

master plan

PADRE ISLAND



NATIONAL SEASHORE / TEXAS

PADRE ISLAND

NATIONAL SEASHORE

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introduction

"... In order to save and preserve, for purposes of public recreation, benefit, and inspiration, a portion of the diminishing seashore of the United States that remains undeveloped, the Secretary of the Interior shall take appropriate action in the public interest toward the establishment of . . . Padre Island National Seashore . . ." (Public Law 87-712, September 28, 1962)

Thus after 35 years of public interest, the area was authorized, and after special legislation in 1968 and 1969, additional funds were obtained making it possible to acquire most of the land within the boundary. Padre Island is acclaimed as the longest undeveloped stretch of ocean beach in the United States. The seashore stretches 65 miles without development in an environment of shifting sand, grassland, and water. The beaches are excellent for swimming and beach camping, and much of the time birdlife is plentiful. Inaccessibility has limited the use of Padre Island to 4-wheel-drive vehicles, oil and gas exploration, and grazing. Now, as a national seashore, the island has entered a new phase: grazing has been terminated, access is improved, and more emphasis is being placed on recreation.

category

Padre Island will be administered as a national recreation area.

the resource

Within this unbroken sweep of surf, sand, and grass-covered dunes is a fascinating assemblage of marine and terrestrial plants and animals adapted to life in this often harsh, constantly changing environment. Here, as with much of the gulf coast, fascinating debris drifts onto the beach, evidence of the gulf currents that move throughout the North Atlantic Basin.

CHARACTER OF THE ISLAND

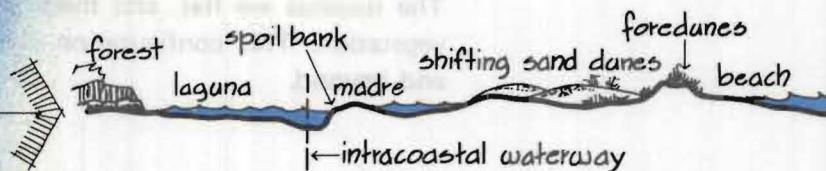
Except where severe erosion has occurred, the northern portion of the island consists of broad beaches, large stabilized foredunes, grassy flatlands, large shifting sand dunes, and the Laguna Madre. The average depth of the Laguna Madre in this area is about 4 feet. Along the intracoastal waterway, there is dredged material forming spoil banks varying from 1 to 5 acres which are sparsely vegetated with grasses and low shrubs. There are two natural islands on the north end, North Bird and South Bird. These are a little larger than the spoil banks and have both saltwater and freshwater ponds with significant bird rookeries.

In the vicinity of the shell beaches, the island character changes because of an unusual convergence of gulf currents. Here the cross section changes to steeper beaches, high foredunes, grassy flats, and extensive salt flats. The abundance of shells and fish in this area make it an important visitor attraction.

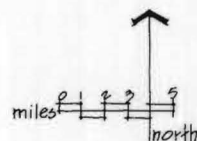
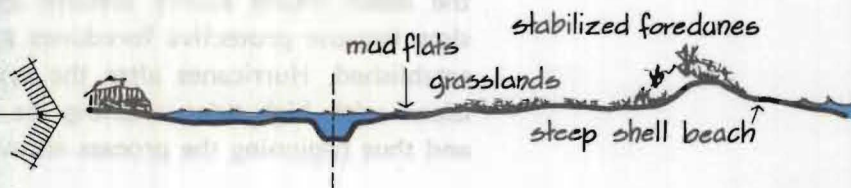
In some sections of the island there are lowlands between major dune masses. These become flooded during the rainy seasons, forming freshwater ponds that remain for many months in the winter. These ponds attract the wintering birds, as does the Laguna Madre. Winter is prime time to see migrating birds that come to feed in the rich Laguna Madre natural marine nursery, and to enjoy the warm climate. The out-of-State visitor, like the birds, is attracted to the warm winter climate, while the Texan is attracted by the cool summer breezes, which is in sharp contrast to the hot interior of the State.

corpus christi

north bird island
south bird island



spoil bank islands
yarborough pass



resources

padre island national seashore

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South of Big Shell Beach, the island is flat and low with several passes where the Laguna Madre drains into the Gulf of Mexico after hurricanes and high water. After these passes close, ponds are left behind, supporting fish life for many months before drying up. The beaches are flat, and there are few or no foredunes and little vegetation. This configuration continues to the Mansfield Channel and beyond.

THREAT TO THE RESOURCE

This vast barrier island has been in the building process for over 5,000 years. As the sand particles are brought in by the gulf currents, the wind moves them on to the foredune and beyond to the inner island, eventually depositing the particles in the Laguna Madre. As this natural process of building and eroding continues, the island moves slowly towards the mainland. This movement is slow because protective foredunes are built up as the vegetation is established. Hurricanes alter the system by breaking through the island with high tides, washing the barrier dunes back to the sea, and thus beginning the process all over again.

Man has hastened the movement of the sands by climbing on the dunes and by grazing his animals on them. Such activities weaken the vegetative cover and expose the sands to rapid wind erosion. Grazing has been terminated; but as more visitors come to the island, the foredunes will be even more threatened.

For 20 to 30 years, oil and gas exploration and extraction have been actively pursued on Padre Island, but no major development has extended beyond the Yarbrough Pass area. Exploration is accomplished with large-tired, 4-wheel-drive vehicles that can traverse any section of the island with little difficulty. Extraction, primarily of natural gas, only requires simple pipe stands at the site. Offshore oil and gas are piped to the island and transported by pipeline or barge to the mainland. Minimal operations are required, except for some storage and filtering facilities.

The Mansfield Channel is a ship channel approximately 300 feet wide and 14 feet deep, extending through the island to Port Mansfield. On the gulf are two large granite breakwaters, constructed in the late 1950's by the Corps of Engineers. Presently, the channel is used by shrimp boats and pleasure craft.

history

Padre Island was discovered by Alvarez Alonza de Piñeda in 1519. Spain showed little interest in the island after its discovery, thus the island remained for almost 300 years the exclusive domain of the Coahuiltecan and Karankawa Indians, who seasonally visited Padre to fish. In 1805, Isle Blanca or Isle de les Malequitos, as the Spanish called the island, was granted to Padre Nicolas Balli, a member of a prominent Rio Grande Valley family. Padre Balli not only gave the island its present name but also introduced cattle raising to it. From 1805 to 1971, cattle raising was the major economic activity. At the end of the Mexican War in 1848, Americans replaced the Mexicans as Padre's principal beneficiaries. By the time of the Civil War, the island supported a small community of cattle ranchers. In 1879, an Irishman named Patrick Dunn, who had been forced off the mainland by the fencing of the free open ranges, moved to Padre. He acquired ownership of almost the entire island and developed a large cattle ranch. In 1926, Dunn sold Padre to a Col. Sam Robertson, an early day south Texas developer, who had dreams of making Padre the Miami Beach of the Texas gulf coast. Robertson built a causeway to the island and established tourist facilities, but the depression broke him. It was not until the completion of the causeways at each end of the island in the 1950's that Padre again experienced any substantial development other than Dunn's cattle ranch, a number of natural gas wells, and a Navy target range.

Interest in exploiting Padre Island's outdoor recreation potential dates from the 1930's when suggestions were made to turn the island into a State park. These plans, however, were never realized. In the 1950's, concern with the Nation's vanishing natural shoreline once again focused public attention on Padre's outstanding natural values. The movement to preserve Padre as a national recreational area achieved success in 1962 with the passage of the legislation establishing Padre Island National Seashore.

the region - recreation needs and natural resources

FACILITIES

The national seashore is bounded by the rapidly expanding development of private and public facilities. On both ends of the island are county parks oriented to day use with some minor development of campgrounds. The State park system has recently purchased a park on Mustang Island and has an undeveloped park on Boca Chica Island. The State is planning to orient its areas to the overnight camper and some day use. Private development on each end, which is oriented both to the gulf and the Laguna Madre, has been able to fill the need for overnight accommodations and private homesites. On the north end, some multi-storied structures are being developed - some for overnight accommodations and others to be sold as condominiums. The south end has 30 miles of private lands between the end of the road and the Mansfield Channel. The developers have prepared a master plan indicating their intention to develop this area in an orderly manner, but there are no county zoning controls to ensure implementation of their plans.

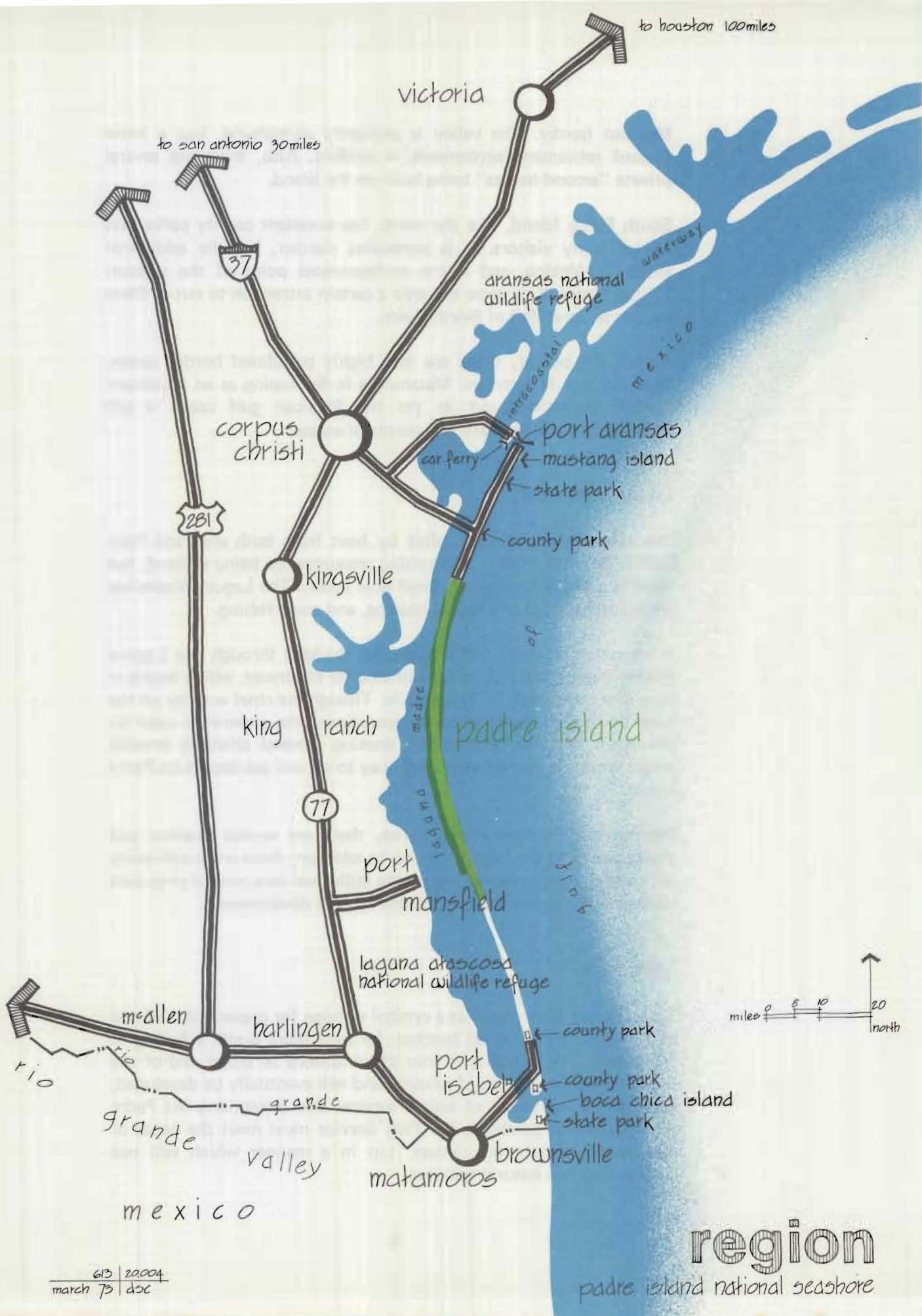
POPULATION CENTERS

Padre Island bridges two main population centers: Corpus Christi to the north and the Rio Grande Valley to the south, with the vast King Ranch lying between these two centers. Corpus Christi, a sophisticated metropolitan community of 285,000, is the nucleus of a 6-county region with an overall population of 350,000.

Many beaches in this area are available for public use and commercial development. Four miles within the seashore boundary, a major Park Service development, Malaquite Beach, is partially completed.

Public interest in the national seashore was expressed through attendance at public meetings, signed petitions, and many letters. Support for preserving the park's wilderness character far outweighed support for extensive roads and development. The people interested in South Padre were particularly concerned about a development that would serve that end of the island, since all development so far has been at Malaquite Beach.

The Rio Grande Valley indeed justifies the need for a substantial development. Its three counties, like the north, support a population of approximately 350,000; and many potential visitors live across the



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region
padre island national seashore

Mexican border. The valley is primarily agricultural, but a trend toward retirement settlements is evident. Also, there are several private "second homes" being built on the island.

South Padre Island, like the north, has excellent county parks that attract many visitors. It is somewhat warmer, has the additional allure of Mexico, and is the southernmost point of the western United States. This gives the area a certain attraction to out-of-State visitors beyond that of North Padre.

Across the border, there are two highly populated border towns, Reynosa and Matamoros. Matamoros is developing as an important tourist attraction, but as yet the Mexican gulf coast is still undeveloped and has very few points of access.

LAGUNA MADRE

The Laguna Madre is accessible by boat from both ends and from Baffin Bay. Its fishing and hunting resources are being utilized, but there is additional need for small boat access. The Laguna Madre has great potential for swimming, boating, and wade fishing.

A channel for barge traffic has been dredged through the Laguna Madre, making it a link in the Intracoastal Waterway, which begins in New York and ends in Brownsville. Though the chief activity on the waterway is commercial barge operations, the channel is used by fishermen and for recreational boating. Several channels provide access from the Intracoastal Waterway to oil and gas depots on Padre Island.

Beyond the seashore's boundaries, there are several marinas and access points to the Laguna Madre. In addition, there are subdivisions with water access channels adjoining individual lots; several proposals recommend the continuation of this type of development.

ANALYSIS

The seashore now stands as a symbol of hope for preservation of one of the Nation's last great beaches, for here there is still a feeling of wilderness. The opposite is true of conditions at either end of the island where large areas of private land will eventually be developed, providing a multitude of visitor services and attractions. At Padre Island National Seashore, the Park Service must meet the needs of the nearby population centers, but in a manner which will not destroy this fine natural resource.

visitor use

PRESENT FACILITIES

Most present visitor use is limited to the popular Malaquite Beach area and to 3 to 4 miles beyond a point where the common street vehicle can be used. However, many local residents have purchased 4-wheel-drive and other specialized vehicles to explore the primitive beach, find unusual debris, and fish remote sections such as the Big Shell Beach. The Malaquite Beach development is an extensive day-use area with permanent bathing facilities and concession services. An overlook tower combining water storage with an interpretive-use area has been quite successful. Other visitor-use and administrative facilities are planned, along with a housing and maintenance area. Water is supplied from Corpus Christi.

The campground is somewhat experimental in design, being located on the foredune rather than in front or in back of it. Here one gets better air circulation and views, in addition to being protected from high tides. This type of construction, however, is costly and alters the natural form of the dune.

PROJECTED VISITOR USE

Visitation to the seashore increased at a very rapid rate between 1968 and 1971. Visitation jumped from 361,000 in 1968 to 904,000 in 1971, then in 1972 even with considerable road and bridge construction in the area, the visitation maintained the 1971 level.

It is difficult to project future use based on these figures since the park is still very new. An analysis of the surrounding region indicates that visitation could continue to increase beyond the point where a desirable park experience can be provided unless certain controls are enforced.

legal factors and other agreements affecting resource use

The enabling legislation, Public Law 87-712 of September 28, 1962, set forth the purpose, described boundaries, detailed the limitations for land acquisition, authorized expenditures to build roads, permitted the Navy to continue its use of the area, and authorized \$5 million for acquisition. Shortly after, the Navy stopped its use of the area as a bombing range and turned their facilities over to the seashore. Also, the State highway department is providing the necessary access outside the boundaries. Within the boundaries, there will be no road running the full length of Padre Island National Seashore, as specifically stated by Congress in a hearing on September 11, 1962.

The law's land acquisition limitations include the following:

"Sec. 4. (a) When acquiring land, waters, or interests therein, the Secretary shall permit a reservation by the grantor of all or any part of the oil and gas minerals in such land or waters and of other minerals therein which can be removed by similar means, with the right of occupation and use of so much of the surface of the land or waters as may be required for all purposes reasonably incident to the mining or removal of such from beneath the surface of these lands and waters and the lands and waters adjacent thereto, under such regulations as may be prescribed by the Secretary with respect to such mining or removal.

(b) Any acquisition hereunder shall exclude and shall not diminish any right of occupation or use of the surface under grants, leases, or easements existing on April 11, 1961, which are reasonably necessary for the exploration, development, production, storing, processing, or transporting of oil and gas minerals that are removed from outside the boundaries of the national seashore and the Secretary may grant additional rights of occupation or use of the surface for the purposes aforesaid upon the terms and under such regulations as may be prescribed by him."

This section creates some problems of conflicting use: areas set aside for their primitive character must be left accessible for mineral exploration and extraction; areas planned for public use must be left open for transportation of industrial equipment and installation of necessary facilities. So far excellent cooperation has minimized these incompatibilities.

The limitation of \$5 million for acquisition made it necessary to return to Congress for two separate bills: first Public Law 90-594 of October 17, 1968, then 91-42 of July 11, 1969. Each authorized additional funds for acquisition.

Because of excessive cost, lands concerned in the condemnation proceedings for the section south of the Mansfield Channel were reverted. Shortly after in the Senate hearings for FY 1970, the Service explained to the Senate committee the reasons for the reversion and the need for the additional legislation.

All the lands have been acquired within the boundaries north of the Mansfield Channel except for a minor parcel in the Laguna Madre owned by the Willacy County Navigation District. South of the channel nothing has been purchased except two small parcels totaling 18 acres, plus the beach, which was donated by the State. The State lands extend from the mean high tide line to the 2-fathom line in the Gulf of Mexico. The boundary in this section narrows to 1,500 feet from the mean tide line and extends for 11½ miles at this width. Lands south of the Mansfield Channel were to be acquired with those north of the channel; but because of the extreme cost, it was ultimately decided not to purchase these lands.

An "Aquatic and Waterfowl Resource Management Plan for Padre Island" was drawn up in 1969. This was approved by the National Park Service and concurred in by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

An agreement between the National Park Service and the National Audubon Society continues the society's right granted by the State of Texas to use North and South Bird Islands for the purposes of propagating, protecting, and conserving birdlife.

land ownership diagram

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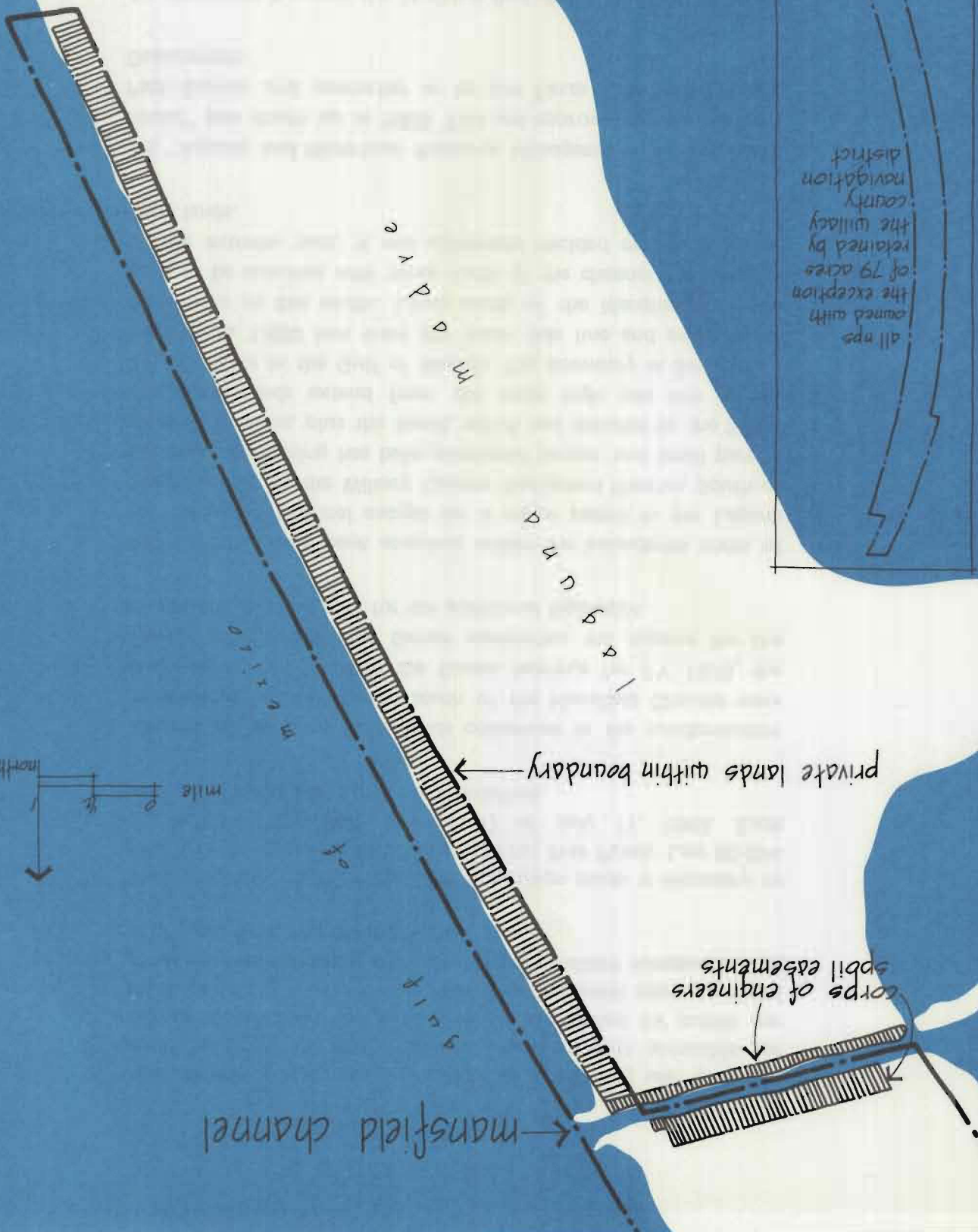
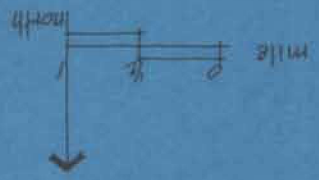
detail area

all nps
owned with
the exception
of 79 acres
retained by
the willacy
county
navigation
district

private lands within boundary

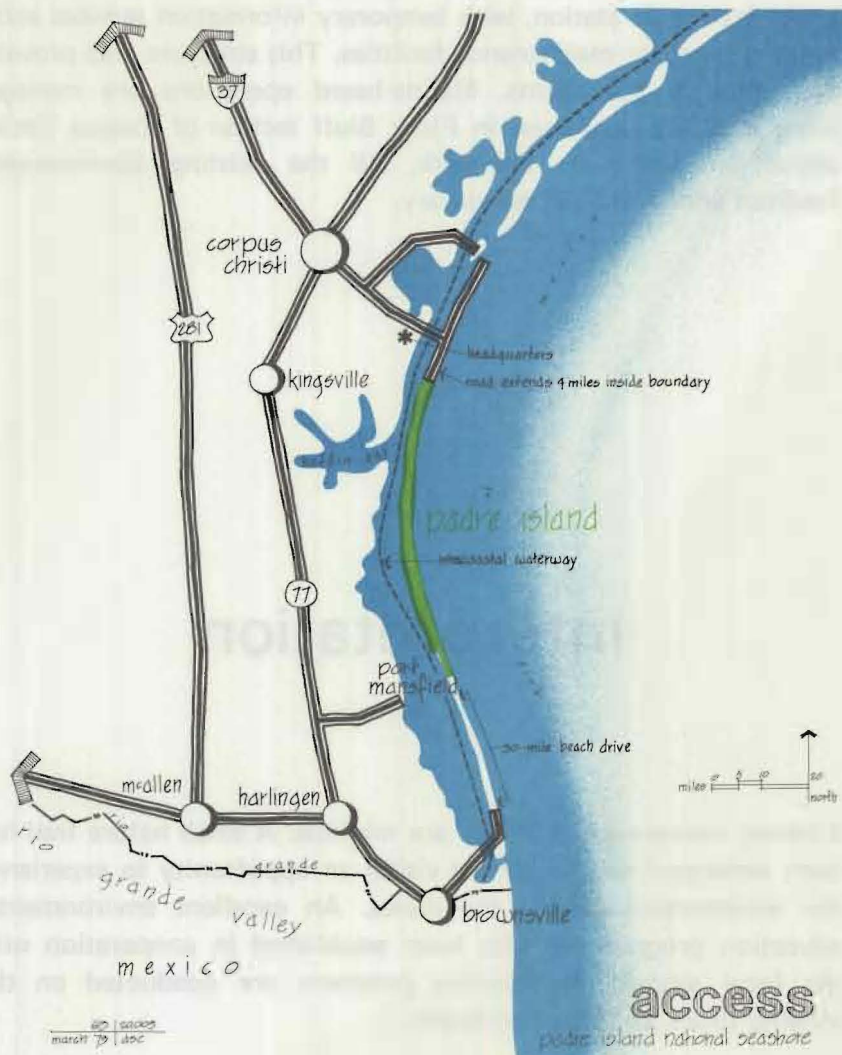
corps of engineers
spill easements

mansfield channel



access

Access from the north is continually being improved and will soon be augmented by a new bridge from Corpus Christi. From the south, a new bridge is under construction, and the road is scheduled to be extended in stages to the seashore boundary. This 19-mile section has been designated by the State highway department as Park Road 100; the landowners have agreed to donate to the respective counties a 200-foot right-of-way with beach access every 5 miles.



management

Presently the national seashore operation is managed from Flour Bluff — in suburban Corpus Christi — 16 miles from the seashore's northern entrance. The GSA-rented administrative facility is located on the main access route to the seashore. Though Corpus Christi still has a high corrosion factor, it is much lower than that on the beach. The Flour Bluff location provides for housing, schools, and shopping. Downtown Corpus Christi is 15 miles north and provides the major services for operational needs.

On the island, there is a rehabilitated Navy barracks being used as a district ranger station, with temporary information services and a holding yard for maintenance facilities. This structure also provides two minimal apartments. Marine-based operations are managed from a rented boathouse in Flour Bluff section of Corpus Christi about 8 miles from the park. All the existing administrative facilities are considered temporary.

interpretation

Existing interpretive activities are minimal. A small nature trail has been developed to provide the visitor an opportunity to experience the environment behind the dunes. An excellent environmental education program has also been established in cooperation with the local schools. Interpretive programs are conducted on the viewing tower at Malaquite Beach.

the plan

The concept of this plan is to give the visitor a broad range of opportunities to experience the various features of the island in a manner that is not available to him at the existing seashore parks in the region. Providing diversified uses will attract a greater variety of visitors to the island. Most of the existing parks are oriented to high-density bathing use, with easy access and many concessioner services. This is the concept of the seashore's Malaquite Beach development on a grand scale. This plan projects a development at the Mansfield Channel and will pursue other avenues of use such as transportation systems, access to remote sections of beach, environmental education, Laguna Madre access, and low-density use of the vast primitive areas in the interior of the island. The greatest value of the seashore is its endless stretches of primitive beach and interior lands. The undeveloped nature of the seashore will become unique to the area as development and access are expanded in the surrounding areas.

SUMMARY

The master plan proposals call for expansion of the existing Malaquite Beach development, access to the Laguna Madre, and extension of the road system south for an additional 15 miles to a trailhead at Yarborough Pass. Here basic facilities would be provided for a transportation system, Laguna Madre access, and camping. This road will make it possible to close Little Shell Beach to driving for a distance of 12 miles. From the southern end of Little Shell Beach to the Mansfield Channel — a distance of 45 miles — there would be no development with the possible exceptions of some shelters and interpretive devices related to the transportation system. Behind the foredune in this section there will be no development or access except that necessary for mineral extraction. The public must visit this area without the aid of mechanical conveyances.

At the south end, the master plan proposes a boundary change to authorize adequate space to provide recreational facilities for the visitor from the south. Here access will be provided across the channel via a ferry for passengers and specialized vehicles. Beach facilities, camping, boat dock, and other appropriate facilities will be provided south of the channel, thus leaving the north side primitive. A transportation system will operate from the channel north.

headquarters on mainland



laguna madre access

high-density day use at outer limits of park

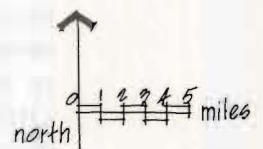
sections of beach closed to driving

trailhead to primitive area

increase access to shell beaches

beach shelters at decreasing intensity. accessible via transportation systems, hiking & specialized vehicles.

primitive area



access across the mansfield channel for pedestrian & specialized vehicles

high-density use

adjust boundary to accommodate facility south of mansfield channel

laguna madre access

causeway (proposed by others)

highway proposed by state highway department

development concept

padre island national seashore

ACCESS

Background

The main controversy dealt with in the plan is access. The public meeting and the letters that followed related primarily to this question. The earlier master plan indicated access up to Dunn's Ranch about 26 miles beyond the end of the existing road. The oil and gas companies have built several low-standard sections of road beyond the end of the public road.

The visitor experience for the individual without 4-wheel-drive vehicles is limited to the 6 miles of public road and 4 miles of drivable beach. Individuals desiring to leave access as it is are largely those with special vehicles and those wanting to preserve as much as possible of the little remaining primitive areas.

Public Roads

It is planned that access to Yarborough Pass be provided for the average visitor without the need of a special vehicle. This 15 miles of added access will extend beyond the end of the existing public road. The road will be unpaved and then proceed through the grassland, and shifting sand dunes to Yarborough Pass. Where possible, the route will follow the existing service roads and pipelines. Spur roads to small parking areas will be required for access to Little Shell Beach. Boardwalks and interpretive devices will prevent excessive erosion of the foredune. In conjunction with these developments, small group camps and environmental education areas will be developed. The design of this road will give the visitor the opportunity to experience the unusual environment behind the dunes, and to gain access to the Yarborough Pass area with its excellent shell beaches. From here to the Mansfield Channel, no further public roads will be constructed.

Big Shell Beach extends from Yarborough Pass south for 16 to 17 miles and is the finest section of shell beach on Padre Island. It is also known for its excellent fishing. This area will be accessible by walking, a transportation system, and 4-wheel-drive vehicles. Behind this section of beach are the highest foredunes and most extensive grasslands; because of their fragility, restricted access — even by foot — is essential.

Hiking

Many people who are not familiar with Padre Island have the impression that the island's extensive distances of primitive beach would be ideal for hiking and backpacking. In reality the lower gulf coast is not well suited for this. The extremely salty air, combined with the fine blowing sand, soft footing, lack of fresh water, many insects, and high humidity, creates a very hostile environment. Sore eyes, overexposure, and general discomfort usually bring the adventure to an end long before expected.

Since a limited amount of hiking is the ideal way to experience the area, elevated shelters are proposed to reduce the climatic exposure, and make it possible for the visitor to spend the night on the beach. Constructed trails are not needed except where it is necessary to protect the resource.

Beach Driving

The combination of beach driving, fishing, camping, hiking, and bathing, all in the same narrow strip, is dangerous. To separate these uses, sections of beach will be experimentally closed to all driving, as is the case now north of Malaquite Beach. Little Shell is an excellent resource for beach combing and very poor for driving. Even 4-wheel-drive vehicles are often immobilized by the instability of the small shells. This would be an ideal area to close for a period of time when the road extension is completed. In doing so public reaction and natural changes can be evaluated to determine the success of such action. Though 4-wheel-drive vehicles are most popular, other types are also used. These have similar problems and must be dealt with on an equal basis.

Exploring the beach via a 4-wheel-drive vehicle is an exciting experience because the number of visitors able to participate is usually small, the danger of getting stranded is always imminent, and the chances of finding a prize float or shell is much greater. This specialized vehicle gives the individual freedom to drive where he wants, to test his vehicle, to fish where he wants, to carry the equipment he desires, and to pick up large amounts of beach debris. Uncontrolled use of these vehicles, however, endangers the very resources that must be protected. Therefore, information services and restrictive measures must be implemented to indicate the visitor's responsibilities in using the land. Vehicles will be

restricted to the beach and roads. Driving cross-country and over dunes will be prohibited. Vehicle traffic may build up to such an extent in the future that management will prohibit vehicles completely or permit them only on a reservation basis. In order to provide visitors from the south an equal opportunity to drive their beach vehicles, access across the Mansfield Channel will be planned as part of a passenger ferrying service.

Boating

Boat access on the Laguna Madre will be developed west of Malaquite Beach, at Yarborough Pass, and the Mansfield Channel. Though fishing is the primary recreational use of the lagoon, national seashore access may encourage other uses. As boating use increases, with added marine-oriented housing developments, boat access to the island will become an important use. Boat-access camping on some spoil banks could be developed as the existing private structures are removed. Care must be taken in the development of these spoil banks so they do not infringe on the preservation of North and South Bird Islands.

resource management

EROSION

Since the settlement at the beginning of the 19th century, heavy grazing and burning have considerably altered the vegetation. Periodic drought has intensified these factors. The combined effects of overgrazing, fire, and storm surges have denuded large expanses, accelerating natural transport of sand. In the Laguna Madre the natural filling-in process has been telescoped from its normal centuries-long timetable into a few short decades. Restriction of natural exchanges of water has significantly raised the salinity of Laguna Madre. Several desirable forms of aquatic life with narrow salinity tolerances have been unable to adapt to this modification of habitat. Critical levels of pesticides are turning up in the eggs of white pelicans nesting within the seashore.

Though these changes are poorly understood, the basic elements of the seashore ecosystems remain, and knowledge exists to give direction to the use and preservation of this resource.

VISITOR USE

Beyond the beach, the resource is fragile and, in several places, is highly vulnerable to even light-to-moderate use. It is imperative that further destruction of the dune vegetation be prevented, and stabilization of damaged areas initiated. Natural erosion will be left to heal itself rather than the Service undertaking a major stabilization effort. Four-wheel-drive vehicles and dune buggies must be restricted to the beach zone.

WILDLIFE

The entire gulf coast of Texas, especially Laguna Madre, is an important wintering area for waterfowl. Padre Island provides limited but critical freshwater feeding and resting areas for these birds during the winter months; and, in the summer months, many species find suitable nesting habitats on and around the island. In order to perpetuate this resource, the freshwater sites must remain free of development and sustained disturbance during the critical months. South Bird Island merits special consideration. It is the special domain of the rare white pelican and many other avian forms during their nesting season. It is important that no recreation activity be permitted that will disturb this natural island. As development continues along the gulf coast, the national seashore, complemented

by Atascosa and Aransas Wildlife Refuges, will increase in importance as a bird-nesting site and sanctuary.

Bird observation points will be developed with walkways and blinds; during the winter season, the visitor will be able to observe and photograph the excellent displays of waterfowl at close range.

REGION

Several regional problems are tied directly to the welfare of the natural ecosystems of and around the national seashore; therefore, it will be necessary to mesh park research and monitoring programs with the larger regional projects.

DREDGING

There is a periodic need to dredge the Intracoastal Waterway. Over the years an extensive series of spoil banks have emerged, many of which are now vegetated and have become valuable bird rookeries in their own right. Each additional spoil bank, however, further diminishes the physical size of Laguna Madre and interferes with natural currents. Suggested alternative solutions to the spoil problems are: add material to existing banks, or deposit material on designated portions of Padre Island, as long as unacceptable resource impact does not result. Adding to the existing spoil banks is a second possibility, so long as areas where bird rookeries exist are avoided.

RESEARCH

At this point in time, it is not realistically possible to precisely define the potential impact of the projected visitor use of the national seashore. An ongoing, interdisciplinary research program has been proposed and is essential to minimize present resource deterioration as well as to meet anticipated and unknown future threats.

COOPERATION

The National Park Service will cooperate with the various planning agencies to develop the adjoining lands in a manner that will complement the national seashore. Continued cooperation in managing the Bird Islands is essential, as well as cooperating with the oil and gas companies in their use and development of their required activities. Their presence in the areas proposed for Laguna Madre access will require modification of their present operations.

transportation systems

Everyone who has experienced the trip agrees that the 4-wheel-drive vehicle ride down the island is a unique and exciting experience. Driving the beach at 20 to 30 miles per hour does not give the individual a chance to feel the remoteness and solitude, but he does feel the extent of the area if he makes the 60-mile trip to the Mansfield Channel. Few ever get this opportunity, and those who do are generally local people.

BEACH BUS

In order to give more visitors the opportunity to experience the remote sections of the island, and particularly to gain access to the choice Big Shell Beach, a beach bus system is proposed to operate from Yarbrough Pass and the Mansfield Channel. Eventually, these systems may give the visitor the opportunity to travel the length of the island. Scheduling of these vehicles should be such that the middle section would be traversed, at most, only two to four times a day; many scheduled stops will be planned closer to the terminals so the visitor can get out and walk for 1 to 2 hours, and then use the system again. In close conjunction to these stops will be shelters and interpretive facilities, again at decreasing density as they approach the center of the primitive beach.

This system is a very long-range project because it cannot be started until the road is extended from either end. Therefore, an interim system could be developed from the Malaquite Beach parking area that would give the visitor a similar experience by providing access to Little Shell Beach.

Other systems should be encouraged to replace the automobile as the area develops. Bus service from Corpus Christi as well as from South Padre could reduce the pressure on most parking areas.

BOAT ACCESS

Presently there are no public facilities for the visitor to experience the Laguna Madre from the seashore. The opportunities here are excellent for many recreational activities, plus the interpretive advantages of relating this body of water to the barrier island. The

areas selected for Laguna Madre access are west of Malaquite Beach, at Yarbrough Pass, and the Mansfield Channel. Utilization of these sites, which have already been disturbed by the dredging activities of the oil companies and the Corps of Engineers, will not necessitate the disturbance of another area in the Laguna Madre. These sites also relate to the main developments, thus economizing on utilities and management.

interpretation

CONCEPT

In order to help the visitor understand and appreciate the national seashore, and to provide adequate information about the recreation opportunities available and how the visitor may safely enjoy them, adequate interpretive services will be provided.

Interpretive activities will illustrate this place of changing moods and beauty, and ask the visitor to consider certain questions:

The Ocean — its tides and currents, its effect on the national seashore. What toll is man's exploitation of this resource taking?

The Island — its role as a barrier island, the winds, the storms, the vegetation. What happens when man attempts to modify this natural place?

The Wildlife — the migrations, the nesting. Why have these populations changed?

The History — Indian, Spanish, ranching, oil and gas, recreation. What next? What effect?

It is important that the visitor understand the island so he will use it properly. The visitor must be kept off the foredunes to prevent erosion. A successful interpretive program will reduce the need for intensive management.

The visitor will question the presence of oil and gas equipment at various locations along the beach. Heavy equipment is transported

down the beach, and at times there will be activity in the primitive zones. This must be explained to the visitor.

OPTIONS OF USE

Generally a visitor comes to Padre Island National Seashore for one of two reasons. He is either there to enjoy the area as a recreation resource, or he is there to enjoy and understand the national seashore as a great natural resource. Because of the broad spectrum of interests, an interpretive program is to be developed that allows the visitor a series of options. These options range from walking alone on the beach to watching a surfing event with a large crowd; from driving his own car to riding in a beach bus; from watching a program about ocean tides and currents to watching the tide come in.

LOCATION OF INTERPRETIVE FACILITIES

The program will be developed through a combination of onsite and offsite measures. Facilities are needed at Malaquite Beach, North Entrance, Mansfield Channel, the Dunn Ranch, Laguna Madre, Novilla Site, and Yarrowborough Pass. Other interpretation along the beach or interpretive road will be conveyed by radio, wayside signs, cassette, beach bus radio, or guided tours. Interpretive demonstrations on fishing, surfing, and sketching will be held from time to time.

The center of interpretive activity will be Malaquite Beach. A series of interconnected units will provide space for information, interpretive theme development, and staging for auto and beach transport trips, and for guided walks. As the needs of Mansfield Channel develop, a similar facility will be needed there.

Interpretive programs and the route of the road extension will be designed to best illustrate how fragile the stabilized areas are, and to strengthen the general interpretive theme.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

The national seashore offers an ideal situation for environmental education. Present working relationships with local schools should be continued. A facility for the purposes of research and environmental education should be developed not far from the Malaquite Beach development.

administration

Certain administrative functions will remain in Corpus Christi. A district administrative office with minimal housing and maintenance facilities is required for the intensively used area at Malaquite Beach. Eventually, another district office will be needed at the Mansfield Channel. A similar but lesser facility will be required at Yarborough; this sub-district office will eventually provide 24-hour protection to this remote outpost.

general development

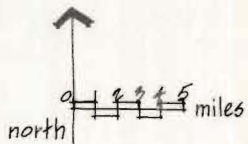
The location and emphasis of the development are indicated on the general development plan. These developments are concentrated at locations to best serve the visitors' needs of access, interpretation, and management in a manner that will preserve the natural values of the island.

MALAQUITE BEACH (Class I)

This area is designed for intensive use. Added to the previous plans for this area is the development of facilities oriented to the Laguna Madre. Here boat access, short-term boat docking, swimming areas, concessioner services, and interpretive facilities should be provided. Boat access to the island may become popular as the area outside the seashore develops.

MANSFIELD CHANNEL (Class I)

This area is also designed for intensive use. It is essential, however, that no development other than shelters, transportation system terminal with a comfort station, and boat dock be provided north of the channel. This area is to remain primitive. In order to accomplish this the boundary will have to be changed or some other arrangement worked out to provide the services proposed south of the channel.



camping on spoil banks

interior island road

beach access points
& group camps (3)

transportation system
& shelters

primitive area

transportation system
& shelters

port
mansfield

proposed boundary
change

headquarters

- administrative services

malaquite beach

- bathing facilities
- concessioner rentals
- concessioner food service & sales
- concessioner camper supplies
- concessioner service station
- interpretive facilities
- environmental education
- administrative services
- maintenance & housing
- beach campground
- laguna madre access & related services

yarborough pass

- trailhead to primitive area
- bathing facilities
- minor concessioner services
- interpretive shelter
- environmental education
- ranger station
- laguna madre campground
- laguna madre access & related facilities
- transportation system terminal

mansfield channel

- bathing facilities
- equipment rentals
- food service & sales
- camper supplies
- interpretive facility
- environmental education
- administrative services
- maintenance & storage
- campground
- laguna madre access & related services
- transportation system terminal
- ferry service for passengers & beach vehicles

general
development

padre island national seashore

The development will serve South Padre Island, the Rio Grande Valley, and the southern visitor. It will provide access to the north side of the channel via passenger ferry and will also add services to facilitate beach driving vehicles. Bathing services will not be available north of the channel; so changing rooms and showers must be provided on the south. Because this area will be isolated from the rest of the administrative offices, adequate facilities are needed within this complex.

Boat access, temporary dockage, concessioner services, and camping are to be developed to serve the marine visitor.

Since additional acquisition funds are not authorized, every effort should be made through land exchange and donation to gain the necessary space for the proposed development. Some facilities may be provided on the adjacent private lands through agreement or easement. These may include: sewage disposal, boat access, equipment rentals, food service and sales, camper supplies, and vehicle campgrounds. These facilities, provided by others, would substantially reduce the space required for the National Park Service development.

YARBOROUGH PASS (Class II)

This will be a trailhead facility with the necessary services to provide Laguna Madre access, information and interpretation, minimal concessioner services, and facilities to serve the transportation system vehicles. The main purpose of this development is to give the visitor the opportunity to experience the inner island and to gain access to the prime shell beaches. The key to this area is limited development. It is not to become a major concession facility with overnight accommodations and major food services.

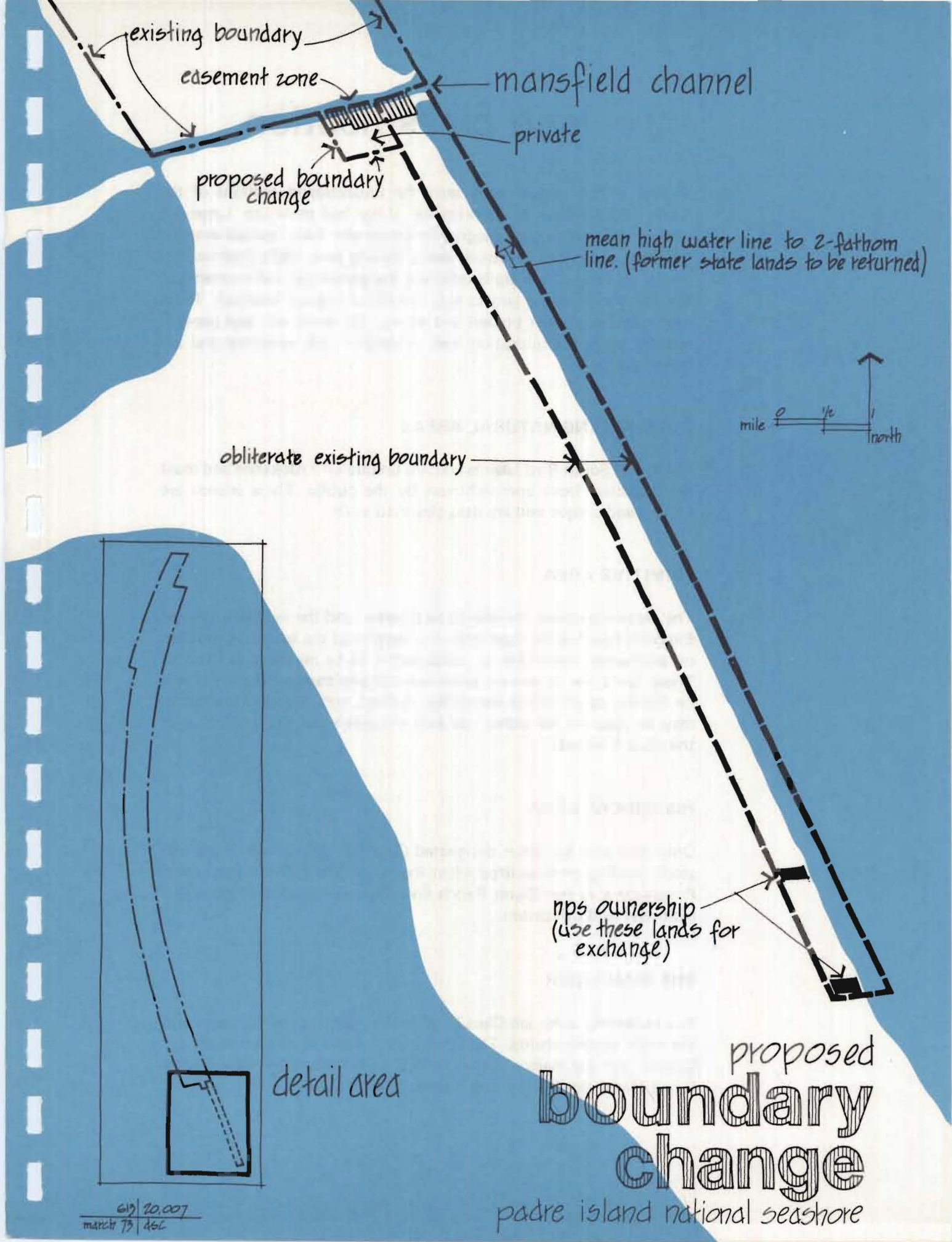
HEADQUARTERS

Expansion of the existing GSA-rented structure or selection of a new site within the Corpus Christi area will be necessary in the near future because the existing facilities are no longer adequate.

boundary adjustments

In order to provide the services planned in the Mansfield Channel area, it will be necessary to change the existing boundary. The long narrow strip provided for in the enabling act proved to be prohibitive in cost because it included the expensive beach frontage and excluded the much lower value mud flats that are required to protect the beach development from encroachment.

An area encompassing about 200-300 acres south of the channel is needed. In exchange for this land, the remaining private land south of the channel would be removed from the threat of condemnation. The land between the mean high waterline to the 2-fathom line will be returned to the State of Texas. The few acres now in Park Service ownership would be used in an exchange for the lands adjacent to the channel.



land classification

Though a few people have seen the undeveloped sections of the island and believe it to be primitive, it has had some use. Large-tire vehicles transporting seismographic equipment have roamed over the salt flats and dunes for many years, leaving only slight indentations on the surface. Cattle trails interlace the grasslands, and remnants of the Navy's bombing targets still remain at regular intervals. These past uses have been phased out except for some oil- and gas-well testing. Mineral exploration and extraction will continue and are permitted by law.

OUTSTANDING NATURAL AREAS

North and South Bird Islands contain unique bird rookeries and must be protected from encroachment by the public. These islands are natural and unique and are thus classified as IV.

PRIMITIVE AREA

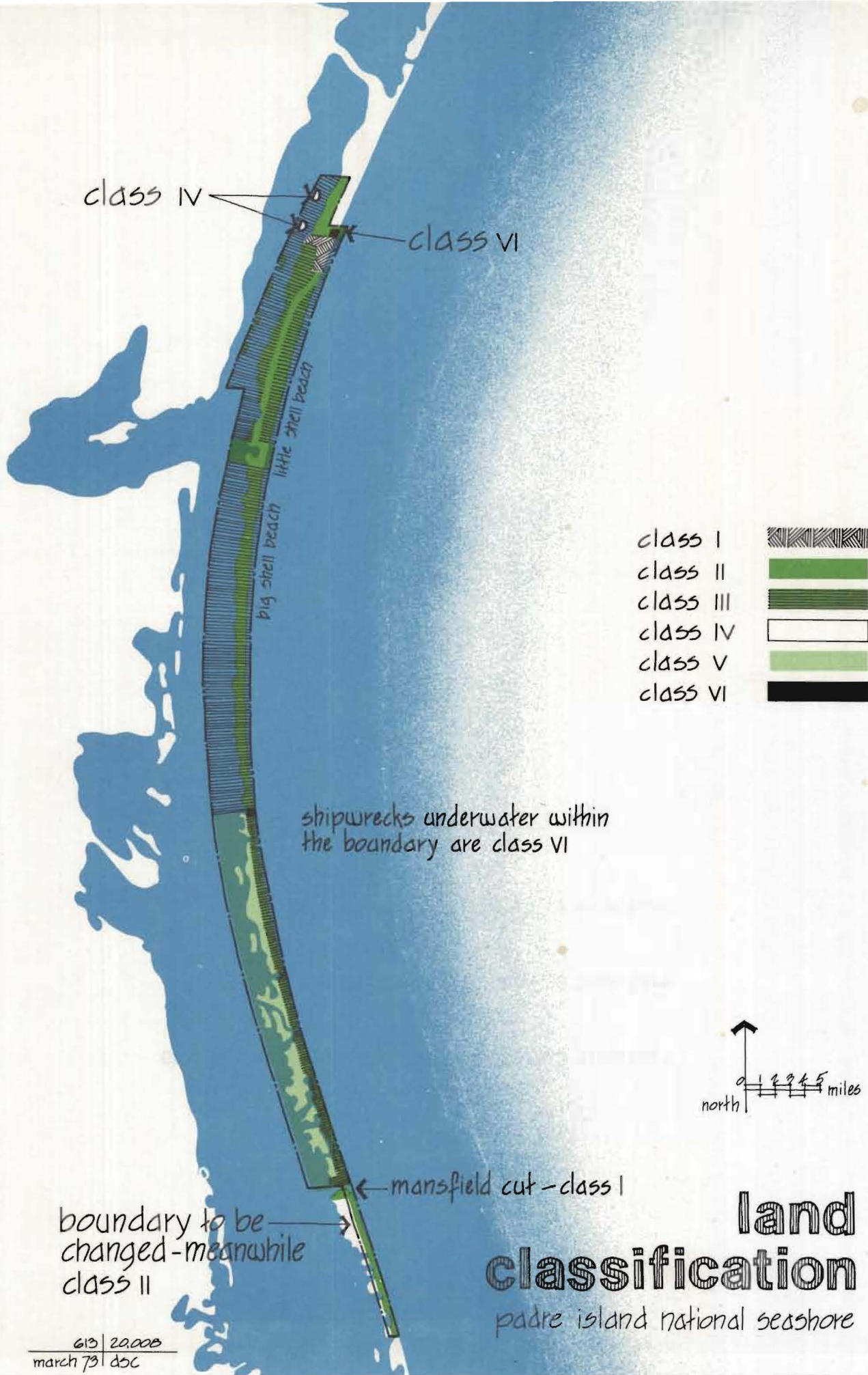
The section between the Mansfield Channel and the southern limit of Big Shell Beach is the most primitive section of the island. It contains no permanent structures or roads and is to be managed as Class V. These lands are to remain primitive and undisturbed. Facilities will be limited to primitive campsites, shelters, and sanitary facilities as may be required for public use and enjoyment, or for protection of the Class V values.

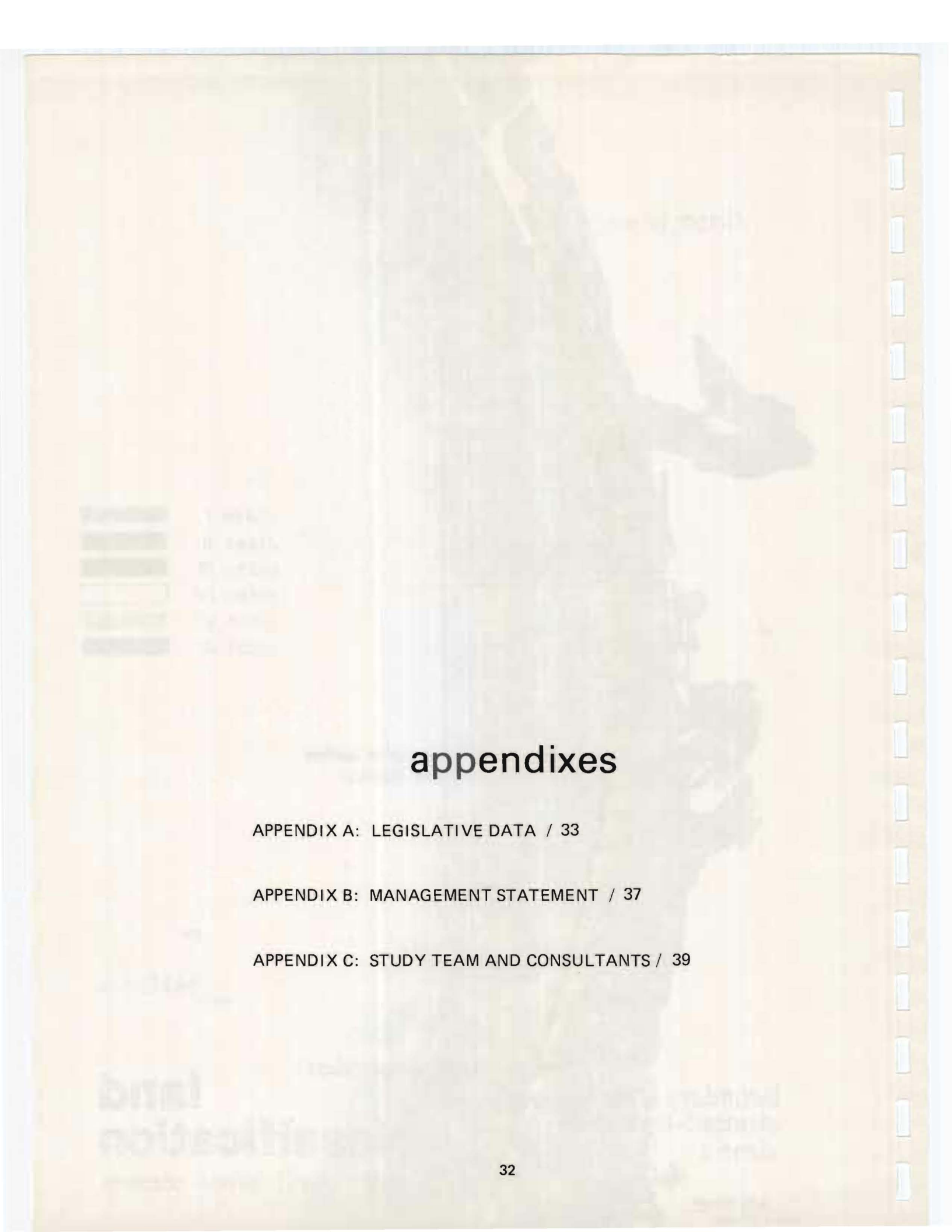
HISTORICAL AREA

Only one area has been designated Class VI. This is one of the old stock holding areas utilized when the island was still a cattle ranch. Preservation of this Dunn Ranch line camp will document the major historical land utilization.

THE REMAINDER

The remaining areas are Class III with the exception of the roads and the main developments. The roads from Malaquite Beach south are Class II and the main entrance road Class I. Yarborough Pass is Class II and Mansfield Channel and Malaquite Beach Class I.





appendixes

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APPENDIX A: LEGISLATIVE DATA

Public Law 87-712
87th Congress, S. 4
September 28, 1962



An Act

To provide for the establishment of the Padre Island National Seashore.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That in order to save and preserve, for purposes of public recreation, benefit, and inspiration, a portion of the diminishing seashore of the United States that remains undeveloped, the Secretary of the Interior shall take appropriate action in the public interest toward the establishment of the following described lands and waters as the Padre Island National Seashore: Beginning at a point one statute mile northerly of North Bird Island on the easterly line of the Intracoastal Waterway; thence due east to a point on Padre Island one statute mile west of the mean high water line of the Gulf of Mexico; thence southwesterly paralleling the said mean high water line of the Gulf of Mexico a distance of about three and five-tenths statute miles; thence due east to the two-fathom line on the east side of Padre Island as depicted on United States Coast and Geodetic Survey chart numbered 1286; thence along the said two-fathom line on the east side of Padre Island as depicted on United States Coast and Geodetic Survey charts numbered 1286, 1287, and 1288 to the Willacy-Cameron County line extended; thence westerly along said county line to a point 1,500 feet west of the mean high water line of the Gulf of Mexico as that line was determined by the survey of J. S. Boyles and is depicted on sections 9 and 10 of the map entitled "Survey of Padre Island made for the office of the Attorney General of the State of Texas", dated August 7 to 11, 1941, and August 11, 13, and 14, 1941, respectively; thence northerly along a line parallel to said survey line of J. S. Boyles and distant therefrom 1,500 feet west to a point on the centerline of the Port Mansfield Channel; thence westerly along said centerline to a point three statute miles west of the said two-fathom line; thence northerly parallel with said two-fathom line to 27 degrees 20 minutes north latitude; thence westerly along said latitude to the easterly line of the Intracoastal Waterway; thence northerly following the easterly line of the Intracoastal Waterway as indicated by channel markers in the Laguna Madre to the point of beginning.

Padre Island
National Sea-
shore, Tex.
Establishment.

SEC. 2. (a) The Secretary of the Interior (hereinafter referred to as the "Secretary") is authorized to acquire by donation, purchase with donated or appropriated funds, condemnation, transfer from any Federal agency, exchange, or otherwise, the land, waters, and other property, and improvements thereon and any interest therein, within the areas described in the first section of this Act or which lie within the boundaries of the seashore as established under section 3 of this Act (hereinafter referred to as "such area"). Any property, or interest therein, owned by the State of Texas or political subdivision thereof may be acquired only with the concurrence of such owner. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, any Federal property located within such area may, with the concurrence of the agency having custody thereof, be transferred without consideration to the administrative jurisdiction of the Secretary for use by him in carrying out the provisions of this Act.

Acquisition of
land, etc.

76 STAT. 850.
76 STAT. 651.

(b) The Secretary is authorized to pay for any acquisitions which he makes by purchase under this Act their fair market value, as determined by the Secretary, who may in his discretion base his determination on an independent appraisal obtained by him.

(c) In exercising his authority to acquire property by exchange, the Secretary may accept title to any non-Federal property located within such area and convey to the grantor of such property any

federally owned property under the jurisdiction of the Secretary within such area. The properties so exchanged shall be approximately equal in fair market value: *Provided*, That the Secretary may accept cash from or pay cash to the grantor in such an exchange in order to equalize the values of the properties exchanged.

Sec. 3. (a) As soon as practicable after the date of enactment of this Act and following the acquisition by the Secretary of an acreage in the area described in section 1 of this Act, that is in the opinion of the Secretary efficiently administrable to carry out the purposes of this Act, the Secretary shall establish the area as a national seashore by the publication of notice thereof in the Federal Register.

Publication in
F. R.

(b) Such notice referred to in subsection (a) of this section shall contain a detailed description of the boundaries of the seashore which shall encompass an area as nearly as practicable identical to the area described in section 1 of this Act. The Secretary shall forthwith after the date of publication of such notice in the Federal Register (1) send a copy of such notice, together with a map showing such boundaries, by registered or certified mail to the Governor of the State and to the governing body of each of the political subdivisions involved; (2) cause a copy of such notice and map to be published in one or more newspapers which circulate in each of the localities; and (3) cause a certified copy of such notice, a copy of such map, and a copy of this Act to be recorded at the registry of deeds for the county involved.

Notice.

Mineral reservation.

Sec. 4. (a) When acquiring land, waters, or interests therein, the Secretary shall permit a reservation by the grantor of all or any part of the oil and gas minerals in such land or waters and of other minerals therein which can be removed by similar means, with the right of occupation and use of so much of the surface of the land or waters as may be required for all purposes reasonably incident to the mining or removal of such from beneath the surface of these lands and waters and the lands and waters adjacent thereto, under such regulations as may be prescribed by the Secretary with respect to such mining or removal.

(b) Any acquisition hereunder shall exclude and shall not diminish any right of occupation or use of the surface under grants, leases, or easements existing on April 11, 1961, which are reasonably necessary for the exploration, development, production, storing, processing, or transporting of oil and gas minerals that are removed from outside the boundaries of the national seashore and the Secretary may grant additional rights of occupation or use of the surface for the purposes aforesaid upon the terms and under such regulations as may be prescribed by him.

76 STAT. 651.
76 STAT. 652.

Administration.

16 USC 1.

Sec. 5. Except as otherwise provided in this Act, the property acquired by the Secretary under this Act shall be administered by the Secretary, subject to the provisions of the Act entitled "An Act to establish a National Park Service and for other purposes", approved August 25, 1916 (39 Stat. 535), as amended and supplemented, and in accordance with other laws of general application relating to the areas administered and supervised by the Secretary through the National Park Service; except that authority otherwise available to the Secretary for the conservation and management of natural resources may be utilized to the extent he finds such authority will further the purposes of this Act.

Roadways.

Sec. 6. The Secretary may provide for roadways from the north and south boundaries of such public recreation area to the access highways from the mainland to Padre Island.

Gunnery or
bombing ranges.

Sec. 7. The Secretary of the Interior shall enter into such administrative agreements with the Secretary of the Navy as the Secretary of the Navy may deem necessary to assure that the Secretary of the Interior will not exercise any authority granted by this Act so as to interfere with the use by the Department of the Navy of any aerial gunnery or bombing range located in the vicinity of Padre Island.

Appropriation.

Sec. 8. There are authorized to be appropriated such sums as may be necessary to carry out the provisions of this Act; except that no more than \$5,000,000 shall be appropriated for the acquisition of land and waters and improvements thereon, and interests therein, and incidental costs relating thereto, in accordance with the provisions of this Act.

Approved September 28, 1962, 12:40 p. m.



Public Law 90-594
90th Congress, H. R. 17787
October 17, 1968

An Act

82 STAT. 1155

To authorize the appropriation of funds for Padre Island National Seashore in the State of Texas, and for other purposes.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That, notwithstanding any other provision of law, there are hereby authorized to be appropriated such sums as may be necessary to satisfy the final judgment of \$6,810,380 (that is, \$9,212,730 minus \$2,402,350 deposited in court; all figures exclusive of amounts for tract No. 7) rendered against the United States in civil action numbered 65-C-54 in the United States District Court for the Southern District of Texas, for the acquisition of land and interests in land for the Padre Island National Seashore. The sums herein authorized to be appropriated shall be sufficient to pay the amount of said judgment, together with interest and costs as provided by law.

Padre Island
National Sea-
shore, Texas.
Appropriation.

Approved October 17, 1968.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY:

HOUSE REPORT No. 1856 (Comm. on Interior and Insular Affairs).
SENATE REPORT No. 1598 (Comm. on Interior and Insular Affairs).
CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, Vol. 114 (1968):
Sept. 16: Considered and passed House.
Oct. 4: Considered and passed Senate.



Public Law 91-42
91st Congress, H. R. 11069
July 11, 1969

An Act

83 STAT. 45

To authorize the appropriation of funds for Padre Island National Seashore in the State of Texas, and for other purposes.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That, notwithstanding any other provision of law, there are hereby authorized to be appropriated such sums as may be necessary to satisfy the final net judgments rendered against the United States in civil action numbered 66-B-1 in the United States District Court for the Southern District of Texas, for the acquisition of lands and interests in land for the Padre Island National Seashore, totaling \$4,129,829.00, plus interest as provided by law.

Padre Island
National Sea-
shore, Texas.
Appropriation.

Approved July 11, 1969.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY:

HOUSE REPORT No. 91-305 (Comm. on Interior & Insular Affairs).
SENATE REPORT No. 91-261 (Comm. on Interior & Insular Affairs).
CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, Vol. 115 (1969):
June 16: Considered and passed House.
June 30: Considered and passed Senate.

APPENDIX B: MANAGEMENT STATEMENT

The following statement by the superintendent Padre Island National Seashore reflects park management's needs and goals relative to this master plan.

Purpose

The purpose of Padre Island National Seashore is "... to save and preserve, for purposes of public recreation, benefit, and inspiration, a portion of the diminishing seashore of the United States that remains undeveloped"

Management Category

Recreation.

Management Objectives

To Serve the Visitor Provide increased opportunities for those types and levels of outdoor recreational use that will be compatible with, dependent upon, or enhanced by the seashore environment, leaving to others the opportunity to provide facilities and development for other recreational and tourist activities.

Reach the visitor through various information and interpretive methods that will broaden his understanding of this barrier dune island — the processes by which it was created; the factors that continue to affect it; the human history associated with it; and, importantly, the means by which it can best be utilized for recreational benefit without impairment.

Coordinate with others in encouraging increased use of the seashore resources for environmental education purposes through the Environmental Study Area and National Environmental Education Development Programs.

To Preserve the Resource Develop a sound resource management plan based on adequate research and aimed at eliminating the adverse influences of man, restoring natural conditions, and otherwise enhancing recreational use through active resource manipulation.

Confine public vehicular use to established roadways and designated beach corridors in order to preserve fragile dunes and grasslands. A

suitable means by which visitors can gain access to those sections of the seashore that are not accessible by conventional motor vehicles needs to be developed.

Seek legislation adjusting the boundaries south of Mansfield Channel to the minimum needed for development of essential visitor-use facilities on the south end of the national seashore.

Continue to work with the oil- and gas-extraction industries in developing means that will minimize any adverse environmental effects of this legislatively authorized resource use.

Continue to manage wildlife resources in close cooperation with the State of Texas and the National Audubon Society pursuant to existing memorandums of understanding.

Work closely with the Corps of Engineers in developing ways to minimize any adverse environmental effects of their channel-dredging operations.

To Administer the Area Operate the seashore year-round. Administration will be through two district offices, one at each end of the seashore, with administrative headquarters located in Corpus Christi.

APPENDIX C: STUDY TEAM AND CONSULTANTS

Study Team

TEAM CAPTAIN
SUPERINTENDENT
WILDERNESS SPECIALIST
SOCIOLOGIST
ECOLOGIST
INTERPRETIVE PLANNER

Marc Malik
James McLaughlin
Paul Kalkwarf
Bonnie Campbell
David Morris
Charles Clapper

Consultants

Park Staff
Concession Manager
Research Associate

Ernest Setliff
Donald Woodard

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