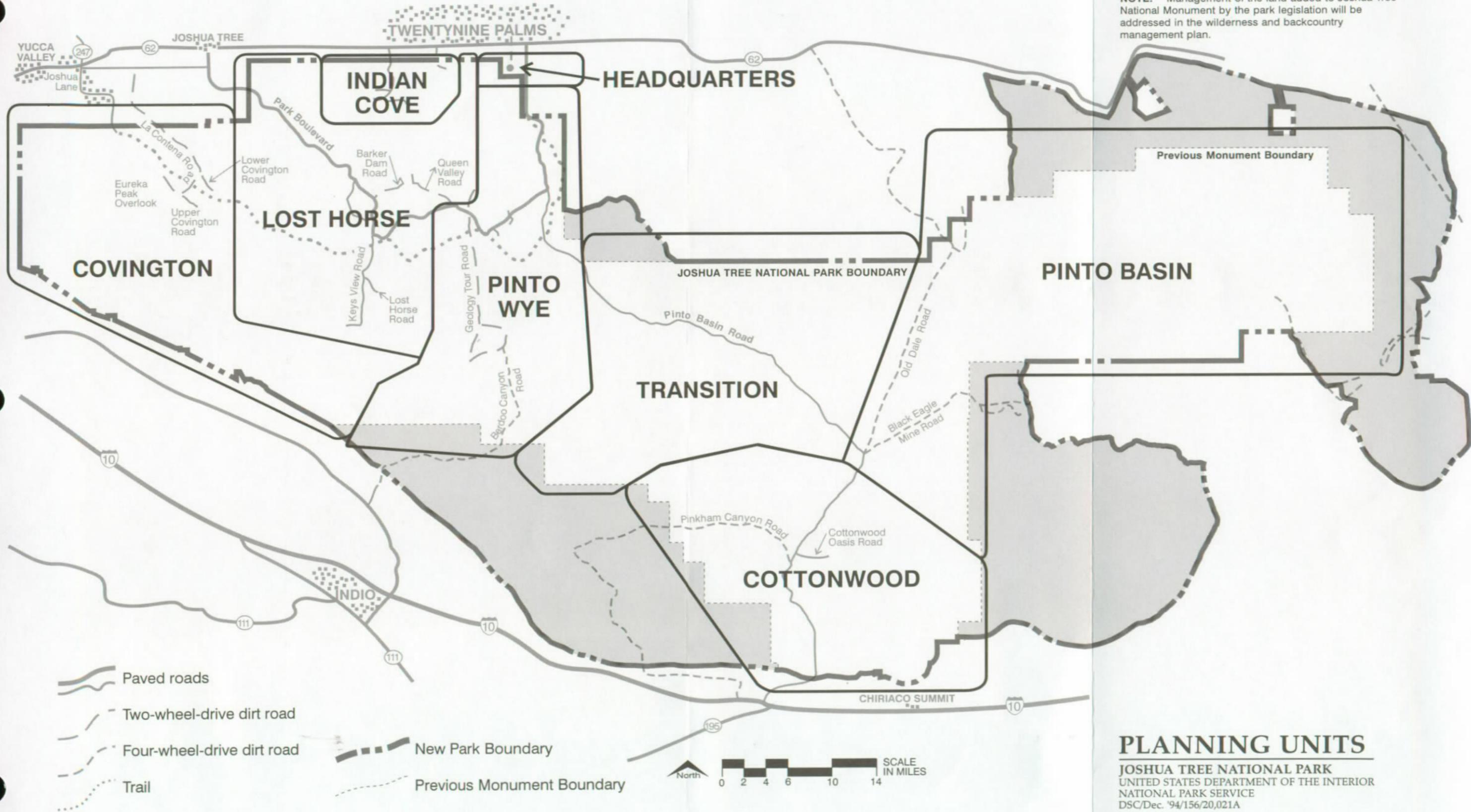


ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT PLANS



This section includes alternative development concept plans that specify actions necessary to resolve problems in each of the eight planning units. The eight planning units are shown on the following graphic. These plans are proposed in order to correct problems in developed areas and define and expand these areas where necessary. Final sizes and details for facilities in these various plans would be determined during design along with additional environmental analysis.

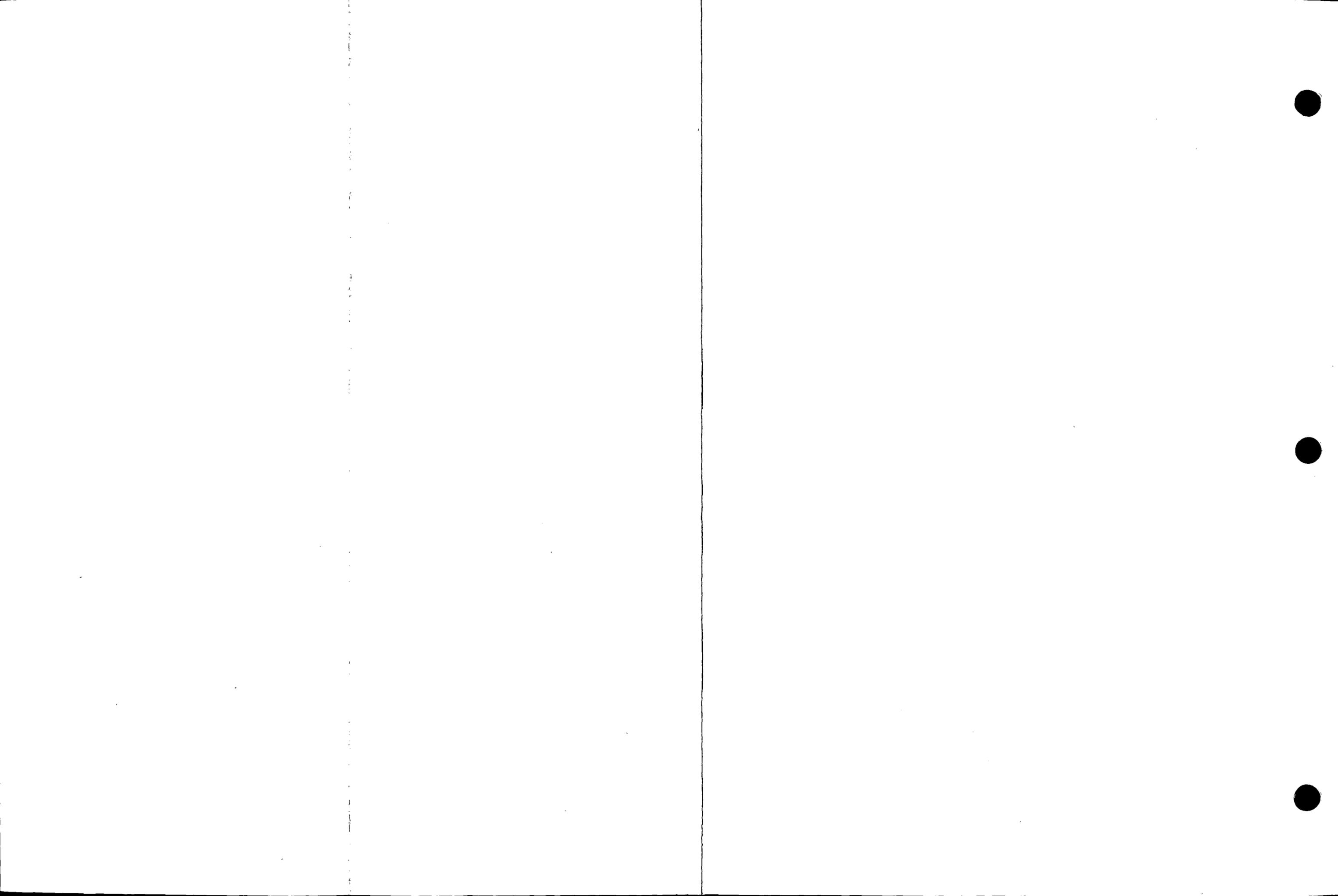
NOTE: Management of the land added to Joshua Tree National Monument by the park legislation will be addressed in the wilderness and backcountry management plan.



PLANNING UNITS

JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL PARK
 UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
 NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
 DSC/Dec. '94/156/20,021A

ON MICROFILM



HEADQUARTERS PLANNING UNIT

BACKGROUND

The headquarters unit is in the city of Twentynine Palms at the Oasis of Mara. Visitor facilities include the visitor center, six picnic sites, and a short self-guided interpretive trail to the oasis. The Camping Womens' Trail leads from the Oasis of Mara to the Twentynine Palms art gallery. Most of the exhibits and displays are outdated. Parking is used by both visitors and employees and is insufficient during the busy season. The wall surrounding the oasis is in disrepair. This area is the primary location for Park Service operations. Administrative offices are located in the same building as the visitor center. The building is too small to accommodate both administrative and visitor functions. Other operational facilities include ranger offices, vehicle storage, recyclable materials storage, museum storage, research center, helipad, a trailer and two additional trailer pads, resources office, and the Center for Arid Lands Restoration, which was established as an information center in support of the MAB program and includes a nursery for the propagation of native vegetation.

Utilities include water provided from the Twentynine Palms water district, power from southern California Edison, and a septic system. Restrooms at the visitor center were recently made accessible to people with disabilities.

ALTERNATIVE A — PROPOSED ACTION

This area would become the primary location for cultural interpretation for the park. The area would be redesigned to separate visitor services and administrative functions. Administration would be relocated to a new facility and the visitor center would be renovated to serve as the Oasis of Mara cultural center. Park Service support functions would be consolidated in a new building complex south of the public use area.

Information and Interpretation

The Oasis of Mara cultural center would be located in the current visitor center with interpretive offices, natural history association offices and storage, work, and utility areas relocated to the old administration office space. The center would be the primary location for archeological and historic interpretation. The major interpretive theme would employ the Man and the Biosphere model. The Man and the Biosphere Program was launched in 1971 to provide the knowledge, skills, and human values to support harmonious relationships between people and their environments throughout the world. The biosphere reserves provide a global network of sites for resource protection, sustainable development, research, and education. Interpretive exhibits and displays would be replaced to support this emphasis. Parkwide information and trip planning would be available. The desert landscaping demonstration area would be expanded around the center. Directional signs from State Route 62 and entrance signs would be improved.

The oasis interpretive trail, exhibits, and site furnishings would be upgraded. The wall surrounding the oasis would be repaired. Trails would be provided in cooperation with the

city of Twentynine Palms to adjacent cultural facilities. The Oasis of Mara cultural center and associated trails would complement the proposal by the city of Twentynine Palms to develop the area adjacent to the oasis as a cultural district.

Visitor Facilities

Picnic facilities would be retained, expanded to 8–10 sites, and ramadas added.

Roads and Circulation

Access to the area would continue via city streets. Employee and visitor parking would be separated, with access on a common drive. Visitors would continue to use the 50-car lot on the east side of the cultural center. New parking would be added for buses. New employee and government vehicle parking areas would be constructed as part of the new administrative complex.

Operations

Administrative offices would be relocated to a new 5,200-square-foot building complex that would also house ranger, resources management, artifact storage, research center, and maintenance offices. The largest administrative space requirements are for the Center for Arid Lands Restoration's desert plant propagation. The complex would be expanded south of the present facilities. This would increase efficiency and improve vehicle access. A separate secure NPS parking area would be provided adjacent to the administration building. The trailer presently used by nonagency research personnel who assist the staff would be replaced by an architecturally compatible dormitory.

Water and power systems would be retained. The wastewater system would be improved.

The Park Service would work with the city of Twentynine Palms to provide trail connections from the oasis visitor center to adjacent cultural features.

ALTERNATIVE B — NO ACTION

The park's primary visitor center and support facilities would remain at this site. There would be no change in the functions or facilities.

Information and Interpretation

The headquarters visitor center building would be used for both visitor contact and administration purposes. Parkwide interpretation and information would be provided and exhibits and displays would be retained. The desert landscaping demonstration area would be retained. Directional signs from State Route 62 and entrance signs would be minimal. The self-guided interpretive trail from the visitor center to the oasis would be maintained.

Visitor Facilities

Six picnic sites would be retained. Restrooms at the visitor center would be enlarged.

Roads and Circulation

Access to the area would continue via city streets. Employees and visitors would use a common parking area adjacent to the visitor center.

Operations

Administrative offices would be located in the headquarters visitor center building. Other NPS support facilities would continue to be located in separate buildings and trailers. The wastewater system would be improved.

ALTERNATIVE C — MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

The primary visitor center and support facilities would remain at the current site. Administration would be relocated and the visitor center would be renovated and used for visitor contact. NPS support functions would be consolidated in the area south of the public use area.

Information and Interpretation

Administrative offices would be relocated to a new building and the headquarters visitor center would be used solely for visitor contact. The offices in the visitor center would be relocated to the old administration building, including the interpretive offices, natural history association office and storage, and other work and utility space. Removal of these functions would allow greater exhibit space in the visitor center. Parkwide interpretation and information would be provided. There would be a minor changes in exhibits and displays to continue to support a parkwide perspective. Some trip planning assistance would be available. The desert landscaping demonstration area would be retained. Directional signs from State Route 62 and entrance signs would be improved. The self-guided interpretive trail from the visitor center to the oasis would be maintained.

Visitor Facilities

Six picnic sites would be retained.

Roads and Circulation

Access to the area would continue via city streets. Employees and visitors would use a common parking area adjacent to the visitor center.

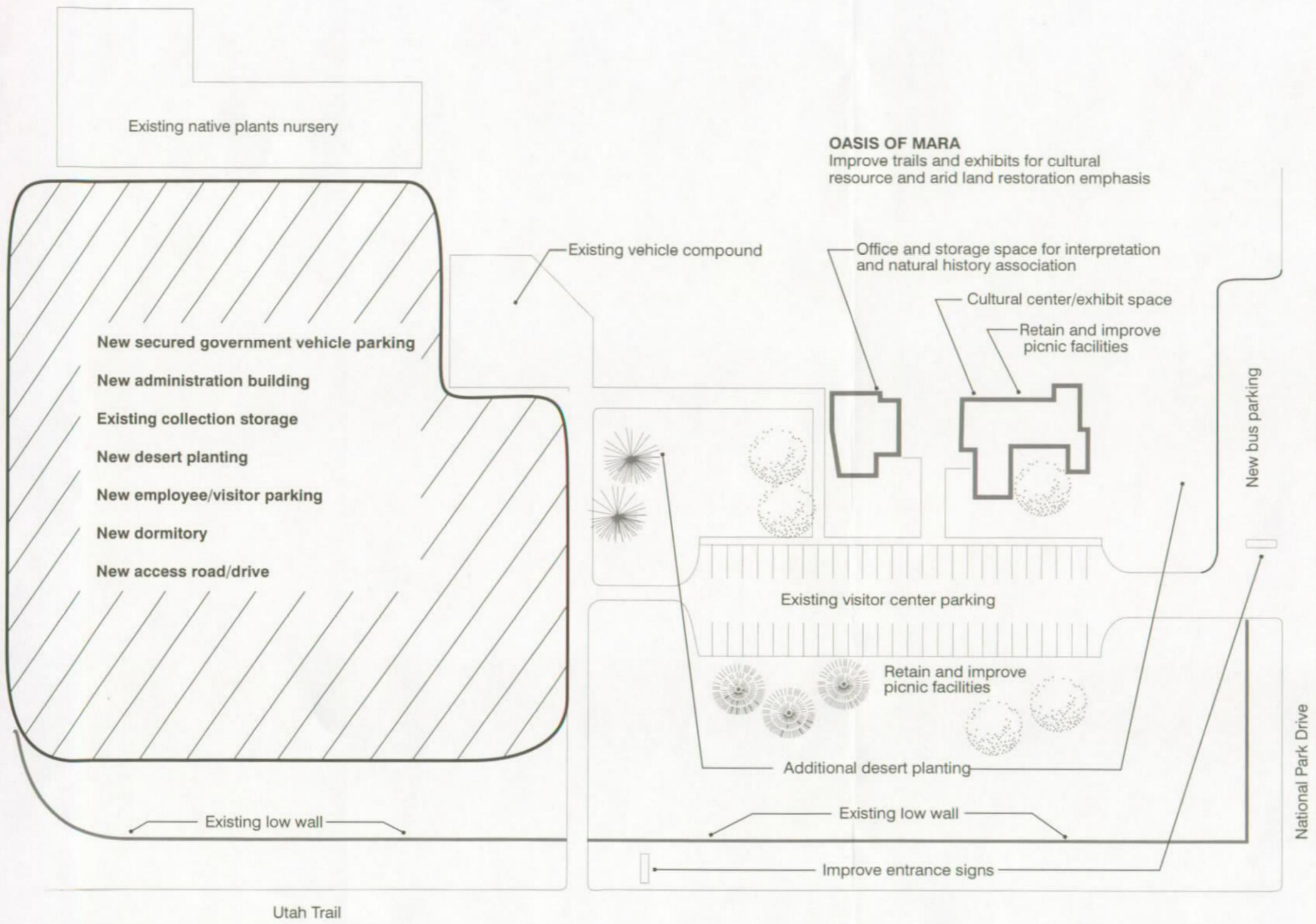
Operations

Administrative offices would be relocated to a new office building near the other Park Service support facilities. These facilities would continue to be located in separate buildings and office trailers. The volunteer trailer housing would remain.

The Park Service would work with the city of Twentynine Palms to establish a walking tour of cultural sites and the oasis.



Headquarters Planning Unit, Twentynine Palms Oasis



NOTE: Management of the land added to Joshua Tree National Monument by the park legislation will be addressed in the wilderness and backcountry management plan.

**Alternative A
Proposed Action
HEADQUARTERS**

JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL PARK
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
DSC/Dec. '94/156/20,023A

ON MICROFILM

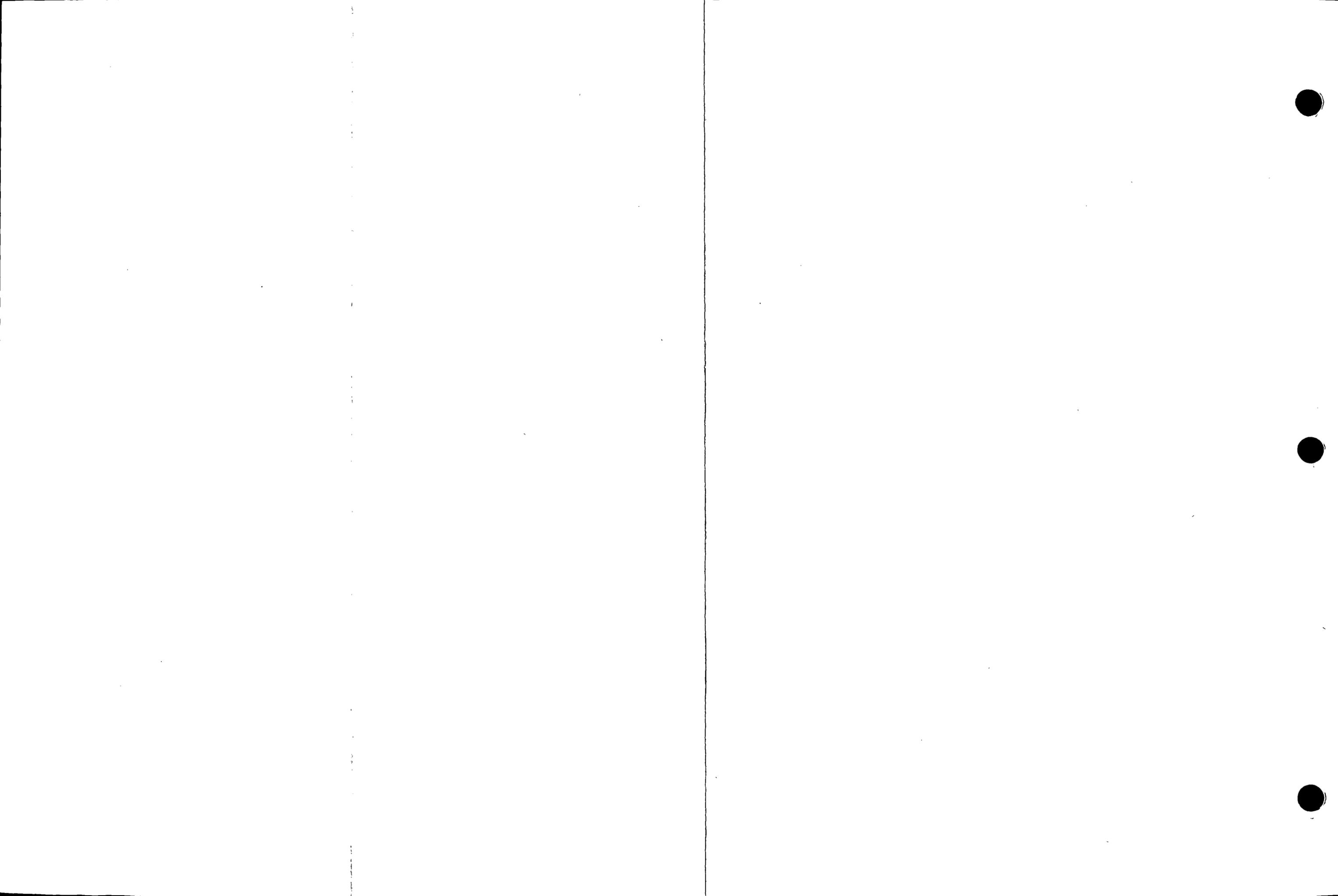


TABLE 10: ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS — HEADQUARTERS, OASIS OF MARA

Action Category	Alternative A Proposed Action	Alternative B No Action	Alternative C Minimum Requirements
VISITOR FACILITIES			
Campgrounds	N/A	N/A	N/A
Picnic Areas	Expand to 8–10 sites	Maintain six sites	Same as proposed action
Restrooms	Maintain restrooms in visitor center	Same as proposed action	Same as proposed action
INFORMATION AND INTERPRETATION			
Signs	Improve directional signs	Retain directional signs	Same as proposed action
Exhibits	Major rehabilitation and redesign of all exhibits and interpretive media at visitor center and oasis	Retain and periodically change visitor center exhibits and displays	Minor rehabilitation of exhibits at visitor center
	Remodel visitor center for use as cultural center only, remodel old administrative building for interpretive and history association offices, storage, and work space that would be removed from visitor center, main park location to provide cultural interpretation and MAB program information; improve orientation and trip planning	Provide parkwide orientation and some trip planning capabilities	Remodel visitor center; remodel old administrative building for interpretive and history association offices, storage, and work space that would be removed from visitor center; provide orientation, space for book sales, and trip planning capabilities
	Retain and expand desert landscaping demonstration area	Retain desert landscaping demonstration area	Retain desert landscaping demonstration area
Fee Station	N/A	N/A	N/A
Visitor Contact	Provide at expanded visitor center	Provide at visitor center	Same as proposed action
ROADS AND CIRCULATION			
Paved Roads	Resurface roads, add parking and access road	Resurface parking lot and access road	Same as proposed action
Dirt Roads	N/A	N/A	N/A
Trails	Improve oasis trail wall and exhibits	Maintain self-guided one-half-mile trail to oasis	Improve oasis trail and retain exhibits
	Provide trail connections to nearby non-NPS cultural features	Maintain trail between NPS and city cultural features	Establish walking tour, include oasis interpretive trail with city cooperation
Parking	Increase parking capacity; provide separate visitor and employee parking; add secure NPS parking	Retain parking	Same as no action

ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT PLANS

Action Category	Alternative A Proposed Action	Alternative B No Action	Alternative C Minimum Requirements
OPERATIONS			
Housing	Provide new dorm for volunteers	Retain trailer and two trailer pads for volunteers	Same as alternative B
Maintenance	Incorporate support shops into new administrative complex; add space in the vehicle compound	Retain support shops	Same as proposed action
Administration	Consolidate and expand administrative functions in new building complex	Maintain NPS support facilities	Relocate administrative offices to new building; retain other support facilities
Utilities	Upgrade wastewater system	Retain utilities	Same as proposed action
Patrol	N/A	N/A	N/A

INDIAN COVE PLANNING UNIT

BACKGROUND

The Indian Cove planning unit is on the north boundary of the park. Indian Cove is the only developed area in this unit and includes camping and day use facilities. It is also a primary backcountry and climbing staging area for day use access into the Wonderland of Rocks wilderness area.

Indian Cove access is from State Route 62. A small visitor contact station is located along the Indian Cove access road. Visitors must park and enter the station to pay the entrance fee. This station also serves as a subdistrict ranger station, but space is inadequate for both functions. A Park Service residence is located next to the visitor contact and ranger station. The trailhead for the Boy Scout Trail into the Wonderland of Rocks is near these buildings. A service road to an old borrow pit exists along the boundary.

Indian Cove includes the second largest campground in the park, with 101 individual sites and 13 group sites. The present campground layout and access roads are very confusing and sites are not clearly defined. Conflicts between user groups arise because campsites abut rock outcrops that are popular with rock climbers. There is a short nature trail at the western edge of the campground. A picnic area with six individual and three group sites is located east of the campground. The picnic sites and associated parking are not clearly delineated, and the group picnic sites are heavily used, which has damaged surrounding vegetation and soil.

Water is supplied to the Park Service residence from the Twentynine Palms water district. Water is not available in the campground. Public restrooms include vault toilets near the visitor contact station and in the campground.

The Fortynine Palms Oasis, trail, and 36-space parking area is also in this planning unit. This trailhead is accessed from State Route 62. The trail to the oasis is about 1.5 miles long. An unmaintained trail to the oasis is available up the canyon wash from Fortynine Palms parking area. There is a concern that visitor use at the oasis during the summer may be inhibiting bighorn use of the spring.

This planning unit is located adjacent to Twentynine Palms. Illegal vehicle access occurs up the washes into the park.

ALTERNATIVE A — PROPOSED ACTION

The Indian Cove developed area would continue to serve campers, day users, and hikers entering the Wonderland of Rocks backcountry area. Facilities would be redesigned to separate campers and day users, clearly define camp and picnic sites, increase contact with park staff, and enhance information and orientation.

Information and Interpretation

The visitor contact and ranger station would be expanded by approximately 200 square feet to provide additional space for fee collection, camping and day use information, orientation to Indian Cove and the rest of the park, and office space. The visitor contact station would be redesigned to include a drive-through fee collection window. Interpretation would continue to be provided primarily through wayside exhibits and self-guiding interpretive trails, which would be updated. Wayside exhibits would be added at the Boy Scout trailhead and in the campground.

Visitor Facilities

Campground registration would be provided at the contact station. The campground would be redesigned to clearly delineate sites and improve aesthetics. Popular climbing areas in the campground would be designated for day use only and parking would be added in these areas. The amphitheater would be redesigned to improve audiovisual capabilities and accessibility. Picnic sites and parking would also be redesigned and six sites would be built near the nature trail.

The public restroom facilities would be upgraded. The temporary structures now in use in the campground would be replaced with more permanent structures. The restroom at the visitor contact station would be upgraded to include flush toilets and water.

Roads and Circulation

The entrance road would be split to direct entering vehicles past a drive-through fee collection window at the visitor contact station, where a small parking area would be provided. Exiting vehicles would follow a one-way single lane to the gate. All roads and parking would be paved except the dirt road to the old borrow pit. The road and pit would be revegetated. A 0.1-mile portion of the Indian Cove access road would be realigned to correct a hazardous curve. Parking for about five cars would be added near three popular climbing areas in the campground that would be designated for day use only.

The trail to Fortynine Palms Oasis would be maintained. Closure of the access road to Fortynine Palms Oasis in the summer during bighorn sheep watering would be evaluated to mitigate impacts of visitor use on the sheep.

Operations

Additional office space for ranger operations would be provided by expanding the visitor contact and ranger station. The NPS residence would be retained. The borrow pit and access road would be revegetated.

The north boundary would be clearly marked and fenced, and patrol of the boundary would be increased to prevent illegal vehicle access.

ALTERNATIVE B — NO ACTION

Camping and day use facilities would be maintained. There would be no redesign of facilities.

Information and Interpretation

The visitor contact and ranger station would be maintained for both functions. Information and orientation would be minimal because of the limited space for displays and literature. The self-guided nature trail and waysides on the west end of the campground would be maintained.

Other Visitor Facilities

The campground and picnic sites would be retained. Day use parking at popular climbing sites would not be available. The Fortynine Palms trail would be maintained.

Roads and Circulation

Roads would be maintained and the entrance road curve realigned.

Operations

Ranger offices would continue to be provided in the visitor contact and ranger station. The Park Service residence would be retained. The borrow pit and access road would remain closed.

The Park Service would maintain patrols along the boundary to discourage illegal vehicle access.

ALTERNATIVE C — MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

Camping and day use facilities would be maintained. However, camp and picnic sites would be better delineated and popular climbing areas in the campground would be converted to day use. Information and orientation facilities would be improved and updated.

Information and Interpretation

The visitor contact and ranger station would be expanded by approximately 200 square feet to provide additional space for fee collection, camping and day use information, orientation to Indian Cove and the rest of the park, and office space. The interpretive exhibits and nature trail waysides would be updated.

Visitor Facilities

Campsites would be further delineated through use of barriers, vegetation, and paved parking for each site. Campsites at popular day use climbing areas would be converted to day use only, with parking provided. The picnic sites and parking would be retained and better delineated to minimize impacts on the surrounding vegetation and soils. Permanent restrooms would be constructed.

Roads and Circulation

Roads would be paved and the entrance road curve realigned. Parking for about five cars would be added near three popular climbing areas in the campground that would be designated for day use only.

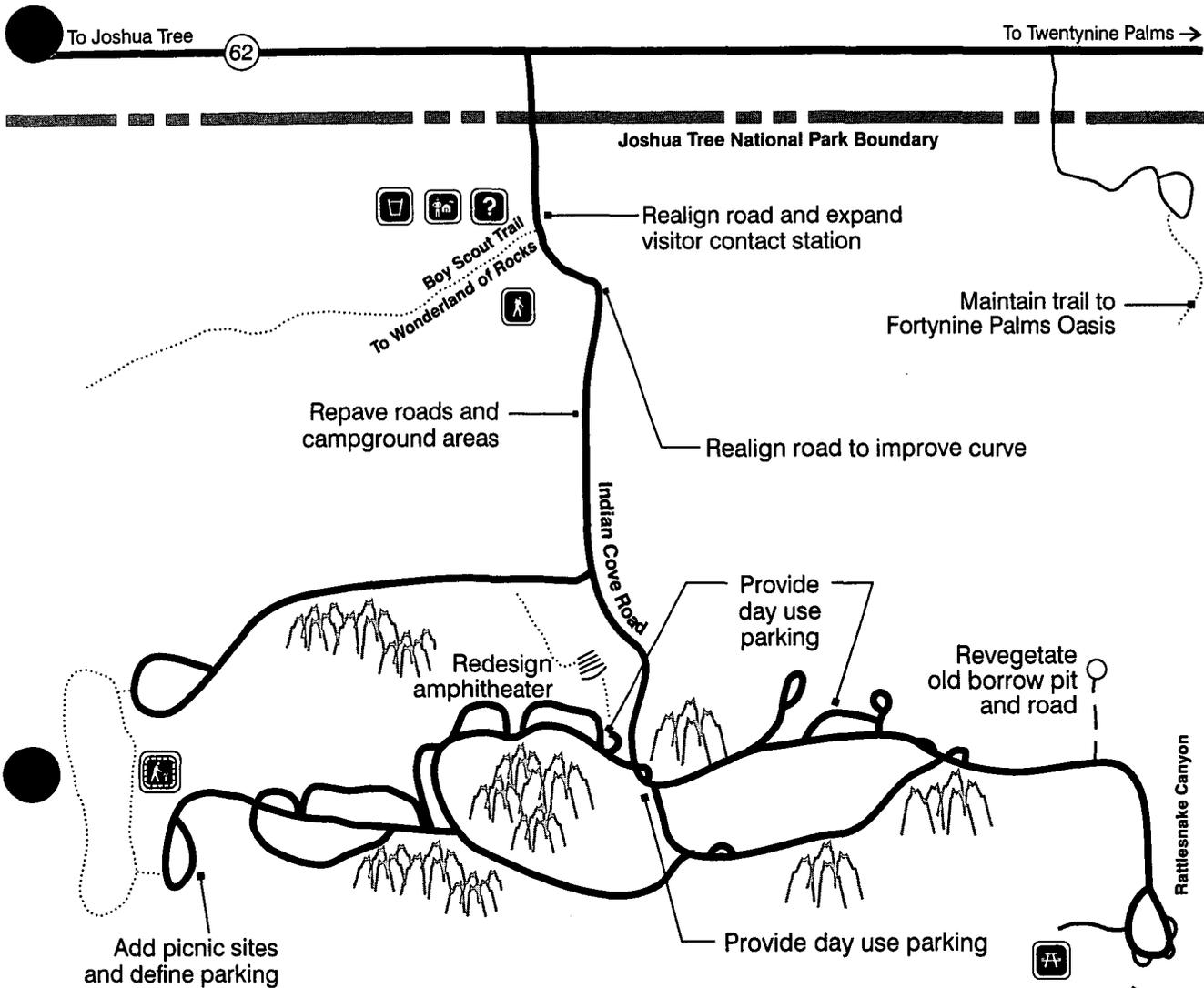
Operations

Additional office space for ranger operations would be provided by expanding the visitor contact and ranger station. The NPS residence would be retained.

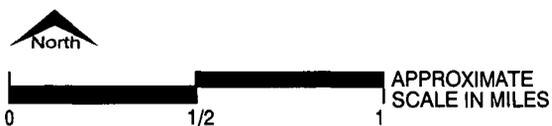
The Park Service would increase patrols along the boundary, which would be clearly marked and fenced to discourage illegal vehicle access.



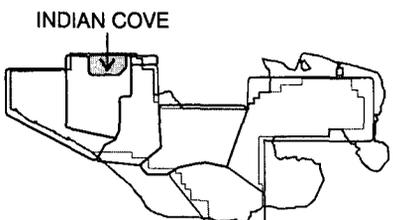
Indian Cove Planning Unit



REDESIGN ENTIRE CAMPGROUND



- Paved road
- Dirt road
- Hiking trail



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Alternative A Proposed Action INDIAN COVE CAMPGROUND

JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL PARK
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
DSC/Dec. '94/156/20,024A

ON MICROFILM

TABLE 11: ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS — INDIAN COVE

Action Category	Alternative A Proposed Action	Alternative B No Action	Alternative C Minimum Requirement
VISITOR FACILITIES			
Campgrounds	Redesign campground and designate popular climbing areas for day use; provide registration at visitor contact station	Maintain 101 individual sites and 13 group sites	Define campsites and designate popular climbing areas for day use; provide registration at visitor contact station
Picnic Areas	Redesign picnic area; add 6 sites near nature trail	Maintain 6 individual and 3 group sites	Define current sites
Restrooms	Provide permanent restrooms at the campground; provide water and flush toilets at restroom near visitor contact station	Maintain 53 vault toilets with temporary structures	Provide permanent restrooms at the campground
INFORMATION AND INTERPRETATION			
Signs	Maintain directional signs	Same as proposed action	Same as proposed action
Exhibits	Upgrade waysides exhibits and nature trail; add wayside exhibits at Boy Scout trailhead and campground	Maintain waysides and nature trail	Upgrade waysides and nature trail exhibits
Fee Station	Redesign contact station, realign road to provide drive-through fee collection window	Park and pay fee at visitor contact station	Same as no action
Visitor Contact	Expand contact station to provide additional space for information, orientation, and office functions; redesign amphitheater	Maintain contact station; retain amphitheater	Expand contact station to provide additional space for information, orientation, and office functions; retain amphitheater
ROADS AND CIRCULATION			
Paved Roads	Pave campground roads, realign curve on entrance road; evaluate summer road closure to Fortynine Palms trailhead	Maintain dirt campground roads; realign curve in entrance road	Same as proposed action
Dirt Roads	Revegetate service road to borrow pit	Maintain closure of borrow pit	Same as proposed action
Trails	Maintain Fortynine Palms trail, Indian Cove nature trail, and Boy Scout trail; evaluate closure of Fortynine Palms trail during bighorn watering	Maintain trails	Same as proposed action
Parking	Pave parking at picnic area, convert campsites near climbing to day use and provide parking	Maintain dirt parking at picnic area	Same as proposed action
OPERATIONS			
Housing	Maintain 3-bedroom house	Same as proposed action	Same as proposed action
Maintenance	Revegetate borrow pit and access road	Borrow pit and road remain closed	Same as proposed action
Administration	Add ranger office space at visitor contact station	Retain ranger office space in visitor contact station	Same as proposed action
Patrol	Increase patrols, clearly mark boundary, and fence	Maintain infrequent boundary patrols	Same as proposed action

COVINGTON PLANNING UNIT

BACKGROUND

The Covington planning unit includes Covington Flats, Black Rock Canyon campground, and a major section of the Little San Bernardino Mountains. The unit has two major entrances — one for Covington Flats and one for the Black Rock Canyon campground. Covington Flats is in a more natural state with dirt road access; Black Rock is a developed area adjacent to community housing and the town of Yucca Valley. Black Rock is a major staging area for hiking and equestrian access to the California Hiking and Riding Trail.

Covington Flats

Access to Covington Flats is along the nine-mile two-wheel-drive La Contenta dirt road that is only partially maintained and is inadequate for RV use. This area of the park contains some of the most extensive Joshua tree forest in the park. The California Riding and Hiking Trail traverses the area. A small picnic area is located at the end of the lower Covington Flats road. Eureka Peak is at the west end of La Contenta Road. Upper Covington Flats Road is a spur off of La Contenta Road.

Black Rock Canyon

Black Rock Canyon contains a 100-space campground, a horse camp, ranger station, interagency fire station, environmental education center, BLM ranger office, and small visitor center. The area has trailheads for day use hiking and for the California Hiking and Riding Trail. Parking for the trailheads is inadequate and not clearly delineated. This area is supplied with water, power, and telephone service.

Little San Bernardino Mountains

The Little San Bernardino Mountains are in one of the most remote areas in the park. There is no development, and there are only dirt roads in this rugged area. The elevation ranges from about 5,300 feet to roughly 1,700 feet.

Illegal wood cutting, poaching, offroad vehicle use, and theft of cactus and archeological artifacts are all problems in this unit.

ALTERNATIVE A — PROPOSED ACTION

Camping and day use facilities would be redesigned to improve aesthetics, increase privacy, and delineate sites and associated parking. The visitor center would be converted to a nature center available to visitors, school groups, and public environmental education programs.

Information and Interpretation

Onsite interpretation would be through personal interpretation, wayside exhibits, and self-guiding interpretive publications and trails. The Black Rock Canyon nature center would provide educational activities. Backcountry and fire management interpretation exhibits would be added. The visitor center would be redeveloped to function as a nature center and environmental education center. The exhibits and interpretive materials would be replaced to support this function. It would have parkwide information and orientation. The center could also be used as a setting for seminars and educational programs. Interpretive programs would be given by a Park Service seasonal ranger.

Other Visitor Facilities

Where closely spaced sites exist in Black Rock Canyon Campground, some sites would be removed to improve the visitor experience and provide privacy. Additional redesign would improve drainage and visual quality. The horse camp would be redesigned and restrooms added. Also, paved trailhead parking for 10 cars would be designated with a backcountry board for the California Riding and Hiking Trail on the east end of the horse camp. Remnants of the old courts would be removed. Covington Flat Road would remain a two-wheel-drive dirt road.

The Black Rock picnic area would be expanded by six sites and improved with ramadas (shade structures). A restroom would be provided near the upper Covington Flat backcountry registration board.

Roads and Circulation

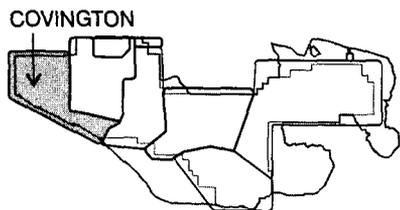
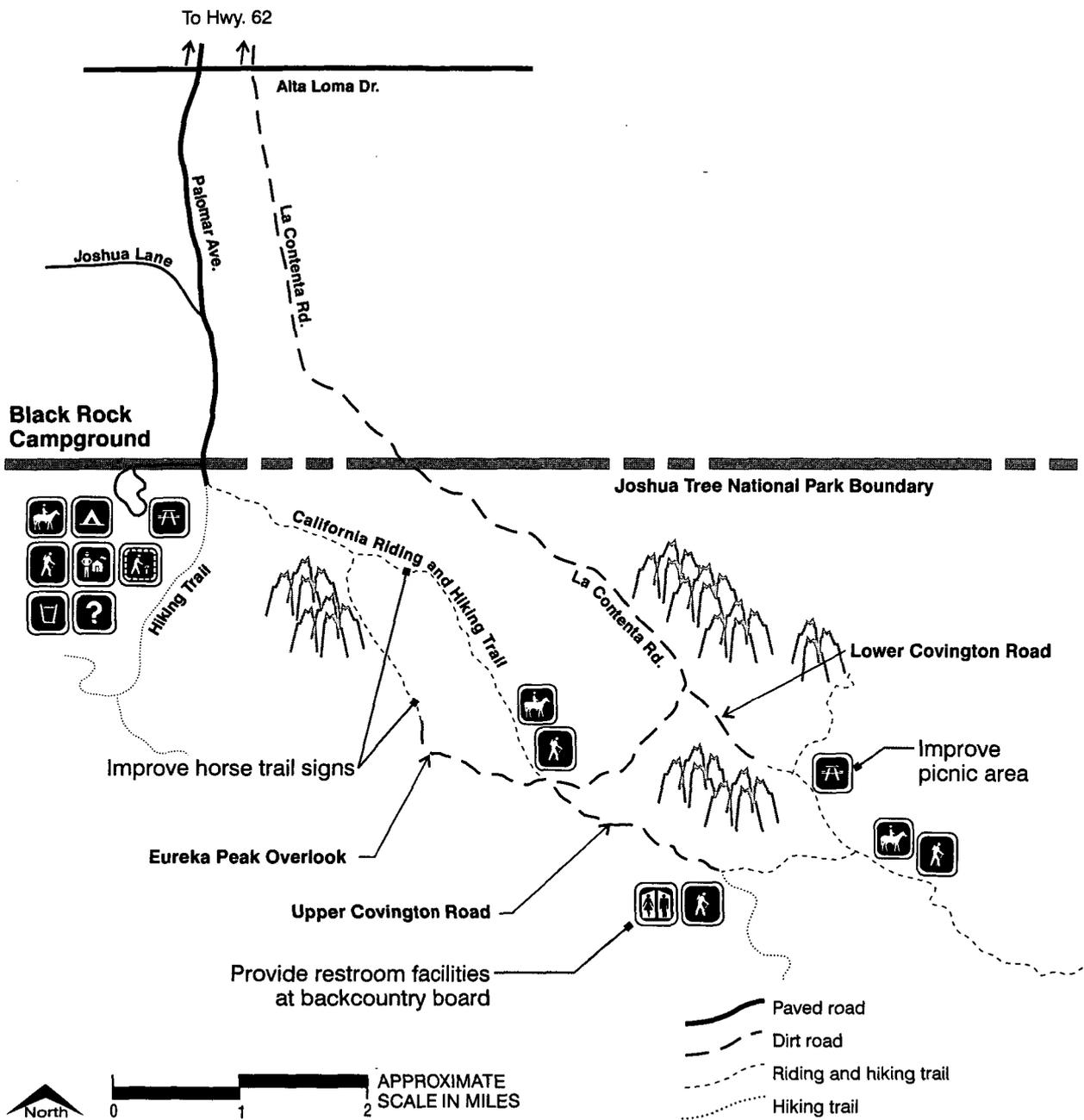
Roads would be maintained. The campground roads and parking areas would be repaved.

Barriers would be placed to more clearly define parking at trailheads and picnic areas at Covington Flat. The barbed wire along the boundary near the Covington Flat entrance road would be removed. Covington Flat Road would remain a two-wheel-drive dirt road.

Designated trails such as the California Riding and Hiking Trail would be marked and a trails plan would be completed for inclusion in a handbook. Horse trails would be better defined with the assistance of local equestrians. Braided trails would be revegetated.

The park would work with adjacent landowners to allow parking at wilderness access points where vehicle use inside the park would not be possible.

The park is working with the city of Desert Hot Springs and the Bureau of Land Management to prepare a regional trails plan. Trail access into the park from Desert Hot Springs has been proposed as part of that plan. The regional trail would continue as a designated trail in the park. Siting would be addressed in the trails plan.

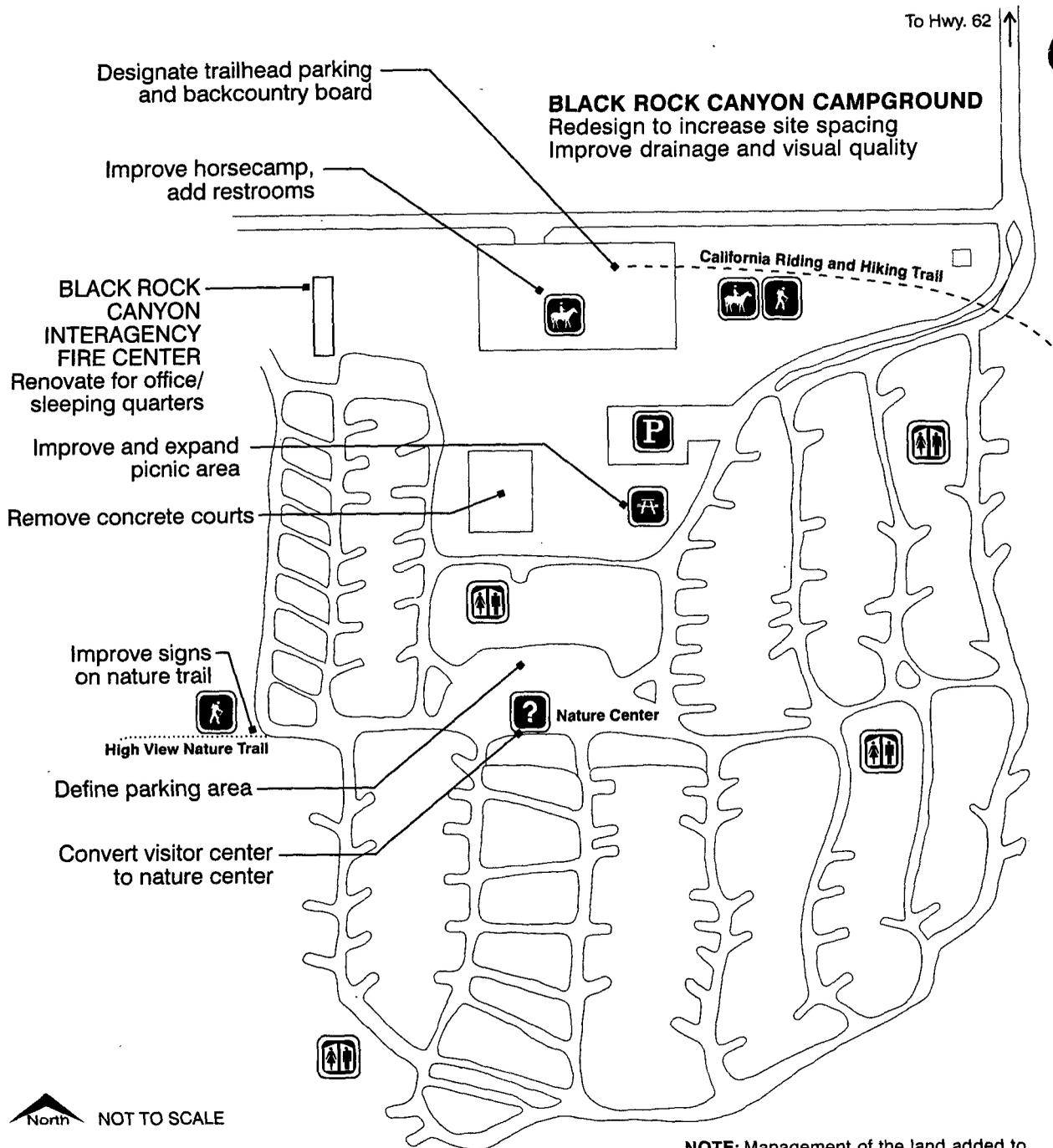


NOTE: Management of the land added to Joshua Tree National Monument by the park legislation will be addressed in the wilderness and backcountry management plan.

Alternative A Proposed Action COVINGTON

JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL PARK
 UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
 NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
 DSC/Dec. '94/156/20,025A

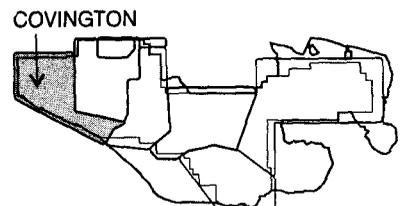
ON MICROFILM



NOTE: Management of the land added to Joshua Tree National Monument by the park legislation will be addressed in the wilderness and backcountry management plan.

Alternative A Proposed Action BLACK ROCK CANYON CAMPGROUND

JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL PARK
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
DSC/Dec. '94/156/20,026A



ON MICROFILM

Operations

A maintenance position would be added to provide a full-time maintenance presence at Black Rock Canyon. Uniformed personnel would also be added for increased patrol of the backcountry to deter illegal activities. Park Service housing and utility systems would be maintained.

The interagency fire center would be renovated to accommodate office and sleeping quarters.

ALTERNATIVE B — NO ACTION

Camping and day use facilities would be maintained. There would be no redesign of facilities.

Information and Interpretation

The visitor center and exhibits would be maintained and the center would be staffed by volunteers.

Visitor Facilities

The campground and picnic sites would be retained. The horse camp and California Hiking and Riding Trail trailhead and staging area would continue to share space.

Roads and Circulation

Paved and dirt roads would be maintained.

Operations

Maintenance would continue on a limited basis, done by staff assigned to other developed areas. The NPS residences would be maintained.

The Park Service would maintain patrols along the boundary to discourage illegal activities.

ALTERNATIVE C — MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

Camping and day use facilities would be maintained. However, campsites would be better delineated by barriers such as vegetation or rocks. The visitor center would be converted to a nature center that would be available to visitors and school groups and for public environmental education programs.

Information and Interpretation

Educational experiences for visitors would be similar to those in the proposed action. Onsite interpretation would be presented by uniformed personnel, on wayside exhibits, and through self-guiding publications and trails. Backcountry and fire management exhibits would be added. The visitor center would be redeveloped to function as a nature center and environmental education center. The exhibits and interpretive material would be replaced to support this function. It would have minimal parkwide information and orientation.

The center could also be used as a setting for seminars and educational programs. Interpretive programs would be given by NPS staff supplemented by volunteers.

Visitor Facilities

Campsites would be better delineated by rock barriers and vegetation. The picnic sites and parking would be retained and better delineated to minimize impacts to the surrounding vegetation and soil. Trailhead parking would be designated with a backcountry board for the California Riding and Hiking Trail on the east end of the horse camp. Remnants of the old private campground facility would be removed.

Roads and Circulation

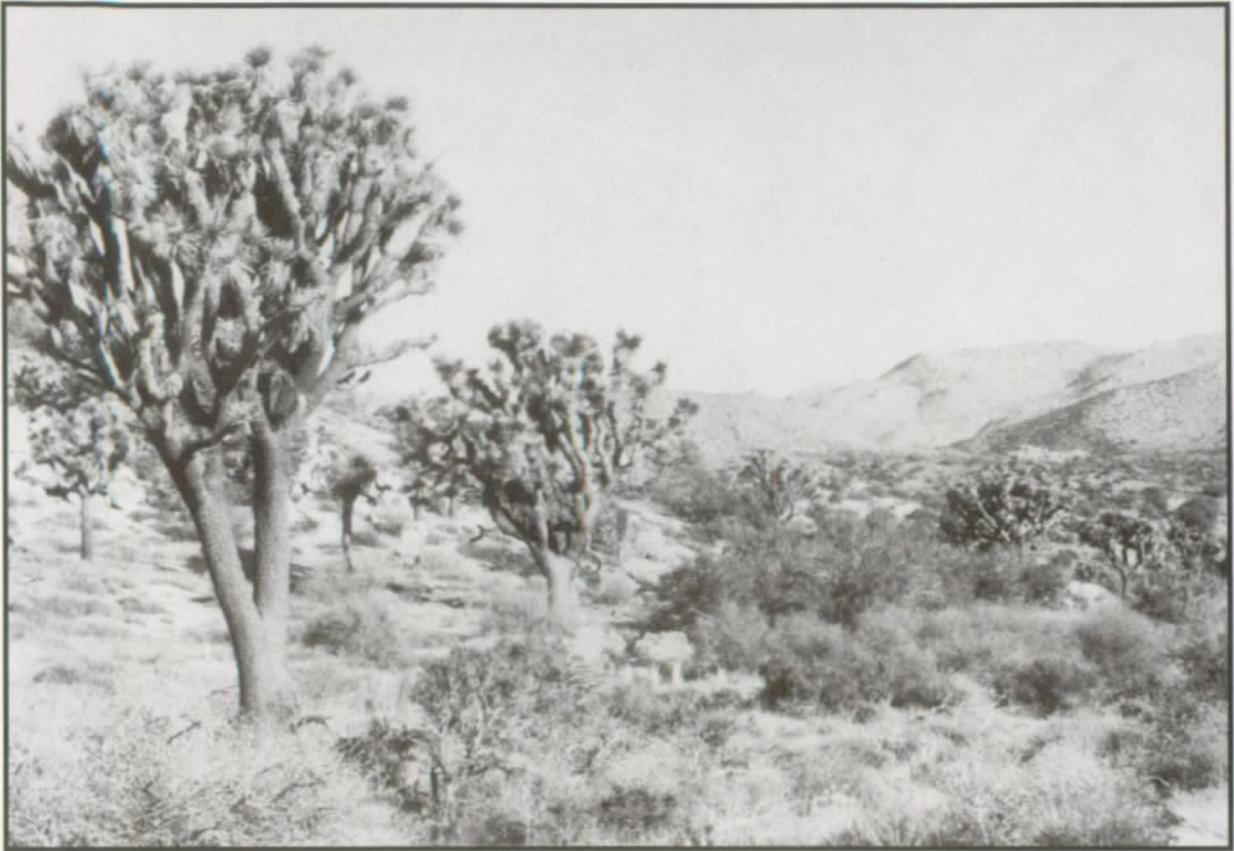
Paved and dirt roads would be maintained. Barriers would be placed to more clearly define parking at trailheads and picnic areas at Covington Flat. The barbed wire along the boundary near the Covington Flat entrance road would be removed.

Significant trails such as the California Riding and Hiking Trail would be marked and a trails plan would be completed for inclusion in a handbook. Horse trails would be better defined with the assistance of local equestrians.

Operations

A maintenance position would be added to provide a full-time maintenance presence at Black Rock Canyon. A seasonal ranger position would also be added to allow more patrols of the backcountry to deter illegal activities.

Housing and utility systems would be maintained.



Covington Planning Unit

TABLE 12: ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS — COVINGTON

Action Category	Alternative A Proposed Action	Alternative B No Action	Alternative C Minimum Requirements
VISITOR FACILITIES			
Campgrounds	Redesign campground to improve drainage, visual quality, and provide more space between campsites; remove concrete court remnants; improve horse camp layout and add one restroom	Retain Black Rock Canyon campground with 100 sites; retain private campground facilities; Maintain group horse trailer area, no restrooms	Clearly define campsites and improve drainage; maintain group horse trailer area
Picnic Areas	Define sites and add 4–6 sites at Black Rock Canyon picnic area, provide ramadas	Retain 4 sites at Black Rock Canyon picnic area	Define sites and provide ramadas at Black Rock Canyon picnic area
Restrooms	Retain four comfort stations at Black Rock Canyon; provide toilets at backcountry trailhead	Retain four comfort stations at Black Rock Canyon	Same as no action
INFORMATION AND INTERPRETATION			
Signs	Maintain directional signs	Same as proposed action	Same as proposed action
Exhibits	Major rehabilitation of exhibits and interpretive media in visitor center, which would function primarily as a nature center and environmental education facility	Maintain exhibits at visitor center	Same as proposed action
Visitor Contact	Provide for NPS interpreters at Black Rock Canyon nature center	Volunteers staff nature center and give programs	Same as proposed action
ROADS AND CIRCULATION			
Paved Roads	Maintain roads	Maintain roads	Same as no action
Dirt Roads	Maintain Covington Flat roads as 2-wheel drive	Same as proposed action	Same as proposed action
Trails	Sign designated trails; revegetate braided trails; establish a trail crew; install backcountry board and parking at California Riding and Hiking Trail access at Black Rock Canyon	Maintain trails	Same as proposed action
Parking	Clearly define spaces in Black Rock Canyon picnic parking lot; add new trailhead parking for the California Riding and Hiking Trail at Black Rock Canyon	Maintain parking areas	Same as proposed action
OPERATIONS			
Housing	Retain 3-bedroom house, one apartment at Black Rock Canyon	Same as proposed action	Same as proposed action
Maintenance	Retain small maintenance facility and add maintenance position at Black Rock Canyon	Retain small maintenance facility at Black Rock Canyon	Same as proposed action
Patrol	Increase backcountry patrols; add seasonal ranger	Maintain backcountry patrol	Same as proposed action

LOST HORSE PLANNING UNIT

BACKGROUND

The Lost Horse planning unit includes the most popular use areas in the park and is where most visitors experience the Mojave Desert. Desert scenery, Joshua trees, many conveniently accessed rock formations, and historic sites are all to be found in this unit. The monzogranite rock piles throughout Hidden Valley and Wonderland of Rocks have made the park one of the premiere rock climbing areas in the world.

The Joshua Tree west entrance is the most convenient for visitors arriving from the west and is used by the majority of visitors. The fee collection station is inadequate for the large number of visitors who enter here. Development has expanded along the northern boundary in this area. Illegal vehicle access takes place up washes into the park.

The main access road into the interior of the park (Park Boulevard) traverses this unit. This paved road, along with the Barker Dam, Queen Valley dirt road, and Keys View paved roads provide the primary access to the visitor use facilities, climbing areas, and trailheads. The network of dirt roads throughout Queen Valley provides redundant access routes to visitor destinations in the valley. Keys View Road accesses the crest of the Little San Bernardino Mountains, which provides a dramatic view across the Coachella Valley to 11,000-foot San Jacinto and, on a clear day, the Salton Sea. It also provides access to the dirt road to the Lost Horse Mine trailhead parking. This mine access road is narrow and subject to washouts, often making access by two-wheel-drive vehicles impossible. Poor sight distance along one crest in the road is a safety hazard to oncoming vehicles.

There are 21 designated day use parking areas. However, with annual increases in visitation, the demand for access has resulted in overflowing parking areas, shoulder parking, and visitor-created parking areas.

The visitor use facilities have been developed throughout the road corridors in response to the dispersed visitor attractions. Directional signs to many of the facilities are ineffective. There are three campgrounds (Hidden Valley, Ryan, and Sheep Pass) with a total of 94 individual sites and six group sites. The Hidden Valley campground is enclosed by granite rock faces that are popular with campers and day use climbers. Ryan Campground is near the California Hiking and Riding Trail and is used by horse campers. Sheep Pass Campground accommodates group camping. Campgrounds are heavily used year-round and operate at capacity during most weekends and over the entire spring season. To the north of Hidden Valley Campground lies Desert Queen Ranch, also known as Keys Ranch, which is only open to guided groups. There are two picnic areas, one at Quail Springs and one at Hidden Valley. Restrooms consist of portable vault toilets. There is no power, water, or telephone service. As with other visitor facilities in the park, continuing impacts to vegetation, soil, and visual quality are a problem.

Two well-defined and very popular nature trails exist in this unit — the Hidden Valley and Barker Dam Trails. The Cap Rock Trail is the only trail accessible to people with disabilities in this unit, and the asphalt surface must be improved to make this trail fully accessible. Generally, the Lost Horse unit has suffered in terms of impacts on the resource and visitor

experience because of an inadequate hiking and horse trail systems. Without a well defined system, numerous braided trails have developed in many different areas of the Lost Horse unit. As more and more trails have been created, the problem for hikers and riders has compounded and resulted in confusion. Besides the hiking trails, numerous access trails from parking areas to rock climbing sites have appeared, resulting in impacts to the resources.

Lost Horse ranger station and weather station are located off an administrative road to the southwest of the Hidden Valley area. A well, septic system, and solar array service this development. Camping near this area is permitted for special uses such as search and rescue and training. The park has insufficient staff to adequately patrol this heavily used unit.

ALTERNATIVE A — PROPOSED ACTION

The primary visitor center would be constructed near the west entrance and would be the principal site for interpretation of the natural resources. All campgrounds, picnic areas, and parking in this unit would be redesigned to reduce impacts to resources and visual quality and to enhance visitor experience. Campground roads and campsite parking would be paved, camp and picnic sites clearly defined, and site furnishings replaced. All day use parking areas would be paved and edges delineated to clearly indicate where parking is allowed. Parking capacity would be increased to about 675 cars and 60 RVs — primarily through expansion of current areas, but also with the addition of some small parking areas.

Information and Interpretation

A new 8,000-10,000-square-foot visitor center would be constructed near the west entrance. The major functions would be visitor orientation, information, natural history interpretation, publication sales, office space, and restrooms. The extension of nearby municipal utilities to this site would be evaluated. A separate study and environmental analysis would be completed to evaluate possible alternative visitor center sites and analyze their environmental impacts. This study would evaluate sites within the park as well as private and other public land outside the park. The center could be operated jointly with the Bureau of Land Management.

This unit would be the primary location interpretation of the park by uniformed personnel and for office and work space. Guided trips on the extensive trail system and costumed interpretation at Keys Ranch and other historic sites would be offered throughout the unit. Wayside exhibits would all be upgraded and new ones would be added as necessary. Self-guiding publications and signs would be developed for many of the trails and other resources in the area. Keys Ranch, Lost Horse Mine, Barker Dam, Ryan House and Lost Horse Well, and Wall Street Mill would be interpreted. Keys Ranch would be the major interpretive resource. Cap Rock Trail would be improved to be fully accessible. An interpretive trail would be developed for the Desert Queen Mine.

Visitor Facilities

Campground circulation roads and site parking would be paved to clearly define vehicle use areas. The campgrounds and picnic areas would be redesigned to clearly delineate sites and improve aesthetics. Quail Springs picnic area would be expanded to provide a place for visitors to watch rock climbing. Sites on the northern perimeter of the Hidden Valley campground would be walk-in sites. The Hidden Valley day use parking area would be removed and converted to a camp loop. Opportunities for day use would continue in the immediate area, with parking available at the Hidden Valley nature trail, Hidden Valley picnic area, and Intersection Rock parking area. At Ryan Campground, some of the campsites would be converted to tent and RV camping and one loop would be designated for horse users only to ensure the safety of visitors. A reservation system would be instituted for the horse campsites. Sheep Pass campground would continue to be used by groups and would be by reservation.

Roads and Circulation

Park Boulevard would be reconstructed and a section relocated from the east side of Intersection Rock to the west side. The Barker Dam road would then "T" off to the east of the relocated boulevard on the south side of Intersection Rock. This new portion of the Barker Dam road would rejoin the present alignment slightly to the east of Hidden Valley campground. The campground loops would then be accessible from the Barker Dam road, and the present access to Park Boulevard would be removed, allowing for separate day use parking on the old roadbed of the parkway adjacent to Intersection Rock (see Hidden Valley Area graphic).

Barker Dam Road would be paved to a consolidated parking area for Barker Dam and Wall Street Mill trailheads. A two-wheel-drive, two-way dirt road connection would be maintained from this point through Queen Valley and to the Desert Queen mine trailhead. The remaining network of dirt roads in the area would be evaluated in the wilderness and backcountry management plan to determine which should be revegetated or retained for hiking, biking, or vehicle use.

Keys View Road would be reconstructed at its present width of 20 feet and vehicles over 20 feet long would be advised not to proceed past the parking area for the California Riding and Hiking Trail. A pullout with gauging station would be provided near the parking area to allow large vehicles to be measured.

A study would be implemented to determine the most effective and economical shuttle system for Joshua Tree. The route from Quail Springs through Hidden Valley to Keys View and possibly east to Belle and White Tank campgrounds would be ideal for this service. Shuttle service to visitor facilities at the park entrances, less popular areas, and roads too narrow for RVs would also be considered. Additionally, the feasibility of interpretive shuttle routes would be studied. Many people could incorporate the sightseeing experience with an interpretive talk.

It would be preferable to maintain the Lost Horse Mine dirt road for two-wheel-drive vehicles. The trailhead should be relocated and expanded as close to the trailhead parking

area as possible. A final decision on the length of this road and location of trailhead parking would be determined following a more detailed design analysis and environmental assessment. Impacts of alternatives ranging from maintaining the current length of the road and correcting the drainage and sight distance problems to placing the trailhead near Keys View Road (doubling the hiking distance to the mine) would be considered.

The old road to Stubbe Springs bisects two wilderness units. This road is closed and would be revegetated. The two-way portion of the dirt road to the Lost Horse ranger station would be maintained for administrative use only and the one-way portion is closed and would be revegetated.

Day use parking would be paved, striped, and expanded at 18 locations. There would be a major expansion of the Wonderland of Rocks backcountry staging area and Hall of Horrors. Parking for Barker Dam and Wall Street Mill would be consolidated into one large lot. Five parking areas would be removed. The trailhead lot at Wall Street Mill would be removed and revegetated. The Keys wait lot and dirt access road would be retained. Options to improve two-way traffic flow on this road, such as pullouts, signs, or limited widening, would be evaluated and impacts assessed during preliminary design. Visitors on the Park Service tour would then drive to the ranch. The Hidden Valley day use lot would be converted to a camp loop with more day use parking than provided at an expanded Intersection Rock parking area. The Rock Pile exhibit pullout area would also be removed. Seven new pullouts would be added primarily in currently disturbed areas for interpretation and climbing access. Parking would total approximately 665 cars and 75 RVs (see Parking and Pullouts graphic and table).

All designated trails would be signed, redundant trails would be revegetated, and new loop trails would be created. Designated routes between parking areas and rock climbing sites would be signed and the social trails would be revegetated. Trails open to horse use and mountain bike use would be determined and clearly designated.

Operations

Water, sewage, and power systems would continue to be provided at the Lost Horse ranger station for administrative use. Camping near this area would continue to be permitted for special uses such as search and rescue and training.

Staff would be increased to provide additional patrols throughout this unit. Fence along the open desert and rock barriers in washes would be placed to discourage illegal vehicle access along the northern boundary of the park.

The Sheep Pass borrow pit on the north side of Park Boulevard would be revegetated.

ALTERNATIVE B — NO ACTION

The heavily used west entrance would continue to have a fee collection station. All campgrounds, picnic areas, and parking in this unit would be retained. Unsurfaced parking areas for approximately 320 cars and 20 RVs would continue to be provided.

Information and Interpretation

The west entrance fee collection station would be maintained. Brief contact with park staff on entry and limited information and orientation materials would continue to be available. The exhibits, interpretive pullouts, publications, and directional signs for this unit would be maintained and upgraded at the current slow rate. Personal interpretive contacts would be minimal. Keys Ranch guided tours would continue.

Visitor Facilities

Campgrounds, picnic areas, and restroom facilities would be maintained. Hidden Valley Campground would be maintained. Ryan Campground would accommodate horse campers and Sheep Pass Campground would be retained for groups. Portable toilet facilities would remain in use.

Roads and Circulation

Paved roads would be reconstructed. Dirt roads would be retained. Maintenance would focus on maintaining a two-wheel-drive, two-way connection between Barker Dam and Queen Valley. Periodic repairs would be made to Lost Horse Mine dirt road to maintain it as a two-wheel-drive road, open seasonally. The dirt road to the Lost Horse ranger station would be maintained for administrative use only. Dirt parking areas would be maintained at the 24 current locations that accommodate approximately 300 cars and 20 RVs. Additional random parking by visitors along road shoulders would continue.

The insufficiently signed historic, recreational, and social trails would remain. There would be multiple hiking trails to climbing rocks from parking areas and riding trails.

Operations

The Lost Horse ranger station and utilities would be maintained. Camping near this area would continue to be permitted for special uses such as search and rescue and training.

Park staff presence and patrol of this heavily used unit would remain low.

ALTERNATIVE C — MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

Camping and day use facilities would be maintained. However, campsites and picnic sites would be better delineated through placement of barriers and revegetation. All other parking areas would be paved and striped to clearly delineate parking areas and make more efficient use of the space. Parking capacity would be approximately 315 cars and 20 RVs.

Information and Interpretation

The fee collection station at the west entrance would be maintained. An orientation wayside would be added at this location.

Wayside exhibits would be upgraded throughout the unit. Self-guiding brochures and signs would be developed for many of the trails and resources in the area. Keys Ranch and Lost Horse Mine would be used as major interpretive resources. Guided tours of Keys Ranch would continue.

Visitor Facilities

Camp and picnic sites would be better defined through the use of barriers and revegetation. The Hidden Valley day use parking area would be converted to a camp loop. Horse campsites would be retained at Ryan Campground. Sheep Pass Campground would be used by groups.

Roads and Circulation

Roads and trails would be improved as under the proposed action. Park Boulevard would be reconstructed and a section relocated from the east side of Intersection Rock to the west side. Barker Dam Road would then "T" off to the east of the relocated parkway on the south side of Intersection Rock. This new portion of Barker Dam Road would rejoin the present alignment slightly to the east of Hidden Valley Campground. The campground loops would then be accessible from Barker Dam Road and the present access to Park Boulevard would be removed, allowing for separate day use parking on the old roadbed of the parkway adjacent to Intersection Rock.

Barker Dam Road would be paved to a new consolidated parking area for the Barker Dam and Wall Street Mill trailheads. A two-wheel-drive, two-way dirt road connection would be maintained from this point through Queen Valley and to the Desert Queen mine trailhead. The remaining network of dirt roads in this area would be evaluated in the wilderness and backcountry management plan to determine which should be revegetated or retained for hiking, biking, or vehicle use.

Keys View Road would be reconstructed at its present width of 20 feet and vehicles over 20 feet long would be advised not to proceed to the Keys View overlook. A pullout and gauging station would be provided south of Cap Rock to allow large vehicles to be measured.

It would be preferable to maintain the Lost Horse Mine road for two-wheel-drive vehicle access. The trailhead should be relocated and expanded as close to the trailhead parking area as possible. A final decision on the length of this road and location of trailhead parking would be determined following a more detailed design analysis and environmental assessment. The impacts of alternatives range from maintaining the current length of road and correcting the drainage and sight distance problems to placing the trailhead near Keys View Road, which would double the hiking distance to the mine.

The road to Stubbe Springs bisects two wilderness units. This road is closed and would be revegetated. The two-way portion of the dirt road to the Lost Horse ranger station would be maintained for administrative use only. The one-way portion is closed and would be revegetated.

Nineteen parking areas would be paved and striped; four would slightly expanded. Hidden Valley day use parking area would be converted to a campground loop. The Rock Pile parking area serves an outdated interpretive exhibit and would be removed.

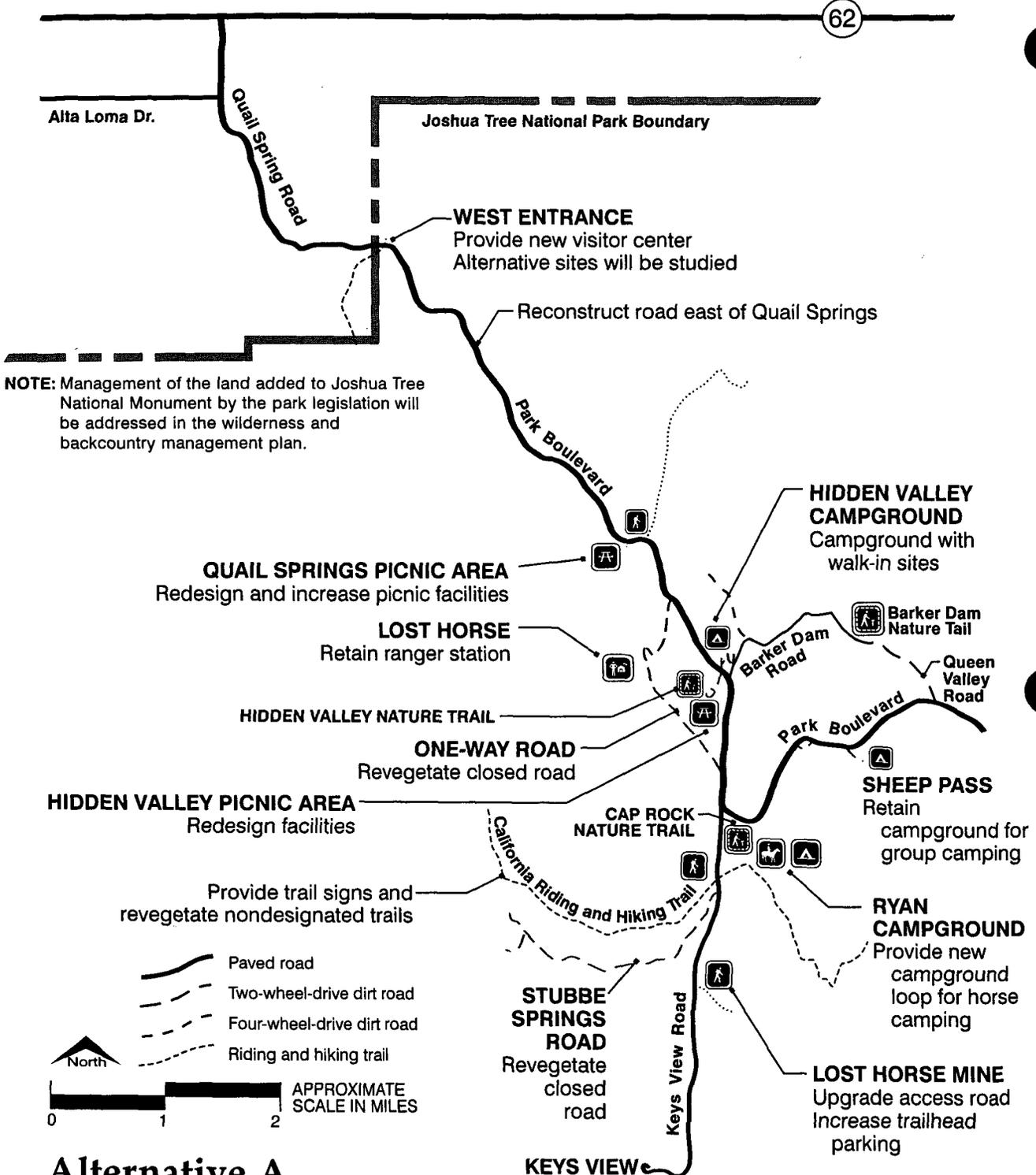
Trails would be marked, redundant trails would be revegetated, and new loop trails would be created. Designated routes between parking areas and rock climbing sites would be signed and the numerous other social trails would be revegetated. Trails open to horse use and mountain bike use would be determined and clearly designated.

Operations

Park operations improvements would be the same as under the proposed action. The Lost Horse ranger station and utilities would be maintained. Patrol of this unit would be increased, the northern boundary fenced along the open desert, and rock barriers placed in washes where there is illegal vehicle access.



Lost Horse Planning Unit



NOTE: Management of the land added to Joshua Tree National Monument by the park legislation will be addressed in the wilderness and backcountry management plan.

Alternative A Proposed Action LOST HORSE

JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL PARK
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
DSC/Dec. '94/156/20,038A

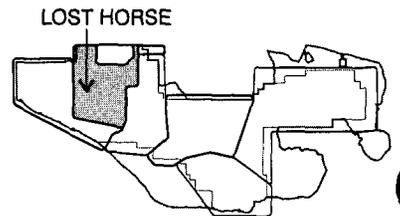


TABLE 13: ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS — LOST HORSE

Action Category	Alternative A Proposed Action	Alternative B No Action	Alternative C Minimum Requirements
VISITOR FACILITIES			
Campgrounds	Redesign campgrounds; pave associated roads, parking. Hidden Valley campground — day use parking converted to camp loop, walk-in sites designated; Ryan campground — separate loop for horses; Sheep Pass campground — groups	Retain 6 group sites, 94 individual sites in three areas; Hidden Valley — Ryan — maintain present design; Sheep Pass — same as proposed action	Better define campsites; Hidden Valley, Ryan, and Sheep Pass campgrounds same as the proposed action
Picnic Areas	Improve and expand	Maintain 21 individual sites	Improve sites
Restrooms	Replace with permanent facilities	Maintain portable vault toilets; one accessible to people with disabilities	Same as no action
INFORMATION AND INTERPRETATION			
Signs	Upgrade directional signs	Maintain directional signs	Same as proposed action
Exhibits	Upgrade exhibits, displays, waysides; add interpretive pullouts with exhibits; develop self-guiding signs and publications for more trails; stabilize Keys Ranch and protect, interpret, and preserve Wall Street Mill, Ryan House, Lost Horse Mine; develop Desert Queen Mine interpretive trail	Maintain exhibits, displays, and waysides; stabilize and maintain Keys Ranch and preserve historic scene at other sites	Upgrade exhibits; provide orientation wayside near entrance station; develop self-guiding signs and publications for more trails; historic properties treated as in proposed action
Fee Station	Collect fees at west entrance	Same as proposed action	Same as proposed action
Visitor Contact	Construct primary visitor center at west entrance; provide information, ranger office space, orientation, interpretation. Increase personal services and guided tours	Continue limited NPS contact at west entrance or throughout unit; Continue Keys ranch guided tours	Continue limited visitor contact at west entrance; Continue Keys ranch guided tours
ROADS AND CIRCULATION			
Paved Roads	Reconstruct paved roads; no RVs advised on Keys View Road; establish shuttle system	Reconstruct paved roads	Same as proposed action, but no shuttle system

ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT PLANS

Action Category	Alternative A Proposed Action	Alternative B No Action	Alternative C Minimum Requirements
Dirt Roads	Maintain 2-wheel drive road connection between Barker Dam and Queen Valley and to Desert Queen mine; upgrade Lost Horse Mine road to 2-wheel drive and increase trailhead parking; revegetate Stubbe Springs road; evaluate other dirt roads and classify acceptable uses in the wilderness and backcountry management plan; road to ranger station administrative access only	Maintain and spot repair Lost Horse Mine road to maintain as 2-wheel drive to trailhead; retain other dirt roads; mountain bikes would continue on roads only; road to ranger station same as proposed action	Same as proposed action
Trails	Establish designated routes between popular climbing routes and parking areas, revegetate braided trail routes; sign all trails; establish trail crew	Retain array of insufficiently signed trail system; multiple trails to popular climbing areas	Same as proposed action
Parking	Pave, stripe, and expand parking areas at 18 locations, with major expansion of Wonderland of Rocks backcountry staging area, Hall of Horrors, and Ryan Mountain trailhead parking; consolidate Wall Street Mill and Barker dam parking into one larger area; remove Hidden Valley day use, Rock Pile exhibit, and trailhead lot at Wall Street Mill; add 7 parking areas in disturbed areas Capacity: 675 cars/60 RVs	Maintain designated dirt parking areas at 24 locations. Additional random parking by visitors along road shoulder. Capacity: 320 cars/20 RVs	Pave and stripe designated parking areas at 19 locations; remove parking at Hidden Valley day use and Rock Pile Capacity: 315 cars/20 RVs
OPERATIONS			
Housing	N/A	N/A	N/A
Maintenance	West entrance: provide water, power, electricity, and phone to new visitor center Lost Horse ranger station: maintain utilities and weather station	West entrance: maintain power and phone service Same as proposed action	Same as no action Same as proposed action
Administration	Retain ranger station; volunteer campground would be reserved for special group uses (training, search and rescue)	Same as proposed action	Same as proposed action
Patrol	Increase NPS presence; provide emergency phones at Lost Horse	Limited NPS presence and poor radio communication would continue	Same as proposed action

PINTO WYE PLANNING UNIT

The Pinto Wye planning unit is a principal overnight use area in the park, with a total of 170 campsites in three campgrounds. It is also a major picnicking area. The unit contains the Belle, White Tank, and Jumbo Rocks campgrounds and Live Oak and Split Rock picnic areas. Campsites at White Tank are poorly defined, and impacts from vehicle use around the sites is increasing. At Belle campground, conflicts between tent and recreational vehicle campers are often due to generator noise. Parking is inadequate for picnickers and hikers at Split Rock.

Administrative areas include the north entrance station and Pinto Wye maintenance facilities. The north entrance is approximately 3 miles directly south of the headquarters visitor center at the Oasis of Mara, and is where approximately 35–40% of the visitors enter. The fee collection station has a number of shortcomings, including inadequate drainage, ventilation, power, and restrooms. Water for the maintenance area is trucked in to a storage tank.

The Geology Tour Road accesses an area that provides excellent interpretation of geology and desert ecology. Sufficient maintenance funding has not been available to maintain this road for two-wheel-drive vehicles, which limits its public use. It is a four-wheel-drive road because it has moderately steep grades and a soft, sandy roadbed.

The California Hiking and Riding Trail leads north through this unit to the city of Twentynine Palms. The section of the trail north of White Tank receives little use.

ALTERNATIVE A — PROPOSED ACTION

Information and Interpretation

Information would be provided at a new north entrance fee collection station. A parking area with an orientation exhibit would be added as part of the entrance facility. Personal services interpretation would be increased. The Geology Tour Road would be the major dirt road experience for most visitors. Interpretive pullout exhibits would be upgraded or relocated to more appropriate locations and new pullouts and exhibits would be added along the main road. Jumbo Rocks amphitheater would be redesigned. Directional signs would be improved.

Visitor Facilities

Belle, Jumbo Rocks, and White Tank campgrounds would be for both tent and RV camping. Campsites and picnic sites would be better defined through revegetation, use of barriers, and paving of roads and associated parking. Portable toilets at campgrounds and picnic areas would be replaced. Formerly used for picnicking, Split Rock would be designated for trailhead parking. Some visitors may still picnic in the area, but there would be no facilities. Four or five additional sites would be added at Live Oak picnic area.

Roads and Circulation

Paved roads would be reconstructed. The Geology Tour Road would be upgraded and maintained as a year-round, two-wheel-drive dirt road to increase the accessibility of this valuable interpretive area. Pullouts would be added on the narrow dirt road to Stirrup Tank. Pushawalla Canyon Road would remain a designated trail closed to vehicles. Berdoo Canyon Road would continue to be designated for four-wheel-drive vehicles. All other dirt roads would be evaluated for appropriate use or revegetation.

Trailhead and picnic parking areas at Split Rock, Live Oak, and the Geology Tour Road/Desert Queen trailhead would be paved, striped, and expanded (see Parking and Pullouts graphic and table). Parking across the road from Skull Rock would be designed for a smaller, more efficient parking arrangement. Day use parking for 5–10 cars would be added at the Arch Rock trailhead, which would be relocated closer to Pinto Basin Road. New interpretive five-car pullouts would be added along the main roads north and east of the Pinto Wye intersection. A larger 8–10 car/2–3 RV parking area for orientation would be added near the north entrance station.

Arch Rock and Skull Rock nature trailheads would be relocated closer to the road to increase their availability. The White Tank pickup and parking area for horse users on the California Riding and Hiking Trail would be maintained.

Operations

The fee collection station would be replaced. The new facility design would consider the need for security and protection from vandalism. Power, water, and telephone service would be extended to the site and a restroom would be provided.

Maintenance facilities would be retained. Water would continue to be hauled in by truck. The water system would be upgraded, including replacement or relocation of the water storage tank to minimize its visibility from the nearby road and trails. Telephone service and covered storage would also be provided. The security system would be upgraded.

Interpretive and law enforcement personnel would be added to increase interpretive contacts and patrols.

ALTERNATIVE B — NO ACTION

Information and Interpretation

Information would continue to be provided at the north entrance fee collection station. Personal services interpretation would remain limited in this unit. The Geology Tour Road would be a major dirt road experience for visitors with four-wheel-drive vehicles. Interpretive trails, waysides, and other self-guiding interpretive media would continue to be available.

Visitor Facilities

Campgrounds would be maintained. Live Oak would continue as a picnic area. Portable restrooms would be available at the campgrounds and picnic areas.

Roads and Circulation

Paved roads would be reconstructed. The Geology Tour Road would be maintained as a four-wheel-drive road. Other dirt roads would remain. Arch Rock and Skull Rock nature trails would be maintained in their present locations.

Operations

The north entrance fee station would continue in use with no utilities. Maintenance facilities would also be retained and water would continue to be hauled in to the maintenance area.

ALTERNATIVE C — MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

Information and Interpretation

Information would continue to be provided at the north entrance fee collection station. Personal services interpretation would be increased in this unit. The Geology Tour Road would be the major dirt road experience for most visitors. Interpretive trails, waysides, and other self-guiding interpretive media would be upgraded and added throughout the area. Jumbo Rocks amphitheater would be redesigned. Directional signs would be improved.

Visitor Facilities

Visitor facilities would be improved as under the proposed action. At Jumbo Rocks Campground the smaller loops would be designated for tent camping only. The remainder of the campground would be open to all types of camping. Belle and White Tank campgrounds would be for both RV and tent camping. Campsites and picnic sites would be better defined through revegetation, use of barriers, and paving of circulation roads and associated parking. Portable toilets at campgrounds and picnic areas would be replaced. Split Rock would be designated for trailhead parking. Four or five additional sites would be added at Live Oak picnic area.

Roads and Circulation

Roads would be improved as under the proposed action. Paved roads would be reconstructed. The Geology Tour Road would be upgraded and maintained as a year-round, two-wheel-drive dirt road. Pullouts would be added on the narrow dirt road to Stirrup Tank.

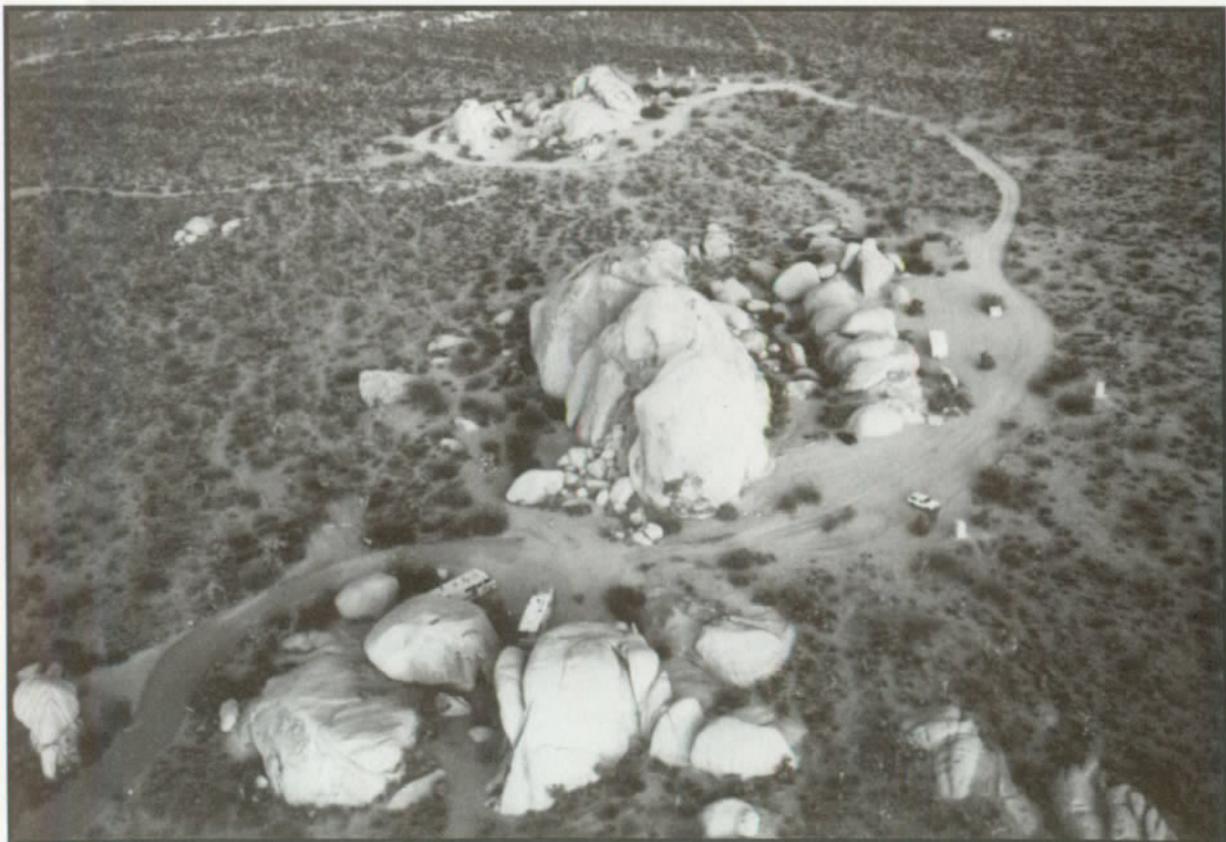
Pushawalla Canyon Road would remain closed. All other dirt roads would be evaluated for appropriate use or revegetation in the backcountry management plan. Parking areas would be paved and striped.

The California Riding and Hiking Trail pickup and parking area at White Tank would be maintained. Arch Rock and Skull Rock nature trailheads would be maintained in their present locations.

Operations

The fee collection station would be improved with the extension of power, water, and telephone service to the site and the addition of a restroom. Maintenance facilities would be retained. Water would continue to be hauled in by truck. The water system would be upgraded, including replacement or relocation of the water storage tank. Telephone service and covered storage would also be provided. The security system would be upgraded.

Interpretive and law enforcement personnel would be added to increase contacts and patrols.



Pinto Wye Planning Unit

TABLE 14: ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS — PINTO WYE

Action Category	Alternative A Proposed Action	Alternative B No Action	Alternative C Minimum Requirements
VISITOR FACILITIES			
Campgrounds	Define sites with vegetation, barriers, and paving of roads and parking.	Maintain 170 sites in three areas	Same as proposed action
Picnic Areas	Define sites at Live Oak and add 4-5 sites; remove picnicking at Split Rock	Retain four individual sites at Live Oak	Same as proposed action
Restrooms	Replace portable toilets with permanent restrooms, add restrooms at Live Oak picnic area and Stirrup Tank trailhead	Retain portable toilets	Same as proposed action
INFORMATION AND INTERPRETATION			
Signs	Improve directional signs	Retain signs	Same as proposed action
Exhibits	Update all exhibits and add new interpretive pullouts with exhibits	Maintain six wayside exhibits	Upgrade exhibits; place information board at entrance fee station with map
Fee Station	Replace fee station, include water, power, telephone, restroom, security system	Maintain fee station, no restroom, power, or telephone	Provide fee station with water, power, telephone, restroom, security system
Visitor Contact	Contact at new north entrance fee station; redesign Jumbo Rocks amphitheater; increase interpretive contacts	Contact at current north entrance fee station	Redesign Jumbo Rocks amphitheater, increase interpretive contacts
ROADS AND CIRCULATION			
Paved Roads	Reconstruct road	Same as proposed action	Same as proposed action
Dirt Roads	Close and revegetate illegal entry through Hidden Valley; create pullouts on road to Stirrup Tank; improve Geology Tour Road for 2-wheel drive vehicles; Pushawalla Canyon road would remain closed; evaluate all other dirt road use in backcountry management plan	Illegal 4-wheel drive entrance through Hidden Valley continues, maintain road to Stirrup Tank (no pullouts), Geology tour road 4-wheel drive only, other dirt roads remain	Same as proposed action
Trails	Relocate Arch Rock and Skull Rock trailheads closer to road; add signs to trailheads	Maintain Skull Rock and Arch Rock trails; not all trailheads signed	Maintain Skull Rock and Arch Rock trails; add signs to trailheads
Parking	Pave, stripe, and expand day use parking areas; add parking areas at Arch Rock trailhead and Wonderland of Rocks orientation pullout	Maintain dirt parking areas	Pave and stripe parking areas

Action Category	Alternative A Proposed Action	Alternative B No Action	Alternative C Minimum Requirements
OPERATIONS			
Housing	N/A	N/A	N/A
Maintenance	Retain maintenance facilities and provide covered storage	Retain maintenance facilities	Same as proposed action
Administration	N/A	N/A	N/A
Utilities	Provide utilities at north entrance station; At maintenance facilities —continue to truck in water; improve water and fire system and security system; provide telephone service	Continue to truck in water and maintain other utilities to maintenance facilities	Same as proposed action
Patrol	Increase patrols	Maintain patrols	Same as proposed action

TRANSITION PLANNING UNIT

This unit straddles the high Mojave and the lower Colorado Deserts. The Transition planning unit has no major development. The only paved road in this unit, Pinto Basin Road, is deteriorating due to drainage problems and flash flooding in wash areas. This road bisects the Cholla Cactus Garden, an area with an unusually high concentration of cacti. Several small parking areas and pullouts with interpretive exhibits exist along the road. Designated trails include the Cholla Cactus Nature Trail. There are backcountry registration sites at Turkey Flats and Porcupine Wash.

ALTERNATIVE A — PROPOSED ACTION

This unit would be the major interpretive area for the transition from the higher Mojave to the low Colorado Desert portion of the park. Transition between the two deserts and the specialized vegetation that grows there would be interpreted through a variety of interpretive trails, personal services, and exhibits. Development would remain limited primarily to interpretation and orientation functions, which would be improved and expanded. Interpretive contacts would be increased. One small picnic area would be added along the main road.

Information and Interpretation

Interpretive exhibits would be replaced or moved to more appropriate locations and new pullouts and exhibits would be added along the main road. The self-guiding nature trail at the Cholla Cactus Garden would be maintained and accessibility would be improved for people with disabilities. Trailhead parking and pullouts would be coordinated during the future phases of the road reconstruction project.

Visitor Facilities

No campgrounds exist or are proposed for the Transition unit. The combination of limited screening ability, visibility from higher elevations, distance from utilities, availability of water, and extreme climatic conditions would make camping inappropriate for this area. There are no picnic areas in the Transition unit, but a small 4- to 6-site picnic area with shade structures would be developed. The location would be determined based on further evaluations; the site should have minimal effect on the vista across Pinto Basin. The old borrow pits near Porcupine Wash or Turkey Flats have depressions suitable for a low profile shade structure. Restrooms would be added at the Cholla Cactus Garden parking area.

Roads and Circulation

The paved road through the Transition unit would be reconstructed, which would resolve drainage problems while retaining slow speeds and minimum widths through the desert vegetation. Adequate site distances along the road for the entrances to parking areas would

be provided. The section of road through the Cholla Cactus Garden could be routed around the concentration of cholla cactus. Relocating the road would allow for revegetation of the disturbed cholla plant community and improved interpretation. A separate environmental analysis of alternative road alignments would be completed during preliminary design for road reconstruction.

A new 8–10 car/2 RV parking area would be constructed for the Cholla Cactus Garden if the road is relocated, and this and all other parking areas and pullouts would be paved. Existing and new interpretive five-car pullouts would be provided along the Pinto Basin road. Parking at the Turkey Flats trailhead pullout would be increased to accommodate 8–10 cars. Parking would be provided at all designated backcountry trailheads.

Closed dirt roads being illegally used by four-wheel-drive vehicles in the Gold Park area would be marked as closed and barriers added. The park would work with adjacent landowners to allow parking at wilderness access points where vehicle use inside the park would not be possible.

Operations

The old borrow pits in this unit would be revegetated. One borrow area near the main road could be rehabilitated to accommodate a picnic area. Patrols would be increased in this unit.

ALTERNATIVE B — NO ACTION

Interpretation and orientation exhibits and trails along the main road would be maintained.

Information and Interpretation

The four interpretive exhibits and pullouts and the Cholla Cactus Garden Nature Trail would be maintained. The Turkey Flats and Porcupine Wash trailheads would also be retained, although signs are inadequate.

Visitor Facilities

There would be no camping, picnicking, or restroom facilities provided.

Roads and Circulation

The paved road through the Transition unit would be reconstructed. Adequate site distances along the road for the entrances to parking areas would be provided. All parking areas would remain unpaved.

Operations

The borrow pits in this unit would remain closed.

ALTERNATIVE C — MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

The transition between the two deserts would be interpreted through existing trails and exhibits and through increased interpretive contacts. Interpretive pullouts and nature trails would be retained and exhibits upgraded. One small picnic area would be added along the main road.

Information and Interpretation

Interpretive exhibits would be replaced along the main road. The self-guiding nature trail at Cholla Cactus Garden Nature Trail would be maintained, and accessibility for people with disabilities would be improved.

Visitor Facilities

No campgrounds would be provided in this unit. A small 4- to 6-site roadside picnic area with shade structures would be developed. Restrooms would be added at the Cholla Cactus Garden parking area.

Roads and Circulation

The paved road through the Transition unit would be reconstructed and adequate sight distances along the road for the entrances to parking areas would be provided. The section of the road through the Cholla Cactus Garden could be routed around the concentration of cholla cactus. Further environmental analysis of alternative alignments would be completed. A parking area would be constructed for the Cholla Cactus Garden if the road is relocated, and this and all other parking areas and pullouts would be paved.

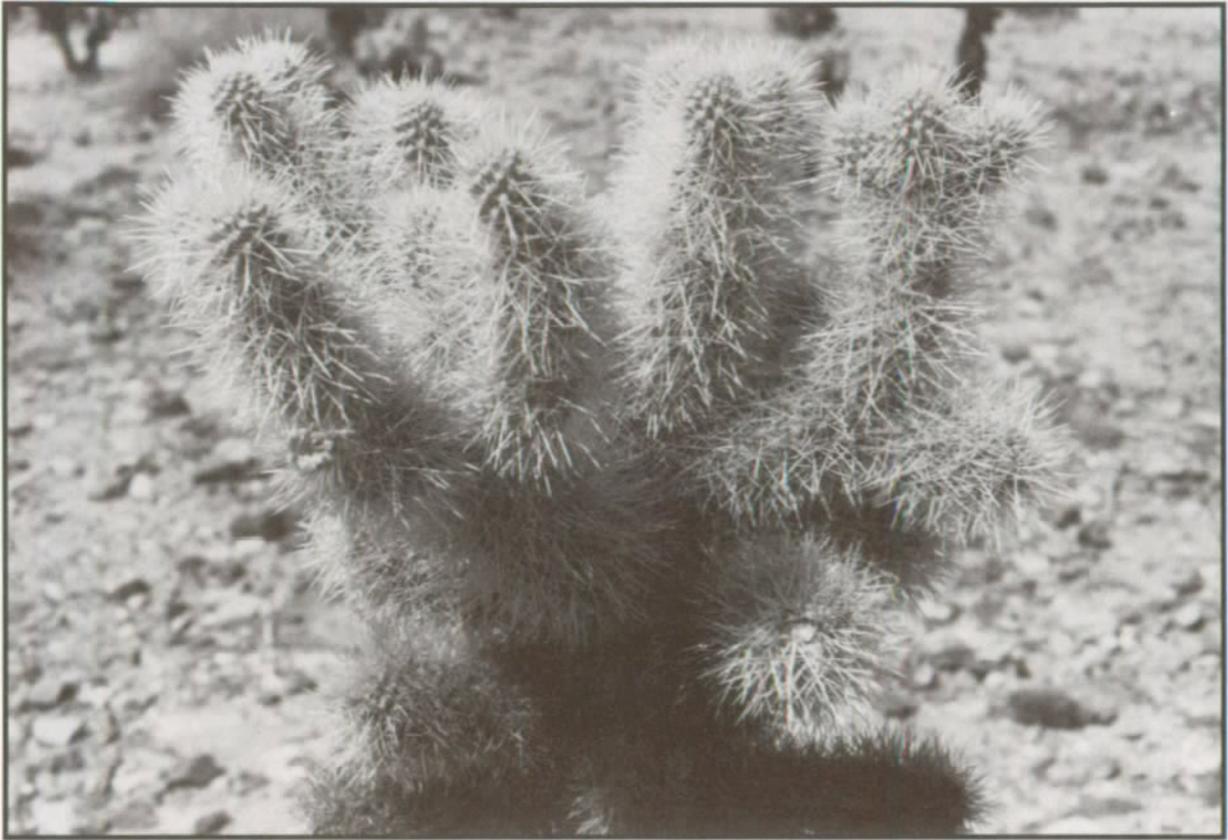
Closed dirt roads being illegally used by four-wheel-drive vehicles in the Gold Park area would be marked closed and barriers would be added.

Operations

The old borrow pits in this unit would be revegetated. Patrols would be increased.

TABLE 15: ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS — TRANSITION

Action Category	Alternative A Proposed Action	Alternative B No Action	Alternative C Minimum Requirements
VISITOR FACILITIES			
Campgrounds	N/A	N/A	N/A
Picnic Areas	Rehabilitate borrow pit and add 4-6 picnic sites with shade structures	None	Add 4-6 roadside picnic tables and a parking area
Restrooms	Add restroom at Cholla Cactus Garden	None	Same as proposed action
INFORMATION AND INTERPRETATION			
Signs	Upgrade boundary and road signs	Maintain signs	Same as proposed action
Exhibits	Improve interpretive exhibits and provide additional interpretive pullouts along the road; add interpretive exhibits and signs at cholla garden	Maintain pullout exhibits, trailheads, and self-guided Cholla Cactus Garden Nature Trail	Same as proposed action
Fee Station	N/A	N/A	N/A
Visitor Contact	Increase interpretive programs	Little interpretive contact would continue	Same as proposed action
ROADS AND CIRCULATION			
Paved Roads	Reconstruct road Evaluate realigning road around Cholla Cactus Garden	Same as proposed action Highway would continue to bisect Cholla Cactus Garden	Same as proposed action Same as proposed action
Dirt Roads	Dirt roads would be evaluated in the backcountry management plan; add signs & barriers to closed roads in Gold Park	Dirt roads would remain confusing, closures would not be signed	Same as proposed action
Trails	Improve Cholla Cactus Garden trailhead and maintain as self-guiding trail and add interpretive signs and exhibits	Maintain Cholla Cactus Garden Nature Trail	Same as proposed action
Parking	Relocate and pave parking at cholla and ocotillo areas during road realignment	Maintain parking at cholla and ocotillo for a total of 14 cars	Same as proposed action
OPERATIONS			
Housing	N/A	N/A	N/A
Maintenance	Rehabilitate borrow pits	Borrow pits would remain closed	Same as proposed action
Administration	N/A	N/A	N/A
Utilities	N/A	N/A	N/A
Patrol	Increase patrols	Maintain patrols	Same as proposed action



Transition Planning Unit

PINTO BASIN PLANNING UNIT

Located in the Colorado Desert, the Pinto Basin has the Pinto Mountains to the north, the Eagle Mountains to the south, and the remote Coxcomb Mountains to east. The Pinto Basin planning unit is remote and undeveloped; the majority of the unit is wilderness. The three four-wheel-drive roads are not in wilderness areas. Black Eagle Mine Road provides access to Bureau of Land Management property and active mines. Old Dale Road runs between the north boundary and Pinto Basin Road. The intersections of these two roads with Pinto Basin Road is confusing and some visitors inadvertently turn off of the main park road onto one of the other two. A third dirt road leads to Pinto Wells, which is open to the wells and closed along the portion leading north across Pinto Basin to Highway 62 north of the park.

There are no campgrounds, picnic areas, parking, or structures in Pinto Basin. There are few interpretive exhibits and limited roving interpretation by park staff. The Coxcomb and Pinto mountains are popular backpacking destinations. The entire unit is an important winter hiking and backpacking area.

The world's largest landfill is proposed within 1 mile of the boundary. The landfill would use abandoned open mining pits in the Eagle Mountains. Its proximity poses some obvious threats to the adjacent wilderness. Blowing trash, dust, noise, and odors could destroy the fragile setting, and the proximity of this operation presents many less obvious threats to the natural ecosystem. The landfill would accommodate 20,000 tons of refuse each day for more than 100 years. Household trash attracts scavengers such as ravens and coyotes, which can flourish in such a setting. Ravens are known to eat young tortoises; the largest known population of tortoises in the park is within 6 miles of the proposed landfill.

ALTERNATIVE A — PROPOSED ACTION

This area would provide an unstructured backcountry and wilderness experience for visitors. Facilities such as campgrounds and picnic areas would not be provided; signs, wayside exhibits, and roads would be kept to a minimum. Management would emphasize protection and restoration of wilderness. Signs, small exhibits, and backcountry boards at entry points into the backcountry and wilderness would be used to inform visitors of regulations and resources that govern use in these areas. Vehicles would be limited to the Old Dale, Black Eagle Mine, and Pinto Wells roads. Old roads into the wilderness would be marked closed and would be barricaded at the wilderness boundary and revegetated.

Information and Interpretation

Parking and an orientation and interpretation exhibit would be added at the Old Dale Road, Black Eagle Mine Road, and Pinto Basin Road intersection. These roads provide the major vehicle access into the Pinto Basin. An entrance sign and exhibit would be provided on Old Dale Road near the north boundary. The regulations and importance of the resources would be listed. Visitors would receive regulatory information at backcountry registration boards at the other wilderness entry points. Interpretive waysides would also be added along Old Dale Road and backcountry areas as appropriate.

Visitor Facilities

There would be no campgrounds, picnic facilities, or other visitor use facilities.

Roads and Circulation

Old Dale and Black Eagle Mine Roads would remain four-wheel-drive dirt roads. Directional signs would be improved and the intersection of these two roads with Pinto Basin Road would be redesigned to clearly differentiate the three roads. The road to Pinto Wells would remain closed beyond the wells. Dirt roads leading to the wilderness boundary would be marked with signs and barricaded to restrict entry. Old road scars in the wilderness would be revegetated. The park would work with adjacent landowners to allow parking at wilderness access points where vehicle use inside the park would not be possible.

There are currently no designated trails in this unit. The wilderness and backcountry management plan would evaluate possible trails in this unit, including points of entry for hiking and backcountry use and where backcountry registration boards would be provided.

Operations

There would be no housing, maintenance, or administrative facilities in this unit. The radio communication system would be upgraded.

ALTERNATIVE B — NO ACTION

This alternative would primarily provide an unstructured backcountry and wilderness experience for visitors. Vehicles would be limited to the Old Dale, Black Eagle Mine, and Pinto Wells roads. The many old dirt roads leading to the wilderness boundary would probably still be used for illegal vehicle operation in the wilderness.

Information and Interpretation

The signs and interpretive exhibits along the roads would be maintained.

Visitor Facilities

There would be no campgrounds, picnic facilities, or other visitor use facilities.

Roads and Circulation

Old Dale, Black Eagle Mine, and Pinto Wells roads would remain four-wheel-drive dirt roads. The road to Pinto Wells would remain closed beyond the wells. Dirt roads leading to the

wilderness boundary would remain and continue to allow illegal vehicle access to the wilderness. There would be no designated trails.

Operations

There would be no housing, maintenance, or administrative facilities in this unit. The radio communication system would continue in use.

ALTERNATIVE C — MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

This alternative would be similar to the proposed action. However, the road to Pinto Wells would remain open to the wells. Other actions that would provide for minimal interpretation and development and increased protection of resources would be the same as for the proposed action.

Information and Interpretation

Parking and an orientation and interpretation exhibit would be added at the Old Dale, Black Eagle Mine, and Pinto Basin roads intersection. An entrance sign and exhibit would be provided on Old Dale Road near the north boundary.

Visitor Facilities

There would be no campgrounds, picnic facilities, or other visitor use facilities.

Roads and Circulation

Old Dale, Black Eagle Mine, and Pinto Wells roads would remain four-wheel-drive dirt roads. Directional signs would be improved and the intersection of Old Dale, Black Eagle Mine, and Pinto Basin roads would be redesigned to clearly differentiate between the three roads. The road to Pinto Wells would remain closed beyond the wells. Dirt roads leading to the wilderness boundary would be marked with signs and barricaded to restrict entry. Old road scars in the wilderness would be revegetated.

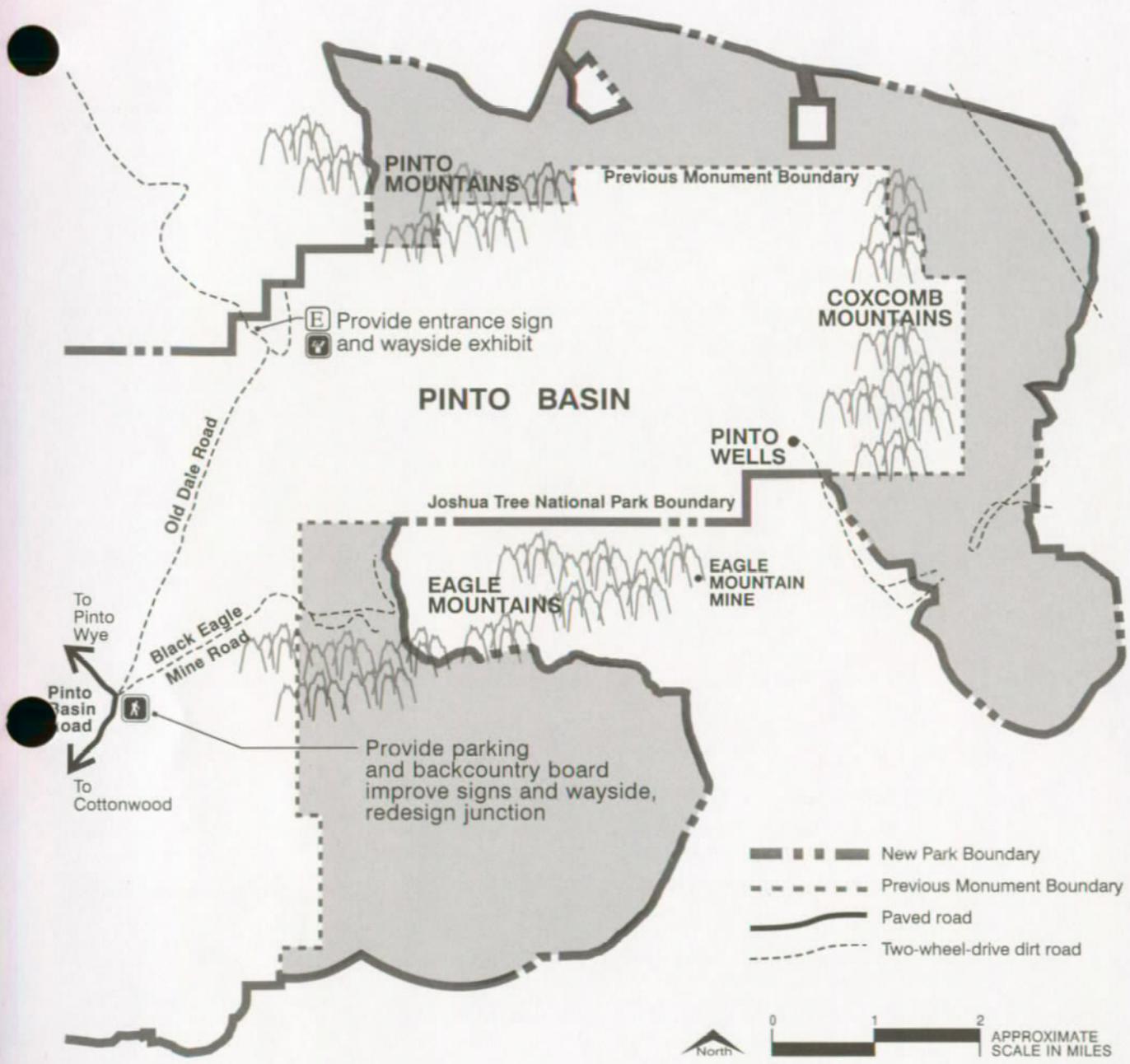
No trails are designated, but this unit might have trails in the future if they are needed to protect sensitive cultural sites. These trails would be included in the trail plan and in the handbook. The points of entry for hiking and backcountry use would remain with improved backcountry boards for user registration.

Operations

There would be no housing, maintenance, or administrative facilities in this unit. The radio communication system would be upgraded.



Pinto Basin Planning Unit



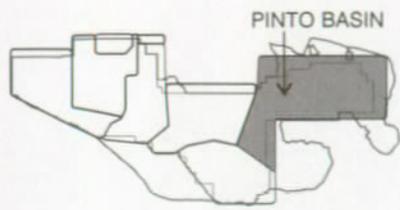
To Pinto Wye
 Pinto Basin road
 To Cottonwood

E Provide entrance sign and wayside exhibit

Provide parking and backcountry board improve signs and wayside, redesign junction

- — — — — New Park Boundary
- - - - - Previous Monument Boundary
- Paved road
- Two-wheel-drive dirt road

0 1 2 APPROXIMATE SCALE IN MILES



NOTE: Management of the land added to Joshua Tree National Monument by the park legislation will be addressed in the wilderness and backcountry management plan.

Alternative A Proposed Action PINTO BASIN

JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL PARK
 UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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 DSC/Dec. '94/156/20,031A

ON MICROFILM

TABLE 16: ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS — PINTO BASIN

Action Category	Alternative A Proposed Action	Alternative B No Action	Alternative C Minimum Requirements
VISITOR FACILITIES			
Campgrounds	N/A	N/A	N/A
Picnic Areas	N/A	N/A	N/A
Restrooms	N/A	N/A	N/A
INFORMATION AND INTERPRETATION			
Signs	Upgrade directional signs	Maintain signs	Same as proposed action
Exhibits	Add orientation and interpretive exhibits at Old Dale Road, Black Eagle Mine Road, and Pinto Basin Road intersection; Add entrance and interpretive signs on Old Dale road at north boundary	Maintain few exhibits	Same as proposed action
Fee Station	N/A	N/A	N/A
Visitor Contact	Maintain roving contacts; schedule historic mining tours	Maintain roving contacts	Same as proposed action
ROADS AND CIRCULATION			
Paved Roads	N/A	N/A	N/A
Dirt Roads	Old Dale and Black Eagle Mine roads would remain 4-wheel drive; improve signs and realign intersection of Old Dale, Black Eagle Mine, Pinto Basin roads Road to Pinto Wells would be open to wells All dirt roads leading into the wilderness would be signed and barricaded at the boundary and old road scars revegetated	Same as proposed action Same as proposed action Dirt roads would lead to the wilderness boundary and road scars would remain	Same as proposed action Same as proposed action Same as proposed action
Trails	Consider trail development in backcountry management plan	No designated trails	Same as proposed action
Parking	Add parking and backcountry registration boards at wilderness access points	No designated parking, dirt pullouts on Old Dale and Eagle Mine roads	Same as proposed action
OPERATIONS			
Housing	N/A	N/A	N/A
Maintenance	N/A	N/A	N/A
Administration	N/A	N/A	N/A
Patrol	Improve radio communications	Radios would not be upgraded	Same as proposed action

COTTONWOOD PLANNING UNIT

This unit has one of the three primary entrances to the park and is the primary area for experiencing the Colorado Desert. Cottonwood Oasis is easily accessible and provides visitors an opportunity to experience this important desert community type. Cottonwood is the focal point for visitor and park support facilities for the eastern portion of the park.

The main south access to the park on Cottonwood Road has an entrance gate at the boundary. Inside the gate is a large parking area and a general information and orientation wayside exhibit. At the Cottonwood developed area visitors can obtain more detailed information and pay the entrance fee at the contact station. Visitors are currently directed off of the main road into this station through traffic cones. The contact station is only large enough for a small information counter with outside map board. Other development at Cottonwood includes a campground, picnic area, ranger station, park housing, small maintenance facility, and trailhead parking with a short trail to Cottonwood Oasis and backcountry trail to other areas. Heavy visitor use at the oasis has resulted in numerous braided trails and severe damage to the soil and vegetation. Limited orientation and interpretation is also provided at Cottonwood Oasis and four roadside pullouts.

Utilities serving this development include water from Smoke Tree well, septic systems, and a diesel-powered generator. There is no telephone service. The generators are noisy, the water system leaks, and the radio communication system is inadequate.

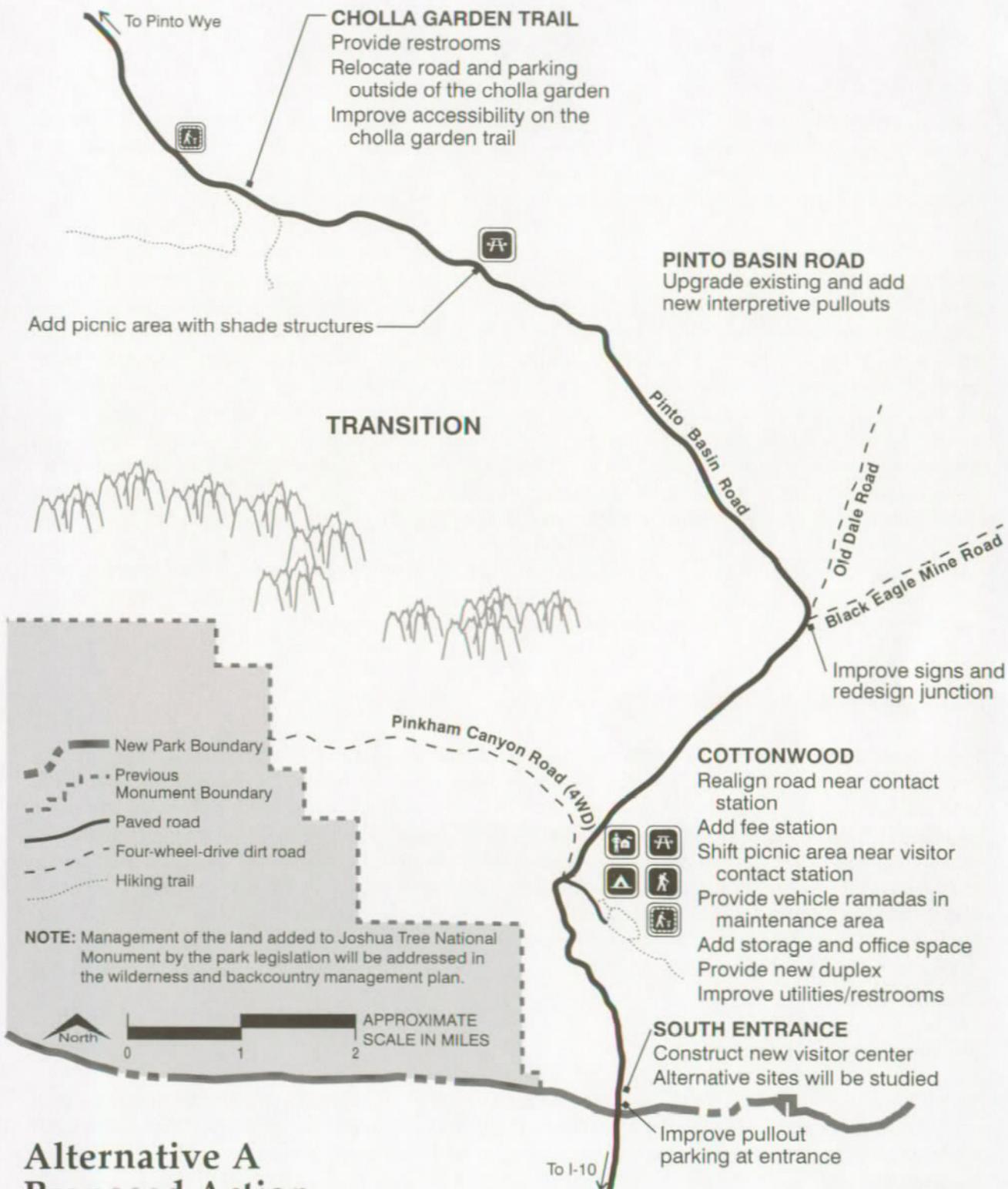
ALTERNATIVE A — PROPOSED ACTION

Cottonwood would continue as the focus for visitor and administrative facilities in the eastern portion of the park. This alternative would improve the entrance, the condition of the oasis and designated trails, and visitor awareness of the two desert environments, with emphasis on the Colorado Desert. Cottonwood entrance would be redesigned and a new enlarged visitor contact and fee collection station would be provided. Impacts on the oasis and along trails would be reduced through revegetation of disturbed areas, placement of signs to direct visitors along the trails, and addition of a new viewing platform for the oasis. Exhibits would be upgraded and expanded at Cottonwood and along the road corridor. Park support facilities would be improved for adequate and efficient operation.

Information and Interpretation

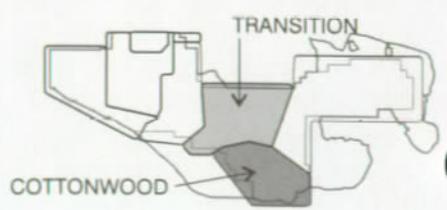
Improvements would be made near the entrance to allow for a pullout. Visitors would be able to park and take photographs. Exhibits would ensure that the visitors are aware of the difference between National Park Service and Bureau of Land Management land, missions, and regulations.

A new visitor contact station would be built. Its location has not yet been decided. It would be approximately 3,000 square feet to accommodate an information and orientation counter, exhibits and displays, administrative offices, and restrooms. Approximately 800 square feet of sheltered outdoor space for informal talks, exhibits, and information boards would be



Alternative A Proposed Action TRANSITION/COTTONWOOD

JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL PARK
 UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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 DSC/Dec. '94/156/20,030A



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added. A fee station would be constructed that would allow for drive-through payment of fees. A separate study and environmental analysis would be completed to evaluate alternative visitor center sites and analyze their environmental impacts. This study would evaluate sites in the park at Cottonwood as well as the development of an interagency facility between Interstate 10 and the park boundary.

Orientation and interpretation parking and pullouts would be retained, exhibits upgraded, and new pullouts added as necessary. A new accessible trail to interpret the Colorado Desert environment would be added south of Cottonwood Canyon at an existing pullout. Interpretation of Cottonwood Oasis would be upgraded. Due to the steep grades surrounding the oasis, it would be very difficult to provide an accessible trail to the oasis. Consequently, a fully accessible viewing platform with interpretive information would be constructed overlooking the oasis. A boardwalk would be constructed at the oasis to reduce foot traffic impacts. Increased interpretation would be provided for other trails in this unit.

Visitor Facilities

The campsites at Cottonwood would be maintained. The sites are well defined and have good separation and screening. Group camping would continue but would shift to the north and occupy currently designated picnic sites to accommodate larger groups. The picnic area would be moved near the visitor contact station where it would be more visible and accessible. Restrooms would be accessible to people with disabilities.

Roads and Circulation

Pinto Basin Road would be reconstructed north of Cottonwood. The road would be realigned and parking redesigned to better serve the new contact facility and provide for drive-through fee collection. The junction of Pinkham Canyon and Pinto Basin roads would be north of the new fee station. Five-car pullouts would be maintained along Pinto Basin Road, with larger parking areas at the south entrance parking area (15 cars/3 RVs) and south entrance sign parking (5-8 cars/2 RVs). Dirt roads would be evaluated in the wilderness and backcountry management plan. Unauthorized vehicle access points would be closed. Signs would be placed on designated trails, and braided social trails would be revegetated.

Operations

Administrative office space would be added as part of the new visitor contact station. Covered maintenance storage (approximately 2,000 square feet) and covered vehicle parking would be provided. The houses would be retained and a new duplex added. The water system would be repaired and fire protection capabilities improved. Telephone service would be provided for administrative and maintenance facilities. Alternative forms of energy would be evaluated to take advantage of sustainable design options.

The communications system would be evaluated. New technology in this field could provide solutions to problems with remote communications systems that have unreliable power

sources. The present use of radios is limited and transmissions are not private. Patrols would be increased to provide improved protection of resources.

ALTERNATIVE B — NO ACTION

There would be no modification of facilities that would enhance the visitor experience or improve protection of the resources, particularly at the oasis. Park support facilities would be maintained.

Information and Interpretation

Information and interpretation exhibits would be retained at Cottonwood and along the road. The contact station at Cottonwood would continue to provide limited information and fee collection.

Visitor Facilities

The campground and picnic area at Cottonwood would be maintained. Restrooms would be made accessible to people with disabilities.

Roads and Circulation

Pinto Basin Road would be reconstructed north of Cottonwood. Pullouts and parking areas would be maintained. Dirt roads would remain. Unauthorized vehicle access into the park would probably continue.

Operations

There would be no change to park housing, maintenance, administrative facilities, or utility systems. Structures and the water system would continue to be repaired as necessary. No telephone service would be provided.

ALTERNATIVE C — MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

Cottonwood would continue as the focus for visitor and administrative facilities in the eastern portion of the park. This alternative would improve the condition of the oasis and the visitor experience there and along designated trails. It would improve visitor awareness of the two desert environments, with emphasis on the Colorado Desert. Impacts to the oasis and along other trails would be reduced through revegetation of disturbed areas and the use of the designated trail and the new viewing platform. Interpretive exhibits would be upgraded at

Cottonwood and along the road corridor. Park support facilities would be improved for adequate and efficient operation.

Information and Interpretation

Improvements would be made near the entrance gate to allow for a pullout. Visitors would be able to park and take photographs.

The visitor contact station would be remodeled and enlarged by about 450 square feet to accommodate an expanded information/orientation/fee collection counter and restrooms.

Orientation and interpretation parking and pullouts would be retained and exhibits upgraded. Interpretation of Cottonwood oasis would be upgraded and visitor impacts to the oasis reduced by clearly marking the designated trail, revegetating social trails, and adding a viewing platform. A backcountry board would be established on trails leading into the park from Chiriaco Summit. A new accessible trail interpreting the Colorado Desert would be added at an existing pullout.

Visitor Facilities

The campsites at Cottonwood would be maintained. Group camping would continue but would shift to the north and occupy current picnic sites to accommodate larger groups. The picnic area would be near the visitor contact station where it would be more visible and accessible. Restrooms would be made accessible to people with disabilities.

Roads and Circulation

Pinto Basin Road would be reconstructed north of Cottonwood. Dirt roads would be evaluated in the wilderness and backcountry management plan. Unauthorized vehicle access points into the park would be closed. Designated trails would be marked and braided social trails would be revegetated.

Operations

Covered maintenance storage (approximately 2,000 square feet) and covered vehicle parking would be provided. Housing would be retained and a new duplex added. The water system would be upgraded and fire protection capabilities improved. Telephone service would be provided for administrative and maintenance facilities. The radio communication system would be improved. Alternative forms of energy would be evaluated to take advantage of sustainable design options.

Patrols would be increased to provide improved protection of resources.

TABLE 17: ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS — COTTONWOOD

Action Category	Alternative A Proposed Action	Alternative B No Action	Alternative C Minimum Requirements
VISITOR FACILITIES			
Campgrounds	Retain sites and expand size of group sites	Retain 62 individual sites and 3 group sites	Same as proposed action
Picnic Areas	Relocate new picnic area closer to the visitor contact station	Retain 6 individual sites	Same as proposed action
Restrooms	Expand and make accessible to people with disabilities	Retain 3 comfort stations; make visitor center facilities accessible to people with disabilities	Same as proposed action
INFORMATION AND INTERPRETATION			
Signs	Add entrance sign near south boundary	Minimal maintenance of trails and signs	Same as proposed action
Exhibits	Expand interpretation for oasis and add viewing platform; increase trails interpretation in this unit	Maintain limited interpretation at oasis	Expand interpretation for oasis and add viewing platform; increase trails interpretation
Fee Station	Build new fee station	Entrance fees collected at contact station	Relocate to middle of road
Visitor Contact	Construct new 3,800 sq. ft. visitor contact station with office space and restrooms	Maintain small contact station	Rehabilitate contact station
ROADS AND CIRCULATION			
Paved Roads	Reconstruct roads	Same as proposed action	Same as proposed action
Dirt Roads	Evaluate all dirt roads in the backcountry management plan	All canyon access points remain open	Same as proposed action
Trails	Improve identification of trails and revegetate redundant ones	Retain confusing, poorly identified trail network	Same as proposed action
Parking	Redesign, expand visitor center; pave other parking and pullouts; add new interpretive pullouts	Maintain parking areas and pullouts	Same as no action
OPERATIONS			
Housing	Retain housing and provide duplex	Retain all housing	Same as proposed action
Maintenance	Add storage and provide covered parking for maintenance vehicles; investigate alternative energy sources; upgrade water system and improve fire protection capabilities; provide telephone service	Retain buildings and storage yard; retain generators; retain utility systems; repair as needed	Same as proposed action
Administration	Add office space	No office space	Same as no action
Patrol	Upgrade communications system; increase patrols	Maintain cellular phones; maintain patrol levels	Same as proposed action



Cottonwood Planning Unit

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT REJECTED

An alternative discussed and rejected would have added new campground and picnic areas. Based on the park's strong resource protection orientation and purpose and its significant resources, new facility developments and their associated impacts were considered and rejected. Alternative methods of managing visitor use in the park, such as an improved camping reservation system, enforcement of time limits, better trip planning capabilities, and encouragement of visitor facilities outside of the park were found preferable.

A visitor center in the Transition zone with a view into the Pinto Basin was considered but rejected; it would have emphasized cultural resources by constructing a state-of-the-art museum for the Campbell Collection and other collections. This facility would have been a center for research in California Desert archeology, ethnohistory, and ethnography. There would have been provisions for botanical, ecological, and zoological research as well. This idea was rejected because of the anticipated expense — more costly than any other possibility — and because it would have compromised wilderness values. It could have been built within a road corridor, but construction of a major facility was regarded as too much of a disturbance to the wilderness character.

Three other alternatives for road projects were considered and evaluated in an environmental assessment that was released to the public in August 1991. They included a partial one-way loop, a total one-way loop, and a widened two-way road. The partial one-way loop alternative was to channel all westbound traffic on Queen Valley Road. The traffic on Park Boulevard (Route 12) between Ryan Campground and Queen Valley Road would be limited to eastbound traffic. The objective was to decrease impacts on Joshua trees, diversify the visitor experience, increase safety, and avoid impacts on known cultural resources. This alternative was rejected after public review because it changed the character of visitation and the quiet areas.

The total one-way loop alternative would have created a closed one-way loop using Queen Valley Road and the section of Park Boulevard that connects the east and west ends of Queen Valley Road. The objectives were the same as the partial one-way and rejection was for the same reason.

The last rejected alternative would have widened the road to 26 feet. The objective was to provide for visitor safety and convenient access to features of interest and to reduce maintenance expenses. This alternative was rejected because of the excessive impact on Joshua trees and native vegetation.