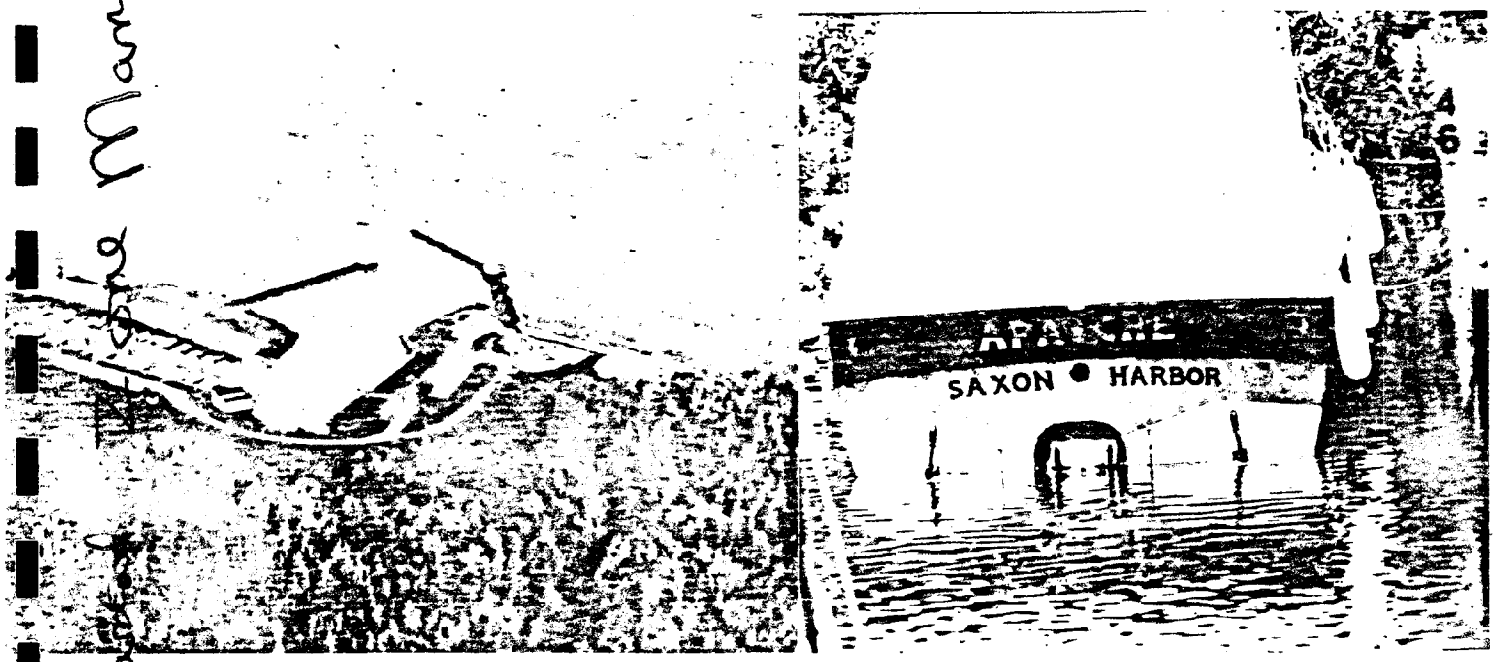
Coastal Zone Management Program

COASTAL ZONE
INFORMATION CENTER



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SAXON HARBOR

IRON COUNTY WISCONSIN

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Northwest REGIONAL Planning COMMISSION

an economic development district

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November 27, 1979

Mr. Italo Bensoni
Iron County Board Chairman
Iron County Courthouse
Hurley, WI 54534

Dear Mr. Bensoni:

We are pleased to present the Cedar Road and Saxon Harbor plans to Iron county.

These plans will help provide a guide for future management and development of both the Cedar Road Corridor and Saxon Harbor County Park.

We would like to thank Iron County for their assistance in preparing the recommendations with particular thanks to Herb Kinney and Charles Nikolai.

Sincerely,

Fred Goold
Landscape Architect

FG:bjd

302 Walnut Street Spooner, Wisconsin 54801 • 715 635-2197

SAXON HARBOR COUNTY PARK

SITE RECOMMENDATIONS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE NOAA
COASTAL SERVICES CENTER
2234 SOUTH HOBSON AVENUE
CHARLESTON, SC 29405-2413

IRON COUNTY, WISCONSIN

SPONSORED BY: WISCONSIN COASTAL MANAGEMENT PROGRAM AND IRON COUNTY

PREPARED BY: FRED GOOLD, LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT
NORTHWEST REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
302 WALNUT STREET
SPOONER, WI 54801

JUL 2 9 1997

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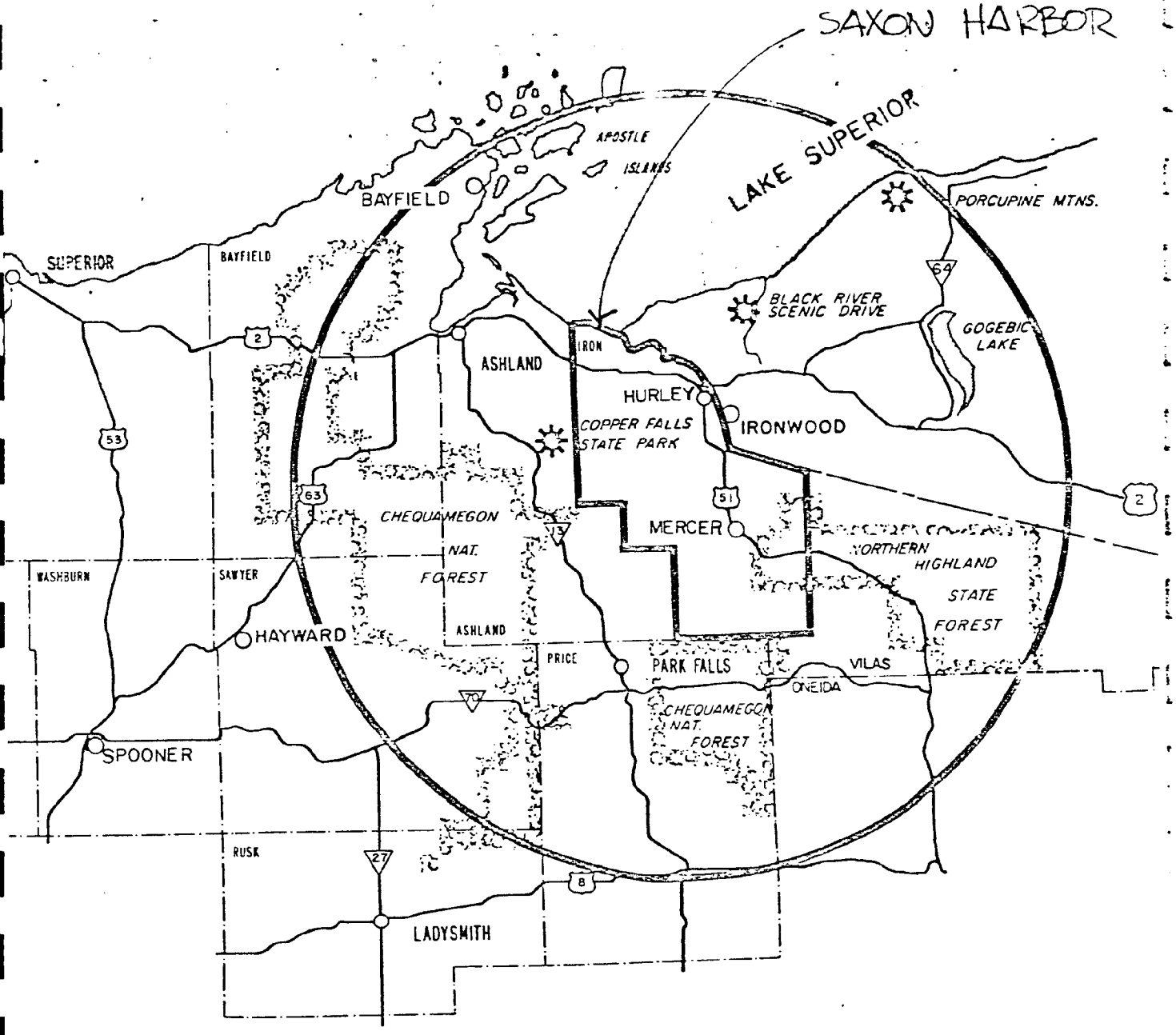
I. INTRODUCTION

Saxon Harbor County Park is located in northern Iron County on Lake Superior (see Figure 1). The park property contains a marina, campground and picnic area.

The marina and day-use launching facilities receive heavy use during seasonal "good fishing" periods.

Iron County has indicated a need for future improvements to the Saxon Harbor Park. These improvements relate not only to the marina and boat use facilities but also to day-use and over-night activities. Development of the Flambeau Trail and Cedar Road should also be considered in any future plans for the Saxon Harbor area.

Funded by the Wisconsin Coastal Management Program, a site planning program examining future expansion recommendations for the park has been prepared.



iron county planning region

50 MILE RADIUS

0 10 20 30 MILES NORTH

FIGURE 1

II. SITE ANALYSIS AND CHARACTERISTICS

Saxon Harbor County Park encompasses approximately 35 acres of county owned land in northern Iron County on Lake Superior. It is the only harbor and shelter area between Black River Harbor in Michigan and Chequamegon Bay. The only public access to Lake Superior in Iron County is provided at Saxon Harbor as indicated on Figure 2.

Present public use facilities include 54 boat slips (52 usable), boat launching ramps, parking areas, a campground, sanitary waste dumping station, restrooms and a small shelter. All of these facilities are maintained by the county.

Climate and weather conditions favorable for recreational activities normally occur from May through October. Another limitation for recreation is the water temperature of Lake Superior which rarely exceeds 65° F. in July or August.

Recreation activities along Lake Superior in Iron County primarily include fishing, camping, hiking, hunting and enjoying the natural scenery.

Saxon Harbor is producing some of the best success rates of recreational fishing along the south shore in Wisconsin, thus increasing pressure on its facilities. The Harbor is located near the mouth of Oronto and Parker Creeks. Oronto Creek was diverted to the east of the harbor to prevent siltation during marina construction. There are high bluffs surrounding the park as indicated on the topographical map (Figure 3). The tops of these bluffs provide excellent views of the lake and harbor. Both Oronto and Parker Creek are subject to extreme flow variation. Flood crests of five to six feet near their confluence are not uncommon.

The picnic/camping portion of the park is prone to spring flooding because of the high flows from Oronto Creek and the poorly drained clay soils. Parker Creek has a drop of 180 feet/mile from CTH A to Lake Superior and Oronto Creek drops 51 feet per mile. During the summer both streams have extremely low flows, exposing much of the stream bed and reducing the living space for fish. The principal fishery value of Oronto Creek is for rainbow trout migration from Lake Superior for spring spawning, with spawning success being limited.

At the present time the 52 usable slips at the harbor are full, with a waiting list at twenty. Support facilities at the harbor include a fuel dock for servicing one boat at a time, several transient slips, public restrooms and marine sanitary waste dumping station (see Figure 4).

Two Boat launching ramps are available for public use, one on the east side of the harbor and one on the north side.

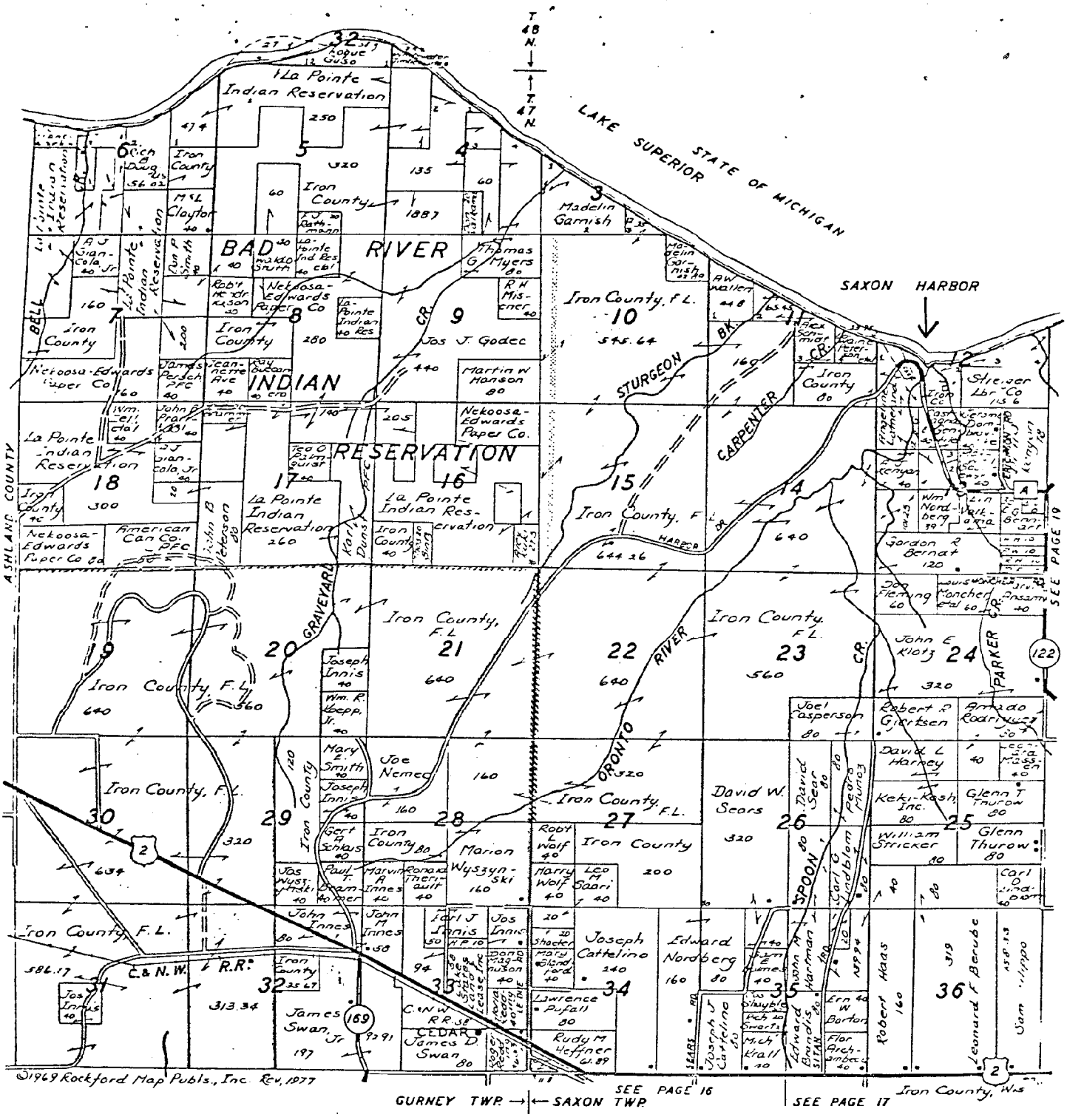

LAKE SUPERIOR
STATE OF MICHIGAN
SAXON HARBOR
BAD RIVER INDIAN RESERVATION
La Pointe Indian Reservation
Iron County
Iron County, F.L.
Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Co.
ASHLAND COUNTY
SEE PAGE 19
SEE PAGE 16
SEE PAGE 17
GURNEY TWP.
SAXON TWP.
Iron County, Wis.
C.&N.W. R.R.
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FIGURE 2

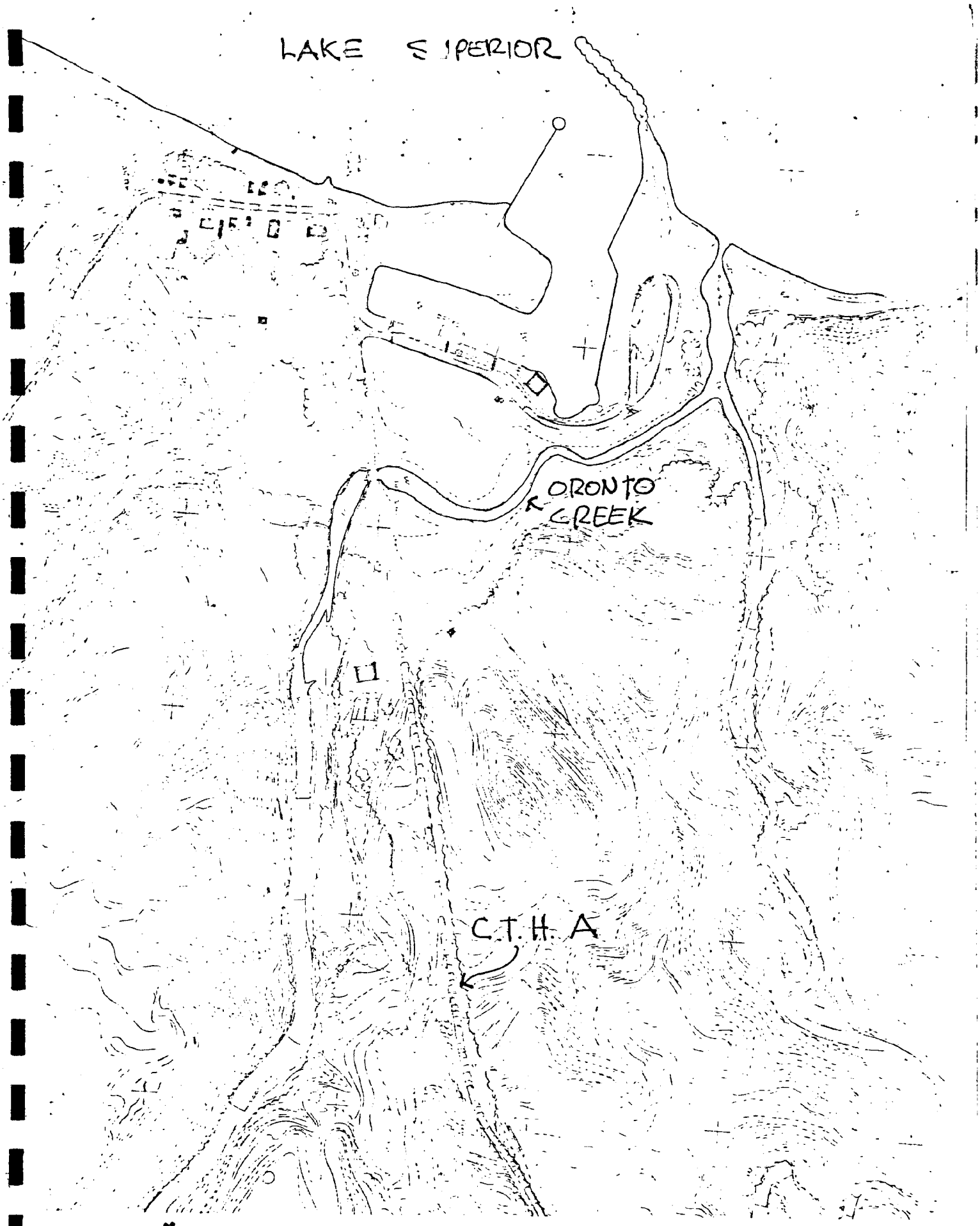

FIGURE 3

The camping/picnic area contains 24 picnic tables. (The campsites are not defined as camping and is permitted almost anywhere in the trees west of CTH A).

Existing trees in the camping area include cottonwood, basswood, maple and ash.

Several seasonal cabins on the west side of the harbor compose the only housing development at the harbor. Serious beach erosion has forced several cabins and garages to be moved from between the road and the lake.

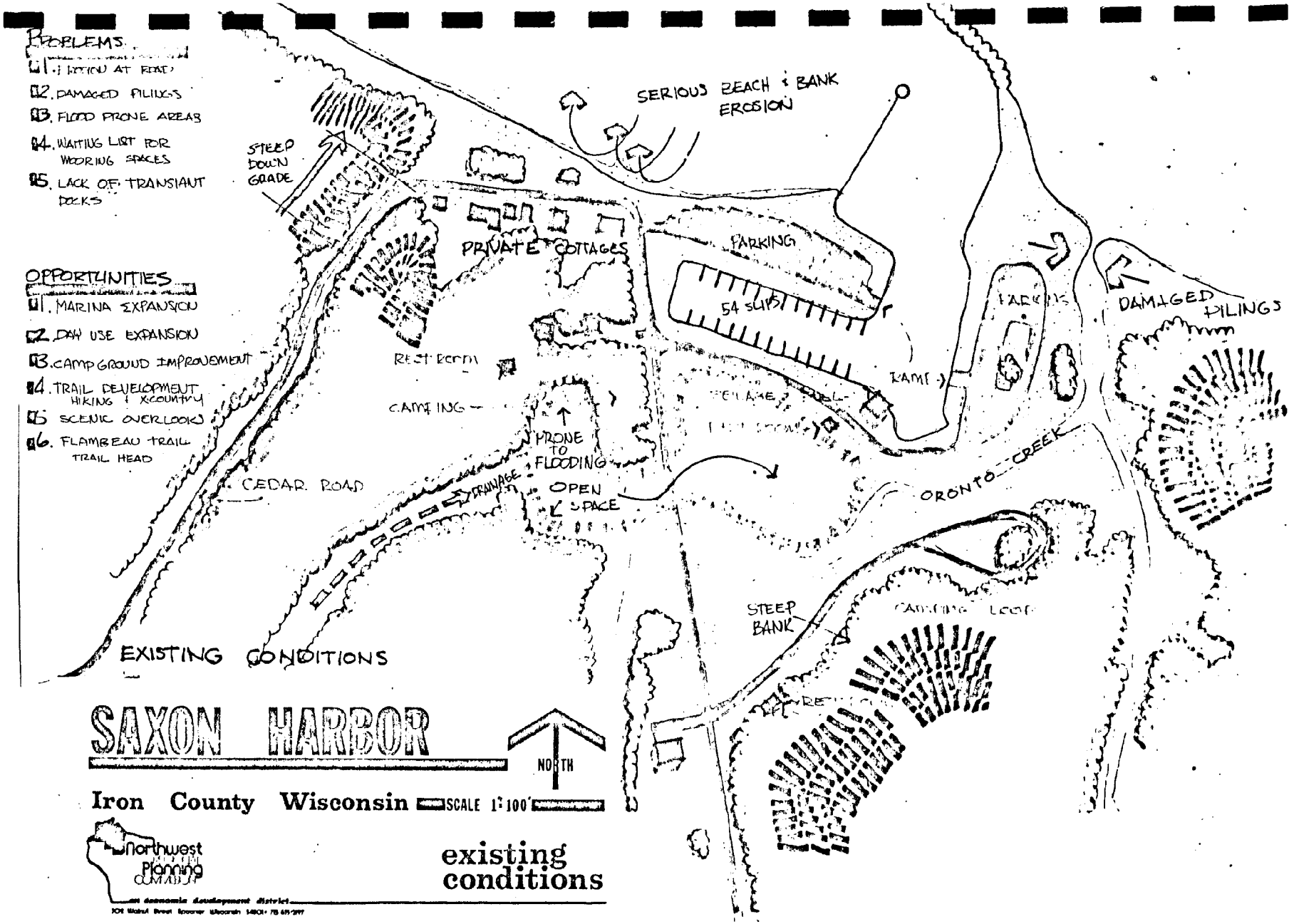
PROBLEMS
1. EROSION AT ROAD
2. DAMAGED PILINGS
3. FLOOD PRONE AREAS
4. WAITING LIST FOR MOORING SPACES
5. LACK OF TRANSIENT DOCKS
OPPORTUNITIES
1. MARINA EXPANSION
2. DAY USE EXPANSION
3. CAMPGROUND IMPROVEMENT
4. TRAIL DEVELOPMENT HIKING + XCOUNTRY
5. SCENIC OVERLOOK
6. FLAMBEAU TRAIL TRAIL HEAD
STEEP DOWN GRADE
SERIOUS BEACH & BANK EROSION
PRIVATE COTTAGES
PARKING
54 SLIPS
RAMP
DAMAGED PILINGS
REST ROOM
CAMPING
PRONE TO FLOODING
OPEN SPACE
CEDAR ROAD
DRAINAGE
ORONTO CREEK
STEEP BANK
EXISTING CONDITIONS
SAXON HARBOR
NORTH
Iron County Wisconsin
SCALE 1" 100'
Northwest Planning Commission
an economic development district
existing conditions

FIGURE 4

III. PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

The planning program for the Saxon Harbor County Park required identifying planned or needed facilities. This program was in part identified by the Forestry-Conservation, Parks and Harbors Committee of the Iron County Board, Herb Kinney, UW Extension Agent and people involved with operation and maintenance of the harbor facility.

Included in the program considerations were the following:

1. Enlarge the marina facility and add more rental slips.
2. Add public transient slips and docks.
3. Implement measures to stabilize shore and bank at the end of CTH A.
4. Redesign camping area and consider expansion; confine camping to one area.
5. Increase day use/picnic area especially near lake shore.
6. Develop a Trail Point with parking for the Flambeau Trail.
7. Consider sensitivity and cultural significance of possible trading post site and Indian burial ground when locating trails, camping, etc.
8. Tie in Cedar Road recommendations with plans for harbor area.
9. Encourage charter service to further enhance recreation fishery promotion in Iron County.
10. Regrade existing camping area to help alleviate spring high water and flooding problems.
11. Consider promotion of breakwater as public fishing pier.
12. Provide for marina support facilities to include: fuel dock for two boats at once; service building for repairs, storage, and marina office; and installation of a boat hoist near service building/ramp area.
13. Develop Short trail loops to scenic vistas on bluffs overlooking lake and harbor.
14. Develop walk-in wilderness campsites.

IV. ALTERNATE SITE PLANS

After analyzing existing conditions at the park and considering the recommended facility program, five alternative site plans were developed. The five alternatives deal with those issues indicated in the program requirements.

Final recommendations are based on a combination of ideas presented in the alternatives.

Alternative 1:

1. Increase number of slips from 54 to 108 by adding slip area parallel to existing one. CTH A will be slightly realigned to accommodate new slip area.

2. Reroute road to east parking and grade to elevation high enough for flood protection from Oronto Creek.

3. Add marina support facilities: service building, hoist, fuel dock.

4. Enlarge camping area at existing site.

5. Expand day use/picnic area at lake shore.

6. Eliminate existing camping loop south of Oronto Creek.

7. Develop Flambeau Trail--Trail Point.

8. Develop walk-in wilderness camping.

9. Develop overlook on bluff south of Oronto Creek.

10. Develop Cedar Road trail loop.

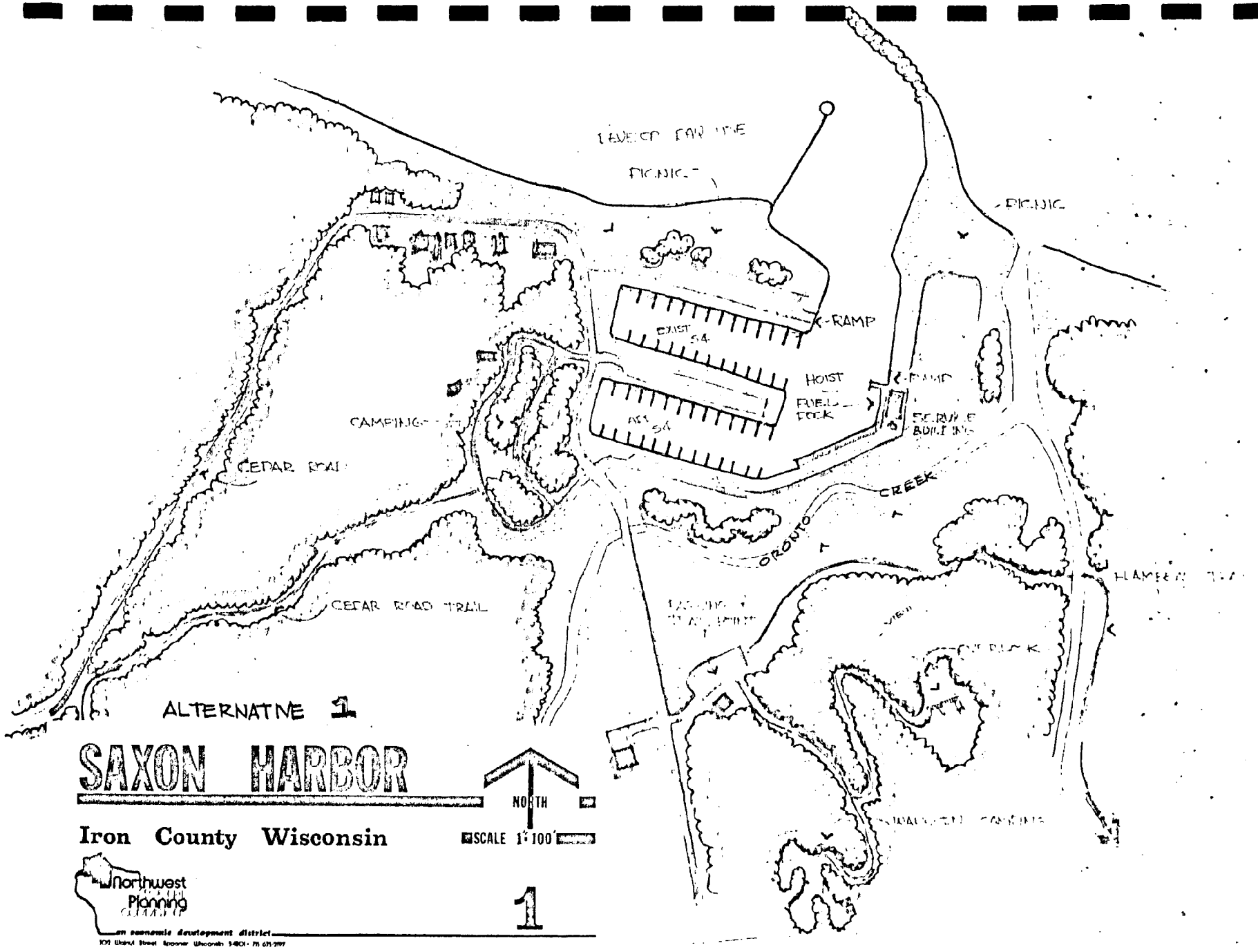
PICNIC
PICNIC
K-RAMP
EXIST. 54
HOIST
FUEL DOCK
SERVICE BUILDING
CAMPING
CEDAR ROAD
CEDAR ROAD TRAIL
CREEK
ORONTO
ALTERNATIVE 1
SAXON HARBOR
Iron County Wisconsin
NORTH
SCALE 1" 100'
Northwest Planning
an economic development district
1

FIGURE 5

Alternative 2:

1. Increase number of slips from 54 to 108 leaving CTH A as is.

2. Change east parking and launching entrance to south of Oronto Creek with new bridge across creek.

3. Add marina support facilities.

4. Enlarge camping area.

5. Develop overlook and Flambeau Trail--Trail Point.

6. Eliminate camping loop south of Oronto Creek.

7. Develop Cedar Road Trail loop.

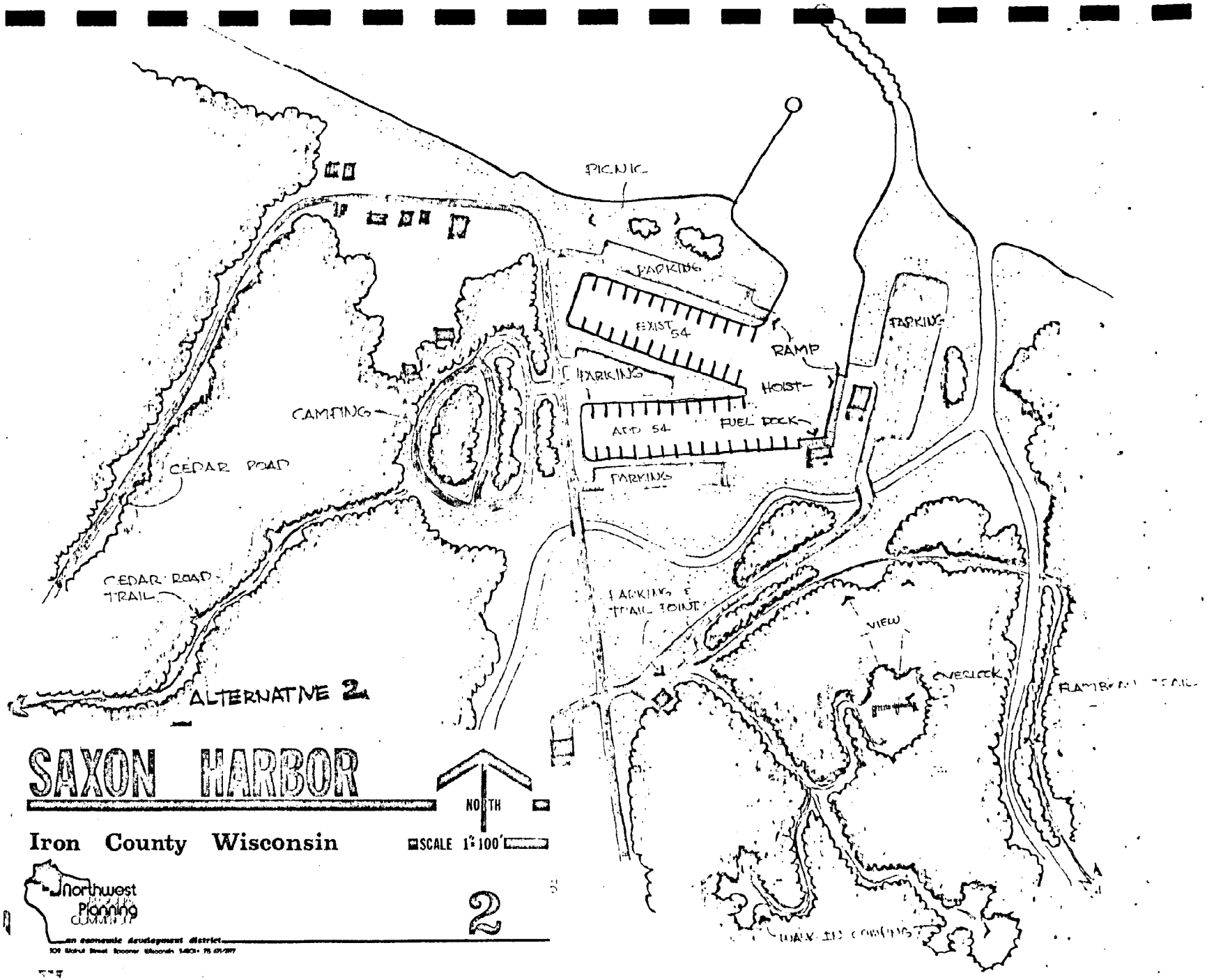
PICNIC
PARKING
EXIST 54
RAMP
PARKING
HOIST
CAMPING
ADD 54
FUEL DOCK
PARKING
CEDAR ROAD
CEDAR ROAD TRAIL
PARKING & TRAIL POINT
VIEW
OVERLOOK
ALTERNATIVE 2
SAXON HARBOR
Iron County Wisconsin
NORTH
SCALE 1" = 100'
Northwest Planning
an economic development district
2

FIGURE 6

Alternative 3:

1. Leave number of rental slips at 54.
2. Add 20 public transient slips on east side.
3. Add hoist.
4. Develop additional camping loop east of CTH A.
5. Develop scenic overlook and Flambeau Trail--Trail Point.
6. Construct foot bridge over Oronto Creek to provide access from Flambeau Trail to harbor area.
7. Expand day use/picnic area at lakeshore.
8. Develop Cedar Road trail loop.

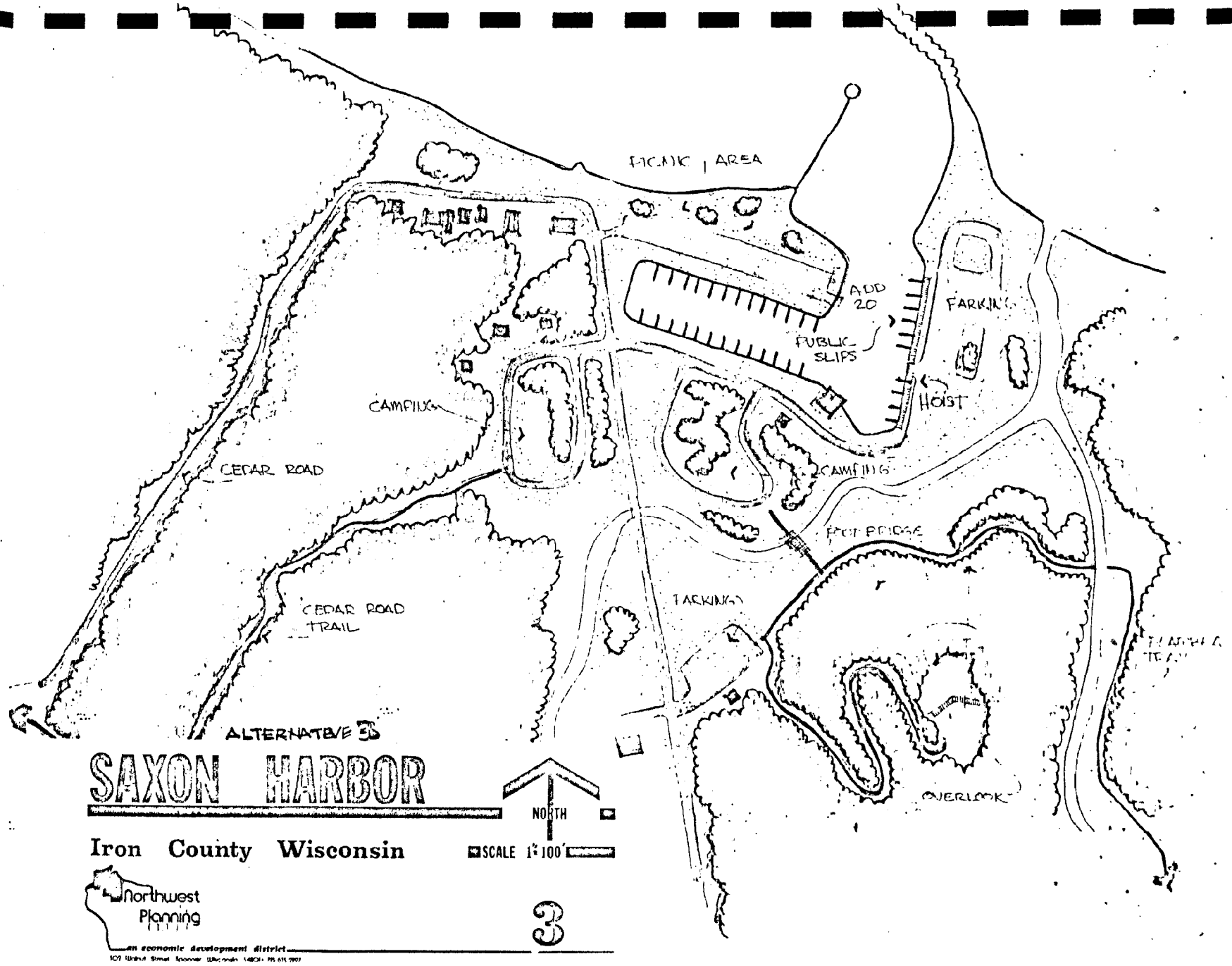
PICNIC AREA
ADD 20
PARKING
PUBLIC SLIPS
HOIST
CAMPING
CEDAR ROAD
CAMPING
FOOT BRIDGE
CEDAR ROAD TRAIL
PARKING
OVERLOOK
ALTERNATIVE 3B
SAXON HARBOR
NORTH
Iron County Wisconsin
SCALE 1" = 100'
Northwest Planning
an economic development district
63

Figure 7

Alternative 4:

1. Increase number of slips from 54 to 108 by adding new slip area east of existing one.

2. Provide marina support facilities on south side of harbor.

3. Develop picnic area between harbor and Oronto Creek.

4. Develop scenic overlook east of Parker Creek in conjunction with Flambeau Trail.

5. Develop Cedar Road trail loop.

6. Leave camping area as is but identify individaul campsites.

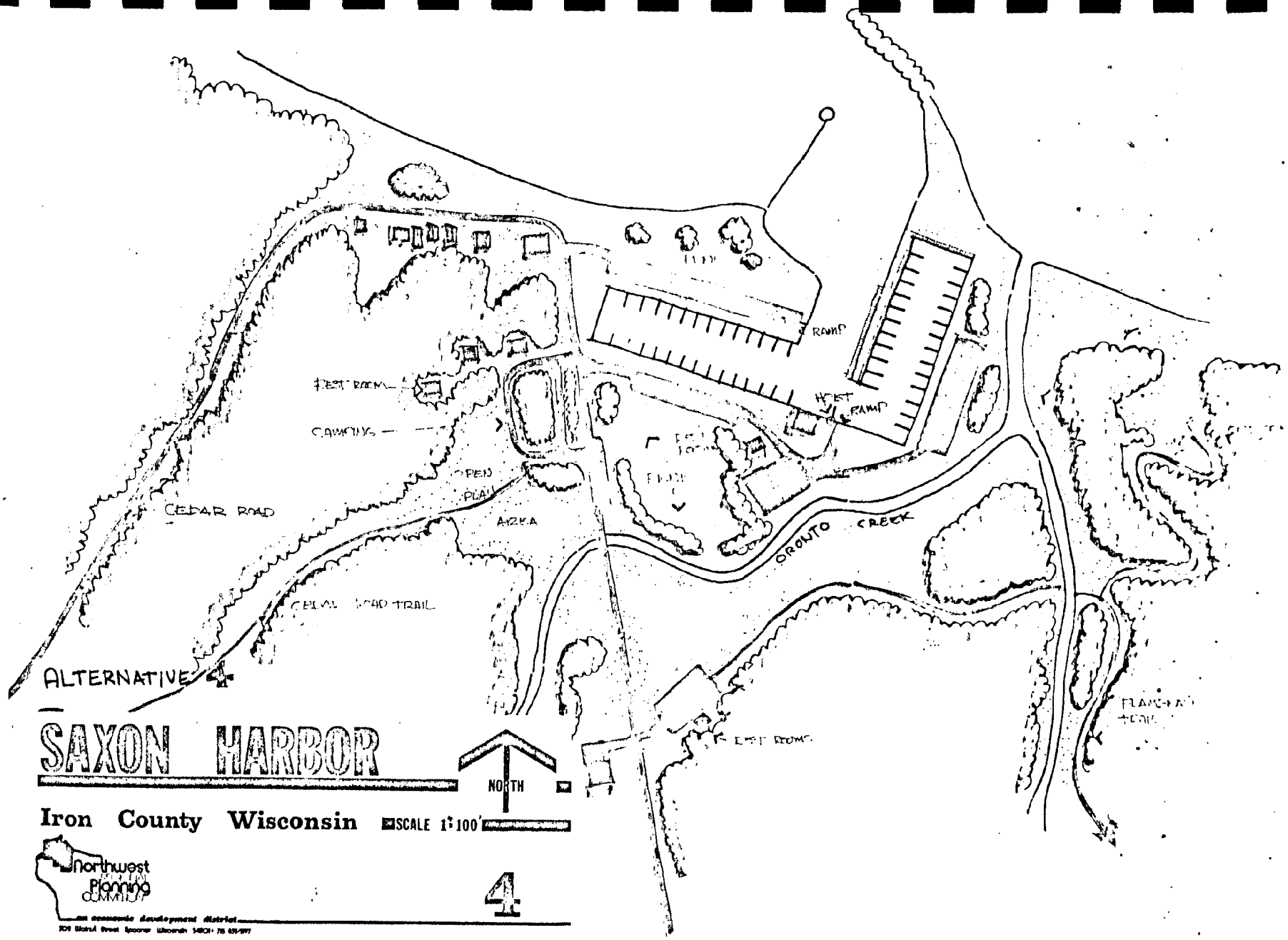
RAMP
REST ROOMS
CAMPING
HOIST
RAMP
OPEN
PLAY
AREA
CEDAR ROAD
ORONTO CREEK
CEDAR ROAD TRAIL
REST ROOMS
ALTERNATIVE 4
SAXON HARBOR
NORTH
Iron County Wisconsin
SCALE 1:100'
Northwest Planning Commission
4

FIGURE 8

Alternative 5:

1. Increase number of rental slips 54 to 108.
2. Add ten public transient slips.
3. Add marina support facilities.
4. Realign CTH A to the west as a park perimeter road.
5. Develop new camping loop adjacent to harbor not to be separated by CTH A.
6. Add parking adjacent to slip areas.
7. Develop expanded day use/picnic area at lake shore.
8. Develop scenic overlooks and Flambeau Trail--Trail Point.
9. Eliminate camping loop south of Oronto Creek.
10. Develop Cedar Road Trail Loop.

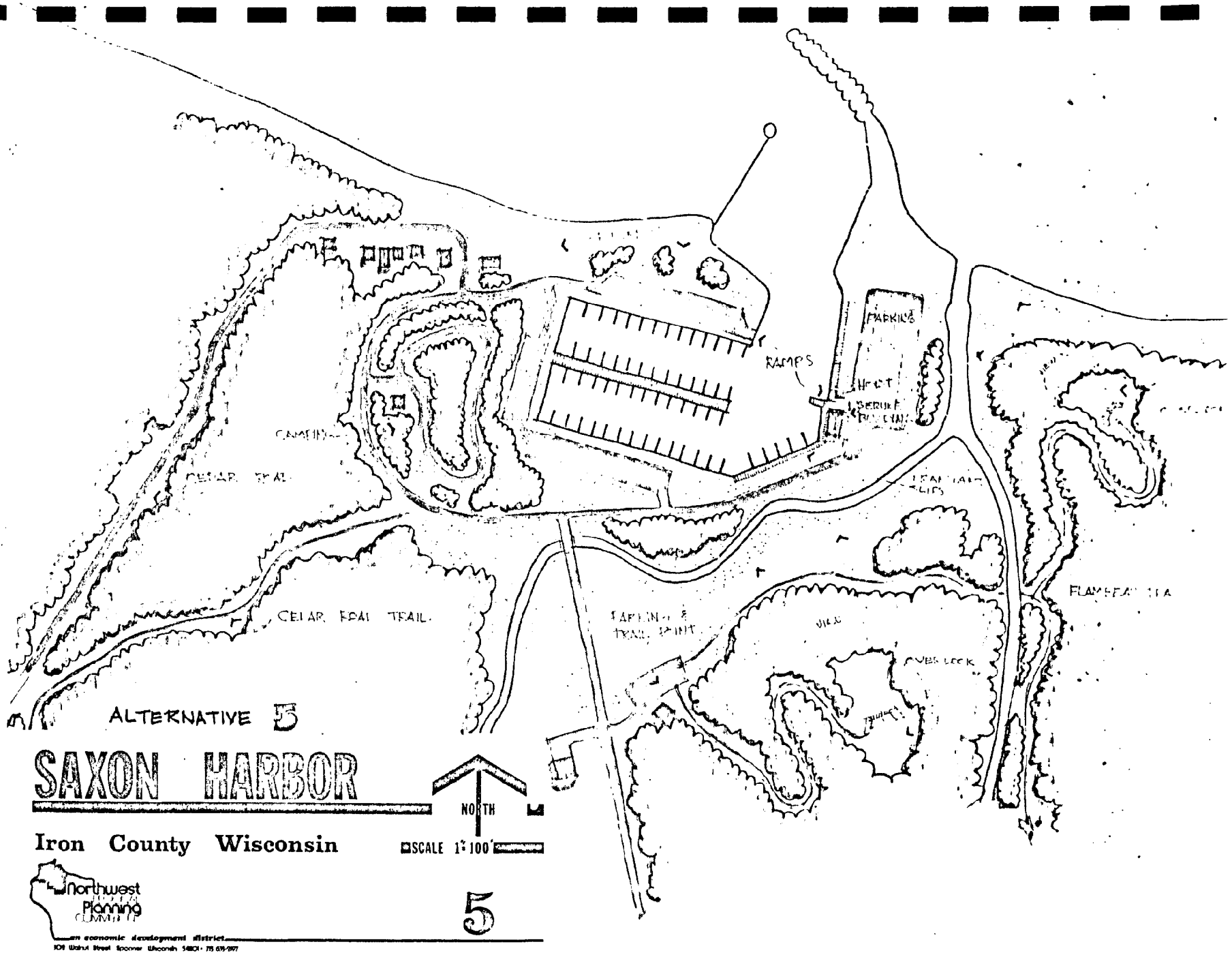
RAMPS
PARKING
CEDAR TRAIL
CEDAR TRAIL TRAIL
ALTERNATIVE 5
SAXON HARBOR
Iron County Wisconsin
NORTH
SCALE 1" 100'
Northwest Planning
an economic development district
5

FIGURE 9

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations for improvements to Saxon Harbor park involve ideas from all five alternative site plans. They are both immediate and long range in nature.

Recommendations--Immediate

1. Implement measures to stabilize bank and shore at end of CTH A.
2. Eliminate camping loop south of Oronto Creek.
3. Add public transient slips on east side of existing harbor.
4. Regrade camping area to help alleviate high water problems.
5. Identify individual campsites in existing camping area.
6. Develop picnic area along lake shore.
7. Develop scenic overlook with access trail.
8. Maintain open play area on west side of existing camping area.
9. Install boat hoist.
10. Promote additional charter service.

Recommendations--Long Range

1. Initiate planning for addition of rental slips. Expanded area should be designed so that existing harbor slips will not be disturbed during construction.
2. Realign CTH A around existing camping area (Alternative 5).
3. Add marina support facilities (service building and new fuel dock).
4. Develop Flambeau Trail and promote as part of Saxon Harbor Park.
5. Develop Cedar Road Trail loop as per recommendations of Cedar Road study with trail parallelling lake shore.

CONCLUSION

Saxon Harbor Park is an excellent addition to Iron County's recreational resources. With the implementation of the recommendations in this study, the harbor facility and park will become even more significant as a recreation attraction bolstering the county's ecomany.

The emphasis on energy conservation will affect the recreation industry in both positive and negative ways. Improvements to Saxon Harbor Park will capitalize on the positive impacts.

IRON COUNTY COMMITTEE ON

FORESTRY-CONSERVATION, PARKS AND HARBORS, FORESTRY BUILDINGS

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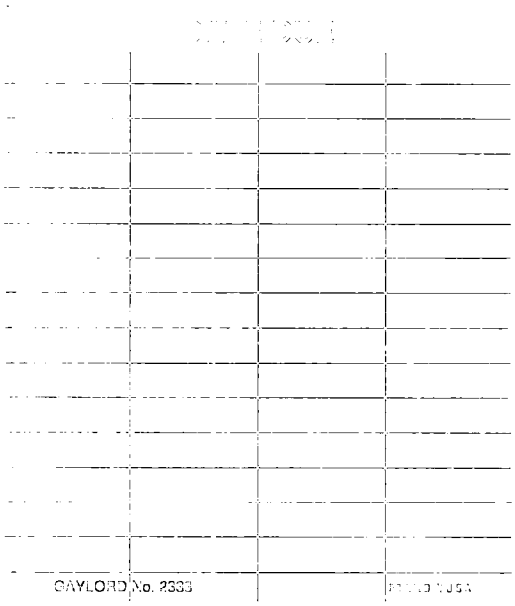

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