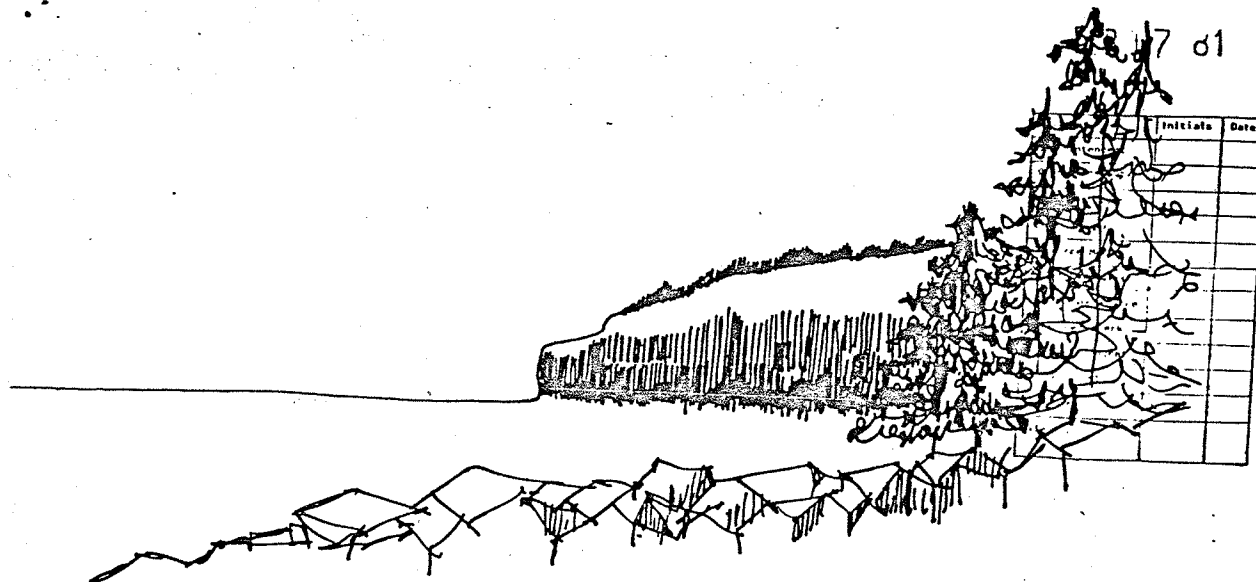


Joe Abelf

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ISLE AU HAUT

Acadia National Park

FOREWORD

This document constitutes the Record of Decision for the General Management of the Isle au Haut unit of Acadia National Park. It is entitled a Review of Alternatives since it was first drafted in December 1977 before the current Council on Environmental Quality regulations implementing the National Environmental Policy Act were put into effect. A Finding of No Significant Impact accompanies this document and is found immediately following the three maps included in the Review of Alternatives.

REVIEW OF ALTERNATIVES
Assessment of Management Alternatives
Isle au Haut
Acadia National Park

This review records the various decisions made by the National Park Service in selecting a management alternative for the Isle au Haut unit of Acadia National Park. In arriving at these decisions careful consideration was given to the response from public meetings, individual public response, and National Park Service policies and legislative mandates.

FINDINGS

The assessment of Management Alternatives for the Isle au Haut unit of Acadia National Park discusses five specific management schemes. It was prepared over the course of the year beginning in mid-July 1976. During this period, the Park Service held one public meeting on Isle au Haut on August 5, 1976, and four meetings with the Isle au Haut Town Planning Board and Selectmen on the island between October 7, 1976, and July 9, 1977. Several meetings were also held between Park Service staff and individual Isle au Haut property owners at the Service's North Atlantic Regional Office in Boston during 1976 and early 1977.

Copies of the Assessment of Management Alternatives were mailed to approximately two hundred and seventy interested groups and individuals, including Maine's congressional delegation, local state legislators, local town managers, concerned state agencies, the state and local areawide A-95 clearinghouses, and the State Historic Preservation Officer. In addition, over two hundred copies of the Assessment were mailed to the Town of Isle au Haut for direct distribution to individuals living on or visiting the island, and twenty-five to thirty more were handed out by the Superintendent's office in Bar Harbor. Availability of the Assessment was published in the Federal Register of August 9, 1977, along with notification of three public meetings and a 30-day review period following the last public meeting.

The three public meetings held on the Assessment were conducted at the Isle au Haut Town Hall on August 29, 1977; at the Ellsworth, Maine, City Hall on August 30, 1977; and at the Stonington, Maine, Town Hall on August 31, 1977. The Isle au Haut meeting was the most heavily attended of the three meetings, with approximately 125 individuals in attendance, while both the Ellsworth and Stonington meetings attracted between fifteen and twenty individuals. At the Isle au Haut meeting, the Town Planning Board and the Selectmen presented their own management alternative for the Isle au Haut unit, and, following a lengthy presentation by the Planning Board, a number of individuals in the audience spoke in favor of the Town's alternative. Similar, but less lengthy, comment was expressed by the public at both the Ellsworth and the Stonington meetings.

Twenty-six written responses were received during the 30-day review period following the Stonington public meeting plus an additional statement from the Isle au Haut Planning Board and Selectmen. Of those responding, half identified themselves as summer residents of Isle au Haut, 19% as park visitors to Isle au Haut, and 31% represented governmental agencies or non-profit organizations. The summer residents overwhelmingly (85%) favored the Isle au Haut Planning Board's alternative, while the majority of the park visitors, governmental agencies, and non-profit organizations indicated that they favored the land acquisitions proposed in Alternative 4 and also the retention and acquisition of the entire median ridge.

DISCUSSION

The five alternatives presented in the Assessment of Management Alternatives for the Isle au Haut unit are:

1. No action. The present management policies would be continued including the point of visitor access at the Isle au Haut town dock (except for the morning mailboat trip from Stonington to Duck Harbor and the afternoon return trip that was instituted during July and August of 1978), overnight visitation limited to a maximum of 18 campers, and no limit on day visitation. The existing park boundaries would be retained.
2. Day use with park holdings consolidated in the southern half of the island. All overnight use would be terminated, and the number of day visitors would be limited by scheduling and capacity of the boat service, and the point of visitor access would be moved to Duck Harbor during the summer months. The park boundaries would be changed so as to delete most of the federal lands in the northern half of the island and consolidate the park holdings in the southern half. Eminent domain could be used within the new park boundaries only if a change in the nature or intensity of use of a parcel of land occurred.
3. Day use with park holdings consolidated in the southwestern sector of the island. The management policies would be similar to those proposed in Alternative 2, and the park holdings would be concentrated more toward the southwestern quadrant of the island than in Alternative 2.
4. Combination of day use and overnight use with the park holdings consolidated in the southern half of the island. Overnight use would be increased from the present maximum of 18 visitors to a maximum of 30 visitors per night; day use would be limited by the scheduling and capacity of the boat service, and the point of visitor access would be moved to Duck Harbor during the summer months. The park boundaries would be identical to those proposed in Alternative 2.
5. Combination of day use and overnight use with park holdings consolidated in the southwestern sector of the island. The management policies would be similar to those proposed in Alternative 3.

Public response to those proposed alternatives indicates there is virtually no support for Alternatives 1, 2, 3, or 5. Alternative 1 retains the town dock as the main point of visitor access and hence fails to resolve effectively the problem of visitor trespass in the Village of Isle au Haut and on the northern half of the island. It also does not address the consolidation of park holdings in the southern half of the island. Alternatives 2 and 3 prohibit all overnight use of the park, and thereby limit the visitor's opportunity to experience much of the real sense of remoteness of this island environment. In addition, the Town of Isle au Haut has never advocated the elimination of overnight use of the park and has indicated that limited overnight camping opportunities are less disruptive to the community than is day use.

Alternative 5 is judged inadequate for either one of two reasons. On one hand, those who favor the consolidation of park holdings in the southern half of the island believe Alternative 5 contains too great a decrease in park acreage, since all of Eastern Head would be eliminated from the park. On the other hand, those who favor the concentration of park holdings in the southwestern quadrant of the island feel the authority of eminent domain is unnecessary because very little acquisition of private land is called for in Alternative 5. The Isle au Haut Town Planning Board expresses the belief that all of this private land, except the Hamilton inholding, can be obtained without resort to eminent domain.

Alternative 4 receives some public support, mainly from those who have actually camped overnight in the park. Specific criticism of this alternative is that there is no justification for increasing the maximum number of overnight visitors, that trail access to the median ridge and the retention of Eastern Head would continue to encourage private property trespass, that retention of the Black Dina Trail corridor would continue the problems of visitor trespass and other conflicts in the Village of Isle au Haut, and that the authority of eminent domain is unnecessary.

Considerable public support is expressed for the Isle au Haut Town Planning Board's alternative by year-round and summer residents and also by the Hancock County Planning Commission. This alternative is similar to Alternative 5, but contains the following exceptions: (1) park visitation would be held to a maximum of 2,500 visitors during the visitor season and overnight camping use would not be increased beyond the present maximum of 18 visitors per night without a compensating reduction in day visitation; (2) the authority of eminent domain would not be granted the National Park Service on Isle au Haut; (3) the park boundaries would differ from Alternative 5 in that the Black Dina Trail corridor is eliminated, a small deletion is included in the Moore Harbor area in order to eliminate a private driveway which is presently on federal land, and the entire Great Meadow is included in federal ownership; and (4) the Park Service and the Town of Isle au Haut shall examine the possibility of using the mouth of Eli's Creek as a bad weather point of visitor access to the park instead of the town dock. In its endorsement of the Town Planning Board's alternative, the Hancock County Planning Commission further recommends the elimination of all overnight use of the park and that the northern boundary of the park run due easterly from the road at Moore Harbor instead of northeasterly as proposed in the Planning Board's alternative.

RECOMMENDATIONS

After careful consideration, the National Park Service recommends that a modified Alternative 4 be selected.

The Boundary

Pivotal in the management of Acadia is establishment of a new park boundary within which future fee acquisitions will be confined. The present boundary, established in 1929, includes all of Hancock County and those lands east and south of the Penobscot Ship Channel within Knox County. Isle au Haut falls within the latter category (see Figure 1).

The proposed new park boundary (see Figure 2) would encompass existing park holdings south of Sawyer Mountain with the retention of a corridor for trail access on the Trailer Lot. Added to this boundary would be: (1) the land encompassing the Great Meadow; (2) the land encompassing Jerusalem Mountain; (3) a strip of land west of Long Pond; (4) land encompassing Merchants Point and most of Merchants Cove; (5) Western Ear; and (6) the Hamilton Property at Duck Harbor. Excluded from this boundary would be three northern parcels that are presently not contiguous to the primary Park holdings to the south. These include: (1) Trailer Lot-- located near the center of Isle au Haut Village; (2) Northern Lot-- located on Champlain Mountain; and (3) Sawyer Lot-- located on Rocky Mountain.

One other parcel proposed for exclusion includes a driveway to a private home in the Moore Harbor area. The lands included within the Trailer Lot, Northern Lot, and Sawyer Lot would be given to the Town with conservation easement restrictions (see section on Conservation Easement Program). Each proposed tract is specifically identified and explained in the Appendix. The rationale for acquiring or deleting lands on Isle au Haut varies from parcel to parcel, but stems from one or more of the following criteria: (1) to protect lands of exemplary scenic or ecological significance; (2) to acquire lands important for public use or recreation; (3) to eliminate inholdings; and (4) to consolidate the park boundary.

Land Acquisition Policies

Ownership of land within the park boundary would be in fee simple and would be obtained by purchase, as well as by donation and exchange. (The Park Service anticipates that the lands in the Merchants Cove area, in Great Meadow, on Jerusalem Mountain, and west of Long Pond will be donated if the proposed boundaries are legislated.) The basis for future land acquisition at Isle au Haut would be the willing buyer/willing seller concept. If eminent domain actions are deemed necessary, the National Park Service would obtain approval from the Isle au Haut Selectmen before proceeding.

Conservation Easement Program

In view of the location of some of the lands proposed for exchange to the Town of Isle au Haut, the Town has agreed to work with the Park Service in establishing conservation easements on lands above 300 feet in elevation. Easements on those lands owned by the Town would be held by

the Park Service. Easements on those lands owned by private individuals would be held by the Town with the Park Service having backup authority (see Appendix for proposed easement language). Lands deleted from the Park below 300 feet would be subject to existing zoning criteria as developed by the Town in their "Revised Zoning Ordinance March, 1975 with Amendments of March, 1978."

In addition, a conservation easement would be sought for Eastern Ear.

Interpretive Concept

Isle au Haut should remain a relatively undeveloped portion of Acadia National Park where the visitor is free to become a part of the natural scene. The interpretive hiking tours emanating from Duck Harbor would continue and would provide each visitor with an orientation brochure describing the trails and places of interest within the Park. Except for limited signing, interpretation would continue on a personal contact basis.

Development and Land Use Concepts

In keeping with the general atmosphere of the entire island -- one of remoteness intermingled with small fishing villages -- Isle au Haut would be left in a generally undeveloped state. Exceptions to this would be the continued maintenance of the peripheral road in its present state, a boat dock at Duck Harbor, the system of trails within the Park boundaries, and the limited number of backcountry campsites.

Overnight use development would not exceed five campsites (possibly relocated to the south of the Duck Harbor area to decrease congestion by day users and noise from vehicles on the road). Overnight use would continue to be handled on a reservation basis. Day use would be limited at Duck Harbor to one tour boat company operating on schedules designed to maintain the sense of a remote island, uncrowded experience and, simultaneously, to protect the natural resources. To accomplish this, tour boat schedules would be developed in consultation with Park Service and Town officials. An additional trail would be feasible along the southwest shore and some changes in existing trails would be necessary to internalize the trail system. The existing trail to Eastern Head would be closed to the public since it crosses private lands. A trail study would be conducted, working closely with the Town Planning Board, to develop a reasonable Park trail system by means of changes, additions, and improvements to the trail network.

A ranger station and seasonal employee quarters are necessary for the efficient management of Park functions on Isle au Haut. The Town of Isle au Haut has expressed an interest in providing such a facility on a lease basis. Efforts would continue to coordinate this proposal with the General Services Administration and the Town of Isle au Haut.

In order to better evaluate land values associated with the exchange of lands between the Town and the National Park Service, a joint timber survey was performed in 1978 using the services of Mr. Douglas W. Meservey, Registered Professional Forester. The estimated value of the

standing timber on the National Park Service lots proposed for exchange totals \$101,254. The estimated value for the timber on the town-owned land is \$32,674. A summary of this survey is enclosed in the Appendix. These figures do not include timber values on Western Ear (1A), Merchants Cove lot (3A), and the Goelet property west of Long Pond (4A). These three properties total 155.13 acres, most of which is timbered.

CONCLUSION

Management Alternative 4 with the above-mentioned modifications constitutes the selected alternative for the Isle au Haut unit of Acadia National Park. (see Figure 3).



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Acadia National Park

R.F.D. #1, Box 1

Bar Harbor, Maine 04609

REPLY REFER TO:

7617

AR(PEC)

GENERAL MANAGEMENT

ISLE AU HAUT

ACADIA NATIONAL PARK

Finding of No Significant Impact

The selected alternative modified Alternative 4 -- as described in the preceding Review of Alternatives would neither have appreciable effects upon the environment nor create further controversy. Therefore, this management action does not constitute a major federal action that would have significant impacts on the human environment and an environmental impact will not be prepared.

Superintendent
Acadia National Park

Concurred:

Acting Regional Director
North Atlantic Region

1979

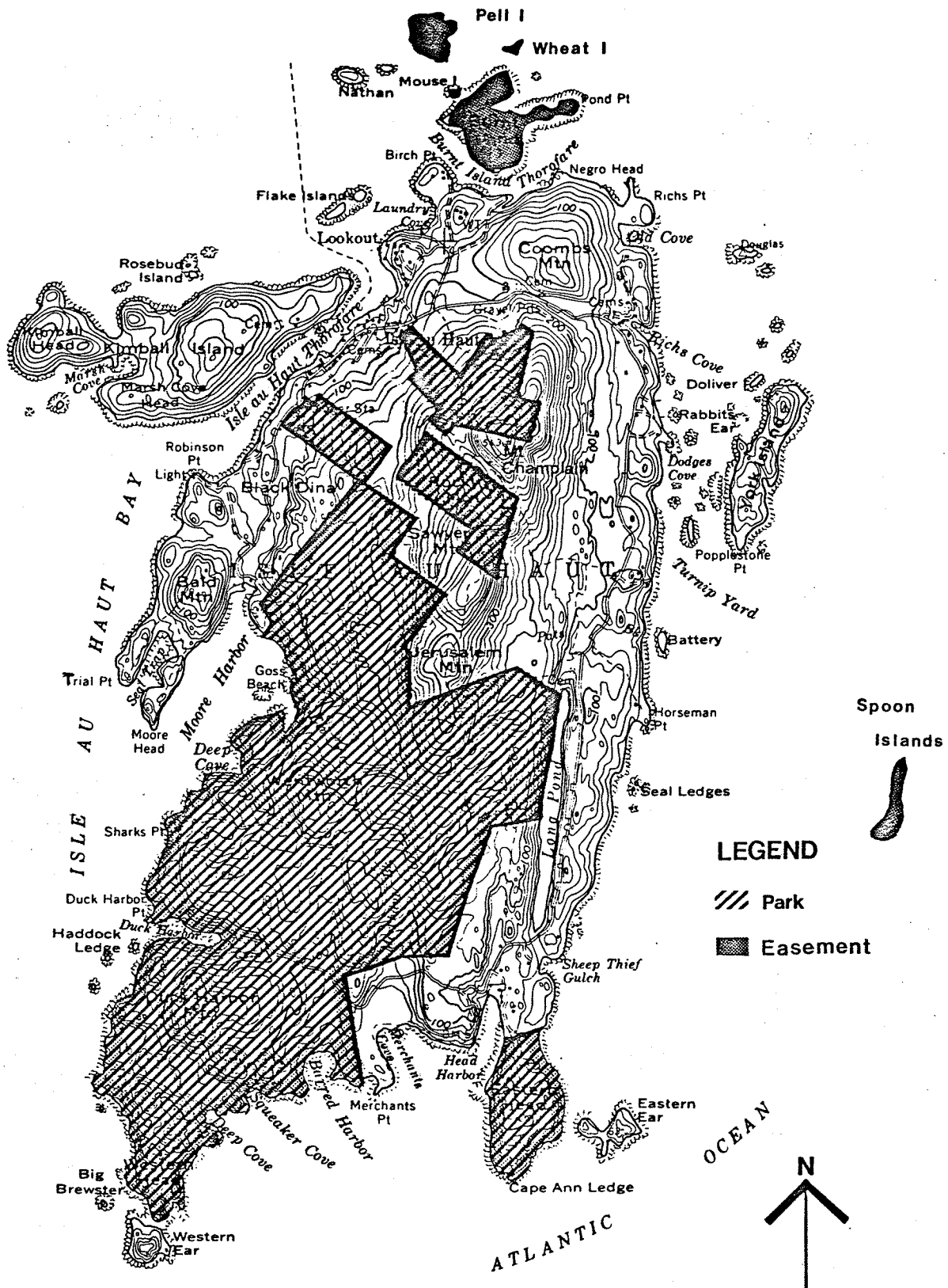


Figure 1: Existing Park Boundaries
ISLE AU HAUT, MAINE

0 1/2 1 mile

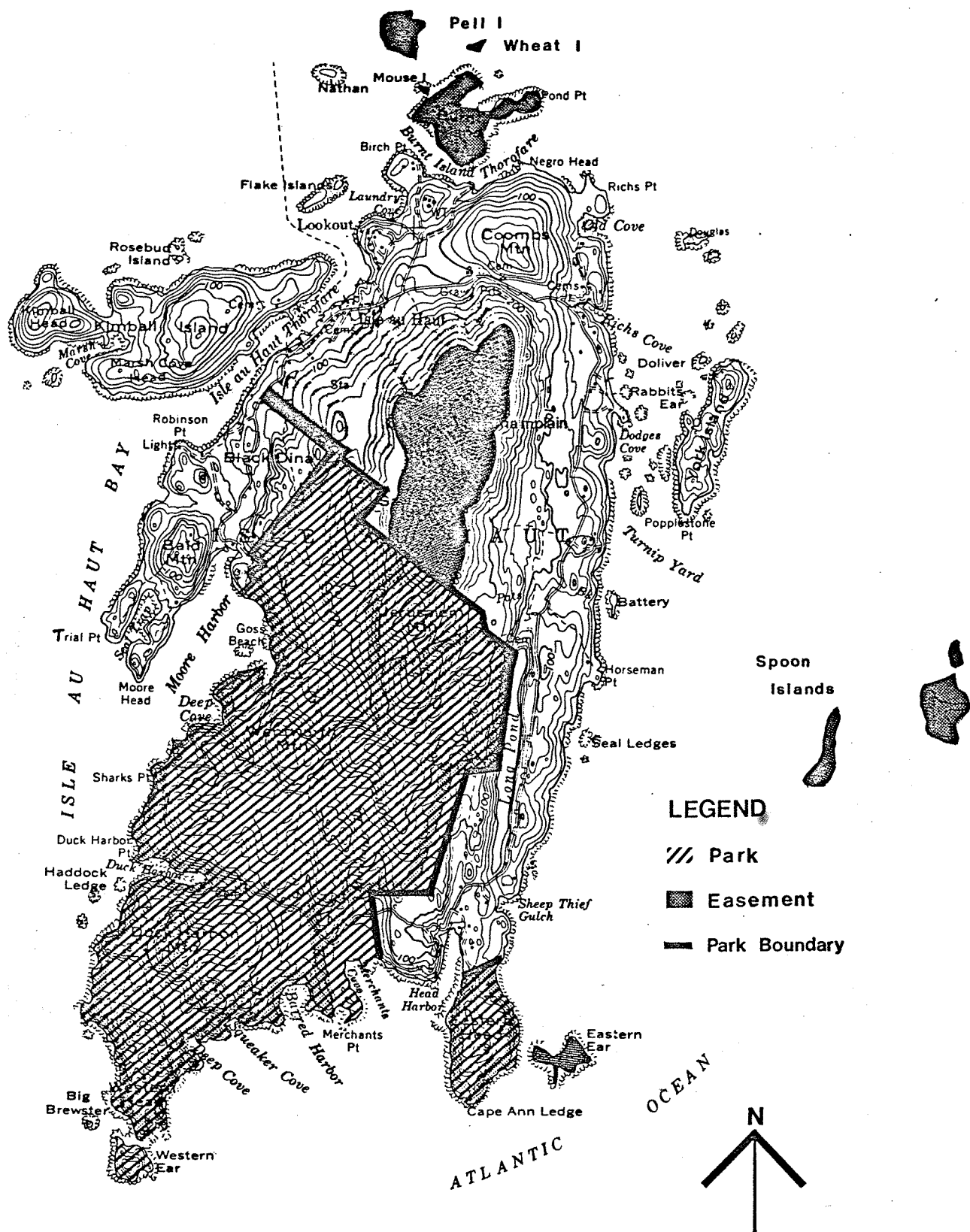


Figure 3: Proposed Park Boundaries
ISLE AU HAUT, MAINE

0 1/2 1 mile

OCT. 15, 1982

Ninety-seventh Congress of the United States of America

AT THE SECOND SESSION

*Begun and held at the City of Washington on Monday, the twenty-fifth day of January,
one thousand nine hundred and eighty-two*

An Act

Relating to the establishment of a permanent boundary for that portion of the
Acadia National Park as lies within the town of Isle au Haut, Maine.

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the
United States of America in Congress assembled, That the Congress
finds that—*

(1) there are significant scenic, educational, natural, and
cultural resources in the town of Isle au Haut, Maine;

(2) due to the isolated location and traditional resource-based
economy of the town's island community, these resources are
fragile and deserving of conservation and protection through
both public and private efforts; and

(3) both residents of the town and visitors to the Acadia
National Park will benefit from the establishment of a perma-
nent boundary for the park and the management of parklands
on a limited entry, low intensity basis.

SEC. 2. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the perma-
nent boundary of Acadia National Park lying within the town of Isle
au Haut, Maine, is hereby established to include only those lands
and interests therein as are depicted on the map entitled "Boundary
Map, Acadia National Park, Town of Isle au Haut, Maine", num-
bered 123-80003 and dated October 1981, which map is on file and
available for public inspection in the offices of the Department of
the Interior and at the Registry of Deeds for Hancock and Knox
Counties, Maine.

SEC. 3. (a) Within the boundary established by section 2, and as
indicated on the map referenced therein, the Secretary of the
Interior (hereinafter referred to as "the Secretary") is authorized to
acquire lands and interests therein by donation or exchange. The
Secretary is authorized and directed to acquire by donation, pur-
chase with donated or appropriated funds, or exchange the tract
known as the Hamilton lot in Duck Harbor. No later than one
hundred and eighty days from enactment hereof, the Secretary shall
convey to the town of Isle au Haut all right, title and interest of the
United States in and to those lands under the jurisdiction of the
Secretary which lie outside the boundary established by section 2
and within the town of Isle au Haut, subject only to such covenants
running with the land as the Secretary and the town agree are
necessary to preserve the general character of such lands, which
shall include covenants to maintain forever in their natural condi-
tion (excepting the cutting of fire trails and the extinguishment of
fires) lands above three hundred feet above the mean high water
level: *Provided, however,* That such covenants with respect to lands
above three hundred feet and below four hundred feet shall permit
the gathering and removal of dead and fallen timber.

(b) Notwithstanding any other provisions of this Act, the Secre-
tary is also authorized to accept by donation, as a coholder for
enforcement purposes only, a limited enforcement interest in con-

servation easements on lands outside the boundary established by section 2 hereof and within the town of Isle au Haut which may from time to time be donated to the Isle au Haut Land Conservation Trust, a trust established under the laws of the State of Maine. The Superintendent of Acadia National Park is hereby authorized to serve as an ex officio trustee of such trust.

SEC. 4. (a) The management and use of parklands on Isle au Haut shall not interfere with the maintenance of a viable local community with a traditional resource-based economy outside the boundary of the park. To the maximum extent practicable, no development or plan for the convenience of park visitors shall be undertaken which would be incompatible with the preservation of the flora and fauna or the physiographic conditions now prevailing, and every effort shall be exerted to maintain and preserve this portion of the park in as nearly its present state and condition as possible. In recognition of the special fragility and sensitivity of the park's resources, visitation shall be strictly limited to assure negligible adverse impact on such resources, to conserve the character of the town and to protect the quality of the visitor experience.

(b) In furtherance of the purpose of subsection (a) of this section, the Secretary shall prepare a report establishing carrying capacities for the Isle au Haut portion of Acadia National Park. The report shall be prepared and the carrying capacities established with public participation and in consultation with the town of Isle au Haut and other interested parties.

(c) The Secretary shall transmit the report to the Energy and Natural Resources Committee of the Senate and the Interior and Insular Affairs Committee of the House of Representatives no later than six months from the date of enactment of this Act. The Secretary shall begin implementing the carrying capacities contained in the report sixty days after the report has been transmitted to the committees.

(d) Carrying capacities established pursuant to this section shall be reviewed, and if necessary revised, every five years. Any revision in such carrying capacity shall be made in accordance with the procedures set forth in subsections (b) and (c) of this section.

(e) Until such time as a carrying capacity limitation is established and implemented pursuant to subsections (b) and (c) of this section, the Secretary shall take such temporary measures as are necessary to assure that visitation does not exceed the average annual visitation for the period 1979 to 1981.

S. 1777-3

SEC. 5. There are hereby authorized to be appropriated after October 1, 1982, such sums as may be necessary to carry out the provisions of this Act.

Speaker of the House of Representatives.

*Vice President of the United States and
President of the Senate.*



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Acadia National Park

R.F.D. #1, Box 1

Bar Harbor, Maine 04609

IN REPLY REFER TO:

November 12, 1981

L1417

(x)W3823

Memorandum

To: Superintendent, ACAD

From: Operations Supervisor, ACAD

Subject: Visitor Use Levels/"Carrying Capacities" Isle au Haut
(Proposed Legislation)

House Bill H.R.4855 and Senate Bill 1777 both state that "... the Secretary shall establish carrying capacities not in excess of annual average visitation during the period 1979 through 1981." Tacit in this wording is the supposition that Isle au Haut has been visited for the last three years at a level beyond which damage to the resource or visitor experience would occur, or beyond which there would be an adverse impact on the local community by park visitors. This does not appear to be the case.

A carrying capacity for Isle au Haut as per this proposed legislation could be defined as the maximum number of visitors that can be accommodated during the summer season while maintaining the resource, the remote island experience for the visitor, and the life style of both year-round and seasonal residents of the local community.

There is little doubt that the Isle au Haut resource could withstand a far greater maximum number of visits than it now does. Day use on park lands is mostly confined to roads and trails and overnight use is confined to three established campsites. There does not seem to be any one part of the natural resource that would be consumed or damaged at an unacceptable level by increased numbers of visitors. The cultural resources are limited to a few archeological sites, and these can be protected by proper management. The optimum number of visitors that could be permitted without degradation of the remote island experience is subjective and based only on visitor expectations. To some the optimum level has already been exceeded; to others a tenfold increase would be acceptable. The Service is mandated to protect the resources while providing for the enjoyment of the resource. To concur with a use level as low as proposed by the legislation would suggest that we agree with the need to limit use at current levels to protect the resource and experience. This is not the case.

Section 4 of the proposed legislation states "The management and use of parklands on Isle au Haut shall not interfere with the maintenance of a viable local community...". Conversely, the Town of Isle au Haut should not interfere with the maintenance of a viable park program. To base a carrying capacity for park lands only on what the community of Isle au Haut perceives as an appropriate level does exactly this -- it interferes with a viable and growing park program. Day use has increased and overnight use would if permitted. With the deletion of the northern park properties, it is relatively certain that a development or plan could be undertaken that would permit an increased level of use by visitors that would not interfere with the local community of Isle au Haut. What is proposed in the legislation is not a carrying capacity at all. It is simply a use limit imposed by the community of Isle au Haut on the park lands. If this use limit is to be imposed by the legislation, the statements relative to the special fragility and sensitivity of the park's resources should be deleted.

There are very few differences in the lands that were and perhaps will be donated to the park and the lands that are currently or will be in private or town ownership. The acreage of park and nonpark lands is approximately equal - the federal government owns about one-half the island. The "carrying capacity" of the lands on Isle au Haut that are in private or local ownership should relate in some way to the present island population of 60 to 70 full-time residents and 120 or more summer residents. Aside from the special status conferred upon the land when it was accepted by the Secretary in the 1940's under the 1929 legislation that permitted the acquisition, there is no "special fragility and sensitivity of the park's resources." Using the town population as a basis to establish a campground use level, the park could increase the number of campsites by about 30. This is not to suggest that the number of campsites be increased to this level but just to point out that there is no inherent special fragility or sensitivity of the park's resources vis-a-vis nonpark lands on Isle au Haut and that non-park lands are more intensively used. What's true for the resident status of park lands. The "special fragility and sensitivity of the park's resources" is only conferred and not inherent. Much of the Isle au Haut legislation proposed is redundant when the Service's 1916 mandate is considered.

Isle au Haut has three campsites that are open to the public on a reservation basis mid-May to mid-October, or 154 days. Up to six people per night are permitted at each of the three sites. The annual use limit as established currently for overnight or camper use is 2,772 overnight stays (3X6X154). The actual use at the campground is much less due to no-shows and smaller average groups per site than the permitted six. The most realistic user limit is still expressed in terms of length of season (154), number of sites (3), and number of visitors permitted per site (6).

Day use entry is by both commercial and private boat. There are no direct controls available on entry by private boat; however, entry to the park via private boat is not significant when counting total day use visitation. It is probable that entry by private boat would not increase absent some positive move on our part to encourage use by boaters. Even if we encouraged visitation by private boaters via moorings, docks, and publicity, such use would probably not be significant. Entry by private boat in 1981 is estimated at 524 persons.

In 1981 the Isle au Haut Company scheduled a boat trip to Duck Harbor to arrive just prior to 12:30 p.m. with an additional trip leaving Duck Harbor at 5:30 p.m. The trips were scheduled June 22 to September 12 (82 days). Two boats were available for use. The larger of the two boats has a capacity of 70, the smaller a capacity of 28. (In 1982 the smaller of the two boats will be replaced by a new boat with a capacity of 50.) If day use is to be limited, the most feasible method would be to limit the operating season (82 days), the trips to Duck Harbor (1), and the capacity of the boat or boats used ($70+28=98$). The day use limit thus established is 8,036 ($82 \times 1 \times 98$), plus private boat entry (524), or 8,560.

In the past visitation has been counted at the Isle au Haut Landing as well as Duck Harbor. If we are to delete all the northern properties, the counts should be taken only at Duck Harbor, and the Isle au Haut Company should continue to differentiate between the park and the town on their schedules during the summer season. Prior to June 22 and after September 12 campers and day use visitors would be counted at the Isle au Haut Landing, as it would not be economic for the Isle au Haut Company to run a trip to Duck Harbor.

The following is an accounting of the number of campers arriving at the Isle au Haut portion of the park and the number of day use visitors arriving at the park for 1979, 1980, and 1981. These records do not count camper overnights. The counts were taken at the Isle au Haut Landing or Duck Harbor as appropriate.

Month	1981		1980		1979	
	Day Use	Campers	Day Use	Campers	Day Use	Campers
October	115	50	57	17	51	25
September	297	60	256	55	360	80
August	1097	414	836	370	671	379
July	784	372	410	369	736	351
June	258	94	174	98	153	127
May	70	62	55	9	81	74
Total	2621	1052	1788	918	2052	1036

Three-year average day use 2154.

Three-year average campers 1002.

Warner M. Forsell

Warner M. Forsell

cc: Judy Hart, NARO

*Private boaters leaving after 5:30 p.m.
Total Day use - after 5:30 p.m.
August 2.5 days.*