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INTERIM INTERPRETIVE PROSPECTUS

Saguaro National Monument Arizona

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INTERIM INTERPRETIVE PROSPECTUS

SAGUARO NATIONAL MONUMENT
ARIZONA

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DIVISION OF INTERPRETIVE PLANNING
HARPERS FERRY CENTER

SEPTEMBER, 1988

Approved by Acting Regional
Director, Western Region,
Lew Albert, by memorandum of
August 16, 1988.

This plan is a supplement to the General Management Plan for Saguaro National Monument. It is the result of on-site discussions during the week of March 7, principally between the following persons:

Bill Paleck - Superintendent, Saguaro NM
Ernest Quintana - Chief of Interpretation & Visitor Protection,
Saguaro NM
Mark Engler, Interpretive Specialist, Saguaro NM
Ed Pilley - Interpretive Specialist, Southern Arizona Group
Bonnie Campbell - Park Planner, Denver Service Center
Cliff Soubier - Interpretive Planner, Harpers Ferry Center

Recommendations in this Plan are concurrent with the final draft GMP, on public review as of this writing. Consequently, resource descriptions, visitor analyses, etc., are not included herein.

Tucson Mountain District (Saguaro West)

Interpretation in the Western District will be geared primarily for the first-time visitor with emphasis on the lower Sonoran Desert ecosystem. As part of a complex of visitor attractions in the immediate vicinity, this unit of the park will emphasize qualities and opportunities unique but complementary to other activities.

The proposed new Red Hills Visitor Center will feature a spacious lobby to serve as a "decompression" and transition area for visitors who have driven considerable distances and partaken of extensive outdoor experiences in the vicinity. Comfortable seating should be provided, perhaps with browse copies of publications. The volume of sales indicates that publications offerings have been an important

service at this location, consequently the function should be adequately provided for.

The theme which lends itself to exhibit treatment is the Saguaro: its rib structure, boots, blossoms, etc., as the predominant feature of the park, and as they differ from other cacti. The saguaro blossom harvest theme will be included in new exhibits.

Interpretive opportunities in the park--trails, loop road, scenic overlooks, points of interest--could best be conveyed through an outdoor wayside exhibit near the visitor center entrance. Schedules of programs (site bulletin format) should be displayed on an outdoor bulletin board.

A ramada, for assembly of groups for talks, will be constructed at the head of the trail which begins in the vicinity of the visitor center, or at a location separate but approximate to the visitor center whichever provides for a more quiet, non-congested setting.

The central theme of the western unit is the lower Sonoran life ecosystem. An audiovisual program, about 10-15 minutes in length, will be produced to introduce the theme. The auditorium should be designed to accommodate temporary exhibits as well as the audiovisual program.

The lower Sonoran ecosystem is also well interpreted in new unigrid trail interpretive signs on the Desert Discovery Trail. This trail is to be handicap accessible. Interpretation on the Bajada Loop Drive will be in the form of an audio program accessible on car radio.

Revisions to the visitor center may disturb the existing cactus garden. It is appropriate to continue this facility somewhere near the building. The present interpretive trail signs have adequate theme and text. When replaced the same text should be converted to unigrid for consistency. A new unigrid trail interpretive sign dealing with Hohokam culture will be located about halfway along the trail leading to the Signal Hill petroglyph site. Additional trail interpretive signs on the subject of Civilian Conservation Corps activities will be installed at the Es-kim-in-zan Picnic Area and at Sus Picnic Area. The latter will point out that several of these historic dams are being reactivated as a water supply to mitigate impact of the Tucson aqueduct of the Central Arizona Project.

The new unigrid trail interpretive sign at the watering hole is a welcome addition; the site will be complete when a new observation blind is constructed with directional marker.

The environmental education program in the park is an important service. Although the location may change, the program should continue.

Rincon Mountain District (Saguaro East)

In contrast to Saguaro West, the Rincon Mountain District receives a high proportion of local, repeat use of trails for hiking, driving, and horseback riding. At the same time, settlement patterns in the region result in a turnover of park users every seven to eight years. Interpretation in this unit will be designed to provide a varied program for repeat visitors and to acquaint succeeding generations with a conservation ethic. The interpretive emphasis of this District will be the Desert to Mountain ecosystem. As the Saguaro and associated ecosystem are in evidence in this district as well, interpretation of the subject will not be neglected.

The visitor center will be redesigned to incorporate two auditoriums. One, probably the present AV room, will show a new program interpreting the central theme of this unit, the desert-to-mountain landscape. Aside from new equipment and program, this auditorium will need some design improvement, particularly window coverings. The second auditorium (the present exhibit room) will be equipped with capability for slide, movie and

video programs as well as live talks and public forums. Existing and future programs dealing not only with desert ecology but also with a broad spectrum of conservation topics and issues will be presented. An example is the video on air quality produced by the park staff. Visitor circulation along the walls needs to be incorporated into the design, to allow for access to special emphasis exhibits and temporary displays.

The existing relief map will be moved to the lobby where it will become an orientation and interpretive device with the addition of fiber optics and support graphics. Aside from park features (roads, trails, campgrounds, etc.) which can be illuminated by visitors and in conjunction with personal services, it would be desirable to indicate the change of plant communities according to elevation. Any permanent exhibits will be in the lobby; their themes will be the varied ecosystems introduced on the relief map. Total lobby design will, of course, include information desk and sales facility.

Outside the visitor center, introductory, thematic unigrid trail interpretive signing is needed for the cactus garden. The theme at the cactus garden will be ethnobotany.

Trail interpretive signs on the desert ecology trail will be consolidated into fewer exhibits with a more thematic, rather than

individual label, approach. The overall theme is adaptation to water supply. This trail should remain handicap accessible.

The Cactus Forest Drive will continue to be interpreted by the existing road guide book. Informational wayside signs at major pullouts of trailheads will be needed, to encourage visitors to visit the monument by foot.

New unigrid interpretive trail signing will be added to the Freeman Homestead trail. A small sign at the trailhead will invite visitors to take the trail. Between the road and homestead site, where there is a good view of the city, the subject is modern demands on the carrying capacity of the desert environment. At the dwelling site, historic photographs will aid in interpreting the early effort at coming to terms with the desert. An audio message could be considered if a description of life on the homestead in the voice of a surviving occupant can be obtained. The sign text will mention that one may return to the road by backtracking or proceed on the loop through a wash. The latter option includes a flash-flood warning.

An Environmental Education Program in the Rincon Mountain District is important. Although a location has not been determined the program should be developed.

Wayside Exhibits, Parkwide

Aside from the major roads, there are a number of entry points into both units which are unmarked. A unigrid wayside exhibit will be produced for each of these major entry points, approximately ten. The major component of these can be standardized, incorporating a park map and visitors' responsibilities. Where appropriate, e.g., at Speedway Boulevard, regulations should be explained: why no dogs are allowed, for example, and where one may enter with dogs. Locations identified for entry waysides at this writing are:

- Picture Rocks Road (East and West entry points)
- Sweetwater Road (East boundary)
- Man-a-Gah (requires County cooperation)
- Rocking K Ranch
- Madrona Ranger Station
- Speedway Boulevard (Douglas Spring and Wildhorse)
- Cactus Forest Trailhead
- Trail crossings at Park and Coronado National Forest boundaries

A regional exhibit will be produced as a step toward the interagency information center proposed in the GMP. Based upon the "Tucson Basin" folder, it will inform visitors of the range of outdoor recreation activities administered by various agencies. One of these will be near the entrance of each of the NPS visitor centers. Other locations might be at the Tucson Convention and Tourist Bureau, the airport, and any of the major recreational entities of

the region. The exact number and locations will be established in the course of preliminary exhibit planning.

Staffing Levels

Implementation of this Interim Interpretive Prospectus will require that staffing levels of interpretive rangers be increased. Saguaro management has identified and has on request with Western Region Forms 10-237 which detail the need for additional interpretive staffing.

Cost Estimates

	<u>Planning</u>	<u>Production</u>
<u>Tucson Mountain Unit</u>		
Museum Exhibits	20,000	80,000
Audiovisual Program	10,000	90,000
Audiovisual Equipment		10,000
Audio tour	1,000	5,000
Wayside Exhibits	2,000	10,000
*Trail Interpretive Signing	0	1,000 each
<u>Rincon Mountain Unit</u>		
Museum Exhibits	8,000	30,000
Audiovisual Program	10,000	90,000
Audiovisual Equipment		20,000
Wayside Exhibits	8,000	40,000
*Trail Interpretive Signing	0	1,000 each
<u>Parkwide Wayside Exhibits</u>		
Entry Exhibits	2,000	10,000
	4,000	30,000
*Regional Exhibit	0	1,000 each

N. B. Audiovisual planning and production costs would be less if work for both visitor centers were programmed in the same fiscal years.

*Park/Regional Office responsibility

