

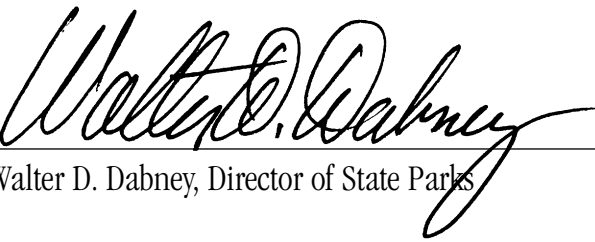
**HUECO TANKS  
STATE HISTORICAL PARK**

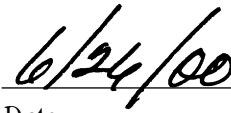
***Public Use Plan 2000***

**TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE**

**June 2000**

This document has been approved for implementation by:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Walter D. Dabney, Director of State Parks

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

# C O N T E N T S

I.	I N T R O D U C T I O N .....	2
II.	P U B L I C U S E P L A N S U M M A R Y .....	4
III.	P U B L I C U S E P L A N R E V I E W .....	5
	A. Mandatory Orientation .....	5
	B. Hours of Park Operation .....	5
	C. Park Fees .....	6
	D. Park Reservations .....	6
	E. Overnight Use .....	7
	F. Fires, Pets, and Bicycles .....	8
	G. Trail System .....	8
	H. Park Management Zones and Visitation .....	10
	I. Commercial and Volunteer Guide Program .....	11
	J. Cultural Resource Management .....	12
	K. Natural Resource Management .....	15
	L. Closure of Critically Impacted and Sensitive Areas .....	16
	M. Volunteer Programs .....	17
	N. Special Use Permit System .....	17
	O. Tours .....	19
	P. Interpretation and Education Programs .....	20
IV.	C O N C L U S I O N .....	20

*Hueco Tanks State Historical Park is one of the most significant [pictograph and petroglyph] sites in North America. . . . The rich legacy of pictographs, highly diverse, the early influence from Mesoamerica, the large number of masks that were precursors to the present day Pueblo Katsina cult, and the unique geology require us to view and protect Hueco Tanks as a precious and sacred cultural resource, as important to southwestern prehistory as the Chauvet Cave in France.*

— Dr. Kay Sutherland, anthropologist, 1997

## I. INTRODUCTION

Hueco Tanks State Historical Park (Hueco Tanks) is a unique place, containing meaning and importance to a variety of user groups. The park's most renowned resources are its thousands of painted rock images (Figure A). These images, spanning a period of at least 1500 years and reflecting influences from several cultural groups, are the reason that the land was designated a state park in 1970. In recognition of the uniqueness and national significance of the images, the entire 860-acre park was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1971.

While the painted rock images are the most well known of its resources, the park is highly significant for other reasons as well. Today, several Native American groups use the park for religious purposes, and view the painted rock panels and landscape as meaningful components of their past and present heritage. The modern importance ascribed to the park has extended

throughout historic and prehistoric times. Archeological deposits, including the remains of surprisingly intact materials, indicate that the area was visited from as early as 10,000 years ago to the present. In addition to these cultural resources, the park is significant for its natural resources as well. Within the park are several rare or localized plant species, and a relatively rare biotic community supported by water resources.



Figure A. Painting of Horned Dancer

Stewardship of these important resources is entrusted to Texas Parks and Wildlife (TPW). Their management is a complex challenge, requiring policies to be developed that will protect the cultural and natural resources while providing for continued resource-compatible public use. While the park's primary significance lies in the cultural and natural resources it contains, it has also traditionally been viewed as a recreational resource. Recreational users include rock climbers, birders, hikers, and others.



Figure C. Erosion of sediments, caused by unrestricted foot traffic

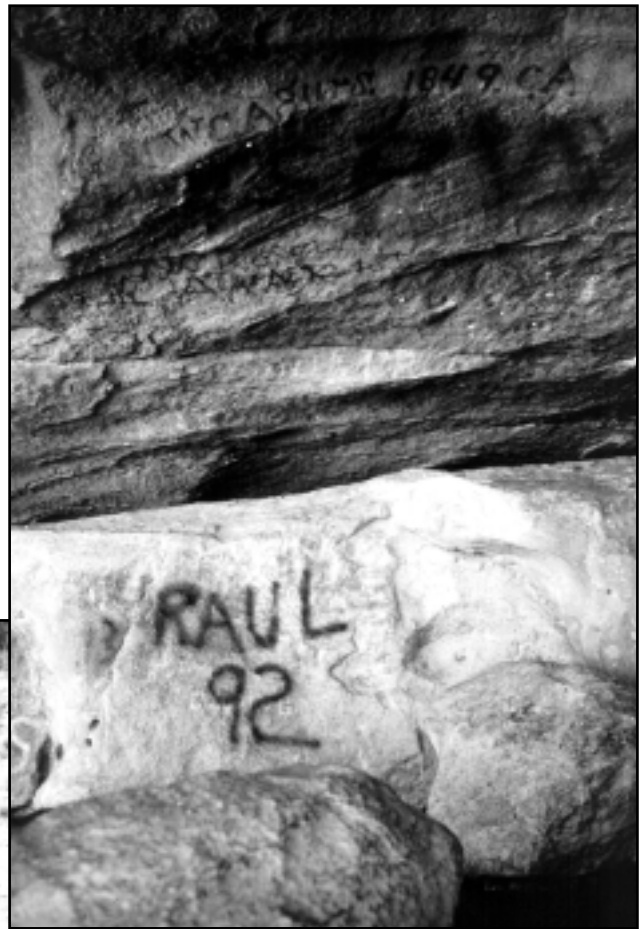


Figure B. Vandalism at Comanche Cave

The principal goal of this Public Use Plan is to balance preservation of the natural and cultural resources and the accommodation of recreational use. Prior to the implementation of the initial Public Use Plan in the fall of 1998, unrestricted access resulted in vandalism of painted images (Figure B) and erosion of archeological deposits and vegetation (Figure C). The initial Public Use Plan was developed primarily to protect the resources from these impacts. The Public Use Plan 2000 retains this emphasis on resource protection, while

modifying some aspects of the initial Public Use Plan. The current Plan, presented here, seeks to preserve the unique experience that Hueco Tanks offers, including opportunities for solitude, discovery, and wildlife viewing. Consequently, the Plan does not attempt to establish “carrying capacity,” but seeks to manage use so as to retain the special spirit of Hueco Tanks.

The initial Public Use Plan for Hueco Tanks was developed based upon recommendations in the park's resources management plan, public input and review. The release of the plan in 1998 marked a decisive step in TPW's efforts to protect the priceless natural and cultural resources present at Hueco Tanks. As part of the ongoing process of monitoring the effectiveness of the plan, TPW agreed to conduct a review of the Public Use Plan after it had been in place for more than a year. In accordance with this agreement, in December 1999 TPW released a written review of the plan that contained proposed changes. This review was disseminated to the public, and written and oral input was obtained from various members of the public, including Native Americans, archeologists, pictograph enthusiasts, rock climbers, campers, hikers, and others with interest in the park. After reviewing these comments from the public, TPW has approved several changes to the initial use plan. These changes, as well as those procedures to be retained, are described in the Public Use Plan presented here.

Public Use Plan 2000 has been developed to meet the goal of protecting and preserving the park's important cultural and natural resources. These resources include not only the obvious elements such as painted images on the rock and archeological deposits, but also less tangible elements such as landscape and viewshed. Preservation of these elements is essential to restore and maintain the cultural landscapes so important to many Native Americans, and to improve the visitor experience for all users of the park. The need for continuing and strengthening the preservation controls in the Public Use Plan remains high. Graffiti and other vandalism, while reduced, has not been eliminated and erosion continues to be a problem in some areas.

## **II. PUBLIC USE PLAN SUMMARY**

Implementation of the Public Use Plan for Hueco Tanks began September 1, 1998. The initial Public Use Plan was the result of a process that involved field investigations, public meetings and input, and peer review of draft plans. The stated goal of the plan was to ensure the protection and preservation of the resources of Hueco Tanks, while providing for an acceptable level of public use.

At the time the initial Public Use Plan was released, a commitment was made to evaluate the results of the management changes at the one-year mark. This evaluation was conducted over a period of several months between Summer 1999 and Spring 2000. As a result of this evaluation, several elements of the original Public Use Plan were retained, and other elements were modified. The following sections will address each element of the Public Use Plan, providing a synopsis of the plan's intent, an assessment of implementation, and its current status including any changes to be made.

### **III. PUBLIC USE PLAN REVIEW**

#### **A. Mandatory Orientation**

1. ORIGINAL PUBLIC USE PLAN: Required mandatory orientation for all park visitors not accompanied by a permitted guide. Orientation was provided by park staff and included information regarding the value of park resources, methods and reasons for resource protection, user responsibilities, areas for special use activities, areas off limits or of restricted access, history and prehistory of the site and appropriate use of the park.
2. ASSESSMENT: As of April 30, 2000, more than 14,000 adults have successfully completed the orientation. This figure does not include the hundreds of children, 12 and under, who have also been oriented. Following completion of the orientation program, visitors demonstrate a better understanding of the changes in public use of the park and an improved appreciation of the park.
3. PUBLIC USE PLAN 2000: TPW is currently finalizing the production of an orientation video. At that time, the current method of orientation will be replaced with a visitor-activated video orientation.

#### **B. Hours of Park Operation**

1. ORIGINAL PUBLIC USE PLAN: Operating hours set out in the plan were based upon daylight savings time changes and were designed to provide staff with sufficient daylight at the end of the day to clear the park. Presence of evening light can be a critical factor in cases of lost or injured park visitors.

Hours defined in the plan were:

- 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. during winter season (October 1 through March 31)
- 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. during summer season (April 1 through September 30)

2. ASSESSMENT: Hours of operation have proved generally acceptable to visitors and staff. Staff recommends that with limited staff and light visitation during spring evenings, the winter hours of operation be extended by one month.
3. PUBLIC USE PLAN 2000: The hours of park operations are to be amended as follows:
  - Winter season (October 1 through April 30): 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
  - Summer season (May 1 through September 30):
    - Friday through Sunday: 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.
    - Monday through Thursday 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

## **C. Park Fees**

1. ORIGINAL PUBLIC USE PLAN: The fee schedule defined in the plan included:
  - \$4 per person, per day
  - Texas Conservation Passport accepted for the holder only
  - Children 12 and under admitted free when accompanied by an adult
  - Parklands Passport accepted as a senior discount pass
2. ASSESSMENT: The park fee schedule has worked well and is known and accepted by park visitors.
3. PUBLIC USE PLAN 2000: There are no recommended changes to the park entrance fees. As described in Section D below, a \$4 non-refundable reservation fee will be charged to persons making reservations, but this fee will be applied to the entrance fee. There are no additional fees to participate on tours led by staff or volunteer guides. With the reinstatement of overnight camping (see Section E), the following camping fees will be applied:
  - \$9 per site per night, for sites having only water
  - \$11 per site per night, for sites having water and electricity

## **D. Park Reservations**

1. ORIGINAL PUBLIC USE PLAN: The provisions of the Public Use Plan removed the park from the Central Reservation System at TPW Headquarters in Austin, so that all reservations were made directly through Hueco Tanks State Historical Park Headquarters Office. Reservations were made for tours, the fifty North Mountain access slots, picnic sites, and camping, and could be made up to six months in advance. While not mandatory, reservations were recommended to guarantee access.
2. ASSESSMENT: Staff reports widespread abuse of the reservation system, particularly for North Mountain access slots. No limits were placed on the number of reservations an individual could make for any one date. Examples of the abuse include visitors unsure of the number in their party making multiple reservations for numerous weekends, up to six months in advance, effectively tying up most available North Mountain slots for extended periods. Once the date arrives, the visitor(s) with multiple reservations commonly cancels half or more of the slots reserved. Although slots are freed up, it is generally too late for interested parties to take advantage of the available reservations/slots.



Administratively, accepting reservations 7 days per week has proven difficult for staff to cover, particularly on busy weekends.

3. PUBLIC USE PLAN 2000: A \$4 per person non-refundable fee will be charged for each reservation made, and will be applied to the daily entrance fee at the time of the visit. Central Reservation Center policies regarding reservations and cancellations will be implemented as feasible. Reservations will be accepted Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., El Paso time.

## **E. Overnight Use**

1. ORIGINAL PUBLIC USE PLAN: The plan called for use of the camping area by groups only, including permitted commercial and volunteer guided groups and qualified educational study groups. All overnight use was to be by advance application and reservation only.
2. ASSESSMENT: A number of issues have arisen regarding full utilization of the campground. There are currently times when no qualified guides are available to camp with groups interested in staying overnight. In addition, individuals and families arrive at the park desiring to camp but, without a reservation or as a member of a guided party, they are turned away at the gate. Because of these situations, the campground is frequently underutilized or vacant. Some periodic flooding has caused damage to facilities and campsites.

With increased information regarding the numbers and locations of archeological deposits and pictographs, the risks associated with allowing overnight use become of greater concern. Because of these issues, a ban on overnight camping was instituted December 1, 1999.

Public response, however, has indicated strong support for reopening the park to camping. The utilization of a camp host system should allow camping to continue, while overcoming the problems associated with both unmonitored camping and the requirement of guide accompaniment.

3. PUBLIC USE PLAN 2000: Overnight use of the park will be allowed under the following conditions: (1) camp hosts will be present in the campground, (2) campers can stay for a maximum of three nights, and (3) there will be a six person maximum occupancy of any camping site. During the winter season, at least two camp hosts will be present; during the remainder of the year, there will be at least one camp host.

## **E. Fires, Pets, and Bicycles**

1. ORIGINAL PUBLIC USE PLAN: The plan did not permit pets or bicycles in the park under any circumstances. Fires were prohibited, with containerized fuel allowed only in designated camping and picnic areas.
2. ASSESSMENT: Situations have arisen during the year demonstrating the need for less restrictive regulations for pets and bicycles. Because of resource and visitor concerns, neither pets nor bicycles are appropriate in the backcountry of the park.
3. PUBLIC USE PLAN 2000: Pets will be allowed on leash and under control of their owners at all times; they will be allowed in camping and picnic areas and on designated roads only (Figure D, fold-out page 9). No pets will be allowed on tours, in the backcountry or outside of the developed areas of the park. Pets are allowed only in the camping and picnic areas. Owners must clean up after their pets.

Bicycles will be permitted only on designated paved roadways and in developed areas of the park. No bicycles will be allowed in the backcountry or on roads not open to motorized vehicles (see Figure D).

The prohibition on fires and limits on containerized fuel use in the designated camping and picnic areas only are retained.

## **G. Trail System**

1. ORIGINAL PUBLIC USE PLAN: Prior to fall of 1998, pedestrian traffic in the park was not channeled to specific trail routes. This uncontrolled pedestrian use cut numerous informal trails throughout the park, resulting in devegetation and severe erosion in some areas. The Public Use Plan called for development of a clearly delineated trail system to ensure resource protection and acceptable visitor circulation.
2. ASSESSMENT: An interim trail system was established in October 1998. The purpose of the trail system was to:
  - Identify primary routes of accessibility to all major rock features (mountains) and interpretive locations in park
  - Evaluate the trail routing in regards to operational and recreational requirements
  - Establish precedence for a defined and limited trail system
  - Allow an evaluation of a defined trail route in relation to known and suspected cultural and natural resources

When viewed from a recreational and operational perspective, the initial routing of the interim trail system proved to be a functional and scenic success. However, to ensure that the trail offered maximum protection to archeological deposits and to Native American concerns, archeological fieldwork and Native American consultation were undertaken. Archeological investigations during the summer of 1999 revealed a concentration of significant cultural deposits adjacent to the major geologic formations that comprise the nucleus of the park. This confirmation of suspected archeological materials necessitated amending sections of the proposed primary trail routes identified in October 1998. Consultation with Native Americans is ongoing.

The primary purpose of the proposed trail route is to enhance opportunities for park visitors to experience educational and interpretive benefits related to the park's cultural and natural resources, while also allowing them to enjoy the scenic vistas offered by the park. Recreational access is a secondary purpose of the trails. All trail routes are planned to avoid or minimize impacts to the significant natural and cultural resources of the park. The long-term goal is to offer every park visitor a guided experience to see at close hand and to learn about the many significant cultural and natural resources in the park.

3. PUBLIC USE PLAN 2000: The trail will be constructed in two or more phases due to funding considerations. Phase I construction, using currently available funds, will be initiated upon the completion of the Section 106 consultation process.

## **H. Park Management Zones and Visitation**

1. ORIGINAL PUBLIC USE PLAN: The plan divided the park into two separate management zones and set a total limit of 210 visitors in the park at any time. The majority of North Mountain was open to unguided use, for a total of 50 visitors at any given time. The south face of North Mountain and the remainder of the park were accessible by guided tour only, with tours provided by park staff, volunteer guides and certified commercial guides. Total guided tour participants were set at 160, with a maximum of eight tours underway at a time. Tour sizes were limited to 25 participants for educational tours and 10 participants for recreational tours.
2. ASSESSMENT: Because of the abuses of the reservation system, visitation at North Mountain has frequently been less than the maximum allowed at any time. As a result, some people wanting access to North Mountain have been turned away because all of the slots were filled. The limits set for total guided tour participants, total number of tours underway at a given time, and tour sizes have proven appropriate.

3. PUBLIC USE PLAN 2000: The unguided and guided areas designated in the original use plan will be retained, with the slight change that a buffer zone around the camping area will be open to visitors without a guide (see Figure D). This buffer zone is being opened to unguided access to allow visitors access to their campsites, and to allow bicycles and dogs access to paved roads in these areas. The visitation limit on North Mountain will be increased to 70 people, and the total number of visitors allowed in the park will accordingly be increased to 230. In addition, the reservation fee should reduce overbooking of reservations and allow additional visitors to access the North Mountain area.

## **I. Commercial and Volunteer Guide Program**

1. ORIGINAL PUBLIC USE PLAN: The plan provided for guide service concessionaires under contract with TPW to provide visitor tours and other activities within the park. Commercial guides were required to submit a proposal, provide proof of liability insurance, and complete guide service training conducted by TPW. Guides were responsible for ensuring that individuals under their supervision conduct themselves in an appropriate manner that is respectful of the park's resources and provides visitors with a safe, quality experience.
2. ASSESSMENT: Forty individuals have completed the Guide Certification courses conducted by park staff. Courses were conducted in October '98, January '99, May '99, and December '99 with (14), (8), (10), and (8) individuals completing the training, respectively. Two commercial guides have been certified, and others have submitted proposals for commercial guiding. Park interpreters have led the training classes, utilizing guest speakers from University of Texas El Paso, TPW, and the El Paso Trans Pecos Audubon Society. The three 2 1/2-day training courses during the first year were conducted to accommodate the requests from the public, although none of the classes reached the capacity maximum of fifteen.

### **PUBLIC USE PLAN 2000:**

*Purpose of Guide Services:* The use of commercial and volunteer guides is an important component of the Public Use Plan. Guides are essential to protect the resources of the site from either deliberate or inadvertent damage. Guides will monitor the actions of individuals within their tour or activity groups and notify park staff of any unacceptable behavior. Guides also serve to provide an educational experience to visitors by interpreting the varied resources of the site. Finally, guides assist in ensuring visitor safety by accompanying those who may be unfamiliar with the site and providing a communication link with staff.

*Training:* Continue staff conducted Guide Certification training at least twice a year, utilizing all available resources. Maintain the current 2 1/2 -day course format, but consider providing training on a more flexible schedule (i.e. three consecutive Saturdays) for individuals unable to attend the current format.

*Commercial Guide services:* As of September 1, 2000, individuals requesting permits as commercial guides will be required to carry \$500,000 worth of liability insurance, with the state named as an additional insured. This insurance is for the protection of the state, should a commercial tour member file a damage claim with the guide and subsequently name the state as a defendant. This insurance is required of all concessionaires operating in the State Park system, in the same amount or more. Commercial guides will be required to complete Guide Service Training before scheduling tours of the park. Because commercial guides must accept liability for the actions of their clients, commercial guides may participate in their tour activities.

*Volunteer Guide services:* Individuals that complete Guide Certification may assist the park by acting as guides for scheduled tours. A database of trained guides will be maintained by park staff and utilized on a rotating basis according to the guides' availability and area of interest. Volunteer climbing guides will not serve as climbing instructors and may not participate in climbing activities while guiding a group, so that full attention may be paid to those in their charge.

## **J. Cultural Resource Management**

1. ORIGINAL PUBLIC USE PLAN: The Public Use Plan was based upon the knowledge that Hueco Tanks contains extensive, highly significant cultural resources and upon the premise that resource protection must be given top priority in management of the site.
2. ASSESSMENT: At the initiation of the public use plan, TPW staff recognized that additional information was needed about the cultural resources within the park. Accordingly, three types of studies were proposed:
  - 1) a survey of the buried archeological deposits in the park;
  - 2) a survey of the pictographs in the park; and
  - 3) an ethnographic study documenting Native American viewpoints about the pictographs, landscape, and archeological remains.

Inventory surveys of the archeology and pictographs were initiated by TPW in 1999. The archeological study found that cultural deposits, spanning a period of 10,000 years, are

found throughout the park. They are concentrated around the base of the mountains in proximity to natural water sources, some captured by artificial dams. Features recorded in these areas include over 100 prehistoric hearths (campfires), 300 bedrock mortars (food-processing facilities), and broad areas of soils stained by intensive use. Over 160 areas sheltered by rocks contain pictographs and cultural deposits that preserve dietary evidence, fragile artifacts, and, in some cases, human remains.

The pictograph assessment provided an initial inventory and digital documentation of the 238 known pictograph panels in the park. An additional 45 pictograph panels were discovered in the course of recording the known panels, and many more are likely to be contained in areas of the mountains that were not studied intensively. Furthermore, scanning and enhancement of the digital images revealed additional pictographs, suggesting that rock faces that appear to be undecorated have a high potential to contain images not visible to the naked eye. Figure E (page 14) shows the locations of pictograph and petroglyph images and archeological deposits recorded to date.

These projects indicate that the archeological deposits in the park are significant and remain relatively intact, holding a considerable potential to provide information on the entire period of human history at Hueco Tanks and in the greater Southwest. Unfortunately, the deposits are subject to extreme erosion when the vegetative cover that anchors the sediments is removed. Regulation of foot traffic is necessary if these deposits are to be preserved. The results of the initial pictograph inventory indicate that significant cultural resources are not restricted to the ground level. This study has demonstrated that the mountains are covered with pictographs, and that years of study will be required to identify, document, and protect all of the images. By managing access in the park, the current use plan provides greater protection to these resources than they have had previously.

The ethnographic study will be initiated by summer 2000. The goals of this study are two-fold: (1) to identify the cultural groups who associate themselves with Hueco Tanks, and (2) to document how those groups used the park landscape, and record any beliefs that they might wish to share with TPW and/or the public regarding their ties to the park. The study is being undertaken for two reasons. First, TPW wishes to obtain information for management purposes. The ethnographic information will help managers evaluate requests for access to resources as well as identify sacred geographical features that may require special treatment or protection. Second, TPW wishes to obtain information that can be used to improve interpretation at the park, by incorporating Native American perspectives and developing a greater cultural sensitivity to the views of affiliated groups.

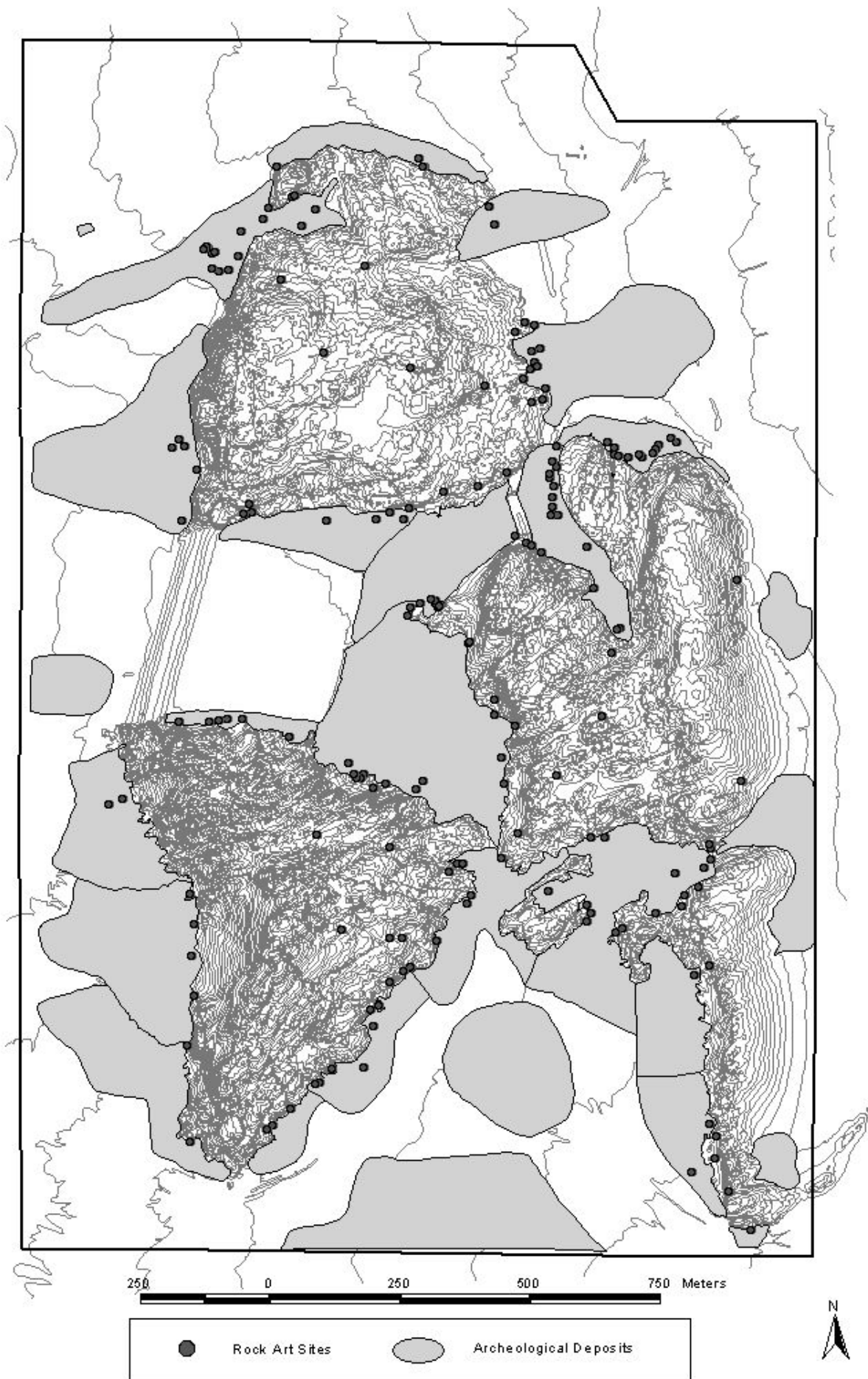


Figure E. Locations of pictograph and petroglyph images and archeological deposits recorded to date. 14

TPW has spent more than \$47,000 over the last five years in the clean-up of the graffiti over pictograph sites at Cave Kiva, Puking Horse, Comanche Cave, the White Horned Dancer and the Cave of the Masks.

Since the public use plan has been in place, the rate of vandalism and other damage to the cultural resources have been reduced. However, since its implementation there continue to be incidences of vandalism. Between September 1999 and April 2000, there have been twelve documented incidences of vandalism. Nine of these were in the unguided area and the remaining three occurred in the guided access only area. None of the three that occurred in the guided area were reported by tour guides, and are therefore believed to have been done by unaccompanied individuals straying from the unguided area.

3. PUBLIC USE PLAN 2000: The Public Use Plan concept of protecting cultural resources will be retained. Completion of the trail system is a very important factor in providing access and increased protection. The findings that the deposits contain intact materials and that the pictographs are present throughout the park, even in areas where they might not be readily visible to the naked eye, support the belief that access must continue to be managed, and that protecting the rock faces is critical. Completion of the ethnographic study is vital. TPW will continue using the services of a pictograph conservator for cleanup in additional areas. TPW will continue monitoring the park to assess ongoing impacts to the cultural resources.

## **K. Natural Resource Management**

1. ORIGINAL PUBLIC USE PLAN: Natural Resources concerns are addressed in the Public Use Plan through closure of critically impacted and sensitive areas, the location of tour routes, and through the planned development of a clearly delineated trail system
2. ASSESSMENT: The most critical problem continues to be sheet and gully erosion exacerbated by trampling and lack of a hardened/designated trail system.

Erosion along an old roadway parallel to the eastern boundary is a continuing problem. This entrenched drainage/gully is activated by runoff from the eastern flanks of West and East Mountains and the Southeast Spur. Originally this roadway intercepted storm runoff diverted by the man-made channel designed to divert runoff westward from the flanks of the Hueco Mountains into Hueco Tanks. A permanent solution to redirect this runoff into the natural drainage is the top priority for a long-term effort to restore the natural runoff and drainage patterns at the park. The critical



point of this endeavor is on private property approximately 1/8 mile east of the Southeast boundary of the park.

A colony of *Colubrina stricta*, a rare shrub, located on the south flanks of North Mountain is not directly imperiled. A monitoring protocol has been established to assess unacceptable impacts for this resource.

Baselines have been established and reports are pending for small mammals, reptiles and amphibians present at the site. Monitoring, as appropriate, will be implemented, particularly in the case of at least two bat roosts historically impacted by recreational activity.

The Resources Management Plan for Hueco Tanks has been authorized for implementation.

3. PUBLIC USE PLAN 2000: Reduction of erosion is a significant natural resource management issue at Hueco Tanks. By arresting erosion accelerated by high concentration of visitor use and through efforts to restore historical/natural drainage patterns, the restoration efforts can move forward. The first step in reducing erosion is the identification of drainage patterns and effects by a professional hydrologist. TPW has earmarked funding for this project, and will initiate the study in the upcoming fiscal year.

#### **L. Closure of Critically Impacted and Sensitive Areas**

1. ORIGINAL PUBLIC USE PLAN: Areas and climbs closed to climbing access listed in the September 1998 Public Use Plan included:
  - Bucket Roof
  - Nuclear Arms
  - Blood & Gore
  - Gold Star Roof
  - Artist's Opposition
  - Cave Kiva
  - 45 Degree Wall
  - Saint Vitus Dance
  - Site 17
  - Sites 16A, A1
  - Sites 29A, A1

2. ASSESSMENT: For the most part, visitors have continued to honor the closures. Staff closely monitors closed areas and ensures that areas are clearly delineated. There are additional areas in the Dragon's Den area that should be closed to protect newly discovered cultural resources or for more intensive natural resource management.
3. PUBLIC USE PLAN 2000: Sites listed above remain closed for restoration, re-vegetation, erosion control, or protection of sensitive resources. Based upon resource assessments, some areas of Dragon's Den will be added to the closed list. These areas will be closed due to the heavy devegetation and erosion caused by unregulated foot traffic in the area (Figure F). Specifically, the climbing areas known as Snappy Tom and Five Bimbos will be closed, and restoration and stabilization efforts initiated. Other areas will be open, but foot traffic will be regulated and visitors must remain on approved routes. The Dragon's Den area will be carefully monitored by park staff to assess the effectiveness of this policy on revegetation and resource protection.

The park staff will continue to monitor the condition of all areas of the park. Should additional areas be found to be endangered, TPW staff may elect to modify foot traffic routes or close those areas in the future.

#### **M. Volunteer Program**

1. ORIGINAL PUBLIC USE PLAN: The Public Use Plan encouraged increased use of volunteers in many facets of park operations. The Volunteer Guide Program is viewed as a vital supplement to park staff conducted programs and activities. Members of the Friends of Hueco Tanks play a significant role in the daily operation of the park.
2. ASSESSMENT: From September 1, 1998 through April 30, 2000, Hueco Tanks has recorded 7110 volunteer hours. Friends of Hueco Tanks members have contributed approximately one-third of these hours. Many of the 40 certified guides have contributed to the total hours. Volunteer hours are up approximately 2% from the same time last year.
3. PUBLIC USE PLAN 2000: Volunteers should remain a vital part of operating Hueco Tanks. Training for park volunteers will continue for all interested individuals. Increased effort will be made to return inmate labor crews to the park to assist with maintenance and other appropriate tasks.

#### **N. Special Use Permit System**

1. ORIGINAL PUBLIC USE PLAN: Provisions were made for Special Use Permits to be provided for groups wishing to conduct ceremonial or religious activities, educational



Figure F. Erosion in the Dragon's Den area

activities, or special activity events. Requests for permits were to be evaluated on a case by case basis. Fees could be waived for individuals participating in approved educational or religious activities.

2. ASSESSMENT: To date, several groups have requested fee waivers under this provision, including members of the Tigua, Mescalero Apache, Kiowa, Pueblo of Isleta, and Kalpulli Native American tribes. The system has worked well, with the exception that some groups have objected to the requirement that they be accompanied by a certified guide when utilizing areas located in the guided access only zone.
3. PUBLIC USE PLAN 2000: Requests for special use permits to conduct ceremonial or religious activities will be assessed using the following guidelines. Individuals must be able to demonstrate that they have a cultural or ethnic affiliation with a group that (1) used the park more than 50 years ago, and (2) has or has had significant cultural, religious, or historical ties with the park. Individuals wishing to acquire religious or ceremonial special use permits must show proof of affiliation with a group having such ties. For individuals belonging to a Native American tribe that is (1) culturally affiliated with the park, and (2) recognized by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), such proof should be presented in the form of a BIA card that states their tribal affiliation. Groups that are not BIA-recognized, but that otherwise meet

the affiliation requirements listed above, are responsible for identifying their members to the park staff.

As a part of the ethnographic study to be initiated this summer, claims of affiliation will be evaluated by a professional ethnographer using the criteria established by the National Park Service. Pending the completion of that study, TPW recognizes ceremonial ties between the park and the following groups: the Tigua (Ysleta del Sur Pueblo), Pueblo of Isleta, the Kiowa, the Mescalero Apache, the Comanche, the Kalpulli Tonal Teocalli, and the Kalpulli Tlateca, Inc. Individuals wishing to acquire a ceremonial or religious permit that are not a member of one of these groups, but that otherwise believe themselves to meet the requirements outlined above, will be asked to complete a form explaining the basis of their claim. Such claims will be evaluated on a case by case basis.

Groups that obtain special use permits for religious or ceremonial activities, and that do not wish to be accompanied by a staff or certified volunteer guide, can be accompanied by a member of their own group that has been certified under the guide program (see Section I). Unlike other individuals certified as volunteer guides, these guides will not be required to make such outings open to the general public, so long as the outings are made for ceremonial purposes and meet the stipulations outlined above. Individuals wishing to become guide certified for the purpose of accompanying members of their group during ceremonies should contact the park staff.

Persons acquiring a special use permit under the guidelines listed above will not be required to pay fees to enter or use the park.

## **O. Tours**

1. ORIGINAL PUBLIC USE PLAN: The plan called for staff conducted tours twice daily five days a week (Wednesday through Sunday) depending upon demand. Tour participants are limited to a maximum of 25 for educational tours and 10 for recreational tours.
2. ASSESSMENT: Guided tours are up approximately 434% over past years. Between September 1, 1998 and April 30, 2000, 4950 individuals have participated in 575 tours. These tours included 328 pictograph, 197 climbing, 20 special use, 17 scientific, 2 hiking, and 11 birding tours. Volunteer guides have assisted with tours as necessary to supplement staff-guided groups. Availability of tours has generally met demand.
3. PUBLIC USE PLAN 2000: Continue providing staff guided tours as outlined in the Public Use Plan, utilizing volunteer guides to supplement park staff.

## **P. Interpretation and Education Programs**

1. ORIGINAL PUBLIC USE PLAN: Expanded public education programs, including increased interpretive efforts, were called for in the Public Use Plan. Additional outreach programs were also identified as needed to help educate park visitors and others regarding the importance of the park and its resources.
2. ASSESSMENT: Expansion of educational and interpretive programs and activities has continued throughout the year. Examples of programs conducted at the park include visitor orientation sessions, pictograph tours, birding tours, guide training workshops, student internships, and special events such as the annual interpretive fair. Off-site programs include slide shows and presentations to community clubs, organizations, and youth groups, and a 30-minute educational video about Hueco Tanks presented in El Paso Independent School District classrooms. Recent findings from the pictograph and archeological surveys point to the need for additional interpretive planning. The upcoming ethnographic survey and on-going natural resource documentation will provide further materials for interpretation.
3. PUBLIC USE PLAN 2000: Continue expansion of park educational and interpretive programs and activities as appropriate, including increased outreach efforts to various groups and organizations. Incorporate additional information obtained from the archeological survey, pictograph and petroglyph inventory, and ethnographic study into the interpretation. Involve Native Americans in the interpretive effort. TPW will seek funds to develop a comprehensive Interpretive Master Plan for Hueco Tanks that will incorporate additional information from the archeological survey, pictograph and petroglyph inventory, natural resources information, and ethnographic survey. To enrich the content of the interpretation, the planning process will include Native Americans as well as other major stakeholders.

## **IV. CONCLUSION**

Key changes to the Original Public Use Plan, approved in this Public Use Plan 2000, include:

- Amend hours of park operations as follows:
  - Winter season (October 1 through April 30):
    - 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Monday through Sunday
  - Summer season (May 1 through September 30):
    - 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., Friday through Sunday
    - 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Monday through Thursday

- Reservations will be accepted Monday through Friday.
- Increase the maximum number of people allowed on North Mountain at any time to 70.
- The \$4 entrance fee will be charged at the time a reservation is made, and will be assessed for each separate reservation made. The above fee will be applied to the entrance fee assessed per visitor per day. Reservations will be accepted Monday through Friday.
- Increase the required liability insurance for commercial guides to \$500,000 beginning September 1, 2000.
- Pets will be allowed on a leash, under control of their owners at all times. Owners are expected to clean up after their pets. Bicycles will be permitted only on designated paved roadways in developed areas of the park. No pets or bicycles will be allowed on tours, in the backcountry or outside of the developed areas of the park.
- A formal trail system will be constructed, based on the results of the archeological study and Native American consultation.
- Based upon resource assessment, the climbing areas known as Snappy Tom and Five Bimbos in the Dragon's Den area are added to the closed list.

TPW will continue to monitor and assess the condition of the resources of Hueco Tanks State Historical Park. For additional information on the park or on the current Public Use Plan contact the Park Manager.