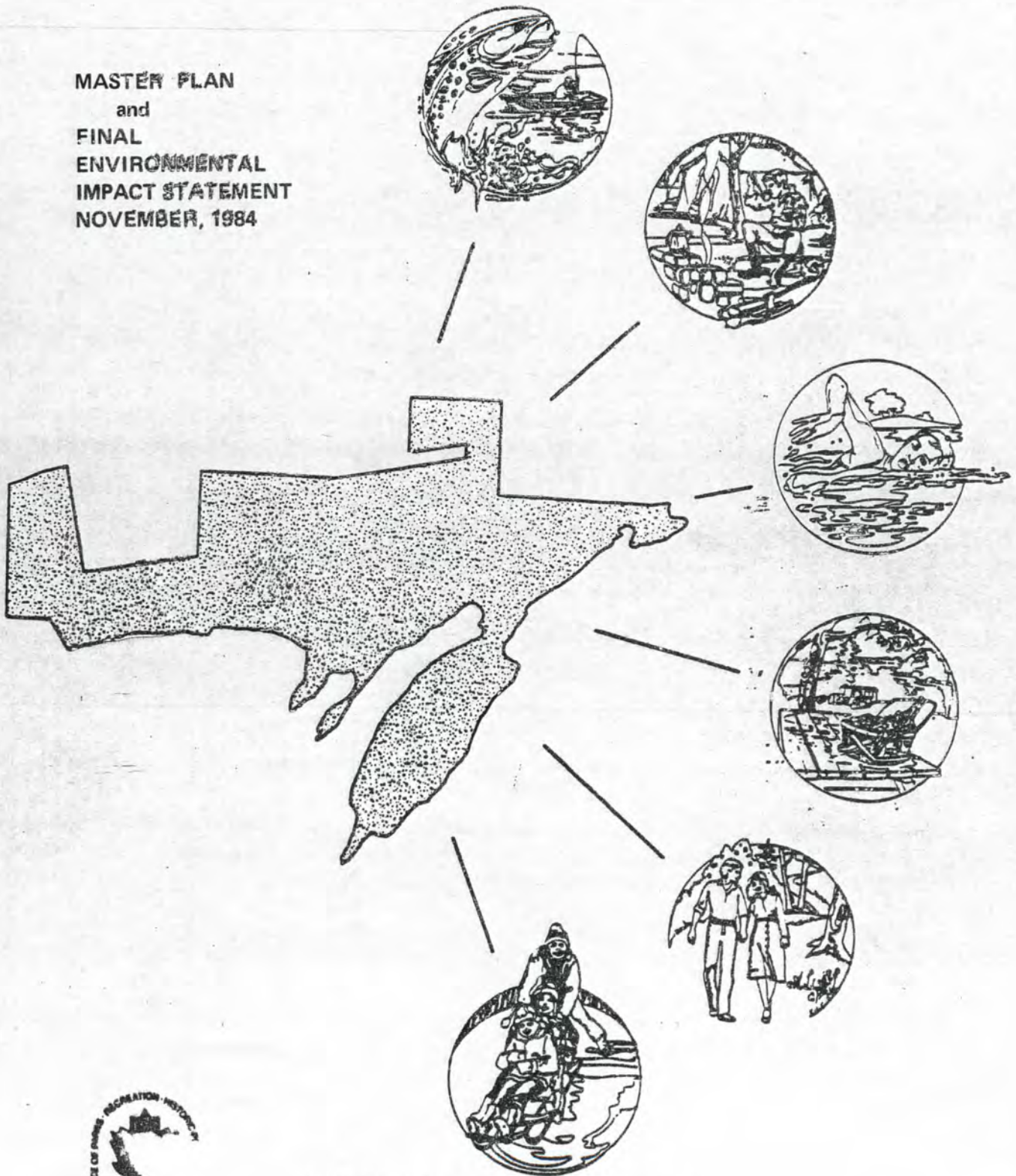


POINT AU ROCHE STATE PARK

MASTER PLAN
and
FINAL
ENVIRONMENTAL
IMPACT STATEMENT
NOVEMBER, 1984



Office of Parks,

of New York, Mario M. Cuomo, Governor
ion & Historic Preservation, Orin Lehman, Commissioner

An Equal Opportunity Agency

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Commissioner Lehman expresses his sincere appreciation to the many individuals and groups who have participated in the process leading to this Final Master Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement. These include staff or representatives of the Clinton County Planning Department, the Soil Conservation Service, the Clinton County Sheriff and local Historian Offices, faculty and students of SUNY Plattsburg, the Campground Owners of New York, and in particular the members of, and organizations represented on the Ad Hoc Committee for Pt. Au Roche, chaired by Wayne Byrne.

This report was written by staff of the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP), and its preparation was coordinated through the Environmental Management and Planning Bureaus of the OPRHP. Persons contributing to this report were:

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 - + Members of the OPRHP Parks Program Analysis Statement (PPAS) Committee also participated in the review of this document.
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE ACTION:

The adoption of a Master Plan for Point Au Roche State Park

THE LEAD AGENCY:

The NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

THE NEED:

Adoption of a Master Plan for Point Au Roche State Park will establish guidelines for its development and operation. These guidelines will assure a balance between the use and protection of the resources of Point Au Roche and adjacent bays. While findings from studies demonstrate the need for additional recreational opportunities in the area, the park's outstanding location and resources are also important factors substantiating the need for the park's development.

THE SETTING:

Point Au Roche State Park is situated within the Thousand Islands State Park region and the Clinton County/Plattsburgh area and is easily accessed from either the Northway or Route 9.

The park consists of 840 acres of undeveloped parkland located in the Town of Beekmantown. The land for the park was purchased in 1974 with funds authorized by the voters of New York through the Environmental Quality Bond Act of 1972. Prominent features are sandy beaches, three scenic peninsulas, four bays, important natural areas, and Lake Champlain.

Most of the park consists of old fields formerly used for agriculture; forest areas cover less than 20 percent. Special engineering design may be necessary to manage soil limitations.

Portions of the park were also used for commercial ventures prior to acquisition.

The park is classified as Scenic. This classification allows for a variety of recreational uses but such uses must be consistent with the natural character and capacity of the park's resources.

THE ALTERNATIVES:

The Master Plan contains the description and analysis of four main alternatives. The primary guidelines used to evaluate these alternatives were: the park's classification as Scenic, a developed area limitation of 30 percent, the extent of protection of scenic, natural, and cultural resources of the park, and findings from resource capacity analyses.

The park land was also classified according to three intensities of use: low, moderate, and high.

THE MASTER PLAN:

The Master Plan consists of eight elements grouped into six phases. The first three phases include development of day use facilities for swimming and picnicking, boat launching and pumpout facilities. A nature center, campsites, and a possible mooring area are in the last three phases.

The camping element is divided into two parts. The first part, which is scheduled for Phases 4 and 5, consists of construction of 60 unimproved sites and 30 carry-in sites. Most of the unimproved sites will be replacements for decreases in the number of sites at Cumberland Bay and Macomb Reservation State Parks.

Expansion of day use facilities and/or implementation of the second part of the camping element are dependent on additional assessments of need and resource capacity, the findings from which will be subject to public review and comment.

The bathing beach will be located in the central portion of the beach facing Treadwell Bay while the camping loops will be situated in the central upland section of the park. The boat launching facilities will be located on the shoreline of Middle Bay. Pumpout facilities will service deeper draft vessels using Deep Bay. The feasibility of and need for a formal mooring program will also be evaluated. The northern end of Long Point (near Conner Bay) is the proposed site for the nature center.

Total estimated cost for development is \$5.5 million. Operation of the park will require approximately 15 seasonal employees as well as additional permanent operation staff. The final design of the development phases are contingent on the findings of more detailed analyses of certain resources, such as soil.

THE IMPACTS:

The development and operation of the park will not only result in benefits normally associated with recreation activities, but will also benefit the local economy. Community income generation from visitor expenditures and park operation has a potential to reach \$2.6 million each year. The park will also provide additional employment opportunities in an area that has a history of unemployment rates above the state average. Full development of the park will generate almost \$10 million in income over the period of construction and approximately 31 construction related jobs. Community fiscal impact will amount to \$55,000 in additional tax revenues each year.

The development of the park will improve the quality of camping at Cumberland Bay State Park, since the Master Plan calls for a reduction in the number of campsites at that facility.

Other resources which may be affected by park development are the bays, (e.g. water quality), forested areas, and scenic and cultural resources. Through the adherence to the applicable environmental codes and standards and the mitigation steps within the design of the Master Plan, adverse impacts on these resources are not expected to be significant.

II. SOME QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT THIS MASTER PLAN AND FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

1. WHAT IS THE ACTION?

The adoption of a Master Plan for Point Au Roche State Park.

2. WHO IS PROPOSING TO DO THIS?

Orin Lehman, the Commissioner of the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP).

3. WHY WAS THIS REPORT WRITTEN?

This Master Plan/Final Environmental Impact Statement was written to provide people with an interest in New York State a chance to participate in the planning for one of its State Parks.

4. HOW MUCH OPPORTUNITY HAS THERE BEEN FOR PUBLIC INPUT?

This Plan/FEIS is a revision of a Draft Plan/DEIS which was made available for public review in August. A public hearing was held on August 16th to obtain comments on the Draft Plan and DEIS.

The OPRHP also held a public information meeting in February to provide persons an opportunity to identify what should be included within the Draft Plan/DEIS.

Since its creation in 1983, the Ad Hoc Committee for Point Au Roche has invested considerable time and effort in identifying and evaluating alternative plans and their possible effects.

5. HOW SHOULD THIS REPORT BE REVIEWED?

It's really up to the reviewer. Those persons familiar with the Draft Plan/DEIS may be interested in reviewing only those sections which have been clarified or substantially changed. These elements and their pages are listed below:

<u>ELEMENT</u>	<u>PAGE NO(S)</u>
Day Use	68, 81
Camping	17, 85, 86, 100, 101, 109, 110
Soils	30, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 101, 115
Erosion	63, 101, 114
Water and Wastewater	32, 37, 38, 88
Cultural Resources	44, 112
Cabins	64, 67, 71, 73, 74, 87

One can also choose to read the entire report, cover to cover, or can choose to focus only on those parts that are of interest. The following table can help focus on the major areas of interest,

AREA OF INTEREST	*	SECTION

What is the park like now?	*	Environmental Setting

What comments were made on the Draft Plan/DEIS?	*	Comments and Responses

What is in the Master Plan?	*	Master Plan

How did the OPRHP arrive at the Master Plan	*	Analysis and Alternatives

What will happen if the Master Plan is implemented?	*	Environmental Impacts

6. WHAT KINDS OF COMMENTS SHOULD BE MADE?

All comments are welcome. Persons can state their support or opposition to the plan or certain parts of the plan. They can also point out areas in the report that are not quite accurate or need further explanation. Commissioner Lehman is particularly interested in comments that (1) provide new and pertinent information or (2) clearly describe what kinds of information are needed and the reasons why.

7. WHAT HAS ORIN LEHMAN DECIDED?

Commissioner Lehman has decided to have this report prepared and made available for public review and comment. He has not made any decision regarding adoption of a Master Plan for the park.

8. WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

There will be a 10 day comment period beginning on the date of completion of the Master Plan/Final Environmental Statement. Comments on this report will then be taken into consideration by Commissioner Lehman.

A "Statement of Findings" will then be prepared. This document will describe the action taken by Commissioner Lehman as well as a description of the basis for this action.

9. HOW CAN SOMEONE COMMENT ON THE PLAN?

People can call (518-474-0443) or write Orin Lehman or his contact persons:

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Thousand Islands State Park & Recreation Commission
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Alexandria Bay, New York 13607
(315-782-0100 ex. 301)

III. INTRODUCTION

This report contains a description of a Master Plan for Point Au Roche State Park in Clinton County. It also contains a description of (1) existing conditions in the park and region; (2) the rationale used by the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) in developing alternatives and in selecting the preferred alternative and (3) the impacts expected to be associated with implementation of the Master Plan.

The land for Point Au Roche State Park was purchased by the State in the 1970's using funds from the Environmental Quality Bond Act of 1972. One of the main purposes of the acquisition was to provide public access to the western shoreline of Lake Champlain. Over the past several years, OPRHP has had a policy of directing its capital budget primarily toward rehabilitation of existing park facilities rather than development of new parks. As a result, Point Au Roche has remained essentially undeveloped; recreation at the park has been limited to uses such as hiking, nature interpretation and cross-country skiing.

A. PLANNING PROCESS

In early 1983, the staff of the Thousand Islands State Park and Recreation Commission (TISP&RC) prepared a preliminary Park Program Analysis Statement (PPAS) for Point Au Roche. This statement contained a concise summary of existing resources (i.e. inventory) and the general policies which would guide the development of a more detailed plan for the park.

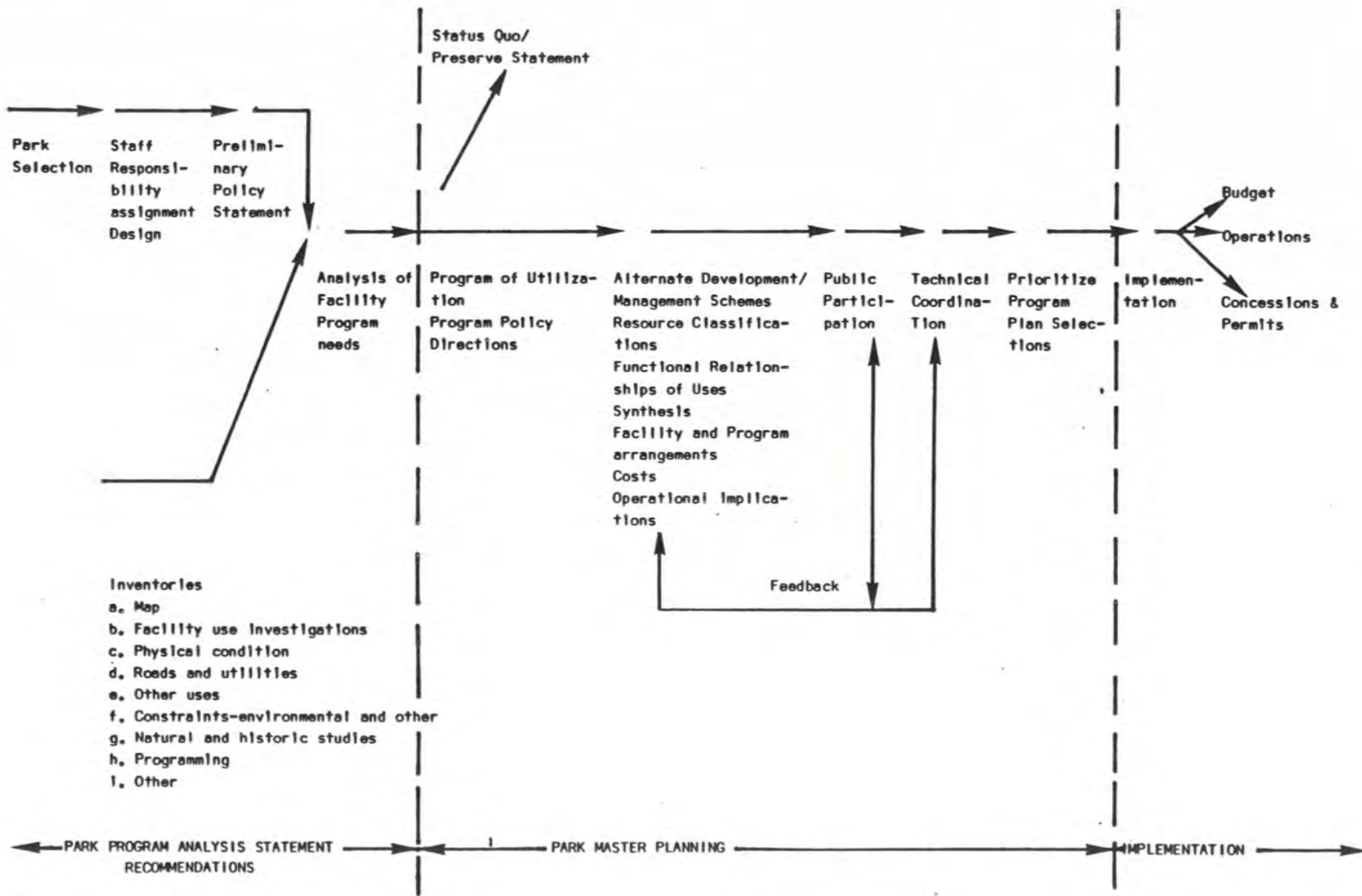
A PPAS is designed to provide an overview of existing resources and anticipated future park use and is the initial step in the planning process for State Parks (Figure 1). It provides general direction for subsequent park master planning including the analysis of alternative plans, selection of a preferred alternative, and preparation of an implementation schedule.

In general, the OPRHP planning process adheres to three basic principles:

1. Planning is a continuing process: Conditions and assumptions for classification and management of park resources must be constantly re-evaluated in light of new information, changing needs and priorities, and resource character.
2. Planning must be comprehensive: The information and research base which supports the planning process must encompass all relevant social, economic and physical factors relating to the management and operation of park resources.

FIGURE 1

STATE PARK PLANNING PROCESS



3. Planning must be coordinated and allow for public participation: Coordination and cooperation among appropriate governmental entities, special interest organizations, the private sector and the public at large is not only desirable but necessary.

In order to facilitate this effort and to maximize local input to the planning process, the Clinton County Legislature appointed an Ad Hoc Committee for Point Au Roche State Park (see Appendix A for list of members). This committee, which consisted of interested persons from a variety of backgrounds, worked closely with regional and main office staff of the OPRHP by providing guidance for the preparation of this Master Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement.

A public hearing was held August 16, 1984 at the Clinton County Government Center in Plattsburgh on the Draft Master Plan and DEIS. All comments, statements and letters received at, or subsequent to the hearing were considered in preparing this Final Master Plan and FEIS. A Citizens' Advisory Committee will be established to work with the TISP&RC in the implementation of the plan. If there are any significant changes made to the plan this committee will be advised and consulted on those changes.

B. RELATIONSHIP TO STATE AND REGIONAL PLANS

Planning for the use of the Point Au Roche goes back to 1964 when the area was recommended for park purposes. Since then various private entities have had an interest in the area's development for recreation.

Point Au Roche State Park is classified within the Parkland Classification Report (OPR, 1980) as a Scenic Park. Within that report all OPRHP parks were classified according to preliminary long term land use/conservation goals by means of statistical analysis of various management-related criteria and environmental data. A Scenic Park is defined as one located in a natural setting with a limited amount of development. Programs and facilities in a Scenic Park are oriented toward nature-related activities and scenic resources and can include camping, swimming, picnicking and fishing. Other TISP&RC parks which are classified as scenic are: Long Point, Wellesley Island, Higley Flow, Keewaydin and Kring Point. These parks all offer a variety of recreational activities. The natural setting is, however, the primary attraction at each of these parks rather than the developed facilities. Likewise, Point Au Roche will be designed to minimize the amount of alteration to its natural and scenic resources so as to be consistent with its classification as a Scenic Park.

OPRHP's 1983 Statewide Comprehensive Recreation Plan (SCRIP) contains a description of facility development at Point Au Roche for day use activities: (e.g. picnicking, camping, swimming, boating, and winter recreation, (e.g. cross-country skiing). The major programs envisioned are environmental education and other general park programs.

Findings from the recreation planning efforts of the Lake Champlain-Lake George Regional Planning Board (1974) and the New England River Basins Commission (1979) are consistent with the results of state planning efforts for the park. A Point Au Roche scenic park would follow regional planning recommendations concerning access to the recreational opportunities associated with Lake Champlain.

To summarize, the planning for Point Au Roche has followed a progression of inventory, analysis, and finally synthesis of all findings into a Master Plan. The purpose of this report is not only to document this progression in planning but also to provide additional opportunity for persons to actually participate in planning for this important recreation resource of New York State.