

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FOREST SERVICE

George Washington National Forest
Harrisonburg, Virginia 22801

REPLY TO: 1630 Written Information

January 19, 1973

SUBJECT: Manuscript of Plans Must be Big and Broad



TO: Chief
Attention: Clifford Owsley, Div. of I&E

Attached is the revised manuscript for "Plans Must be Big and Broad" together with photographs and maps of the area.

If there is further revision needed, please let me know.

Robert W. Cermak

ROBERT W. CERMAK
Forest Supervisor

Attachments

" PLANS MUST BE BIG AND BROAD"

The Beginning of Recreation Planning on the National Forests

Ski areas, reservoirs and lakes, golf courses; natural and manmade attractions of all kinds are the focus of a burgeoning land development activity across the country. Aspen, Big Sky Country, London Bridge, and Disney World are familiar names in many homes. Many lesser proposals spring up almost daily throughout the land.

The outgrowth of recreation oriented development and land sales schemes combined with accelerating urban sprawl have focused attention on land use planning as a means to gain control. Some cities, counties, and states are far in front with complex inventories and comprehensive plans designed to control and guide land use. Other political units lag behind, but most governments realize the immediate need to plan for land use. The Federal government is also concerned and some kind of land use planning legislation seems sure to emerge from Congress in the near future.

Individual agencies within government have been involved in land use planning for years. One of the most complex networks of such plans has developed within the Forest Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture. Broad plans concerning individual resources have been developed at three or four levels of management and have been coordinated with directions covering all uses and resources through what has been known as Multiple Use Plans.

Presently, these plans are in another stage of evolution, one in a long succession of changes in what has to be regarded as a dynamic planning process spanning more than 50 years. Perhaps comprehensive planning in the Forest Service goes even further back in time. Certainly the first recreation plan for a National Forest, developed in 1919, embodied most of the elements which were incorporated into plan after plan, through the Multiple Use Plans and on to the land use planning process currently being put into effect on the National Forests. This is the story of that first recreation plan and its development.

Recreation planning on the National Forests can be dated from March 1, 1919, when Arthur H. Carhart reported for duty at the Rocky Mountain District (Regional) Headquarters of the Forest Service in Denver, Colorado. Carhart was fresh out of the U. S. Army and eager to apply his training as a landscape architect to recreation problems and opportunities in the National Forests. His job inquiries to several western districts of the Forest Service were turned down for lack of funds, but District Forester A. S. Peck of the Rocky Mountain District was able to offer him a job as a "Recreation Engineer" with an annual salary of \$1,800.

Carhart was to face a great challenge not only in the planning and management of the great recreation resources of the Rocky Mountain Forests, but also in building appreciation within the Forest Service of the future of outdoor recreation.

Not that recreation was new to the National Forests. It wasn't. There are many accounts of fishermen, hunters, picnickers, and even campers using the forests while they were yet called Forest Reserves. By 1919 estimated recreation use in the Rocky Mountain District had reached 1,223,544 visitors, and this total was 24 percent greater than recorded in 1917. There were several reasons for this increase in recreation use.

World War I had some effect by moving hundreds of thousands of young Army recruits from the densely populated cities to training camp locations near mountains. The restrictions on foreign travel due to the war also played a part leading to a "See America First" campaign on the part of railroads and travel agencies.

Probably the increasing population of the midwest and east and the expanded use of land and resources began to eliminate areas once used by the people in that section of the country. And, times were changing. Wages were rising and work hours growing shorter. The index of union wages rose from 114 in 1917 to 199 in 1920. More leisure time was available, and more people could afford to take vacations.

The new wealth enabled more people to own an automobile. Mass production techniques increased ownership and registration of cars in Colorado from 43,300 in 1916 to 129,300 in 1920. By 1925 registration reached 240,000, an almost sixfold increase in 10 years.^{1/} Just as it is today, the automobile became a major factor in the early development of outdoor recreation.

The increase in automobile ownership and production required improved highways. In 1918 only 2,250 miles of road in Colorado had a gravel, sand, or pavement surface. The post war era saw the beginning of many major highway projects, and by 1925 total road mileage was up 70 percent over 1918, and surfaced road mileage had increased by 270 percent.^{2/} This was a time when highway travel was still an adventure and roads were named to attract the traveler. Routes like the Navajo Trail, the Victory Highway, the Plains to Mountains Highway, the Plains and Canada Highway, and the Lincoln Highway were being promoted by states and cities throughout the country.

In the state of Colorado the war's end was the signal for cities and towns along the Front Range to agitate for recreational developments in the nearby National Forests. The success of Rocky Mountain National Park, the city of Denver's Mountain Park System, and the Pikes Peak Region in attracting visitors was the envy of other cities eager for a share of the tourist dollar.

The first real action came in the southern part of the state. In 1918 the Commerce Club (Chamber of Commerce) of Pueblo under the leadership of P. A. Gray asked Supervisor A. G. Hamel of the San Isabel National Forest if the Service would install camp and picnic facilities in the Wet Mountains west of Pueblo. Hamel replied that there had never been an appropriation by Congress for this type of work, and, while he recognized the need, he had no funds.^{3/}

The Club came back with an offer of \$1,200, half of which was put up by the city of Pueblo, to develop facilities in Squirrel Creek Canyon near Beulah, about 30 miles west of Pueblo. The city built three toilets, ten fireplaces, two shelters, and other improvements sufficient to accommodate up to 125 people. The response from Puebloans was immediate, in fact, overwhelming. One Sunday in August 1919, over 700 automobiles were counted near the recreation facilities in Squirrel Creek Canyon.

Al Hamel was a man of vision. He saw opportunities for outdoor recreation on the San Isabel. He was also an astute judge of the times and of the men who showed interest in the Forest. The little development along Squirrel Creek had the attention of the Commerce Club and Hamel exploited this interest with the suggestion that the 1919 work might be expanded unto cooperative effort, perhaps an association for recreation development. Having sown the seed, he wisely waited for it to germinate.

Earlier in 1919 Hamel had taken the new Recreation Engineer on a tour of the Forest. He hauled him around the attractive forested canyons of the Wet Mountains building Carhart's interest in the recreation potential of the Forest. As recalled by Arthur Carhart in April of 1972, Hamel then brought him over the Hardscrabble Divide and stopped with the snow capped splendor of the Sangre de Cristo Range spread across the western horizon. Carhart was so impressed that he agreed to seriously consider recreation planning on the San Isabel.

Perhaps it was during this tour that Hamel and Carhart also discussed ways to finance recreation development. The people of Pueblo had shown their interest and had backed it up with dollars. The origin of the idea of a recreation association is uncertain, but it probably came from the determination of these two men to put a recreation plan into action.

Pete Gray, secretary of the Pueblo Commerce Club, was also foresighted and enthusiastic. When members of the Club mentioned further recreation development of the Forest, and Al Hamel made offhand references to association, Gray was not slow in arriving at the answer. So it was with Arthur Carhart as a catalyst and the guidance of Supervisor Hamel that the members of the Commerce Club formed the non-profit San Isabel Public Recreation Association on November 6, 1919.^{4/} It was the first time private citizens had banded together to foster recreation development of a National Forest.

The interest of the people of Pueblo, Florence, and other communities near the San Isabel impressed the Recreation Engineer. Carhart was the first landscape architect employed by the Service, the first man whose sole job was to investigate recreation resources for the Service and to develop plans for their use. He had been busy during his first 9 months in the Forest Service. He visited all the forests of the District to gain knowledge of their recreation potential. He was on the lookout for the right combination of natural potential, location, and local interest which could be used as model for a comprehensive recreation plan. By the fall of 1919 he had narrowed the choice to either the Superior National Forest in Minnesota or the San Isabel National Forest.

He was convinced that a plan was necessary because: "heretofore, camps have been put in as necessity dictated to satisfy a need.....(that) could not be ignored, and not to create a demand or anticipate a need." He felt that "There should be.....a recognition that any camp or summer home-site has a direct relation to all other uses and improvements in that region, and plans should be shaped to meet those conditions."^{5/}

There was strong support for recreation development by the communities near the San Isabel. In addition, Forest Supervisor Al Hamel had shown keen interest and enthusiasm in promoting recreation use of the Forest. The San Isabel Public Recreation Association was a source of funds without which a plan might remain an empty document instead of a record of dynamic accomplishment.

When he wrote the plan, Carhart listed nine factors which guided selection of a Forest for the first comprehensive recreation plan. The factors were: geography, physiography, proximity to population, transportation, history, scenery, local cooperation, Forest support and interest, and relationship to industrial workers.^{6/} It seems likely that the cooperative attitude of local people and of the personnel of the Forest were key factors in his selection of the San Isabel National Forest for the first comprehensive recreation planning in the National Forests. Although it was not listed, a tenth factor would have to be the money to do the job.

Sometime during the busy fall and winter of 1919 Carhart found time to write a Narrative Recreation Plan for the San Isabel. The original plan in the Conservation Library at Denver bears the date 1920, but references in the plan to other plans bearing December 1919 dates indicate the plan was written in 1919. In the foreword Carhart said: "These are the forward steps in policy.....in planning and putting into action the scheme here offered for the San Isabel National Forest. Concentration of effort..... (to) complete,....a comprehensive plan outline for a region before any work is started and then keep the big plan in view during development."^{7/} His objective was to "produce a magnificent recreation area which will be a pride to the Service and give in return to the people.....the greatest good to the greatest number."

He painted in broad strokes a concept of recreation use which was so integrated with other uses that today it would be called land use planning. Throughout he emphasized the "big plan,"^{8/} "big regional planning,"^{9/} "the larger plan,"^{10/} and "big planning,"^{11/} to drive home his central point that a broad regional plan was the fount from which smaller and detailed plans should flow. He was convinced that "detail plans for the different regions (within the Forest) will be worked out as the need arises..."^{12/} He struck upon the reasoning which guided later multiple use planning and current land use planning when he wrote, "*It forecasts a time when in all of the Forests of the Nation a really comprehensive plan for regional development will be in force* and, by a correlation of the recreational use with other activities and a full utilization of that use consistent with the best use of the Forest, will give to the people of the Nation the fullest possible return from their Forests."^{13/}

With this narrative as "the big plan" which provided the broad concepts and policies as a foundation, Carhart next wrote an action plan. The General Working Plan for Recreation Development of the San Isabel National Forest, Colorado, bore a date of December 1919, just a month after formation of the Association. It was timely because the Association would be ready to go to work in the spring of 1920.

The working plan contained the details of a program for recreation development of the San Isabel. One of its purposes was to guide development by the S.I.P.R.A. and a newly formed second organization, the Spanish Peaks Mountain Playground Association. A second purpose was to provide a model for other recreation development in the National Forests. The plan recognized that recreational use of a National Forest was highly varied and complex. Carhart applied regional planning techniques to link all elements of recreation, sanitation, transportation, wildlife, and fire protection together in a comprehensive plan.

The plan first divided the Forest into units according to topographic features, access, and geographic location. The next step was to determine origins of recreation traffic and distribution points for this traffic once it was near or on the Forest. Carhart then identified a network of primary and secondary roads needed to distribute use. Each unit of the Forest was separately considered. Next the planning indicated focal points in most of the units toward which recreation use could be concentrated by reason of the available recreation resources. Each recreation area was described as to what facilities

it should contain. The typical area centered on tent camps with picnic grounds, hotels (resorts), auto camps, and recreation trails at varying distances from the focus.

The last portion of the plan discussed some of the elements of recreation developments and use. In these sections some of the trends and problems of the ensuing 50 years were forecast. For instance, in a section on auto camps there is a description of the advantages of auto camps in bringing together visitors from across the country and the social life which would develop in these camps. Although recreation vehicles were yet to come, the description resembles the situation at a typical private campground of today.

While the plan proposed large numbers of summer homes, it also pointed out the dangers inherent in this kind of use. "There must be direction of this use or it will, in many cases, become a detriment. There is neither moral obligation nor legal reason for letting each applicant select for himself what he considers the best summer home location in the Forest without any reference to any other part of the plan, or other people's desires..... there is need for these areas being established...in locations where the development will be consistent with good use of the territory."^{14/}

A trail system tied to recreation use was proposed and different modes of transportation were considered. Stage or bus lines and even electric car lines were projected. The map section of the plan outlined each phase of the program. Also proposed was the principle that private development

of recreation opportunities both on and off the Forest should be encouraged. The emphasis was that such enterprises provide adequate service to the public, that they "forward recreational use," and that they not be allowed to overcharge.

The plan suggested that "as a general policy, the preservation of anything of unusual scenic beauty, scientific interest....should be carried out."^{15/} This was a reflection of Carhart's concurrent work in developing a theory of wilderness preservation and management. He also proposed acquisition of scenic areas outside the Forest for their protection.

Vistas and viewing areas were proposed along roadways and the outline of a visitor information program was suggested which included demonstration areas, outdoor education programs, and signing.

While Carhart was completing the plans, the Association was gaining momentum. The Directors authorized sale of 20,000 shares of stock at \$5 per share. During the winter of 1919-1920 nearly \$6,000 was raised for recreation development for the 1920 season. A list in San Isabel National Forest files showed 169 purchases varying from \$5 to \$400 and totalling \$5,615. The purchasers received a certificate and a certain amount of satisfaction for their part in developing recreation on the Forest.

This money was to be used to start development according to the working plan. An ambitious construction program was projected for 1920 based upon the plan. It included \$89,825 in improvements split between the Spanish Peaks, the

Sangre de Cristo and Wet Mountain areas. Of this total, \$18,930 was to be for recreation facilities and the rest for road project. Planned were 23 campgrounds, picnic areas, roadside rests, or trail camps plus several trails and other facilities.^{16/}

The S.I.P.R.A. pitched into its program with enthusiasm. Upon Carhart's recommendation the Association hired Frank H. Culley, then head of the Department of Landscape Design at Iowa State College, to plan and supervise its development.^{17/} Culley supervised a crew of four or five young men who built two campgrounds on Squirrel Creek Campground, another on South Hardscrabble Creek, and a fourth site on North Creek, all near Beulah, Colorado, in the Wet Mountains. Facilities included 75 camp units, 12 toilets, and 14 foot bridges. These campgrounds may have been the first designed and built by a landscape architect on the National Forests.

Another feature of that summer of 1920 was the construction of the Cascade Trail, possibly the first trail on the National Forests to be built specifically for recreation. The trail was designed by landscape architects to enhance the hiker's enjoyment of the natural scene, the stream, and the wildlife, and it created considerable interest among local people and professional men.

Much of the road work programmed for 1920 also was completed by county, state, and Forest Service crews. About \$75,000 was spent on several routes, two of which subsequently became state highways.

In these days of constantly increasing wages and escalating costs, it is interesting to review the cost of 75 family units, 3/4 mile of trail, and other facilities. The total cost of the 1920 construction was \$4,814.87 or about \$64 a family unit.^{18/} The same amount would only buy about three to five family units at today's prices. Cost records for the 1921 season showed toilets costing \$31.95 of which \$12.90 was for overhead, labor, and their subsistence. The same items for a cabin totaled \$59 per unit.^{19/} Materials and transportation cost for each cabin was \$55.

The Association's progress stimulated efforts by other communities. During 1919 the city of Florence, just north of the Forest boundary, also cooperated with the Forest by starting a small campground on South Hardscrabble Creek not far from the other developments. When the Association was formed the city agreed to work through them. The South Hardscrabble project was completed by the Association crew during 1920.

Directors of the Association and Forest Service people met with leaders in Walsenburg and Trinidad to discuss cooperative recreation development. As a result, the Spanish Peaks Mountain Playground Association was formed early in 1920. Although it was not active until late in the year, good progress was made. In 1920 a small campground was built on Cucharas Creek, a cabin camp begun at Blue Lakes, and two other areas were planned for Trujillo Creek and East Spanish Peaks.^{20/}

The concept of a cooperative recreation association spread to Ouray in western Colorado during 1920. The next year a similar association was formed

in Minnesota titled the Superior National Forest Recreation Association. This group was instrumental in early efforts to protect the area later designated as the Boundary Waters Canoe Area from logging and development for cabins and resorts.

From time to time there were conflicts between desires of the Association and Carhart's professional judgement. One case involving the location of a community house on Squirrel Creek is documented in a series of letters in the San Isabel National Forest historical file. The Association proposed a different location from that planned by Carhart. He responded with some electric comments about hodge-podge planning, snap judgement, and make-shift moves, but conceded that Supervisor Hamel should have the final say. Carhart even convinced the Association president, A. V. Fagerstrom, to stick to the plans, but the majority of the Association was unmoved. This time, however, "policy won over art" and a building was constructed along Squirrel Creek instead of at the top of the hill as Carhart proposed.

The impetus of Carhart's planning and the interest of the Forest and local people was enough to keep the S.I.P.R.A. going strong for several years. The publicity aspect of the program was amplified and plans were made with Missouri Pacific RR, Denver & Rio Grande Western RR, Santa Fe RR, and other transportation companies to bring tourists to Pueblo, the gateway to the San Isabel National Forest. Brochures were published extolling the scenery of the Sangre de Cristo, the Spanish Peaks, and the Great Sand Dunes (then part of the Forest).

The construction program continued through the 1920's with new campgrounds built at Ophir Creek, Davenport Gulch, and improvements at all the other sites. The Association was influential in securing many state, local, and federal road projects throughout the Forest area. The disputed community house and other facilities were built for use of Pueblo groups about half-way up Squirrel Creek. Other campgrounds were developed as a result of the program at Comache, Lake Creek, and Alvarado in the Sangre de Cristo Range. All construction was generally in line with Carhart's planning.

The steady process of recreation development on the San Isabel and the benefits of developing according to a plan were impressive to visitors and officials alike. The long hours of negotiation and discussion that Supervisor Hamel spent with the Association and the labor of his Rangers made the model recreation plan a reality on the ground. Perhaps this was the greatest achievement, a demonstration that recreation was an important use of the National Forests, that a plan worked, and that recreation on the National Forests deserved to be financed by Congress.

However, by 1923 the Recreation Engineer was no longer on the scene. Carhart proposed expansion of the recreation budget for the Rocky Mountain District to \$56,000 for the Fiscal Year 1922. He suggested adding five more landscape architects and proposed recreation construction on several forests. He was unsuccessful in reaching his goal and the following year asked for \$40,000. Congress allotted only \$10,000 and Carhart left the Service realizing his dreams for recreation on the National Forests had been sidetracked.

When the 1929 stock market crash shook the nation, it spelled the slow death of the Association. The depression years were especially severe in southern Colorado where the economy was strongly linked to coal mining and steel making. There were no longer extra dollars available for building recreation areas.

However, the advent of the Civilian Conservation Corps in 1933 gave new life to recreation development. The first CCC camp in Colorado was established on South Hardscrabble Creek in April 1933. It was short-lived and closed in November 1933, but other camps were set up in August 1934 at Gardner, Colorado, at South Creek near Beulah in November 1935, and at Lake Isabel in May 1937.

Among the many accomplishments of these young men was development of 170 acres of public camp and picnic grounds. About 93 family units were developed and most of the sites developed by the Association were improved. In effect, the CCC had taken over the duties of the Association.^{21/}

The coming of the CCC coincided with a decline of the Association caused by economic conditions and by retirement of its original officers. There must have been some sense of relief when the CCC arrived to assume what had become an ever larger job. The Association made one last major effort when it purchased land for construction of Lake Isabel Dam and Reservoir. The dam and reservoir were built by the CCC and the small lake immediately became the most popular recreation water in southern Colorado.

What happened to the campgrounds built by the Association? In 1952 the Squirrel Creek Road was virtually destroyed by a flood. Now, the only access to the old campgrounds is on foot along the rocky stream bed. One section of the road traversing a hill away from the creek goes from nowhere to nowhere. The old Pueblo municipal building still stands, the campgrounds are still there with tables, sunken garbage cans, fireplaces, and toilets, ready for visitors who never arrive. The tables and toilets rot a little each year, and falling trees cover more spurs and trails. The other campgrounds built under the plan are used by campers in recreation vehicles, and Lake Isabel is the heaviest used area on the Forest.

What about Carhart's plan? It is now a historic document, but the basic structure of recreation plans is essentially the same as in that first plan. In fact, with revision to account for changed transportation methods, the original plan still fits the situation. Some of the problems he forecast came to pass, especially in other forests which did not have his "big plan." The San Isabel never became a major recreation center despite the efforts of the Association, the Forest, and Carhart, but this was due to economic and international conditions which they could not foresee. Now Southeast Colorado appears to be on the threshold of a new economic and population surge which could have heavy impact on the San Isabel.

Carhart's first plan became the model for others which followed, and in later years many of the proposals he made became policy. These plans and policies make it possible to provide quality recreation for many people as he foresaw over 50 years ago. On the San Isabel recreation use has grown

steadily outward from Carhart's "focal points," but today's principal attractions are still the same scenic mountains that Al Hamel showed to Carhart that day in 1919.

Are there lessons to be learned from the San Isabel Plan 50 years after its inception?

The effort was successful because it welded a workable plan to effective leadership and public cooperation. Carhart's plan was a landmark. His creative approach set the stage for recreation development of the San Isabel, and subsequently of all National Forests. The durability of the plan and its elements shows that the concepts were sound, but the test of a plan is how well it works.

Without leadership and financing the plan would have joined other papers gathering dust in a forgotten file. Al Hamel and Pete Gray provided the direction that fueled the plan and kept it going long after its author left. They were the prime movers who brought the plan to life on the ground as highways, campgrounds, trails, and many other recreation facilities.

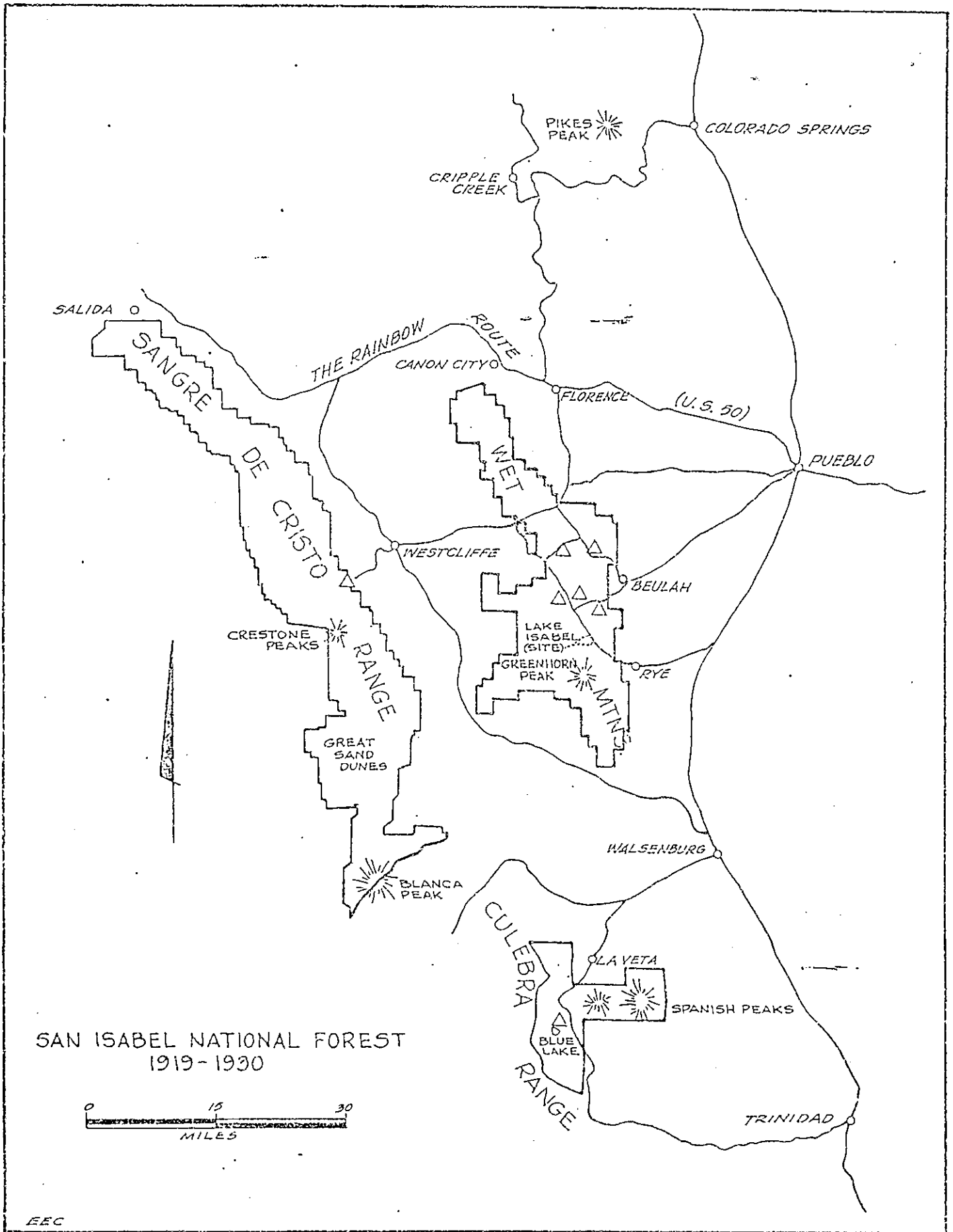
But, the outstanding success story was the cooperative effort between government and the people of Pueblo and southern Colorado. This cooperation produced the funds which made the plan a reality. Just as important, it established a priority of land use that impressed all those who came

in contact with the project. The cooperative idea spread, and with it spread the realization that recreation was a major use of the National Forests that should be managed and funded.

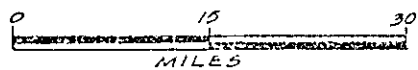
In the five decades since the San Isabel Plan was written many good planners and leaders have been developed within the Forest Service. Recreation is now recognized and financed by Congress as a major use of the National Forests. However, then as now, "the fullest possible return from their Forests" depends upon active citizen participation in government.

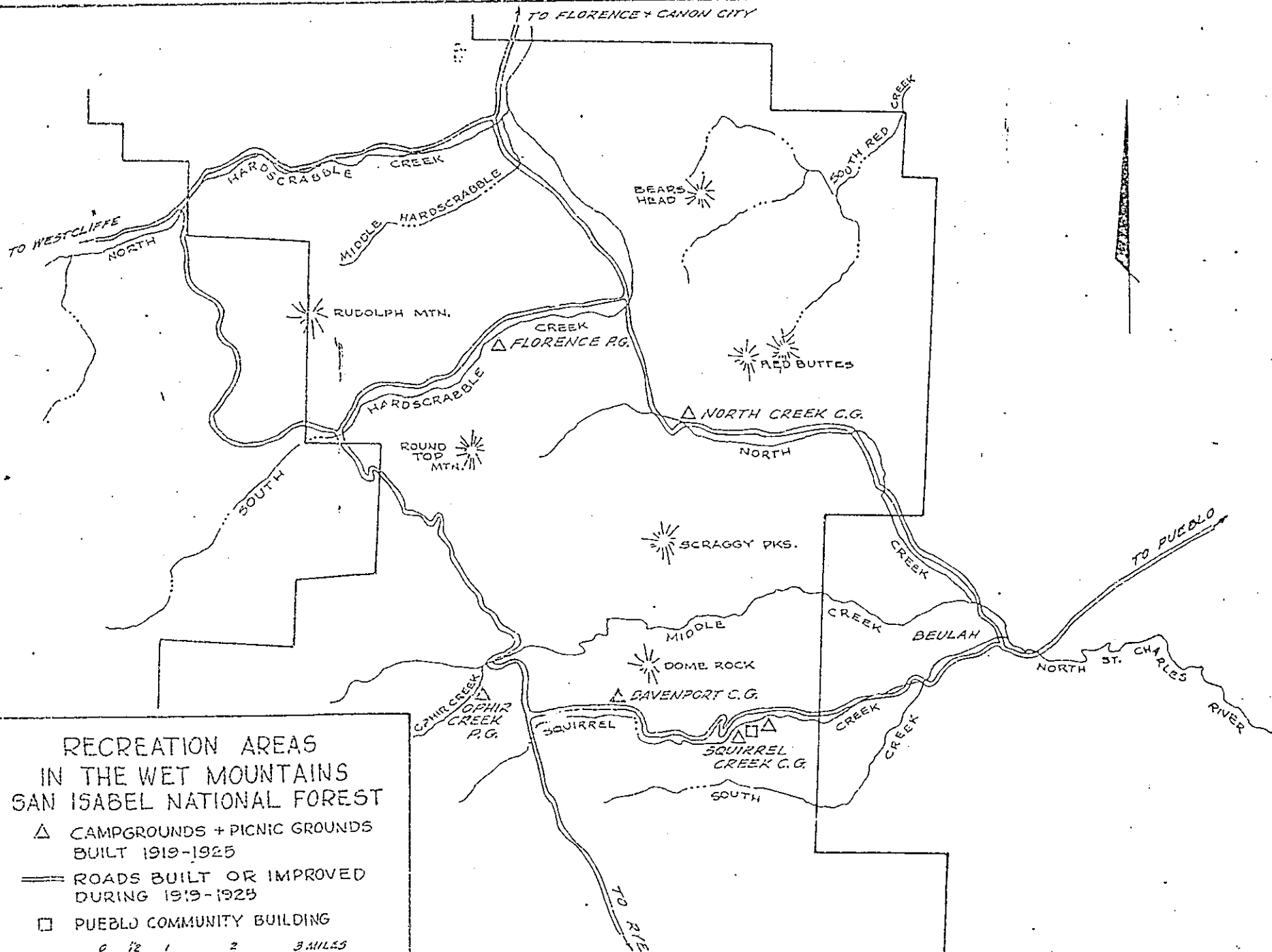
FOOTNOTES

1. Statistical Abstract of the United States 1920, 1925
2. Statistical Abstract of the United States 1918, 1926
3. Letter District Forester Peck to Chief Forester, December 3, 1920, p. 12, Carhart Papers, Conservation Library, Denver
4. Copy of Articles of Incorporation, S.I.P.R.A. file, San Isabel National Forest historical file, Pueblo
5. San Isabel National Forest Recreation Plan, p. 2, Carhart Papers, Conservation Library, Denver
6. pp. 6-8 ibid
7. pp. 3-4 ibid
8. p 4 ibid
9. p. 9, ibid
10. p. 49 ibid
11. p. 49, ibid
12. p. 49 ibid
13. p. 49 ibid
14. General Working Plan for Recreational Development of the San Isabel National Forest, Colorado, December 1919, pp. 39-40, Carhart Papers, Conservation Library, Denver
15. p. 59 ibid
16. San Isabel National Forest historical file, S.I.P.R.A. folder, Pueblo
17. Letter Carhart to Don Clark, November 6, 1960, San Isabel National Forest files, Pueblo
18. Letter Carhart to Hamel, April 4, 1921, San Isabel National Forest files, Pueblo
19. San Isabel National Historical File, S.I.P.R.A. folder, Pueblo
20. Letter Peck to Chief Forester, December 3, 1920, p. 26, Carhart Papers, Conservation Library, Denver
21. San Isabel National Forest Historical file, Folder 1931-1937, Pueblo



SAN ISABEL NATIONAL FOREST
1919-1930





RECREATION AREAS
IN THE WET MOUNTAINS
SAN ISABEL NATIONAL FOREST

△ CAMPGROUNDS + PICNIC GROUNDS
BUILT 1919-1925

== ROADS BUILT OR IMPROVED
DURING 1919-1925

□ PUEBLO COMMUNITY BUILDING

0 1/2 1 2 3 MILES