UNIT 663

SAN ONOFRE STATE BEACH

GENERAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

September 1972

Resource Management Plan and General Development Plan for

SAN ONOFRE STATE BEACH

STATE OF CALIFORNIA THE RESOURCES AGENCY
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION
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DEPARTMENT
OF
PARKS AND RECREATION

SEPTEMBER 1972

H. LEE WARREN
DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

Resource Management Plan and General Development Plan for

SAN ONOFRE STATE BEACH

Prepared by

DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION BRANCH

September 1972

Reprinted December, 1972

Reprinted
OCTOBER 1974

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CONTENTS

I	Summary	1
II	Need	2
III	Resources Analysis	3
IV	Resource Management Plan	11
V	The Plan for Development	12
VI	Environmental Impact Statement	15
	References	17

STATE OF CALIFORNIA - RESOURCES AGENCY

DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

STATE PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION

P.O. BOX 942896, SACRAMENTO, CA 94296-0001

EXCERPTS FROM THE MINUTES OF OCTOBER 1972
San Onofre State Beach
Resource Management Plan and General Development Plan

It was moved by Commissioner Bonnicksen, seconded by Commissioner Starkey, and carried by roll call vote with Commissioner McMillan voting NO that the following resolution be adopted:

WHEREAS the Director of the Department of Parks and Recreation has presented to this Commission for approval the proposed Resource Management Plan and General Development Plan for San Onofre State Beach; and

WHEREAS this reflects the long-range development plan so as to provide for the optimum recreational use of the shoreline and related upland areas consistent with their protection;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that this Commission approves the Department of Parks and Recreation's "Resource Management Plan and General Development Plan for San Onofre State Beach", dated September 1972, subject to such environmental changes as the Director shall determine advisable and necessary to implement carrying out the provisions and objects of said plan; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the agricultural land along San Mateo Creek, which was included in the area as a provision of the lease, be reserved for agricultural purposes.

* * *

Re. SAN ONOFRE STATE BEACH
RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN and
GENERAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN dated September 1972

Note: This plan was made obsolete when the Park and Recreation Commission approved a "Revised General Plan" in March 1984. The Final was printed in June 1984. Though this revision is sometimes listed as an "Amendment" it can be considered a new General Plan.

Plates

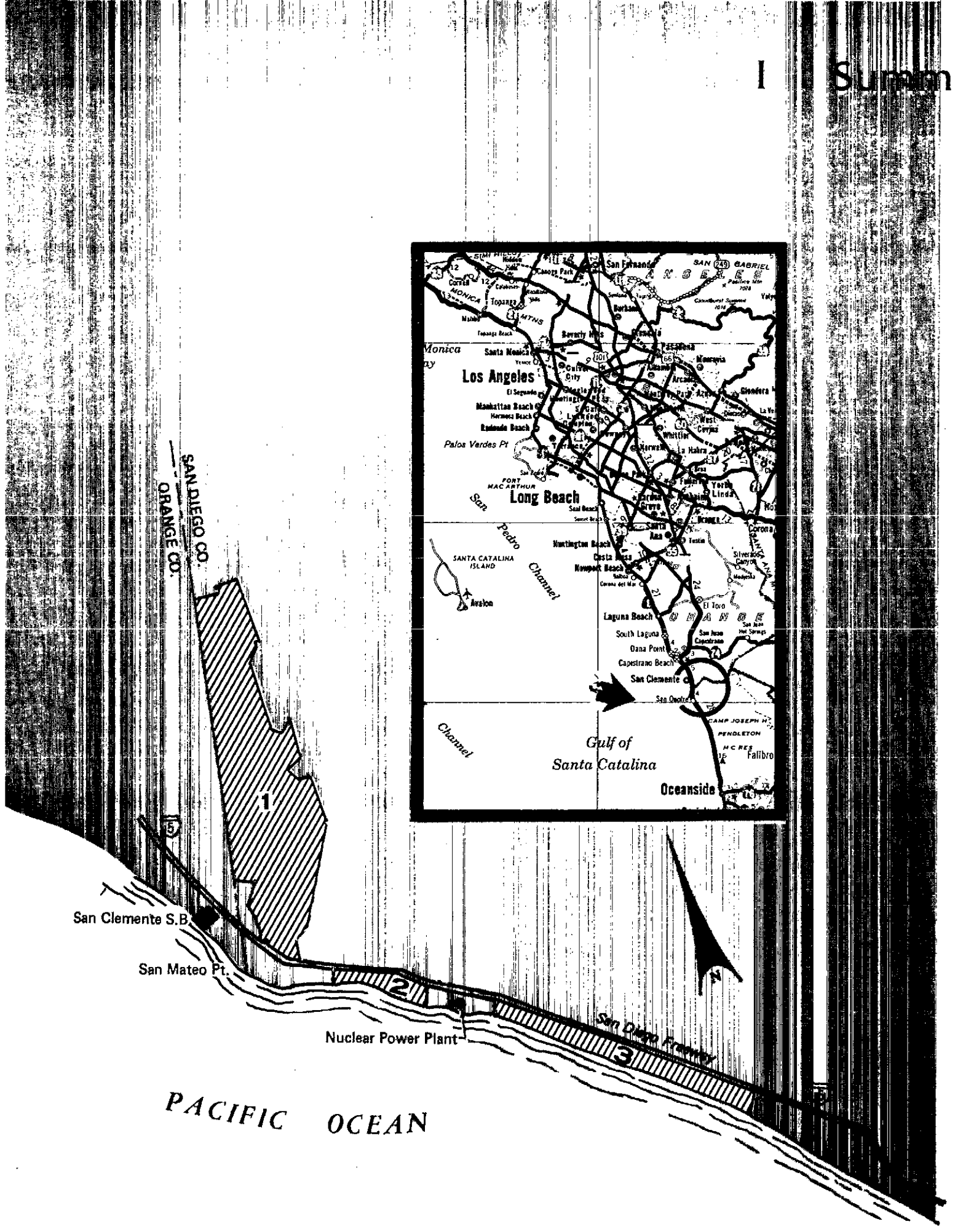
Resource Analysis 5

- Vegetation Values
- Wildlife Habitat Values
- Archeological Sites
- Scenic Values
- Agricultural Values

Allowable Use Intensity Map 9

General Development Plan 13

I Summary



San Onofre State Beach contains 2,945 acres of land in three separate parcels which can be developed to provide facilities for camping, picnicking, swimming, surfing, fishing, hiking and cycling. Located midway between Los Angeles and San Diego, the park will, when developed to its full potential, help alleviate the critical shortage throughout Southern California metropolitan areas of recreation facilities within the zero-to-two hour travel zone.

The park contains 55 acres of beach and 24,000 feet of ocean frontage. In addition to swimming and surf fishing, this area is famous for some of the best surfing in California.

A careful resource analysis has indicated that certain areas at the park can accommodate intensive development. Those portions of the park suitable for high intensity use will provide space for more than 1,000 campsites, 1,600 day use parking spaces, four group camp areas, two campfire centers, and the necessary service facilities.

Other areas, such as the rugged cliffs and arroyos at the edge of the coastal plain, are suitable for low density use. They have a high scenic value and will be traversed by approximately 25 miles of hiking trails.

Planned development of this area as a park will also include preservation of the marshy area at the lower end of San Mateo Creek, one of the few remaining fresh water marshes in the Southern California area.

Ultimately, the unit has a potential to provide for 7,335 overnight visitors in 1,467 campsites and three group areas; 6,384 daytime visitors can be accommodated by the parking lots adjacent to the beaches.

The mild climate in this area will allow the park to be used throughout the year. Summer temperatures range from 62° to 85°. In the winter season the temperature varies from a low of 44° to the low 70s. Rainfall averages about 13 inches annually.

The land has been acquired by the State of California under a 50-year lease from the Department of the Navy.

Funding for initial development is anticipated in the 1973-74 fiscal year.

Planned Development

Type of Facility	Proposed Facilities
Camp Units	1,167
Group Camp Units	4
Parking Facilities (Serving beach day use)	1,296
Parking Facilities (Serving inland day use)	300
Campfire Centers	2
Trails	25 mi.
Trailer Sanitation Stations	10
Concession Buildings (Food and beach rental)	2
Food and Laundry Service	1

II Need

San Onofre State Beach lies between Los Angeles and San Diego, two of the fastest growing metropolitan areas in California. It is located within the zero-to-one-hour travel time zone of the Los Angeles metropolitan complex and within the one-to-two-hour zone of San Diego metropolitan area. It is now apparent that recreational areas close to large population centers will be critically needed to meet recreation demands in the years to come. San Clemente State Beach, just upcoast of San Onofre, contains 157 campsites which were filled to capacity 143 nights during the 1971-72 fiscal year. Nearly 50,000 prospective campers were turned away during this period.

Projected Population*

	1970	1980	1990
Los Angeles-San Bernardino-Riverside metropolitan complex	9,549,700	10,980,200	12,899,800
San Diego metropolitan area	1,245,100	1,679,200	2,141,500

*Department of Finance, 9/71

Recreation Demand

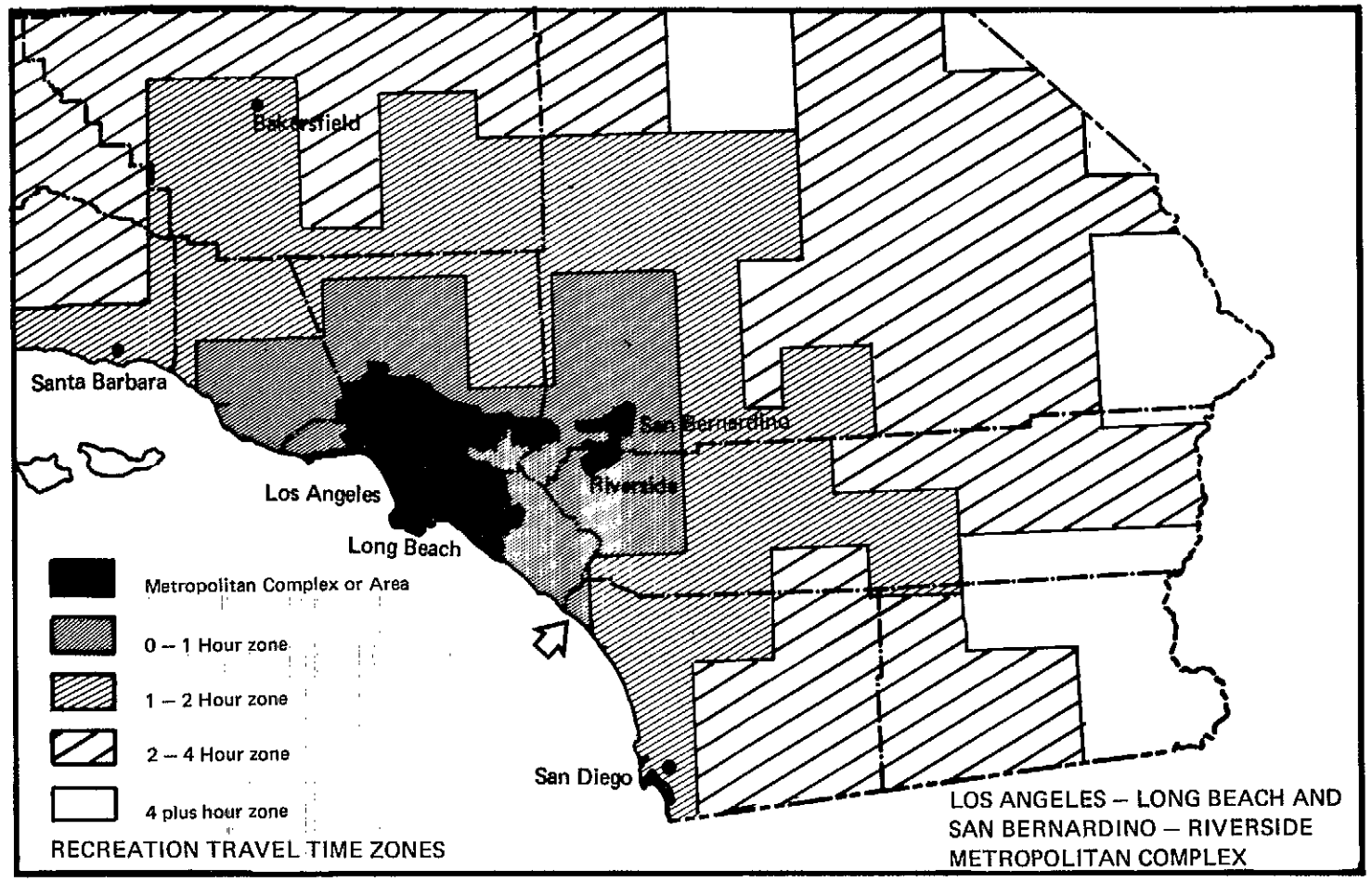
The recreation demand for the residents of these metropolitan areas is increasing faster than the population growth. Between 1960 and 1980 the population of the San Diego metropolitan area is expected to increase 61 percent while the recreation demand is expected to increase 85 percent.

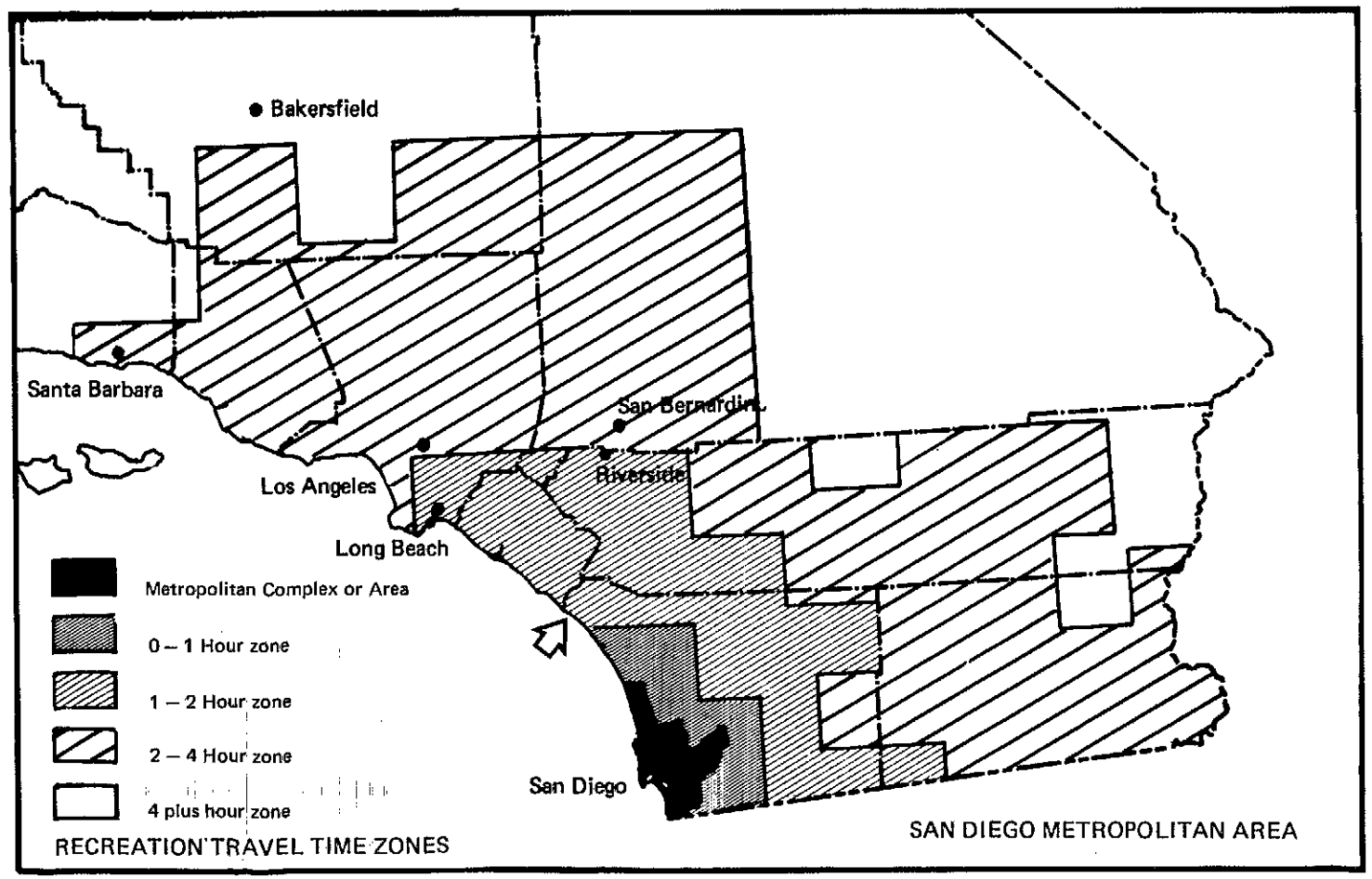
In this metropolitan area the recreation demand will be increasing at a rate over 1.35 times that of the population increase during this 20-year period.

The new facilities needed from all suppliers to meet the existing and future recreation demands of these metropolitan areas within their respective travel time zones from San Onofre include:

	1970	1980	2000
Zero-to-One Hour Travel Time Zone			
Los Angeles-San Bernardino-Riverside metropolitan complex			
Camp units	3,678	4,618	7,658
Picnic units	8,888	14,068	28,158
One-to-Two Hour Travel Time Zone			
San Diego metropolitan area			
Camp units	723	933	1,583
Picnic units	512	722	1,312

Source: Park and Recreation Information System, 1969.

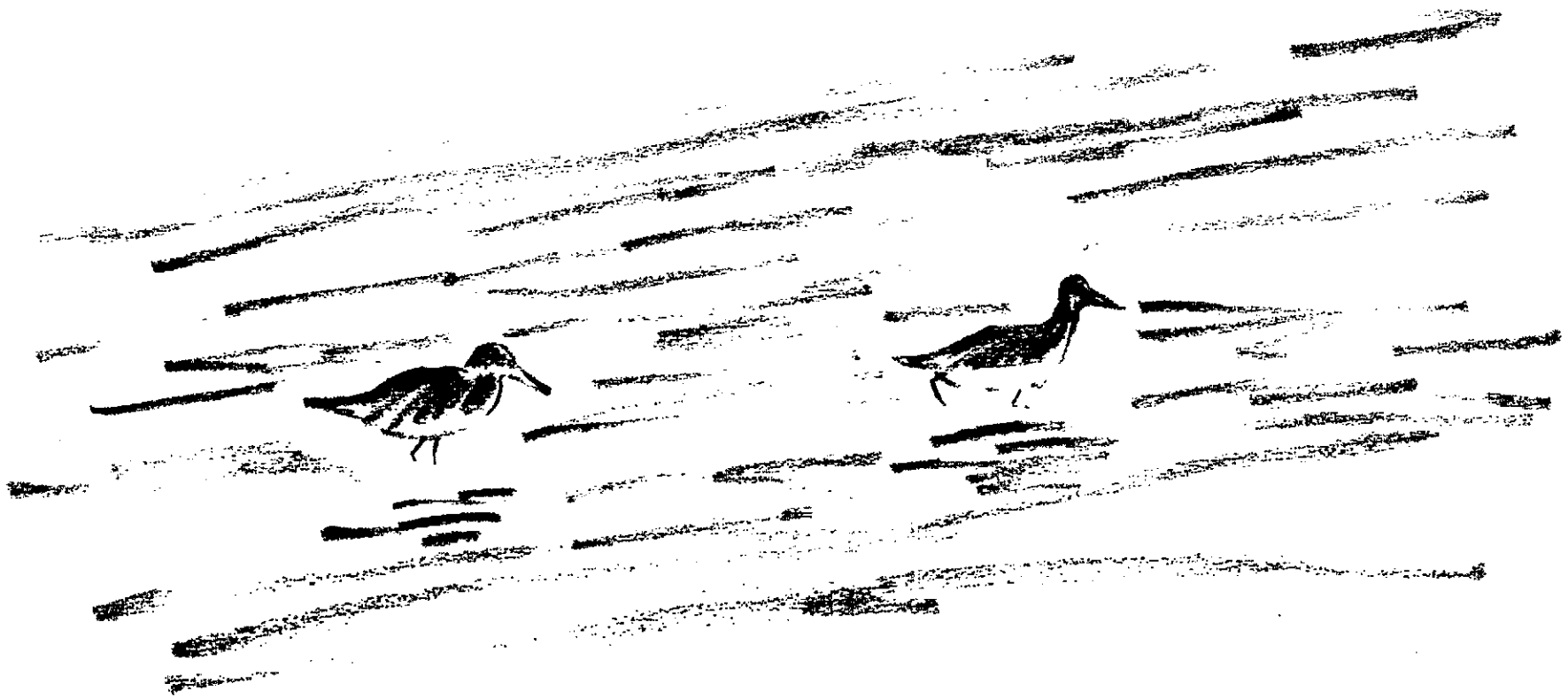




III Resources Analysis

The purpose of this chapter is to analyze and interrelate the recreational resources within the park area. It will explore the question of what we have to work with and will provide the basic rationale for the allowable use intensity plan and the "General Development Plan" set forth in Chapter 5.

The resources analysis is depicted by six maps, each of which is discussed in the following text. Five of the maps show the resources that should be preserved, and one map deals with hazardous areas. The dark areas of the maps represent the areas of highest resource value; the lighter areas are those with less resource value. In order to minimize damage to natural resources, the most intensive development should take place in the lightest areas; less intensive development should be located on slightly darker areas; and the darkest areas should receive minimum use and development.



A. Hazards

The purpose of this map is to indicate general areas of geologic hazards. A more detailed study will be necessary to determine specific building sites.

Slope Stability

In addition to the obvious hazards inherent in all precipitous terrain, many of the steep cliffs and arroyos in this park area are subject to landslide. Some factors considered in determining dangerous degrees of slope instability are rock type, structure, and geomorphology. A study of these factors resulted in an estimate of net stability expressed in terms of relative propensity to slide.

Sink Holes

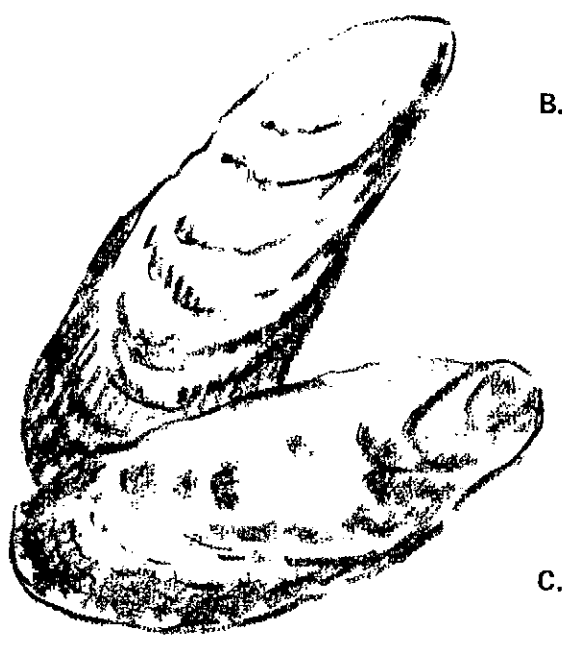
The sink holes, all located in an area roughly 40 yards wide by 120 yards long, vary in diameter, but can be as much as 80 feet deep with nearly vertical sides. Many of these holes are undercut and concealed by brush, making them extremely dangerous to the public.

Flash Floods

Although annual precipitation is only about 13 inches, this area lies in a zone of high intensity rainfall. Average intensities are 0.7 inches per hour, and intensities many times this amount are possible. These short-period high-intensity rains, combined with relatively impervious ground surfaces and steep slopes, create a potential for flash flooding in six canyons. The relative danger of flash floods in the six drainage basins are indicated on the map numerically in decreasing order of hazard.

San Mateo Creek

The surface water flow of San Mateo Creek, which drains a watershed of 132 square miles, is subject to wide fluctuations in volume and maximum discharge from year to year. Although its average discharge is only 5.53 cubic ft./sec., its maximum discharge in 1966 was 2,760 cubic ft./sec.



B. Wildlife Habitat

The San Onofre State Beach contains eight biotic communities which attract numerous species of wildlife. On the coastal portions these biotic communities include sublittoral, littoral, coastal strand, and coastal sage scrub. Biotic communities in the inland areas include fresh water marsh, riparian, desert wash, coastal sage scrub, and California coastal chaparral.

Of special note are the extensive little neck clam beds. The most productive areas are north of the nuclear powerplant. Additional areas are located where the drainages empty into the ocean. The habitats of highest quality and statewide significance are identified by the dark tone on the map. The areas of good habitat quality are indicated by the lighter tone, and those areas of lower quality are unshaded.

C. Vegetation Resources

Twelve vegetation communities are identified on the site. Five are upland communities subjected to occasional flooding. The remaining seven comprise the wetland communities that generally occupy the low-lying areas below the 10-foot contour level. The freshwater and brackish marshes located at the mouth of San Mateo Creek are some of the finest marshlands on the Southern California coast. The areas within the site contain good native stipa grassland elements in a mosaic of predominantly annual grasses. The plant communities of unique quality (statewide significance) are indicated by the darkest tone. Those areas of relatively high value are indicated by the lighter tone.

D. Scenic Resources

The coastal cliffs and beaches have great scenic appeal, but there are few interior areas that offer scenic resources of statewide significance. The following areas are marked on the map as having scenic value.

1. The coastal bluffs and the beach area are classified as areas of prime scenic quality.
2. The Upper Cristianitos Creek, which contains a number of biotic communities with a diversified plant and animal population, has scenic value.
3. The agricultural open space provides a scenic element which is becoming increasingly rare in the coastal zone.
4. The pond area in the southeast corner of the inland portion and the freshwater lagoon west of the highway (not included in the lease) exhibit high scenic qualities as viewed from the highway.

E. Archeological Resources

The Indians living in this area at the time of first contact by the Spanish were the Juaneno. Their village on the downcoast side of San Onofre Creek was Hechmai, and the village on the upcoast side of San Mateo Creek was Panhe. A generalized survey resulted in the discovery of six archeological sites previously unrecorded. Three known sites were also reviewed because of their close proximity to the unit.

Of the six sites within the park, the one at the confluence of San Mateo and Cristianitos Creeks is by far the largest and most complex. The other sites appear to have sustained limited or specialized use.

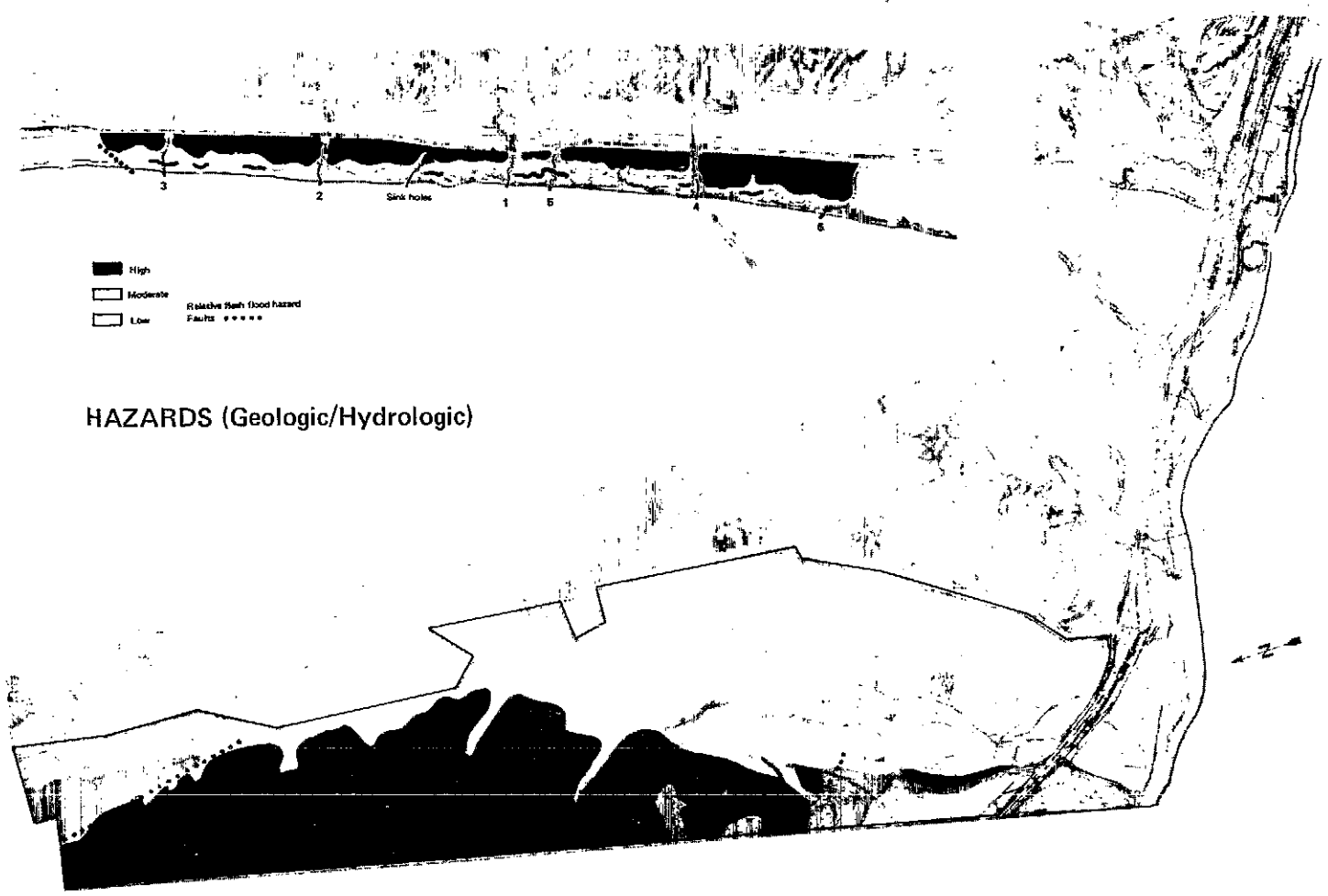
F. Agricultural Resources

Approximately 500 acres of the valley of San Mateo Creek are presently used for vegetable production. Nine fresh-market vegetable crops are being cultivated on this land, which is under lease from the Navy. California's Comprehensive Ocean Area Plan states:

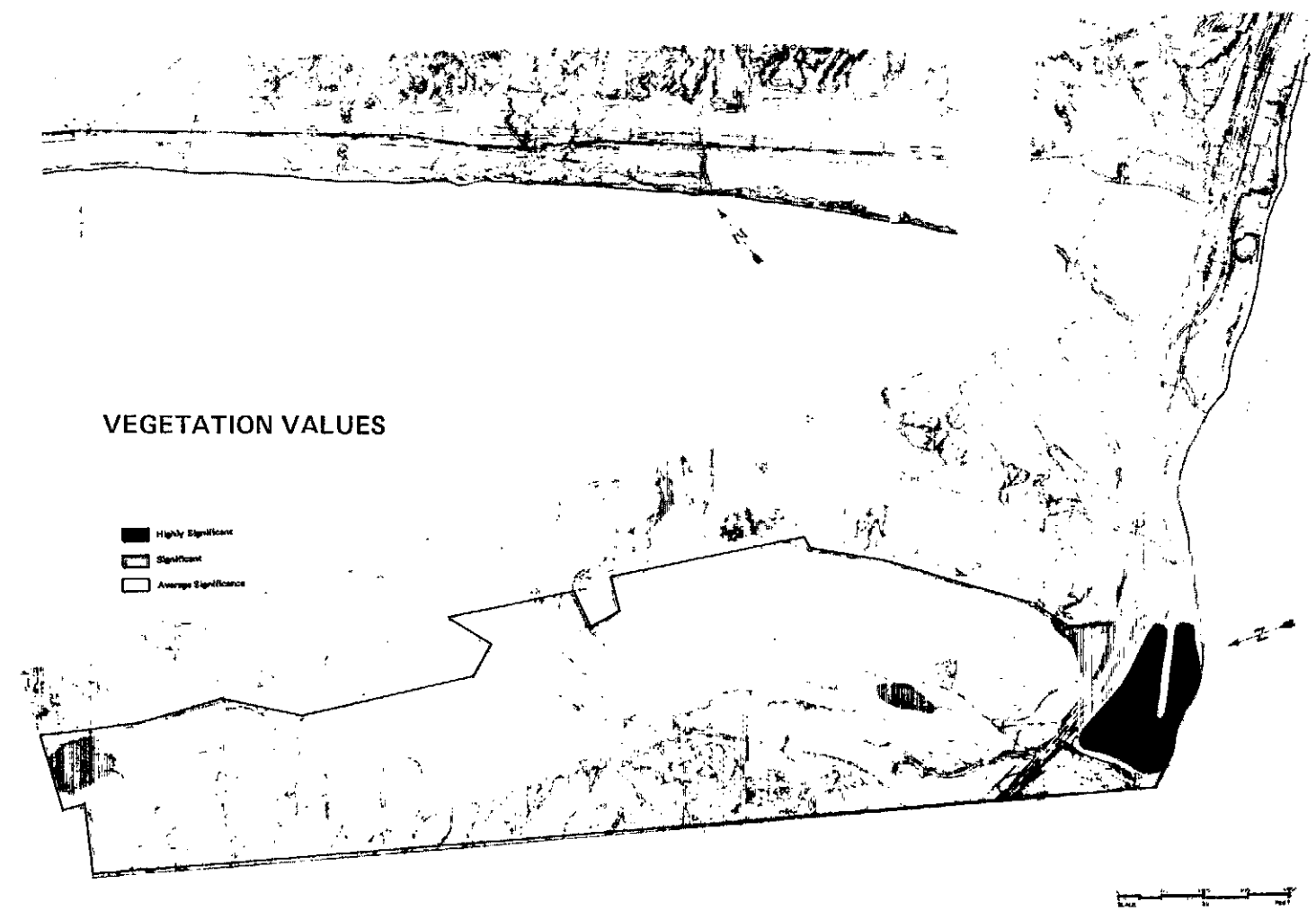
> The location of prime coastal agricultural land in relation to the moderating marine influences makes them a unique and limited state and national resource. There is no substitute in North America for certain of the combinations of soil and climate that exist in California's coastal zone.

These 500 acres along San Mateo Creek represent about 5 percent of the county's vegetable production in this prime coastal zone. If subdivisions continue at their present rate, less than half of this coastal agricultural land will be available within the next 20 years.

Eight of the nine crops currently grown on the site have a strong dependence on this coastal agricultural land. The economic value of the crops is approximately $1.5 million annually. Nearly $750,000 are paid in wages, and additional employment benefits are indirectly generated through related jobs that depend on agriculture. Considering the high positive social and economic impacts of the existing agricultural activities, it would appear that this land use activity should be retained. Preservation of this agricultural land is also enjoined by Article 28 of the California Constitution which states, "It is in the best interest of the State to maintain, preserve, conserve, and otherwise continue in existence open space land for the production of foods and fiber."

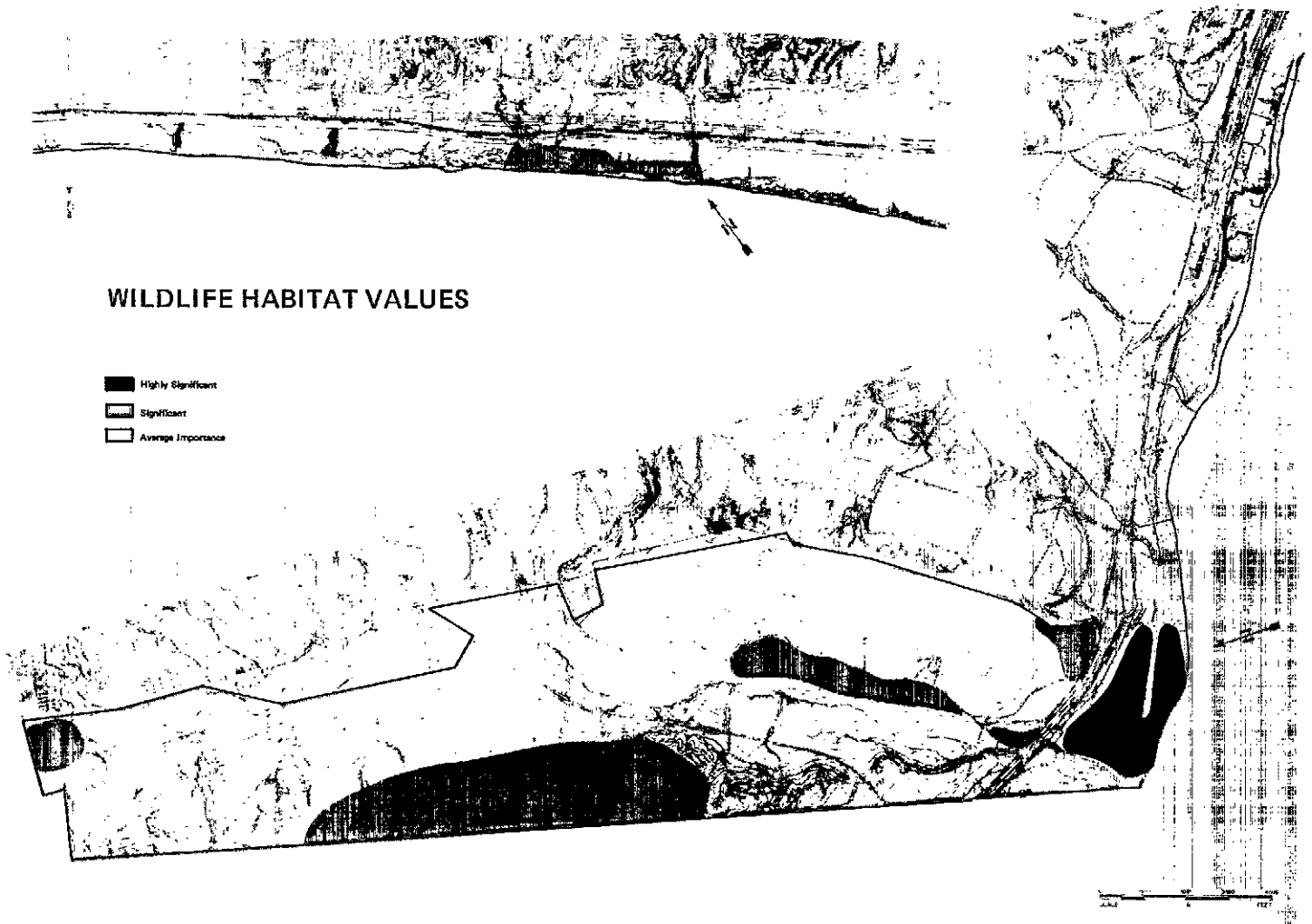


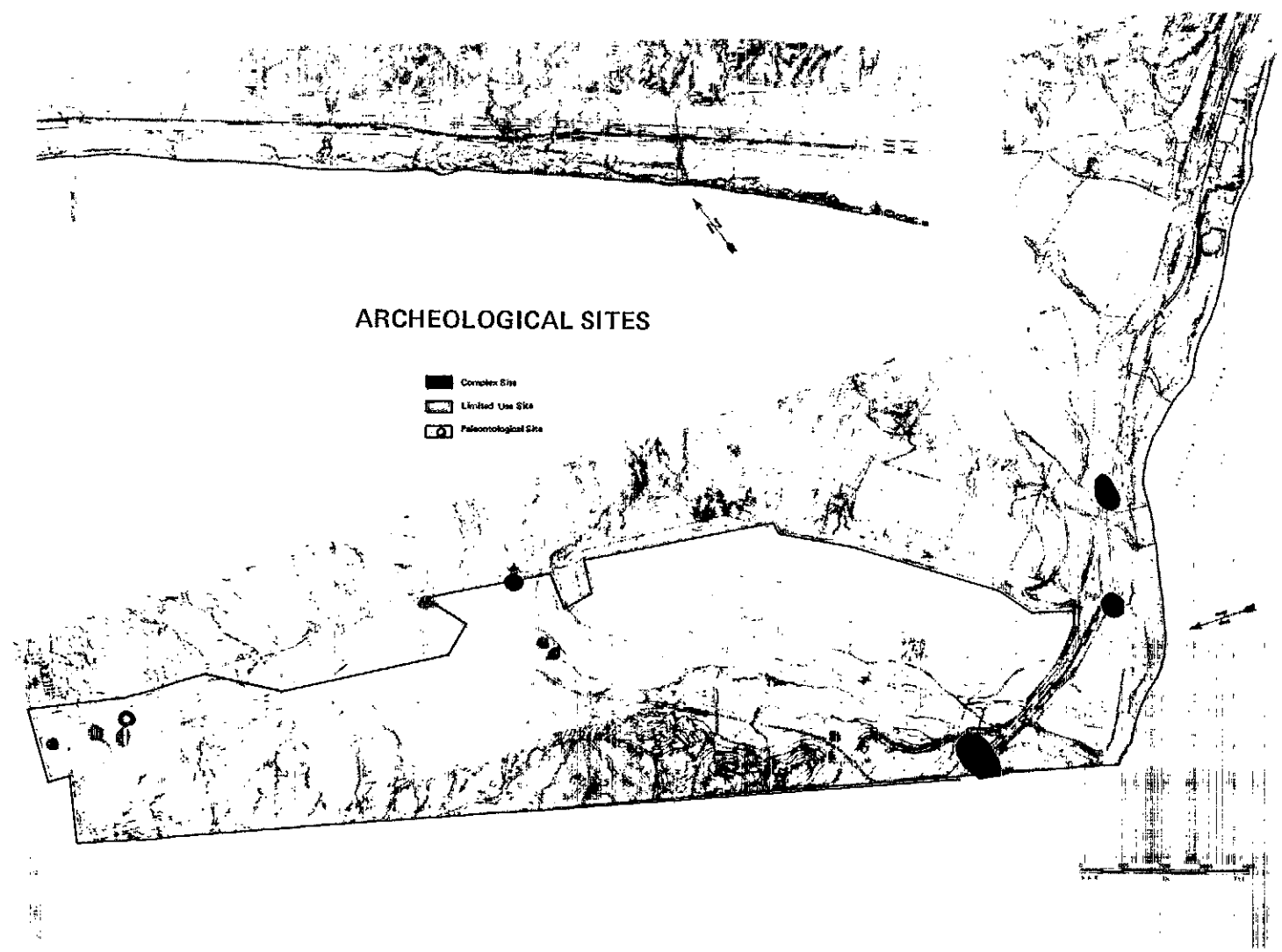
HAZARDS (Geologic/Hydrologic)

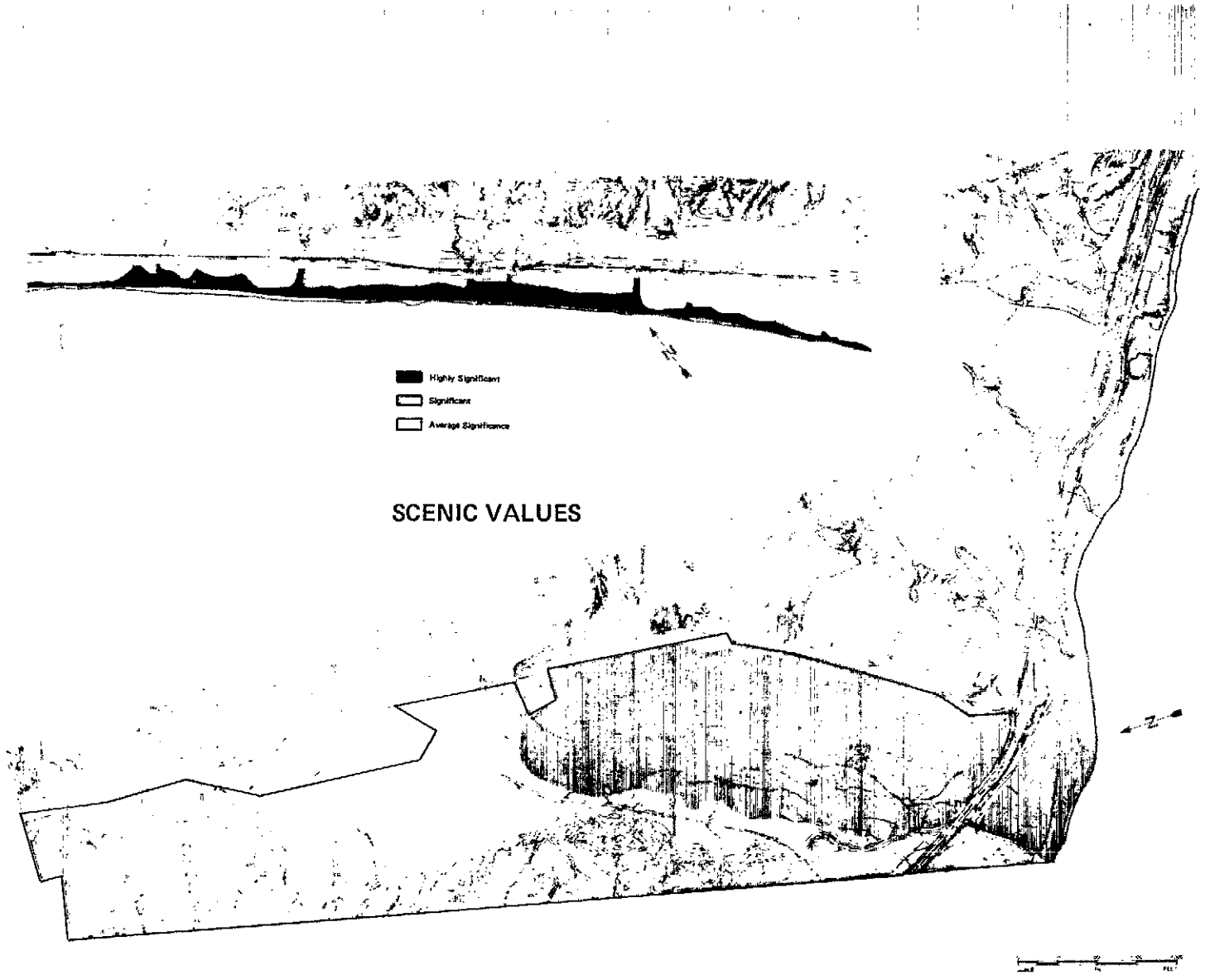


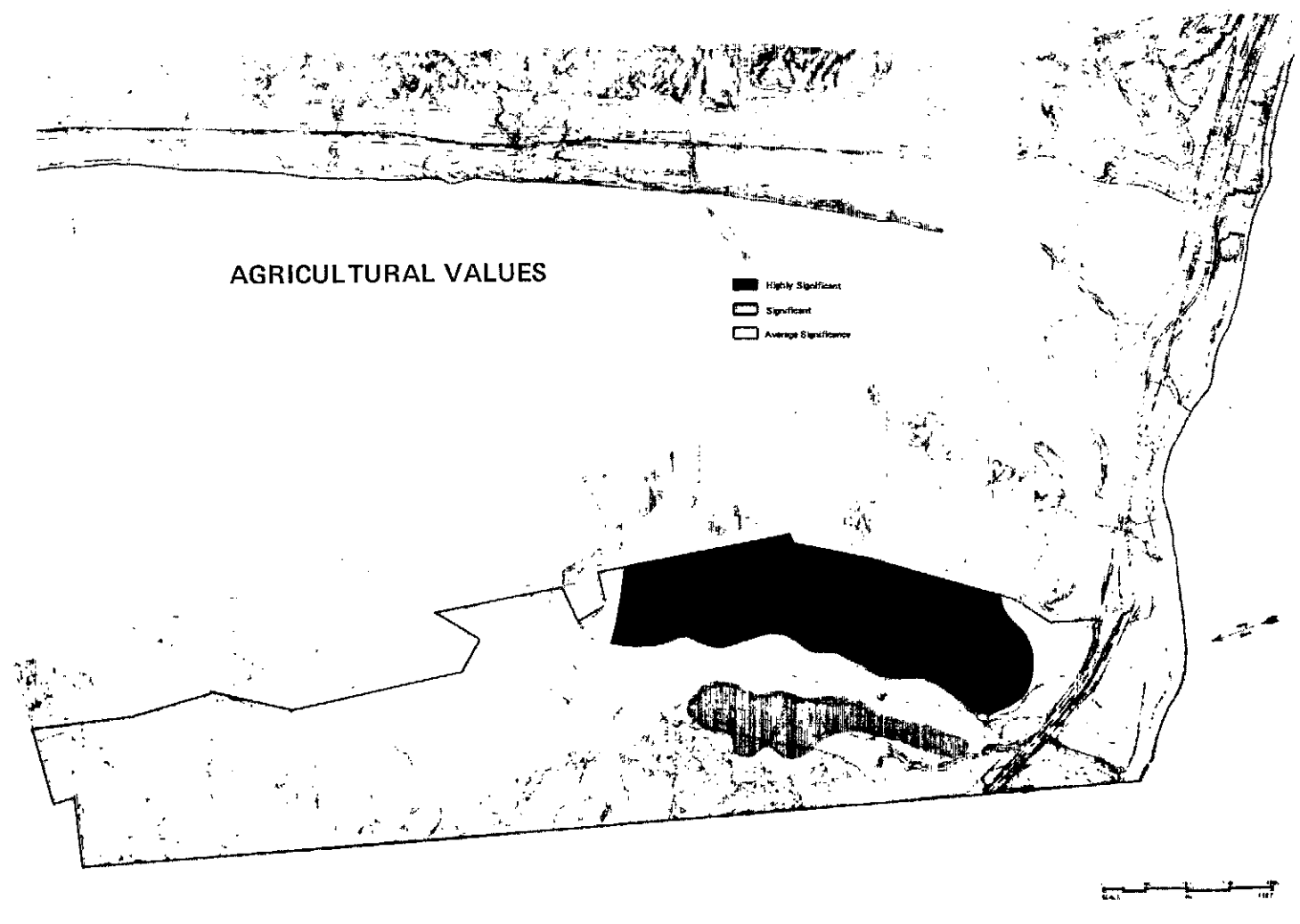
VEGETATION VALUES

NOTE: To avoid printing costs and delays, the overlay system described on the prior page was not used in this printing of the development plan reports on San Onofre State Beach, and maps replace the original overlays. Copies of reports containing the overlays can be inspected at the Department's district offices.


WILDLIFE HABITAT VALUES
Highly Significant
Significant
Average Importance


ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES
Complex Site
Limited Use Site
Paleontological Site


Highly Significant
Significant
Average Significance
SCENIC VALUES


AGRICULTURAL VALUES
Highly Significant
Significant
Average Significance

G. Allowable Use Intensity Map

The shading on the six resources maps has identified those areas that should be preserved or that should receive restricted use because of natural hazards or because of resources that, being rare, unique, or of a fragile nature, could be destroyed by hard use.

Conclusions based on the above studies are depicted on the allowable use intensity map. Use intensity signifies the number of people per acre allowable in an area at one time without doing irreparable damage to the natural resource being used. The people-per-acre factor must also include space for service facilities – parking, restrooms, picnic tables, and the like.

High Use Intensity - 30 or more people per acre

Approximately 205 acres distributed through all three parcels are suitable for high use intensity, which is typified by beach use. It is considered that 100 square feet per person is adequate for beach use, which develops a use intensity of 435 people per acre.

Another example of high use intensity can be found in picnic areas, though such use is just at the beginning of high intensity use. Picnic tables 30 to 35 feet apart will develop a use of about 30 people per acre. Present thinking is that family groups will not voluntarily locate closer than 30 to 35 feet from each other, which makes it inadvisable to try to achieve a higher use density in picnic areas.

Moderate Use Intensity - 8 to 30 people per acre

Moderate use intensity is appropriate to areas with average resources values, moderately stable soils and geology, moderate slopes, and the like. Approximately 240 acres in parcels 1 and 3 have been found suitable for moderate use.

A typical example of this use would be campsites located 100 feet on center. This generally accepted spacing standard of 4 camps per acre generates a use intensity of 16 to 20 people per acre.

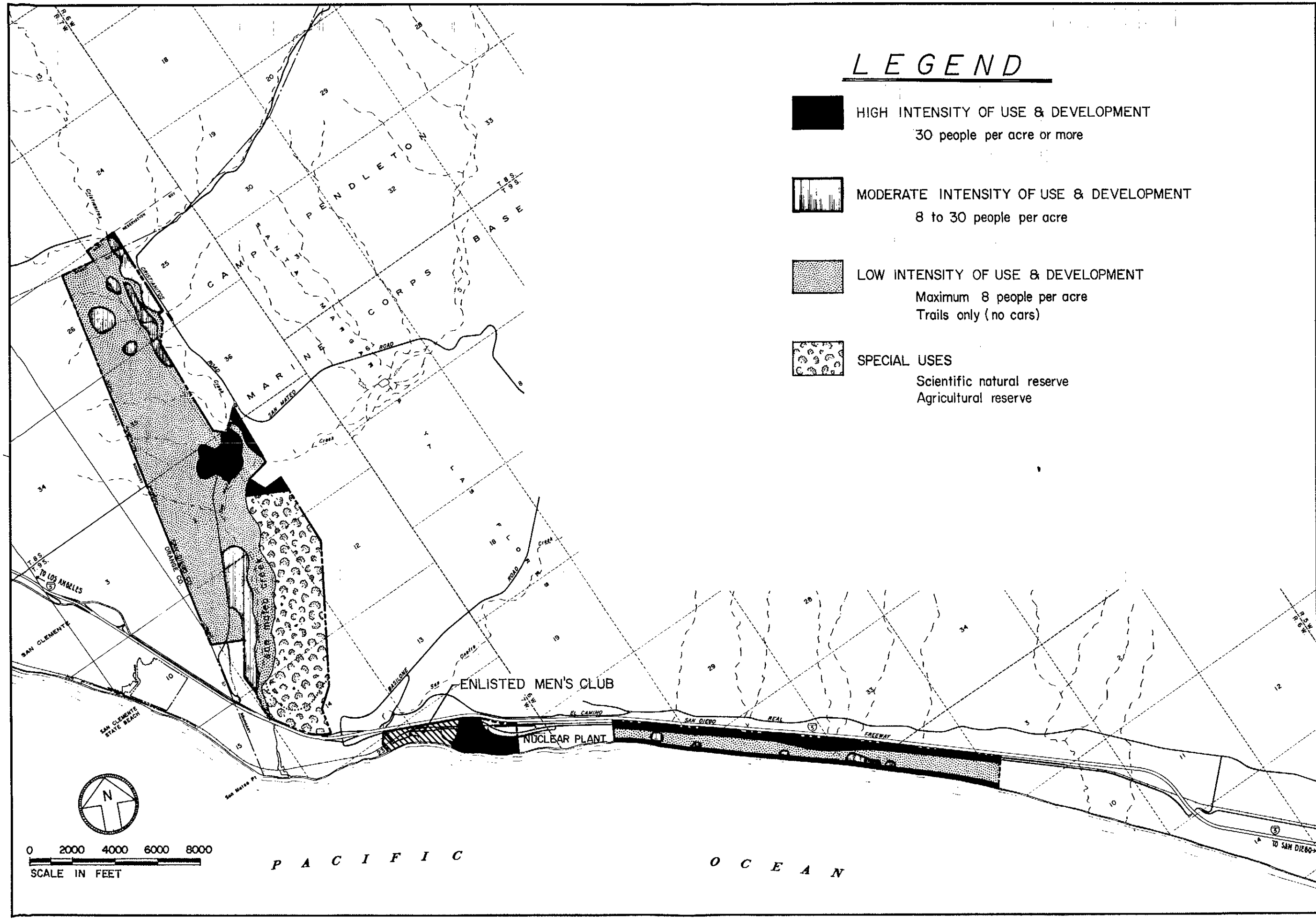
Low Intensity Use - Less than 8 people per acre

Low intensity use areas may contain rare, unique, or fragile resources that can be destroyed by higher intensity use, or they may contain hazardous areas.

Approximately 2,000 acres in parcels 1 and 3 are considered suitable for low intensity use only. These areas can be developed for hiking, nature study, and primitive camp developments.

Agricultural Use

Approximately 500 acres devoted to coastal row crop cultivation have been reserved for agricultural use. This area was described above during discussion of the agricultural resources overlay.



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CHECKED

REVISIONS | DATE

RESOURCES AGENCY OF CALIFORNIA
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION
APPROVED _____ DATE _____

SAN ONOFRE STATE BEACH
ALLOWABLE USE INTENSITY MAP

DRAWING NO. 13193

SHEET NO. 1 OF 1

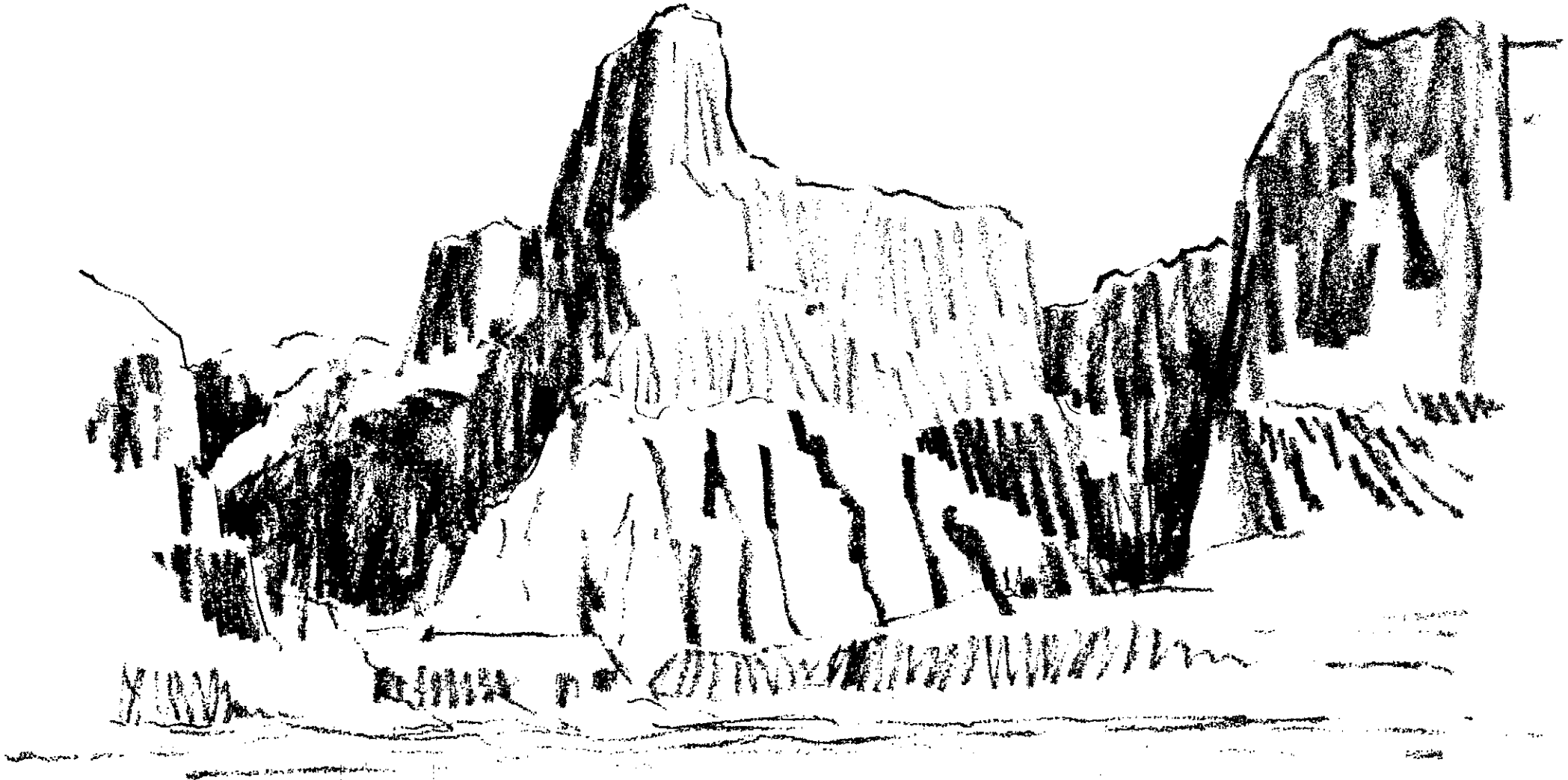
IV Resource Management Plan

Declaration of Purpose

San Onofre State Beach is established to make available to the people the outstanding beach and related features along the northern coast of San Diego County, including important uplands east of the Interstate 5 Freeway in the valley of San Mateo Creek. It will also provide for the enjoyment and use of these areas in ways that take full advantage of the recreational opportunities thus afforded while at the same time protecting the natural and cultural values of the region.

Declaration of Management Policy

The Department of Parks and Recreation will manage the lands and their resources at San Onofre State Beach so as to provide for optimum recreational use of the shoreline and related upland areas consistent with their protection. The Department will also protect from damage or deterioration those natural and cultural features that lend distinction to this coastal region, including, but not limited to, the beaches, the spectacular coastal bluffs, the best examples of natural vegetation, the wetlands near San Mateo Creek, notable geological phenomena, fossilized plants and animal life, the remains of Indian civilization, and sites associated with historical events.



V The Plan for Development

Each parcel has distinctively different physical characteristics which determine the uses to which it can best be adapted. The proposed development of each parcel is depicted on the attached map entitled "General Development Plan," and each parcel will be discussed separately in the narrative which follows.

Circulation

Since these parcels are separated by intervening pieces of land, every possible means of transportation must be developed to link them together for use as a single park unit.

The abandoned Highway 101 helps provide access from Interstate 5 at Basilone Interchange and a link between parcels 2 and 3. Access to parcel 1 is not so easy. An off-ramp for northbound traffic leads to a San Clemente frontage road which provides access to Parcel 1 via Cristianitos Road. Southbound traffic must exit at the Avenida Califia off-ramp and cross I-5 on an overpass to reach the frontage road leading to Parcel 1. A new interchange is proposed by the Division of Highways at this location. This interchange will provide direct access to parcel 1 to both northbound and southbound vehicles. It is estimated that this interchange will be completed in 1979.

Access from parcel 1 to the other two parcels is possible but not convenient. It requires returning to the freeway and traveling along it for about 4,000 feet to parcels 2 and 3.

A bicycle trail provided by the Camp Pendleton Marine Base alleviates some of the access problems. It is located, for the most part, on an old two-lane coast highway route which has been and is still being used as a military road. It provides bicycle access from parcel 1 at Cristianitos Road across San Mateo and San Onofre creeks to areas inland of parcels 2 and 3. In addition, there are culverts accessible from the bicycle trail which run under I-5, the railroad, and the abandoned Highway 101. Some of the culverts, being large enough to walk through, provide excellent opportunities for pedestrian access to the beach from parcel 1. Use of the bicycle trail should be expanded to include minibus or elephant train services between parcel 1 and culverts leading to the beach in parcel 3.

The railroad which parallels parcels 2 and 3 also has potential for increasing the accessibility of the beach parcels. In fact, AMTRAK has already brought underprivileged youth from Los Angeles into parcel 3 on an experimental basis.

General Use

Parcel 3

This parcel is comprised of three land forms: the coastal plain, the cliffs, and the beach.

The coastal plain is a valuable resource, being one of the few such areas along the Southern California coast that is still in its natural state. The plan does not indicate intensive development on the coastal plain except for construction of campgrounds and daytime parking facilities on the abandoned right of way of old Highway 101 and trails across the coastal plain to provide beach access.

The cliffs have magnificent scenic quality and will not be developed except for hiking trails to provide beach access.

The beach is sandy, and the area is good for swimming. The usable acreage of the beach varies with the season and the tides. At the highest of high tides the beach is completely inundated; at the lowest of low tides, the beach is well over 100 feet wide. For planning purposes, an average beach width of 70 feet was used, which, over the three and one-half miles of beach frontage, gives a total of 27 acres of sandy beach. At an average distribution of 100 square feet per person, the beach will support approximately 11,700 people at any one time.

When parcel 3 is fully developed, its campsites and day use parking facilities will support about 5,000 people at any one time. However, that use figure will be greatly increased by beach users from parcel 1 and from outside the park.

Parcel 2

The total length of the beach in parcel 2 is about 6,000 feet. The lease excludes for the present the northern 2,600 feet, an area used by members of the Marines' Enlisted Men's Club. However, the lease does permit development of this area as a state park when the Enlisted Men's Club is moved to a new location.

It is of the utmost importance that negotiation concerning the relocation of the Enlisted Men's Club be pursued. The Enlisted Men's beach has many attributes desirable for public recreation; for example, it is 200 feet wide, sandy, and in a very good swimming area. There are no high cliffs here, so travel between the beach and inland areas is simple and direct. In addition, acquisition of this area will allow a great improvement in the presently circuitous vehicle access to parcel 2. This 2,600 feet of beach is the only stretch of beach in the San Onofre area which is truly adaptable to intensive public use. Ocean-oriented recreation could be provided for 6,000 people in this comparatively small (55 acres) portion of parcel 2.

The immediately usable portions of parcel 2 are comprised of the same three land forms as parcel 3: the coastal plain, the cliffs, and the beach.

The coastal plain has been filled with material excavated from the nuclear power plant site. The natural vegetation has been destroyed, leaving the area barren. Overnight camping in this area is indicated on the plan. This use will necessitate earth mounding and planting to create a more scenic environment. Camping use at this area would be ideally suited for the surfers.

The cliffs have inherent scenic quality and will not be developed except for trails to provide beach access.

The 3,400 foot strip of beach frontage within parcel 2 that can be developed immediately is sandy throughout most of its length and averages nearly 200 feet in width. Surfing is excellent, and the sandy portions can be developed for day use beach activities.

Part of this beach is composed of rocks large enough to bruise the ankles of swimmers standing in the surf, which makes this area unsuitable for the usual day use beach activities. However, these rocks come from a natural off-shore reef which makes some of the best surfing waves in California. The plans consequently call for development of this area as a surfing beach.

Parking for this beach is located on a narrow stretch of soil at the base of the cliffs. Little, if any, of the sandy beach will be within the parking area.

It is not appropriate to provide transportation to this parcel from parcel 1 because this beach will be filled to capacity by the people using the facilities developed within the parcel.

Parcel 1

This parcel is comprised of four land forms quite different from those of parcels 2 and 3. These forms include the flood plain, the flatlands adjacent to the flood plain, gently sloping lands, and steep hillsides.

The flood plain includes the flood area of the San Mateo and Cristianitos creeks. Although dry during the summer season, these creeks often rise out of their banks during the winter rainy season and flood an easily discernible area adjacent to their channels. No developments are indicated in this flood area.

The flatlands adjacent to the flood plain could conceivably flood, but they are high enough above the flood plain to be safe for recreational development. A large portion of this land is indicated on the plan as reserved for agricultural use. The campgrounds indicated at the northern extreme of parcel 1 are on flatlands adjacent to the flood plain. Scattered native sycamore trees in this area contribute to an excellent camping environment.

The gently sloping lands also provide opportunities for recreational development, and all such lands have been indicated on the plan as use areas. The picnicking area and the large camping area are on gently sloping lands. The bulk of the picnic area is barren except for grass cover, and planting will be necessary to provide an appropriate environment for picnicking and related activities. There are some natural cottonwood trees along the creek bank which will provide shady areas for immediate public use. The large camping area indicated on the plan is presently being used for agricultural purposes, and planting to create a better environment for campsites will be no problem in this rich deep soil.

The steep unstable hillsides have fragile soils and geology and are not suitable for development. Hiking trails already exist through these hillsides, and such trails will be upgraded. The plan indicates a network of hiking and nature trails, some leading to hike-in camps located in the flatter portions. These hillside trails will provide many good scenic vistas and miles of enjoyable hiking.

The plan for parcel 3 indicates a total of 550 campsites, group camping for 100 people, 100 primitive hike-in campsites, and a 300-car parking area for day use facilities, which include picnicking facilities, bicycle rentals, and interpretive facilities.

Utilities

Water

The only available water source is the water system operated by the City of San Clemente. The park can be tied into the city's 10-inch main 2,000 feet east of El Camino Real at the county line.

The alternative sources considered included the Camp Pendleton Marine Base supply; however, the Marines will not supply water to the park. The drilling of wells is precluded by our lease with the Marine Corps.

Electricity

The Southern California Edison Company has power available to all these parcels, and this supply is the only practical source.

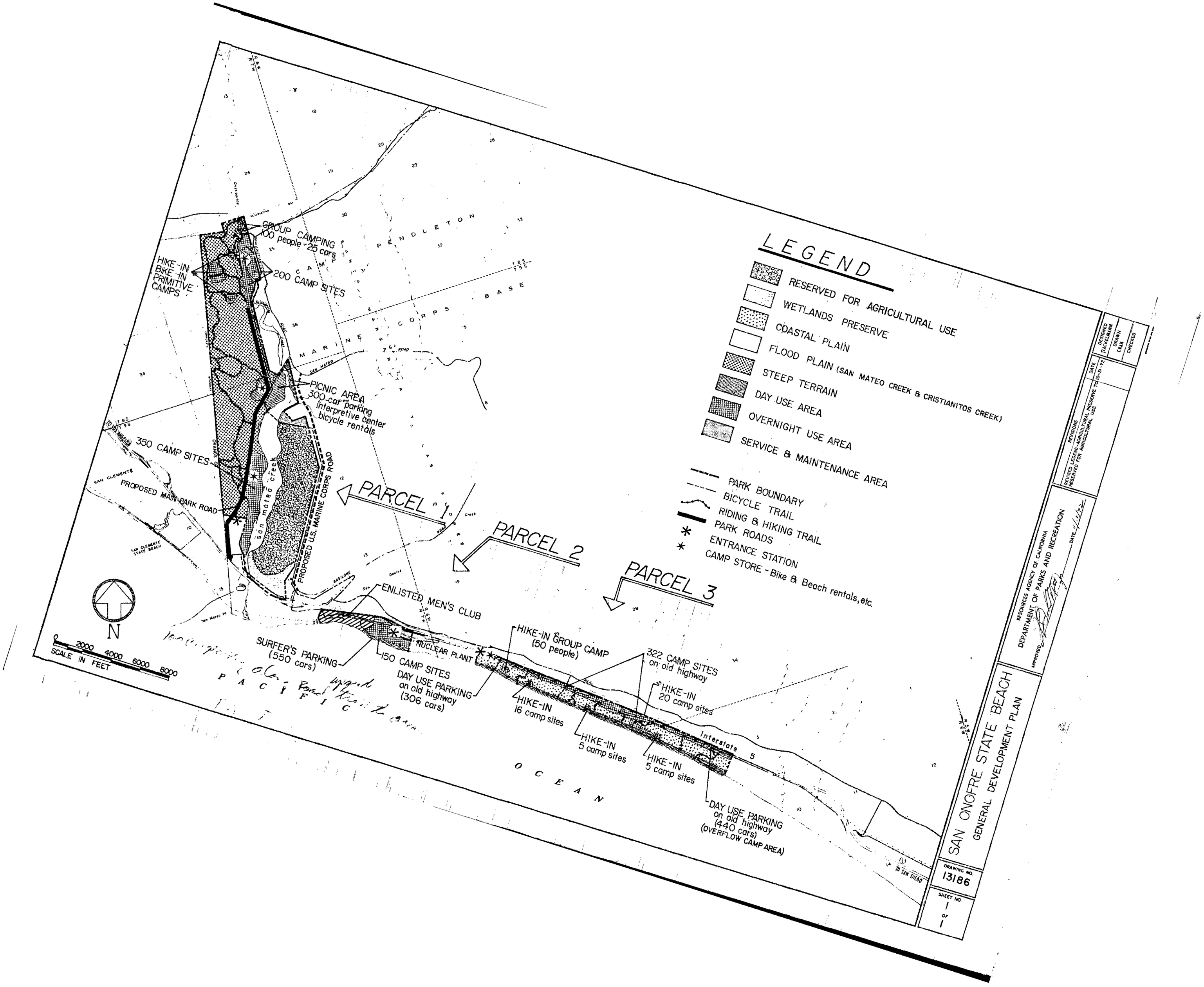
Sewage

The following alternatives for sewage disposal have been considered:

1. A collection system exporting sewage to the City of San Clemente with lift stations
2. A collection system exporting sewage to the Camp Pendleton Marine Base treatment plant with lift stations
3. A collection system, treatment plant, and spray fields or spreading basins on park lands
4. A collection system and on-site treatment plant with export of effluent to the Camp Pendleton Marine Base treatment plant

Consideration of these alternatives provided the following information:

1. The City of San Clemente is asking a $200,000 connection fee plus a fee for treatment based upon the percentage of plant capacity used. The city would also expect the State to participate in the cost of a large interceptor line. The minimum cost to the State for this participation would be $600,000.
2. The Camp Pendleton Marine Base treatment facility is now operating at maximum capacity and is not capable of handling the additional sewage generated by our development.
3. An on-site sewage treatment facility and on-site disposal is possible, but the City of San Clemente is opposed to the discharge of effluent around the San Mateo Creek Basin, which is presently used by the City as a water reclamation and recycling basin.
4. An on-site sewage treatment facility with export of effluent to the Camp Pendleton Marine Base treatment ponds seems feasible. Whereas the Marine facility is incapable of treating the raw sewage generated by the park, it is capable of accepting treated effluent for oxidation treatment through its ponding system.


LEGEND
RESERVED FOR AGRICULTURAL USE
WETLANDS PRESERVE
COASTAL PLAIN
FLOOD PLAIN (SAN MATEO CREEK & CRISTIANITOS CREEK)
STEEP TERRAIN
DAY USE AREA
OVERNIGHT USE AREA
SERVICE & MAINTENANCE AREA
PARK BOUNDARY
BICYCLE TRAIL
RIDING & HIKING TRAIL
PARK ROADS
ENTRANCE STATION
CAMP STORE - Bike & Beach rentals, etc.
GROUP CAMPING
100 people - 25 cars
HIKE-IN
BIKE-IN
PRIMITIVE
CAMPS
200 CAMP SITES
CAMP PENDLETON
MARINE CORPS BASE
PICNIC AREA
300-car parking
interpretive center
bicycle rentals
350 CAMP SITES
PROPOSED MAIN PARK ROAD
PROPOSED U.S. MARINE CORPS ROAD
san mateo creek
PARCEL 1
PARCEL 2
PARCEL 3
ENLISTED MEN'S CLUB
SURFER'S PARKING
(550 cars)
150 CAMP SITES
DAY USE PARKING
on old highway
(306 cars)
NUCLEAR PLANT
HIKE-IN GROUP CAMP
(50 people)
HIKE-IN
16 camp sites
HIKE-IN
5 camp sites
HIKE-IN
5 camp sites
322 CAMP SITES
on old highway
HIKE-IN
20 camp sites
Interstate 5
DAY USE PARKING
on old highway
(440 cars)
(OVERFLOW CAMP AREA)
PACIFIC OCEAN
N
0 2000 4000 6000 8000
SCALE IN FEET
SAN ONOFRE STATE BEACH
GENERAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN
RESOURCES AGENCY OF CALIFORNIA
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION
APPROVED
DATE
REVISIONS
REVISED LEGEND - AGRICULTURAL PRESERVE TO RESERVED FOR AGRICULTURAL USE
DATE 10-31-72
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INTERPRETIVE ANALYSIS

Two major interpretive themes can be developed immediately at San Onofre State Beach: ocean-oriented activities and geology. Additional information from future studies may allow significant development of other themes, such as the Juaneno and earlier Indian cultures, local plant and animal life, and perhaps the rapidly disappearing coastal row crop culture. These major themes will be discussed later in more detail.

At the outset, it should be understood that further land acquisition is necessary in order to realize fully the long-range interpretive goals being discussed and to present adequately the primary interpretive themes of the San Onofre area. The outstanding and historically significant beaches at the mouths of San Mateo and San Onofre creeks and the valuable marshlands just inland from the mouth of San Mateo Creek should be added to the park at the earliest possible date.

Ocean-Oriented Recreation

Surfing

The San Onofre area is historically probably the most appropriate area in California for an interpretive analysis of surfing from its Hawaiian origins to modern times. The advances in surfing techniques and surfboard construction should be an integral part of the interpretive program. The many techniques of surfing could also be described: kayak, canoe, outrigger, and body surfing. (Note: Two of the finest and best-known surfing beaches in San Onofre are in the area recommended for acquisition.)

Beach Activities

Interpretation of ocean-oriented activities could include presentations on swimming, sunbathing, skin and scuba diving, beachcombing, nature study, fishing, and clamming.

Safety

Instruction in water safety and courtesy could be part of all presentations on ocean-oriented activity.

Relationship of Sea and Land

Tied in with interpretation of recreation activities and perhaps leading to other interpretive themes, such as geology and land forms, would be descriptions of the interactions of the land and the sea, which have shaped the area's recreation features. Ocean waves, currents, the origin and movement of beach sands, and sea and stream erosion all contribute to development of the major interpretive themes.

Geology and Land Forms

The long sandy beach and precipitous cliffs or bluffs that are the primary scenic and recreational attractions of the area are products of dynamic geologic processes still operating today. These need to be interpreted as well as seen to be fully appreciated. The interpretive effort here would also seek to explain the formation and development of the unique sink or "stope" holes and would emphasize precautions regarding the hazards presented by the bluffs. The reef and cobble bed communities would be included in this major theme coverage.

An interesting and obvious aspect of the geology of this region is the Cristianitos fault. Excellent examples of the fault exist at two or more locations along the cliff faces.

Other geologic features may be considered for interpretive treatment. These are mostly associated with the inland terraces, paleontological deposits and outcroppings, and additional evidences of faulting and erosion.

Archeological Features

Evidence of the Juaneno and earlier Indian cultures may be of major importance in future interpretive analysis of the area; however, additional information on this subject is needed.

Biotic Communities

The many biotic communities in the area should be included in general interpretation. Emphasis could be placed on the exceptionally fine stands of riparian growth (especially the native sycamores) located near Cristianitos Creek; the perennial grassland communities in that same area; the freshwater marsh at the lower end of San Mateo Creek, particularly the part of it that is located on the property recommended for acquisition; and some of the unusually fine coastal sage scrub community on the slumping bluff area near the southern end of parcel 3.

Cultural Resources

The more noteworthy cultural values (both prehistoric and historic) presented in the Resources Inventory and Analysis in this report should be given consideration in both immediate and long-range interpretive planning. A rather interesting point, certainly worthy of further consideration, is the possibility of retaining and using the agricultural operations on parcel 1 to interpret the fast-disappearing row crop agriculture of Southern California. Consideration might be given to replanting some lima bean acreage. Lima beans were once one of the major crops throughout the coastal plains of Southern California but they have nearly disappeared from this area.

Short-Term Interpretive Program

The first stage of the interpretive program should consist primarily of personalized services, such as guided walks and tours, which can be supplemented on an interim basis with printed material. At this stage it is recommended that only minimal consideration be given to on-site interpretation by means of panels, exhibits, signs, and other devices.

Interpretive programs can increase in sophistication as permanent park developments replace the present interim facilities, as more information is gathered on the resource values of the area, and as access problems are solved. But much more information is needed about such features as the slump area on parcel 3 and the true significance and interpretive value of the local Indian cultures before the full interpretive value and potential of the area can be realized.

As further studies bring greater understanding of the area, development can proceed on off-site audiovisual displays, and the guided tours and walks can be supplemented by on-site signs, parcels, displays, and other devices suitable for enriching the guided tours or serving as "self-guiding" facilities.

Long-Range Interpretive Program

Construction of a permanent visitors' center is essential to long-range interpretive planning in this area. The prime location for such a center is the rather bare knoll south of and adjacent to the mouth of the San Mateo Creek flood plain drainage. Nowhere else in the entire area is there a better location for viewing and interpreting the major themes of the area. From this site the visitor would be able to view the two prime surfing beaches with their attendant activities as well as the beach strand with its dominating bluffs. A freeway off-ramp is located near the site. However, as mentioned earlier, this property has not yet been acquired. A recommendation to acquire this site was incorporated in the 1964 San Onofre Beach Study.

If possible, trails should be developed to allow visitors to approach the beaches and the natural preserve area near the downcoast end of parcel 3 and the identified natural and cultural elements in parcel 1.

The marsh-lagoon complex may require development of interpretive facilities. One possibility is construction of an elevated walkway through a selected portion of this area with appropriately positioned viewing blinds and interpretive devices to help enhance visitor appreciation of this fast-dwindling coastal resource.

To minimize problems generated by vehicle traffic and to offer additional opportunities for extending interpretive services, an elephant train or a system of trams should be developed. Whenever possible, bicycle paths should be incorporated in any road design. Every effort should be made to reduce the use of motorized vehicles and the need for parking space by providing alternate means of transportation between the more distant areas of the park.

VI Environmental Impact Statement

The land that constitutes San Onofre State Beach, consisting of 2,945 acres, was leased to the State of California by the U.S. Department of the Navy under a 50-year agreement in September, 1971. The property was leased to the State in three parcels designated as parcels one, two, and three. Each parcel will be discussed here as a separate unit.

Parcel 1

Parcel 1 lies inland from Interstate 5. It will be used for family camping, group camping, picnicking, bicycling, hiking, environmental and agricultural interpretive facilities, and service and maintenance area. This parcel will also be used for commercial agricultural purposes.

The primary impact of the San Onofre development on this parcel will be caused by the construction of facilities, such as roads, parking spaces, trails, drainage structures, comfort stations, and underground utilities. Although the area will be unsightly during the construction period, once the development is completed, the visual impact on the natural flora, fauna, or general character of the land will be limited.

The secondary impact of the development on parcel 1 will be caused by public use of the area. The negative effects of this will include visual pollution caused by tents, trailers, cars, and the like.

The benefits of the project will include public enjoyment through camping, picnicking, hiking, bike riding, and participation in environmental, agricultural, educational, and interpretive programs as well as fishing, swimming, and surfing. Another benefit will be the continuing use of 500± acres for commercial agriculture. It is the intention of the Department of Parks and Recreation to maintain agriculture within the valley for as long as possible and to include this part of California's economy within the interpretive program at San Onofre State Beach.

Unavoidable adverse environmental effects will be caused by paving, cuts and fills, and vegetation removal, all of which will be minimal.

Mitigation of undesirable effects on the environment will be achieved by constructing all developed day use areas and campgrounds on stable flatland which, in most cases, has been used by the U.S. Marine Corps for many years.

Except for the fairly severe cuts and fills that will be necessary on the interior campground road near its connection to the Cristianitos Road, almost all roads and trails will be built on existing roads.

An alternative to the proposed development in terms of meeting the public's need for camping and other recreational facilities is to develop the agricultural lands within the property. This would have the positive effect of keeping large numbers of people out of the natural areas. However, it would have the negative effect of severely downgrading the quality of the recreation experience. The removal of agriculture from this land would also be a negative factor since the land constitutes one of the most productive table-crop farms on the southern coast.

The only other alternative would be not to develop the area at all. However, the ever-increasing demand for recreation facilities on the Southern California coast will probably have to be met. The expansion of existing facilities at nearby parks to meet these needs would pose other environmental problems that would probably be more severe than those encountered at San Onofre.

Parcel 2

Parcel 2 is bounded on the south by the Southern California Edison Nuclear Power Plant, on the north by the U.S. Marine Corps Enlisted Men's Club, and on the east by Interstate 5. Because of the rocky character of the beach, which causes better than average surfing conditions, this area will be developed primarily for use by surfers. Camping on the barren coastal plain and day-use parking at the base of the bluffs will be the two uses provided for the surfers. This parcel will also include a service and maintenance area on the inland side between the Southern California Edison Company spur track and the old highway.

The primary impact of the San Onofre development on parcel 2 will be caused by grading, paving, installation of underground utilities, and construction of comfort stations and drainage structures. Since the beach is already heavily used by the public, the secondary impact caused by this project will be confined to the coastal plain development. People, cars, and tents will detract from the beauty of the environment. The positive impact will be the reaction enjoyed by the public.

There are no unavoidable adverse environmental effects as a result of this development.

Mitigation measures will include tree and shrub planting on the coastal plain to soften the impact of the development.

The only alternative to the proposed project would be not to develop the area at all. However, it must be assumed that the beach will continue to be at least as heavily used as it is now. The coastal plain area, where camping is planned, would remain open land, but since this land is now sterile fill, it cannot be expected to support naturally any significant vegetation.

Parcel 3

Parcel 3 is a three and one-half mile strip of magnificent coastline. The development proposed for this area is intended to fit in with the primitive nature of the land. It will include day use parking and trailer and tent camping along the abandoned U.S. Highway 101, access trails to the beach, small hike-in camps at selected sites in the canyons, comfort stations on the highway and on the beach, and underground utilities.

The primary impact of the San Onofre development on this parcel will be caused by installation of underground utilities and construction of trails and comfort stations. The secondary impact will be the result of use. People will want to explore the coastal plain and are apt to litter, destroy vegetation, and cause erosion. Persons who wander off the trails leading to the beach will also destroy vegetation and cause erosion.

A positive impact of the development will be the enjoyment of a primitive beach by the public. This will include recreation activities such as camping, picnicking, fishing, swimming, surfing, and tide pool exploring. Interpretive programs will include information on the most westerly land terminus of the San Andreas Fault.

Unavoidable adverse environmental effects are almost nonexistent. The abandoned right of way of Highway 101 is already in full use for camping and day use parking, and there are three developed trails to the beach. Actually, the project will do little more than upgrade the existing facilities.

Mitigation measures will include safety fencing, which will serve the dual purpose of protecting the public and the environment. Trails will be so well designed that visitors will be discouraged from causing erosion by choosing their own way to the beach. Adequate signs and interpretive facilities will inform the public of the value of the resources and the need to preserve them.

Since the area is already in use, the only alternative to the development would be to close the area to the public and terminate the use of the facilities there. The result of this would be a public outcry followed by a demand for increased use at nearby parks, all of which are heavily used at the present time.

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