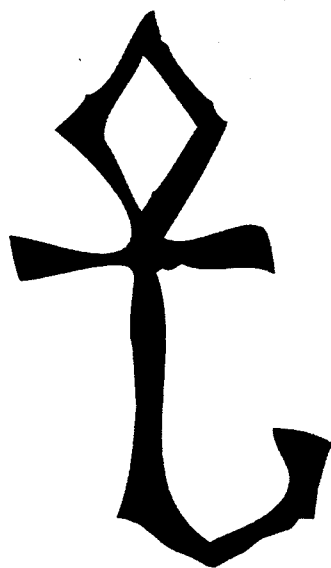




**General Management Plan
Amendment**

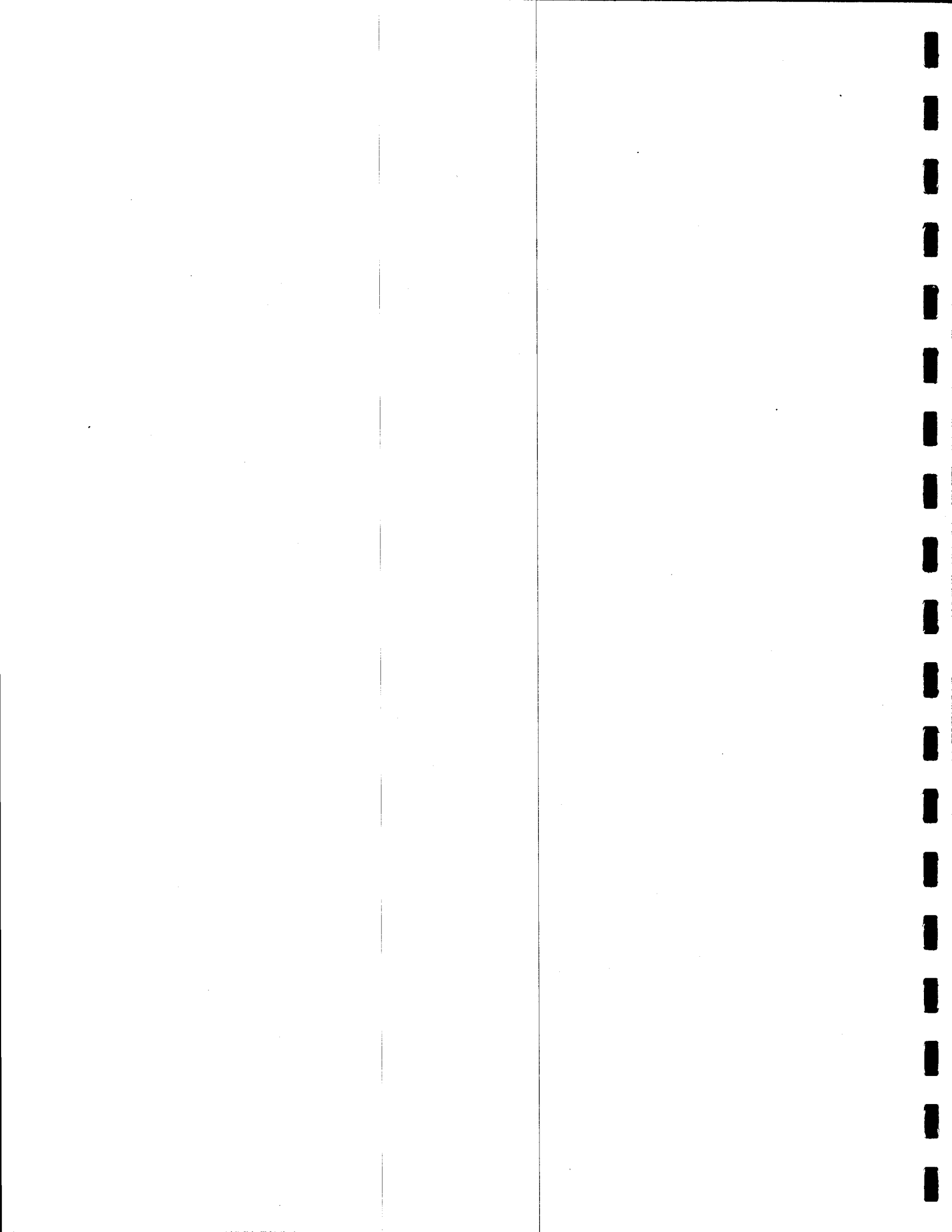
Rancho de las Cabras

**San Antonio Missions
National Historical Park
Texas**

**GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN
AMENDMENT
AND ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

**Rancho de las Cabras Site
San Antonio Missions National Historical Park
Floresville, Texas**

Prepared jointly by the staffs of San Antonio Missions National Historical Park and Intermountain Support Office-Denver, Intermountain Region, National Park Service.



SUMMARY

Needing to buffer their colonial establishment in North America from the French in Louisiana, the Spaniards began the settlement of Texas in the late 17th century. Between 1718 and 1731 they established five missions along the San Antonio River. San Antonio Missions National Historical Park (NHP) was established by Congress in 1978 to preserve four of those missions, their characteristic architecture, and their related farms and irrigation systems. (The fifth, San Antonio de Valero, commonly known as The Alamo, is owned by the State of Texas and administered by the Daughters of the Republic of Texas.)

Each of the missions had a distant rancho, or small ranch, which provided it with necessary livestock. As the rancho for Mission Espada, Rancho de las Cabras was an integral part of that mission's social and economic life. In 1991 Congress passed PL 101-628, which authorized the expansion of the NHP to include several mission-related historic features, including the ruins of Rancho de las Cabras. Title to 99.2 acres that include and surround the ruins was transferred from the State of Texas to the National Park Service (NPS) in 1995.

The four missions and most of their adjacent related historic features are located along a 6-mile stretch of the San Antonio River in the city of San Antonio. Rancho de las Cabras is the most distant unit of the NHP. It is located near Floresville, Wilson County, approximately 23 miles to the southeast of San Antonio.

This amendment to the San Antonio Missions General Management Plan (GMP) will guide the management and development of Rancho de las Cabras for the next 12 to 15 years. This document contains a preferred plan and three alternative plans for the site. One of them, alternative A, is a "no action" alternative. It describes what visitor use, development, and resource management would look like in the absence of any change to the current management of the site. With minor exceptions (such as addition of a pathway through the ruins for visitors' safety and the removal of vegetation from the ruins walls) it describes the status quo projected into the near future. The ruins of the walls, which are currently covered by sand to protect them, would remain covered. In addition to being a real choice for the management and development of the rancho, alternative A serves as a baseline against which to compare changes that would take place under the other alternatives.

The other two alternatives (B and C) offer different ways to develop the park, concentrating on the ruins, the interpretive facilities, and an entrance road. Both alternatives accomplish the goals of providing the visitor with a rewarding experience and preserving the cultural resources of the rancho, but do so in different ways.

PURPOSE AND NEED

In alternative B, a moderate portion of the ruins would be exposed and stabilized, a simple open-air interpretive area would be developed, and the existing park entrance road would be used.

Alternative C would expose and stabilize most or all of the ruins, would have an indoor interpretive building, and would provide a new park entrance road.

The preferred plan combines elements of alternatives B and C. From alternative B it takes the concept of an open-air interpretive area, consisting of a shaded sitting area, interpretive/informational exhibits, and an enclosed office for the ranger. From alternative C it takes the new entrance road, complete exposure of the ruins, a rest room, and an interpretive trail.

A boundary change would be necessary in both the preferred plan and alternative C. The strip of land that contains the existing entrance road would be transferred to the neighboring landowner, and the land necessary for the proposed entrance road would be acquired from the same owner.

Table of Contents

SUMMARY...i

Table of Contents...iii

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PLAN...1

Need for the Plan...1

Issues to Be Addressed...1

Purpose and Significance of Rancho de las Cabras...2

Background...2

Purpose—Why the Rancho Is a Part of San Antonio Missions NHP...2

Significance—Why the Rancho Is Special...3

Mission Goals...3

PREFERRED PLAN AND ALTERNATIVES...5

Preferred Plan: Full Exposure of Ruins; Open-Air Visitor Facility...5

Preservation of the Historic Resources...5

Management Zones...5

Historic Zone...7

Development Zone...7

Boundary...7

Carrying Capacity...8

Specifics of the Preferred Plan...8

Alternative A: No Action...13

Alternative B: Partial Exposure of Ruins; Open-Air Facility...13

Alternative C: Full Exposure of Ruins; Indoor Facility...16

Alternatives Considered but Rejected...19

THE AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT...23

Cultural Resources...24

Soils and Vegetation...24

Visitors...25

Floodplains, Wetlands, and Riparian Zones...25

Threatened and Endangered Species...25

Economic Effects...25

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES...27

Preferred Plan—Full Exposure of Ruins; Open-Air Visitor Facility...27

Cultural Resources...27

Mitigation...27

Soil and Vegetation...27

Mitigation...28

Visitors...28

Mitigation...28

Floodplains, Wetlands, and Riparian Zones...29

Mitigation...29

Threatened and Endangered Species...29

Economic Effects...29

Carrying Capacity...29

Cumulative Impacts...30

Conclusion...30

Alternative A—No Action...30

Cultural Resources...30

Soil and Vegetation...30

Visitors...30

Floodplains, Wetlands, and Riparian Zones...30

Wildlife, Threatened, and Endangered Species...31

Economic Effects...31

Conclusion...31

Alternative B—Partial Exposure of Ruins; Open-Air Visitor Facility...31

Cultural Resources...31

Mitigation...31

Soil and Vegetation...31

Mitigation...31

Visitors...31

Floodplains, Wetlands, and Riparian Zones...31

Wildlife, Threatened, and Endangered Species...31

Economic Effects...31

Conclusion...31

Alternative C—Full Exposure of Ruins; Indoor Visitor Facility...32

Cultural Resources...32

Soil and Vegetation...32

Visitors...32

Floodplains, Wetlands, and Riparian Zones...32

Wildlife, Threatened, and Endangered Species...32

Economic Effects...32

Conclusion...32

List of Preparers...33

Planning Team (all are National Park Service employees)...33

Contributors...33

Consultation and Coordination...35

Summary of Consultation and Public Involvement...35

List of Agencies, Organizations, and Persons Consulted...36

Bibliography...37

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PLAN

The purpose of this plan is to provide a general management plan (GMP) for the Rancho de las Cabras site, through an amendment to the GMP of San Antonio Missions National Historical Park. The plan will guide the management and development of Rancho de las Cabras for the next 12 to 15 years. Rancho de las Cabras, which offers some of the best remaining opportunities to understand mission life in the southwest during the 17th and 18th centuries, is in Wilson County, Texas, approximately 23 miles southeast of San Antonio. (See Location Map)

The National Parks and Recreation Act of 1978 requires that all national park units have a general management plan to guide their development and use. In the preparation of this plan, consideration was given to revising the 1981 GMP for the San Antonio Missions NHP. It was decided that even though there were additions to the park during the 1991 expansion, the existing GMP is adequate for the rest of the park, and that a plan for the rancho is the only addition needed.

Need for the Plan

The two contiguous parcels making up the present rancho were acquired by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPW) in 1977 and 1982, with the intention that they would become a state park. Beginning in 1980, the University of Texas at San Antonio conducted five seasons of archeological fieldwork in and adjacent to the rancho's ruins for the TPW. After the fieldwork was completed, the TWP realized that it would not be possible to establish a park for an indefinite period of time, so the ruins were covered with sand as a means of

protecting and preserving them. To date there have been no developments or public use of the area.

Prior to the transfer of the rancho to the NPS, the Service made a commitment to develop and provide public use of the area. The purpose of this plan is to guide the use and development in a way that will preserve the rancho's cultural resources while providing for appropriate public use. The only current public use of the area consists of scheduled guided tours that originate at nearby Floresville city park on the San Antonio River. The tours, which occur on the first Saturday of each month and last 1½ hours, average about eight people. At all other times the park gate is locked, and there are no NPS employees on site.

The NPS objective is to provide each visitor an interesting and informative experience in the park. People visit this part of San Antonio Missions NHP to see the rancho ruins and to understand the role the rancho played in the 18th century life of Mission Espada and its community of Indians and Spaniards. For this to happen, it is helpful to enter and walk around the rancho compound, to be able to see and approach the exposed rock walls, and to have the rancho's history and significance explained either by park personnel or by interpretive exhibits.

Issues to Be Addressed

The following are the issues that were identified during the public involvement phase and are addressed in the plan:

- From the standpoint of San Antonio Missions NHP as a whole, the rancho is a unique cultural resource—different from the missions, *acequias*, and *labores*.

PURPOSE AND NEED

Therefore, it is helpful to articulate its purpose and significance within the broader purpose and significance of the entire park.

- What type of experience should the visitor to the rancho have? The GMP should guide the conservation treatment, facilities, and interpretation through which the site will provide the intended experience.
- What should be done (or not done) to the historic walls and grounds to help the visitor understand and enjoy the rancho? What should the visitor see? Should the ruins remain covered with protective sand, or should they be partially or completely exposed?
- What is the appropriate treatment for any walls that are exposed: preservation as is, partial restoration, or complete reconstruction?
- Should the existing entrance road be improved or left as it is, or is there a better access route? Where should the parking be, and how many spaces are needed?
- Is a rest room needed? Should there be trails, or should free movement in and around the walls be permitted? Is there a need for maintenance, law enforcement, or resource management facilities on site?
- Is a small visitor contact station needed? Where? What interpretive themes should be conveyed to the visitors?
- Should there be trail connections to local and regional recreation developments?
- Do present land uses adjacent to or close to the park or known plans of private and public owners pose any obstacles to the success of this GMP?

Purpose and Significance of Rancho de las Cabras

Background

Each of the San Antonio missions had a rancho on which to raise livestock. Because unfenced livestock would have wandered into the town and into the

missions' farms if they had been kept close to San Antonio, the ranchos were established at considerable distances from the missions.

In addition to their obvious importance in providing the mission communities with beef and cowhides, these ranchos—and others like them—served as entry points and nurseries for the Southwest's great cattle tradition. What would become the era of the American cowboy in the late 19th century had its roots in Spain and Mexico and was introduced to what is now the United States at places like these Texas missions in the 18th century. Here, the mission Indians learned the new skill of herding. The language, the equipment, the activities, and the way of life of the *vaquero* (later, buckaroo) on these unfenced ranges evolved into what 100 years later would briefly become the symbol and spirit of the western United States.

The remains of only one of these colonial Spanish mission ranchos—Rancho de las Cabras—are known to exist along the San Antonio River. Rancho de las Cabras was intimately linked to Mission Espada. Remains of the walls of its fortified compound and interior rooms still stand underneath mounds of protective sand.

Purpose—Why the Rancho Is a Part of San Antonio Missions NHP

Rancho de las Cabras was an integral part of the community of Mission San Francisco de la Espada and is therefore an important part of the mission's story. It is preserved as a cultural resource of San Antonio Missions National Historical Park that represents a little-known aspect of the economic and cultural life of the missions.

Significance—Why the Rancho Is Special

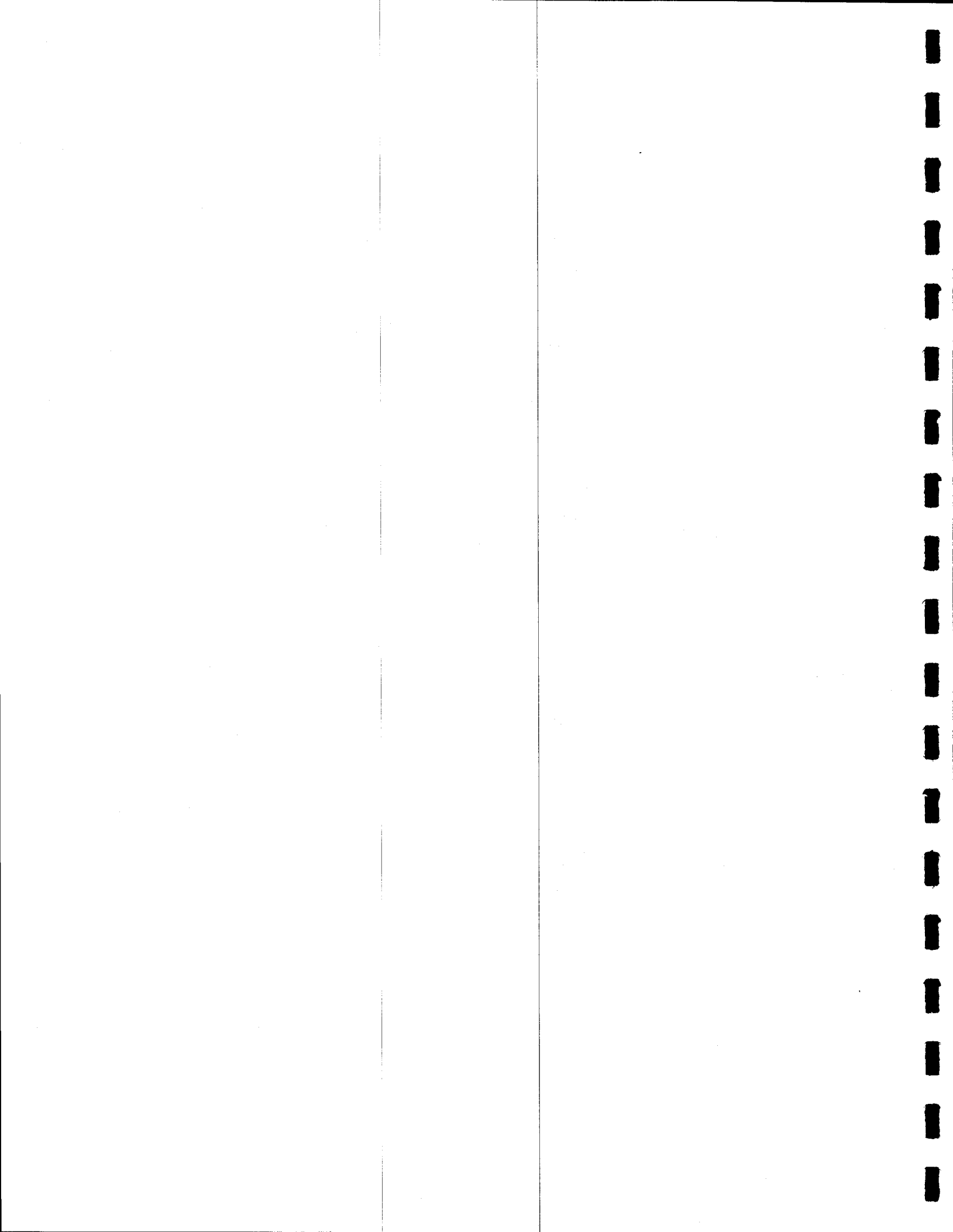
As the only San Antonio mission rancho known to remain, Rancho de las Cabras offers the best opportunity for preserving and interpreting this aspect of mission life. It is also an excellent location from which to interpret the story of the beginnings of the Western cattle industry, an industry and culture that evolved over the subsequent century into the American tradition of cowboys, ranches, and trail drives.

Mission Goals

The goals for the entire San Antonio Missions NHP are to preserve, restore, and protect in perpetuity the resources of San Antonio Missions NHP. The NPS hopes to provide the public with a greater understanding and appreciation of the Spanish colonial influence in the New World through interpretation of the historical and architectural values of the San Antonio Missions. Guided by that general purpose, the park staff will work toward the following mission goals, which are specific to the rancho:

- The preservation of the rancho ruins will be management's highest priority.
- The visitor to the rancho will learn about the rancho's role in the life of Mission Espada and in the evolving Southwest cattle and ranching industry.
- When budgeting and staffing allow, the rancho will be open to the public and staffed on a scheduled basis.
- The community of Floresville will be encouraged to "adopt" the site, with local volunteers becoming involved in its interpretation and maintenance.

The proposed uncovering and preservation treatment of the walls, the exposure of the occupation levels, and archeological investigations will be open for public viewing and will be interpreted.



PREFERRED PLAN AND ALTERNATIVES

Four alternatives, including the National Park Service preferred plan are presented in this chapter. The preferred plan is the proposed general management plan amendment for the Rancho de las Cabras portion of San Antonio Missions National Historical Park, and if adopted would serve as the general management plan for this portion of the park. The plan will guide the management and development of Rancho de las Cabras for the next 12 to 15 years. The alternatives provide for distinctly different levels of treatment for Rancho de las Cabras—ranging from no action to full exposure of the area's prime resource—its ruins.

All of the alternatives are consistent with state and county plans and programs in the immediate area.

All facilities and programs resulting from this plan will be accessible to people with disabilities. In the event the actual experience, activity, or observation that is the purpose of a program or facility is not accessible because of topography or some other obstacle, it will be made available to people with disabilities in an alternate way, possibly at another location.

Except for alternative A, no action, each of the alternatives for management and development of Rancho de las Cabras is consistent with two essential goals, as described below:

- the provision to visitors of an enriching experience and
- the permanent protection and preservation of the site's cultural resources.

The no-action alternative would protect the cultural resources but provide only a

limited visitor experience, because the ruins would remain under mounds of sand fill, visitors would be unable to see the ruins, and the potential for interpreting the walls would be severely limited.

Preferred Plan: Full Exposure of Ruins; Open-Air Visitor Facility

Preservation of the Historic Resources

The rancho ruins are not only the most important cultural resource at las Cabras, they are also the feature of greatest interest to the public. It is the intention of the NPS to preserve these cultural resources. Although the ruins are currently covered with sand for their protection, the preferred plan would uncover most or all of the walls and provide ongoing preservation treatment for the exposed sections.

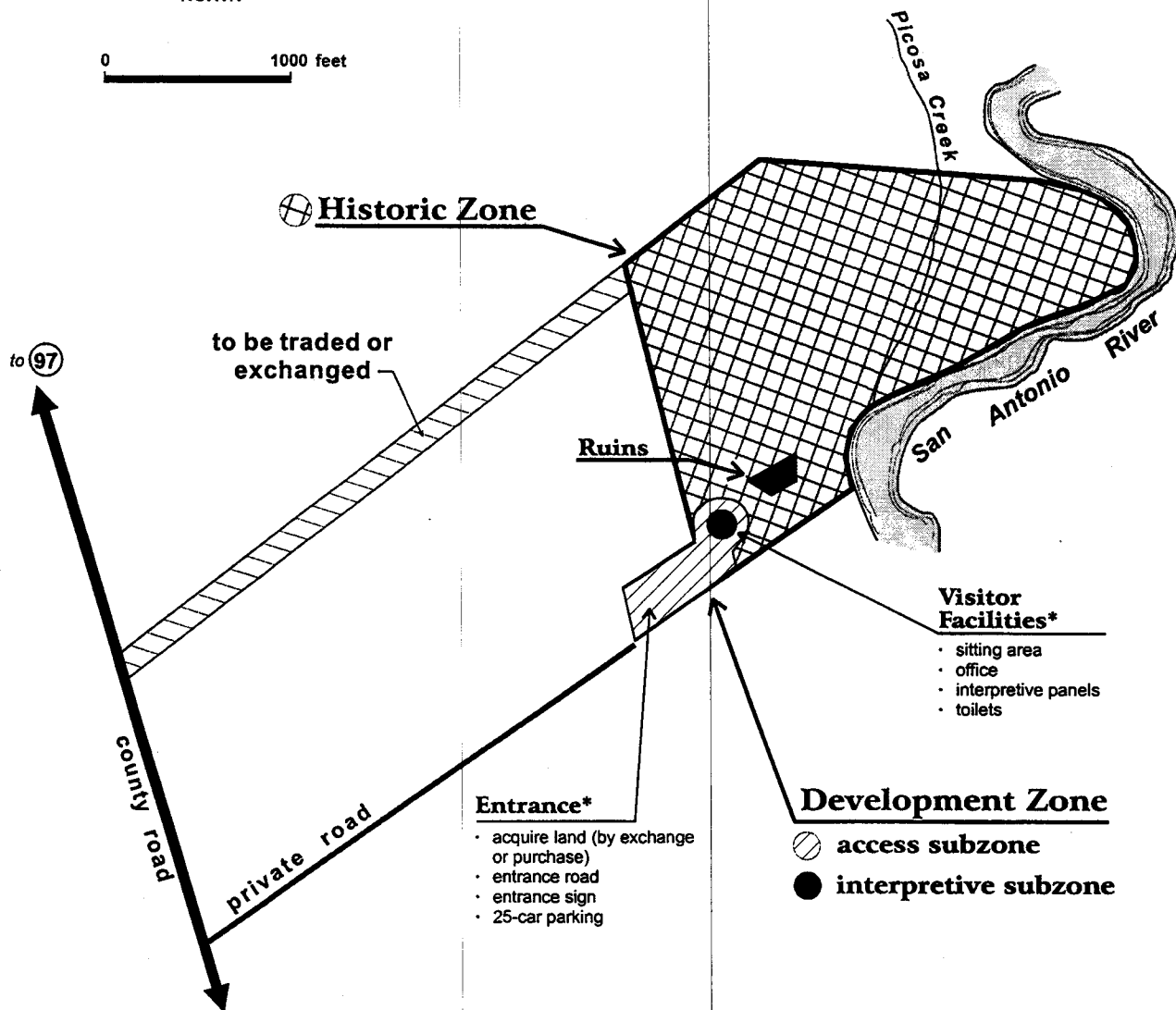
Archeological excavations in the 1980s revealed an additional cultural resource within the compound: two occupation levels a foot or more below the surface of scattered fill and wind-blown dirt. If they can be properly protected, these levels could be exposed to some extent for viewing and interpretation.

Management Zones

Rancho de las Cabras has two management zones: the historic zone and the development zone. The development zone has two subzones (see Management Zone Map). Each will be managed for specific resource and visitor purposes. (The zones and their locations on the map follow the recommendations of the preferred plan. That is, they have been drawn on the assumption that the proposed land transfers and facility development will take place.)



0 1000 feet



Entrance*

- acquire land (by exchange or purchase)
- entrance road
- entrance sign
- 25-car parking

Visitor Facilities*

- sitting area
- office
- interpretive panels
- toilets

Development Zone

- ◌ access subzone
- interpretive subzone

* approximate locations

Management Zones

(for the proposed plan)



Rancho de las Cabras
San Antonio Missions
National Historical Park
Texas

United States Department of the Interior • National Park Service

472 | 80,092
7/98 | IMDE

▪ *Historic Zone*

Rancho de las Cabras was entered in the national Register of Historic Places on May 20, 1973, and it is a Texas State Archeological Landmark.

Except for the development zone, the entire site will be managed as a historic zone. The main management goals in this zone are the permanent preservation of the rancho ruins and all related historic resources and their interpretation to the public in such a way as to make the site's purpose and significance readily understandable.

Some or all of the walls will be exposed and will receive conservation treatment and maintenance, for example, selected replacement of fallen stones, pointing, vegetation removal, and so on. Visitors that will be able to view the ruins at one time will be limited to the number that can enjoy the interior space without crowding; this will depend in part on the amount of wall that is exposed. Interpretation will be provided.

▪ *Development Zone*

This zone will contain those developments required by visitors.

Interpretive Subzone.

This subzone includes a small visitor contact and interpretive area and structure. It will be managed to provide history of the rancho and information visitors need for a safe and enjoyable visit.

Access Subzone.

This subzone includes the entrance road and parking area.

Boundary

With one exception, the boundary of the rancho site is adequate. All of the compound ruins are included within the existing boundary with sufficient surrounding land to provide needed

visitor facilities and to develop interpretive programs about the 18th-century grazing landscape. There is some evidence that there were structures like fences and corrals outside the compound, but these are well within the rancho boundary. The only boundary change required would be to provide a better public entrance to the site. One of the three criteria listed in the NPS Management Policies (1988) as justification for recommending boundary revisions reads "to address operational and management issues such as access and boundary identification by topographic or other natural features or roads" (emphasis added).

The current unimproved entrance road extends almost one mile from the county road to the parking area. It would be quite costly to improve the road to an all-weather road and to maintain it. The preferred entrance location is at the extreme south of the site, close to the ruins. Trading the 8½-acre strip that contains most of the present entrance road for land at the south end of the site would provide adequate space for a parking area and the proposed entrance off the road that leads to Promised Land Dairy. The existing entrance strip could be exchanged for the land identified for the proposed entrance at little or no expense to the NPS. The one landowner that would be involved in the transaction has already said that he would be willing to make the exchange.

Two additional requirements from the Management Policies apply. The first states that "the added lands will be feasible to administer considering size, configuration, ownership, costs, and other factors." The proposed addition would be more practical as an entrance road than the existing strip of land. The size and configuration of the land to be acquired would be specifically designed to fit the topography and to accommodate the proposed short entrance road and

parking area. The amount of land added would be such that its appraised value would closely match that of the strip of land to be traded for it. There will be little if any cost to the government because the acquisition will be part of an exchange of lands.

The second additional Management Policy requirement states that "other alternatives for management and resource protection are not adequate." The land to be removed from the boundary was originally acquired by the State of Texas solely for the purpose of access to the rancho. It contributed no other value to the park. It had been long cultivated before it was used for access to the rancho and does not contain any known cultural resources. It was never developed by the state for the intended purpose and was merely a strip of overgrown farmland when the park was transferred to the NPS. This planning process has determined that the proposed entrance at the south would not only be better from the standpoint of visitor convenience, it would also be less costly to develop and maintain.

Carrying Capacity

It is important that the number of visitors, either at one time or over an extended period, not be so great that park resources are impaired. Similarly, the number of visitors at one time should not be so great that a visitor feels crowded or that the atmosphere of historic quiet is spoiled. For the foreseeable future, the number of visitors to the rancho will not approach such levels. As the number of visitors increases, park staff will monitor the effects on the ruins and on the visitors' experience. If it becomes apparent that there will be crowding or resource impairment problems in the future, the park will conduct a visitor experience and resource protection study

to determine the numerical limits or administrative controls that are needed.

Specifics of the Preferred Plan

The preferred plan for Rancho de las Cabras is a combination of elements from alternatives B and C. The plan would include the following:

- An entrance sign and gate at the new entrance.
- A surfaced, all-weather road would enter the southern corner of the site from the road to the Promised Land Dairy. It would lead to a surfaced, 25-car parking area southwest of the ruins.
- The 0.7-mile long strip of land that contains the existing unimproved entrance road would be offered in trade for the land needed for construction of the proposed entrance. The property owner whose land is adjacent to the strip (and could therefore add it to his property) also owns the land that would be needed for the proposed entrance and has said that he would be interested in such a trade. The park boundary would be adjusted to accommodate the two changes. The proposed entrance was selected because it is closer to the ruins. In addition, Wilson County has agreed to maintain the road that goes to the Promised Land Dairy (a private road), thereby relieving the NPS of the need to improve and maintain the existing entrance road.
- The interior of the chapel walls, which have evidence of original plaster that would require special preservation treatment would not be exposed. All or most of the compound walls would be exposed, including the subsurface evidence of the original walls that were removed in a later phase of construction. This would expose all of the ruins, including the entire outline, or "floor plan," of the compound. The exposed walls might require very limited replacement of fallen stones, but no restoration or reconstruction of the walls would occur. The walls would be stabilized and pointed, as necessary.

- All or much of the upper of the compound's two occupation levels would be exposed, as would a portion of the lower level.
- Interpretation, which may consist of personal services, nonpersonal services, or a combination of the two will be provided in and around the compound to interpret the ruins and describe the purpose of the rancho, the work that was done there, the people who did it, and the rancho's relationship to Mission Espada.
- A 2,100-square-foot open-air visitor contact/interpretation facility, including office and storage space for the ranger, a sheltered sitting area, toilets, and sheltered exhibits for interpretive messages and park information would be near the parking area, approximately 250 feet southwest of the ruins.
- An interpretive trail would describe the native vegetation, the scene as it would have been when grazed,
- and the vegetation that is there now. It would lead to the overlook of the San Antonio River valley.
- A trail to the river would provide a connection for canoeists and riverside hikers and a means for canoeists to carry their boats to the parking lot.
- Ethnographic research is under way at Mission San Juan. The results of that research may suggest the lines of ethnographic research that should be conducted at the rancho.

Staffing for Preferred Plan

7 day per week interpretive coverage

1 FTE GS-9 Ranger (interpretation)	\$ 45,000
.5 FTE GS-5 visitor use specialist	\$ 17,500

5 day per week maintenance coverage

1 FTE WG-5 maintenance worker	\$ 35,000
Other expenses	
Utilities (electricity, phones, security, etc.)	\$ 5,500
Vehicle	\$ 4,200
Site brochures	\$ 1,000
Supplies and materials	\$ 5,000
Travel and training	\$ 3,000
Equipment (5-year amortization)	\$ 10,000

Total annual	\$126,200
---------------------	------------------

NOTE: Staffing and expenses for alternative B would be the same as for the preferred plan. Alternative C would require an additional .5 FTE for a WG-9 maintenance mechanic, at an additional cost of \$25,000.

All figures are expressed in 1997 dollars.

1 FTE (full-time equivalent) is equal to one full-time employee, or 2,080 work hours per year.



0 1000 feet

to 97

to be traded or
exchanged

location of
interpretive
trail to be
determined

Pecos
Creek

rugged
ravine

San Antonio
River

**Rancho
Ruins**

- walls and occupation levels exposed
- interpretive signs and path

**Open-air
Visitor
Facilities***

- sitting area
- office
- interpretive panels
- toilets

Entrance*

- acquire land
- entrance road
- entrance sign
- 25-car parking

county road

private road

* approximate locations

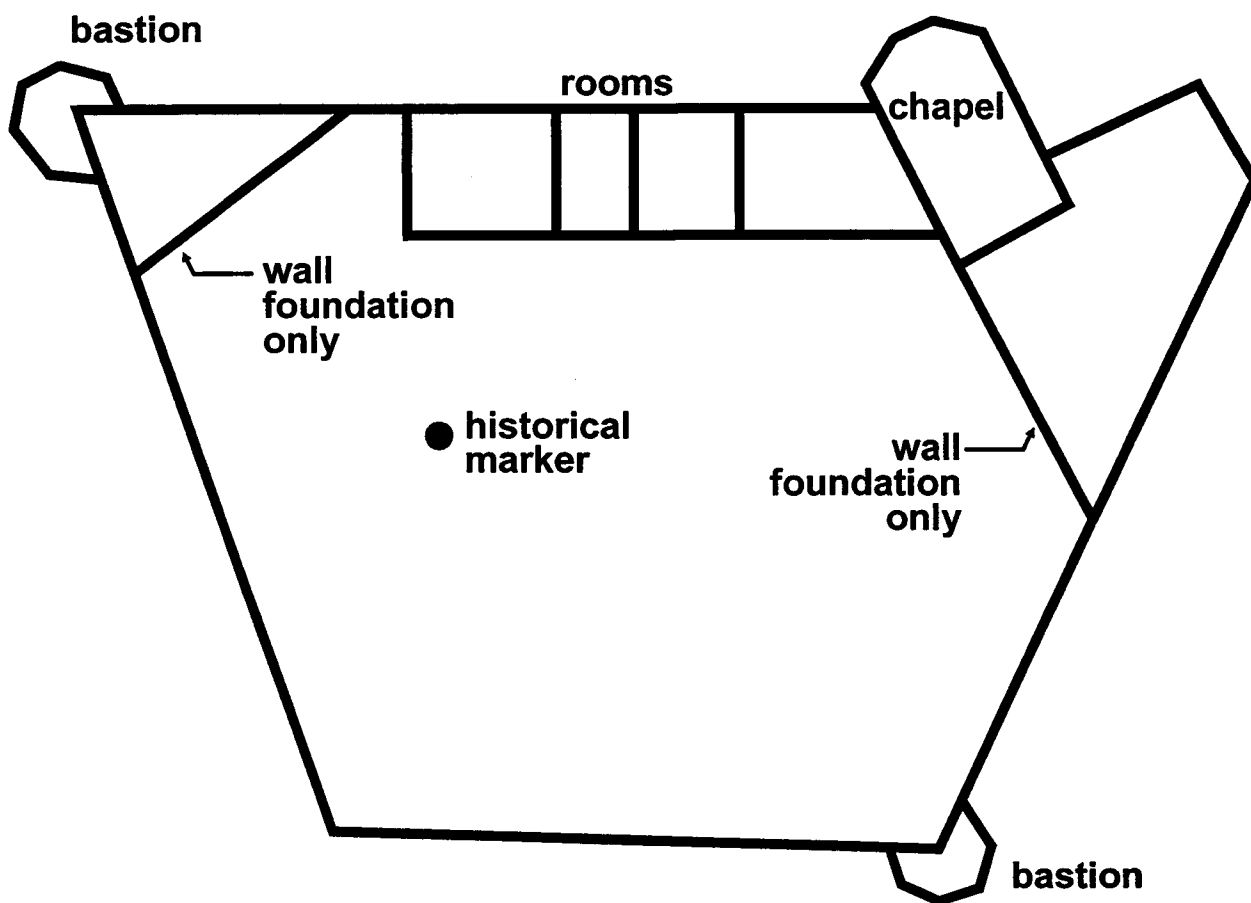
**Preferred
Plan**



**Rancho de
las Cabras**
San Antonio Missions
National Historical Park
Texas

United States Department of the Interior • National Park Service

472 | 80,095
7/98 | IMDE



0 3 6 9 12 15 meters

15 meters = 49.2 feet

**note: Except where exposed
by erosion, all walls are
covered with sand.**

The Compound Ruins



**Rancho de
las Cabras**
San Antonio Missions
National Historical Park
Texas

United States Department of the Interior • National Park Service

472 | 80,091
7/98 | IMDE

PREFERRED PLAN AND ALTERNATIVES

Development Costs--Preferred Plan			
Item	Quantity	Unit Cost*	Total
1. Paved Entrance Road	¼ mile	\$825,000.00	\$206,250
2. Paved Parking Area	25 spaces	2,000.00	50,000
3. Hard-Surfaced Pedestrian Pathways	1 mile	80,000	80,000
4. New Wayside Exhibits / Entrance Sign	7 ea.	8,215.00	57,500
5. Visitor Contact Sta. / Shaded Sitting Area	2,100 SF	110.00	231,000
6. Utilities:			
Septic System	1	13,000	13,000
Water Well and Distribution	700 VLF	70.00	49,000
Electrical Service (Buried)	500 LF	100.00	50,000
7. Landscape Improvements:			
Vista / Exotic Clearing	5 acres	5,500.00	27,500
New Native Plant Materials	3,000 SF	10.00	30,000
8. Stabl'n / Preserv'n of Historic Resources:**			
Excavate Sand	1,080 CY	41.50	44,820
Emergency Stabilization	1,200 SF	12.50	15,000
Preservation:			
Wall Capping	500 SF	10.00	5,000
Pointing	2,400 SF	4.20	10,080
Gross Construction Cost, Material, and Labor Cost			\$869,150
Project Planning and Advanced Planing cost			\$217,288
TOTAL			\$1,086,438

Notes:

* per DSC Class C Estimating Guide FY 96-98

** The amount of ruins preservation to be done, especially stabilizing, capping, and pointing the walls is a rough estimate. It will be determined more precisely after the protective sand has been removed and the wall can be inspected.

Alternative A: No Action

Prior to its acquisition by the NPS there was no public use or development at Rancho de las Cabras. Simply because the unit is now a part of a national historical park, more people will want to visit it. Therefore, even under the no-action alternative the NPS must provide minimal facilities to ensure public safety and convenience and to protect the cultural resources. The no-action alternative would include the following:

- A National Park Service entrance sign and a gate would be installed near the parking area.
- The dry-weather entrance road would be maintained but not improved. The existing informal parking area would be identified and maintained but not surfaced.

There would be no additional facilities for the public, and visitation would be allowed on a limited, scheduled basis, as is currently being done. At all other times the site would remain locked.

The ruins would remain covered with sand and not visible to visitors, which would limit the extent of their interpretation. The covering sand provides adequate protection for the ruins, so little or no additional cultural resource protection would be provided. The only treatment necessary would be the removal of vegetation growing in the sand on top of the walls, which threatens their stability.

Interpretive exhibits would be limited as would general site maintenance, including vegetation removal and litter collection. Staff would periodically inspect the cultural resources and conduct occasional law enforcement patrols of the site.

Alternative B: Partial Exposure of Ruins; Open-Air Facility

In this alternative, vehicle access into the park on the existing entrance road would be improved, there would be an informal open-air interpretation and sitting area, and toilets would be provided.

To a limited degree, the walls would be exposed and visitors would be able to approach them and observe the nature of their construction. Enough of the walls would be exposed to provide a general picture of their extent and layout. Unexposed sections of wall would continue to be passively preserved. Exposed sections might require very limited replacement of fallen stones, but no restoration or reconstruction of the walls would occur. The exposed sections would be stabilized and pointed, as necessary. Alternative B would include the following:

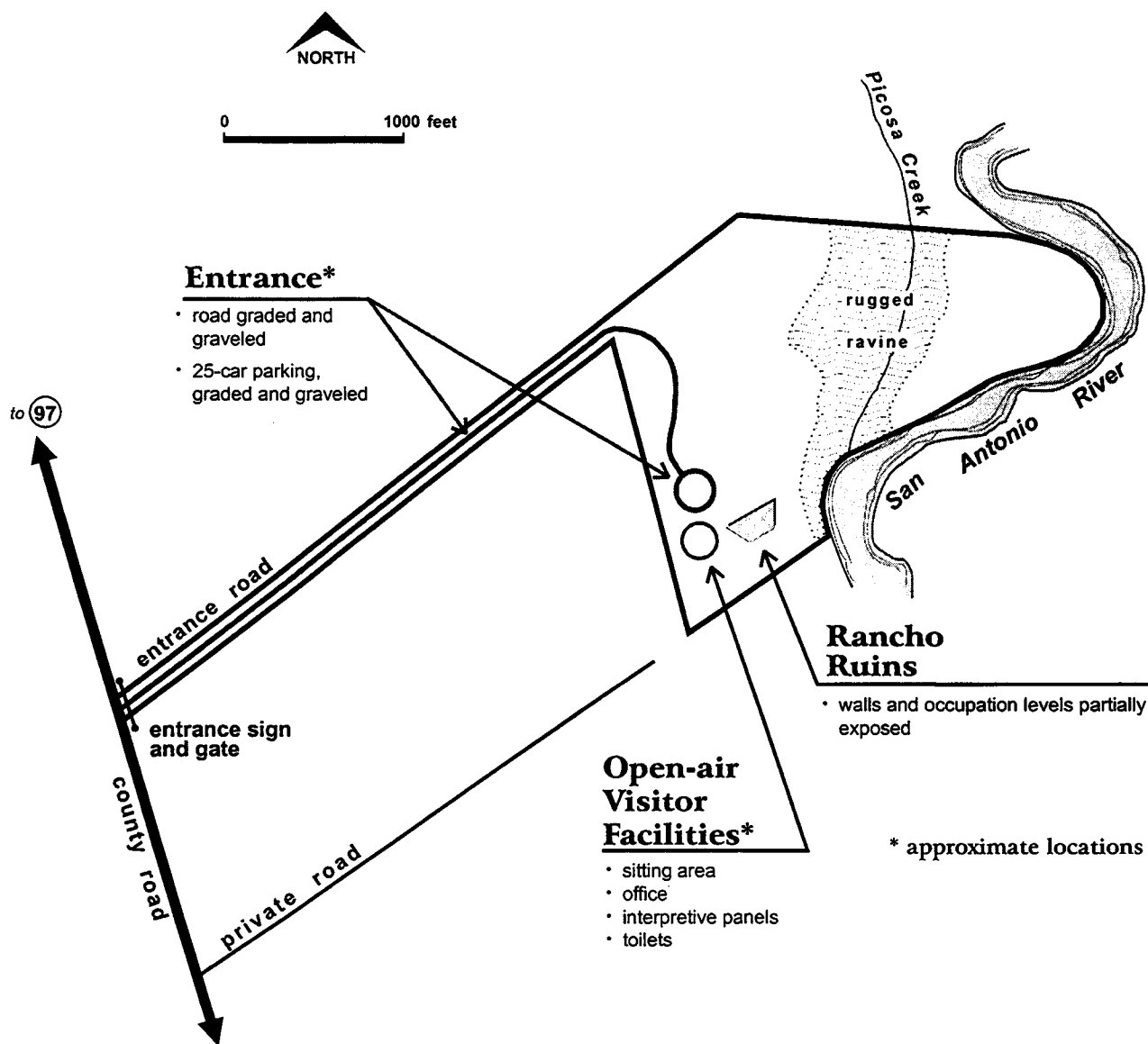
- Entrance sign and gate at the present entrance.
- The present entrance road would be graded and graveled, as would a parking area for 25 cars.
- Several sections of the walls would be uncovered and stabilized down to the ground level. These sections would be selected so as to expose the most interesting sections of wall and to show the construction of the walls and the shape and extent of the compound.
- Small representative sections of the two subsurface occupation levels would be exposed in order to illustrate the relationship between them and to interpret how the accumulation of domestic debris and animal waste caused the rise of the ground level during the active life of the rancho.

PREFERRED PLAN AND ALTERNATIVES

- Signs or exhibits would be installed in and around the compound to interpret the ruins, the purpose of the rancho, the work that was done there, the people who did it, and the rancho's relationship to Mission Espada.
- A 2,100-square-foot open-air visitor contact/interpretation facility, including office space and a small storage closet for the ranger, toilets, a small, sheltered open-air sitting area, and sheltered exhibits for interpretive messages and park information would be installed near the parking area.

Development Costs—Alternative B

Item	Quantity	Unit Cost	Total
1. Gravel Entrance Road	1 mile	\$450,000.00	\$450,000
2. Gravel Parking Area	25 spaces	850.00	21,250
3. Bark-Chip Pedestrian Pathways	1 mile	35,000.00	35,000
4. Wayside Exhibits/Entrance Sign	7 ea.	8,220.00	57,540
5. Visitor Contact Station/Shaded Sitting Area	2,100 SF	110.00	231,000
6. Utilities			
Septic System	1	13,000	13,000
Water Well and Distribution	700 VLF	70.00	49,000
Electrical Service (buried)	500 LF	100	50,000
7. Landscape Improvements:			
Vista/Exotic Clearing	3 Acres	5,500.00	16,500
8. Stabl'n / Preserv'n of Historic Resources:			
Excavate Sand	600 CY	41.50	24,900
Emergency Stabilization	800 SF	12.50	10,000
Preservation:			
Wall Capping	500 SF	10.00	5,000
Pointing	1,800 SF	4.20	7,560
Gross Construction Cost, Material, and Labor Cost			\$970,750
Project Planning and Advanced Planing cost			\$242,688
TOTAL			\$1,213,438



Alternative B



Rancho de las Cabras
 San Antonio Missions
 National Historical Park
 Texas

United States Department of the Interior • National Park Service

Alternative C: Full Exposure of Ruins; Indoor Visitor Facility

The three major additions in alternative C would be the full exposure of the ruins, an entrance road at the southern end of the park (replacing the existing one), and the provision of a 2,100-square-foot indoor visitor center. All or most of the compound would be exposed down to one or both of the historic occupation levels. Possibilities for interpretation would be enhanced by a combination of the exposed ruins and the indoor interpretation structure. The modest visitor center would provide space for interpretive programs and the study of exhibits away from the summer heat, humidity, and occasional heavy rains. Understanding and enjoyment of the area would also be enhanced by an interpretive trail. Alternative C would include the following:

- A surfaced entrance road would enter the southern corner of the park from the road to the Promised Land Dairy, and a surfaced parking area for 25 cars would provide all-weather use. The existing

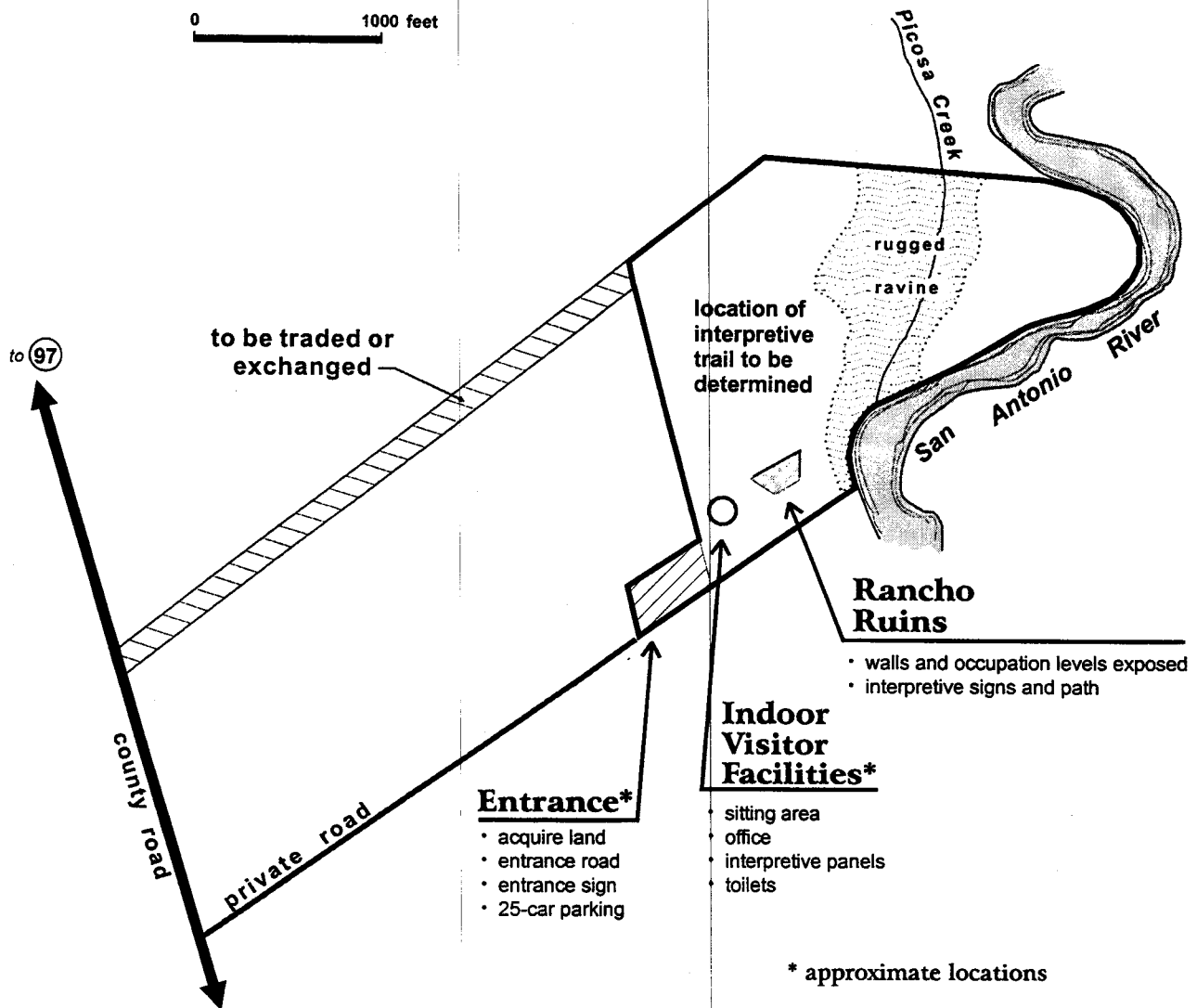
entrance road strip would be exchanged for land to accommodate the new entrance. A formal boundary adjustment would be made.

- An entrance sign and gate at the new entrance.
- All of the compound walls would be exposed and stabilized, including the subsurface evidence of two original walls that were removed down to ground level in a subsequent phase of construction. This would expose the entire outline, or "floor plan," of the rancho compound.
- Exposure of all or much of the upper occupation level and a substantial portion of the lower level.
- Signs or exhibits as in alternative B.
- An indoor visitor center would provide space for an information desk, interpretive exhibits, lecture/audio-visual programs, and a rest room. The building would occupy approximately 2,100 square feet.
- An interpretive trail would tell the story of the natural landscape and human interactions with it during Spanish colonial times. It or another trail would lead to the overlook of the San Antonio River valley. A trail to the river would provide a connection for canoeists and riverside hikers and a means for canoeists to carry their boats to the parking lot.

Development Costs--Alternative C			
Item	Quantity	Unit Cost	Total
1. Paved Entrance Road	¼-mile	825,000.00	\$206,250
2. Paved Parking Area	25 spaces	2,000.00	50,000
3. Hard-Surfaced Pedestrian Pathways	1 mile	80,000	80,000
4. Wayside Exhibits/Entrance Sign	7 ea.	8,215.00	57,505
5. Indoor Visitor Facility/Rest Room	2,100 SF	250.00	525,000
6. Utilities:			
Water Well and Distribution	700 VLF	70.00	49,000
Septic System	1 ea.	13,000.00	13,000
Electrical Service (Buried)	500 LF	100.00	50,000
7. Landscape Improvements:			
Vista / Exotic Clearing	5 Acres	5,500.00	27,500
New Native Plant Materials	3,000 SF	10.00	30,000
8. Stabl'n / Preserv'n of Historic Resources:			
Excavate Sand	1,080 CY	41.50	44,820
Emergency Stabilization	1,200 SF	12.50	15,000
Preservation:			
Wall Capping	500 SF	10.00	5,000
Pointing	2,400 SF	4.20	10,080
<i>Gross Construction Cost, Material, and Labor Cost</i>			\$1,163,155
<i>Project Planning and Advanced Planing cost</i>			\$290,789
TOTAL			\$1,453,944



0 1000 feet



Alternative C



Rancho de las Cabras

San Antonio Missions
National Historical Park
Texas

United States Department of the Interior • National Park Service

472 | 80.094
7/98 | IMDE

***Alternatives Considered but
Rejected***

Residents of Floresville suggested that an office be established in Floresville, where there is available office space at a convenient distance from the park, for the administration of Rancho de las Cabras. The planning team considered the suggestion but decided that there is no need for an office in the foreseeable future.

Residents of Floresville urged the reconstruction of the chapel. NPS policy requires that if what remains of a historic

structure is sufficient to convey to the visitor what it once looked like and to interpret its story, the Service should refrain from rebuilding it and instead preserve it in its current condition. Accurate reconstruction of the chapel would rely on descriptions of the mid-18th-century structure, and to date, no such descriptions have been found. Reconstruction would also be costly at a time when funds are very limited. Additionally, reconstruction could unintentionally alter or destroy original fabric and materials, which would jeopardize future scientific investigations of the site.

Comparison of Preferred Plan and Alternatives

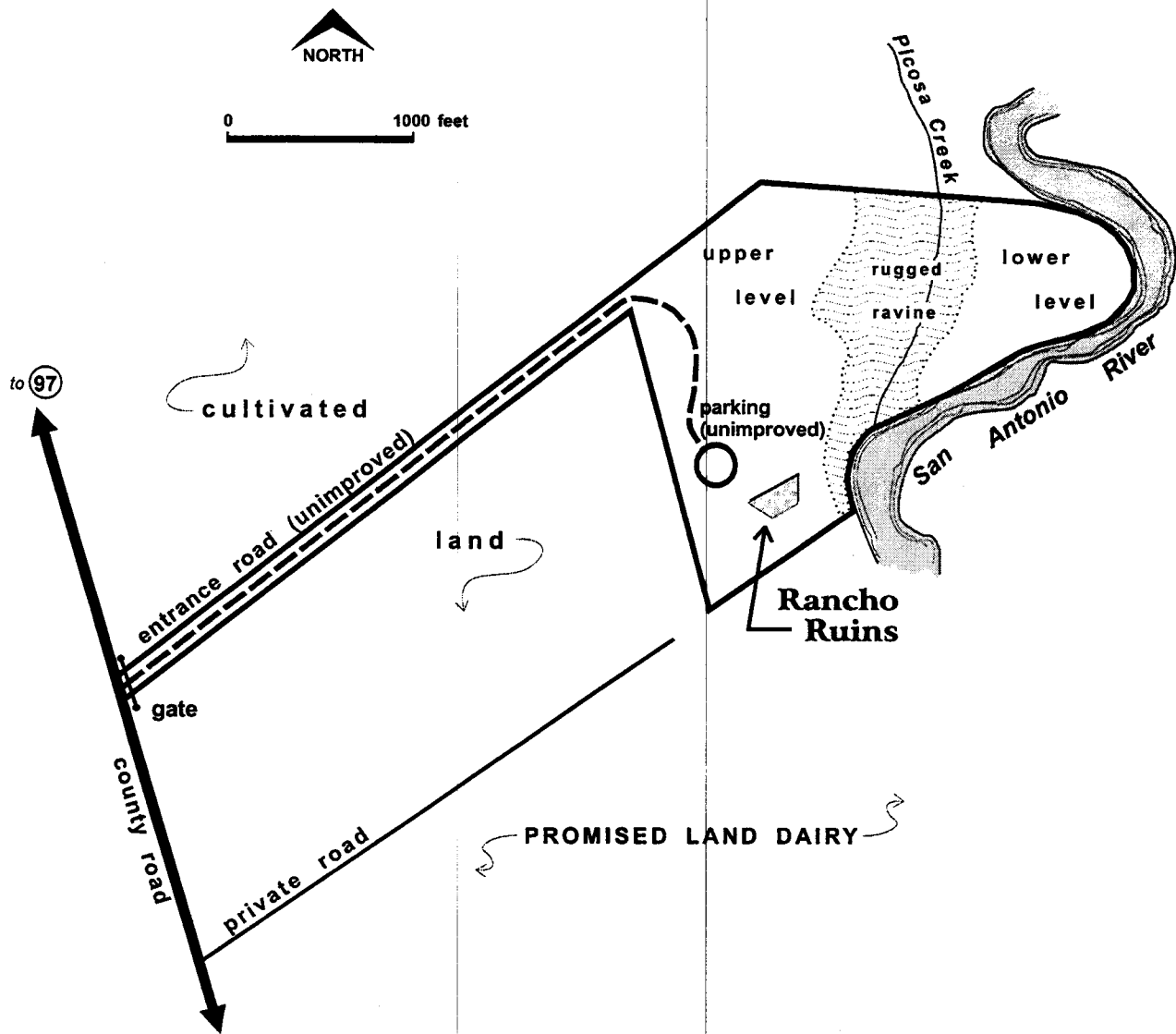
Preferred Plan—Full exposure of ruins; open-air visitor facility	Alternative A—No Action (no map)	Alternative B—Partial exposure of ruins; open-air visitor facility	Alternative C—Full exposure of ruins; indoor visitor facility
Entrance sign and gate	Entrance sign and gate*	Entrance sign and gate	Entrance sign and gate
New hard-surface road into south of park; boundary adjustment	Existing entrance road maintained; no improvement	Existing entrance road graded and graveled	New hard-surface road into south of park; boundary adjustment*
Hard-surfaced parking area	Unsurfaced parking area	Gravel parking area	Hard-surfaced parking area*
All walls uncovered, exposed to view	Ruins remain covered, not visible	Several sections of wall uncovered, exposed to view	All walls uncovered, exposed to view*
Most or all subsurface occupation levels uncovered, exposed to view		Sections of subsurface occupation levels uncovered, exposed to view	Most or all subsurface occupation levels uncovered, exposed to view*
Interpretive signs in/around compound		Interpretive signs in/around compound*	Interpretive signs in/around compound
2,100-sq.-ft. open-air covered sitting area and interpretive panels, indoor office, and toilets		2,100-sq.-ft. open-air covered sitting area and interpretive panels, indoor office, and toilets*	2,100-sq.-ft. indoor visitor center, incl. rest room, utilities, auditorium, exhibits
History/nature trail			History/nature trail*

Items marked * in A, B, and C make up the proposed plan

Benefits			
Highest visitation, open full day	Low visitation, limited to scheduled guided tours	Higher visitation, extended open hours	Highest visitation, open full day
2.5 full-time employees	No NPS staff on site	2.5 full time employees	3 full-time employees
High interpretive potential	Low interpretive potential	High interpretive potential	Highest interpretive potential
Active protection of all exposed sections of walls and occupation levels	Passive protection of compound walls and occupation levels	Active protection of all exposed sections of walls and occupation levels	Active protection of all exposed sections of walls and occupation levels

Comparison of Environmental Impacts

Preferred Plan—Full exposure of ruins; open- air visitor facility	Alternative A—No Action	Alternative B—Partial exposure of ruins; open- air visitor facility	Alternative C—Full exposure of ruins; indoor visitor facility
<i>Cultural Resources</i> Complete exposure of walls to elements; preservation treatment	<i>Cultural Resources</i> No exposure of walls	<i>Cultural Resources</i> Some exposure of walls; preservation treatment	<i>Cultural Resources</i> Same as proposal
Potential damage to walls by visitors; increased presence of rangers, warning signs		Less potential damage by visitors than proposal, more than "no action"	
<i>Soil and Vegetation</i> Boundary adjustment: 8.5 acres of existing road to revert to agriculture; 5.2 acres marginal farmland to become road, parking, etc.	<i>Soil and Vegetation</i> No boundary adjustment or land use change	<i>Soil and Vegetation</i> No boundary adjustment or land use change	<i>Soil and Vegetation</i> Same as proposal
2,100 sq. ft. of ground disturbed by outdoor interpretive facility	No interpretive facility	Same as proposal	2,100 sq. ft. of ground disturbed by indoor interpretive facility
<i>Visitors</i> Potential for vandalism and personal injury; warning signs and presence of ranger	<i>Visitors</i> Visitors on guided tours only; low potential for vandalism and injury	<i>Visitors</i> Same as proposal	<i>Visitors</i> Same as proposal
Opportunity to see all ruins; enhanced interpretive experience	Ruins not visible	Can see some ruins; better interpretive exp. than "no action," worse than proposal.	Same as proposal
<i>Wetlands</i> No impacts	<i>Wetlands</i> No impacts	<i>Wetlands</i> No impacts	<i>Wetlands</i> No impacts
<i>T & E Species</i> No impacts	<i>T & E Species</i> No impacts	<i>T & E Species</i> No impacts	<i>T & E Species</i> No impacts
<i>Economics</i> No negative impacts; some minor benefits to Floresville possible	<i>Economics</i> No change	<i>Economics</i> Same as proposal	<i>Economics</i> Same as proposal
<i>Cumulative Impacts</i> None			



Existing Conditions



Rancho de las Cabras

San Antonio Missions
National Historical Park
Texas

United States Department of the Interior • National Park Service

472 80,090
7/98 IMDE

THE AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The Rancho de Las Cabras site of San Antonio Missions NHP is in Wilson County, Texas, approximately 23 miles southeast of San Antonio. It is about 3 miles southwest of Floresville, near State Road 97. It consists of 99.2 acres, most of which are in a compact block of land bounded on the east by the San Antonio River, with the rest in a long, narrow (0.7 mile by 100 feet; 8.5-acre) strip that extends to an unsurfaced county road. The strip contains an unimproved entrance road that provides vehicle access to the site from the county road. It is approximately one mile from the entrance at the county road to the informal parking area currently in use. Picoso Creek flows through the park and joins the river at the park's boundary.

The site has three distinct topographical sections (see Existing Conditions Map). The higher, western section, which includes the ruins and part of the entrance road, is level at an elevation of 400-410 feet. The central section consists of a steep valley side that drops about 75 feet to Picoso Creek. The eastern section is a level area about 25 feet above the creek, located between the creek and a bend of the river. The three sections are roughly equal in area.

In the 1930s the State of Texas erected a state historical monument near the center of the compound (see Compound Ruins Map). Some of the data on the monument is erroneous. Specifically, the site is referred to as a "mission," rather than as a rancho of a mission, and there is a historically misleading connection made to the Canary Islanders who had settled the surrounding region. The connection to Mission Espada is not explained.

The site and its surrounding area have been grazed and farmed for two centuries, and the adjacent properties are still cultivated. Grazing has been excluded from the park since it was acquired by the state around 1980, so the upper and central sections have grown up to second growth vegetation. The dominant species of this second growth is mesquite, many of which grow very large. There are also live oak, post oak, and pecan trees, a variety of thorny underbrush species, and sparse, short grasses.

The entrance road from the county road is unimproved. It is rough, with encroaching vegetation, and vehicles have to avoid some depressions. It can be used safely by passenger cars only during dry weather. Because there is no prepared or designated parking area, visitors park in a convenient space about 200 feet from the ruins. There are no facilities. The compound's interior can be walked through, but there are rock and shrub impediments to avoid. Most sections of the walls must be approached over the rough and sloping surface of the sand covering. No part of the compound or its immediate surroundings is easily accessible to mobility-impaired people, and much of it is impossible for them to access.

The boundary of the site, as acquired by the NPS, has not been changed since it was purchased by Texas Parks and Wildlife. All of the land within the boundary is NPS land.

Cultural Resources

The site contains the ruins of the rancho's defensive compound and a small part of what was its surrounding grazing land. These are the only ruins known to remain of any of the San Antonio missions' ranchos. The ruins are in the southernmost part of the site. The walls stand from just above natural ground level to a few sections that are 6-8 feet high. No portions of the roof remain. Fallen stones rest at the base of the walls, and the entire complex is covered with sand and soil for protection. The compound consists of the remains of a defensive rock wall that surrounded a working and living space for the Indian *vaqueros* who herded the livestock here for Mission Espada 23 miles away. There are two bastions on opposite corners, four rooms on the inside of one wall, and a chapel that forms one section of the wall. Inside the walls are the below-surface foundations of two walls that were razed when the compound was enlarged, and there is evidence of interior *jacales* (small, wooden structures). The archeological excavations of the 1980s also revealed two superimposed levels of occupation within the compound a foot or more below the current surface of scattered fill and wind-blown dirt. It is assumed that there were exterior structures, such as corrals and fences, but insufficient archeological work has been done outside the walls to know if any such remains exist or what other cultural resources may be there.

With the exception of a few spots where it has eroded off the walls, the entire structure is covered by a protective layer of sand. Because of this covering, the ruins, for the most part, are invisible as such and are visible mainly as irregular mounds of earth that are colonized by volunteer vegetation. The interior of the compound is covered to varying depths

with the same fill and with accumulated wind-blown deposits, scattered shrubs, and small trees.

Considerable archeological research has been conducted within the compound, so much is known of its construction and use. Enough sampling was done outside to ascertain that there probably were exterior structures (fences and corrals), but very little is known about their extent or whether there were other structures. No evidence of other cultural resources has been found on the site. Part of the site (the existing entrance road) was farmed for many years, and any evidence of cultural resources that might have existed along that strip would have been destroyed or scattered long before it was acquired by the state.

Soils and Vegetation

The rancho site has two distinct landscape types: uplands and riparian. Grazing and cultivation have disturbed the uplands. Until the State of Texas acquired the land, ranching and peanut farming took place here. This area is now a brushy mesquite savanna with various trees and shrubs, including huisache, cactus, yuccas, *agaritas*, and small live oaks. Numerous native and nonnative grasses cover much of the ground. Below this upland lies a lush riparian landscape along the confluence of Pecos Creek and the San Antonio River. This vegetative association includes large pecans, black walnuts, and willow trees along with numerous shrubs, vines, and grasses. The transition between these two landscape types is quite dramatic, with areas of steep slopes and rock outcroppings.

The soils are predominantly red sand. Large chunks of sandstone are visible as outcroppings, and surface stones are scattered throughout the landscape.

The surrounding landscape is actively used for agricultural purposes. The neighboring farms and ranch lands are under intense management, growing crops such as hay and peanuts. A large-scale dairy operation is located immediately south of the rancho property. The economy associated with these neighboring land uses appears to be relatively strong and viable. Those areas not in agricultural use revert to a physical state resembling that of the Rancho de las Cabras site.

Visitors

Because of the lack of staff and the absence of facilities, visitors are brought to the site only on ranger-led tours. They meet at the city park a mile away and come in car caravans. The ranger leads an interpretive walking tour through and around the ruins. The tours are offered once per month, last approximately 1½ hours, and average about 8 people. At all other times the park gate is locked, and no NPS employee is on site.

Floodplains, Wetlands, and Riparian Zones

The part of the site that is affected by the proposed plan is 85 feet above Picos Creek and the San Antonio River. It is not in the floodplain or riparian zone, and it does not contain wetlands.

The Army Corps of Engineers determined that the site does not contain navigable waters, therefore it is not subject to the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899. The San Antonio River and Picos Creek, however, are "waters of the United States," so the NPS would need to receive Corps authorization to discharge dredged or fill material into them.

It is not known what effects, if any, there would be on the creek and the river from withdrawing water from a well.

Threatened and Endangered Species

There are no threatened or endangered species reported in Wilson County. The only candidate species reported in the county is the Gulf Coast hog-nosed skunk (*Conepatus leuconotus texensis*). This skunk is not known to occur in the site.

Evidence of wildlife is abundant at the site. Species include deer, rabbits, raccoons, and numerous birds and reptiles. Numerous species of fish also swim in the San Antonio River. The river corridor is important to numerous wildlife species for food, shelter, and dispersal, and to migratory and nesting birds.

Economic Effects

Park tourism, park-related federal expenditures, and expenditures by other nonlocal parties on park-related activities and projects provide insignificant contributions to the local economy. Total combined sales from this part of the park's operating expenditures are approximately \$2,000. Tax revenues being gained from park-related expenditures are about \$150 annually. Operations and use of the park result in no jobs in the local community.



ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

NOTE: All construction or ground-disturbing activities will be preceded by archeological surveys and/or have the on-site presence of an archeologist.

Preferred Plan-Full Exposure of Ruins; Open-Air Visitor Facility

Cultural Resources

Most or all of the compound walls, including two remnant walls that exist only as foundations, would be exposed. Depending on available funds, full exposure might take a period of years, with work occurring in increments along selected sections of wall. Wastage from natural causes would be negligible.

With the additional portion of walls exposed, the potential for accidental or intentional damage would be increased. Removal of the covering fill from much or all of the historic occupation levels would expose them to some degree of weathering, erosion, and foot traffic. Decisions regarding how much of them to expose and whether shelter, drainage, or other protection is necessary would be made based on their susceptibility to weathering.

At a time when there was no protection of the rancho and when its historic significance was less appreciated, an unknown number of stones were removed from the compound by nearby residents and were sometimes used in private yards or gardens. Now, recognizing the importance of the rancho, some of these residents have offered to return stones to the park. Because the stones' authenticity would be difficult to determine, and because the NPS does not intend to reconstruct the walls, the

offers have been declined. In the future, the park will accept the donation of stones that appear to be genuine and will stockpile them.

Archeological investigations have been conducted only in and adjacent to the compound. Although there is no surface evidence of cultural resources in the areas to be disturbed by the road, parking area, and visitor facility, all construction will be preceded by archeological examination, or an archeologist will be present.

▪ Mitigation

Exposed sections of the walls will receive preservation treatment consisting of limited replacement of fallen stones, possibly a protective cap on the top layer of stones, and periodic repointing. Stones that have fallen from the walls and are part of the rubble at the walls' bases (except for those few that might be needed for replacing on the walls) will be removed to a storage area and saved.

Signs will inform people of the personal danger of climbing on the walls, and a ranger's presence will deter vandalism.

Soil and Vegetation

The existing entrance road, which is 0.7 mile by 100 feet and covers approximately 8.5 acres, would be abandoned as a road and traded to the adjacent landowner, who would most likely farm it. Prior to its acquisition by Texas Parks and Wildlife, this strip was farmed for many years.

The section of entrance road that leads from the above-mentioned strip to the existing informal parking area will remain in the park. This disturbed roadbed and

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

parking area cover approximately 1.3 acres.

The new road would enter the site at its southernmost part, from the existing road to the Promised Land Dairy. This would require new construction of about 1,650 feet (0.76 acre) of surfaced, two-lane road within the site. Construction of the surfaced parking lot to the southwest of the ruins would disturb about 0.18-acre by removing vegetation, grading, preparing the ground, and surfacing.

The visitor facilities would be clustered at a spot approximately 200-300 feet southwest of the ruins, close to the parking area. The combined sitting area, office, and interpretive/information exhibits would cover an area of approximately 2,100 square feet. The installation of flush toilets would require a well to be drilled nearby, connected by approximately 100 feet of buried waterline, and a one-acre (approximate measure) septic field. Approximately 900 feet of buried conduit would bring electricity to the site. Construction of the interpretive trail would cause negligible impacts.

Approximately 6.8 acres, or 6.9 percent, of the site would be disturbed or covered:

Paved entrance road and parking for 25 cars	0.9 acres
Hard surface paths, signs, etc.	0.5 acres
Contact station, septic field, buried utilities	0.2 acres
Landscape/vegetation treatment, native plantings	<u>5.2 acres</u> 6.8 acres

The 8½ acres to be acquired by trade for the entrance road and parking area is marginal farmland not currently in production. The vegetation is largely grassy with shrubby growth and early

succession plants. This section has been cultivated more recently than the Rancho site proper. It contains an earthen dam and remnants of a dry cattle tank.

▪ *Mitigation*

The current entrance road, when traded to the adjacent landowner, will probably revert to agricultural use, as it was prior to its acquisition for use as a state park. This will balance the potential loss of land to be acquired for the new entrance. The section of entrance road that remains in the park and the parking area (1.3 acres) will be allowed to revert to natural vegetation by natural means or, if necessary, by plantings.

Visitors

Depending on the number of visitors and on the need for extended open hours, it is possible that the park will be open to unescorted visitors and that at least some of the visitors would be free to move through the ruins unattended. Climbing on the rough-hewn stones could be hazardous to the climber, and stones could be dislodged from the walls in the process.

▪ *Mitigation*

Although signs and posted information would instruct visitors not to climb on the walls or disturb the stones, the potential for such behavior would be greater than in the no-action alternative.

The visitors' experience will be greatly improved by this plan. They will be able to see the ruins and to learn about them from interpretive waysides and on-site rangers. They will have a sheltered place to sit and rest rooms. The surfaced road and parking will make the site useful in wet weather. All facilities will be accessible to visitors with disabilities.

Floodplains, Wetlands, and Riparian Zones

The part of the site that would be affected by the preferred plan is 85 feet above Picos Creek and the San Antonio River. It is not in the floodplain or riparian zone, and it does not contain wetlands. Except for the very minor disturbance of a footpath to provide canoeists access to the river, this alternative does not envision changes to the riparian zones.

The Army Corps of Engineers determined that the site does not contain navigable waters, therefore it is not subject to the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899. The San Antonio River and Picos Creek, however, are "waters of the United States," so the NPS would need to receive Corps authorization to discharge dredged or fill material into them. No such activities are planned.

It is not known what effects, if any, there would be on the creek and the river from withdrawing water from a well.

▪ Mitigation

Prior to digging a well a hydrologic study would be conducted.

Threatened and Endangered Species

There are no threatened or endangered species reported in Wilson County. The only candidate species reported in the county is the Gulf Coast hog-nosed skunk (*Conepatus leuconotus texensis*). This skunk is not known to occur in the site.

The San Antonio River corridor is important to numerous wildlife species for food, shelter, and dispersal, and is important to migratory and nesting birds. Approximately 93 percent of the site's natural cover will be retained, continuing to offer its benefits to wildlife.

Economic Effects

The preferred plan would not have any negative effects on the surrounding

properties or on the town of Floresville. The rancho has been public property for many years, owned first by the state and then by the NPS, so there will be no change in ownership. Minor benefits could be realized by the merchants of Floresville if people attending the monthly tours were to purchase lunches, souvenirs, and the like in town. And it is possible that they would realize increased benefits when the site is open for longer hours. It is possible that local residents would find employment with private contractors constructing the proposed facilities. No park housing is planned, so it is possible that a park employee stationed at the rancho might buy or rent housing in the Floresville area.

The preferred development program anticipates a one-time expenditure of about \$870,000. This could result in a one-time increase of about \$1.3 million in total sales, \$100,000 in state tax revenues, and about 13 jobs being created in the economy for the duration of the development project.

An estimated annual increase in the park budget of \$126,000 could result in recurring total sales, considering indirect and induced multipliers of about \$410,000 annually, \$32,000 increase in state tax revenue, and four jobs created in the local economy.

Carrying Capacity

As visitation increases, impacts (if any) on the cultural resources will be carefully monitored. It is not anticipated that normal visitor use, such as walking around the ruins or using the trails, will have any negative effects on the resources, or that it will cause social crowding. If the monitoring reveals any damage to the resources or a reduction in the quality of the visitors' experience, management controls over the number of

visitors or their movements or other necessary controls will be implemented.

Cumulative Impacts

There would be no cumulative impacts from the preferred plan.

Conclusion

Uncovering the ruin walls might lead to insignificant effects from the elements or visitor contact, but these would be mitigated by close monitoring and continual maintenance. Disturbance to the ground, plants, and potential buried cultural resources from road, parking lot, and visitor facility construction would be mitigated by careful design and by guidance from on-site archeologists. In all other aspects, effects would be beneficial.

Alternative A--No Action

Cultural Resources

The sand that covers the ruins and the interior floor of the compound provides them excellent protection from weathering, erosion, or the dislodging of stones. Remaining covered, the cultural resources will suffer no natural wear. Visitors within the compound walk on the fill surface, as opposed to a historically significant surface, so their normal activities will cause no impacts. All visitors are on ranger-guided tours, so there is little chance of accidental damage or vandalism to the ruins.

Volunteer vegetation has germinated and grown on and adjacent to the walls. Their roots, especially those of trees, threaten to shift and dislodge stones as they work their way down into the structure. This vegetation will be removed and prevented from reestablishing.

Soil and Vegetation

There would be occasional maintenance work on the existing entrance road, but it would occur on the already disturbed surface, therefore causing no additional impacts to soil and vegetation. Parking would continue in the present undefined site, which is about 200 feet from the ruins. No archeological survey has been made of the parking site, but it has already been thoroughly disturbed at the surface, and no additional impacts are likely as a result of continued parking there.

There would not be any new ground disturbance at the site under alternative A.

Visitors

Because the rancho is now a part of the NHP and has been widely advertised as such, it is certain to receive increased visitation, even with no development. All visitors are now members of scheduled, guided tours. Except for a gate that closes the park at the county road, there are currently no controls on visitor use (such as a designated parking area and formal paths), so visitors can wander free among the ruins. Because the unimproved area used for parking is already disturbed, and because the area of the compound that is walked on is covered with fill, impacts caused by a continuation of uncontrolled use, if any, would be insignificant.

Because there would be only occasional patrols of the park by rangers, it is possible that there would be more vandalism under the no-action alternative than would occur with the other alternatives.

Floodplains, Wetlands, and Riparian Zones

There would be no positive or negative effects.

Wildlife, Threatened, and Endangered Species

There would be no positive or negative effects.

Economic Effects

There would be no potential construction employment with this alternative. There would be the continued potential benefit to local merchants of purchases made by the current visitors. No staff person would be stationed at the rancho.

Conclusion

The continuation of existing practices would result in no impacts to the area.

Alternative B-Partial Exposure of Ruins; Open-Air Visitor Facility

Cultural Resources

Similar impacts to those described for the preferred plan would occur, except that smaller portions of the walls and occupation levels would be exposed to the elements and potential visitor-caused disturbance.

▪ Mitigation

Exposed sections of the walls will receive preservation treatment consisting of limited replacement of fallen stones, possibly a protective cap on the top layer of stones, and periodic repointing. Stones that have fallen from the walls and are part of the rubble at the walls' bases (except for those few that might be needed for replacing on the walls) will be removed to a storage area and saved.

Signs will inform people of the personal danger of climbing on the walls, and a ranger's presence will deter vandalism.

Soil and Vegetation

The existing road and informal parking area would be graded and surfaced with

gravel. It is possible that artifacts would be unearthed and damaged by the grading, although much of the current right-of-way was previously farmed, and there have been no signs of cultural resources.

The open-air visitor facility would occupy approximately 2,100 square feet of ground a few hundred feet from the ruins.

Minor digging and construction would be required, including the use of construction trucks and equipment.

▪ Mitigation

All construction or ground disturbance would be preceded by archeological surveys, or there would be an archeologist present during construction.

Visitors

The number of visitors would be lower than under the preferred plan; how much lower would depend largely on the number of hours the site would be open.

Floodplains, Wetlands, and Riparian Zones

Impacts would be the same as those identified under the preferred plan.

Wildlife, Threatened, and Endangered Species

Impacts would be the same as those identified under the preferred plan.

Economic Effects

Same effects as identified under the preferred plan.

Conclusion

Grading and graveling the road and parking lot would cause less of an impact than the new road and parking construction proposed in the preferred plan. Fewer of the walls would be exposed, so more of the ruins would

continue to be passively protected by the sand covering. Otherwise, effects would be the same as those identified under the preferred plan.

Alternative C-Full Exposure of Ruins; Indoor Visitor Facility

Cultural Resources

Impacts would be the same as those identified under the preferred plan.

Soil and Vegetation

Impacts from construction of the road and parking area would be the same as those described in the preferred plan.

Construction of the indoor visitor facility would require permanent footings and the installation of utilities. The building would cover approximately 2,100 square feet.

Visitors

Impacts would be the same as those identified in the preferred plan.

Floodplains, Wetlands, and Riparian Zones

Impacts would be the same as those identified in the preferred plan.

Wildlife, Threatened, and Endangered Species

Impacts would be the same as those identified in the preferred plan.

Economic Effects

The indoor visitor facility would be a larger construction project than proposed for the preferred alternative, and as a result, could provide more opportunities for short-term employment. Otherwise, economic benefits to the community are the same as those identified for the preferred alternative.

The proposed development program anticipates a one-time expenditure of about \$1.1 million. This could result in a one-time increase of about \$1.6 million in total sales, \$128,000 in state tax revenues, and about 17 jobs being created in the economy for the duration of the development project.

An estimated annual increase in the park budget of \$151,000 could result in recurring total sales, considering indirect and induced multipliers of about \$440,000 annually, \$34,000 increase in state tax revenue, and four jobs created in the local economy.

Conclusion

Because of the construction of a small building and septic system, this alternative would have the greatest impacts on soil, vegetation, and buried cultural resources of all the alternatives. Otherwise, impacts for this proposal would be the same as those identified for the preferred alternative.

LIST OF PREPARERS

Planning Team (all are National Park Service employees)

Steve Whitesell, *Superintendent San Antonio Missions NHP*

Alan Cox, *former Assistant Superintendent San Antonio Missions NHP*

Mary Bomar, *Assistant Superintendent, San Antonio Missions NHP*

Mark Chavez, *Chief of Professional Services (architect)*

Dan Steed, *Chief of Resource Management and Visitor Protection*

Roz Rock, *Historian*

James Oliver, *Landscape Architect*

Cherry Payne, *Chief of Interpretation*

Dava McGahee, *Interpretive Ranger*

Jake Ivey, *Archeologist, Intermountain Region*

Don Goldman, *Planner, Intermountain Support Office-Denver, Intermountain Region*

Contributors

Lori Kinser, *Visual Information Specialist, Planning and Environmental Quality, Intermountain Support Office-Denver, Intermountain Region.*

Anne A. Fox, *Archeologist, Center for Archaeological Research, University of Texas, San Antonio*

Susan Chandoha, *Los Compadres de San Antonio Missions NHP*

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Ecological Services provided information on threatened and endangered species.

Army Corps of Engineers provided data regarding the Clean Water Act and the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899.

The Texas State Historic Preservation Officer will comment on the preliminary draft plan.



CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

Summary of Consultation and Public Involvement

A series of scoping meetings were held in the park in January, February, April, and May 1996, three of which included public meetings with the officials and residents of Floresville, Texas, the nearest community to Rancho de las Cabras. A summary of the public meetings follows:

- A January 9 meeting was held in Floresville to inform the residents of the beginning of the GMP project and to solicit their ideas and respond to questions. Among the topics that were of most interest to the attendees were how long the project would take, whether the NPS would reconstruct the chapel (now in ruins), how the NPS would keep them informed of progress, whether there would be more archeological research, whether the NPS would work with local schools, and how vehicular access could be improved. Most of the responses were tentative or vague, because they could only be answered during the planning process.
- Scoping meetings were held by the entire team in the park February 12-16. These included a meeting with Floresville residents and a team visit to the rancho. At Floresville we discussed San Antonio Missions NHP, how it is organized and where the rancho fits in, and what the NPS's role would be at the rancho. A main message (well received) to the 35 attendees was that it is very unlikely that the chapel would be reconstructed, that most likely it would be preserved as it is (although with the backfill removed) and interpreted from the perspective of ruins. The residents made evident their interest in the park, both in terms of it being a new popular local attraction and because of their desire to participate in some way in the park programs. Many suggestions were made as to what developments and programs the rancho should have. In-

house team discussions covered what form the project would take (update SAAN's GMP or do a GMP amendment for the rancho) and what issues should be covered.

- May 7-10. The team discussed newly presented data, and further refined its ideas and decisions. Alternative plans were chosen. Purpose and significance statements were made final. The status of the team's ideas and alternative recommendations were presented in a public meeting in Floresville. Residents, after hearing the team's presentation, suggested a few new ideas: eliminate the small visitor center from alternative C and use the funds to protect the cultural resources; consider using a vacant storefront in Floresville as a park office; expose only the upper portion of the walls (most stand 2-6 feet above the ground) and use the savings to expose more linear feet of wall. The idea of using a southern entrance to the park was supported by residents and the affected landowner.

The team met with archeologist Anne A. Fox, both at the rancho and on the phone. Ms. Fox was among the University of Texas at San Antonio archeologists who did the original investigation of the compound beginning in 1980, while the rancho was owned by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, and is an expert on the archeology of the site. (Jake Ivey, now an employee of the National Park Service and a member of the team, was at that time an archeologist at the university and worked on the rancho project with Ms. Fox (see the bibliography).

Following are the issues that came out of the team's deliberations and its meetings with Floresville residents, which were subsequently considered in this plan:

- From the standpoint of San Antonio Missions NHP as a whole, the rancho is a

unique cultural resource—different from the missions, *acequias*, and *labores*. Therefore, it is helpful to articulate its purpose and significance within the broader purpose and significance of the entire park.

- What type of experience should the visitor to the rancho have? The GMP should guide the conservation treatment, facilities, and interpretation through which the site will provide the intended experience.
- What should be done, or not done, to the historic walls and grounds to help the visitor understand and enjoy the site? What should the visitor see? Should the ruins remain covered with protective sand, or should they be partially or completely exposed?
- What is the appropriate treatment for any walls that are exposed: preservation as is, partial restoration, or complete reconstruction?
- Should the existing entrance road be improved or left as it is, or is there a better access route? Where should parking be located, and how many spaces are needed?

- Is a rest room needed? Should there be trails, or should free movement in and around the walls be permitted? Is there a need for maintenance, law enforcement, or resource management facilities on site?
- Is a small visitor contact station needed? Where? What interpretive themes should be conveyed to the visitors?
- Should there be trail connections to local and regional recreation developments?
- Do present land uses adjacent to and near the park or known plans of private and public owners pose any obstacles to the success of this GMP?

List of Agencies, Organizations, and Persons Consulted

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Army Corps of Engineers

The Texas State Historic Preservation
Office

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Briceland, Richard H. *Money Generation Model*. NPS Statistical Office, 1991.

General Management Plan and Development Concept Plan, SAAN, July 1982.

Ivey, James E., Anne A. Fox, and Courtenay J. Jones. *Archaeological Survey and Testing at Rancho de las Cabras*. Three reports on three seasons of work, published by the University of Texas at San Antonio, 1981, 1983, and 1983.

Rock, Rosalind Z., Ph.D. "Rancho de las Cabras: Historical Background Information for Interpreters." September 1995 (unpublished).

"San Antonio Missions National Historic Park: A Report on a Study of Its Boundaries," February 1990.

San Antonio Missions National Historical Park, Statement for Management, July 1980.

