered porch and cooling amenities. On-shore facilities consisted of underground gas tanks, a small metal shed, and a storage shed with additional space to support marina activities. These features were designed to facilitate both functionality and visitor convenience.²⁷ These appraisals indicate the park was serious about understanding and improving concession operations at Oak Bottom and Brandy Creek.

Oak Bottom's early concession record established two enduring patterns: phased development that lagged behind prospectus expectations, and repeated contract recalibration to keep marina services operating. These issues also surfaced across the lake at Brandy Creek.

At Brandy Creek, the concessionaire history mirrored that of Oak Bottom, marked by ambitious plans, setbacks, and evolving strategies. In 1965, the BCMC became the first operator at the site, tasked with enhancing the park's recreational offerings through a range of services. However, like WSI at Oak Bottom, BCMC faced challenges that tested the viability of its operations. WHIS required BCMC to implement improvements and undertake a building program at the site. Their contract stipulated investments on behalf of the concessionaire be no less than \$70,000 and were to include:

...a minimum of 50 rental slips, 25 rental boats, fueling dock, boat storage and repair facilities, marine supplies store, and a snack bar. The government constructed the snack bar, and the concessionaire provided the required marine related improvements."²⁸

These improvements were stalled when, in 1966, high winter run-off washed out the BCMC's operation at Brandy Creek and stopped further construction. By February 1967, the NPS and BCMC had selected a nearby site for Brandy Creek, which was less vulnerable to devastation from high runoff.

But by 1973, the relationship with BCMC had soured and the contract was officially terminated in April of 1973. To keep the area running, WHIS enlisted the help of Froseth, which was running concessions across the lake at Oak Bottom. The park extended the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) that authorized this arrangement for several summers (reauthorized annually in May 1973, 1974, 1975) while they studied the best options for moving forward.

²⁶ Memorandum, Chief Division of Land Acquisition, Wester region to Chief, Division of Concession Management, Wester Region, May 19, 1976, pp. 1 and throughout enclosures, filename "1976_OB-BC_APP-RPT," subfolder "Oak_Bottom," subfolder "FACILITIES_RECORDS," folder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF.

²⁷ Appraisal Report "BRANDY CREEK AND OAK BOTTOM MARINA FOOD AND MERCHANDISE CONCESSION," July 28, 1978, pp. 10-11, filename "1978_OB-BC_APP-RPT," subfolder "Oak_Bottom," subfolder "FACILITIES_RECORDS," folder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF.

²⁸ Ibid.

In 1974, the park wrote to the Western Region headquarters asking that the Oak Bottom contract be amended to also include Brandy Creek. A new contract, park staff recommended, should eliminate, at least for the time being, horse and guide services at Brandy Creek to reduce pressure on the concessionaires. By this time, despite the NPS's wishes to honor public and county desires that multiple concessionaires have opportunities to profit in the park, WHIS staff had concluded that "the history of these two separate operations demonstrate that demands for concession services do not justify and cannot support two individual concessionaires."²⁹ Moving forward, the park would combine operations of Brandy Creek and Oak Bottom under one concession contract.

While Froseth continued to operate both Brandy Creek and Oak Bottom under a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), the award of a formal concession contract was delayed as the park worked to complete the 1976 *Master Plan*. A feasibility study concluded that maintaining two fully developed concession areas at the lake was economically unviable. The study also recommended conducting a long-range assessment of visitor use and carrying capacity prior to expanding facilities, in order to inform future development and resource management decisions.³⁰

By the time the 1976 Master Plan was finalized, visitor numbers had grown significantly, rising from 400,000 in 1964 to over 1.2 million by 1975.³¹ The plan diverged from the recommendations of feasibility studies, instead calling for expansion at Brandy Creek and Oak Bottom to accommodate growth, as well as more ambitious development at Boulder Creek—a project that ultimately never materialized. Additionally, the plan anticipated increased backcountry visitation and proposed expanding backcountry accommodations and horse rental services as demand arose.³² Planners appeared disconnected from on-the-ground realities, drafting grand proposals that WHIS's short history and prior feasibility studies had already demonstrated were not financially viable.

In April 1977, the NPS executed a three-year concession contract for operations at both Brandy Creek and Oak Bottom. The contract was awarded to Oak Bottom Marina (OBM), owned by Thomas and Suzan Jaharis.³³ The following year, appraisals of concession-operated facilities at Brandy Creek Marina included docks with various boat slip configurations, a floating store with basic amenities, and supporting onshore infrastructure such as fuel storage tanks and sheds for storage and operational needs.³⁴

While the marinas at both Brandy Creek and Oak Bottom had certainly progressed, the more ambitious plans outlined in the park's 1976 Master Plan were never fully realized. A large campground, marina, and beach envisioned to sit at the mouth of Boulder Creek did not come to fruition.³⁵ The 1976 Master Plan had emphasized the importance of concessionaires in enhancing visitor experience, stating that such operators would serve as points of contact for visitors

²⁹ Memorandum, Whiskeytown to Western Region, October 1, 1974, cited in "Synopsis of Concession Planning History of Whiskeytown."

³⁰ "Synopsis of Concession Planning History of Whiskeytown."

³¹ WHIS, *Final Master Plan*, 1976, p. 25.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 19, 37-44.

³³ The original 1978 partnership agreement is cited in US DOI, NPS, WHIS, Contract No. CC-WHIS-001-83, executed October 11, 1982, code 5.A, box 1, series "Contracts and Permits," WHIS-DF (processed by NARA).

³⁴ Appraisal Report "BRANDY CREEK AND OAK BOTTOM MARINA FOOD AND MERCHANDISE CONCESSION," July 28, 1978, p. 11, filename "1978_OB-BC_APP-RPT," subfolder "Oak_Bottom," subfolder "FACILITIES_RECORDS," folder "Administrative_History," WHIS-DF.

³⁵ WHIS, *Final Master Plan*, 1976, pp. 38-40.

and share in the responsibility of providing information and interpretation. This role was imagined to be particularly important at sites offering horse and boat rentals and other services where interpretive opportunities could arise.³⁶ However, concessionaire presence remained more modest than intended.

These early contracts show WHIS consolidating concessions and scaling proposals as feasibility studies and operating experience narrowed what could be sustained. That pattern continued under the Oak Bottom Marina concessionaire.

Oak Bottom Marina: Contract Administration

The OBM contract formalized combined management of services at Oak Bottom and Brandy Creek. The Jaharises were tasked with providing essential services to visitors, including boat rentals, dock management, campground accommodations, and the operation of retail food services.³⁷ Even with early successes, the financial and operational challenges of running the concession began to weigh heavily on the Jaharises. By 1986, they decided to exit the business, citing the difficulties of maintaining profitability while meeting NPS's increasingly stringent standards for facility upgrades and visitor services. Their departure marked the end of a foundational phase for Oak Bottom's concession management, paving the way for new leadership under Kenneth and Cheryl Smith.

On March 31, 1986, the concession was officially transferred to the Smiths following an NPS review of the new operators' capacity to fulfill the contract's obligations. The transfer documents outlined the assets being acquired by the Smiths, including boats, docks, and retail inventories, and stipulated that the new concessionaires would inherit all improvement responsibilities not yet completed by the Jaharises.³⁸

With the concession contract transferred to their management, Kenneth and Cheryl Smith assumed operation of OBM. From the outset, the Smiths indicated their intent to maintain the continuity of services established by their predecessors, including boating, camping, and retail amenities. Their tenure also introduced changes to the scope of the concession and coincided with operational and regulatory challenges associated with operating under NPS oversight.

In 1988, NPS expanded the Smiths' responsibilities through Amendment No. 3 to the original concession contract. This amendment officially added the Oak Bottom Campground to their management portfolio, requiring them to oversee 94 campsites in addition to their existing operations. (Under the Jaharis-owned OBM contract, Amendment No. 1 charged the concessionaire with operation and maintenance of the Oak Bottom Campground, initially as a two-year pilot program and later extended through 1986.³⁹) The amendment also introduced a mandatory \$132,000 improvement program, aimed at modernizing both marina and campground facilities. Among the required upgrades

³⁶ WHIS, *Final Master Plan*, 1976, p. 47.

³⁷ US DOI, NPS, WHIS, Contract No. CC-WHIS-001-83, executed October 11, 1982, code 5.A, box 1, series "[Concessions] Contracts and Permits (Case Files)," WHIS-DF (processed by NARA).

³⁸ Asset Purchase Agreement and various correspondence, filename "1986_Concessioner_Transfer_Jaharis_to_Smith," code 5.A, box 1, series "[Concessions] Contracts and Permits (Case Files)," WHIS-DF (processed by NARA).

³⁹ Howard H. Chapman, Regional Director, Western Region to Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Smith, Dec. 18, 1986, 5.A box 1, series [Concessions] Contracts and Permits (Case Files), WHIS-DF (processed by NARA).

were the replacement of aging partitions in comfort stations, the repainting and re-roofing of marina structures, the replacement of deteriorating docks, and the installation of ADA-compliant features.⁴⁰

These improvements were not only critical to maintaining visitor satisfaction but also fell in line with national trends toward improving accessibility and infrastructure in public recreation areas during the late 1980s. Recognizing the financial strain these requirements would impose, NPS adjusted the Smiths' franchise fee structure to allow them to offset the costs of these improvements against their annual payments. The Smiths were expected to complete the upgrades incrementally, with deadlines spread over the remaining term of their contract.⁴¹

During the 1990s, the Smiths achieved notable successes in expanding Oak Bottom's profile as a recreational destination. Their operations benefited from steady visitor growth and the site's reputation as a gateway to Whiskeytown Lake's boating and camping experiences. However, as the scope of their responsibilities grew, so too did the complexity of managing their concession. By the end of the decade, tensions began to emerge between the Smiths and NPS over compliance issues, setting the stage for the conflicts that would define their final years.

In 1990, Ken Smith proposed deepening the west end of Oak Bottom Marina harbor by four feet. There were two reasons Smith proposed the project: to allow for the yearly mooring of boats at the marina, which had seen growing demand from OBM's customers, and to improve pedestrian circulation by eliminating the need to walk across "slippery mud banks" for customers to get to the docks in the winter. The concessionaire planned to use the ramps at Brandy Creek as the model, improving, he argued, both the safety and appearance of the Oak Bottom docks.⁴² In mid-October, the US Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) routinely lowered the lake level to 1,197 feet, forcing OBM to move the docks to deeper waters to keep them afloat. The excavation project would eliminate the need to move docks by creating enough lake depth in the marina to maintain docks in place, year-round near the shoreline access ramps.⁴³

From Smith's initial vision, the project morphed slightly to remove three feet (approximately 7500 cubic yards) of soil and fill on the lake bottom at the west end of Oak Bottom Harbor directly under the floating docks.⁴⁴ Park and concessionaire staff also realized an added benefit of the project would be improving access to the docks for those in wheelchairs or with limited mobility.⁴⁵ Timing of the project was key; Smith and NPS staff planned to conduct excavations while the lake water was low, allowing them to use less expensive and easier to operate earth moving equipment rather than dredging the lake.⁴⁶

⁴⁰ Amendment No. 3, Concession Contract CC-WHIS0001-83, January 19, 1989, filename "1987-2005_Contract_No_CC-WHIS001-83_Smith," 5.A box 1, series [Concessions] Contracts and Permits (Case Files), WHIS (processed by NARA).

⁴¹ Amendment No. 3, Concession Contract CC-WHIS0001-83, January 19, 1989, filename "1987-2005_Contract_No_CC-WHIS001-83_Smith," 5.A box 1, series [Concessions] Contracts and Permits (Case Files), WHIS (processed by NARA).

⁴² Ken Smith to Superintendent Foust, September 20, 1990, folder "L7617 Environmental Statements Oak Bottom Excavation," box HQ7, WHIS-AF.

⁴³ Memorandum, "Environmental Documentation for Oak Bottom Excavation Project," Superintendent Foust to Files, December 13, 1990, folder "L7617 Environmental Statements Oak Bottom Excavation, box HQ7, WHIS-AF

⁴⁴ Superintendent Ray C. Foust to Project Superintendent J. Paul Capener (USBR), November 19, 1990, pp. 1-2, folder "L54 Water Matters 1990 on 3 of 3," box HQ4, WHIS-AF; and Memorandum, "Environmental Documentation for Oak Bottom Excavation Project," Superintendent Foust to Files, December 13, 1990. The lake soil that was to be removed was fill material from the construction of the nearby parking lot, as well as sediment from an ephemeral stream, deposited after the construction of the lake.

⁴⁵ Memorandum, Chief, Fire and Natural Resource Management to Superintendent Foust, November 11, 1990, folder "L7617 Environmental Statements Oak Bottom Excavation," box HQ7, WHIS-AF.

⁴⁶ Memorandum, "Environmental Documentation for Oak Bottom Excavation Project," Superintendent Foust to Files, December 13, 1990.

In November 1990, park staff determined that the marina excavation project qualified for a categorical exclusion under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), as it posed no risk to habitats, endangered species, or cultural sites.⁴⁷ Smith and Superintendent Ray Foust worked to acquire necessary permits and approvals from the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG), from the USBR, and from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Excavated materials would be deposited in a deeper channel of the lake, and turbidity would be closely monitored to maintain plume levels within thresholds approved by the CDFG.⁴⁸ That same month (November of 1990), the park's superintendent wrote to Shasta Dam Project's Superintendent J. Paul Capener (identified in the correspondence as Bureau of Reclamation), to confirm with the agency that WHIS had approved Oak Bottom Marina's proposal to deepen the marina.⁴⁹ All was set for excavation to begin.

The primary concern remaining for the marina dredging project was maintaining appropriate water levels in Whiskeytown Lake. Superintendent Foust highlighted the positive aspect of the ongoing drought: lower-than-normal lake levels meant there was no need to request that USBR lower the lake further for dredging. However, Foust urged BLM to carefully monitor lake levels so that the water did not drop below an elevation of 1,189 feet, as doing so would compromise the dredging work.⁵⁰

Foust also took this opportunity to address operational challenges caused by low water levels. He reminded BLM that when the lake falls below 1,189 feet, it creates issues for the water intake serving WHIS employee housing and public facilities, posing potential health and safety risks. At this level, all three launch ramps become unusable, including the lowest ramp at Brandy Creek, which ends at 1,190 feet. Additionally, concessionaire boat slips are rendered nearly unusable, and NPS access to the lake for emergency purposes is severely limited. Foust emphasized the seriousness of these impacts, stating that "any elevation lower than 1,189 feet is extremely detrimental to our overall operation and might well dictate complete closure of the lake, which will have a major impact on the public."⁵¹

At the same time, Foust cautioned BLM that if water levels exceeded 1,193 feet during the marina dredging project, both the dredging and work on the Oak Bottom service water system could be disrupted. Coordinating these concerns was necessary to maintain the project schedule, which Foust projected for completion by December 15, 1990.⁵²

The 1990 marina excavation project was an example of the Smiths' efforts to address both visitor needs and operational challenges at Oak Bottom. By deepening the harbor and improving dock access, the project aimed to enhance safety, accessibility, and year-round functionality, illustrating the growing expectations for recreational facilities at Whiskeytown. But as the 1990s progressed, tensions between the Smiths and NPS over operational compliance and facility management emerged. These issues revealed the need for clearer roles, better communication, and a more

⁴⁷ Memorandum, from Chief, Fire and Natural Resource Management to Superintendent Foust, November 11, 1990, folder "L7617 Environmental Statements Oak Bottom Excavation," box HQ7, WHIS-AF; and Memorandum, "Environmental Documentation for Oak Bottom Excavation Project," Superintendent Foust to Files, December 13, 1990.

⁴⁸ Agreement, CA Dept. of Fish and Game and Ken Smith, November 1990, folder "L7617 Environmental Statements Oak Bottom Excavation," box HQ7, WHIS-AF.

⁴⁹ Superintendent Ray C. Foust to Project Superintendent J. Paul Capener (USBR), November 19, 1990, pp. 1, folder "L54 Water Matters 1990 on 3 of 3," box HQ4, WHIS-AF.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

stable management structure—factors that would play a major role in shaping discussions around finding a long-term replacement for Oak Bottom Marina’s concessionaire.

During the early 1990s, with Superintendent David Pugh at the WHIS helm, concessions management responsibilities had been a collateral duty assigned first to the superintendent, then to the Chief of Interpretation, then to the Chief Ranger. Pugh recognized that the lack of a consistent point person, as well as poorly defined responsibilities attached to the duty had contributed to what had become a rather soured relationship between park staff and the concessionaire at Oak Bottom Marina. Dissatisfaction over the concessionaire’s visitor services and facilities maintenance contributed to the tense relationship. The concessionaire also expressed frustration that their ability to generate profits had been undermined by the cutbacks of 1995 and 1996, including WHIS’s removal of lifeguards at Brandy Creek, which they argued kept visitors away.⁵³ Starting in 1995, Pugh worked together with Pacific Great Basin Support Office (PGSO) to develop a new concessionaire contract, a draft prospectus, and an economic feasibility study.⁵⁴

Relations between the concessionaire at Oak Bottom and park staff continued to be stressed while Pugh awaited the ability to execute a new contract. Although WHIS completed and put out for bid a new concession prospectus in 1997, Congress passed the NPS Concessions Management Improvement Act of 1998 before a new contractor could be selected. The new law delayed Pugh’s efforts to get a new concessionaire contract in place. Instead, he continued to authorize on a year-by-year basis the contract with Oak Bottom Marina. It was an unsatisfactory arrangement, but Pugh continued to assign as a collateral duty the management of the concession program, tasking it to the Chief Ranger position. In his 1998 annual report, Superintendent Pugh suggested that the unit would hire a seasonal intern to work with the Chief Ranger in managing the concessions relationship and program, monitoring the concessionaire daily, correcting problems more immediately, and improving lines of communication. Pugh’s projection proved premature, as the concessionaire situation remained unresolved by year’s end:

By the end of this year [1999], we hope to have a new concession contract in place. Although we have made some positive progress with the concessions program in the form of better communication, identifying safety problems, and site inspections, we feel that a change in the current concession contract would benefit both the park and the current operator.⁵⁵

As it turned out, Pugh’s successor would continue to struggle with the Oak Bottom Marina concessions well into the next century.

Importantly, even while Superintendent Pugh attempted to improve the concession situation with Oak Bottom Marina, some major facility improvements at Oak Bottom were completed. In 1995, the park contracted to replace and/or rehabilitate sewage systems at Oak Bottom as well as at Whiskey Creek and Brandy Creek.⁵⁶ Authorized in 1991

⁵³ David Pugh, “Whiskeytown National Recreation Area Annual Report, Fiscal Year 1996,” 1997, p. 7, folder “A2621 Reports Superintendents,” box HQ6, WHIS-AF.

⁵⁴ David Pugh, “Annual Narrative Report Fiscal Year 1995 (and 1994), Whiskeytown NRA,” March 1996, p. 2, folder “A2621 Reports Superintendents,” box HQ6, WHIS-AF.

⁵⁵ David Pugh, “Superintendent’s 1998 Annual Narrative Report,” 1998, p. 4, folder “A2621 Reports Superintendents,” box HQ6, WHIS-AF.

⁵⁶ David Pugh, “Annual Narrative Report Fiscal Year 1995 (and 1994), Whiskeytown NRA,” 1996, p. 4.

under Pugh's predecessor, Superintendent Foust, but not completed until 1996, were a series of improvements to the Oak Bottom Launch Ramp. A grant from California Division of Boating and Waterways (CA-DBW) and design services from Denver Service Center, funded two self-leveling courtesy docks and four launch lanes, a new restroom, new fish cleaning station, landscaping of the grounds between the RV campground and day use parking area, parking area lights, and resurfacing of the entire day use parking area.⁵⁷

While these facility improvements marked significant advancements for visitor access and infrastructure at Oak Bottom, they could not resolve the growing tensions between the concessionaire (the Smith family) and NPS. Operational conflicts, unmet deadlines, and disagreements over contract terms escalated, ultimately culminating in formal action by the park to address non-compliance.

By July 25, 2006, the escalating tensions culminated in NPS issuing a Cure Notice, formally outlining the Smiths' alleged breaches of their concession agreement. The notice cited multiple areas of non-compliance, including unauthorized facility expansions, delays in completing mandated improvements, and failure to adhere to approved service rates for fuel sales and slip rentals. These allegations were compounded by ongoing disputes over dock construction and property management, leaving little room for reconciliation.⁵⁸ The Smiths responded in a lengthy letter of August 16, 2006, defending their positions on each point charged and leveling their own charges against WHIS Superintendent James Milestone:

...when all the erroneous statements and unjustified facts are removed, we are doing nothing that is not permitted by the existing contract...Ever since Mr. Milestone has stepped foot on Whiskeytown Lake as the Superintendent he has had a vendetta against me and my concession operation. That, coupled with 15 years without a new contract has caused much stress on me personally, as well as financially, for which I feel the Park Service and Mr. Milestone personally are responsible for. That is why I have notified the Park Service this is my last year of operation.⁵⁹

In the end, for both parties it seems, differences were irreconcilable.

In the final months of their tenure, the Smiths worked with NPS to wind down operations. On December 31, 2006, their contract officially ended, concluding a twenty-year period characterized by both growth and controversy. But it took more than a year for the Smiths and the NPS to come to a legal agreement about property and monies

⁵⁷ WHIS, "Whiskeytown National Recreation Area Annual Report, Fiscal Year 1996," 1996, p. 6, folder "A2621 Reports Superintendents," box HQ6, WHIS-AF.

⁵⁸ James F. Milestone to Ken and Cheryl Smith, Re: *Cure Notice - Concession Contract No. CC-WHIS00 1-83*, July 25, 2006, filename "2000-2006_Smith_Correspondence," code 5.A., box 5.A.1, series [Concessions] Contracts and Permits (Case Files), WHIS-DF (processed by NARA). If a contractor fails to perform any provision of a contract, the Agency Contracting Officer (ACO or CO) can issue a "Cure Notice." The cure notice must be in writing and specifically state what failure exists and provide ten days to "cure" the failure.

⁵⁹ Ken Smith to Darby Watson, Pacific West Regional Office, August 14, 2006, filename "2000-2006_Smith_Correspondence," code 5.A., box 5.A.1, series "[Concessions] Contracts and Permits (Case Files)," WHIS-DF (processed by NARA).

owed. After much contest, the parties signed a settlement in May of 2007. The agreement addressed unresolved issues, including compensation for the Smiths' possessory interest, personal property held in the park, and obligations related to the Government Improvement Account (GIA). Under the settlement, NPS agreed to pay the Smiths \$540,000 in compensation for their possessory interest, while the Smiths relinquished claims to additional compensation and agreed to remove all personal property from the park within thirty days. Items not removed would automatically become property of the US government. The Smiths also paid \$122,000, representing the unexpended GIA balance, back to NPS. Both parties released each other from further claims related to the expired concession contract, and the Smiths waived any rights under California Civil Code §1542, acknowledging the agreement as a complete resolution.⁶⁰

The termination of the Smiths' contract in 2006 brought an end to a tenure characterized by both notable successes and persistent challenges. Under their management, Oak Bottom Marina expanded its role as a gateway for visitors to experience Whiskeytown's recreational offerings, and significant improvements were made to the marina and campground facilities. However, their operations also highlighted recurring issues in the relationship between concessionaires and park management, particularly in balancing entrepreneurial autonomy with adherence to federal oversight and compliance standards.

Following the Smiths' departure, Oak Bottom Marina, LLC, a subsidiary of Forever Resorts, stepped in to run concessions, first on a temporary contract, and then finalized. Under Executive Directorship of John Schoppmann, the new concessionaire assumed responsibility for the marina and campground facilities under a revised agreement that emphasized transparency, modernization, and alignment with NPS goals. The transition marked a shift away from the controversies of the Smith era and incorporated lessons learned from prior management challenges.⁶¹ A separate episode beginning in 1999 involved proposed reuse of the privately owned Whiskeytown Store/Post Office inholding and the legal limits on expanding commercial activity within park boundaries.

Whiskeytown Store and Post Office Inholding

In 1999 WHIS Superintendent Pugh, NPS staff, and Shasta County Department of Resource Management staff engaged in a series of back-and-forth propositions for a new campground, store, and recreation at the site that had come to be known as "Whiskeytown." Located approximately a half-mile north on Whiskey Creek Road was a small privately-owned complex that included a residence, outbuildings, and the original Whiskeytown Post Office and General Store building. Although this site was not the original location of Whiskeytown, visitors and locals had come to call and think of this site on Whiskey Creek Road as "Whiskeytown," primarily because of the presence of the old Whiskeytown Post Office and General Store building.

⁶⁰ Settlement Agreement, Resolving Disputes Related to national park Service Contract CC-WHIS001-83, signed May 21, 2007, filename "2007_Contract_No_CC-WHIS001-83_Settlement_Agreement," code 5.A., box 5.A.1, series "[Concessions] Contracts and Permits (Case Files)," WHIS-DF (processed by NARA).

⁶¹ Category II Contract, US DOI, NPS, WHIS, Concession Contract NO. TC-WHIS001-07, Temporary Concession Contract, 2007, filename "2007_Contract_No_TC-WHIS001-07_Oak_Bottom;" and US DOI, NPS, WHIS, Concession Contract NO. TC-WHIS001-09, 2009 filename "2009-2016_Contract_No_CC-WHIS001-09_Oak_Bottom," both in code 5.A, box 5.A.1, series "[Concessions] Contracts and Permits (Case Files)," WHIS-DF (processed by NARA).

The simple, single-story building was constructed in its original location in Whiskeytown in 1947 where it had operated as a bar, store, and post office owned by postmaster Dorothy Herman and her husband Gus.⁶² The Post Office itself was known as the Shilling Post Office until 1952 when the official name and façade sign were changed to Whiskeytown Post Office.⁶³ When Whiskeytown was flooded for the construction of Whiskeytown Dam, the Post Office building was moved to the site along Whiskey Creek Road. The parcel of land on which the complex sat was at this time owned by the Herman-Roche family.⁶⁴

Bill Roche continued to operate the Whiskeytown General Store and Post Office in the relocated building. In fact, according to an oral history conducted with Roche, the store in its new location on Whiskey Creek Road constituted the “oldest private business around this [Whiskeytown] lake....” In this phase of its existence, the store owners had a congruent relationship with the park, Roche remembered: “All the personnel in the park were really a great asset to Redding and the whole area. There was no animosity here with our family.”⁶⁵ At an unknown date, Guy Autore purchased the Herman and Roche properties and the 0.895 acres on which they sat.⁶⁶ The store continued to operate for some time but closed its doors around 1995.⁶⁷

While the store sat closed, Autore and a group of three local women—Salinder Kang, Jesslyn Sue Sparks, and Monica Middleton—worked together on ideas for the future of the property. Eventually, capitalizing on federal and state incentives for women-owned businesses, the three local women would form the limited liability corporation Whiskeytown California Ventures, LLC. The group proposed a new and expanded use for the post office complex and its surroundings. Although the specific plans for the site evolved through the next several years, at the core was the group’s intent to cater to “the general public who’s [sic] interest and enjoyment is playing bluegrass music.” The LLC argued that bluegrass offered a connection to the area’s mining and homesteading history, was upbeat and positive, and was especially well-

⁶² Park sources give original construction dates for the building as both 1946 and 1947, however, the most thorough research on the building and its history was conducted by Danica Willis who gives a date of 1947. Danica Willis, Cultural Resources Program Manager WHIS, “NRHP Determination of Eligibility, P 45-003707, The Whiskeytown Post Office,” July 2011, p. 10, filename “SHPO_Submission_9-21-17.pdf WHIS Store,” subfolder “WHIS Store PO Demo,” subfolder “Demo Bld Docs,” subfolder “WC WHIS Store Demo,” subfolder “COMPLETED PROJECTS,” subfolder “20210927,” folder “FACILITIES,” WHIS-DF. For the 1946 construction date, see, for example, Whiskeytown Post Office State of California Primary Record Site form, “P45-003707, P 45-003707 (WHIS Post Office),” date recorded November 18, 2004, folder “2006_Appendix 1_Site_Forms,” WHIS-DF.

⁶³ The Post Office, though operated out of earlier buildings, had existed under the names of Blair, Stella, and Whiskey Creek. This information and much that is recorded in park-produced documents which contain early Post Office history in Whiskeytown comes primarily from Harry E. Salley, *History of California Post Offices, 1849-1976* (Postal History Associates, 1977) or from Dottie Smith’s Historic Data Inventory of the Shasta County Interlakes Special Recreation Management Area, (BLM, 1995). See also, Willis, “NRHP Determination of Eligibility, P 45-003707, The Whiskeytown Post Office,” 2011, p. 10.

⁶⁴ Bill Roche interview by Ranger Clinton Kane (n.d. est. 2000), subfolder “Roche Family,” folder “Oral History,” WHIS-DF. Bill Roche was Dorothy Herman’s son who had served as postmaster as well. His stepfather was August “Gus” Herman.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Memorandum, Superintendent Milestone to Regional Director PWR, “Future Plan and Facility Assessment Regarding the Autore Property at Whiskeytown National Recreation Area,” October 22, 2010, folder “D3423 Buildings Autore Property Whiskeytown Post Office Store and Residence,” box HQ8, WHIS-AF. In the previously cited memorandum Superintendent Milestone also indicates: “When Dr. Autore purchased the property from Roche and Herman, he subdivided the second residence on the bluff above the Whiskeytown Store and Post Office and sold it to the Morgan Family. The Morgan residence is used as a summertime rental property for weekend visitors to Whiskeytown.” Both archival and digital files held at WHIS variously mis-spell the last name “Autore” as “Atorie,” and “Autorey.”

⁶⁷ Memorandum, James W. Cook, Planning Division Manager, Shasta County Dept. of Resource Management to Guy Autore, “Whiskeytown Store, A.P. No.: 011-240-57, General Plan: Public Land, Zoning: NRA-WI,” February 23, 1999, folder “D3423 Buildings Individual BLDG Data (other than concession and historical) 1 of 2,” box HQ8, WHIS-AF.

suited to the location, as it required no electrical amplification to be performed appropriately. They envisioned a future in which the site on Whiskey Creek Road would expand to accommodate bluegrass festivals and provide an extended tourist season, providing a boon to the park and a profit-making enterprise for themselves. Whiskeytown Ventures, LLC engaged Jim Hall as their Operating Manager to help bring their dream for the Whiskeytown Bluegrass Historical Campground into reality.

In its initial proposal, the group sought to reopen the Whiskeytown General Store and Post Office as part of a proposed Whiskeytown Bluegrass Historical Campground, with plans to expand the facility to include a deli and saloon. Their first action was to apply for a liquor license through Shasta County. However, the group did not initially coordinate with park officials regarding the compatibility of these plans with NPS management policies. This sequence contributed to administrative confusion and delay, underscoring the importance of early coordination with WHIS in concession-related planning.

In February 1999, Hall submitted an Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) permit request to Shasta County. Pat Cecil, Senior Planner at the county wrote to Superintendent Pugh that month. Cecil wanted to make sure his reading of the county zone ordinance and of the federal regulations defining what activities were legally permitted on private property within park boundaries was accurate. Both Cecil and Pugh turned to Shasta County Zoning Ordinance Chapter 17.20 and Public Law 89-336, Section 2 (e) for guidance.⁶⁸ They agreed that the sections of these regulations that stated “no additional or increased commercial or industrial uses are permitted within the district” applied in the case of the Whiskeytown Store as configured in the ABC permit application.⁶⁹ Cecil and Pugh reasoned that the addition of a saloon and deli constituted a secondary use of the original store. The regulations stated that all nonconforming commercial or industrial uses must cease within ten years of the ordinance’s enactment.⁷⁰ Notably, the regulations did not list stores, saloons, restaurants, or other service-related activities as permitted uses. Furthermore, neither the County nor Pugh could locate any permit applications on file that would have legally allowed the Whiskeytown Store to operate beyond 1977, ten years after the ordinance took effect.

⁶⁸ Public Law 89-336, Section 2 (e), dated November 8, 1965; and Shasta County Zoning Ordinance, Chapter 17.20, especially sections 17.20.020 and 17.20.030. These regulations are also laid out in 36 CFR 30.2 (C) as of 2024. The proposed complex was within the boundaries of WHIS and therefore the permitted uses as specified for NRA-WI applied.

⁶⁹ Pat Cecil, Senior Planner, Shasta County Dept. of Resource Management to Superintendent David Pugh, February 5, 1999, and Superintendent Pugh to Cecil, February 17, 1999, both in folder “D3423 Buildings Individual BLDG Data (other than concession and historical) 1 of 2,” box HQ8, WHIS-AF.

⁷⁰ Shasta County Zoning Ordinance, Chapter 17.20.020.

While retail operations of any sort were not listed as permitted uses in the regulations, “campgrounds, organization camps, and picnic areas,” were permitted. For the park, a store, especially one with a saloon and deli, was clearly a commercial entity that fell outside the permitted uses of private property within park boundaries. For Whiskeytown Ventures, the store-saloon-deli was an integral part of the campground facility they envisioned. It also represented a creative use of a locally significant building that many regarded as a sentimental and historic gem. The situation was further complicated by the fact that the store had continued operating until just four or five years before the LLC applied for a liquor license—albeit without extended use permits and in violation of county and federal regulations. The county ultimately denied the ABC permit request.⁷¹

Although the regulations seemed clear to park and county authorities, Whiskeytown Ventures persisted. For the next several months, Hall’s group continued to press the county and park for approval of plans that put the historic post office complex to a new use. Hall mobilized supporters to garner support for the project that seemed to expand with every interaction—a chop house, Mexican cantina, and distillery selling a Whiskeytown-brand whiskey were all proposed. Hall enlisted the support and help of concessionaire Ken Smith of Oak Bottom Marina. In March 1999, Smith wrote to Superintendent Pugh to plead on Hall’s behalf.⁷² Smith had even offered to direct overflow campers from Oak Bottom to the Bluegrass Historical Campground.⁷³ Hall also reached out to his congressman, Wally Herger. The congressman wrote to DOI on behalf of Hall to inquire if a policy change was possible or if Hall’s endeavor would require a change of law.⁷⁴ The responses to inquiries from Hall’s supporters were always the same—NPS officials held fast that as proposed the commercial aspects of the proposed Bluegrass Historical Campground were not permitted under federal regulations.⁷⁵

Despite the previous ABC permit denial, in mid-May of 1999, and on behalf of Whiskeytown Ventures, LLC, Hall submitted to the county a pre-application for a permit to construct the Whiskeytown Historical Bluegrass Campgrounds. The proposal included reactivating the old Whiskeytown General Store and Post Office building. In the southern end of the building, the group proposed a sundry store and deli; the north end would be a bait and recreation center. A horseshoe pit and shower room would be installed to the north of the historic building. Behind the post office building, a “3-tiered swimming pool,” open-sided courtyard, and eight tent camping sites would be framed by newly planted shade trees.⁷⁶

⁷¹ Memorandum, James W. Cook, Planning Division Manager, Shasta County Dept. of Resource Management to Guy Autore, “Whiskeytown Store, A.P. No.: 011-240-57, General Plan: Public Land, Zoning: NRA-WI,” February 23, 1999, folder “D3423 Buildings Individual BLDG Data (other than concession and historical) 1 of 2,” box HQ8, WHIS-AF.

⁷² Superintendent David A. Pugh to Oak Bottom Marina, March 16, 1999, folder “L1415 Acquisition of Land Policy and Procedure,” box HQ4, WHIS-AF.

⁷³ Shasta County, Dept. of Resource Management, “PRE-APPLICATION 99-03, Whiskeytown Historical Bluegrass Campground,” July 12, 1999, folder “D3423 Buildings Individual BLDG Data (other than concession and historical) 1 of 2,” box HQ8, WHIS-AF.

⁷⁴ Congressman Wally Herger to Melania Beller, Director of Congressional Affairs, DOI, May 15, 1999, folder “D3423 Buildings Individual BLDG Data (other than concession and historical) 1 of 2,” box HQ8, WHIS-AF.

⁷⁵ Superintendent David A. Pugh to Oak Bottom Marina, March 16, 1999, folder “L1415 Acquisition of Land Policy and Procedure,” box HQ4, WHIS-AF; and John J. Reynolds, Regional Director, Pacific West to Congressman Wally Herger, June 1999, folder “D3423 Buildings Individual BLDG Data (other than concession and historical) 1 of 2,” box HQ8, WHIS-AF.

⁷⁶ Shasta County Dept. of Resource Management, Planning Permit Master Application form, PRE-APPLICATION 99-03, May 1999, folder “D3423 Buildings Individual BLDG Data (other than concession and historical) 1 of 2,” box HQ8, WHIS-AF.

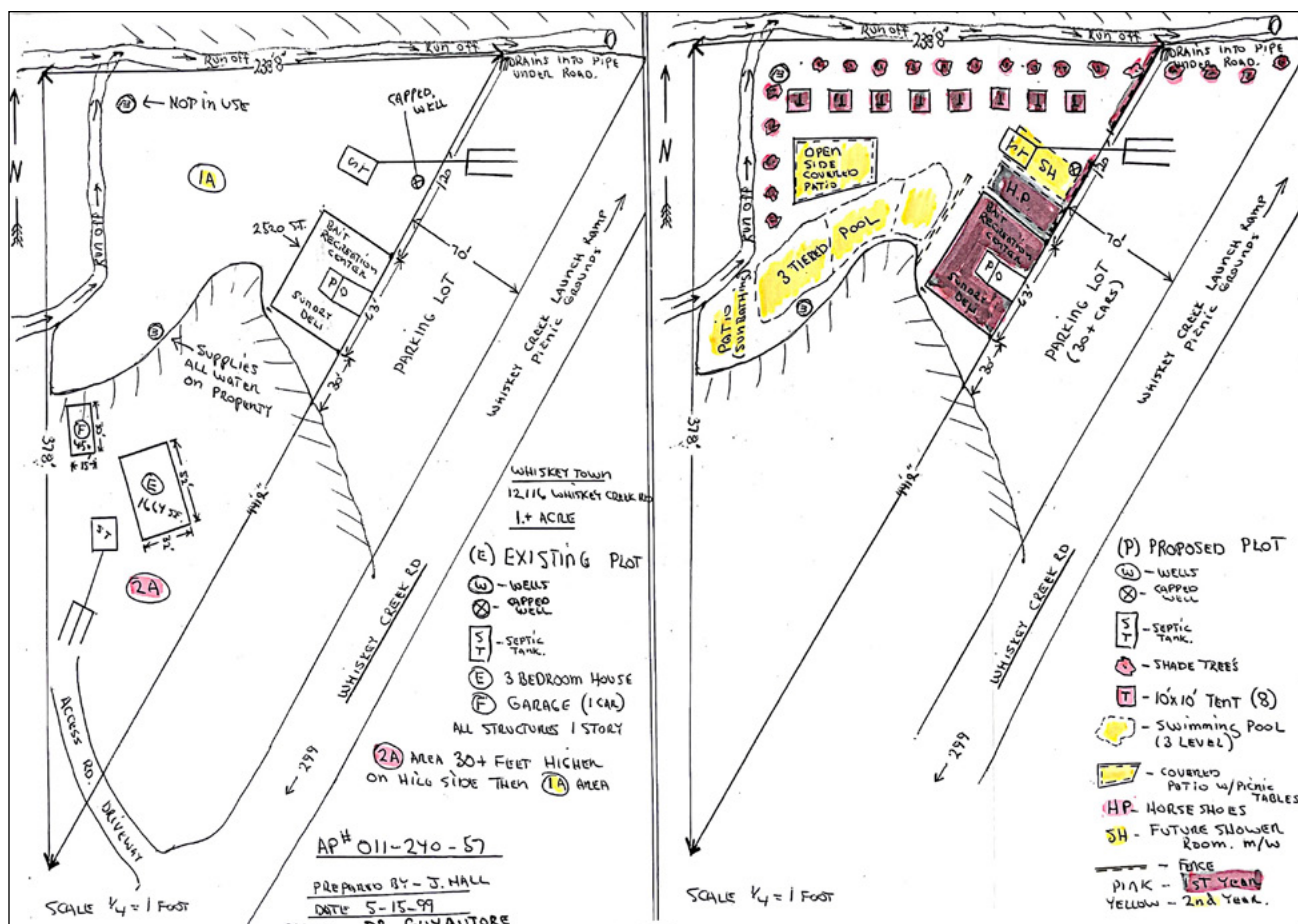


Figure 32. Site sketch of proposed Whiskeytown Bluegrass Campground, May 1999. Source: Sketch on file at WHIS Archives.⁷⁷

Shasta County again sought NPS input. Superintendent Pugh, while inclined to reaffirm his conclusion that the commercial activities described in the pre-application were not legally permissible, sought confirmation by consulting the PGSO and the Regional Solicitor's Office. At issue was that the campground portion of the application was permissible, whereas the store was clearly commercial.⁷⁸ The PGSO responded by confirming Pugh's interpretation and recommending that he explicitly state in his letter to Shasta County that the store and deli were prohibited commercial operations. However, some uncertainty remained within PGSO regarding the exact classification of the proposed swimming pool.⁷⁹ Pugh responded to Shasta County but did not make explicit which elements of the pre-application were and were not commercial aspects of the proposed campground. Rather, Pugh simply cited the relevant public law, county zoning ordinance, and Code of Federal Register once again. Perhaps this general approach was due to the lingering confusion over how to interpret the proposed swimming pool. Perhaps it was meant to put the burden of decision back

⁷⁷ Sketch from Shasta County Dept. of Resource Management, Planning Permit Master Application form, PRE-APPLICATION 99-03, May 1999, folder "D3423 Buildings Individual BLDG Data (other than concession and historical) 1 of 2," box HQ8, WHIS-AF.

⁷⁸ Memorandum, Superintendent Pugh to Sondra Humphries, Pacific Land Resources Program Center, PGSO and Jennifer Grove, Office of the Solicitor, PGSO, "Whiskeytown Store," June 4, 1999, folder "D3423 Buildings Individual BLDG Data (other than concession and historical) 1 of 2," box HQ8, WHIS-AF.

⁷⁹ Sondra S. Humphries, NP-WRO to Superintendent Pugh, email "Re: Whiskeytown Store - Memo," June 16, 1999, folder "D3423 Buildings Individual BLDG Data (other than concession and historical) 1 of 2," box HQ8, WHIS-AF.

onto the county, or perhaps it was a simple oversight. Regardless, Superintendent Pugh's lack of explicitness meant the issue would continue to linger.⁸⁰

Shasta County returned its review of the pre-application to Whiskeytown Ventures, LLC, on July 12, 1999. James Cook, Planning Division Manager, was quite explicit in his response, detailing for the enterprising group that "the sundry shop, snack bar/deli, recreation/rental center and bait shop, and meal services would be inconsistent with the regulations of the NRA-WI district in that no additional commercial services are allowed within the NRA-WI zone district, and are prohibited by Public Law 89-336, Section 2(e) dated November 8, 1965." The primitive tent campground without commercial concessions, the County ruled, might be pursued through a use permit request, but would require significant additional study, including a grading plan, mitigating fire safety concerns, and conducting water quality and use studies.⁸¹

The record does not clarify whether Hall and Whiskeytown Ventures acted out of persistence, misunderstanding of legal constraints, or perceived conflict with federal oversight. Regardless, they continued to pursue the project. Undeterred from the clear prohibitions against new commercial activities, Hall once again contacted the office of Congressman Wally Herger seeking the support and override from each of Shasta County's denials of their proposed commercial activities.⁸²

In late July 1999, after a prolonged period of informal planning, Jim Hall approached Superintendent Pugh regarding the proposal. According to Pugh's notes on the meeting, Hall provided a wide range of ideas on how the old post office complex might be used, including a proposal to sell a brand-name whiskey—"Whiskeytown Moonshine"—from the post office building that he planned to fully restore. Pugh attempted to explain to Hall the legal prohibitions on commercial activity not expressly authorized by the DOI. The last lines of Pugh's notes regarding his in-person meeting with Hall diplomatically captured the situation: "I do not believe Mr. Hall understands the applicability of the legislation or the zoning ordinance to this situation or to him, or the intent to limit the extent of commercial activities in the park."⁸³

Superintendent Pugh's assessment of Hall's determination, or more accurately Hall's refusal to accept the legal interpretations he'd been given, proved spot-on. Despite repeated communications from Shasta County and NPS staff that the commercial aspects of the Bluegrass Historical Campground were prohibited, the group continued to seek support for their project. To be fair, there is little reason to expect that Hall or Whiskeytown Ventures would have understood the park's intent to limit commercial activities. For one, the store had been operating just five years prior to this saga. For another, concessionaires operated with commercial activities at Oak Bottom and Brandy Creek. Finally, for Whiskeytown Ventures, the sundry shop and bait center were interpreted as necessary components of a campground and therefore as permissible under the county code. Having surveyed other county campgrounds and finding similar facilities,

⁸⁰ Superintendent Pugh to Russ Mull, Director Shasta County Dept. of Resource Management, Comment on "PRE-APPLICATION 99-03 (Whiskeytown Tent Campground)," June 24, 1999, folder "D3423 Buildings Individual BLDG Data (other than concession and historical) 1 of 2," box HQ8, WHIS-AF.

⁸¹ Shasta County, Dept. of Resource Management, "PRE-APPLICATION 99-03, Whiskeytown Historical Bluegrass Campground," July 12, 1999, folder "D3423 Buildings Individual BLDG Data (other than concession and historical) 1 of 2," box HQ8, WHIS-AF.

⁸² Jim Hall to Wally Herger, July 1999, folder "D3423 Buildings Individual BLDG Data (other than concession and historical) 1 of 2," box HQ8, WHIS-AF.

⁸³ Superintendent David Pugh, Memo to file, July 29, 1999, folder "D3423 Buildings Individual BLDG Data (other than concession and historical) 1 of 2," box HQ8, WHIS-AF.

as well as similar facilities in National Parks run by concessionaires, Whiskeytown Ventures argued that the proposal fit within the law and zoning ordinance.⁸⁴ Although repeated permit denials and subsequent correspondence clarified the park's position over time, the dispute nevertheless exposed differing interpretations regarding the scope of allowable commercial activity within the recreation area.

Hall tenaciously wrote once again to Congressman Herger. He outlined a six-phase plan for the Whiskeytown Historic Bluegrass Campground. Commercial activities were central. At the campground site, Hall's group was still pursuing opening a pizza parlor and beer salon, whiskey retail store, chop house, gift shop, Mexican cantina, melodrama theatre, historically themed antique shops, and a bear grotto.⁸⁵

The archival record at WHIS does not follow the story further. Presumably, Hall and Whiskeytown Ventures succumbed in the face of legal prohibitions. One document, however, hints that during this period there may have been continued efforts by either Autore or Whiskeytown Ventures, LLC to develop the property. Looking back from the year 2010, Superintendent Milestone recounted:

Park management was concerned that individuals would try to develop this property which would have increased the complexity of park operations. It was for these reasons that the park aggressively sought to purchase the Autore Property inholding.⁸⁶

Eventually, without a profitable use for the old Whiskeytown General Store and Post Office building, Autore let the building sit vacant. As early as 2005, but perhaps prior, lack of use left the post office complex vulnerable to vandalism and eventually to infestation by mice, bats, and vermin.⁸⁷

Meanwhile, WHIS pursued its plans to purchase Autore's inholding. While the NPS worked to secure funds, the McConnell Foundation bought the property from Autore, holding it for eventual purchase from the park.⁸⁸ In January of 2010, the NPS purchased the property from McConnell Foundation for \$420,000.⁸⁹

The park began an assessment of condition, renovation costs, and possible uses for the post office complex and the other buildings on the property. Superintendent Milestone immediately saw potential use for the house and outbuilding on the property, which were in much better condition since they had remained in use. These buildings, Milestone thought, would make good office space for the Law Enforcement Ranger program, especially as they

⁸⁴ Shasta County Dept. of Resource Management, Planning Permit Master Application form, PRE-APPLICATION 99-03, May 1999, folder "D3423 Buildings Individual BLDG Data (other than concession and historical) 1 of 2," box HQ8, WHIS-AF.

⁸⁵ Whiskeytown California Ventures, LLC to Senator [sic] Wally Herger, "PLANNING COMMISSION RULING ON LOCATION USE AT WHISKEYTOVN," n.d. [copy received at Whiskeytown July 28, 1999], folder "D3423 Buildings Individual BLDG Data (other than concession and historical) 1 of 2," box HQ8, WHIS-AF.

⁸⁶ Memorandum, Superintendent Milestone to Regional Director PWR, "Future Plan and Facility Assessment Regarding the Autore Property at Whiskeytown National Recreation Area," October 22, 2010, folder "D3423 Buildings Autore Property Whiskeytown Post Office Store and Residence," box HQ8, WHIS-AF.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Grant Deed signed January 28, 2010, filename "WHIS 01-150 (McConnell) -Grant Deed 29Jan2010," subfolder "Autore_House-Destroyed-Carr18," folder "FACILITIES," WHIS-DF. At some point shortly after WHIS acquired the property, records refer to it as both Whiskeytown and Whiskey Creek General store and/or Post Office.



Figure 33. Photo of broken post office sign, June 21, 2011.
Source: Photograph on file at WHIS Archives.⁹⁰

continued efforts to deal with illicit marijuana operations. Meanwhile, the post office building repeatedly fell victim to vandalism. Inside, walls, windows, and doors were broken, and fixtures destroyed.⁹¹ Cultural Resource Program Manager Danica Willis recorded at least two instances of external vandalism in 2011, one in which “Whiskey” was stolen from the façade sign and the remaining letters were broken and left on the ground.⁹²

During the spring of 2011, WHIS enlisted MACTEC Engineering and Consulting to inspect the buildings on what had been the Autore property; the firm found high levels of asbestos, vermiculite, and carcinogens at the post office complex.⁹³ Renovations of the post office building would necessitate not only mitigation of hazardous materials but also upgrading electrical and all other utilities to comply with state and federal regulations. Renovation cost estimates proved exorbitant. Projected renovation and operation costs neared \$1 million, while demolition and removal were estimated at just \$102,015. At the same time, the park faced an excess of \$30 million worth of deferred maintenance.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ Photograph from Memorandum, Danica Willis, CR Program Manager to Superintendent Milestone, “Vandalized Archaeological Site,” June 21, 2011, filename “Willis 2011-Memorandum-Post Office Vandalism,” “2011,” folder “Cultural_Resource_Reports-PRIVILEGED,” WHIS-DF.

⁹¹ Memorandum, Superintendent Milestone to Regional Director PWR, “Future Plan and Facility Assessment Regarding the Autore Property at Whiskeytown National Recreation Area,” October 22, 2010, folder “D3423 Buildings Autore Property Whiskeytown Post Office Store and Residence,” box HQ8, WHIS-AF.

⁹² Memorandum, Danica Willis, CR Program Manager to Superintendent Milestone, “Vandalized Archaeological Site,” November 7, 2011, Filename “Memorandum-Post Office Vandalism- 11-1-11,” subfolder “2012,” folder “Cultural_Resource_Reports-PRIVILEGED,” WHIS-DF. See also Memorandum, Danica Willis, CR Program Manager to Superintendent Milestone, “Vandalized Archaeological Site,” June 21, 2011, Filename “Willis 2011-Memorandum-Post Office Vandalism,” subfolder “2011,” folder “Cultural_Resource_Reports-PRIVILEGED,” WHIS-DF.

⁹³ “DOI Deferred Maintenance and Capital Improvement Plan NPS Project Data Sheet,” Draft March 2013, Filename “WHIS RR Edits to Do,” draft March 2013, subfolder “FY15 Call,” subfolder “FY Calls Project,” subfolder “Work Barge,” subfolder “FLEET, FLEET PROPERTY FUEL,” subfolder “20210927,” folder “FACILITIES,” WHIS-DF; and Enclosure with David L. Larabee, Chief of Facility Management WHIS to Disposal Reality Specialist, Real Property Utilization and Disposal Division GSA, November 3, 2017, filename “Enclosure 1 SOF,” subfolder “WHIS Store PO Demo,” subfolder “Demo Bld Docs,” subfolder “WC WHIS Store Demo,” subfolder “COMPLETED PROJECTS,” subfolder “20210927,” folder “FACILITIES,” WHIS-DF.

⁹⁴ File notes created by Dana Willis, 2017, filename “Whiskeytown Store PEPC SHPO,” subfolder “WHIS Store PO Demo,” subfolder “Demo Bld Docs,” subfolder “WC WHIS Store Demo,” subfolder “COMPLETED PROJECTS,” subfolder “20210927,” folder “FACILITIES,” WHIS-DF. Other park records estimated the renovation costs might well exceed the \$1 million. For example, one document estimated renovations could creep to \$2.5 million, see File notes, 2017, filename “Project Information,” subfolder “WHIS Store PO Demo,” subfolder “Demo Bld Docs,” subfolder “WC WHIS Store Demo,” subfolder “COMPLETED PROJECTS,” subfolder “20210927,” folder “FACILITIES,” WHIS-DF.

CHAPTER 7.2: CONCESSIONAIRE VISIONS AND REALITIES

The park was left to make hard decisions at a historical moment when the 2011 debt ceiling crisis, accompanying volatile markets, and passage of the Budget Control Act of 2011 meant contracting NPS budgets. The US Legislature had issued “calls to action” for government agencies including the DOI to avoid acquisitions of additional assets requiring maintenance. WHIS anticipated a 2 percent budget cut for the next fiscal year.⁹⁵ Park staff were left with no viable options to save the building.

Willis completed a detailed determination of eligibility for the post office’s listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Her major finding was:

Despite the fact that the Whiskeytown Post Office/Store has achieved local significance in Whiskeytown and the surrounding area, it does not meet the criteria of the National Register of Historic Places. The value of the building lies in its recorded history in newspapers, books, oral histories, and recollections. The finding of this Determination of Eligibility is that the Whiskeytown Post Office/Store is not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.⁹⁶

The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) concurred in August 2012.⁹⁷

Based on the facilities cost assessment and with a determination that the building was not NRHP eligible, the park moved forward with a proposal to demolish the Whiskeytown General Store and Post Office building and complete the compliance process. As park staff completed the necessary compliance processes for NEPA and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), the condition of the post office building continued to worsen. A December 2017 survey of the building described it as “a hazard to the public.”⁹⁸

The park’s preferred option, on which SHPO did concur, was to demolish the building, remove hazardous waste and electrical utilities, cap and fill two abandoned and non-operational deep-water wells, abandon the 1,000-gallon septic tank and leach field system, and rehabilitate the site to a natural state. The post office and general store would be

⁹⁵ Filename “WC STORE CAC,” 2011, subfolder “WHIS Store PO Demo,” subfolder “Demo Bld Docs,” subfolder “WC WHIS Store Demo,” subfolder “COMPLETED PROJECTS,” subfolder “20210927,” folder “FACILITIES,” WHIS-DF.

⁹⁶ Willis, “NRHP Determination of Eligibility, P 45-003707, The Whiskeytown Post Office,” 2011, p. 10; and Susan A. Stratton for Milford Wayne Donaldson, California SHPO, to Superintendent Milestone, August 28, 2012, filename “SHPO_Submission_9-21-17.pdf WHIS Store,” subfolder “WHIS Store PO Demo,” subfolder “Demo Bld Docs,” subfolder “WC WHIS Store Demo,” subfolder “COMPLETED PROJECTS,” subfolder “20210927,” folder “FACILITIES,” WHIS-DF.

⁹⁷ Willis, “NRHP Determination of Eligibility, P 45-003707, The Whiskeytown Post Office,” 2011, p. 10; and Stratton to Milestone, August 28, 2012.

⁹⁸ Title V Property Survey Federal Property Information Checklist, completed December 3, 2017, filename “20180215104618334.pdf Final Docs WHIS Store,” subfolder “Demo Bld Docs,” subfolder “WC WHIS Store Demo,” subfolder “COMPLETED PROJECTS,” subfolder “20210927,” folder “FACILITIES,” WHIS-DF; and Board of Survey Document, n.d., filename “BOS Doc,” subfolder “WHIS Store PO Demo,” subfolder “Demo Bld Docs,” subfolder “WC WHIS Store Demo,” subfolder “COMPLETED PROJECTS,” subfolder “20210927,” folder “FACILITIES,” WHIS-DF.

commemorated with an interpretive panel.⁹⁹ In May 2018, Superintendent Milestone made a request to the NPS Regional Office to dispose of the Whiskey Creek Store and Post Office, which was approved within weeks.¹⁰⁰ Just two months later, the Carr Fire destroyed the post office complex building.

In the aftermath of the Carr Fire, the old post office structure debris and hazardous materials were removed as part of the immense clean-up efforts throughout the park (see Chapter 4.4: Fire Management and Adaptation). Cleanup at the site entailed removing concrete slabs, approximately ten cubic yards of stucco and ash, removing the pressure tank at the well site, and more.¹⁰¹ The formulated cost of clean-up of the site was \$132,963, just slightly more than the original estimates to remove the building had been, accounting for inflation.¹⁰²

Looking back at the history of the Whiskeytown General Store and Post Office reveals both missed opportunities and the complexity of park decision-making. At the bare minimum, this episode demonstrates that personal communication between park leadership and stakeholders is central to developing shared understanding and identifying viable opportunities. Earlier and more sustained communication between Whiskeytown Ventures and park leadership may have clarified expectations and reduced administrative delays.

Additionally, alternative approaches might have explored opportunities for collaboration between park leadership, Autore, and Whiskeytown Ventures to identify a use for the post office building consistent with NPS policy. As one of only three buildings remaining from the original Whiskeytown, the post office held local significance and presented potential for interpretive use. Identifying an acceptable and permissible use could have allowed the building to contribute to visitor services while preserving its historical value.

The building's prolonged vacancy and lack of maintenance only compounded challenges for its rehabilitation. Addressing asbestos mitigation and restoration earlier—at the property owner's expense—could have opened opportunities to integrate the building into the park's interpretive mission. For example, the concessionaires at Whiskeytown Bluegrass Historical Campground might have fulfilled the 1976 Master Plan vision by taking on an “interpretive responsibility” for the site.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ “DOI Deferred Maintenance and Capital Improvement Plan NPS Project Data Sheet,” Draft March 2013, Filename “WHIS RR Edits to Do,” draft March 2013, subfolder “FY15 Call,” subfolder “FY Calls Project,” subfolder “Work Barge,” subfolder “FLEET, FLEET PROPERTY FUEL,” subfolder “20210927,” folder “FACILITIES,” WHIS-DF.

¹⁰⁰ Memorandum, Martha J. Lee Acting Regional Director, Pacific West Region to Superintendent Milestone, “Approval on the Proposal to Dispose of the Whiskey Creek Store and Post Office Building Asset Number 248704,” May 2018, folder “Old Correspondence 2017-2019,” box HQ1, WHIS-AF.

¹⁰¹ Filename “WHIS 253679 List of Cleared Building Sites 01 27 2020,” subfolder “2020 Updates Mods,” subfolder “Burned Building Clean up Carr Fire,” subfolder “COMPLETED PROJECTES,” subfolder “20210927,” folder “FACILITIES,” WHIS-DF; and Filename “Completion Reports 2018 Carr Fire,” subfolder “Status Completion Reports,” subfolder “PMIS SCC 23,” subfolder “20210927,” folder “FACILITIES,” WHIS-DF.

¹⁰² Filename “Proposed PWR RR program FY18-22, subfolder “Older docs,” subfolder “R&R,” subfolder “BIG PICTURE,” subfolder “20210927,” folder “FACILITIES,” WHIS-DF. Using an online CPI Inflation Calculator, \$102,015 cost for demolition in 2011 translates to \$113,938 in 2018, accessed May 2024, <https://www.in2013dollars.com/us/inflation/2011?endYear=2018&amount=102015>.

¹⁰³ WHIS, *Final Master Plan*, 1976, p. 47.

WHIS's approach to the Whiskeytown General Store and Post Office was shaped primarily by hazardous building conditions, escalating rehabilitation costs, prolonged vacancy, and budget constraints. Although the determination of ineligibility for the NRHP removed certain preservation requirements, it did not expand feasible options in practice given the building's deteriorated condition and the costs associated with compliance and rehabilitation. At the same time, the evolving and often incompatible proposals advanced by Whiskeytown Ventures, along with limited early coordination with park staff, made it difficult to establish a permitted and sustainable use for the property.

Conclusion

Concessionaire operations at WHIS have been shaped by the persistent gap between planning assumptions and the conditions required to execute and sustain visitor-service enterprises on federal land. WHIS repeatedly pursued concessionaire-provided amenities as a mechanism for meeting visitor needs at Oak Bottom and Brandy Creek while limiting direct government operation of marina and related services. That approach required not only viable business projections and reliable capital investment, but also consistent contract administration, clear performance expectations, and workable compliance pathways in a setting governed by environmental constraints, fluctuating lake levels, and changing legal requirements.

The Oak Bottom and Brandy Creek concession sites are examples of the administrative complexity of these arrangements. Early contracts and prospectuses carried ambitious construction and service expectations that proved difficult to meet under seasonal demand, water-level variability, and the financial limits of small operators. The record shows WHIS repeatedly recalibrating: terminating underperforming contracts, commissioning appraisals, revising prospectuses, consolidating concessions when feasibility analyses questioned the viability of multiple operators, and balancing visitor-service goals against the risk of overbuilding. These actions were a pragmatic effort to maintain continuity of visitor services while protecting the government's interests in facilities, possessory property, and compliance obligations.

The Oak Bottom Marina contract under Kenneth and Cheryl Smith illustrates a later phase of the same administrative challenges: long-running reliance on year-to-year authorizations amid delayed prospectus implementation, the burdens created by collateral-duty concessions oversight, and increasing friction over deadlines, rates, facility modifications, and the interpretation of contract terms. The 2006 Cure Notice, contract termination, and subsequent settlement closed a period in which visitor-service continuity and facility investment coexisted with sustained disputes over compliance and contract management. The transition to a new operator after 2006 marked a management reset rather than a simple operator change, with WHIS seeking clearer alignment between concession performance and NPS standards.

The Whiskeytown General Store/Post Office and the proposed Bluegrass Historical Campground highlight a different but related constraint: the strict legal boundaries governing commercial activity on private inholdings within park boundaries. In that episode, local stakeholders pursued uses they regarded as compatible with visitor services and

heritage tourism, while WHIS and Shasta County consistently returned to statutory and zoning limits that constrained commercial expansion. The outcome—continued vacancy, escalating hazards and contamination concerns, and eventual disposal/demolition decisions (with the Carr Fire accelerating the building’s loss)—shows how regulatory structure, deferred maintenance pressures, and limited feasible reuse options can narrow the range of outcomes even when a resource holds local meaning.

Across these episodes, the administrative record points to recurring requirements for concession success at WHIS: feasible scale, clearly enforceable agreements, stable lines of responsibility within park staffing, early and direct communication with stakeholders, and a realistic assessment of what visitor services can be sustained without undermining resource protection, compliance, and public safety obligations. These conditions—not aspirational planning alone—set the terms under which WHIS has been able to provide concessionaire-supported visitor services while maintaining its stewardship responsibilities.

CHAPTER 7.3: LAW ENFORCEMENT AND CRIME

Law enforcement at Whiskeytown National Recreation Area (WHIS) evolved along two tracks: routine visitor protection in high-use beach and lakeshore settings, and sustained responses to illegal marijuana cultivation in remote areas of the park. As visitation stabilized in the 1970s and 1980s, WHIS formalized patrol, accident response, and behavior management through compendium restrictions and other targeted prohibitions (including rules related to nudity, alcohol, and later smoking). Beginning in the late 1980s, marijuana cultivation introduced a more hazardous enforcement environment that affected staffing priorities, operational procedures, and risk management through 2018.

Interagency collaboration became a defining feature of this evolution. Cooperative relationships with the US Bureau of Reclamation (USBR), county sheriff's offices, the State of California, and other state and federal partners extended WHIS's limited staffing capacity through shared jurisdiction agreements, dispatch and records-access arrangements, mutual-aid support, and episodic security assignments such as post-9/11 infrastructure protection. During Superintendent Ray Foust's tenure in the 1980s—drawing on his background in law enforcement—the park strengthened its enforcement posture in ways that shaped both routine public-safety work and the expanding response to marijuana cultivation on federal lands. This chapter traces these parallel strands of visitor protection and drug interdiction, emphasizing how policy choices and interagency coordination structured enforcement outcomes over time.

Visitor Safety

As a small park unit, WHIS has historically relied on collaborations with law enforcement agencies at the county, state, and federal levels to support visitor safety and resource protection. In its early years, WHIS law enforcement rangers (law enforcement officers, LEOs) were deputized as state game wardens, expanding the range of regulations they could enforce.¹

As visitation increased, the park administration began developing policies to address emerging safety concerns. A major focus of these efforts was the lake's swim beaches, which have historically been the most frequented areas of WHIS. Recognizing the need to create a safe and enjoyable environment, Superintendent Leon Mitchell introduced one of the park's earliest safety policies in 1975: a ban on public nudity across beaches, campgrounds, and day-use areas.² This measure responded to the growing popularity of nudism, led in part by groups like the Free Beach Movement,

¹ Whiskeytown Unit, "The Staff: Narrative, Master Plan Whiskeytown Reservoir Recreation Area Drawings," October 1964, p. 10, Sheet 4 of 4, subfolder "Facilities_Planning_Maps," folder "FACILITIES," WHIS-DF.

² Leon J. Mitchell to All Employees, Whiskeytown NRA, "Policy on Nudity," May 19, 1975, WHIS DF.

which advocated for nude sunbathing and skinny-dipping at secluded public beaches.³ Enforcement of this policy was left to the discretion of individual rangers, who determined whether nudity was impacting the experience of other visitors.⁴ The policy was reaffirmed in 1978 by Superintendent Foust.

In 1977, WHIS strengthened its law enforcement capacity by entering an agreement with the State of California to share jurisdiction over federally held lands within the park.⁵ This collaboration aimed to reduce response times and “promote the public welfare and enjoyment of the area by establishing a consistent and uniform application of law enforcement.”⁶ The agreement was amended in 1982 to include Shasta County and required renewal every five years.⁷

Despite these measures, visitor safety issues persisted, particularly those related to alcohol. By the early 1980s, alcohol-related incidents, including drunk driving, became a significant concern for park staff. These incidents often occurred on roads near the beaches during the late afternoon and evening.⁸ In 1984, drunk driving was identified as one of the park’s top management concerns, prompting increased patrols and specialized ranger training.⁹ In 1985, WHIS and the California Highway Patrol agreed to share authority for responding to traffic accidents on Highway 299 segments within the park, with the Highway Patrol handling more serious incidents.¹⁰ However, these efforts led to more arrests without fully addressing the root issue. By 1987, WHIS recorded 251 arrests, 174 of which were alcohol-related, underscoring the need for more effective solutions.¹¹

In response, the park enacted an alcohol ban on all Whiskeytown Lake swim beaches in 1988. The ban significantly improved visitor safety, with DUIs decreasing by 67 percent, public intoxication citations dropping by 68 percent, and drunk and disorderly conduct citations declining by 58 percent.¹² Community members supported the measure, praising WHIS for creating a safer environment.¹³ This policy marked a turning point in managing alcohol-related incidents within the park.

³ Marguerite S. Shaffer, “On the Environmental Nude,” *Environmental History*, 13, no. 1 (January 2008): p. 135, accessed November 18, 2024, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25473196>.

⁴ Shaffer, “On the Environmental Nude,” p. 135.

⁵ Whiskeytown Unit, “Law Enforcement Agreement for concurrent Criminal Jurisdictions at Whiskeytown Unit, Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area,” June 2007, folder “A44 MOA Law Enforcement Agreement for Concurrent Criminal Jurisdiction,” box HQ6, WHIS-AF.

⁶ State of California, Shasta County, and Whiskeytown National Recreation Area (WHIS), “Law Enforcement Agreement for concurrent Criminal Jurisdictions at Whiskeytown Unit, Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area,” June 2007, folder “A44 MOA Law Enforcement Agreement for Concurrent Criminal Jurisdiction,” box HQ6, WHIS-AF.

⁷ State of California, Shasta County, and Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, “Amendment to Law Enforcement Agreement for Concurrent Criminal Jurisdiction at Whiskeytown National Recreation Area,” June 1, 1982, folder “A44 MOA Law Enforcement Agreement for Concurrent Criminal Jurisdiction,” box HQ6, WHIS-AF. 2007 is the last year on file in the archival materials for this agreement.

⁸ Whiskeytown Unit, “Annual Statement for Interpretation and Visitor Services,” August 1981, p. 9, WHIS-DF.

⁹ Whiskeytown Unit, “Annual Statement for Interpretation and Visitor Services,” April 19, 1984, p. 2, WHIS-DF.

¹⁰ Letter from Lewis K. Wood (Caltrans) to Roy Cates (Maintenance Superintendent III, Northern Region NPS), “Relationship with National Park Service,” February 19, 1985, folder “A44 MOA Law Enforcement Agreement for Concurrent Criminal Jurisdiction,” box HQ6, WHIS-AF.

¹¹ Ray C. Foust, “Annual Superintendents Report-1987,” July 7, 1988, folder “A2621 Reports Superintendent’s,” box HQ6, WHIS-AF.

¹² Letter from Ray C. Foust to Regional Director of Western Region, “Appropriations for Drug Interdiction,” November 29, 1988, folder “W34 Drugs,” box HQ14, WHIS-AF.

¹³ Ray C. Foust, “Annual Report-1988,” March 10, 1989, p. 3, folder “A2621 Reports Superintendent’s,” box HQ6, WHIS-AF.

While alcohol-related incidents decreased by the late 1980s, crime rates rose in the 1990s due to budget cuts that reduced law enforcement staff by 40 percent.¹⁴ Despite the staffing challenges, Superintendent Foust remained committed to park safety, often finding creative ways to address the shortfall. In 1993, WHIS partnered with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Ukiah District to share criminal offender records and other justice information through a statewide network. This agreement allowed WHIS access to resources from the Federal Bureau of Investigation, National Crime Information Center, National Law Enforcement Telecommunication System, Department of Motor Vehicles, and California Law Enforcement Telecommunication System. The agreement also enabled WHIS to provide dispatch services for BLM law enforcement personnel, generating revenue for the park.¹⁵

By 1995, Superintendent Pugh reported that crime at WHIS had grown more severe, including an increase in “gang violence,” though specific details in the historical record are lacking.¹⁶ In 1996, vandalism and malicious mischief doubled, exacerbated by the elimination of seasonal law enforcement and lifeguard positions due to funding cuts. The absence of qualified staff to operate park vessels left the lake patrol inactive, further straining resources.¹⁷ By 1998, WHIS recorded nearly 8,000 incidents handled by just three permanent rangers, three seasonal rangers, and a single criminal investigator—an average of 1,333 cases per staff member.¹⁸

In 1998, WHIS enhanced visitor safety and recreational experiences by implementing restrictions on certain activities at the lake. Superintendent David Pugh led a significant change in water-based recreation by instituting a ban on personal watercraft (PWC) (e.g., Jet Skis). Park staff identified these motorized vehicles as having “a major negative impact” on other activities like fishing, swimming, kayaking, and sailing—recreational uses emphasized in the park’s GMP.¹⁹

After the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, WHIS entered another partnership to address heightened security concerns. Under an agreement with the USBR, the National Park Service (NPS) provided round-the-clock security at critical infrastructure sites, including Whiskeytown Dam and Carr Powerhouse, as well as Shasta Dam and other facilities outside WHIS. This arrangement lasted until February 2002, when threat levels were reassessed.²⁰ In 2002, WHIS dedicated \$626,442 to visitor safety services, which included law enforcement rangers, emergency medical services, lifeguards, and patrols on land and water—a growing percent of WHIS’s budget, but still a shortfall of the hundreds of thousands more dollars needed to support those services.²¹ By 2008, WHIS further expanded its partnerships,

¹⁴ Letter from Ray Foust to Sheriff Phil Eoff, April 2, 1990, folder “W30 Jurisdiction 1990-1999,” box 14, WHIS-AF.

¹⁵ US Department of the Interior (DOI), “Agreement No CA-050-IA-0001, Law Enforcement Agreement Bureau of Land Management/ Ukiah District, National Park Service/Whiskeytown Unit,” August 31, 1993, subfolder “Law Enforcement Dispatch,” folder “A44 MOA Interagency Agreement BLM 1 of 2,” box HQ6, WHIS-AF.

¹⁶ David Pugh, “The Year in Review,” March 14, 1996, p. 6, folder “A2621 Reports Superintendent’s,” box HQ6, WHIS-AF.

¹⁷ David Pugh, “Annual Report, Fiscal Year 1996,” pp. 1, 8, folder “A2621 Reports Superintendent’s,” box HQ6, WHIS-AF.

¹⁸ David Pugh, “Superintendent’s 1998, Annual Narrative,” p. 5, folder “A2621 Reports Superintendent’s,” box HQ6, WHIS-AF.

¹⁹ WHIS, *Whiskeytown Unit General Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement*, July 1999, p. ii, subfolder “ADMIN_PLANS,” subfolder “Not_Accessioned,” folder “Administrative_History,” WHIS-DF.

²⁰ US Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) and National Park Service (NPS), “Shasta Dam Patrol Services by the National Park Service,” January 23, 2002, subfolder “Shasta Dam Patrol Services,” folder “A44 MOA US Bureau of Reclamation,” box HQ6, WHIS-AF.

²¹ “Whiskeytown National Recreation Area: Business Plan,” August 2003, file, p. 18, “WHISBIZPlanprintquality,” subfolder “ADMIN_PLANS,” folder “LIBRARY-REPORTS,” WHIS-DF.

contracting with Sequoia National Park to provide 24/7 dispatch operations for \$60,000 annually.²² Superintendent James Milestone emphasized the importance of these partnerships, stating, “Ranger staffs work together in mutual aid situations and officer back-ups during arrests and situations where force multiplier reinforces officer safety. Reliable radio dispatching is critical to a successful law enforcement program, and the joint agency effort is a demonstrable efficiency.”²³

Building on the success of the 1980s alcohol ban at beaches, WHIS targeted another vice in the 2000s to enhance visitor experiences. In 2009, Shasta County Public Health and Human Services proposed a smoking ban at Brandy Creek Beach. By 2010, Superintendent Milestone formalized a policy in the WHIS Compendium designating four swimming beaches as “smoke-free.”²⁴ This policy prohibited the use of tobacco products, medical marijuana, and vaping, and aligned with a statewide movement in California to ban smoking at beaches and public recreation areas.²⁵ In 2016, Milestone expanded the ban to include smoking on trails, making Whiskeytown the “first smoke-free unit of the National Park Service.”²⁶

Partnerships have been a cornerstone of WHIS’s law enforcement strategy, allowing the park to address persistent staffing shortages while leveraging resources from allied agencies. These collaborations enhanced operational capacity and aligned with interagency approaches within public land management.

Private property along WHIS’s western boundary has been owned by individuals associated with the Hells Angels motorcycle club since at least the early 2010s. Local reporting identifies the site as a clubhouse or meeting place for the Shasta–Humboldt chapter, with documented activity since at least 2018, including periodic large gatherings. Ownership and use of the property have shifted over time with changes in chapter organization, with periods of both active use and dormancy. Although located outside park jurisdiction, the site’s proximity introduces an additional external land-use dynamic along the park’s boundary. As with other adjacent private uses, park leadership has coordinated with property owners and county law enforcement regarding site activity and has remained attentive to potential implications for traffic and visitor safety.²⁷ While WHIS’s visitor safety efforts focused on addressing predictable challenges such as alcohol-related incidents, the emergence of illegal marijuana cultivation presented a distinct enforcement environment.²⁸

²² Letter from James Milestone to Steve Anderson (BLM), March 17, 2008, subfolder “Law Enforcement Dispatch,” folder “A44 MOA Interagency Agreement BLM 1 of 2,” box HQ6, WHIS-AF.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Milestone, et al, “Smokey Says, ‘Get Your Ashe Off My Beach,’ Implementing a Smoke-free Beach Policy at Whiskeytown National Recreation Area,” *George Wright Forum* 27, no 3, 2010, pp. 292-302.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ WHIS, “Breathe the Fresh Air of Whiskeytown,” January 5, 2016, accessed November 2024, <https://www.nps.gov/whis/learn/news/breathe-the-fresh-air-of-whiskeytown.htm>; and Leadership Redding, “Speaker Bios: Recreation & Environment Session,” May 5, 2011, accessed November 2024, <https://leadershipredding.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/2010-2011-Recreation-Bios.pdf>.

²⁷ Email communication to authors from Glendee Ane Osborne, April 16 2026; Damon Arthur, “Ask the Record Searchlight: Hells Angels compound near Whiskeytown?,” *Redding Record Searchlight*, December 1, 2022, accessed February 2025, <https://www.redding.com/story/news/2022/12/01/hells-angels-compound-near-whiskeytown-california-shasta-humboldt-chapter-motorcycle-club/69683476007/>; Valen Lambert, “Hells Angels Do Disneyland,” *County Highway*, n.d., accessed February 2025, <https://www.countyhighway.com/archive/volume-1/issue-2/hells-angels-do-disneyland-lambert>.

²⁸ Lambert, “Hells Angels Do Disneyland.”



Figure 34. Marijuana Grow Camp, no date.
Source: Photograph on file at WHIS Archives.²⁹

Illegal Marijuana Cultivation

Since the 1980s, illegal marijuana plantations have been numerous throughout public lands of the United States, especially in Northern California. Nicknamed the “Emerald Triangle,” Northern California’s combination of climate, a culture of “frontier individualism,” and remoteness has made the area a top choice for illegal marijuana grow operations.³⁰ Historian Nick Johnson explains that the production of illegal substances in the area pre-dates the marijuana grow sites. He notes, “During prohibition...the area [Northern California] was a haven for bootlegging with its vast expanse of dense forest, rolling hills, and jagged, craggy mountains.”³¹ Johnson also draws parallels between the ideology of the State of Jefferson movement and marijuana cultivation. The State of Jefferson movement, broadly speaking, is a political movement that seeks an independent state comprising land in Northern California and Southern Oregon, areas that have a rural, libertarian view that differs from the urban, liberal population centers in other parts of each respective state.³² Geographic and countercultural influences combined with consumer fear of consuming

²⁹ Photograph in subfolder “Best Photos,” subfolder “Whiskeytown,” folder “Marijuana” WHIS-DF.

³⁰ Nick Johnson, *Grassroots: A History of Cannabis in the American West*, (Corvallis, OR: Oregon State University Press, 2017), p. 122.

³¹ Johnson, *Grassroots*, p. 122.

³² Peter Laufer, *The Elusive State of Jefferson: A Journey Through the 51st State* (Helena, MT: TwoDot, 2013).

chemically tainted marijuana from abroad, relaxed drug laws in Oregon, and the increase of public facing literature on growing marijuana combined to create the boom of Northern California's cannabis grows in the 1980s.³³

Programs like President Ronald Reagan's "War on Drugs," cracked down on imported drugs and prompted foreign growers to seek hidden places to grow marijuana inside the United States.³⁴ In 1983, California Governor George Deukmejian started the "Campaign Against Marijuana Planting" (CAMP), a program that partnered federal and local law enforcement to target marijuana cultivation in the state. In response to these programs, illegal marijuana growers on private land sought more remote locations for their operations, often on public lands. Federal land managers began to see increased cultivation of marijuana on public lands beginning in the 1980s. By the 1990s, the practice increased at an alarming pace. By the twenty-first century, the US Government Accountability Office argued that illegal marijuana cultivation posed a significant threat to the country's public lands.³⁵ In addition to being a safety hazard for federal staff and visitors to public lands, these grow operations threatened extensive damage to cultural and natural resources, including water diversion and pesticide contamination.³⁶

Within WHIS, illegal marijuana cultivation mirrored the national timeline. Staff first discovered marijuana cultivation in the park in the 1980s. During the mid to late 1980s, LEOs discovered two large-scale grows. In 1985, WHIS rangers located and destroyed a grow operation yielding a crop with an estimated street value of \$480,000.³⁷ In 1988, law enforcement officers from WHIS, the Shasta Trinity National Forest, and Shasta County Sheriff's office busted an operation with over 1,400 plants and a sophisticated irrigation system near Highway 299.³⁸

These earliest discoveries coincided with the NPS Western Region's 1984 policy around illegal marijuana grow operations. Effective April 1 of that year, the "Western Region Illicit Drug and Cannabis Control Program" laid out policy and guidelines for western parks to handle the issue. The NPS-wide policy was to "identify and control all forms of illicit drug activity upon lands within [NPS] jurisdiction."³⁹ The program outlined protocols for surveying land to identify potential grow operations, procedures for reporting incidents, training for law enforcement park rangers, strategies for cooperation with state and local agencies, and approaches to secure funding. The Western Regional Office supported "this initiative and expect this program to receive high priority and strong commitment from all park management."⁴⁰

³³ Johnson, *Grassroots*, Chapter 5 "'Black Market Blues': Capitalized Cannabis and the Environment 1980-1996." In this chapter, Johnson covers a variety of topics related to the issue, both in Shasta County and California writ large.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 139.

³⁵ "Best Management Practices for Illegal Marijuana Cultivation in National Parks," Draft, December 18, 2014, NPS, p. 1, subfolder "FINAL Documents," subfolder "BMPs," subfolder "Marijuana," subfolder "VEGETATION_PROJECTS," subfolder "LIBRARY-REPORTS," WHIS-DF.

³⁶ James Milestone, "Superintendent's Annual Report 2008-2009," October 2009, p. 22, folder "A2621 Reports Superintendent's," box HQ6, WHIS-AF.

³⁷ Memorandum, Superintendent WHIS to Regional Director, Western Region, "Drug-Related Problems," September 8, 1986, folder "W34 Drugs," box HQ14, WHIS-AF.

³⁸ Letter, "Emergency Law and Order Funding Request, from Ray Foust to Regional Director, Western Region," August 22, 1988, folder "Requests for Funding" box HQ 1, WHIS-AF; Letter, "Appropriations for Drug Interdiction," from Superintendent (WHIS) to Regional Director of Western Region, November 29, 1988, folder "W34 Drugs," box HQ14, WHIS-AF.

³⁹ Western Region Illicit Drug and Cannabis Control Program White Page, April 1, 1984, folder "W34 Drugs," box HQ14, WHIS-AF.

⁴⁰ Memorandum, All Areas and Offices, Western Region from Acting Regional Director, Western Region, "Illicit Drug and Cannabis Control Program," March 26, 1984, folder "W34 Drugs," box HQ14, WHIS-AF.

Despite the stated support from the Regional Office, however, WHIS dealt with inadequate funding and too few trained staff to handle the situation. Grow operations continued to crop up inside the park boundaries and on adjacent lands. In a 1988 request for funding, Superintendent Foust argued that due to a lack of personnel, rangers did not locate any grow sites in 1987. Foust pointed out that the operation located in 1988 could have been operational for several years prior to the bust given its size. If the park had more funding, he argued, LEOs could discover and eradicate sites more consistently.⁴¹

Into the early 1990s, WHIS's limited resources continued to hinder the recreation area's ability to consistently investigate and monitor illegal grow operations. Park staff found an average of three illegal grow operations a year.⁴² Putting LEO-qualified rangers on detection and raid duty for illegal grow operations took them away from general park protection. In the early 1990s, WHIS only had four permanent LEO rangers and usually three to four seasonal LEO rangers who made 200 to 300 arrests a year.⁴³ By taking one or more of these rangers, who were already very busy, and putting them into drug detection, it would put a further strain on WHIS's staff and in turn visitor safety.

In light of the continuing region-wide problem with illegal marijuana cultivation, the Western Regional Office asked parks to develop a written request for any base of non-recurring funds for Drug Enforcement operations for the 1991 fiscal year. WHIS asked the Regional Office to increase LEO staffing again with two GS-7 rangers who would rotate with existing staff on being assigned to participate in interagency law enforcement programs with Shasta County to combat the illegal grow operations for the 1991 year.⁴⁴

Starting in the late 1990s, Mexican drug trafficking organizations (DTOs) began growing marijuana inside the United States, often on remote areas of public lands to avoid the need to smuggle product across the borders. These groups brought a new level of sophistication and scale to grow operations, exploiting WHIS's remote terrain for their illicit activities. Mexican DTO grow operations inside the United States increased after Homeland Security increased efforts to secure the border after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Park staff identified Mexican DTOs operating in WHIS as early in 2001.⁴⁵ That same year, WHIS staff, in cooperation with other agencies, started orchestrating raids on grow sites.⁴⁶ NPS rangers and Shasta County Sheriff officers located areas in WHIS's lower-elevation hills where growers cultivated and established cannabis grow sites.⁴⁷ The interagency force raided the sites and recovered thousands of marijuana plants, guns, fertilizers, and herbicides.⁴⁸

⁴¹ Letter, "Emergency Law and Order Funding Request, from Ray Foust to Regional Director, Western Region," August 22, 1988, folder "Requests for Funding," box HQ1, WHIS-AF.

⁴² Request for Drug Enforcement Program Funding- Non-Reoccurring project/activity, 1991, folder "W34 Drugs," box HQ14, WHIS-AF.

⁴³ Letter, "Appropriations for Drug Interdiction," from Superintendent (WHIS) to Regional Director of Western Region, November 29, 1988, folder "W34 Drugs," box HQ14, WHIS-AF.

⁴⁴ Request for Drug Enforcement Program Funding- Non-Reoccurring project/activity, 1991, folder "W34 Drugs," box HQ14, WHIS-AF.

⁴⁵ Memorandum, James Milestone to Deputy Regional Director, "Safety Alert on Emergency Communications of Park Employees, Volunteers, and Visiting Staff," November 12, 2013, folder "Miscellaneous 4 of 8," box HQ2, WHIS-AF.

⁴⁶ James Milestone, "Major Marijuana Cultivation Sites Destroyed at Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, 5 Men Arrested," July 26, 2016, accessed November 2024, <https://www.nps.gov/whis/learn/news/major-marijuana-cultivation-sites-destroyed-at-whiskeytown-national-recreation-area-5-men-arrested.htm>.

⁴⁷ WHIS, "Manage Access to Enhance Security and Protect Park Resources, Environmental Assessment," August 2010, p. 6, accessed November 2024, <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/document.cfm?documentID=35695>.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 7.

CHAPTER 7.2: CONCESSIONAIRE VISIONS AND REALITIES

Illegal marijuana grow operations have had far-reaching impacts on nearly every aspect of WHIS's management. Former staff emphasized that marijuana cultivation significantly shaped park priorities during this period, drawing sustained administrative, law enforcement, and resource management attention.⁴⁹ Workers tending these plantations often lived on-site, generating trash and human waste, harming wildlife, and posing risks of violent encounters with park staff and visitors. The cultivation process itself required significant water resources, draining streams and other natural water sources essential to the surrounding ecosystem. Additionally, growers frequently used harmful pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers that polluted the environment and contaminated nearby watersheds. These operations also damaged cultural resources by disturbing the ground or repurposing historical structures to house workers or store materials.⁵⁰

It was not until the early 2000s that WHIS initiated a stronger, multi-agency campaign to eradicate continually expanding marijuana sites. WHIS, in collaboration with various partners, also implemented numerous strategies to combat grow operations and mitigate their impacts. In the early 2000s, park staff installed gates on administrative and service roads and placed boulders or other blockages along abandoned roads to restrict access to remote locations. Cutting off access roads was necessary to reduce or eliminate new grow operations, as growers relied on vehicles to transport equipment to cultivation sites. In 2004, the park installed gates on ten administrative roads, reducing marijuana sites, illegal dumping, and unauthorized camping. The park proposed installing an additional ten gates to hinder ease of access on backcountry roads for marijuana growers.⁵¹ By 2009, WHIS ranked second across the entire NPS for marijuana eradication.⁵² Between 2004 and 2010, WHIS had seized approximately 170,578 marijuana plants, with 2006 having the highest record of 71,254 plants.⁵³

⁴⁹ Barbara Alberti (WHIS Chief of Resources and Fire, 2006-2009), written responses to interview questions, email correspondence with authors, April 2026.

⁵⁰ Milestone et al., "Continued Cultivation of Illegal Marijuana in US Western National Parks," in Samantha Weber, ed., *Rethinking Protected Areas in a Changing World: Proceedings of the 2011 George Wright Society Biennial Conference on Parks, Protected Areas, and Cultural Sites* (Hancock, Michigan: The George Wright Society, 2012): pp. 212-213, accessed November 2024 <http://www.georgewright.org/1138milestone.pdf>.

⁵¹ WHIS, "Manage Access to Enhance Security and Protect Park Resources, Environmental Assessment."

⁵² James Milestone, "Superintendent's Annual Report 2008-2009," October 2009, p. 22 folder "A2621 Reports Superintendent's," box HQ6, WHIS-AF.

⁵³ "Best Management Practices to Confront Marijuana Cultivation in Parks," Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Park, and Yosemite National Park, March 2017, p. 6, subfolder "FINAL documents," subfolder "BMPs," subfolder "Marijuana," folder "Digital Files Sent by GA post Research Trip," WHIS-DF.

In the 2010s, Mexican DTOs expanded their presence within WHIS. To counter this, WHIS secured funding specifically for drug interdiction efforts that addressed the growth of DTO activities within the park.⁵⁴ In 2011, WHIS rangers detected six grow operations and removed over 25,000 plants at a street value of \$78,840,000.⁵⁵ In 2014, the park reported that “predictive models indicate that 95% of Whiskeytown is suitable for marijuana growth,” highlighting the widespread nature of the issue.⁵⁶ At one grow operation at WHIS, rangers discovered a digital camera used by the site’s workers. Staff discovered photographs documenting black bears killed by individuals associated with the grow operation, as well as evidence that workers had used a historic mine shaft for water storage.⁵⁷ Rather than being confined to one area, grow operations emerged almost anywhere in the park, making them exceptionally difficult for staff to monitor and control.

In the summer of 2016, WHIS staff, along with the help of other agencies, raided two operations on the Crystal Creek and Whiskey Creek Drainages. The raid on Crystal Creek led to the discovery of a barbed-wire-enclosed camp, two arrests, and the seizure of 7,680 plants. WHIS cleaned up and flew out 3,000 pounds of garbage with a National Guard Black Hawk helicopter.⁵⁸ At Whiskey Creek, authorities arrested three men, confiscated 4,641 plants, and used the National Guard helicopter to fly out over 4,200 pounds of marijuana and over 1,200 pounds of garbage.⁵⁹ Both sites were associated with cartel organizations.

During the late 2010s, WHIS staff continued to partner with other NPS units to combat marijuana cultivation. As California parks that also battled DTOs, Yosemite National Park and Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks continued to be strong partners in the fight. In 2017, for instance, the three parks teamed up to produce “Best Management Practices to Confront Marijuana Cultivation in Parks.” Together, NPS staff across the parks pooled their experience to demonstrate how illegal marijuana cultivation increased the presence of poaching, dangerous chemicals, and pollution, and led to a general uptick in illegal activities that drew staff time and resources away from other necessities.⁶⁰

⁵⁴ Milestone et al., “Continued Cultivation of Illegal Marijuana in US Western National Parks,” in Samantha Weber, ed., *Rethinking Protected Areas in a Changing World: Proceedings of the 2011 George Wright Society Biennial Conference on Parks, Protected Areas, and Cultural Sites* (Hancock, Michigan: The George Wright Society, 2012), accessed November 2024 <http://www.georgewright.org/1138milestone.pdf>; James Milestone, “Annual Report 2010: Whiskeytown National Recreation Area,” 2011, p. 16, subfolder “Superintendents_Annual_Report,” folder “Admin Plans,” WHIS-DF.

⁵⁵ Milestone et al., “Continued Cultivation of Illegal Marijuana in US Western National Parks,” in Samantha Weber, ed., *Rethinking Protected Areas in a Changing World: Proceedings of the 2011 George Wright Society Biennial Conference on Parks, Protected Areas, and Cultural Sites* (Hancock, Michigan: The George Wright Society, 2012).

⁵⁶ WHIS, *Foundation Document: Whiskeytown National Recreation Area*, July 2014, p. 16, subfolder “ADMIN_PLANS,” folder “LIBRARY-REPORTS,” WHIS-DF.

⁵⁷ Milestone et al., “Continued Cultivation of Illegal Marijuana in US Western National Parks,” in Samantha Weber, ed., *Rethinking Protected Areas in a Changing World: Proceedings of the 2011 George Wright Society Biennial Conference on Parks, Protected Areas, and Cultural Sites* (Hancock, Michigan: The George Wright Society, 2012).

⁵⁸ Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, “Major Marijuana Cultivation Sites Destroyed at Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, 5 Men Arrested,” July 26, 2016, accessed November 2024, <https://www.nps.gov/whis/learn/news/major-marijuana-cultivation-sites-destroyed-at-whiskeytown-national-recreation-area-5-men-arrested.htm>.

⁵⁹ Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, “Major Marijuana Cultivation Sites Destroyed at Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, 5 Men Arrested,” July 26, 2016, accessed November 2024, <https://www.nps.gov/whis/learn/news/major-marijuana-cultivation-sites-destroyed-at-whiskeytown-national-recreation-area-5-men-arrested.htm>.

⁶⁰ “Best Management Practices to Confront Marijuana Cultivation in Parks,” Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Park, and Yosemite National Park, March 2017, p. 6, subfolder “FINAL documents,” subfolder “BMPs,” folder “Marijuana,” WHIS-DF.

Marijuana cultivation within the park's borders stopped after the 2018 Carr Fire. The fire burned nearly all of WHIS and destroyed the park's illegal marijuana grow operations. Likewise, the fire rendered the once-forested landscape unsuitable for hiding new grow operations. However, the fire's aftermath highlights the need for vigilance as vegetative regrowth could once again make the park attractive to DTOs. Although cultivation has not been documented at the same scale since the Carr Fire, it remains important for staff to retain institutional knowledge of past risk areas and response protocols.

Conclusion

Law enforcement at WHIS has centered around two recurring operational arenas: routine visitor protection in high-use settings and sustained enforcement responses to illegal marijuana cultivation in remote backcountry terrain. Across both arenas, WHIS relied on interagency agreements to extend capacity during periods when staffing levels, dispatch functions, and specialized enforcement needs exceeded what the unit could support with its own personnel. These arrangements shaped day-to-day enforcement practices as well as episodic surges in activity tied to emergent threats, seasonal visitation, and shifting risk profiles.

In visitor-protection work, WHIS addressed persistent safety concerns through targeted policies, patrol strategies, and shared-jurisdiction agreements that aimed to standardize enforcement and reduce response times. Alcohol-related incidents and traffic enforcement pressures produced measurable administrative responses, including a beach alcohol prohibition and later smoke-free policies that formalized behavioral restrictions in concentrated recreation zones. Over time, WHIS also used agreements to secure dispatch support, information-sharing access, and mutual-aid coverage. These tools supported enforcement continuity when budget reductions reduced staffing and when workload intensified during peak visitation periods.

Illegal marijuana cultivation introduced a different enforcement environment—one defined by concealed operations, resource impacts, hazardous materials, and the potential for armed encounters. The record indicates recurring constraints in funding and trained personnel during the early period of cultivation detection, followed by expanded multi-agency operations as grow sites increased in scale and organization, including operations linked to trafficking networks. WHIS combined interdiction work with access-control measures on administrative roads and relied on partner agencies for specialized equipment, aviation support, and coordinated raids. The operational footprint of this enforcement work extended beyond plant removal to include cleanup and mitigation of associated waste and contamination.

The 2018 Carr Fire disrupted cultivation within WHIS by removing concealment cover and destroying active sites, producing a sharp break in the enforcement context described in this chapter. Post-fire conditions reduced the immediate cultivation threat within the burned landscape, while establishing a management context in which regrowth and changing conditions could affect future risk. Within that setting, WHIS's experience with joint operations, access management, and information-sharing remains relevant as an administrative baseline for maintaining visitor protection capacity and responding to illicit activity that can shift across adjacent public lands.

PART VIII

CHAPTER 8.1: PAST THE SHORELINE

Over more than half a century, Whiskeytown National Recreation Area (WHIS) evolved from a newly designated water-based recreation unit into a complex administrative landscape shaped by regulation, environmental risk, interagency coordination, and expanding public expectations. Established in 1965 within the framework of the Trinity River Project, WHIS entered the National Park Service (NPS) with a mandate centered on recreation and scenic preservation. The administrative record, however, reveals that the park's responsibilities quickly extended well past shoreline development.

Between 1965 and 2018, one of the most consequential institutional shifts was the steady expansion and specialization of work. Early staffing structures combined interpretation, resource management, and visitor protection within consolidated divisions operating with modest personnel. Over time, federal compliance requirements, environmental review processes, cultural resource inventories, wildfire planning mandates, concession oversight, and interagency enforcement coordination increased both technical demands and documentation responsibilities. These developments were not unique to Whiskeytown; they are typical of transformations across the NPS during the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, as park units navigated expanding statutory obligations and increasingly complex public expectations. Tasks that once relied heavily on localized decision-making became formalized through environmental assessments (EAs), business plans, foundation documents, and layered review procedures. The park did not simply grow; its workload became more specialized and more procedurally structured.

Visitation patterns reinforced these pressures. Peaks in the late 1970s, 1980s, and early 1990s, followed by later fluctuations, did not alter the fundamental expectation that WHIS would provide safe and reliable public access. As at many NPS units, rising visitation and diversifying recreational uses required expanded maintenance, safety oversight, and regulatory coordination. Trails, roads, marina facilities, cultural sites, and backcountry areas required ongoing monitoring and investment. Increasingly, management attention extended beyond the reservoir itself to encompass upland terrain, watershed systems, historic districts, and ethnographic landscapes. The park's administrative scope became landscape-wide rather than shoreline-centered—an evolution consistent with servicewide efforts to integrate natural and cultural resource stewardship across entire park units.

Despite these institutional changes, several structural features remained constant. Divisional organization—though periodically reorganized or renamed—retained its core components: facilities management, visitor services, law enforcement, resource management, and administration. More persistent still were constraints. Planning documents across

decades repeatedly identified limited staffing and restricted budgets as the park's most enduring challenges. Whether addressing trail erosion, cultural resource surveys, illegal marijuana cultivation, wildfire mitigation, or interpretive programming, administrative ambitions were consistently measured against available personnel and funding—conditions familiar across much of the National Park System.

Certain pressures intensified during the study period. Illegal marijuana cultivation introduced enforcement complexities involving hazardous materials, interagency operations, and public safety concerns. Federal compliance expectations expanded documentation requirements. Most significantly, the fire-prone character of the landscape became an organizing administrative reality. The 2018 Carr Fire marked a profound disruption—destroying infrastructure, altering ecological systems, and reshaping enforcement contexts. Yet even this event revealed institutional continuity: reliance on partnerships, use of established planning mechanisms, and the capacity of staff to operate within structured emergency frameworks.

If constraints shaped Whiskeytown's administrative trajectory, so too did enabling factors. Dedicated permanent and seasonal staff sustained operations despite recurring shortages. Interagency agreements with the US Forest Service (USFS), county agencies, US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and others expanded operational capacity. Partnerships with concessionaires, cooperating associations, nonprofit organizations, and Tribal representatives extended the park's reach beyond its formal boundaries. Consultation with Indigenous communities, particularly the Redding Rancheria, reflected an evolving approach to cultural stewardship within federal policy frameworks. Institutional adaptation occurred less through dramatic structural transformation than through incremental adjustments made by personnel working within enduring administrative systems.

The operational disruptions of 2020 and 2021 provide a clear example. WHIS modified operations in accordance with federal public health guidance and the NPS's *COVID-19 Adaptive Operations Recovery Plan*, issued May 19, 2020.¹ Temporary closures, phased reopenings, and altered service levels occurred within established administrative frameworks. National visitation data indicate that total visits across the system increased from 237 million in 2020 to nearly 300 million in 2021, indicating heightened public demand for outdoor recreation during the pandemic period.² Whiskeytown's operational adjustments occurred within this servicewide context. Rather than altering the park's institutional structure, the pandemic period demonstrated how administrative systems built over decades were mobilized to manage new forms of uncertainty while maintaining the park's core mandate.

Across fifty-three years, Whiskeytown's institutional evolution followed patterns evident across the NPS. Work became more specialized. Regulatory compliance expanded. Environmental risk intensified. Partnerships multiplied. Yet the foundational mandate—to provide for public enjoyment while conserving scenic, historic, and scientific values—remained constant.

¹ National Park Service (NPS), "COVID-19 Adaptive Operations Recovery Plan," May 19, 2020, p. 1, subfolder "2020 Covid," subfolder "COVID-19," folder "20210927," WHIS-DF.

² NPS, "Visitation Numbers," February 22, 2024, accessed November 2024, <https://www.nps.gov/aboutus/visitation-numbers.htm>.

Whiskeytown's administrative history therefore reveals the layering of responsibilities over time within enduring structural limits. Managing a national recreation area required coordination across jurisdictions, sustained attention to cultural and natural resources, vigilance against illicit activity, and adaptation to life in a fire-prone landscape—all while operating within persistent fiscal constraints.

Along and beyond the shoreline of Whiskeytown Lake lies a complex administrative terrain shaped by policy, environment, and the daily labor of those who worked within it. From 1965 through 2018—and as later documentation confirms in its aftermath—Whiskeytown's history demonstrates that institutional resilience rests less on dramatic reorganization than on sustained adaptation within established frameworks of federal land management.

PART IX

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APPENDIX: ENABLING LEGISLATION

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Public Law 89-336

AN ACT

To establish the Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area in the State of California, and for other purposes.

November 8, 1965
[H. R. 797]

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That in order to provide, in a manner coordinated with the other purposes of the Central Valley project, for the public outdoor recreation use and enjoyment of the Whiskeytown, Shasta, Clair Engle, and Lewiston reservoirs and surrounding lands in the State of California by present and future generations and the conservation of scenic, scientific, historic, and other values contributing to public enjoyment of such lands and waters, there is hereby established, subject to valid existing rights, the Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area in the State of California (hereinafter referred to as the "recreation area"). The boundaries of the recreation area, which consists of the Whiskeytown unit, the Shasta unit, and the Clair Engle-Lewiston unit, shall be those shown in drawing numbered BOR-WST 1004, dated July 1963, entitled "Proposed Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area", which is on file and available for public inspection in the office of the Director of the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, Department of the Interior. The Whiskeytown unit shall be administered by the Secretary of the Interior; and the Shasta and Clair Engle-Lewiston units shall be administered by the Secretary of Agriculture, except that lands or waters needed or used for the operation of the Central Valley project shall continue to be administered by the Secretary of the Interior to the extent he determines to be required for such operation. The two Secretaries shall coordinate their planning and administration of the respective units in such manner as to provide integrated management policies for the recreation area as a whole for the purposes of this Act in order to bring about uniformity to the fullest extent feasible in the administration and use of the recreation area.

Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area, Calif. Establishment.

Administration.

ACQUISITION OF PROPERTY

SEC. 2. (a) Within the boundaries of the portion of the recreation area under his jurisdiction and outside such boundaries when required for the construction or improvement of access roads thereto, each Secretary is authorized to acquire lands, waters, or other property, or any interest therein, in such manner, including exchange as hereinafter provided, as he considers to be in the public interest to carry out the purposes of this Act. In connection with any such acquisition, each Secretary may permit the grantor a reservation of all or any part of the minerals or of any other interest or right of use in such lands or waters on such terms and conditions as the Secretary may deem appropriate. Any property or interest therein owned by the State of California or any political subdivision thereof within the recreation area may be acquired under the authority of this Act only with the concurrence of the owner. Notwithstanding any other provision of law,

any Federal property located within the recreation area may, with the concurrence of the agency having custody thereof, be transferred without consideration to the administrative jurisdiction of the appropriate Secretary for use by him in carrying out the purposes of this Act.

The Secretary of the Interior, in order to assure public access to Clear Creek and to provide hiking and horseback riding trails for the public, may, as he deems necessary for these purposes acquire such easements or other interests on either or both sides of Clear Creek

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between the south boundary of the Whiskeytown unit and the highway at Igo, California.

The Secretary of Agriculture is authorized to acquire scenic easements or such other interests, including ownership of the land therein, as he determines to be appropriate to protect and assure the appearance of a strip of land not to exceed six hundred and sixty feet on each side of the centerline of Federal Aid Secondary Highway Numbered 1089 between the points where said highway crosses the south line of sections 19 and 20, township 35 north, range 8 west, and where it crosses the south line of section 18, township 36 north, range 7 west, on the northwesterly side of the Clair Engle-Lewiston unit: *Provided*, That such easements or interests shall not be acquired without the consent of the owners so long as the appropriate local zoning agency shall have in force and applicable to such property a duly adopted, valid, zoning ordinance that, in the judgment of the Secretary of Agriculture, conforms to the zoning standards set forth in regulations issued pursuant to subsection (e).

Mutual consultation.

The two Secretaries shall engage in mutual consultation with respect to such acquisition and to exchange transactions so as to promote uniform policies therefor insofar as practicable, taking into consideration the purposes of the recreation area as a whole, the responsibility of the Secretary of the Interior for the administration of federally owned minerals and of the Central Valley project, and the responsibility of the Secretary of Agriculture for the administration of national forests.

Acquisition of non-Federal property.

(b) When the public interests will be benefited thereby, the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture are each authorized to accept title to any non-Federal property within any part of the recreation area and in exchange therefor convey to the grantor of such property any federally owned property under his jurisdiction within the State of California which he classifies as suitable for exchange or other disposal, notwithstanding any other provision of law. The properties so exchanged shall be approximately equal in fair market value: *Provided*, That the Secretary of the Interior or the Secretary of Agriculture, as the case may be, may accept cash from or pay cash to the grantor in such exchange in order to equalize the value of the properties exchanged. The Secretary of Agriculture shall obtain the concurrence of the Secretary of the Interior with respect to the value of any mineral interests in any such exchange proposed to be made by the Secretary of Agriculture.

Noncommercial residency.

(c) Any owner or owners of improved residential property on the date of its acquisition by either Secretary may, as a condition to such acquisition, retain the right of use and occupancy of the property by himself and members of his immediate family for noncommercial residential purposes for a term ending at the death of such owner, the death of his spouse, or the day his last surviving child reaches the age of thirty, whichever is the latest. The value of the right retained shall be taken into consideration by the respective Secretary in determining the value of the property being acquired.

"Improved property,"

(d) Privately owned "improved property" or interests therein shall not be acquired under this Act without the consent of the owner so long as an appropriate local zoning agency shall have in force and applicable to such property a duly adopted, valid, zoning ordinance that is approved by the Secretary having jurisdiction of the unit wherein the property is located. The term "improved property" as used in this Act shall mean any building or group of related buildings the actual construction of which was begun before February 7, 1963, together with not more than three acres of the land in the same ownership on which the building or group of buildings is situated: *Provided*.

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That the respective Secretary may exclude from improved property any shore or waters, together with so much of the land adjoining such shore or waters as he deems necessary for public access thereto.

(e) Prior to the approval of any zoning ordinance for the purposes of this section, the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture shall jointly issue regulations, which may be amended from time to time, specifying standards for such zoning ordinances. Standards specified in such regulations shall have the object of (1) prohibiting new commercial or industrial uses, other than commercial or industrial uses which the Secretaries consider to be consistent with the purposes of this Act; (2) promoting the protection and development of properties for purposes of this Act by means of use, acreage, frontage, setback, density, height, or other requirements; and (3) providing that the appropriate Secretary shall receive notice of any variance granted under, or any exception made to, the application of the zoning ordinance. Following issuance of such regulations, each Secretary shall approve any zoning ordinance or any amendment to an approved zoning ordinance submitted to him that conforms to the standards contained in the regulations in effect at the time of adoption of the ordinance or amendment. Such approval shall remain effective for so long as such ordinance or amendment remains in effect as approved.

Joint issue of zoning regulations.

(f) The suspension of the respective Secretary's authority to acquire any improved property without the owner's consent shall automatically cease if (1) such property is made the subject of a variance or exception to any applicable zoning ordinance that does not conform to any applicable standard contained in regulations issued pursuant to this section; or (2) if such property is put to any use which does not conform to any applicable zoning ordinance.

(g) Each Secretary shall furnish to any party in interest upon request a certificate indicating the property with respect to which the Secretary's authority to acquire without the owner's consent is suspended.

(h) Within the Shasta and Clair Engle-Lewiston units any owner of unimproved property who proposes to develop his property or a part thereof for service to the public may submit to the Secretary of Agriculture a development plan which shall set forth the manner in which and the time by which the property is to be developed and the use to which it is proposed to be put. If upon review of such plan the Secretary determines that the development and use of the property in the manner prescribed conforms to a zoning ordinance approved in accordance with the provisions of this section and that such use and development would serve the purposes of this Act, the Secretary of Agriculture may in his discretion issue to such owner a certificate to that effect. Upon the issuance of any such certificate and so long as such property is developed, maintained, and used in conformity therewith, the authority of the Secretary of Agriculture to acquire such property or any interest therein without the consent of the owner shall be suspended. This subsection shall not apply to any property which

Property development certificate.

the Secretary of Agriculture determines to be needed for easements and rights-of-way for access, utilities, or facilities, or for administrative sites, campgrounds, or other areas needed for use by the United States for visitors to the national recreation area.

ESTABLISHMENT OF UNITS: BOUNDARY DESCRIPTIONS

SEC. 3. (a) When the Secretary of Agriculture determines that sufficient lands, waters, or interest therein are owned or have been acquired by the United States within the boundaries of the Shasta unit or within the boundaries of the Clair Engle-Lewiston unit to

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permit efficient initial development and administration for the purposes of this Act, he shall publish in the Federal Register a notice to that effect and a detailed description of the boundaries of such unit.

(b) When the Secretary of the Interior determines that sufficient lands, waters, or interest therein are owned or have been acquired by the United States within the boundaries of the Whiskeytown unit to permit efficient initial development and administration for the purposes of this Act, he shall publish in the Federal Register a notice to that effect and a detailed description of the boundaries of the unit.

(c) Following the publication of any such notice, the respective Secretaries may continue to acquire the remaining property within the recreation area.

ADMINISTRATION: PRIORITIES

SEC. 4. (a) Each Secretary is authorized and directed to administer the portion of the recreation area under his jurisdiction in a manner coordinated with the other purposes of the Central Valley project and with the purposes of the recreation area as a whole and in such manner as in his judgment will best provide for (1) public outdoor recreation benefits; (2) conservation of scenic, scientific, historic, and other values contributing to public enjoyment; and (3) such management, utilization, and disposal of renewable natural resources as in the judgment of the respective Secretary will promote or is compatible with, and does not significantly impair, public recreation and conservation of scenic, scientific, historic, or other values contributing to public enjoyment. Such administration shall be carried out under land and water use management plans which each Secretary shall prepare and may from time to time revise in consultation with the other.

(b) In the administration of the portion of the recreation area under his jurisdiction—

(1) the Secretary of Agriculture shall utilize statutory authorities relating to the national forests in such manner as he deems appropriate to carry out the purposes of this Act; and

(2) the Secretary of the Interior may utilize such statutory authorities relating to areas of the national park system and such statutory authority otherwise available to him for the conservation and development of natural resources as he deems appropriate to carry out the purposes of this Act.

HUNTING AND FISHING

SEC. 5. Each Secretary shall permit hunting and fishing on lands and waters under his jurisdiction within the recreation area in accordance with the applicable laws of the State of California and of the United States: *Provided*, That each Secretary may designate zones where, and establish periods when, no hunting or fishing shall

be permitted for reasons of public safety, administration, or public use and enjoyment not compatible with hunting or fishing. Regulations prescribing any such restrictions shall be issued after consultation with the California Department of Fish and Game.

MINERAL DEVELOPMENT

SEC. 6. The lands within the recreation area, subject to valid existing rights, are hereby withdrawn from location, entry, and patent under the United States mining laws. The Secretary of the Interior, under such regulations as he deems appropriate, may permit the removal of the nonleasable minerals from lands or interests in lands

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under his jurisdiction within the recreation area in the manner prescribed by section 10 of the Act of August 4, 1939, as amended (53 Stat. 1196; 43 U.S.C. 387), and from those under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of Agriculture within the recreation area in accordance with the provisions of section 3 of the Act of September 1, 1949 (63 Stat. 683; 30 U.S.C. 192c), and he may permit the removal of leasable minerals from lands or interests in lands within the recreation area in accordance with the Mineral Leasing Act of February 25, 1920, as amended (30 U.S.C. 181 et seq.), or the Acquired Lands Mineral Leasing Act of August 7, 1947 (30 U.S.C. 351 et seq.), if he finds that such disposition would not have significant adverse effects on the purposes of the Central Valley project or the administration of the recreation area: *Provided*, That any lease or permit respecting such minerals in lands administered by the Secretary of Agriculture shall be issued only with his consent and subject to such conditions as he may prescribe.

41 Stat. 437
61 Stat. 913

All receipts derived from permits and leases issued under the authority of this section on lands administered by the Secretary of Agriculture shall be paid into the same funds or accounts in the Treasury of the United States and shall be distributed in the same manner as provided for other receipts from the lands affected by the lease or permit, except that any receipts derived from permits or leases issued on those or other lands in the recreation area under the Mineral Leasing Act of February 25, 1920, as amended, or the Act of August 7, 1947, shall be disposed of as provided in the applicable Act; and receipts from the disposition of nonleasable minerals from public lands under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of the Interior shall be disposed of in the same manner as moneys received from the sale of public lands.

Disposal of
ceipts.

STATE JURISDICTION

SEC. 7. Nothing in this Act shall deprive any State or political subdivision thereof of its right to exercise civil and criminal jurisdiction within the recreation area or of its right to tax persons, corporations, franchises, or property, including mineral or other interests, in or on lands or waters within the recreation area.

ADDITIONS TO THE SHASTA AND TRINITY NATIONAL FORESTS

SEC. 8. The exterior boundaries of the Shasta National Forest in the State of California are hereby extended to include the lands described in the Act of March 19, 1948 (62 Stat. 83), and sections 22 and 27, township 35 north, range 1 west, Mount Diablo base and meridian. The exterior boundaries of the Trinity National Forest

the State of California are hereby extended to include the lands described in the Act of March 19, 1948 (62 Stat. 83), and sections 22 and 27, township 35 north, range 1 west, Mount Diablo base and meridian. The exterior boundaries of the Trinity National Forest in the State of California are hereby extended to include all of sections 4, 5, and 8, the east half and the northwest quarter of section 6, the east half of section 7, the northwest quarter of section 17, and the northeast quarter of section 18, township 33 north, range 8 west, Mount Diablo base and meridian. Subject to any valid claim or entry now existing and hereafter legally maintained, all public lands of the United States and all lands of the United States heretofore or hereafter acquired or reserved for use in connection with the Shasta, Clair Engle, or Lewiston Reservoirs of the Central Valley project within the exterior boundaries of the Shasta and Trinity National Forests which have not heretofore been added to and made a part of such forests, and all lands of the United States acquired for the purposes of the recreation area in the Shasta or Clair Engle-Lewiston units are hereby added to and made a part of the respective national forests within which they are situated: *Provided*, That lands within the flow

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[79 STAT.]

lines of any reservoir operated and maintained by the Department of the Interior or otherwise needed or used for the operation of the Central Valley project shall continue to be administered by the Secretary of the Interior to the extent he determines to be required for such operation.

Disposal of
revenues.

SEC. 9. Revenues and fees obtained by the United States from operation of the national recreation area shall be subject to the same statutory provisions concerning the disposition thereof as are similar revenues collected in areas of the national park system except that fees and revenues obtained from mineral development and from activities under other public land laws within the recreation area shall be disposed of in accordance with the provisions of the applicable laws.

Appropriation.

SEC. 10. There are hereby authorized to be appropriated for the acquisition of lands and interests in land pursuant to the provisions of this Act not more than \$21,600,000. There are also authorized to be appropriated not more than \$22,700,000 for the development of recreation facilities pursuant to the provisions of this Act.

Approved November 8, 1965.

Public Law 89-337

AN ACT

November 8, 1965
[S. 2679]

To amend the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act, as amended.

Watersheds.
Floodwater ca-
pacity, increase.
70 Stat. 1088.
16 USC 1002.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That section 2 of the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act (68 Stat. 666), as amended, is amended by striking out "more than five thousand acre-feet of floodwater detention capacity" and inserting in lieu thereof "more than twelve thousand five hundred acre-feet of floodwater detention capacity".

Approved November 8, 1965.

Public Law 89-338

AN ACT

November 8, 1965
[H. R. 7475]

To name the authorized lock and dam numbered 6 on the Arkansas River in Arkansas and the lake created thereby for David D. Terry.

David D. Terry
lock and dam;
David D. Terry
Lake.
Designation.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That lock and dam numbered 6, Arkansas, a feature of the Arkansas River navigation project, authorized to be constructed by the River and Harbor Act of July 24, 1946 (60 Stat. 641, 647), shall be known and designated hereafter as the David D. Terry lock and dam, and the lake created thereby as the David D. Terry Lake. Any law, regulation, map, document, record, or other paper of the United States in which such lock and dam and lake are referred to shall be held to refer to such lock and dam as the David D. Terry lock and dam, and the lake as the David D. Terry Lake.

Approved November 8, 1965.

APPENDIX: SUPERINTENDENT CHRONOLOGY

Samuel A. King

Project Manager (Pre-Designation Leadership)

1962–1965

Led transition from Bureau of Reclamation oversight to National Park Service administration; established foundational interagency agreements; oversaw construction of initial administrative facilities, staff housing, and early visitor infrastructure prior to formal designation in 1965.

Leon J. Mitchell

Superintendent

1966–1977

First official superintendent following designation. Guided foundational planning, boundary adjustments, early environmental compliance, expansion of natural and cultural resource management programs, infrastructure upgrades, and establishment of environmental education programming (NEED Camp).

Ray Foust

Superintendent

1978–1995

Longest-serving superintendent. Formalized administrative procedures, expanded staffing and volunteer programs, strengthened visitor safety policies (including alcohol restrictions at swim beaches), increased prescribed fire use, addressed emerging resource protection issues, and expanded interpretive and community engagement initiatives.

David Pugh

Superintendent

1995–2000

Advanced integrated resource management planning, including the 1997 Resources Management Plan; addressed budgetary constraints and government shutdown impacts; implemented ban on personal watercraft; strengthened educational programming and concession oversight.

James Milestone

Superintendent

2000–2018

Expanded recreation and trail development; increased community engagement and interpretive programming; implemented smoke-free policies; oversaw planning initiatives and public accessibility efforts; tenure concluded following Department of the Interior investigation and reassignment in 2018.

Craig Ackerman
Acting Superintendent
2018

Served in acting capacity during the initial leadership transition following Milestone's reassignment.

Patrick Gubbins
Acting Superintendent
2018

Served in acting capacity during the Carr Fire.

Josh Hoines
Superintendent
2018–Present

Assumed leadership following the Carr Fire; directed large-scale disaster recovery, ecological restoration, infrastructure rehabilitation, and climate resilience planning; strengthened interagency coordination and community partnerships during post-fire recovery period.

APPENDIX: MAJOR PARKWIDE PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT DOCUMENTS

1964

Master Plan (Pre-Designation). Foundational planning framework organizing management under “Land,” “Visitor,” and “Staff.”

1971

Master Coordination Plan. Organized WHIS into three management zones (Public Use and Development; Preservation; Private Use and Development) to assist with planning and resource management.

1972

Draft Revised Master Plan. Incorporated early operational experience and expanded recreation development.

1975

Natural Resource Management Plan. First systematic framework for environmental stewardship.

1976

Master Plan (Comprehensive Update). Integrated recreation and environmental planning under emerging federal compliance standards.

1978

Historic Resources Study. Provided the first systematic historical synthesis of the area for park use.

1982

Addendum to the Natural Resource Management Plan. Expanded monitoring, ecological studies, and fire management protocols.

1982

Cultural Resource Management Plan. First formalized strategy for cultural resource preservation, including Tower House Historic District.

1988

Amendment to the 1976 Master Plan. Reduced mineral mine leasing acreage within park boundaries.

1993

Fire Management Plan. The first official fire management plan for the park used to “supplement the fires management sections,” of the Natural Resource Management Plan and Master Plan.

1997

Resources Management Plan. First comprehensive coordination of natural, cultural, and recreational resource management.

1999–2000

General Management Plan (GMP) and Environmental Impact Statement. Fifteen-year planning framework replacing reliance on the 1976 Master Plan.

2000

Ethnographic Overview and Assessment and Traditional Use Study. Documented Native American affiliations, traditional land use, and Tribal concerns.

2001

Cultural Resources Overview. This document summarized known resources and information on the pre-history, Native American groups, and history of WHIS along with recommendations for future research and planning.

2001

Strategic Plan (Government Performance and Results Act). Established measurable goals and performance benchmarks.

2001

Exotic Plant Management Plan. Identified and planned for managing exotic plant species within Park Boundaries.

2002

Museum Management Plan. Identified and described collection management issues at the park and made recommendations to address these issues.

2003-2004

Fire Management Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Statement. This updated the 1993 Fire Management Plan to include and incorporate information from the General Management Plan of 1999, the Natural Resources Management Plan of 1998, The Federal Wildland Fire Policy of 1995, the National Fire Plan of 2000, Director's Order #18 of 1998.

2004

Invasive Species Management Plan. Identified and planned for management of invasive plant species.

2005

Vegetation Management Plan. Identified desirable vegetation conditions in the park and how to achieve these goals.

2008

Lower Clear Creek Anadromous Fish Restoration Project (EA). This EA covered a restoration project on the Lower Clear Creek to improve habitats for salmon and steelhead populations in the stream.

2008

Western Area Power Administration Operations and Maintenance Plan (EA). This EA covered WAPA's revised maintenance operation plans for their powerlines running through WHIS.

2008

Museum Management Plan. This was a cooperative plan with Redwood National and State Parks, Lassen Volcanic National Park, and WHIS which shared archival and collections space at the Redwood National and State Parks South Operations Center in Orick California and at the respective parks.

2009

Shasta Bally Telecommunication Site Environmental Assessment. This EA covered the future management of the telecommunication site on top of Shasta Bally with the park selecting an alternative for the existing companies and agencies to remain at the site.

2009

Climate Friendly Parks Action Plan. As part of the "Climate Friendly Parks Program," this document outlined actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in WHIS.

2013

Fire Management Plan Update. This was a part of a mandated 5-year update for FMPs by NPS and provided strategy for firefighter safety, minimizing loss and costs, and maximizing availability of suppression resources.

2014

Foundation Document. Defined WHIS's purpose, significance, fundamental resources and values, and major management challenges.

2016

Accessibility Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan Overview. First document to identify physical, parkwide, and programmatic associability issues and plan for improving accessibility in those categories.

APPENDIX: MAJOR PARKWIDE PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT DOCUMENTS

2016

Archaeological Overview and Assessment. Synthesized archaeological fieldwork conducted in the park into a single document and provided management recommendations.

2016

Tower House Historic District Interim Orchard Management Plan. Reviewed existing information, documented the historical development and existing conditions of the orchard, and provided recommendations for managing the orchard.

2017

Long-Range Interpretive Plan. Outlined interpretive goals and essential interpretive themes for the park over the next five year. The plan was finalized and corrected in 2019, but retained a cover page date of 2017.

2018

Carr Fire After Action Review (AAR). Interagency operational review following the Carr Fire.

2018

Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) Documentation Carr Fire. Assessed the damage of the Carr Fire and identified next steps in rehabilitating resources impacted by the fire.

2018

Black Bear Management Plan. Outlined bear management procedures at the park.

2020

The Wintu Homeland of Clear Creek, Ethnographic Accounts of Whiskeytown. A study focused on the ethnography of the Wintu within the boundaries of present Whiskeytown.

2022

Trails Management Plan (Environmental Assessment). Post-Carr Fire trail rehabilitation and long-term backcountry management framework.

2022

Fire Management Plan Update. FMP updated again in 2022 (and annually thereafter) as part of the FMP Review Process to incorporate national, regional, and local evolution, as well as changes in wildland fire policy, process, and implementation guidance since 2013. This was also the first FMP post-Carr Fire.

2022

Camden and Tower Historic District Cultural Landscape Report. A cultural landscape report that described the resources, history, conditions of the Camden House, and Tower House Historic District.

2022

Whiskeytown Visitor Center Historic Structures Report. Provided an in-depth look at the architecture and architectural history of the Visitor Center.

2023

WHIS Scope of Collections. Provides guidance and direction for the acquisition of museum objects.

2025

Historic Resources Study. This report provided historic contexts for the park and described resources within the parks boundaries within those contexts.

2025

Tower House Historic District Historic Structures Report. Provided an in-depth look at the architecture and architectural history of the buildings in the Tower House Historic District.

APPENDIX: NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES PROPERTIES AND DESIGNATIONS

(See WHIS records for complete listing)

Site Name	Site Type	Individual and Associated Features	SHPO Eligibility
Building 100: Administrative Headquarters Building	Historic Industry		Determined Not Eligible
Brandy Creek Developed Area	Mission 66		Determined Not Eligible
Brandy Creek Fee Station	Mission 66		Demolished – Determined Not Eligible
Carr PH Housing Developed Area (Multiple Sites)	Historic Habitation		Determined Not Eligible
Judge Carr Memorial Developed Area	Historic Industry		Determined Not Eligible
Carr Powerhouse Substation (USBR)	Historic Industry		Determined Eligible
Camden Toll Road/LR/SR20	Historic Road		Recommended Not Eligible
Clear Creek Canal - Lower	Historic Industry		Recommended Not Eligible
Clear Creek Canal - Upper	Historic Industry		Determined Not Eligible
Crystal Creek Conservation Camp	Historic District		Determined Not Eligible
Crystal Creek Quarry	Historic Industry		Unevaluated
Building 318: Park Residence	Historic Habitation		Determined Not Eligible

APPENDIX: NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES PROPERTIES AND DESIGNATIONS

Site Name	Site Type	Individual and Associated Features	SHPO Eligibility
El Dorado Mine Historic District and Landscape – Bickford (Destroyed by Carr Fire in 2018)	Historic Mine		Listed
Building 105: Facilities and Maintenance Building	Mission 66		Determined Not Eligible
John F. Kennedy Memorial Panel	Memorial		Determined Not Eligible
Mill Creek Ditch	Historic Industry		Listed
NEED/WES Camp (Demolished in 2025. Being Rebuilt)	Historic District		Determined Not Eligible
Oak Bottom Developed Area	Mission 66		Determined Not Eligible
Peltier Bridge	Historic Bridge		Determined Not Eligible
PG&E French Gulch 1101 Distribution Line	Historic Industry		Determined Not Eligible
Pioneer Road	Historic Road		Determined Not Eligible
Portuguese Flat Mine	Historic Mine		Determined Eligible Nominated for NRHP
Princess Ditch	Historic Industry		Determined Eligible
Shasta Bally Road	Historic Road		Determined Not Eligible
Shasta Bally Telecommunications Facility	Historic Industry		Determined Not Eligible
South Fork Mountain Road	Historic Road		Determined Not Eligible
State Route 299 (Caltrans)	Historic Road		Recommended Not Eligible
Tower House - Soo-Yeh-Choo-Pus Archaeological District	Archaeological District		Listed
Tower House Historic District	Historic District	Clear Creek Foot Bridge, Mill Creek Ditch, Camden & Tenant House and Barn	Listed

Site Name	Site Type	Individual and Associated Features	SHPO Eligibility
Tower House Mining Ditch District	Historic District	Irrigation System (Crystal, Mill, Willow Creek Ditches)	Listed
Trinity - Cottonwood 115 kV Transmission Line (PG&E)	Historic Industry		Determined Not Eligible
Visitor Center Historic District	Mission 66		Determined Eligible
Building 321: WHIS Fire Module	Historic Habitation		Determined Not Eligible
Building 324, Park Residence	Historic Habitation		Determined Not Eligible
Whiskey Creek Road & Culvert (2 Road Segments) – Shasta County	Historic Road		Determined Not Eligible
Whiskeytown Dam	Historic Industry		Unevaluated
Whiskeytown Post Office	Historic Structure		Determined Not Eligible Destroyed by Carr Fire 2018
Whiskey Creek East Developed Area (Group Reservation -Day Use Area)	Historic		Determined Not Eligible

APPENDIX: MAJOR FIRE CHRONOLOGY

Year	Fire Name	Total Acreage Burned
1980	Tower House	2,414.23
1990	Kanaka	2,900.71
2004	French	12,675.35
2008	Motion	28,329.74
2008	Whiskeytown Complex/Moon	35,312.22
2018	Carr	229,651.4
2020	Zogg	56,338.1

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