

# CANYONLANDS

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE



The Needles from the air

*"It is important . . . for dwellers in a crowded planet to have resort to the grandeur and peace of nature."*

SAMUEL H. ORDWAY, JR.

COVER

Canyonlands vista  
from the west rim

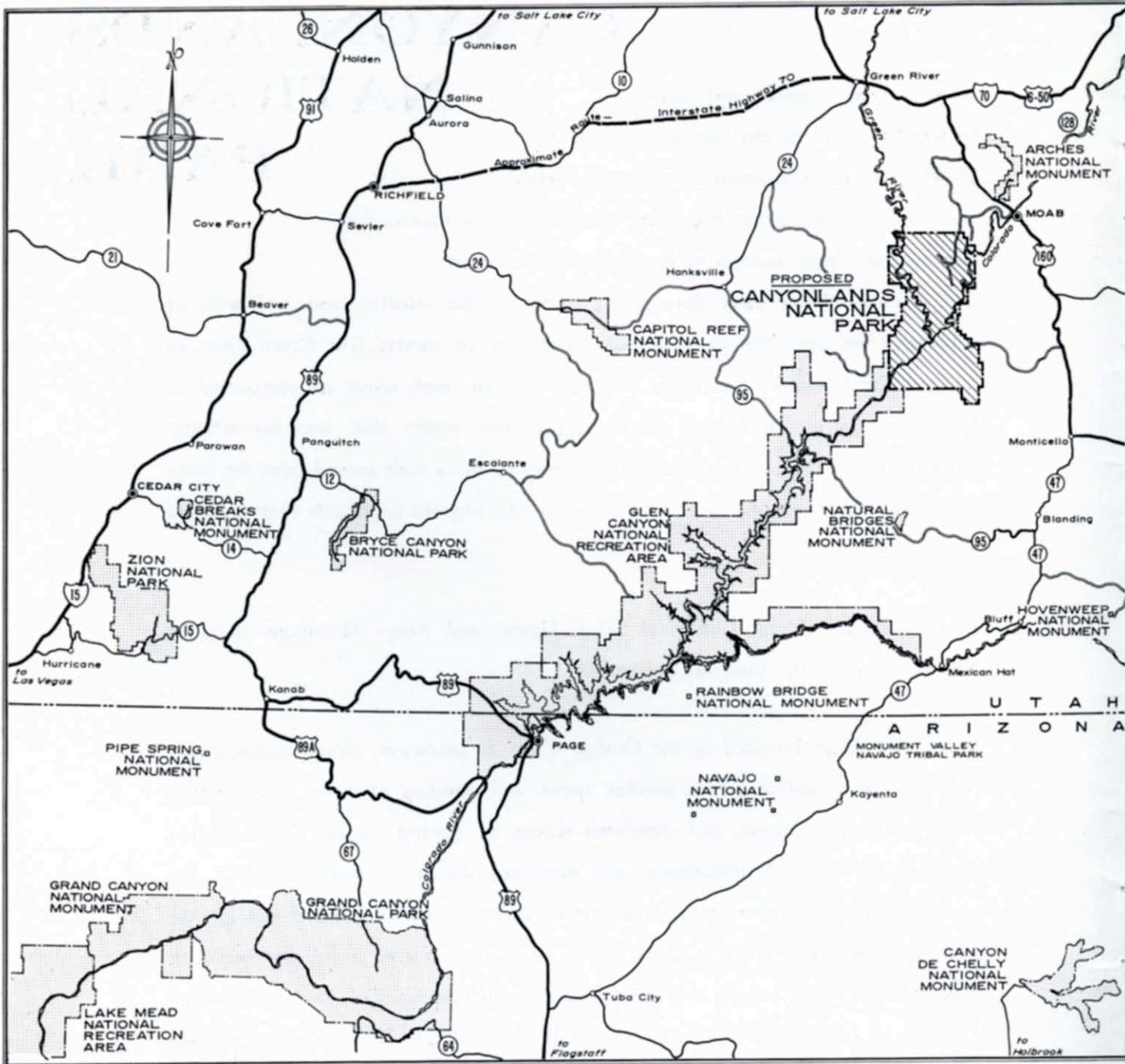
# A PROPOSED CANYONLANDS NATIONAL PARK

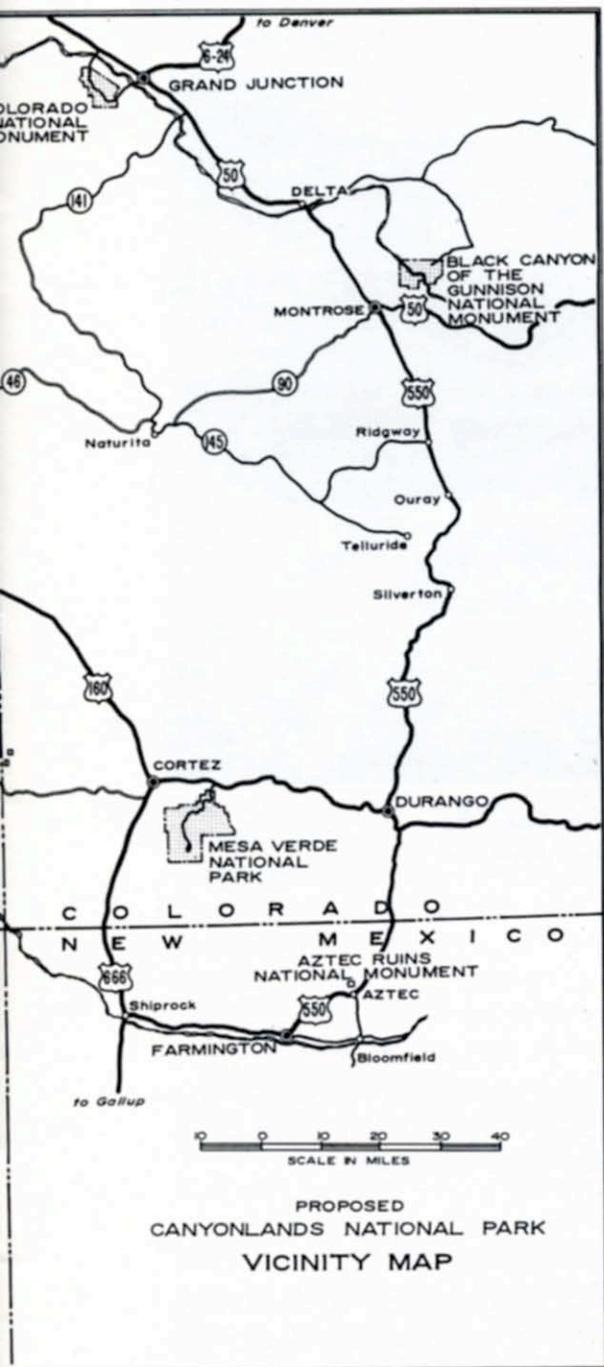
Rock—carved, colored, and clothed  
by weather—controls the character of our land.  
Nowhere is the relationship between the earth's  
framework and the forces that shape it more dramatic than in the  
plateau and canyon country of the American Southwest.

The Colorado River slices through the center of this colorful land, and with its tributaries has been the single greatest shaper of the scenery. The Green River, as large as the Colorado, joins it in southeastern Utah. Both rivers are entrenched in labyrinthine gorges, and below the confluence their waters slide into the echoing depths of Cataract Canyon. Benches a mile to 15 miles wide extend from the inner canyons to the cliffs of orange-red sandstone rimming the highlands that surround the confluence.

Far beyond the Orange Cliffs, the LaSal, Henry, and Abajo Mountains stand as impressive and often snowclad landmarks.

Within the basin bounded by the Orange Cliffs is landscape almost indescribably diverse. It is a land of arches, needles, spires, and standing rocks; of broad plains, steep scarps, bold mesas, and crenelated buttes; of roaring rapids, placid reaches, sandbars, bits of level bottomland, and intricately dissected tributary canyons. Because the rivers and their canyons have been effective barriers to travel through the area, and because steep cliffs and rough terrain have hindered movement within it, much of it is poorly known, and some is unexplored. The heart of this highly colored complex of geologically significant and scenically inspiring wilderness is the proposed Canyonlands National Park.





## THE REGION

The term "Canyon Lands of Utah" was coined to describe the interior section of the Colorado Plateaus spanning the Colorado River, from the Arizona line north to about the town of Green River, Utah, and northeast into extreme western Colorado. Its scenic culmination is the region surrounding the confluence of the Green and Colorado Rivers in southeastern Utah, and despite including many smaller, named components, is a visual and physiographic entity. It is bounded in general by the inward-facing cliffs of Wingate sandstone on the west, north and east, by the lower slopes of the Abajo Mountains and the Dark Canyon Plateau on the south, and by the drainage of the Dirty Devil River on the southwest.

### *Climate*

Elevations range from a low of 3,600 feet in Cataract Canyon to almost 8,000 feet at Cathedral Butte. However, most of the land surface lies between 4,500 and 5,500 feet, on the benches, and between 5,500 and 6,500 on the rims. It is dry country, with an average annual precipitation of 5 to 9 inches, much of the moisture coming in late-summer thunderstorms and with some



View south from Grandview Point, across Standing Rock Basin, the Colorado River, and the Salt Creek country to the Abajo Mountains.

snowfall on the rims. Except for the two main rivers, and Indian Creek and the Dirty Devil, there are no permanent streams, and but few permanent sources of water at springs and natural catchment basins. Temperatures are severe—from  $110^{\circ}$  or higher down to  $20^{\circ}$  below zero. The average annual temperature is from  $50$  to  $55^{\circ}$ . As in other desert areas, the daily, as well as the seasonal, temperature variations can be

extreme; hot days cooling rapidly after sundown to a low shortly before sunup, then a rapid rise again.

#### Access

The canyon country is tantalizingly close to the main highways along which hundreds of thousands of potential park visitors pass each year. U. S. 6 and 50 (combined) is a heavily traveled east-

west route, and crosses only 25 miles north of the area. Interstate 70, now under construction, follows the same alignment. U. S. 160 is a main route between the Intermountain West-Pacific Northwest and New Mexico-Texas-Oklahoma. It goes through Monticello, LaSal Junction, and Moab, in places less than 10 miles east of the area.

State Route 24, from Green River to Hanksville, Capitol Reef National Monument, and U. S. 89, parallels the western rim of the canyon country, about 30 miles away. It is now mostly paved, and the remaining graveled stretch will be covered soon. When this is completed, a surge of travel, mostly by tourists, can be expected.

State Route 95 leaves the paved Monticello - Monument Valley road (State Route 47) just south of Blanding, and winds past Natural Bridges National Monument to a ferry crossing the Colorado River at Hite, and on to Hanksville. It is little used, and can be impassable in bad weather. A high-standard highway bridging the Colorado River at Narrow Canyon, not far above the Dirty Devil, has been proposed. If it materializes, it will be another close, well-traveled access route. At present, State Route 95 passes 25 miles south of the area.

With few exceptions, the view from these highways toward the canyons is relatively uninteresting, for open desert land rolls outward toward the rim and there is no hint of the grandeur that lies below. From the perimeter, roads, some of which are graveled and passable in passenger cars, and some of which are rough jeep tracks, lead to the rim and, in a few places, over the

edge and down onto the benches. These are, in general, the tracks that would become access roads to the proposed Park.

### *Country to see . . .*

The region is visually exciting. The Colorado River system has here sliced through and stripped back many essentially horizontal rock layers. These layers are highly colored, and they wear away in a variety of distinctive patterns. The plateaued surface of the Wingate sandstone makes the skyline, and its edge is everywhere a bold and dominating cliff. Below it—back through geologic time—the older rocks reveal their raveled edges, some as weak slopes or gullied scarps, some as blocky ledges. This is the scenery of erosion, and the master pattern is very clear. The great rivers have done the major downcutting. Intermittent tributary streams, rain, and frost, have chiseled the details. Varying resistance of the rock layers, and the joints and faults that cut through them have controlled the visible results.

The geological importance of the area is unquestioned. It contains perhaps a greater diversity of erosional features than any other comparable area in the country, and it ranks as possibly the world's greatest exposure of red rock canyons.

The major river canyons divide the region into three units, connected visually and geologically, but accessible only from different directions.

Southeast of the rivers, in the Needles area, the Cedar Mesa sandstone is broken into blocks by close-

set joints, and has eroded into a fantasy of rounded pillars, spires, and balanced rocks. Close by, just to the west, the same sandstone is faulted into parallel grabens — sunken valleys — and the aspect is entirely different. To the southeast, the color-banded sandstone has been cut by winding streams into a wilderness of alcoves, ridges, pockets, fins, and arches.

West of the rivers, a broad bench

extends for miles, laced by narrow canyons and capped by improbably shaped remnants of overlying layers, and the scenery is vast and wild. Part of the bench is chopped into a network of little-known canyons, called The Maze. On that side, the skyline rim of orange cliffs extends from the plateau behind in narrow ridges, cut by passes forming more distant views, and left in places as isolated buttes.

Vista in the west-side wilderness. Elaterite Butte on left skyline.





Upheaval Dome from the air. View northwest, to Green River and beyond.

The skyline plateau extends into and dominates the land between the rivers. Its tip, Grandview Point, affords a vantage point from which to scan the Canyonlands, and the bold thrust of cliff-ringed highland deserves its name — The Island in the Sky. Upheaval Dome, a unique geologic feature deserving recognition for itself alone, craters the surface of the Island like a huge, colorful boil. Between the

plateau and the Green and Colorado Rivers, a resistant ledge, The White Rim, makes an esplanade from which to view the inner gorges, rivers, embayments in the wall above, and basins, some of which enclose large and spectacular erosion remnants.

Thus the geologic scenery is grand, varied, colorful, and, above all, evident — susceptible of clear, dramatic explanation.



Tower Ruin

Plant and animal life in the area is not of major significance in itself, but supplements the scenery. There are a few Douglas-fir in niches in the upper rim, and cottonwoods and other water-loving plants grow here and there around a few seeps and springs. But this is arid country, and the dominant impression is of pinyon-juniper woodland and grassy flats on the plateaus, and desert shrub and thin grass on the lower benches. Mule deer, rodents, birds, and reptiles characterize the animal population. Bighorn are reported to be present in the canyon country along the Green and Colorado Rivers, and it has been suggested in the past that this area be set aside as a bighorn sanctuary. Adaptation to a harsh environment and animal speciation due

to physiographic barriers are subsidiary biologic values.

Evidence of prehistoric man is found throughout the area, and there is a significant concentration of interesting campsites, granaries, and ruined villages in the southeast quarter of the proposed Park. That area displays a mingling of Fremont and Developmental Pueblo cultures, and there is a possibility of subsequent occupation by Utes, Southern Paiutes, and Navajos.

Since the arrival of European civilization, this region's history is thin. Nevertheless, what history there is has impact, for this is the rough, wilderness barrier to travel, the canyon country where arduous exploration led to new geologic concepts, and the outlaw's lair.

## THE STUDY

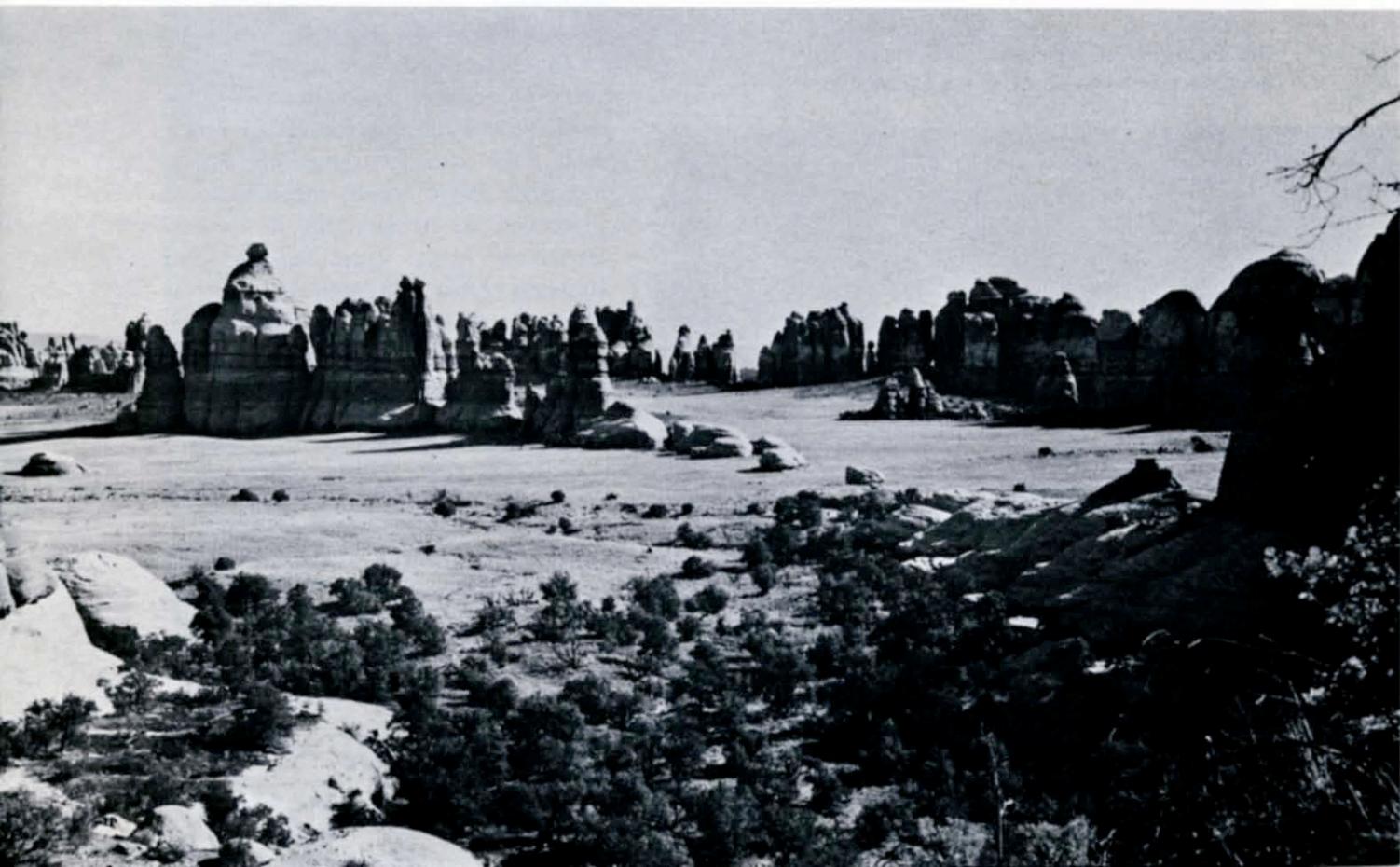
Although the region has been seldom visited and is little known, its significant scenery and geology has been recognized for more than a century. In 1859, Dr. J. S. Newberry, geologist to the MacComb Expedition, got close to the confluence of the rivers and described the scenery in glowing terms, with particular appreciation of the Needles. So with the members of Major J. W. Powell's historic river expeditions, who saw the canyons from within, and, in several places, climbed out to overlooks. Frederick S. Dellenbaugh, a member of Powell's second expedition in 1871, gives a particularly vivid

description of The Maze area in his book, *A Canyon Voyage*.

Scientific surveys of the Colorado River Basin in this century touched upon the significance of the region, and more and more spectacular features came to light as jeep tracks were pushed into the area during the uranium boom of the last decade.

In 1959 the National Park Service began a study of this scenic wilderness which, with the signally important trip led by the Secretary of the Interior in 1961, has resulted in the proposal to preserve and make available for public enjoyment the features of greatest national significance in a Canyonlands National Park.

The Needles punctuate the rolling meadows of Chesler Park



## PARK VALUES

The study area is the scenic heart of the Colorado Plateau Province. It contains a startling diversity of inspirational scenery, but is nevertheless a comprehensive whole. Although some of the individual features found within the area (arches, cliffs, canyons, colorful rock layers, semidesert flora and fauna) are also found in other units of the National Park System, many are not duplicated elsewhere and the total assemblage of features and their visual aspect is unique. Nowhere else is there a comparable opportunity to view a colorful, exciting, geologically significant wilderness from above, and then get down into its midst—and still not lose the atmosphere of remote wilderness.

The Green River (lighter-colored water) joins the Colorado in the heart of the Canyonlands.



The placid parks, particularly Chesler and Virginia, ringed by the bristling forest of fantastic needles, are outstanding. Elephant Canyon, offering rapidly changing scenery every hundred yards, has towering Druid Arch as a climax at its head. Salt Creek and Horse Creek and their tributaries provide equally intriguing but very different visual values, as well as Indian ruins of archeological significance. Angel Arch in Salt Creek Canyon is incomparable. The grabens in the Needles country are scenically outstanding and geologically remarkable.

Cataract Canyon — the explorers' nightmare and modern river-runners' challenge—is a feature well worth seeing (and hearing). In the heart of the Canyonlands the Green and Colorado Rivers merge their differing shades of silt-laden waters to form the wildest river on the continent; a stream, untamable and only partly shackled, whose geologic history of erosion is astounding, and whose basin holds the world's most vivid scenery.

The Maze—still unexplored—is exciting wilderness. The spires and other erosion remnants on the broad bench west of the rivers are compelling. Standing Rock Basin would merit national protection on its own for its concentration of huge, sculptured fins and standing rocks. So would Upheaval Dome, a feature geologically unique, with an appearance as unusual as its story. The Island in the Sky, a great plateau ringed by sheer cliffs and con-



Angel Arch

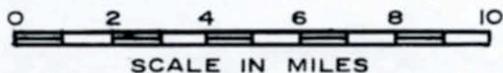
nected to the main land mass by a neck only forty feet wide, is an incomparable vantage point. Other overlooks in the Canyonlands provide different but equally stimulating views.

Scenery alone makes this physiographic unit of national significance and warrants the establishment of a National Park within it. The geologic interpretation of that scenery enhances it, and can be done simply, meaning-

fully, and dramatically. Archeological, historical, and biological values buttress the significance. Even the place names add an extra fillip of attraction. Who can doubt the appeal of those already mentioned, and of Ernie's Country, Devils Lane, Bobbys Hole, The Six-shooter Peaks, the Sewing Machine, Sunset Pass, Lands End, Happy Canyon, The Golden Stairs, Bagpipe Butte, Tapestry Slab, and Potato Bottom?

38°-30' EMERY COUNTY  
WAYNE COUNTY

# PROPOSED CANYONLANDS NATIONAL PARK AREA MAP



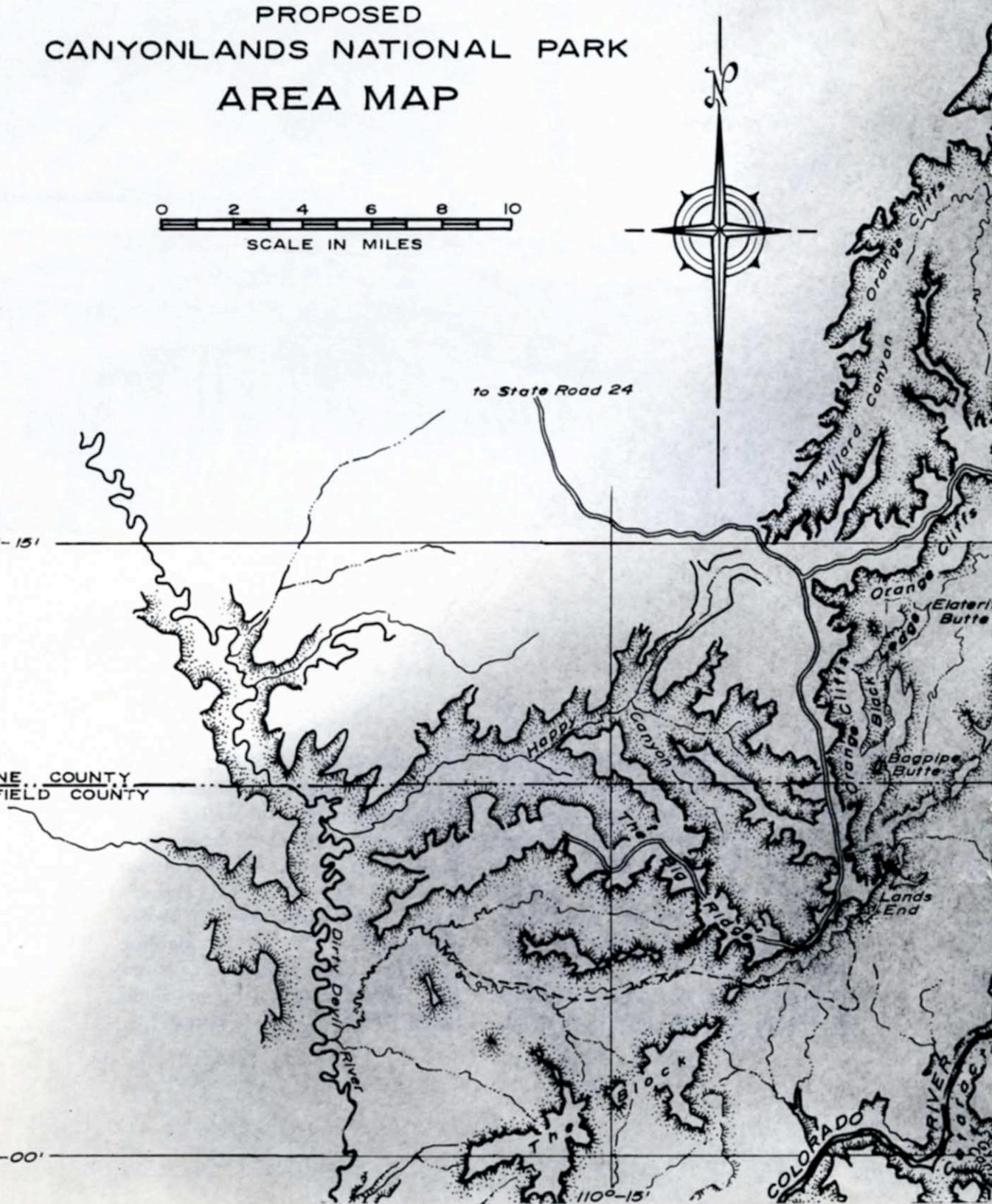
to State Road 24

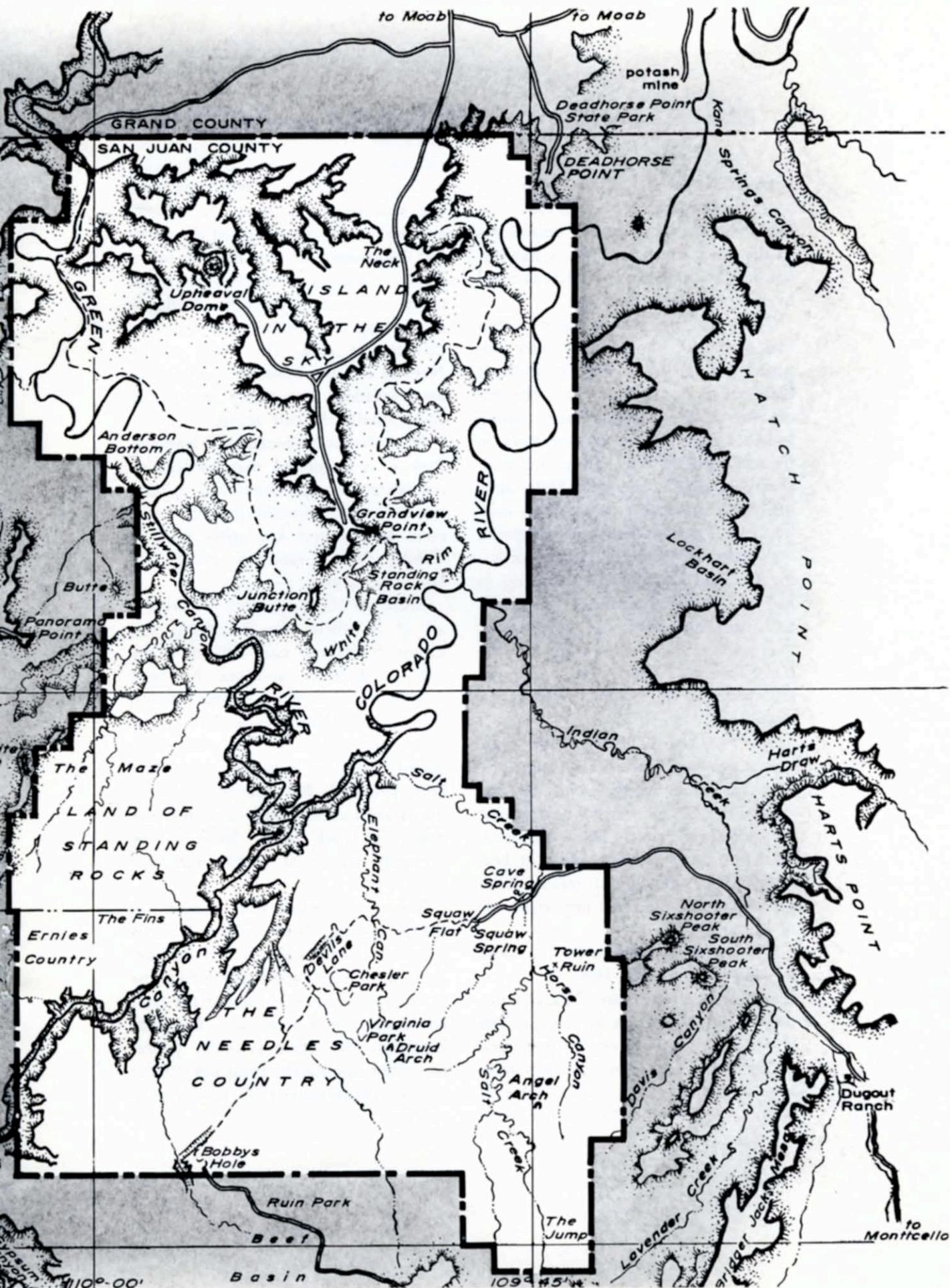
38°-15'

WAYNE COUNTY  
GARFIELD COUNTY

38°-00'

110°-15'





to Moab

GRAND COUNTY  
SAN JUAN COUNTY

potash mine  
Deadhorse Point  
State Park

DEADHORSE  
POINT

ISLAND  
IN THE  
SKY

Upheaval  
Dome

Grandview  
Point

Standing  
Rock  
Basin

White  
RIVER

COLORADO

Kanab  
Springs Canyon

Lockhart  
Basin

HARTS  
POINT

The Maze  
LAND OF  
STANDING  
ROCKS

The Fins  
Ernie's  
Country

THE  
NEEDLES  
COUNTRY

Salt  
Creek

Elephant  
Canyon

Cave  
Spring

Squaw  
Flat  
Squaw  
Spring

Chesler  
Park

Virginia  
Park  
Druid  
Arch

Angel  
Arch

Salt  
Creek

Indian  
Creek

Harts  
Draw

Creek

North  
Sixshooter  
Peak

South  
Sixshooter  
Peak

Tower  
Ruin

Horse  
Canyon

Davis  
Canyon

Lavender  
Creek

The  
Jump

Bridge  
Creek

HARTS  
POINT

Dugout  
Ranch

Jacks  
Woods

to  
Monticello

110°-00'

109°-45'

## PRESENT LAND USE

Southeastern Utah is one of the most sparsely populated regions in the country. There are no permanent inhabitants in the study area, and only a handful live in the rough country circumscribed by the perimeter highways.

There are no private lands within that portion of the canyon country proposed for inclusion in Canyonlands National Park. In fact, with the exception of the Dugout Ranch along Indian Creek and an 80-acre tract in the southeastern corner, the entire study area is in public ownership. State lands aggregate somewhat more than one-ninth of the total land area proposed for National Park status. A strip bordering Cataract Canyon and extending to just above the junction of the Green and Colorado Rivers is included in the reclamation withdrawal of the Glen Canyon project, and would be absorbed into the National Park when established.

All the proposed Park is under grazing permit, and grazing has historically been the most intensive use of this region, but lack of water limits grazing in the canyon country below the rims. Since the heart of the area is at best marginal or submarginal grazing land, grazing is not the most important use of the area.

Oil and gas is presently the big boom in southeastern Utah. However, in the area proposed for National Park status, there is no production at present. The entire proposed Park can be presumed to be under lease. Several wells have been drilled, and there will undoubtedly be more. The well-drilling is not, how-

ever, the most damaging aspect of exploration activities, for proper site restoration can render a drill location inconspicuous. It is the bulldozer trails and shot-hole pads cleared for seismic exploration that have created the greatest disturbance of the natural scene. There is already a network of tracks, many of them apparently needlessly duplicating one another, into much of this remote area. The heart of the Needles and the Maze have not as yet been invaded, presumably because of exceptionally difficult access.

With the establishment of a National Park it is suggested that cooperative regulation of exploration and drilling methods could minimize damage to the area, and protect key spots such as Chesler Park, Grandview Point, and Upheaval Dome.

Much of the area, and presumably all of it where the Shinarump and Chinle formations crop out below the cliffs of Wingate sandstone, has been staked with uranium mining claims. Some of these have been worked in past years, but almost all are now abandoned. So far as is known, none have been patented. No known producing mines are located within the area proposed for Park status. Some of the presently unworked claims may still be active.

There is considerable interest in potash mining. Texas Gulf Sulphur is presently developing a tremendous deposit on the Colorado River outside the proposed Park area. Much of the land bordering the Green and Colorado Rivers in the region is under permit or permit application from the Bureau of Land Management for potash prospecting.

Withdrawals for power site classifications and reservations line the rivers throughout the area.

Because of the almost impenetrable nature of much of the country, there is but little deer hunting in the proposed Park. Hunting is more intensive south and east of the area.

### ECONOMIC EFFECTS OF A NATIONAL PARK

A study by the University of Utah for the Service estimated that government and tourist expenditures during the first five years after establishment

of the Park would amount to almost \$11 million. This would result in wages and other net income in the surrounding area of over \$2.9 million. As this income is spent, it would produce further net income, for a total of over \$5 million in the area.

In the sixth year it is estimated that Park visits would reach 250,000. This would mean \$945,000 in wages and other net income in the area, from the \$3½ million spent by visitors. Wages and other income in the area, resulting directly from expenditures by a growing number of visitors, would reach \$2.7 million in the 15th year and \$4.5 million in the 25th year.

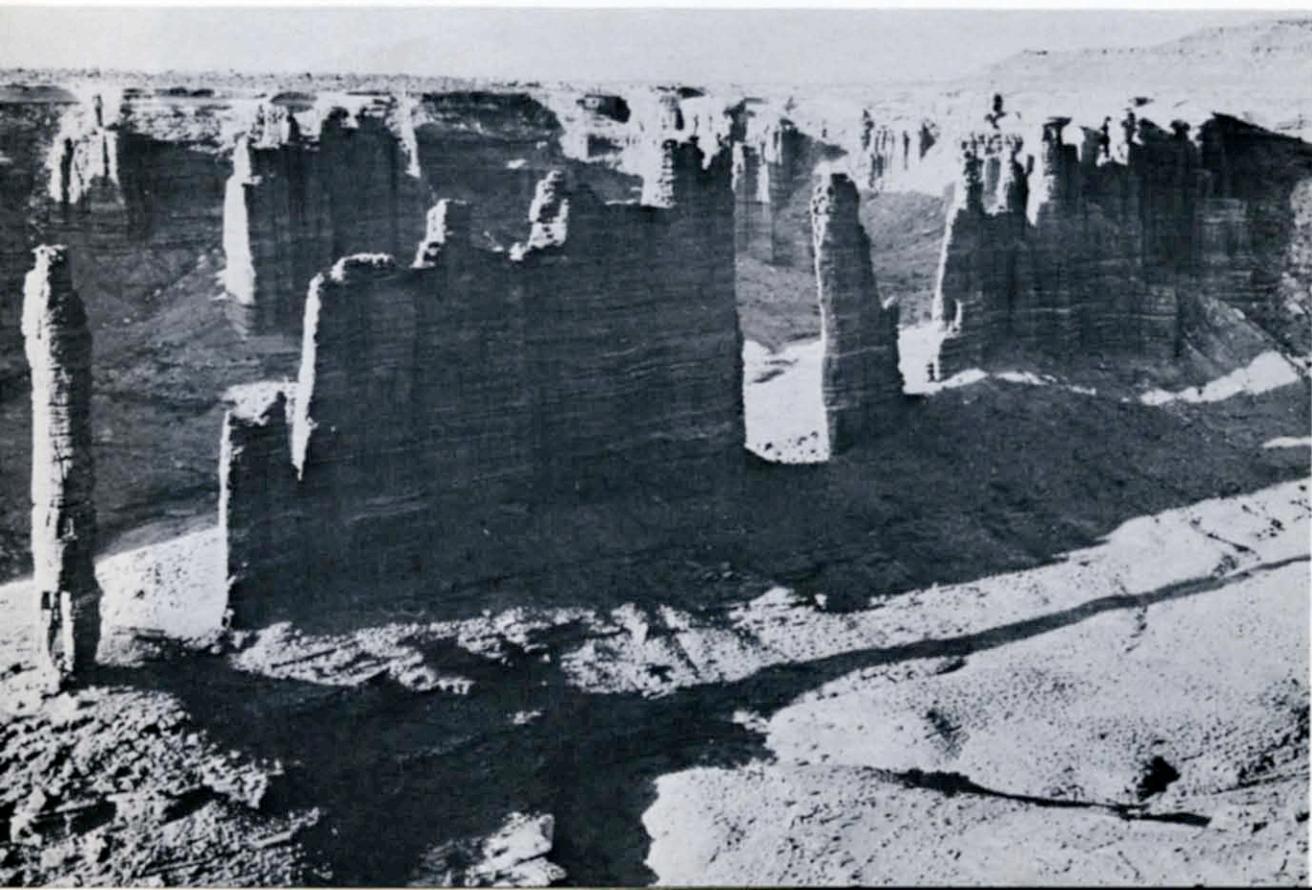
Canyon country from the White Rim. LaSal Mountains on skyline.





Standing Rock Basin from the air. Junction Butte in center background, Grandview Point in right background.

Standing Rock Basin from the White Rim



## THE OPPORTUNITY

The significant values of the canyon country have been endangered only recently, but the landscape scars of unrestrained oil exploration are becoming serious.

The network of exploration roads have opened up large segments of the area to potential vandalism or thoughtless, damaging use.

Unquestionable national significance and imminent destruction of park values point up the need for immediate conservation.

The entire study area is of park caliber. More restrictive boundaries are here proposed to include only the inner features of greatest significance.

Since the entire area is already in public ownership, there should be no major factors other than the tenure of existing land uses that would adversely affect its availability for park use.

The establishment of a National Park would benefit the local and State economy. Acquisition would cost nothing and the cost of development and administration would be commensurate with its national value and significance.

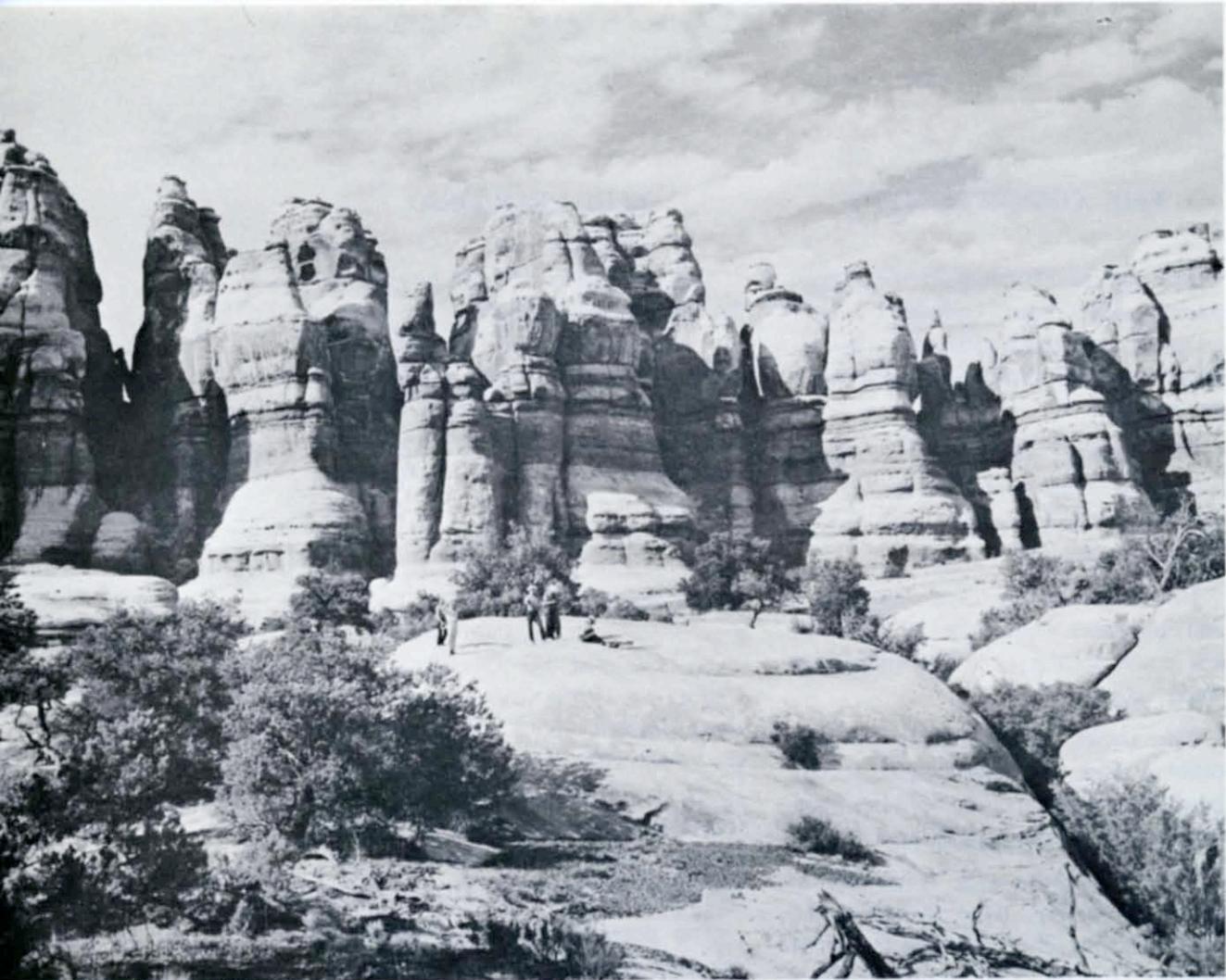
There is considerable public interest in the area, both of local and nationwide origin. The Advisory Board on National Parks, Historic Sites, Buildings, and Monuments has adjudged the area a worthy addition to the National Park System. It is of unquestionable national significance. It would make a suitable — in fact, an outstanding — National Park.

## THE PROPOSAL

The Department of the Interior and the National Park Service recommend the establishment of a Canyonlands National Park containing approximately 332,000 acres. The proposed boundaries have been drawn, along describable subdivision lines, to encompass the features of greatest scenic, geologic, inspirational, and recreational significance surrounding the confluence of the Green and Colorado Rivers. The Park would include the land between the rivers south of the Grand-San Juan County line; the inner rims of the river canyons above their confluence; the Maze and many erosion remnants in the Land of Standing Rocks; upper Cataract Canyon; the Needles and associated grabens; and lower Salt Creek, including its tributary, Horse Canyon.

The proposed area is adaptable to effective park preservation, administration, and development. Several superb overlooks on the rim plateaus are outside the proposed Park on the east and west. Since these overlooks are of esthetic as well as interpretive significance, there is a potential interpretive and public-use opportunity for future consideration.

From the confluence of the Green and Colorado Rivers the features of prime value range outward to the encircling cliffs. The proposed Park area is large enough, and the features are, fortuitously, sufficiently well located, to make it a comprehensive unit. It is not a complete whole, however, since it lacks the skyline plateau rim on two sides.



Banded pinnacles in the Needles—Virginia Park.

## THE PARK PLAN

A Canyonlands National Park would introduce its visitors to the grandeur of vast, colorful, unspoiled canyon country, and to the elemental processes that formed it. It would provide the delight of intricate scenic detail, and the wilderness excitement of the unexplored. It would be a compelling graph-

ic link between powerful natural forces and man's experience.

### *Policy*

Management and development for visitor and administrative uses should be carefully controlled, under three main precepts: Administer the area so as to protect the visitors and the significant values; make a total park experience available by suitable roads,

overlooks, other facilities, and a comprehensive interpretive program; and reserve appropriate portions of the Park for proper back-country uses.

The interpretive theme would relate the visual experiences of the visitor to the story of the landscape and its plant and animal inhabitants, and explain man's history here. Continuing research will provide the details of the story,

and it would be expressed through talks, conducted walks, and at manned overlooks, and by wayside and museum exhibits.

Cooperation would be sought with the Utah State Park and Recreation Commission to coordinate interpretation and other phases of management of Canyonlands National Park with those of Deadhorse Point State Park.

The Maze—still unexplored. Abajo Mountains in background.



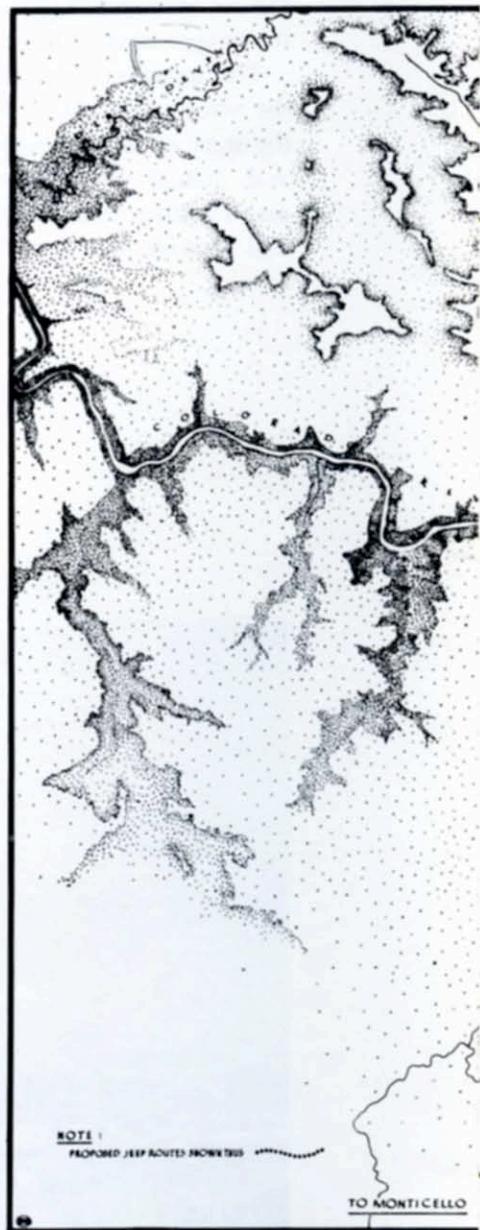
## Development

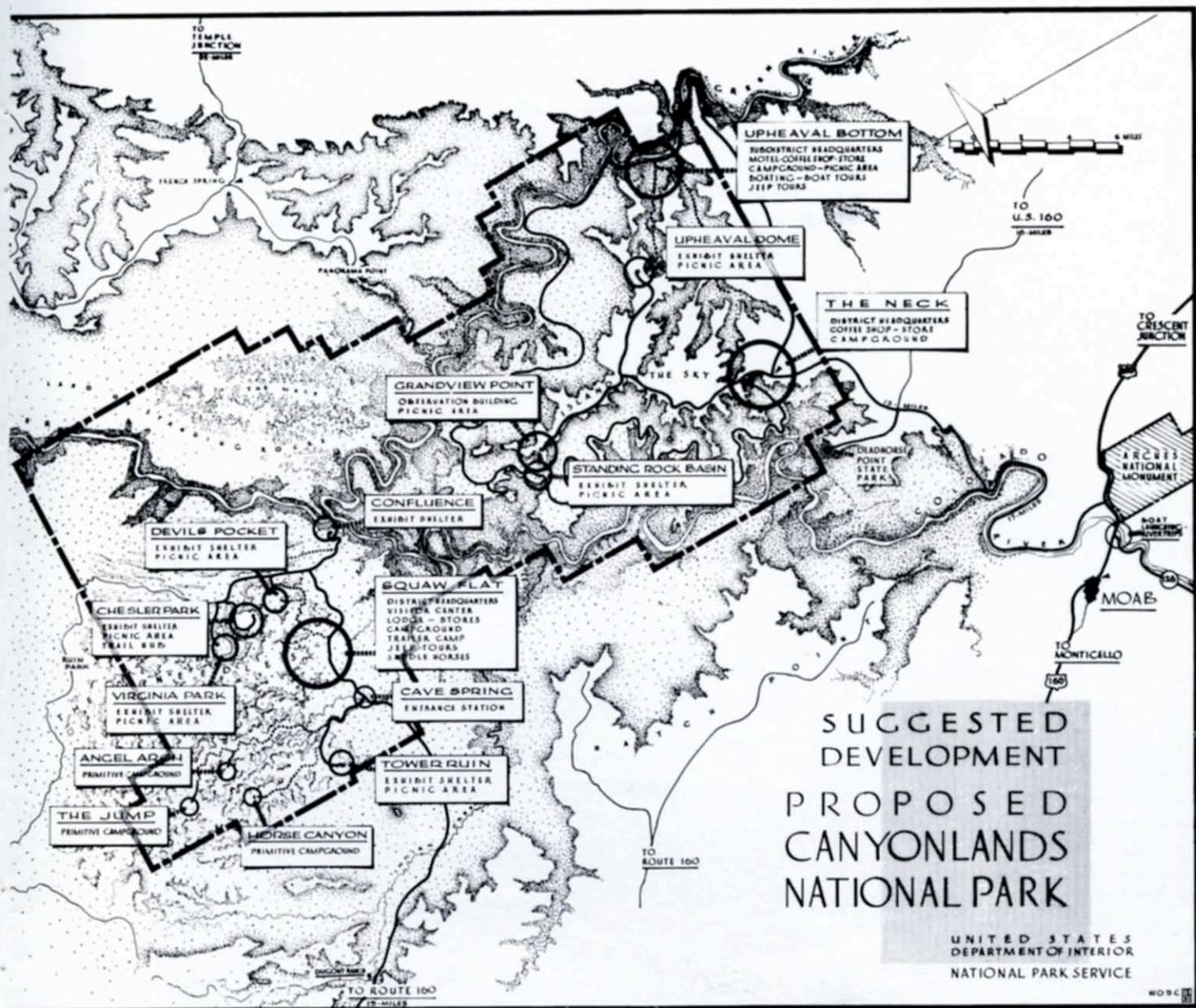
The problem of providing access while preserving wilderness can be solved here, for it is possible to get people into the heart of the area in comfort without disturbing the area values, and still leave appropriate sections for proper wilderness use.

Between the rivers, the Island in the Sky would be a primary visitor-use area, with roads, overlooks, interpretive devices including a visitor center, short trails, a campground, and adequate meal facilities. A road on the White Rim should circle the Island in the Sky, and lead to Standing Rock Basin and the Green River bottoms. On the river a ranger station, boat launching facilities, a campground, and overnight accommodations would serve the visitor and protection needs.

A road through the Needles from the Indian Creek entrance, which could eventually connect with approaches to the south in the Ruin Park-Abajo Mountains area, would provide access by short spur roads to such features as Chesler Park, Devils Pocket, Tower Ruin, and the Confluence overlook. Other features there could be reached by jeep, over established jeep trails, and on foot. Chesler Park would serve as a hub for trails fanning out to Druid Arch and Virginia Park. Squaw Flat could be a center for protection, interpretation, and visitor accommodation facilities.

Access to the west side of the Park would be by jeep, horseback, and on foot. Although outside of the proposed Park, the truly notable views from the western rim should be recognized and consideration should be given to making selected rim views accessible to the public.





# SUGGESTED DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED CANYONLANDS NATIONAL PARK

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

WORC

## PUBLIC USE

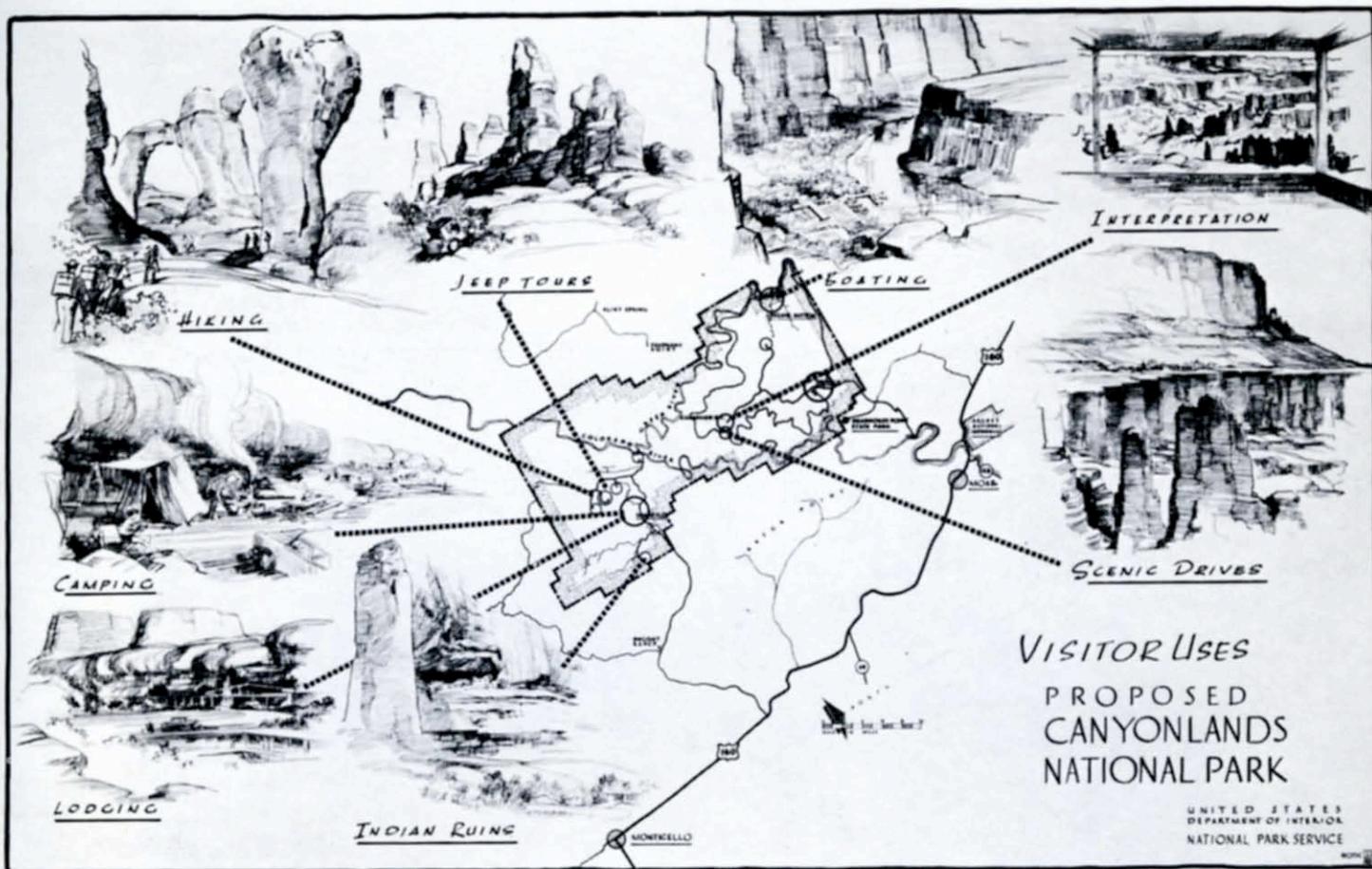
The historic, prehistoric, biologic, geologic, and, above all, scenic qualities make this proposed Park of intense interest to visitors. Here they can stand on a promontory and catch the excitement of the great, varied vista of unspoiled canyon country — and then go down and examine it from within. At any overlook it is obvious that a

trip below the rim will be rewarding, and such is the case.

From the White Rim between the rivers the land seems even bigger than when seen from above, for still the distant views are possible, and now the Island in the Sky looms high above as the White Rim road winds around the heads of the crisply sculptured canyons leading down to the rivers. The relative resistance of the White Rim sand-

Air view of the White Rim, Green River, Orange Cliffs, and Henry Mountains.





stone is evident, particularly where it caps the softer layers left standing as fins and large pillars in Standing Rock Basin. This road leads to the bottomlands along the Green River, and gives people an opportunity to compare, close up, that great stream with the slender ribbon they saw from above. From the bottomlands, a jeep side trip to the interior of Upheaval Dome provides another contrast with the view of it from above.

The drive into the Needles, and the possibilities for further exploration on foot or by jeep, afford a different experience. The rims are distant, now, and the wildly fashioned pinnacles and tortuous stream channels envelop the traveler. Here he will see and, with

proper interpretation, understand the details of the physiography. This is country to camp in, to hike in, to see at sunset and at dawn. This is the land the prehistoric Indians lived in. It touches the imagination, as the traveler relates his experience to that of earlier people, and to the forces that have formed the scene.

Along the west-side approach to the Park there are superb panoramas of the Canyonlands, and other more restricted views into the long, winding canyons incised into the highlands on that side. Some visitors will jeep and hike into the Park along the broad bench under the rim, for more than any section of the Park, that will be back country, and retain true wilderness appeal.



Looking down Cataract Canyon

Another use of the Park will be by boat, along the rivers. The Green and Colorado are navigable (and already well used) downstream to just below their confluence. This aspect of the Park—seeing it from the bottom up—is again a new dimension in the Canyonlands experience. A few river runners will continue to run the rapids of Cataract Canyon, down to the impounded waters of Lake Powell.

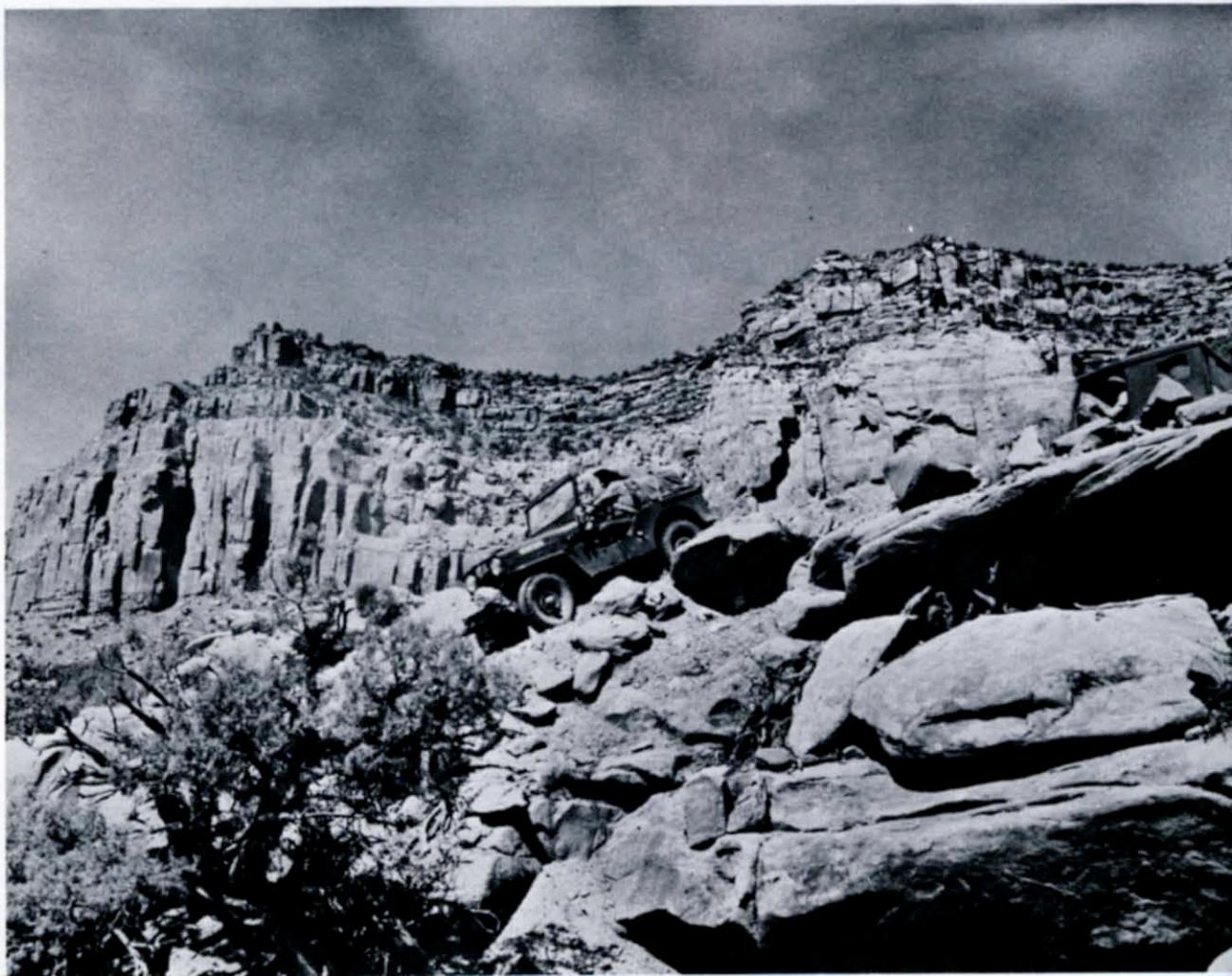
This, then, will be a Park that stimulates visitors' interests immediately, from the first viewpoint visited, and that provides intriguing things to do and see for many days. Although the rim views are superb, it is the ease of access to the country under the rim that makes this Park outstanding in terms of relating park values to people's experience.

The opportunities for recreation in

its most literal sense—a spiritual refreshment—are so great in the Canyonlands that recreation is of paramount significance. This land is so unlike the home and work environment of most people who will visit it that their familiar cares and problems will be forgotten in the spiritual refreshment afforded by the spectacular scenery. Some people may be repelled, and call the scenery ugly; not because it is drab or

dull, but merely because it is so different as to be incomprehensible to them and therefore hostile. But most visitors will be absorbed by the variety of visual experience, and will find so many fascinating things to do, to see, to poke around in, to explore, to understand, that a Canyonlands National Park, like other great National Parks, will fulfill recreational needs in the highest manner.

Rough jeeping in the Canyonlands





STEWART L. UDALL  
Secretary



MARCH, 1962

CONRAD L. WIRTH  
Director