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Liard Highway Corridor Interpretive Plan
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LAIRD HIGHWAY CORRIDOR

INTERPRETIVE PLAN

JULY 1989

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PREPARED FOR:

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM
GOVERNMENT OF THE N.W.T.

LIARD HIGHWAY INTERPRETIVE PLAN

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project context

The continued growth of tourism in the north has prompted the government of the **N.W.T.** to develop interpretive plans for the main highways that combine to make the **N.W.T.** highway system. The **Liard Highway** is one of these and the subject of **this** interpretive plan. Although **the present level** of facility development is low along **the** route, the highway is one of **two** main entry /exit points **into the territory** and as such is **important** in **the** formulation of both first and last impressions of the **territory**.

Over the last year, **three** projects have been undertaken that will play a role in defining the content of this interpretive plan. These are: the **recently** completed **Master Plan for Blackstone Territorial Park**, an interpretive plan similar to this one for Highway= 1 which is **currently in** progress, and the **Fort Liard Visitor Centre Interpretive Plan** also **currently in** progress. It is hoped that these related projects will be coordinated to provide a cohesive and **integrated** package for the highway **traveller**.

In **the** case of the **Liard** highway, the interpretive challenge will be dealing **in** a creative and captivating manner with 1) a distant environment that requires interpretation from afar i.e. the Mackenzie **Mountains** and 2) a visually **unexciting** environment that continues virtually uninterrupted for hundreds of **miles**.

1.2 The Region

Paralleling the **Liard River**, the **Liard Highway** corridor traces its **route** through gently **rolling**, heavily forested **terrain** known as the Interior Plains. The plains were formed millions of years ago from fine sediments deposited on **the** bottom of an ancient inland **ocean**. In some places the Plains are raised up **in** the form of hills and plateaus. The area from Fort Smith west to the **Liard River** and **stretching** north to the Mackenzie River and the shores of Great Slave Lake is the **Alberta Plateau**. The **Alberta Plateau** gradually rises to the southwest to meet the **foothills** of **the** Mackenzie Mountains across the **Liard River**.

Typical of large rivers in the Interior Plains region, the **Liard** is a wide, relatively shallow and slow moving river meandering along a course to its junction with the Mackenzie River. However, its **location at the** edge of the

mountains means the more placid smaller creeks enter the **Liard** from the plateau **to** the east while larger, **faster** rivers flow down from the mountains **to the** west. **Indeed** the **Liard's** own headwaters are in **those** mountains **in** the southwestern Yukon.

Traveling through the area **the** visitor **is** surrounded by boreal forest, **composed** of **white** and black spruce, larch, **lodgepole** pine, jack pine, birch, aspen and balsam poplar. The boreal forest is the wet northern forest characteristic of the interior plains. The blackened remains of trees are testimony to the common **occurrence of fire**. Quick **to** return to burned over **areas** are pink **fireweed** and aspen.

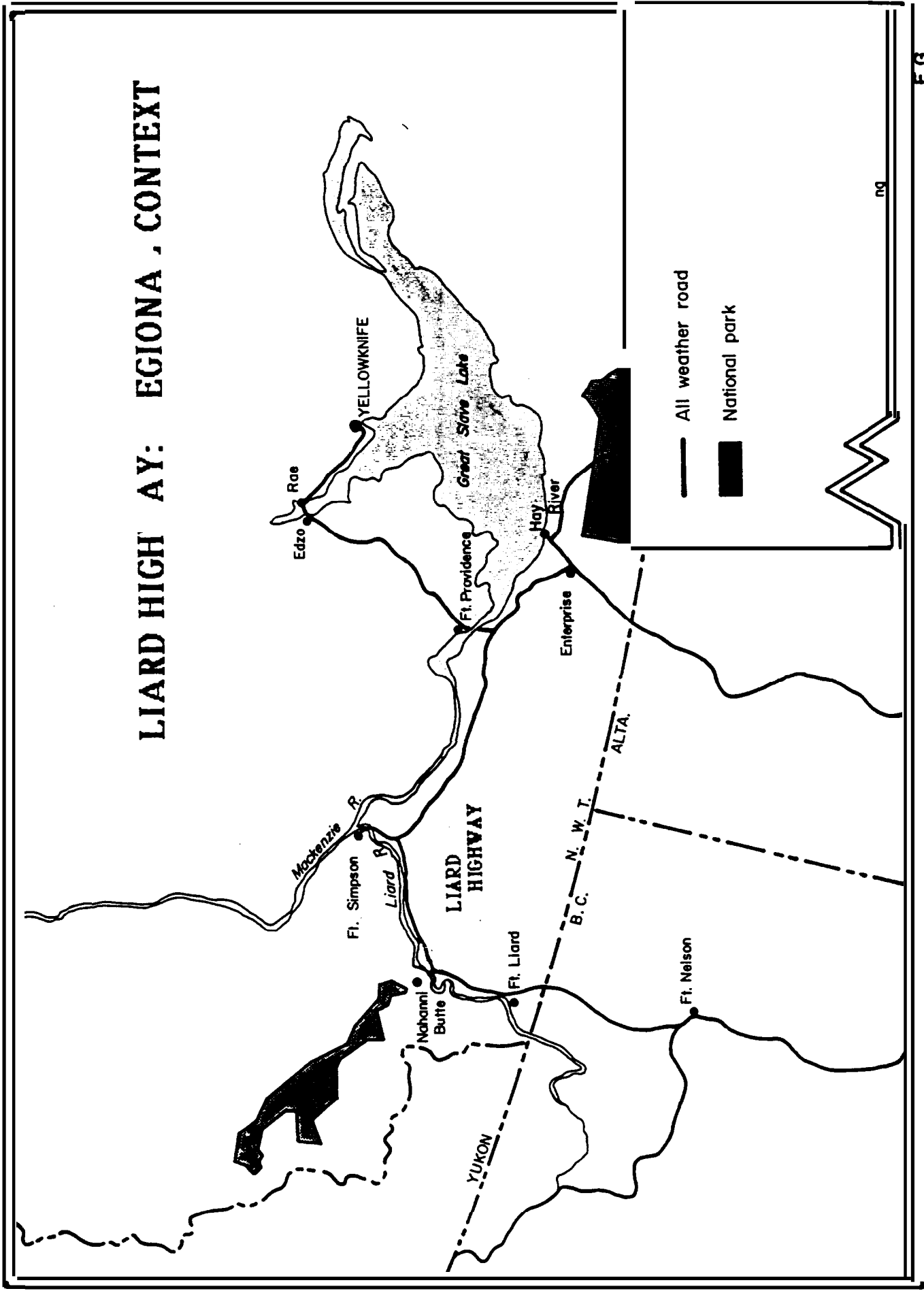
The boreal forest is home **to** a variety of wildlife. **Moose**, caribou, black bear, **grizzlies** and **wolves** inhabit the area. Several major fur-bearing animals such as **marten**, weasels, wolverines, **lynx**, muskrat and beaver can **also** be found. Smaller mammals like chipmunks and squirrels are a common sight while others **like** shrews, mice, voles and bats, though plentiful, are rarely seen for they are active **mostly** at night.

1.3 The Highway

Plans for a new highway which would **link the** Alaska Highway with the existing Northwest Territories highway system (**Hwy # 1**) extending **to** Fort Simpson were being advanced during the 1970's. The **Liard** Highway would not only provide more direct access **to** the Northwest **Territories** for **travellers to**, and **residents of**, British Columbia and **the** Yukon but would also provide a loop **highway route** in the Northwest **Territories**. It Was hoped that this would contribute **significantly to the** amount of highway traffic entering **the Northwest Territories**. The provision of services along such a highway and **especially the** early contact **with** visitors **entering** the Territories was seen **to** be important

In 1972 **Nahanni** National **Park** was established. This river oriented park featuring wilderness, white **water** canoeing and rafting has become a major international **attraction** for wild river enthusiasts. The spectacular Virginia Falls has also become more well known and is the most desirable **tourist attraction** of the park for those unable or unwilling **to** take up **the** challenge of **the** river. **Access** is provided by aircraft landing on **the** river above the falls. Other special features of the park such as the hot springs and hiking **opportunities** are less well known **and** appreciated. The park has established

LIARD HIGHWAY: REGIONAL CONTEXT



operational facilities at Fort **Simpson** and **Nahanni** Butte. The **site** of **Blackstone** Territorial Park was also recognized for its potential as a jumping off point to **the national** park due to its proximity and the highway access soon to be provided.

Construction of the highway began slowly in 1969 and 1970 when efforts resulted in the highway extending from Fort Simpson only as far as **the** Birch River. There was a short hiatus before construction began again in the middle seventies. Final **gravelling** and the official opening of the **Liard** Highway **took** place in the **fall** of 1983.

Since **this** time **the** **Liard** Highway has served a useful link to more southerly points. Its completion meant that visitors could **enter** the Northwest **Territories** via Fort Smith and exit via **the** **Liard** highway or vice versa. A **park** development and implementation plan for **Blackstone** Territorial Park were completed in 1981 and development of **the** park proceeded along with the construction of the highway.

1.4 The Traveller

Although **indepth** visitor surveys have not been carried out along the highway, **observations** of use at **Blackstone** Territorial Park and the visitor records for **the** park indicate some generally consistent characteristics of the **Liard** Highway **traveller**.

The highway travelers are generally family groups, most often couples. They typically are traveling in some form of recreational vehicle, although with varying levels of facilities included. These **visitors** are generally not familiar nor experienced with **backcountry** travel but may have **travelled** extensively by road to far reaching destinations. Although the age range varies, there is a tendency for this group to be in an older age bracket. Very little bus **traffic** frequents **the** highway unlike other routes such as **the** Alaska **Highway**. The development of significant **attractions** and **tour** packages will be an important impetus to change this situation.

These are generalizations however and **need** to be put in context. In order to gain perspective, it is necessary to **examine the visitor** statistics for both the Territory and more pertinently for the Big River Tourism Region, of which **the** highway is a part. A summary of visitor **statistics** is presented in Table * 1.

NON-RESIDENT VISITOR CHARACTERISTICS

	N.W.T.	Big River	
Existing visitation			
1982	43,000	29,300	
1984	41,000	22,000	
1986	52,000	32,500	
Travel mode	Air	Road	Air
1982	68%	32%	66%
1984	69%	31%	64%
1986	71%	29%	66%
Trip purpose			
Business	40%		30%
Vacation	55%		60%
Friends/Relatives	5%		10%
Visitor origin		Air	Road
Alberta	41%	39%	52%
Ontario	19%	22%	6%
B.C.	12%	12%	16%
Saskatchewan	3%	3%	6%
Manitoba	5%	8%	2%
Quebec	3%	1%	1%
Maritimes	3%	4%	--
Yukon	3%	1%	2%
united states	9%	9%	--
Overseas	2%	--	--
Length of average stay		10.1 nights	10.1 nights
Party size average		1.76	1.8
Expenditures 1982			
Air travellers	\$36,416,900	\$18,103,400.	
Road Travelers	\$2,696,000	\$2,180,000.	

Table # 1

During 1986, 52,000 person trips were taken in the N.W.T. and of these the Big River region accounted for the largest proportion of all the tourism regions with 62% or 32,500 trips. This level of overall visitation represents an increase of 25% over 1984 figures on a territorial basis and 48% on a regional basis. Travel is heavily weighted to the summer period, with 38.2% of travel in and out of the Territory during 1986 occurring during the month of July and 23.6% in August.

Travel into the N.W.T. is primarily by air (71%) rather than by road (29%) although a slightly higher percentage travelled by road into the Big River Region (34%) due to its greater accessibility. While these figures show a decrease in road travel over the period 1982-86 for the N.W.T. as a whole, road travel as a percentage of all travel modes remained constant in the Big River Region over the same time period. Recent statistics for 1987 show that of the 11,700 visitors entering the N.W.T. by road, 1,200 used the Liard Highway.

Of all the regions, Big River is the most popular region for recreationists/pleasure travelers. These people represented 60% of visitors as compared to 30% who were travelling on business in 1986. In contrast, the N.W.T. as a whole received 40% business visitation and 55% pleasure travellers. On average, these travellers are staying 10.1 nights and traveling in parties averaging 1.76 people. However, length of stay for those staying in campgrounds in the Big River Region is considerably less at 5.7 nights, yet party sizes are slightly larger at 1.8 people.

It is also apparent from these statistics that Alberta residents comprise the majority of visitors to both the N.W.T. and the Big River Region. In the region, Alberta represents 57% of road travellers followed by B.C. at 16%, and 39% of air travelers followed by Ontario at 22%. Visitor demographics show that the average visitor to the Region is 36.6 years old, has a professional occupation (37%) with an income of \$34,500/year. On average, they will spend \$983.00 if entering the Region by air and \$218.00 if entering by road (1982 figures).

Analysis of these visitor statistics for their significance to the Liard Highway provides a number of relevant conclusions. Firstly, the overall number of potential highway travellers is low and likely to remain so in the near future. This has the potential to change dramatically however, with long term changes in the Northwest Territories road system e.g. a highway traveling alongside the Mackenzie River to Inuvik. Secondly, party sizes of highway travellers are relatively small (2-4 people). This also could change significantly if greatly increased bus tour traffic is encouraged to travel the

highway. At present this visitor group is almost non-existent **but there** is excellent potential for growth. The number and quality of interpretive attractions along the highway will no doubt play a role in any transition. Thirdly, **visitors'** length of stay is only a short time, on average 1-2 nights.

A number of conclusions can be drawn from the above discussion which **will** assist in the development of an interpretive plan appropriate to the **Liard Highway** user. They are presented **below** in point form:

* **visitor use levels are** generally low and will likely **remain so in the near** future.

* a potentially significant **visitor** group is the bus **tour traffic**. Programs and facilities need to be developed **to attract** such tours **to stop** along the highway.

* **increases in visitor use could** result from major destination developments in the region or from the development of road access up the Mackenzie River **to Inuvik**. Neither is considered a short term possibility.

* **existing camping facilities** have sufficient **capacity to meet the present and** projected demand by highway users. An average of 10 vehicle access parties per night (**70 parties per week**) over a **13 week season** for a **total** of **910 parties** can easily be **accommodated** presently at **Blackstone Territorial Park**.

2.0 INTERPRETIVE CONCEPT

2.1 Goals and Objectives

A number of factors were considered prior to establishing the goals and objectives of **this** interpretive plan. They are:

- 1) the highway is relatively close **to the** B.C. border and presents an early impression **for new visitors to the Northwest Territories**, equally it could represent the last **impression** for those leaving the territory via **the Liard Highway**;
- 2) the highway is part of a **loop system** through the N. W.T., one **that** will likely gain in popularity as a recreational **travel** corridor;
- 3) **the highway** brings **the motor vehicle traveller** as close **to Nahanni National Park** - a park of international reputation and significance - and to the Ram Plateau area - **recently** proposed as a **territorial park** - as **they** are likely to come; and
- 4) **the** highway runs alongside the **Mackenzie Mountains** in the only portion of **the** present highway **system** of **the** southwestern Northwest Territories where a mountain environment **can be** seen.

Thus the interpretive opportunities of the **Liard Highway** should be not only distinctive but **well** executed so as **to** encourage greater exploration of **the** beauties and challenge of **the** region. With this **context in mind the** interpretive goals for **the Liard Highway** are:

1. to **create** a meaningful and informative experience for visitors so that they will leave the highway with a better appreciation for the natural and cultural heritage of the **Liard Valley** and its surrounds;
2. **to** provide opportunities for an enjoyable and **restful** experience that will be a welcome break from the long and difficult hours of **highway travelling**; and
3. to encourage more **travellers to** drive the **Liard** highway and **to** spend longer doing so, thus increasing the tourism benefits for **the** surrounding region.

More specifically **interpretive objectives** have been **developed** in the **context** of the goals just identified. They **propose** specific actions which **will** lead towards **the** achievement of **the** interpretive goals. These objectives are:

1. to interpret the relationship of the **physical** and biological characteristics of **the** region to its human history, native traditions and lifestyle, and recent **development**;
2. to describe recreational **opportunities** and **services** available in the area that will encourage greater contact **with** the environment;
3. to make use of **existing** developed areas wherever possible and practical;
4. to use interpretive media that are appropriate to the level of use **they** will receive and to the nature of **the** site concerned; and
5. to present a cohesive and comprehensive **interpretive** program to the **interested** highway **traveller**.

2.2 Regional Theme

“On the edge’

In **the context** of the **Northwest** Territories highway **system**, the **Liard** Highway **occupies** an important niche. Traversing **the extreme** southwest corner of the territories, the highway is situated in a unique position: it is at **the** interface of a variety of different environments exhibiting a diversity of geological and climatic influences. As such it is an important transition zone for the **traveller** on a journey **either** northwards or southwards. The **Liard** valley is an area where the east overlaps with the west **and the** north with the south. It is indeed “on the edge’.

Located on the western edge of the Interior Plains it exhibits much of the **same** flora and fauna typical of the boreal forest/prairie ecological complex of central and **eastern North** America. At the same **time** though, the influence of the **Pacific** climate and **western** geography is very much in evidence **in** the **Liard** valley. Whether it is **the Liard** River itself which has its source in **the** Mackenzie Mountains or **the** high level of rainfall brought in by winds originating over the Pacific Ocean, the **Liard** Valley shows a mixing of the two influences. At the **same** time, **the Liard** Valley is also at **the** interface of northern and southern influences. Permafrost is in evidence throughout the valley as are northern wildlife species such as the ptarmigan and the raven. **Yet, the** valley is also **home**, for part of **the** year, to the American Redstart and the **Ovenbird** not to mention some members of the reptile family.

2.3 Sub-Themes and Messages

To explore the scope of the highway interpretive theme, a number of **sub-themes** have been identified that highlight **the** major aspects of the region to be interpreted **to** the highway **traveller**. In each case the sub-theme will reflect a different **aspect** of the overall theme of ‘on the edge’. Each **sub-theme** is briefly described below.

‘On the edge of the mountains’

Even though the highway does not **travel** directly through the Mackenzie Mountains, **the** mountains definitely **play an** important role in the dynamics of the environment of **the highway** region. In view of this, one of **the sub-themes** for the highway has been identified as ‘on **the edge** of **the** mountains’. **This** seems **to** be an appropriate sub-theme for the highway, for not only does the mountain environment hold considerable **appeal** for visitors **to** the region but it also impacts greatly on life **in the Liard** Valley. **One** particularly important element of this relationship is the **Liard** River itself which originates in the mountains and draws much of its **character** from the environment **to** the west. It also seems appropriate to share the focus of attention on the mountains rather than just **the** Alberta Plateau, since **other** opportunities along the Northwest Territories highways will also focus on the plateau; and since **Blackstone** Territorial Park provides the closest and only real opportunity for visitors to connect with **the** mountain environment along the **highway** system of the southwestern **Northwest** Territories.

Messages:

- * Geology and **geomorphology** of the Mackenzie Mountains
 - **mountian** building processes
 - South **Nahanni** River
 - Virginia Falls
 - canyons
 - area
 - volume of flow
 - **hotsprings**
 - **Rabbitkettle** Hotsprings
 - **Wildmint** Hot-springs
 - **karst** landscape

- **Nahanni N.P.**
- the **Ram Plateau**
- important **mineralizations**

* Alpine environments of the Mackenzie Mountains (the **Ram Plateau**)

- vegetation - **shrubs**
 - wildflowers
- wildlife - caribou
 - grizzly bear
 - **Dall's** sheep

* Traditional lifestyles

- **fishing, hunting,** and trapping
 - techniques, species, areas
- use of resources
 - **food, clothing,** shelter

* **Modern resources**

- minerals (**Cantung** and Cadillac mines)
- economic **potential**
- recreation potential

“On **the** edge of **the** plains”

Although the mountains are a dominant element in the **landscape, they** are not always visible **to** the highway **traveller**. In fact **the** majority of travelers' time is spent driving through the seemingly endless rolling country of **the Interior** Plains region. A far less exhilarating environment, **the** boreal forest of **the** plains is, however, **equally** intriguing in **terms** of ecological interrelationships. **Its characteristics** and the wildlife **that** it shelters are an important part of the highway **story**. Similarly, the changes in **vegetation** and the corresponding changes in wildlife as one moves into the mountains are interesting. In this respect, the transition in evidence here is representative of the differences in moving from **the** prairies **to** the mountains that is experienced elsewhere along the east slopes of the Rockies extending southward through Canada **and** much of the United States. Also of **interest** to **the** highway **traveller** and typically in evidence on the Interior Plains are **the** remnants of glaciation and **the** presence of permafrost today.

Messages:

* Geology

- Interior Plains
- morphology

* Glaciation

- characteristics and timing
- remnants of glaciers (till, moraines, drumlins, eskers etc.)
- interpretation of **these** features
- economic importance

* The boreal forest

- vegetation - **trees** and shrubs
 - wildflowers
- standing water
- fire
- wildlife
 - prominent species
 - moose - bear
 - marten - lynx
 - muskrat - beaver

^xTraditional lifestyles

- **fishing, hunting**, and trapping
 - techniques, **species**, areas
- use of resources
 - food, **clothing**, shelter

* Modern resources

- oil, gas and coal
- lumber
- agriculture

"On the edge of **the river**"

The **water** system of the region is a very significant landscape feature and has been a major determinant in **landform** and land use. **It is** the central **theme** of **Nahanni National Park** both from a **landform** and a recreational perspective **with** Virginia Falls and **Whitewater** Canyons of the South **Nahanni** being the most widely known park features. Similarly the **karst landscape** of the national park and **the** adjacent Ram Plateau is an important

element of the impact of **water** on the **landscape**. The **Liard** River itself is also a major river not only **by** Northwest Territories standards but by national and international standards. As part of the Mackenzie River drainage basin, it draws both from the mountains on the west, in which the **Liard** River has its headwaters, **and** from the Alberta Plateau on **the** east.

Although **the** highway **traveller** is not always aware of the **Liard** River, it is an important feature of **the landscape** through which the **traveller** is journeying. Interpretation of this sub-theme therefore must play a prime role in conveying this critical element of **the landscape** to the **visitor**.

Messages:

* World scale river **system**

- **Liard** River drainage basin characteristics
 - area
 - volume of flow
- as part of the Mackenzie River System
- **tributary** morphology
- meanders
- silt
- origin in Yukon

* Seasons of the river

- ice thickness
- freeze-up
- break-up
- spring run-off, high water

* Biologically rich river flats

- **sawtimber** in the valley **bottom**
- **denning** sites for black **bears**

* Traditional **Acho Dene** lifestyles

- **fishing, hunting,** and trapping
 - techniques, species, areas
- use of resources
 - focal, **clothing, shelter**

* Days of adventurers and gold seekers

* Early European contact

- trade, settlement, **the** church

*** Changes in transportation**

- canoe
- barge
- airplane
- highway

'On the edge of the north'

The essence of this sub-theme is to convey the significance of the **Liard** valley as exhibiting **the** interplay of **both** northern and southern influences. That is, the **Liard** valley, located above the 60th parallel and contained within the Northwest Territories, is indeed in the north. It exhibits many of **the physical** characteristics associated with northern climates such as **permafrost** (although discontinuous), stunted plant growth and northern **species** of plants and animals. All the **same**, in the context of the north, **the Liard** valley is without a doubt the **"banana belt"** of the **territory**.

Precipitation is far higher here **than** in the rest of **the Northwest Territories** where arid conditions prevail. This is evident throughout the drive along the highway where **bog** and fen **ecosystems** are common. While the north is generally considered to have little or no tree growth, **the Liard** River valley exhibits relatively luxurious forests having potential for timber cutting **in the** valleys and pulp **wood** in the upland areas. On the other hand animal **species**, such as the bison and the American **Redstart** are those generally associated with more southerly environments and yet can be found in **the Liard** River valley.

Messages:

*** northern landscape features**

- permafrost
- permafrost and frost features Mackenzie **Mtns.**

*** northern flora and fauna species**

- introduced species - bison
- important species - tundra swan

*** banana belt of the north**

- forest **resources e.g. sawtimber** and pulp wood
- **reptiles**
- rainfall
- **Ovenbird** and American **Redstart**

- Harlequin Duck
- **treeline** here compared to **Yellowknife**
- one of few places in Canada where can see **all** four species of loon (Common, Pacific, Red **Throated** and Yellow-billed)

* Impact of modern resources and activities on the region's development

- modern lifestyles
- new economic initiatives
- new social patterns
- future prospects

2.4 Media

It is not **within** the scope of this plan **to detail all** the media approaches to be used at the various **sites** selected for development along **the** highway **corridor**. This is **the** essence of site specific work that will follow from this plan. Rather the plan has identified the **theme** structure and organization of theme and **message** communication by linking various **theme** and message components with each of the sites selected. In addition **media** types such as personal contacts, displays, or brochures, have been identified that would seem to be appropriate for the site. With respect to **the** style of **the** media that might be **used** at each of these locations **to** most effectively convey the **message**, it is **important** not **to** hamper the creativity of interpretive designers. However, some guidelines or comments **reflecting** the image of the interpretation of the corridor are provided here.

* In the development of all interpretive media, it should be **the** objective **to create** interpretive experiences for visitors that are personal, exciting and involving. The more connected **the** visitor feels with the area, the more successful the interpretive **experience** will have been. The result will **be** visitors **spending** more time and showing greater interest in **the** recreational opportunities in **the** region.

* The **interpretive** media should have as an objective **to set the Liard** region **apart**. While it is important **to demonstrate** some link with **other** regions of the highway the area should, at the same time, be conveyed as being distinctive. Too much of the same message or the **same** media approach along a highway system will encourage visitors **to speed up and move on**. Breaking it **into** distinctive sections will provide change and diversity that **will give** the **system** more **attractiveness** and will encourage greater visitor participation.

*the **single most important** media form is **personal contact**. This is often difficult to provide because of the expense. **However**, nothing can replace **the** impact and effectiveness of qualified and competent **interpreters** in a region like the **Liard Highway** corridor.

* Media presentation is critical. It must reflect **the** character of **the** area and **present a** lively, inviting and energetic image. **It cannot be** dull and drab but also not gaudy and out of place. Tasteful presentation is **important**.

* Be careful of modern **technology**. High tech experiences are not **the** reason visitors come **to** the **Liard** region. The region is also **remote** enough **to** make maintaining high tech media troublesome if not **totally** impossible.

3.0 DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT

3.1 Site Inventory

An **inventory** of the special resources and **opportunities** for recreation and interpretation along **the highway** corridor was undertaken through **three** distinct means. First a review of available literature **was** conducted, supplemented by the consulting Warn's knowledge of **the** area as a result of previous **work** in **the** region. Much of the literature is general **to** the area and **does** not relate **to** specific features along the highway corridor. It is nevertheless **very** valuable in developing an understanding of the area and was fundamental in the development of the theme structure for **the** corridor plan.

The second means of inventory **was** through discussions with local people in the communities of Fort Simpson and Fort **Liard**. These discussions, held in **February** 1989, **were** used **to identify** specific sites of **interest for** interpretation and **recreation** and **to discuss** concerns about the overall level of **service** and use of the **highway** corridor. This is **critical to the** development of viable tourism activity in the region.

The literature review and theme framework **were** essential to **the** third means of developing the resource inventory. This was **a** survey of the highway **to identify** **specific** sites where various interpretive themes and recreational opportunities could **be** developed. The inventory map (see back **pocket**.) notes **the** areas and general nature of the specific roadside resources **that** were identified in the survey.

3.2 Site selection Considerations

Identifying sites for development along the **Liard** Highway corridor was **the** result of the combination of a number of **criteria**. While **the** criteria **discussed** below are ranked in order of **importance**, it is **essential** to consider the interaction of the criteria in selecting **the** most appropriate **sites** for development. No one criterion alone is sufficient to result in designation.

3.2.1 Representativeness of themes, subthemes and messages

Two aspects of this criteria are **important**. The first is **the** quality and interpretive potential of **the** resources along the corridor to communicate **their** character to the **travelling** public. Are geological structures clear and identifiable? Are the characteristics of the wildlife habitat discernible?

The second aspect is one of balance. Considering balance, means to reflect on all **the sites** that have potential and ensure that, through **the** selection of certain sites, **all** of the themes, **subthemes** and messages can **be** adequately **addressed** with the resources selected. To convey the complete **theme structure** is important in identifying a set of sites for interpretive development along **the** corridor.

3. 2. 2 Spatial distribution

The character of a highway corridor requires that consideration be given to **the** natural travel flow of visitors along the route. **Too** many stopping points will result in **people by-passing** sites and missing important elements of **the** interpretive **story**. Not enough **sites** reduces the potential to focus **on** specific details in the landscape or of historical interest.

Another aspect of this criteria is the relationship to existing facilities and services presently or proposed along **the** route. Specifically **Blackstone** Territorial Park and the proposed **visitor centre** at **the** Fort **Liard** junction influence the location and content of other site developments along the **route**.

3.2.3 Site conditions

Site conditions refers to both the specific terrain conditions of each site, as well as **the** location of facilities and activity areas in relation to the highway. **Sites** ranking high **under** this criterion would be close to the highway, although slightly **removed** for dust and noise considerations, and would be conducive to use **with** minimal facility development.

3.2.4 Development costs and operation

Consideration is also given to the overall development and operating costs associated **with** facilities along the highway. Location relative to **centres** from which ongoing maintenance and operation can **be** carried out is **important**.

3.3 Levels of Development

To facilitate planning of a **balanced** and comprehensive system of sites, three categories of site development are proposed. The categories are based on the extent of facility development **and will** affect the time to be **spent** at

each site **and** the range of activities that are available to the visitor. Each is **described** briefly below.

3.3.1 Primary Sites

These **are** major **sites where** a full range of facilities is **possible** including major interpretive displays, **trails**, viewing towers/platforms, camping and picnic **facilities** etc. Typically the range of **activities** would be varied and the site **capacities** would **be** greater than other categories of sites. The level of services could also be a factor in **distinguishing** sites. Facilities at primary **sites** would be of high quality **to** sustain high levels of use and to provide easy and comfortable access throughout **the** site. Wide, hard **surfaced trails** with minimum grade and relatively short distances **to** features, **water**, sewage facilities, **shelters, etc.** would be important at **these** sites.

3.3.2 Secondary Sites

These sites would provide opportunities for specific activities and provide more **subject-focussed** interpretive facilities. Areas may be based on an interpretive **trail to** a specific feature such as a waterfall, forest environment or historic location. Facilities may include **support facilities** such as picnic tables, viewing **platforms, trails etc.**

3.3.3 Tertiary Sites

These sites would be minor **pulloffs** including simple interpretive or informational signage, viewpoints etc. Minimal facilities would be provided.

4.0 PROPOSED SITES FOR **DEVELOPMENT**

The **sites selected** for development of visitor services along the **Liard** Highway are discussed individually in this section of the report. They are **listed** in order of their location from south **to** north along the corridor beginning with the junction of the **Liard** and Alaska Highways in British Columbia. For each site notes on **the** existing conditions, interpretive themes, messages and media, **proposed** developments and development costs are provided and the **level** of site development is identified as being primary, secondary or **tertiary**. Accompanying each individual site description are **two** maps presenting **the** existing site conditions and the development concept in graphic form. A drawing of the overall development concept is located in the back **pocket**.

A summary list of the sites in **their** order from south **to** north along the highway corridor and a second list **indicating the** balance between primary secondary and tertiary sites is provided below.

Proposed **Sites** for Development

- 4.1 Junction of **Liard** and Alaska Highways (**B.C.**)
- 4.2 B.C. Border Crossing
- 4.3 Border Viewpoint
- 4.4 Ft. **Liard** Highway Visitor Centre
- 4.5 **Muskeg** River Valley
- 4.6 Rabbit Creek
- 4.7 Bison Viewing Area
- 4.8 Highlands Park
- 4.9 **Nahanni Butte** Winter Road
- 4.10 **Blackstone** River Day Use Area
- 4.11 **Blackstone** Park
- 4.12 Tank Site
- 4.13 Birch **River Crossing**
- 4.14 Poplar **River** uplands
- 4.15 Boreal Forest
- 4.16 Mackenzie Highway Jet.
- 4.17 **Liard** River Ferry Crossing
- 4.18 Marten River
- 4.19 Mackenzie River Valley

Primary Development Sites

- 4.1 Junction of **Liard** and Alaska **Highways** (B.C.)
- 4.4 Ft. **Liard** Highway Visitor **Centre**
- 4.8 Highlands Park
- 4.11 **Blackstone Park**
- 4.12 Tank Site

Secondary Development Sites

- 4.3 Border **Viewpoint**
- 4.5 **Muskeg** River **Valley**
- 4.10 **Blackstone** River **Day** Use Area
- 4.14 Poplar River Uplands
- 4.16 Mackenzie Highway Jet
- 4.17 **Liard** River Ferry Crossing
- 4.19 Mackenzie River Valley

Tertiary Development **Sites**

- 4.2 **B.C.** Border Crossing
- 4.6 Rabbit Creek
- 4.7 Bison Viewing **Area**
- 4.9 **Nahanni Butte** Winter Road
- 4.13 Birch River crossing
- 4.15 Boreal Forest
- 4.18 Marten River

4.1 Junction of **Liard** and Alaska Highways (**B.C.**)

It is recognized that a **visitor /information centre** should be located at an **entry point to** the highway corridor. The **centre should** be designed to welcome **visitors** entering the **Liard** region and **to introduce** them to the interpretive opportunities along the road corridor. An important aspect of the **centre** would be the conveyance of up-to-date road and weather conditions. The **centre should be** creatively designed and employ a number of self-guided displays and audio-visual devices balanced with interpretive staff **to provide** one-on-one personal contact with potential highway **travellers**. The displays need not be all encompassing in content but **should** contain information on representative elements of the highway drive. They should summarize the highlights and experience the **traveller** could expect. A rotation of visiting staff on a weekly basis i.e. a trapper, **hunter**, dog team and driver etc. would be an imaginative and educational attraction. The exterior of the **centre** should be visually exciting **to tempt the traveller to** stop. On the inside it must be personal and informative **to reassure and** entice the **traveller to head north**.

The precise **location** for such a **centre** has not been decided. Several options exist including: **locating the centre** in Fort Nelson where it could be combined with **other** tourism facilities; **locating the centre** in Fort Nelson but. not in combination with any other facility; or locating it at the junction of the **Liard** and Alaska highways. The potential advantages and disadvantages of the three sites should be given further consideration in a separate study. The following discussion will **focus on the** site at the T-junction of the two highways. However, should the **centre be** located in Fort Nelson, there will still need **to be** a significant feature placed at the junction **to make an** impression on the **passerby** and to pique their imagination on what **lies up** the road. A sculpture or display sign of large size and an imaginative design would be appropriate. Additional travel information should also be presented.

1. Existing Site Conditions and Resources

- flat, forested **terrain**
- cleared right-of-way
- T junction
- no development
- minimal signage: directional

2. **Subthemes** and Messages

- general introduction **to** the Northwest **Territories** and the **Liard** Region

3. Proposed Development (Primary)

a) Purpose and Scope

- to attract visitors to the Northwest Territories and the Liard region in particular
- to excite people about the possibility of a trip to the Northwest Territories either at that time or in the future
- to provide information that will reassure visitors and increase their interest in the trip
- to introduce potential visitors to the exciting character and diversity of the Liard region
- to provide information on specific visitor opportunities that will encourage participation

b) Interpretive Media

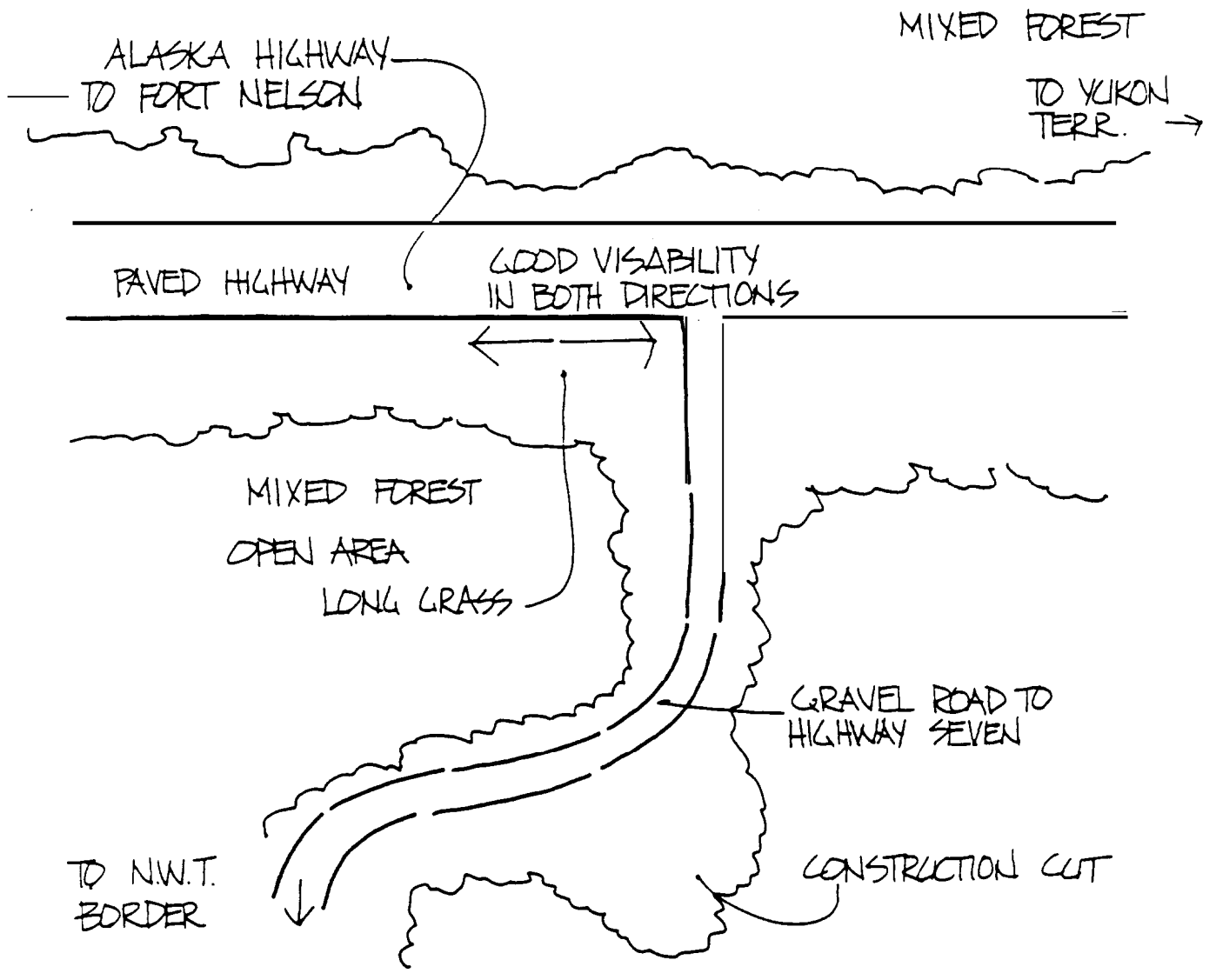
- visitor centre staff
- information displays
- interpretive displays
- brochures
- audio/visual programs
- tour guide cassette tapes for sale

c) Facilities

- full service visitor centre
- visitor reception area, display area, theatre, service facilities (eg. washrooms, lounge), outdoor activity area (displays, picnic sites,
- extensive approach signage
- major signage at intersection in conjunction with visitor centre

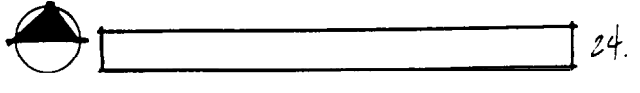
d) Costs: Capital

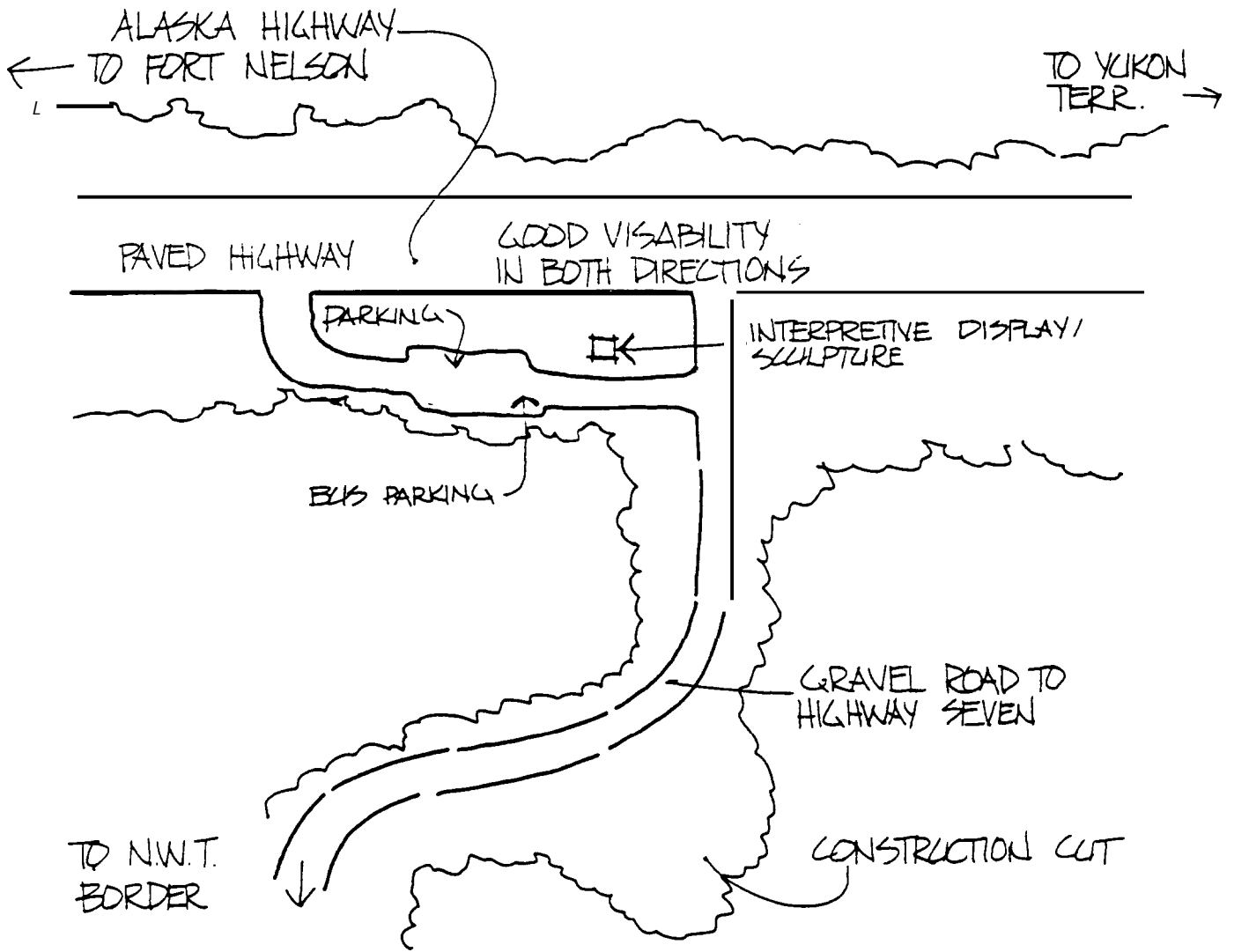
- property purchase
 - visitor centre [planning and design, construction, site facilities, landscaping, etc.]
- ? 700.



**LIARD/ALASKA HWY JCTN
EXISTING CONDITIONS**

**LIARD HIGHWAY CORRIDOR
DEVELOPMENT & INTERPRETIVE PLAN**





**LIARD/ALASKA HWY JCTN
DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT**

**LIARD HIGHWAY CORRIDOR
DEVELOPMENT & INTERPRETIVE PLAN**



4.2 B.C. Border Crossing (#34) (km O)

The border crossing into the Northwest Territories is presently not an inviting setting for the visitor who has travelled such a long way to get there. It is most important that the site create a pleasing visual impression and that the facilities are both attractive and functional. The site does not have to be developed on a large scale@ achieve this. In fact, because the physical setting of the border site itself is not particularly attractive, encouraging visitors to travel on to the Border Viewpoint site just 5 km down the road should be the primary objective. Thus the border crossing itself should be a welcome and a pleasant place for visitors to photograph their entry into the Northwest Territories.

1. Existing Site Conditions and Resources

- flat terrain with mixed forest cover, high ridge visible in the distance in the NWT
- loop access to single picnic site (gravel pad) from highway
- highway signage identifying the boundary and stating various regulations: also major sign indicating the relevant highway maintenance contract
- some cottage development along the lake at the border accessible along a dirt road joining the highway at the boundary: road generally not passable except in dry conditions and in winter

2. Subthemes and Messages

- welcome to the NWT and to the Liard Region
- encourage visitors to stop at the Border Viewpoint site just down the road to get an overview of the region and the activities and opportunities available

3. Proposed Development (Tertiary)

a) Purpose and Scope

- milestone marking entry into the Northwest Territories
- brief highway rest stop and photo opportunity
- interpretive site of the 60th parallel and the interprovincial border

b) Interpretive Media

- interpretive site signage

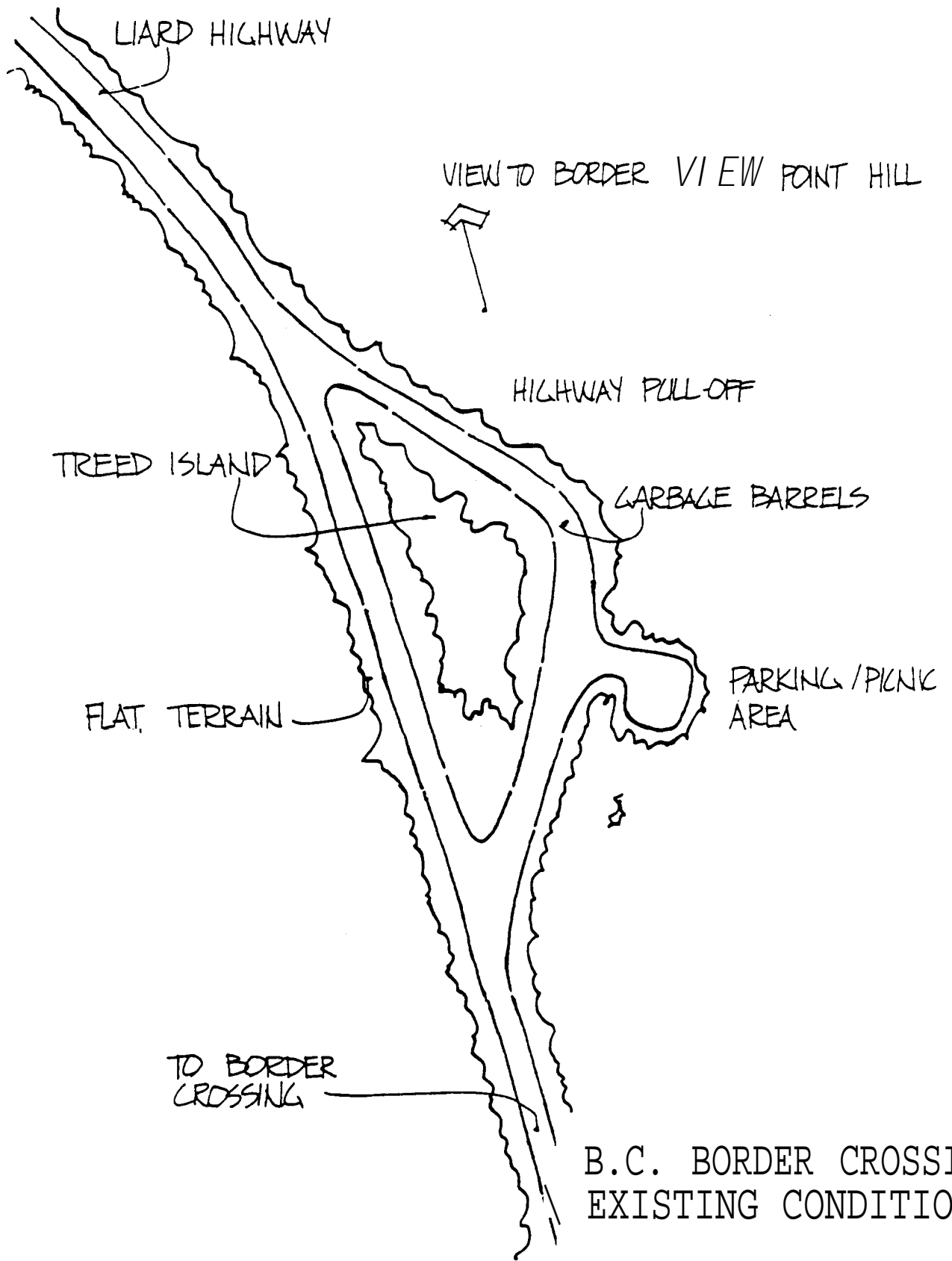
c) Facilities

- major welcome sign
- interpretive **signage** on border and **60th** parallel
- information **signage**
- pull-off area
- parking area

d) Costs: Capital

- improve **pull-off** & parking 30.
- **interpretive signage** and landscaping 20.
- 'Welcome*' sign and information **signage** 40.

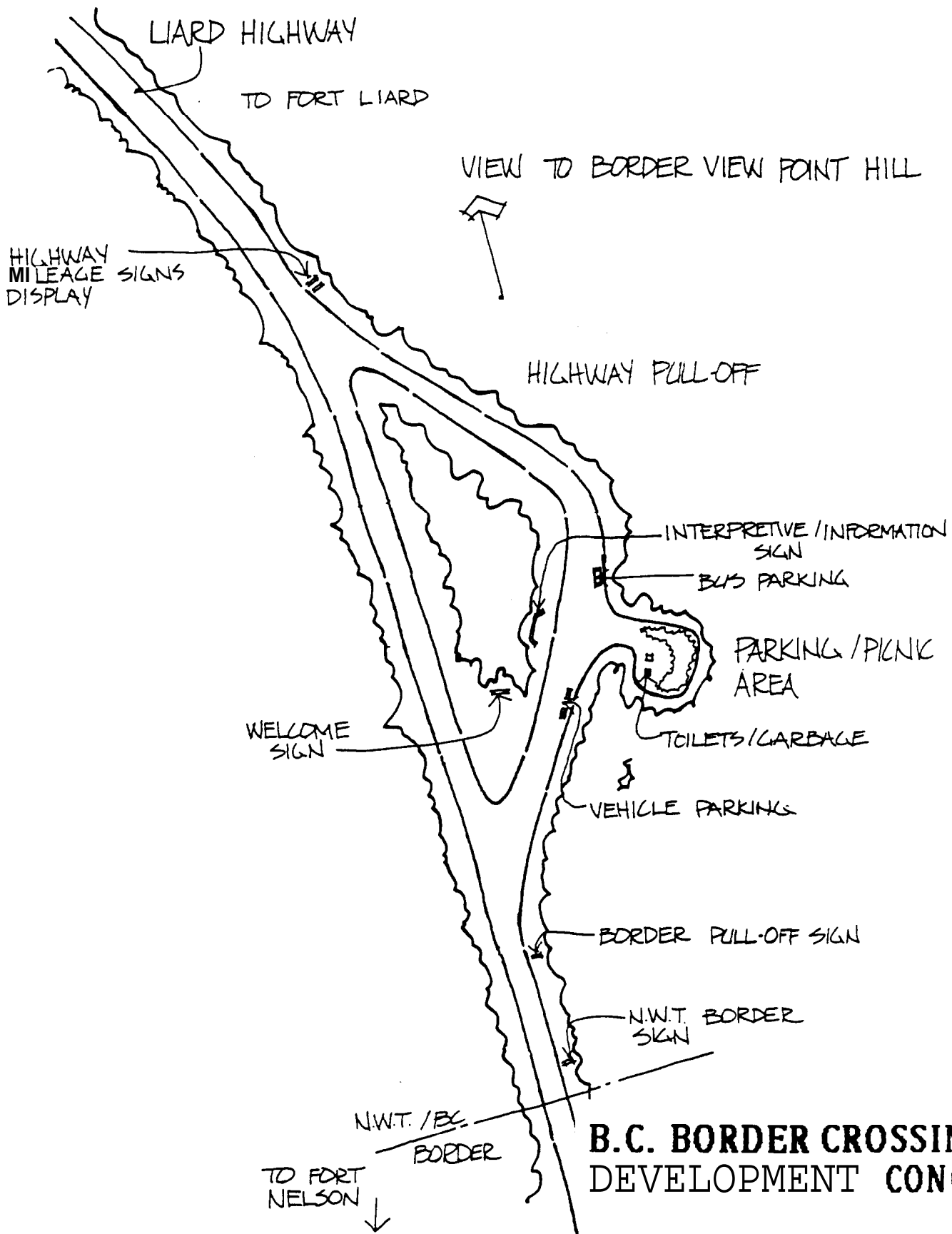
TOTAL 90.



B.C. BORDER CROSSING
EXISTING CONDITIONS

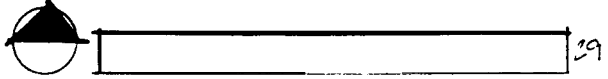
**LIARD HIGHWAY CORRIDOR
DEVELOPMENT & INTERPRETIVE PLAN**





B.C. BORDER CROSSING DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT

LIARD HIGHWAY CORRIDOR DEVELOPMENT & INTERPRETIVE PLAN



4.3 Border Viewpoint (#33) (km 5)

This site has the potential to provide dramatic **appeal to** the visitor. Appeal that the border crossing itself is unable to provide. Views up the **Liard** River valley and over **the** expansiveness of **the** area are important in generating excitement and enthusiasm in the highway **traveller**. This is an objective of the corridor development along the **Liard** Highway. Such an **important** entry **to the** region should be developed to encourage and excite **the** visitor.

1. Existing Site Conditions and Resources

- no facilities
- mixed forest of **spruce, poplar** and birch
- varying age of forest including younger growth with considerable deadfall and undergrowth up slope from **the** highway
- significant **slope (10 - 15%)**
- well drained **site**
- road cut quite high at the **crest**
- some **views** from **the top** of the road cut but not from the road itself
- very good viewing potential because of elevation of the area above the surrounding landscape and the local slope

2. Subthemes and Messages

ON THE **EDGE** OF THE RIVER
ON THE **EDGE** OF THE MOUNTAINS
ON THE **EDGE** OF THE PLAINS
ON THE **EDGE** OF THE NORTH

- Geology and **geomorphology** of the Mackenzie Mountains
 - **the Bowie** fault line
- Modern resources
 - economic potential of oil and gas exploration (link **with** Norman Wells oil field)
- Glaciation
- The boreal forest
- World scale river **system**
 - long distance views northwest up the **Liard** Valley
- Cultural history and exploration
 - Father **Petitot** and development of the written Dene language

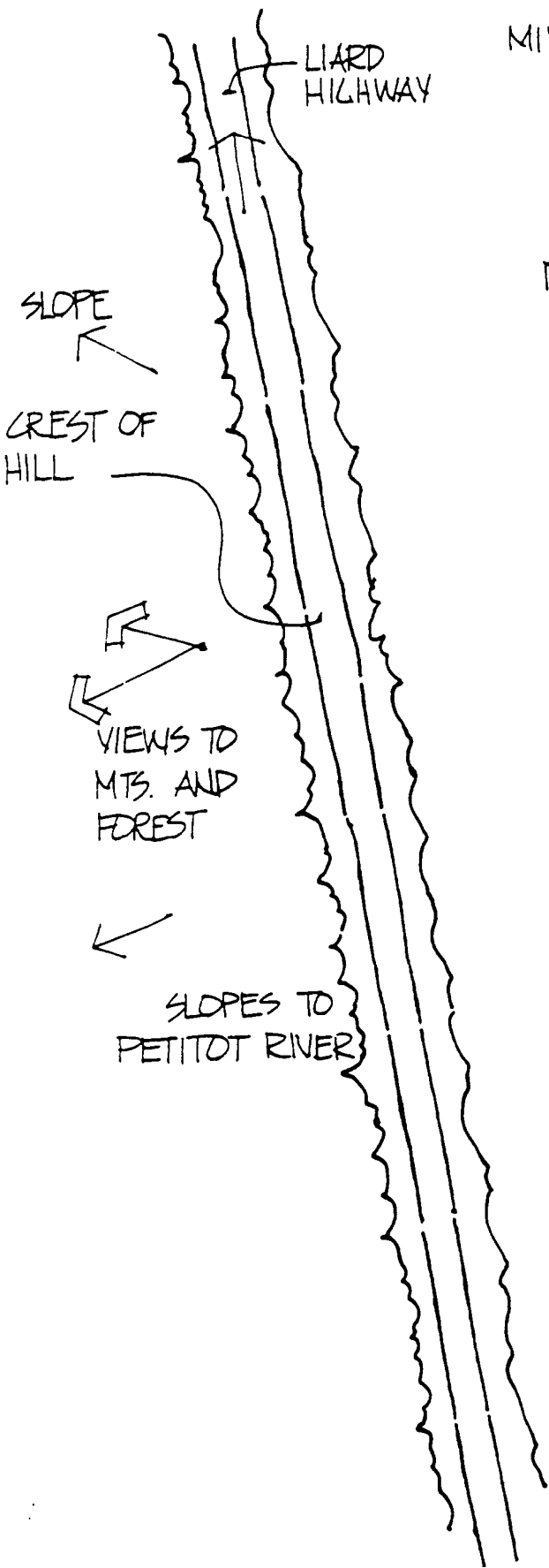
- Banana **belt** of the north
 - **climate**
 - vegetation, gardens

3. Proposed Development (Secondary)

- Purpose and Scope**
 - primary on-site introduction **to the Liard Highway region and to the Northwest Territories as a whole** - must be an attractive well serviced site that creates a positive impression of the NWT
 - major **day** use stop
 - **very** attractive area providing long distance views of **the Liard River valley**
 - scenic stop for buses **and other tour** groups
- Interpretive Media**
 - enclosed display complex - small **structure** housing displays
 - **cassette** tapes available for use along the highway **and as** souvenirs
 - viewpoint with displays on viewing platform - enclosed **portion**
 - general interpretive brochure on all aspects of the region including natural history and human history
- Facilities**
 - access road **to the** highway at approximately its highest point
 - parking area
 - washrooms (septic system)
 - dump station (septic system)
 - drinking water (**well**)
 - enclosed interpretive display **shelter** with dispensing facilities for brochures and cassette **interpretive** tapes
 - high grade trail **to viewing platform**
 - short distance from parking
 - easy grade and durable, easy walking surface
 - **boardwalking** and wheelchair access
 - **displays** in platform
 - **platform** can be at grade on the up-slope side and elevated on **the down-slope** to facilitate access
 - views can **be enhanced** by selective cutting

d) Costs: **Capital**

- road & parking	\$0.
- brochures	10.
- viewing platform	40.
- enclosed interp. display shelter	50.
- services (water, washroom, dump station)	60.
TOTAL	240.



MIXED FOREST COVER

← SLOPE

KNOLL

← SLOPE

MIXED FOREST COVER

← SLOPES TO PETITOT RIVER

LIARD HIGHWAY

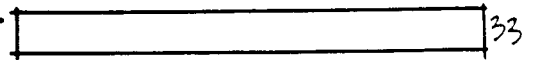
← SLOPE

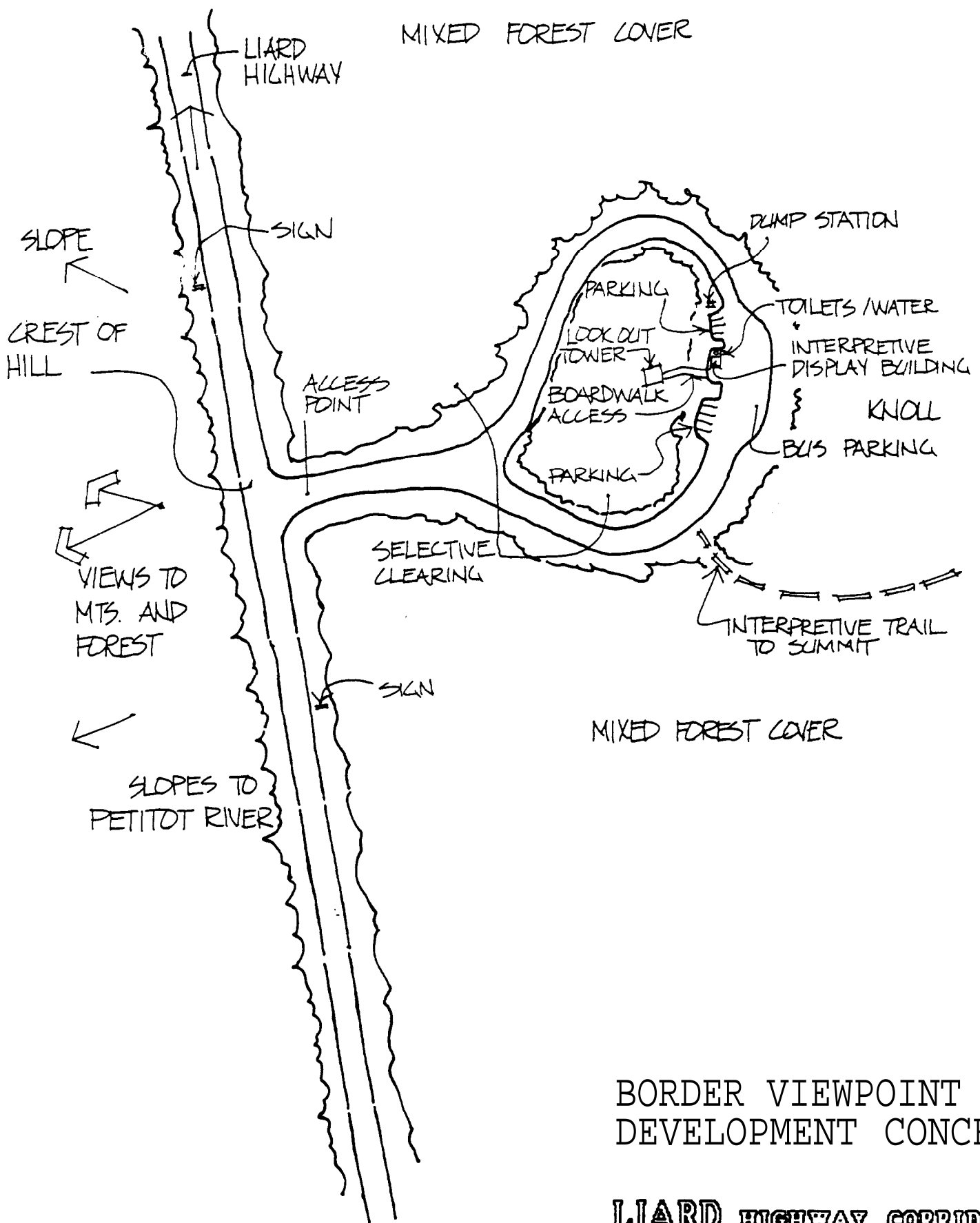
← CREST OF HILL

← VIEWS TO MTS. AND FOREST

BORDER VIEWPOINT
EXISTING CONDITIONS

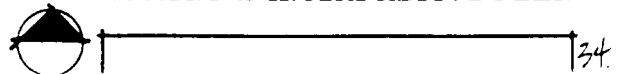
**LIARD HIGHWAY CORRIDOR
DEVELOPMENT & INTERPRETIVE PLAN**





BORDER VIEWPOINT
DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT

**LIARD HIGHWAY CORRIDOR
DEVELOPMENT & INTERPRETIVE PLAN**



4.4 Ft. Liard Highway Visitor Centre and Community Museum (#30) (km 37.7) (proposed)

The most important and practical location to provide visitors with an in-depth appreciation of the cultural history of the region is at Fort Liard. Although the extent and nature of facilities to be developed at the highway junction and in the community have not been finalized, there is a commitment to proceed with some form of development. This plan will not attempt to resolve any of the issues surrounding facility development either in terms of purpose or content. Rather, ideas discussed briefly below are suggestions that might be considered in the facility planning based on the interpretive approach being proposed for the corridor.

The native people living in the Liard region have effectively drawn on the diverse characteristics of the land that result from the interactions of mountains and plain, river and land, and north and south. The theme of "On the Edge" is as meaningful to the people and their heritage as it is to the land that supports them.

An important element that greatly affects the messages relating to the theme is time. Three significant periods are distinguishable: traditional; exploration; and modern period. In the traditional period lifestyles were intimately tied to the diversity of the land. The emphasis began to shift during the exploration period when gold seekers, explorers, traders and missionaries began to introduce new ideas and new implements to the lifestyle of the Liard region. Modern day lifestyles are a blend of the traditions and values of the past with new initiatives in development and utilization of the land. The evolution of the native people of the region through these periods is an important element of the interpretive theme "On the Edge". In an interpretive facility it could be effectively communicated by leading the visitor through three rooms (environments): one for each period, which would convey through stories, pictures and artifacts the life of the people on the edge of the mountains, the river, the plains, and the north.

If the facility takes on a more information centre character, there will be a need to further address these interpretive themes elsewhere, either in the community itself or along the highway. While this plan does not fully respond to such a possibility, some sites identified in the plan could be expanded to address these themes.

4.5 Muskeg River Valley (#28) (km 48)

The approach from Fort Liard is down a small hill which affords a complete view of the long gentle curve of the Muskeg River. The highway bridge cuts across the curve at its mid point. Opportunities for recreation and interpretation are present. The Liard side of the river contains an oxbow lake set in the trees away from the highway providing an interpretive area/trail opportunity. Across the river, on the inside curve, is a large low area of fine sand with easy access to the water. Swimming and fishing are possible. Road access exists to this area. At the forest's edge there is potential to develop picnic sites along with a shoreline trail to other more secluded fishing sites.

Given the proximity of this site to Fort Liard it will likely receive a lot of use from local residents. A close interpretive relationship is possible herein terms of activity programs and exchange of exhibit material.

1. Existing Site Conditions and Resources

- level, well drained site between the highway and an old river meander
- mixed vegetation, birch, poplar, spruce and willow
- undergrowth significantly cleared from past and present use
- existing campsite overlooking the ox bow
- cache constructed on the site
- steep undercut bank along the erosion shore of the river bend
- the opposite shore is gently sloping with noticeable bands of sand and soil deposit and young poplar growth
- wide band of sand beach at the rivers edge with existing access road down to it

2. Subthemes and Messages

ON THE EDGE OF THE PLAINS
ON THE EDGE OF THE NORTH
ON THE EDGE OF THE RIVER

- Traditional lifestyles
- The boreal forest
- Northern landscape features
- Northern flora and fauna species
 - habitat for economically significant species (moose, beaver)
 - critical habitat for migratory bird populations (eg. the endangered tundra swan spends time here)
 - four types of loons

- beaver **trapping** (introduction of **trapping** lifestyle, **both** native **and white**; creation of **trapline** and **trappers** campsite in **the bush**)
- Banana **belt** of the north
 - **climate** of north **vs** south ie. wettest part of **N.W.T.** yet evidence of significant areas of **permafrost**
 - well forested area (influence on **McStyle** - log buildings, wooden boats **etc.**)
- World **scale** river system
 - tributary morphology
 - meanders

3. Reposed Development (**Secondary**)

a) Purpose and Scope

- day use area e.g. **fishing, boating, swimming**
- interpretive opportunities immediately adjacent to the **site** and **along the river**
- **base for hiking opportunities along the Muskeg River valley**
- major **interpretation** of climate of **the** region, **boreal** forest natural history and the relationship with native history of the region

b) Interpretive Media

- interpretive display complex - possible shelter
- interpretive trail **signage**
- use of **trails** for guided hikes by roving interpretive staff

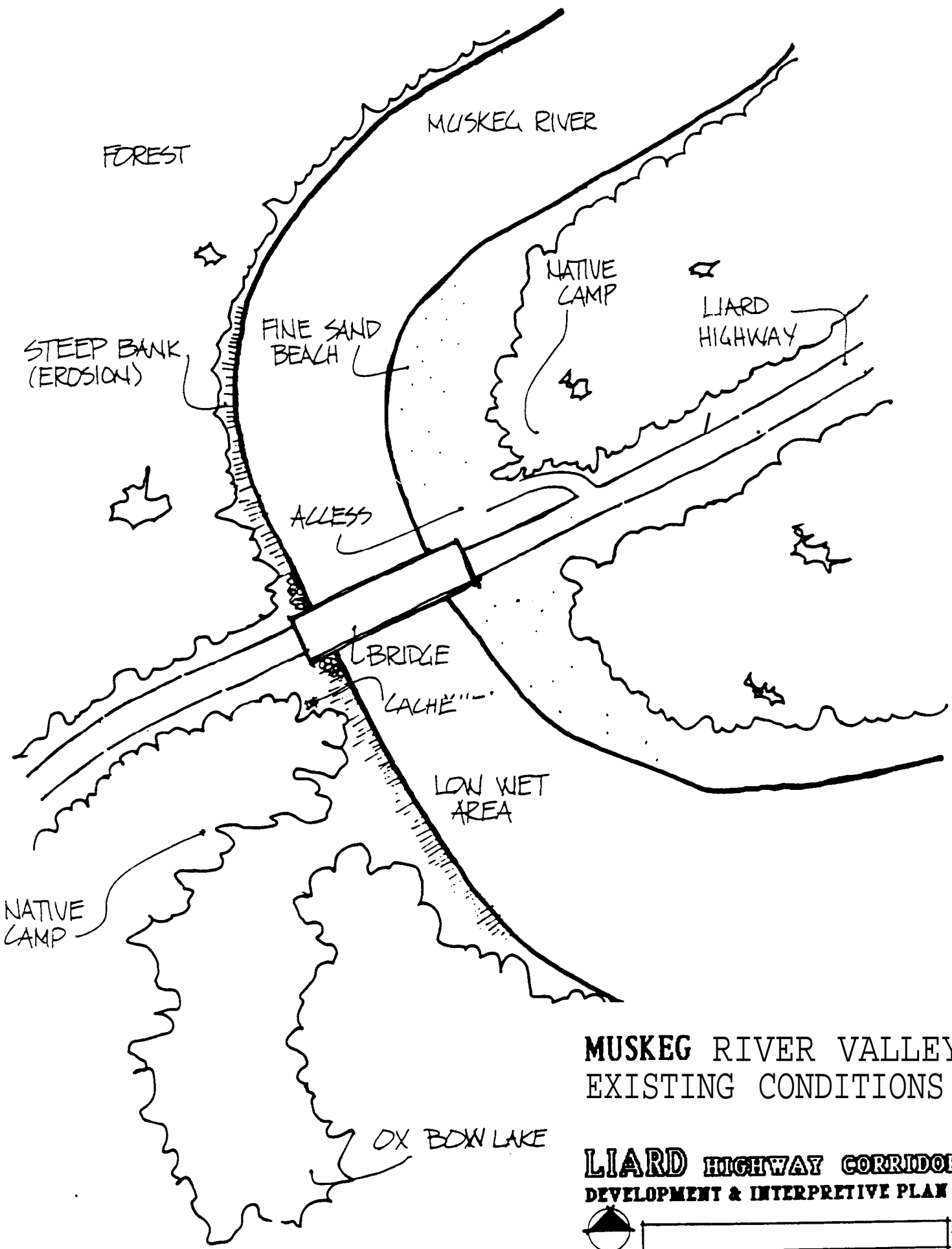
c) Facilities

- road access off the highway on both sides of the river
- parking areas
- services (**water**, pit toilets)
- day use area
- picnic sites (screened picnic shelters)
- interpretive **signage**
- low grade hiking trails **to** features of interest in the surrounding area
 - generally natural trail **bed**
 - some drainage and fill will be required
 - clearing in some areas
 - small sections of boardwalk may be necessary in wet areas
- interpretive viewpoints at key **locations**

d) Costs: **Capital**

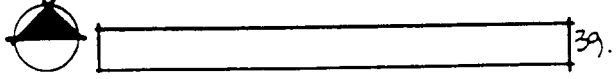
- road & parking	40.
- picnic sites & shelters	30.
- trails	70.
- signage	30.
- services (water, pit toilets)	30.

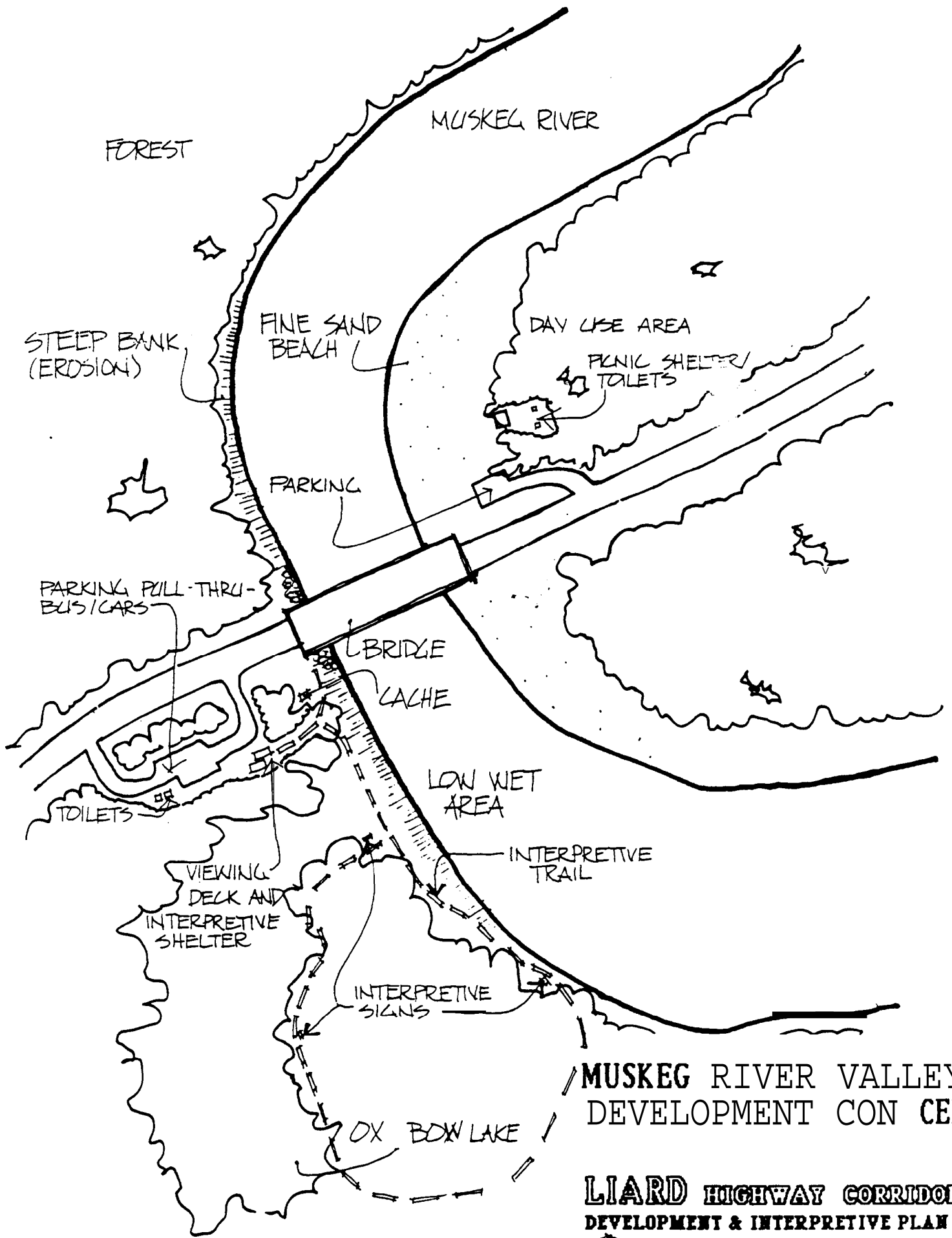
TOTAL 200. “



**MUSKEG RIVER VALLEY
EXISTING CONDITIONS**

**LIARD HIGHWAY CORRIDOR
DEVELOPMENT & INTERPRETIVE PLAN**





4.6 **Rabbit Creek** (*27) (km **65.4**)

This site is **located on** a **slope** above the **small** meandering **creek**. **Visitors** have a clear view across **to the Liard** Mountains which are closer now than at **the** border viewpoint. The site *has an open, airy* feeling - *being* slightly elevated above the road and adjacent slope. This **creates** a relaxing environment **to stop** and picnic and enjoy an **attractive** vista at the same time.

1. Existing Site Conditions and Resources

- no facilities
- young mixed forest cover
- **site is** high above **the** river and well drained
- creek bottom itself is low and wet and unsuitable for extensive creek-side activity
- good views **to** the west

2. **Subthemes** and Messages

ON THE EDGE OF THE PLAINS

- **The boreal forest**
 - **animals** of the boreal forest, especially snowshoe hare (characteristics and habitat)
- Traditional lifestyles
 - native use of snowshoe hare

3. **Proposed** Development (Tertiary)

a) *Purpose* and Scope

- brief highway **rest stop** and viewpoint
- picnic site
- interpretive site of a specific feature of interest

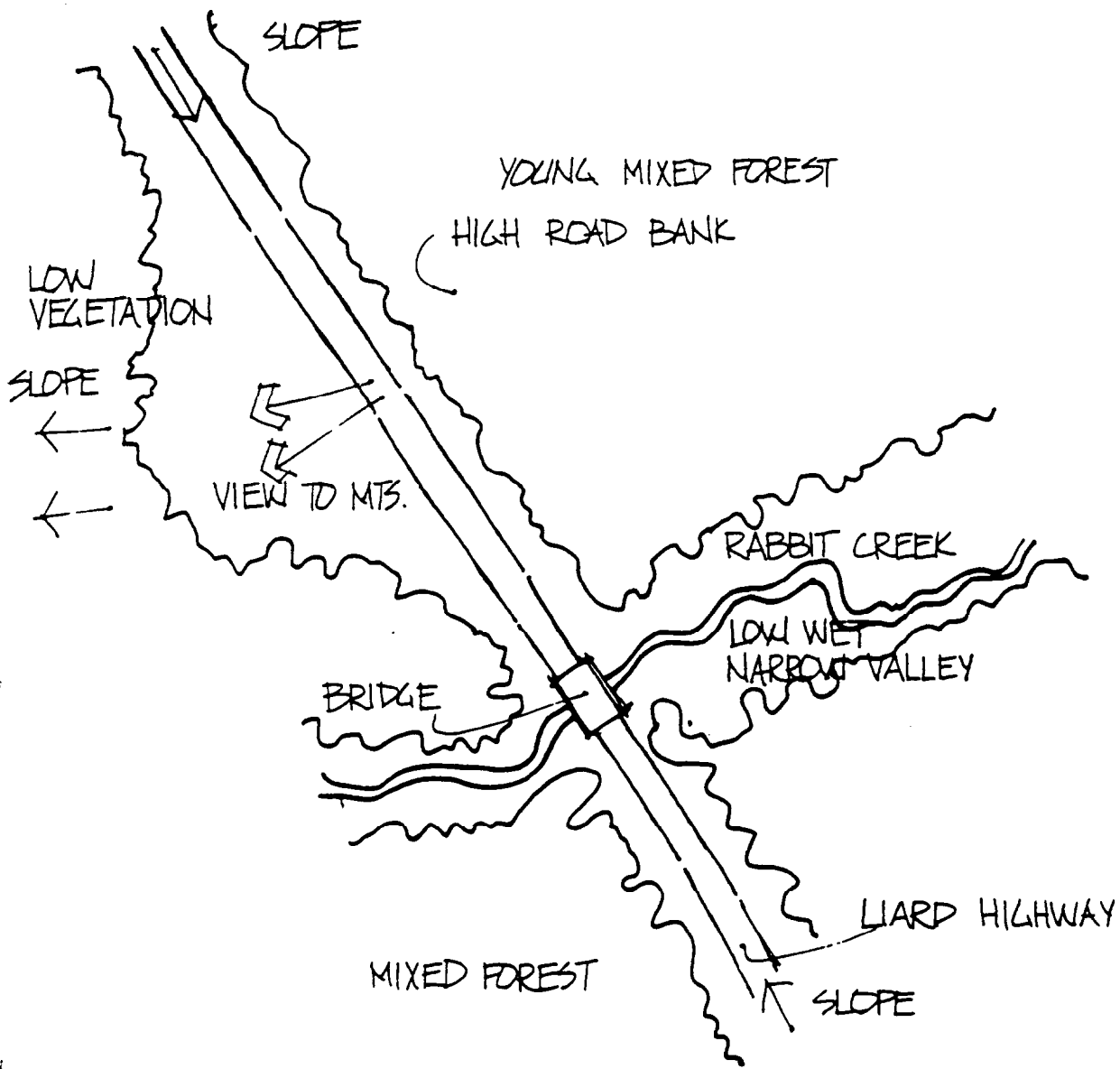
b) Interpretive Media

- site and trail **signage**

c) Facilities

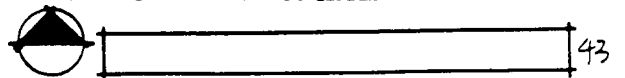
- interpretive trail
- interpretive **signage**
- road access
- parking area
- picnic sites
- services (pit **toilets**)

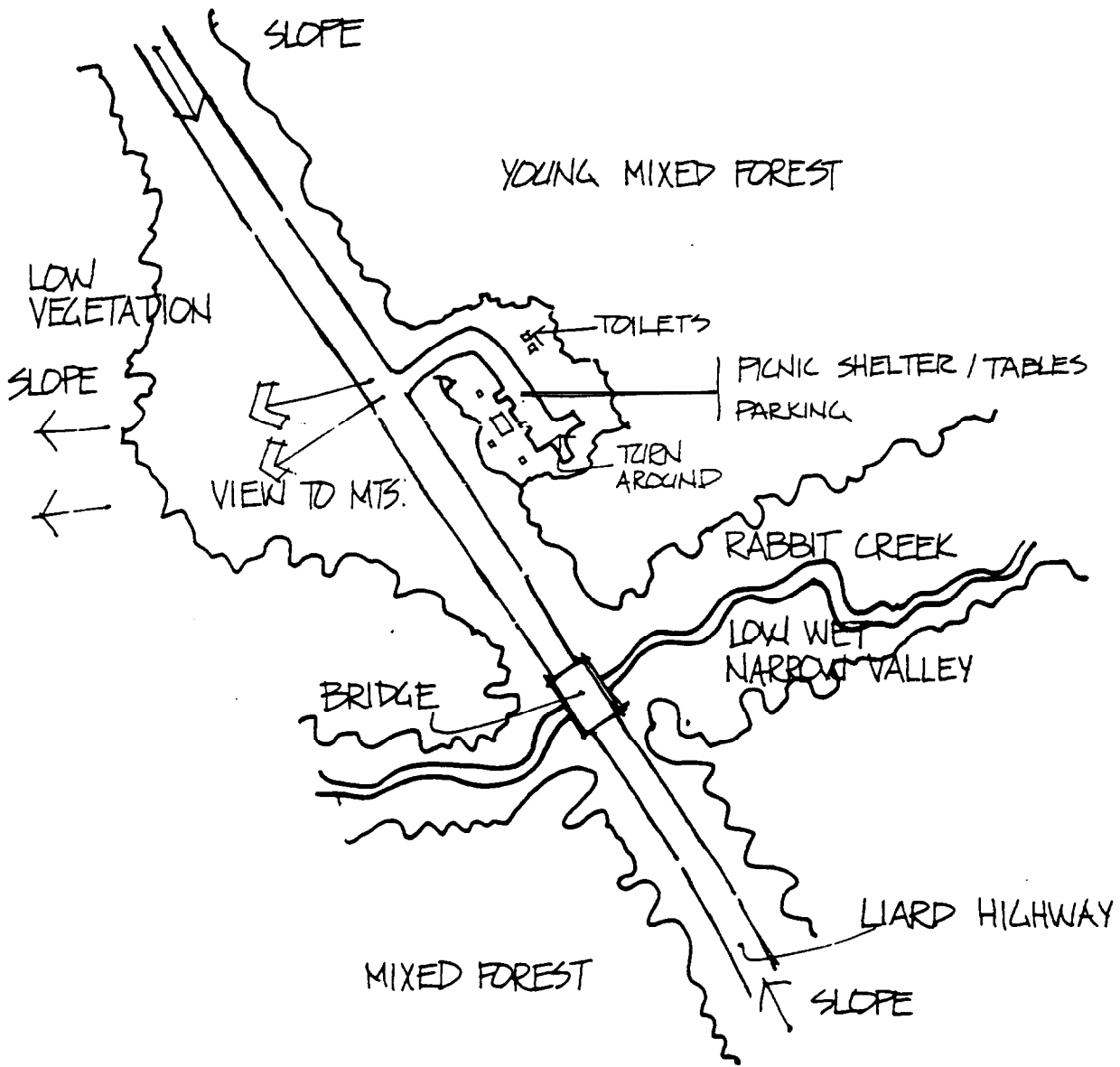
d) Costs: Capital	
- road & parking	25.
- picnic sites	20.
- trail	10.
- interpretive displays	20.
- services (pit toilets)	20.
 TOTAL	 95.



RABBIT CREEK
EXISTING CONDITIONS

LIARD HIGHWAY CORRIDOR
DEVELOPMENT & INTERPRETIVE PLAN





RABBIT CREEK
DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT

**LIARD HIGHWAY CORRIDOR
DEVELOPMENT & INTERPRETIVE PLAN**



4.7 **Bison Viewing Area (#26) (km 78.6) (proposed)**

This is the first opportunity for the **traveller** to obtain a panoramic view of the **Liard** Mountain Range as well as the river valley. The mountains are visible as a distinct line fading off in the distance and with the massive stone wall rising out of **the** forest this **creates** a strong visual image. The **traveller** is reminded that **they** are approaching the edge of the mountains.

This site has **been** identified as a possible area for developing a bison paddock which would allow visitors **to** view **these** animals in their natural setting. The proposal has not gone much beyond the idea stage, but has been viewed as an idea worth pursuing. The description below recognizes this long term **potential** but **acknowledges** that in the short **term** the low key development of the **site** will focus on the view of **the** Mackenzie Mountains. **Interpretation** of the reintroduction of bison can still be undertaken since potential bison sightings along the highway, although very **infrequent**, will certainly be of interest **to** the **visitor**.

1. Existing Site Conditions and Resources

- parking pullout with garbage container, large gravel pad
- gently sloping valley **to** the **Liard** River in the distance
- **young, mixed** forest cover
- excellent views of the Mackenzie Mountains
- views are obstructed by vegetation along side the parking area but are visible in **winter** or from a slightly elevated position such as **the** top of the road embankment on the **opposite** side of the road from the parking area

2. **Subthemes** and Messages

ON THE EDGE OF THE NORTH

- Northern flora and fauna species
- bison characteristics
- bison habitat
- **introduction** of bison into the area

3. **Proposed** Development (**Tertiary**)

a) Purpose and **Scope**

- viewpoint and day use **site**
- opportunity to develop visitor interest in the natural history of the area

- b) Interpretive Media
- interpretive displays
 - use of viewing **tower** area and trail for interpretive talks **and** guided hikes (**potential**)

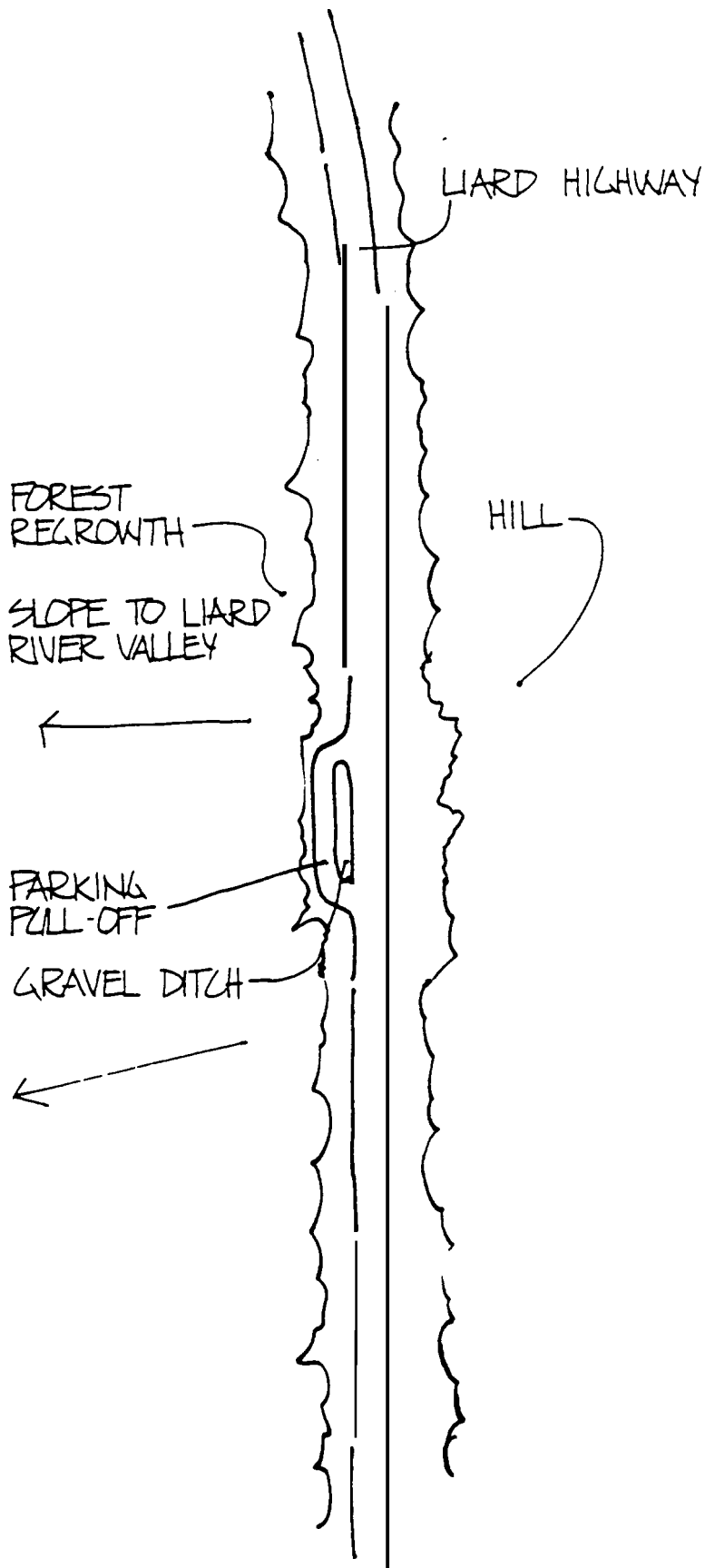
- c) Facilities
- road access **to** parking area (existing)
 - parking area (expand existing away from the road **to** provide **greater** separation from the highway and connection with the picnic sites
 - services (pit toilets]
 - picnic sites
 - **interpretive** displays
 - selective clearing **to** enhance **the** view of **the** mountains

(Potential) (Secondary)

- viewing tower with displays and fixed telescopes
- high grade trail **to** viewing platform
 - short distance from parking
 - easy grade and durable, easy **walking** surface
 - displays on platform
- interpretive trail

d) Costs: **Capital**

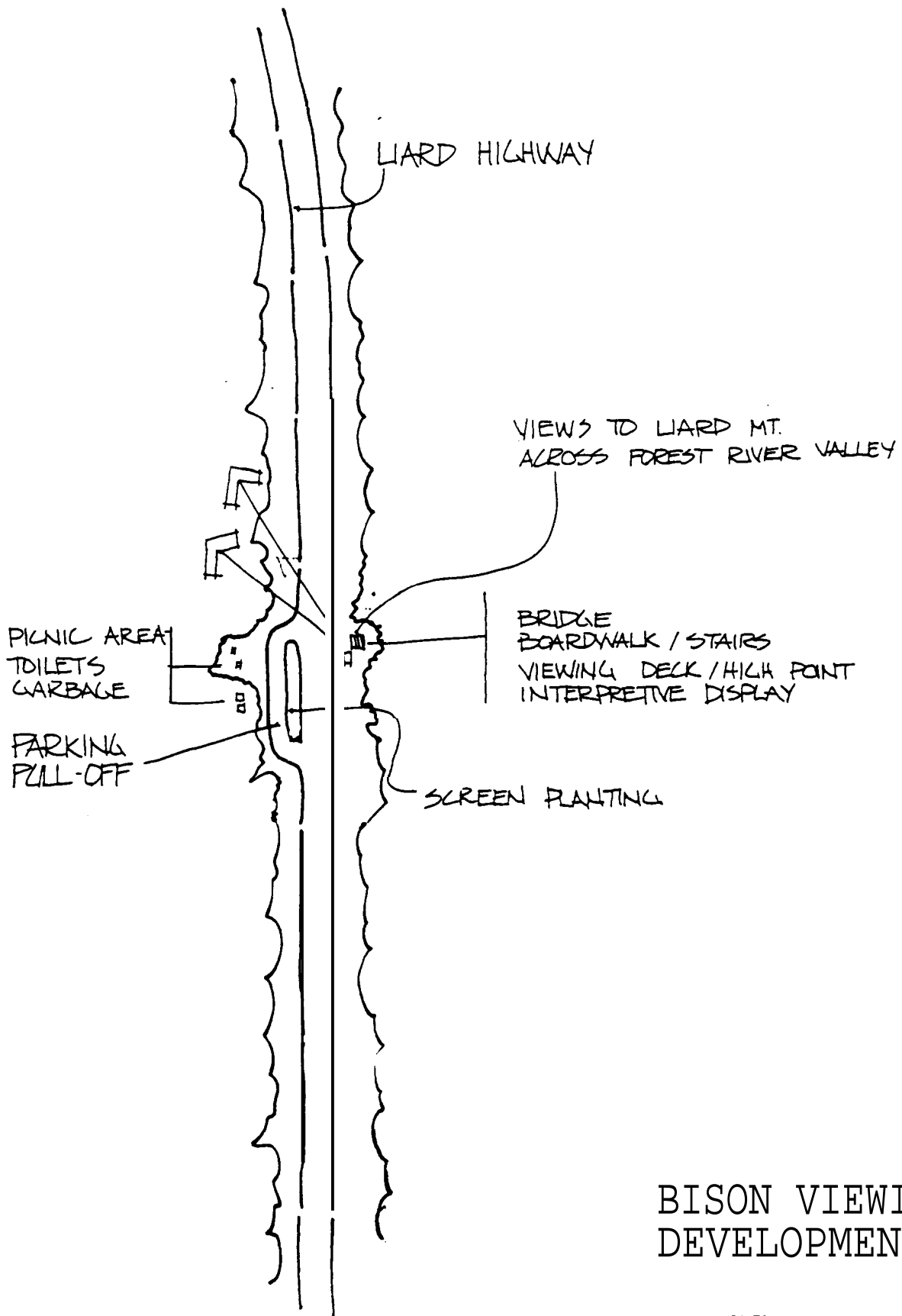
- road & parking	20.
- picnic sites	20.
- interpretive displays	30.
- services (pit toilets)	20.
TOTAL	90.
- trails	20.
- viewing tower	40.
TOTAL	150.



BISON VIEWING AREA
EXISTING CONDITIONS

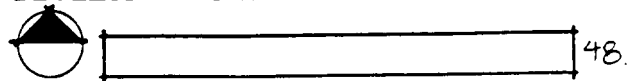
**LIARD HIGHWAY CORRIDOR
DEVELOPMENT & INTERPRETIVE PLAN**





BISON VIEWING AREA
DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT

**LIARD HIGHWAY CORRIDOR
DEVELOPMENT & INTERPRETIVE PLAN**



4.8 Highlands Park (~25) (km 88 - 89)

This is the closest the **traveller** will get to the mountain environment. The site offers excellent recreation and interpretive **opportunities** at many different levels of development. There **is** a feeling of having finally arrived at a point of interest after a long journey. From a **platform** the **traveller** will be able **to** view the **Liard** Mountains "close-up". A river **walk** is also possible from **the** site. A view down an existing cut exposes the river, the far shore **and** the mountains. Walk-in camping and **picnicing** by the **river** are possible for the energetic individual. More **accessible** picnic, camping and **R.V.** facilities can be developed closer **to** the highway.

1. Existing Site Conditions and Resources

- no facilities
- mixed forest cover
- broad, high **terraces** from road elevation to the river below
- cut line from the highway to **the** river with naturally developed **trail**

2. **Subthemes** and Messages

ON THE **EDGE** OF THE RIVER
ON THE **EDGE** OF THE MOUNTAINS

- Geology and **geomorphology** of **the** Mackenzie Mountains
 - sedimentary **stratification**
 - uplift
 - erosional **processes**
- Modern resources
 - oil and gas exploration
 - relationship **to** oil regions of North America
- World scale river system
 - river morphology, stage of development
 - erosion processes
 - meanders

3. Proposed Development (primary)

a) Purpose and **Scope**

- major day use stop
- potential overnight **stop** (further investigations of the potential for a new **territorial park**)
- hike **in** camping **opportunities** to **serve** adventurous and prepared
- very attractive area for visitors who are active and want **to** explore

- scenic stop for buses and other **tour** groups
- closest proximity to Mackenzie Mountains and **good** exposures of geology and structure -- primary interpretive focus

b) Interpretive Media

- enclosed display complex - a small structure housing displays
- viewpoint with displays on viewing **platform** - **telescope**
- platform could use the elevations of the terraces **combined** with **selective clearing to provide good views without the need for stairs but with a level access onto an elevated platform.**
- **interpretive brochure focussing on the geology and landform evolution**
- use of trails for guided interpretive walks by Blackstone Park or roving interpretive staff

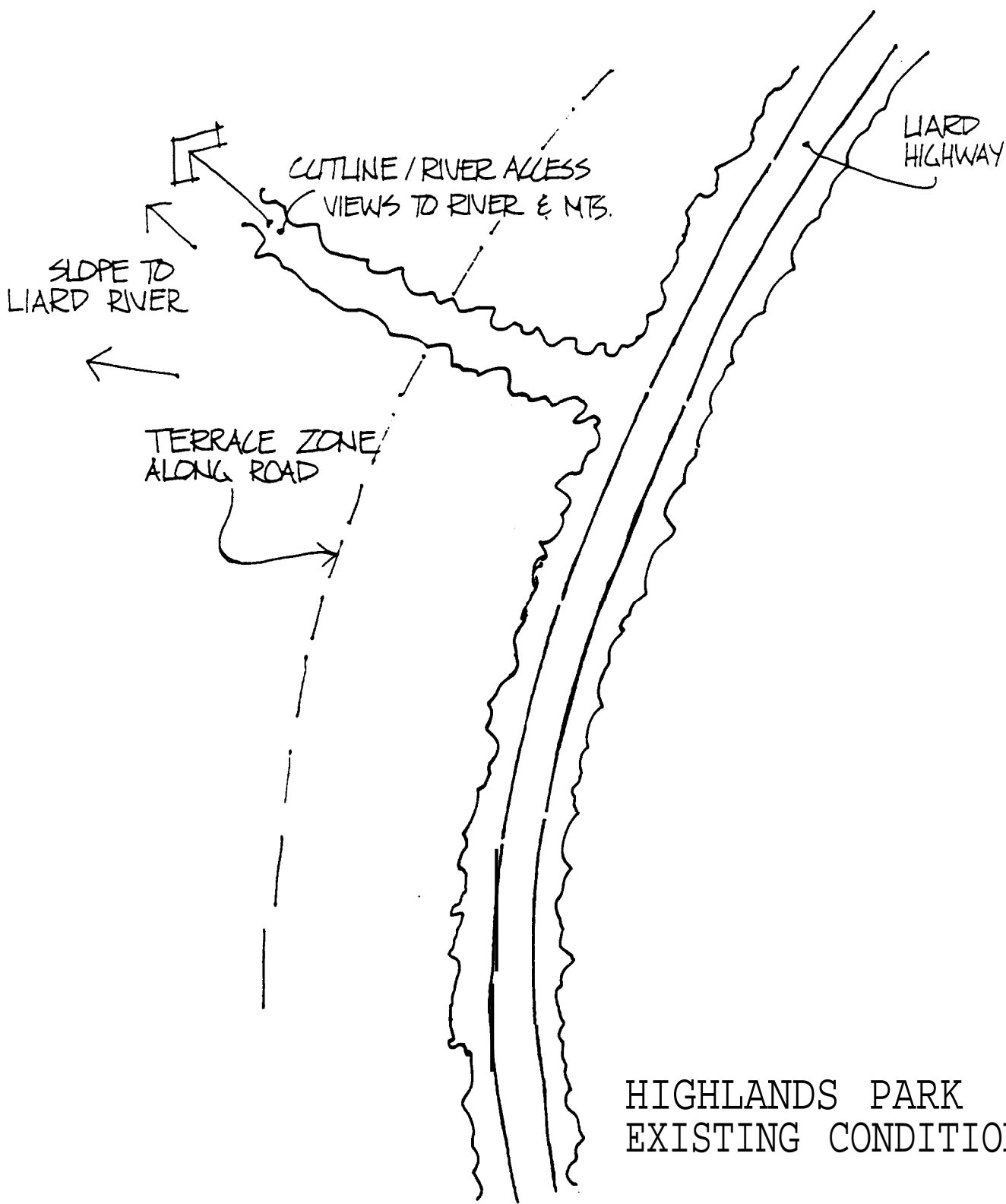
c) Facilities

- road exit/entrance
- parking area
- washrooms (septic system)
- **drinking water (well)**
- group **picnic** area (1 large screened picnic shelter)
- individual picnic sites
- enclosed interpretive display shelter
- high grade trail to raised viewing **platform**
 - short distance from parking
 - **easy** grade and durable, easy **walking** surface
 - **boardwalking** and wheelchair access
 - displays in platform **with** brochures
 - enclosed portion of viewing platform
- low grade hiking **trails to** river
- overnight RV parking sites (minimal facilities)
(**longterm potential** for formal campground development)

d) Costs: Capital

- road & parking	60.
- picnic sites & shelter	70.
- brochures	8.
- trails	40.
- viewing platform	80.
- enclosed interp. display shelter	50.
- services (water, washroom)	40.
- camp sites	30.

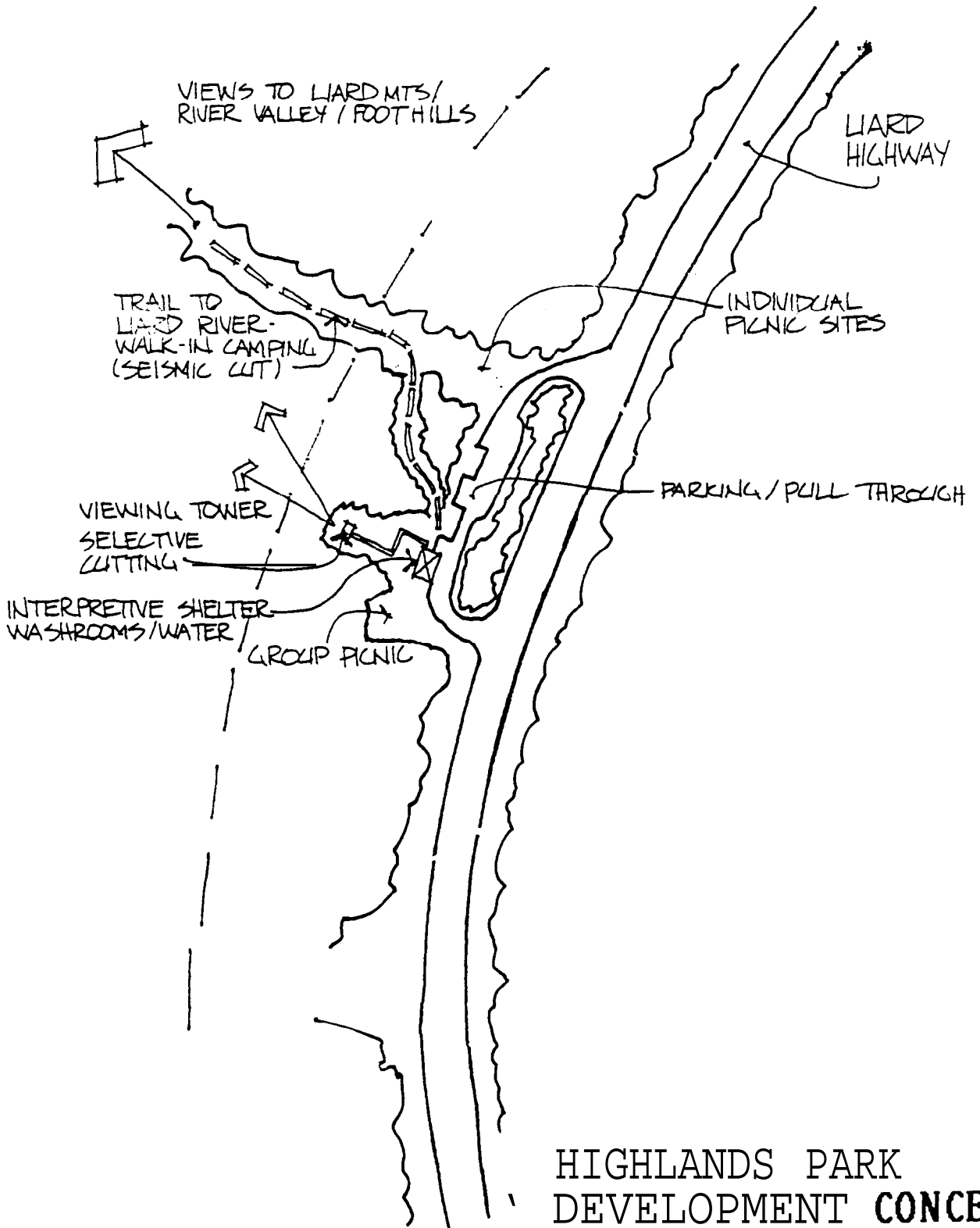
TOTAL 378.



HIGHLANDS PARK
EXISTING CONDITIONS

**LIARD HIGHWAY CORRIDOR
DEVELOPMENT & INTERPRETIVE PLAN**





HIGHLANDS PARK DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT

LIARD HIGHWAY CORRIDOR DEVELOPMENT & INTERPRETIVE PLAN



4.9 **Nahanni Butte Winter Road (19) (km 131.9)**

While **this** site does not **possess** any significant physical attribute, being an opening in **the** bush at the side of **the** road; it does represent a very significant northern phenomenon - **winter** roads. Of added interest here is the fact that the winter road connects an **isolated** native community with the highway in winter. In the summer the inhabitants must rely on boats as their main source of transportation.

1. Existing Site Conditions and Resources

- existing access road: closed in summer
- level, heavily forested site
- clearing of the site within the **highway** right-of-way

2. **Subthemes** and Messages

ON THE **EDGE** OF THE RIVER

- Traditional lifestyles
- Early European contact
 - trading posts were operated near **the** confluence of the **Liard** and **Netla** rivers from **the** late 1920's to the mid 1950's
 - move from NeUa River to **Nahanni Butte**
- Changes **in** transportation
 - history of **Slavey** transportation: birch and spruce canoes in summer, **snowshoes** with a **toboggan** in winter (toboggans were more suitable for heavily forested areas than were sleds with runners)
 - contemporary **transportation** of Dene **people today**: **skidoos** and dog teams in winter, boats and motor vehicles in summer
- Impact of modern resources and activities on the region's
 - mining and oil exploration
 - **Nahanni National Park**
 - **Liard Highway**

3. Proposed Development (Tertiary)

a) Purpose and Scope

- brief highway rest stop
- interpretive site of a specific feature of **interest**

b) **Interpretive Media**

- interpretive display
- focus on native history and early exploration and transportation **history**

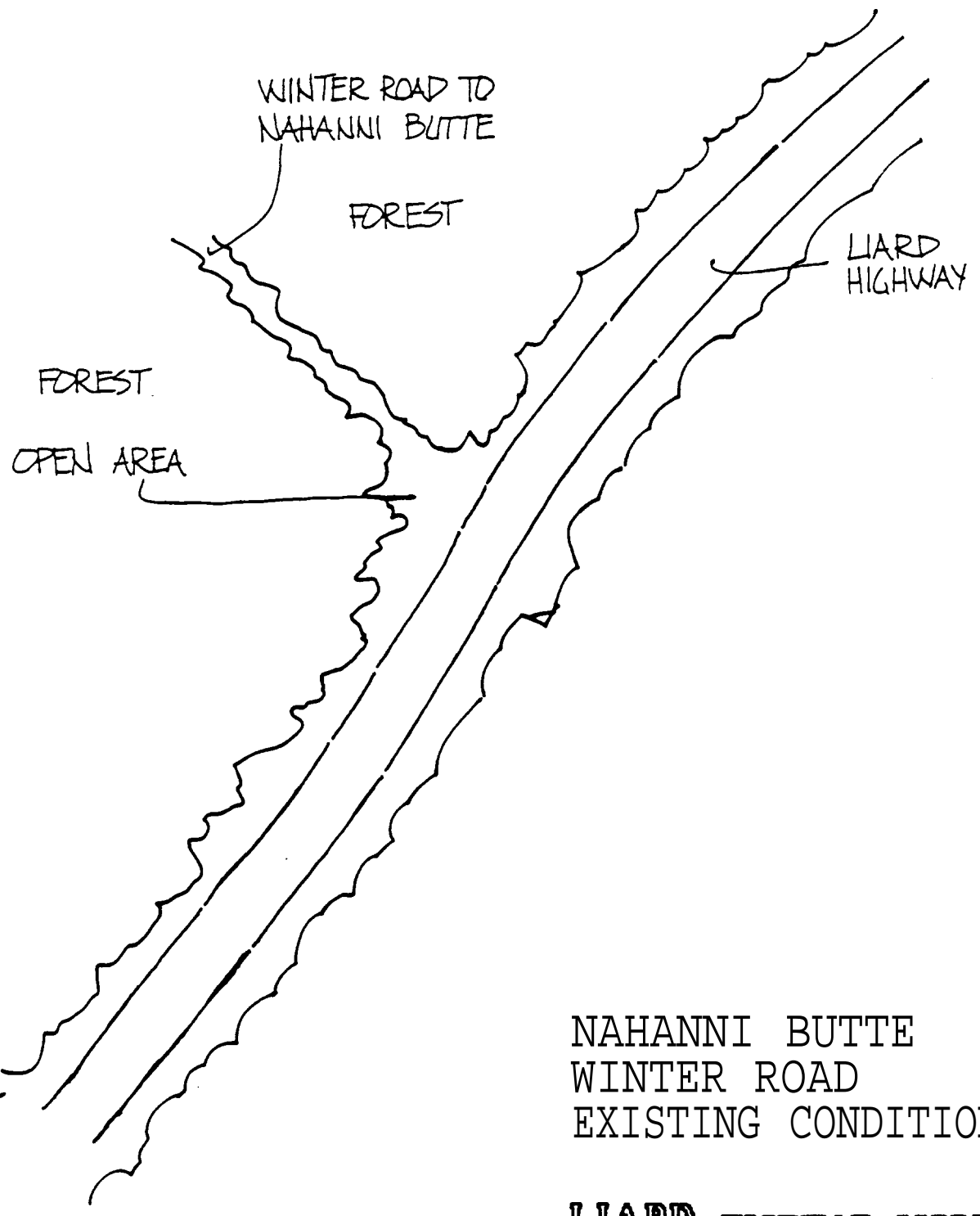
c) Facilities

- interpretive display
- road access
- parking area
- services (pit toilets)

d) Costs: Capital

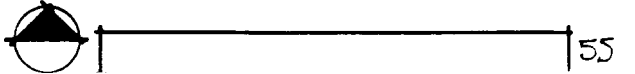
- road & **parking** 20.
- interpretive displays 30.
- services (pit toilets) 20.

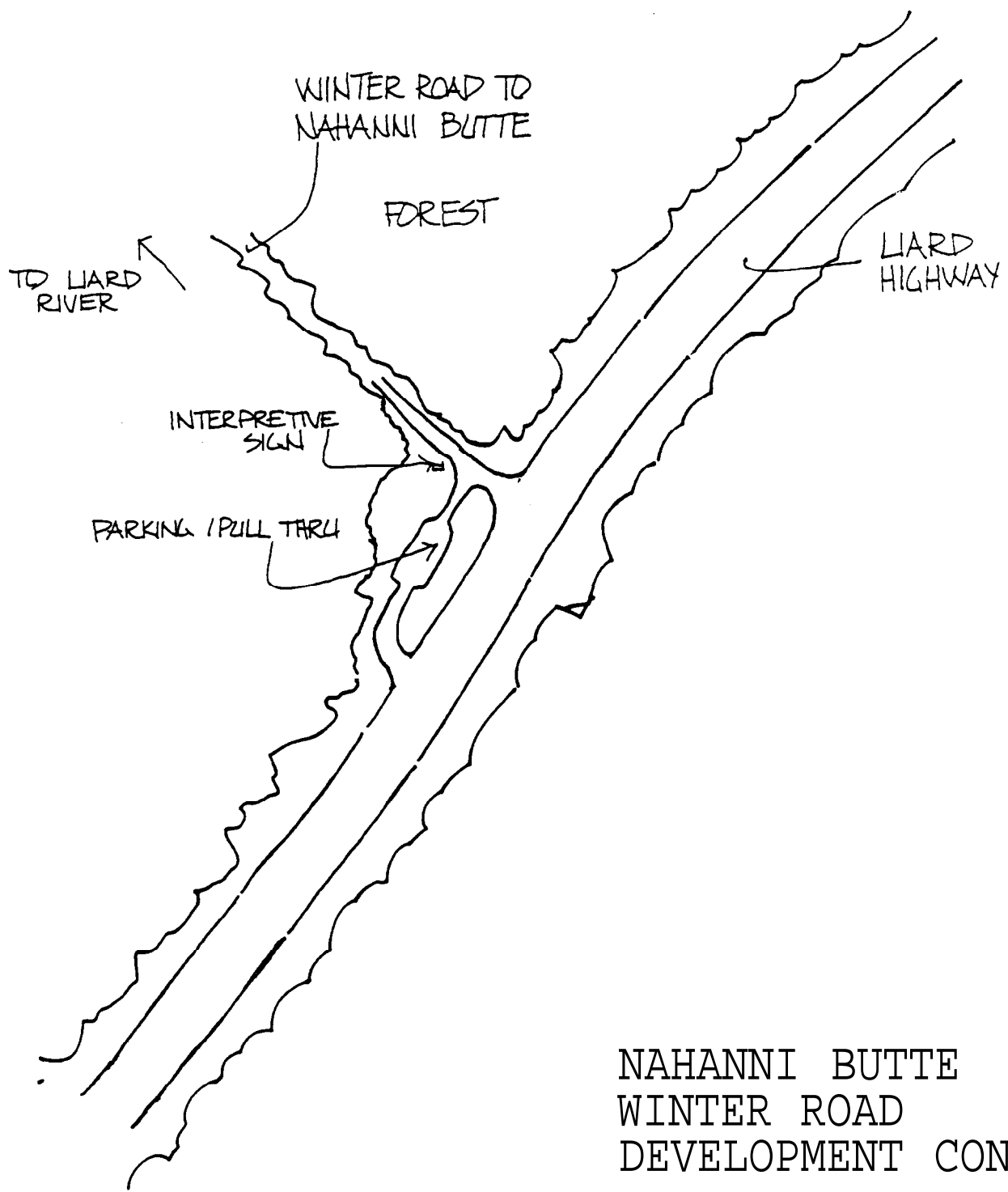
TOTAL 70.



NAHANNI BUTTE
WINTER ROAD
EXISTING CONDITIONS

**LIARD HIGHWAY CORRIDOR
DEVELOPMENT & INTERPRETIVE PLAN**





NAHANNI BUTTE
 WINTER ROAD
 DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT

**LIARD HIGHWAY CORRIDOR
 DEVELOPMENT & INTERPRETIVE PLAN**



4.10 **Blackstone** River Day Use Area (18] (km 148.6) (**existing**)

A master plan for **Blackstone Park** was prepared in early 1989 (PRP Inc.). The plan fully describes the current **state** of development of **the park** and **the proposed** future development. **Blackstone** is **to** be a major activity area along the **Liard** Highway corridor and provide a high level of **service** and interpretive facilities for the traveling public. It is a park where overnight and longer extended stays are encouraged. Recreational activities in the surrounding region (**ie. outings** on the **Liard** River or **to backcountry** areas in the Mackenzie Mountains) and interpretive opportunities and formal programs in the park's **visitor centre, interpretive** display areas, trails and other nearby **sites** along the highway, **will** improve the park as an activity area.

The **Blackstone** River day use area is included within the **park**. Details of the proposed developments and the **interpretive** themes **and** facilities for the **site** are provided in the **master** plan for the park. These developments are considered an **integral** part of the corridor development and have been taken into account in the consideration of **the** remaining corridor development.

4.11 Blackstone Park (existing) (# 16) (km 153.2)

A **master** plan for **Blackstone Park** was prepared in early 1989 (**PRP** Inc.). The plan fully describes **the** current state of development of the park and the proposed future development **Blackstone** is **to** be a major activity area along the **Liard** Highway corridor and provide a high level of service and interpretive **facilities for the travelling** public. It is a **park** where overnight and longer extended stays are encouraged. Recreational activities in **the** surrounding region (**ie. outtrips** on the **Liard** River or **to backcountry** areas in the Mackenzie Mountains) and interpretive opportunities and formal programs in the park's visitor **centre**, interpretive display areas, trails and other nearby **sites** along the **highway**, will improve **the park** as an activity area.

Details of **the** proposed developments and **the** interpretive themes and facilities are provided in **the** master plan for **the park**. These developments are considered an integral part of **the** corridor development and have been taken into account in **the** consideration of the remaining corridor development.

4.12 Tank Site (• 15) (km 20 1.5)

This site represents a **natural** viewpoint, **located** at the top of a slope along the highway with a view **unobstructed** by trees. A wide panoramic view is **possible** with the **Liard** River in the foreground, a vast expanse of forest in the mid ground, and off to the west in the distance, the **Liard** Mountains. The easy access to the site and open view makes this an ideal **site** for bus travelers and the handicapped to enjoy. The large dilapidated **water tank** **located** on the site is a great anomaly. It can be interpreted as an eyesore or a fascinating **story** of the strange occurrences in northern development and road building. Possibilities can be explored for turning it **into** a viewing tower.

1. Existing Site Conditions and Resources

- gravel pile
- large open gravel surface
- old rusty **water tank** (15' high by 20' diameter)

2. **Subthemes** and Messages

ON THE **EDGE** OF THE RIVER

- World scale river **system**
- Seasons of a river
- Biologically rich river flats

3. **Proposed** Development (**Primary**)

a) **Purpose** and Scope

- brief highway rest **stop**
- interpretive site of a specific feature of interest

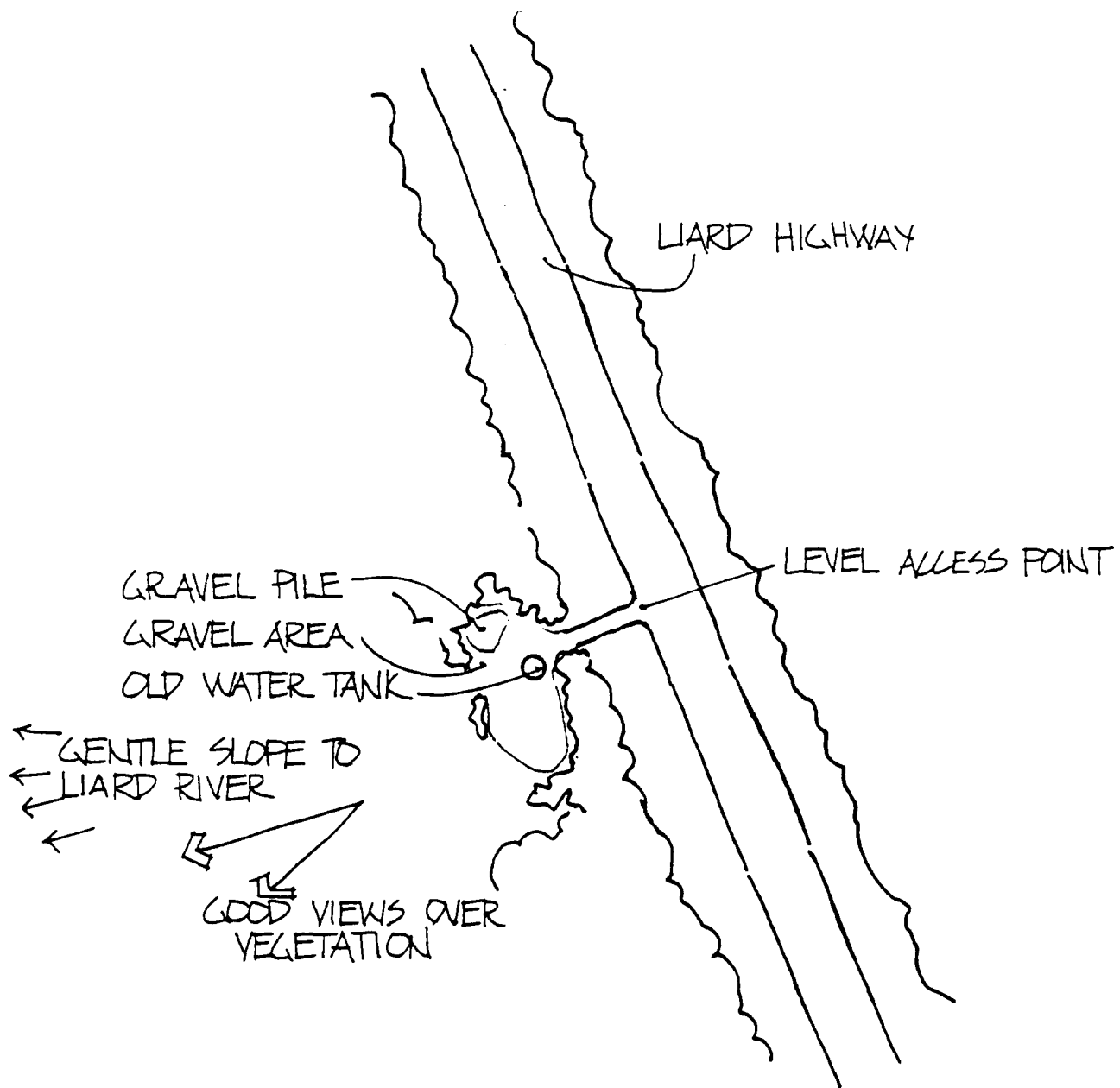
b) Interpretive Media

- **site** and trail **signage**
- interpretive displays on viewing tower
- use of **trails** for guided interpretive walks by **Blackstone Park** or roving interpretive staff

c) Facilities

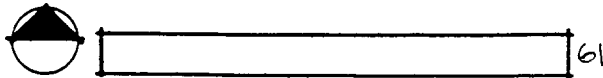
- viewing **tower**
- interpretive **signage**
- road access on the **west** side of the highway
- parking area
- services (water, pit **toilets**)

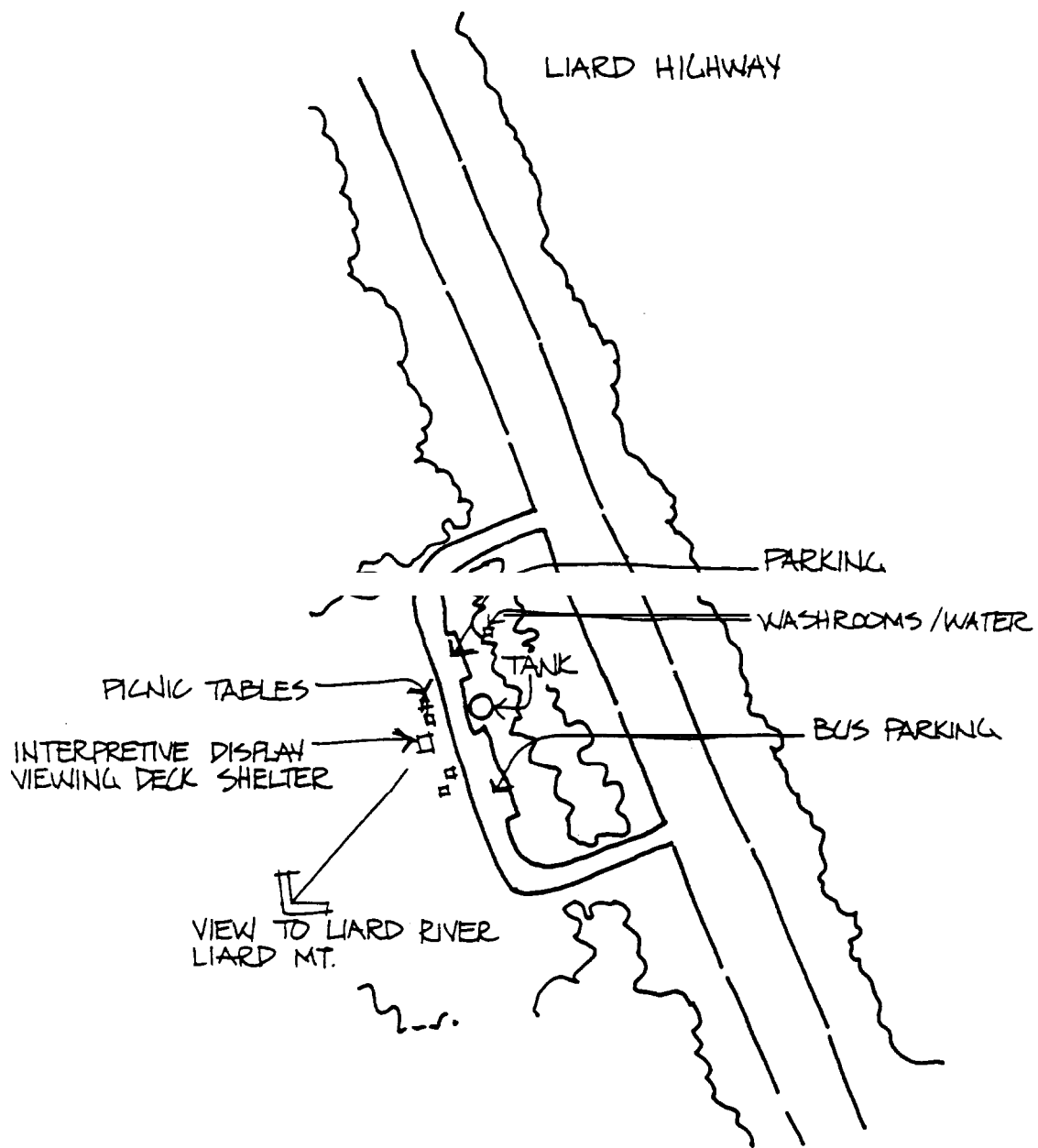
d) Costs: Capital	
- road & parking	30.
- picnic sites & shelter	30.
- trails	40.
- viewing tower	40.
- interpretive displays	25.
- services (water, pit toilets)	30.
TOTAL	195.



TANK SITE - BIRCH R.
EXISTING CONDITIONS

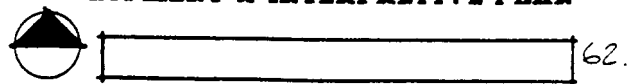
**LIARD HIGHWAY CORRIDOR
DEVELOPMENT & INTERPRETIVE PLAN**





TANK SITE - BIRCH R.
DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT

**LIARD HIGHWAY CORRIDOR
DEVELOPMENT & INTERPRETIVE PLAN**



4.13 Birch River Crossing ("14) (km 205.4)

1. Existing Site Conditions and Resources

- existing access to river and parking area
- evidence of old bridge crossing
- bridge/highway crossing
- **attractive, steep-sided** valley
- series of falls a short distance upstream from highway crossing
- high valley side with good southern exposure
- mixed forest cover with poplar on the higher ridge areas and spruce in the valley

2. Subthemes and Messages

ON THE EDGE OF THE RIVER

- Seasons of a river
 - spring run-off
 - high **water effects**
- World **scale** river **system**
 - **tributary** characteristics
 - differences between western tributaries and eastern
 - drainage from the plains
- Traditional lifestyles
 - hunting and trapping
 - fish species: **longnose** sucker, **northern** pike, **longnose dace**, **trout**, perch
 - use of resources: birch **bark** stripped in spring when sap is flowing and easy to remove, Ft. **Liard** people famous in NWT for birch **bark** containers, also used for canoes but needed much gum and patching therefore canoes were small

ON THE EDGE OF THE PLAINS

- Geology
 - river **morphology**

3. Proposed Development (**Tertiary**)

a) **Purpose** and Scope

- a minor day use stop
- attractive site trail use along the river
- major focus of interpretation on eastern tributaries of **Liard** River
- secondary interpretive focus on native activities

b) Interpretive Media

- ~~use~~ **guiding interpretive trails (with brochure)**
- **viewpoints** along the river with some **signage**
- use of trails for guided interpretive walks **by Blackstone Park** or roving **interpretive** staff

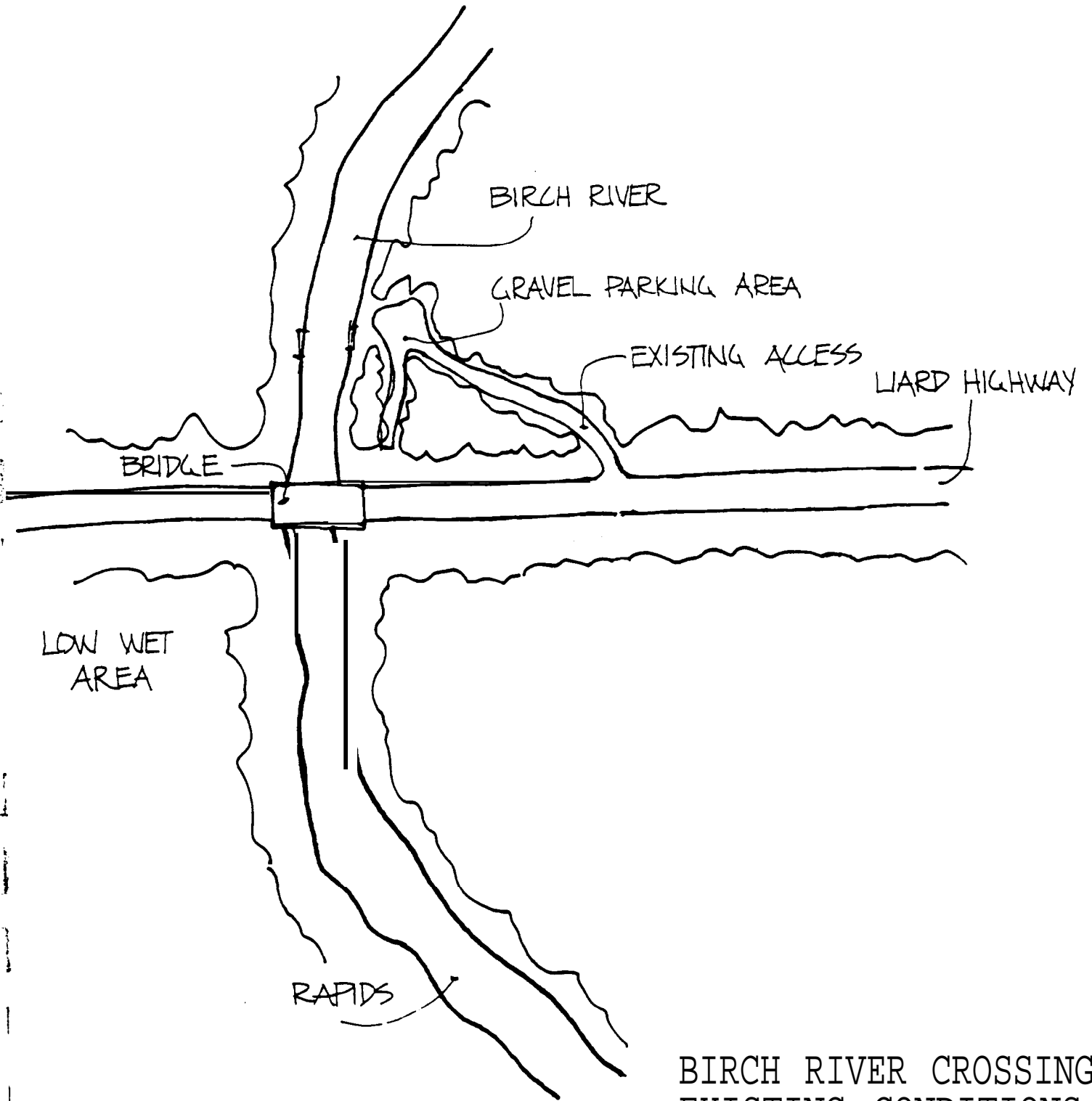
c) Facilities

- road exit/entrance
- parking area
- **washrooms** (pit **toilets**)
- interpretive display including brochure **dispenser**
- interpretive **trails: natural surfacing: upstream to** waterfalls (utilize both sides of **river**)
- viewpoints cleared along trails at key points
- interpretive brochures
- low grade trail **to Liard River: natural surfacing**

d) Costs: Capital

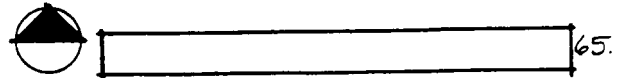
- | | |
|-------------------------|-----------|
| - road & parking | 50. |
| - brochure | 8. |
| - trails | 30. |
| - displays | 30. |
| - services (washrooms) | 20. |

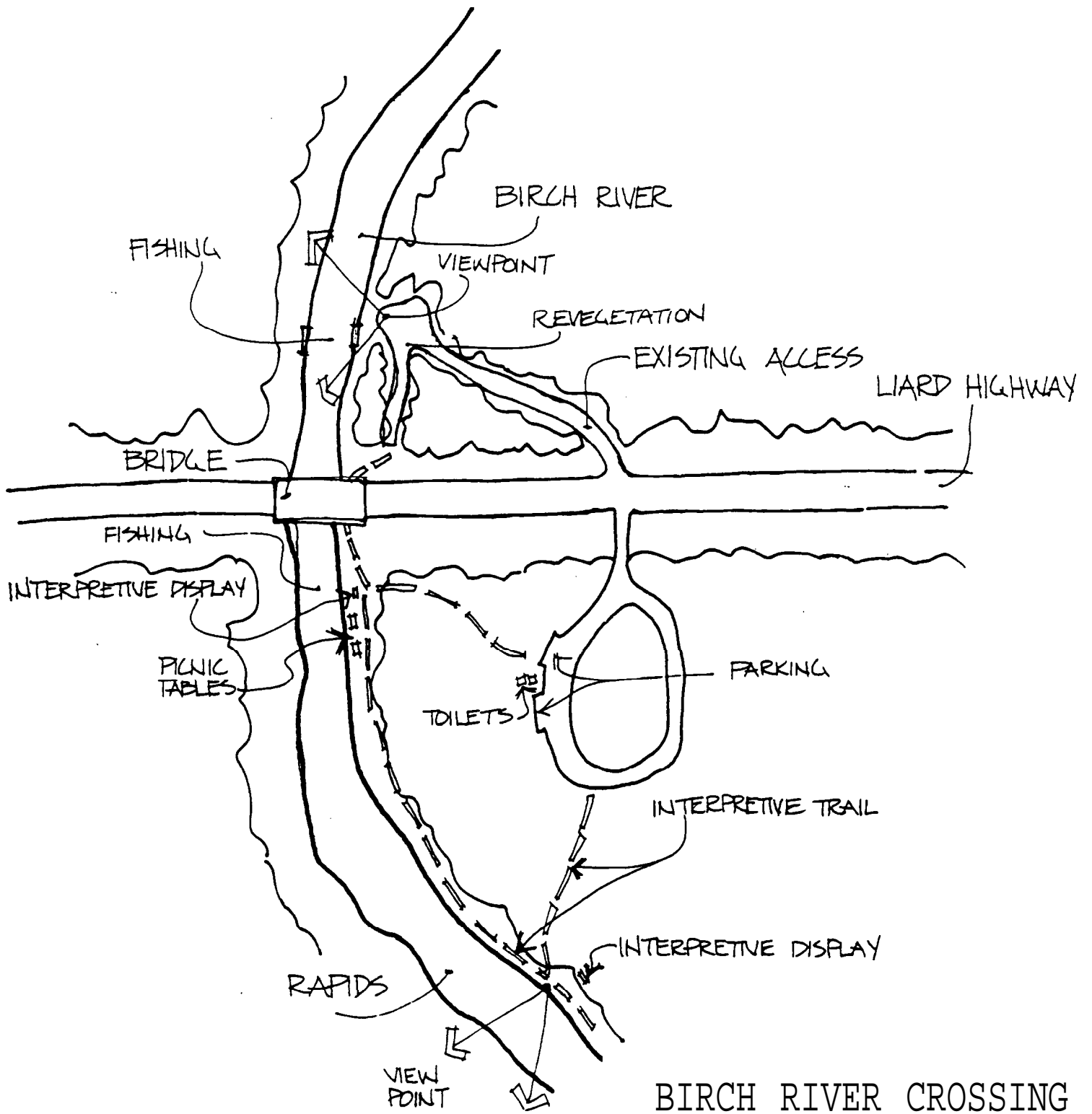
TOTAL 138.



BIRCH RIVER CROSSING
EXISTING CONDITIONS

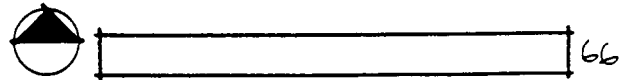
**LIARD HIGHWAY CORRIDOR
DEVELOPMENT & INTERPRETIVE PLAN**





BIRCH RIVER CROSSING
DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT

**LIARD HIGHWAY CORRIDOR
DEVELOPMENT & INTERPRETIVE PLAN**



4.14 Poplar River Uplands (#7) (km 228)

Further investigation of this area may prove to be valuable for complementing the facilities and activities along the highway. This is an area where glacial **landforms** e.g. pothole lakes, drumlins etc. are evident from the highway. Without **significant facility** development, however, **they** will remain virtually inaccessible to the **traveller**. Greater **study** of the area **to determine** its full **potential** is needed. It is possible that high quality **day** use areas including **hiking**, picnicking and even a small beach development may **be possible**. It will **be important to** identify **the** most appropriate locations for **visitor** use and access so that the most efficient and cost effective development will **be considered**. The outline of suggestions provided below has not been field **checked** due to the present restricted access combined with the time constraints of **this** project

1. Existing Site Conditions and Resources

- well drained ridges and **less** well-drained basins between
- **poplar** dominated forest cover on the ridges with more mixed **growth in the** basins
- small pothole type lakes in iodized, steeply rolling terrain with moderate relief

2. **Subthemes** and Messages

ON THE **EDGE** OF THE PLAINS

- Glaciation
 - drumlins, glacial landscape
- The **boreal** forest
 - young **poplar** stand

3. proposed Development (secondary) (potential requiring **further study**)

a) Purpose and Scope

- attractive day use stop
- **water** based recreation potential, eg. swimming
- good **opportunities** for **visitors to** appreciate **the** variety in landscape character of the area
- provide opportunities for **interpretation** of interesting glacial features
- short hiking **opportunities** in interesting and pleasant **terrain**

4.15 Boreal Forest (°4) (km 244- 246)

1. Existing Site Conditions and Resources

- slightly **elevated** site overlooking boreal forest terrain
- on the edge of a bog
- forest cover primarily poplar with some spruce and pine
- long distance views to the **north** and northeast
- views are **restricted** by vegetation and siting of viewpoints will require careful selection and selective cutting

2. Subthemes and Messages

ON THE EDGE OF THE PLAINS

- The boreal forest
 - forest cover of black spruce, jack pine
 - lichen growth and **its** place **within the** Boreal ecosystem
- Traditional lifestyles
 - native use of **spruce to** build small spruce canoes

3. Proposed Development (Tertiary)

a) Purpose and Scope

- brief **highway** rest stop
- views of **boreal** forest landscape
- interpretive site of a specific feature of **interest**

b) Interpretive Media

- small display on viewing decks
- **site** and trail **signage**
- use of trails for guided interpretive walks by **Blackstone Park** or roving interpretive staff

c) Facilities

- **interpretive signage**
- interpretive **trail**: some board walk will be necessary
- viewing decks: upper deck associated with parking area (**long distance views**); lower deck **associated** with bog
- road a-
- parking area
- **services** (pit **toilets**)

d) costs: capital	
- road & parking	20.
- trails	25.
- viewing decks	20.
- interpretive displays	15.
- services (pit toilets)	20.
 TOTAL	 100.

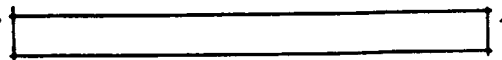
FOREST

BOG
OPEN WET AREA

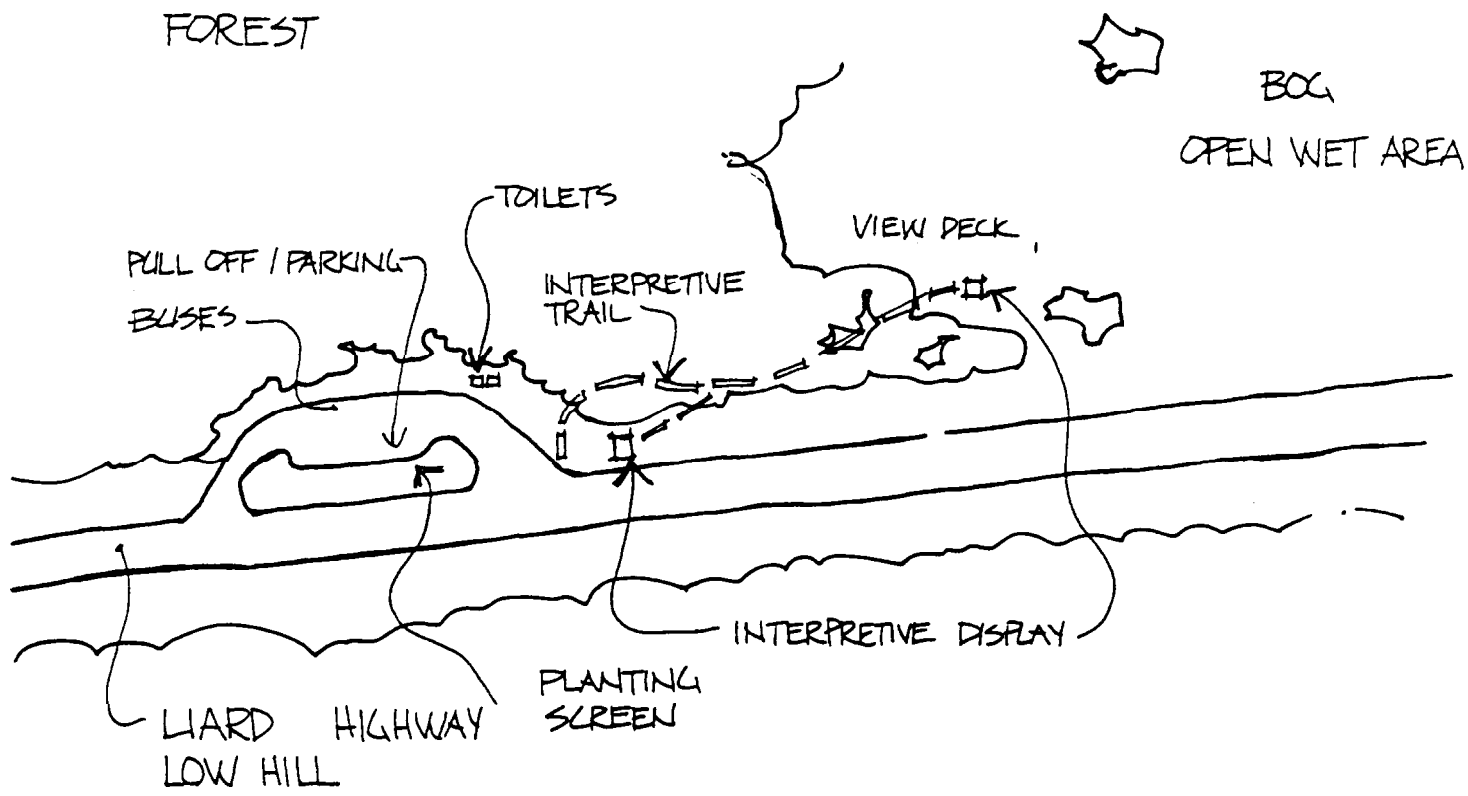
LIARD HIGHWAY
LOW HILL

BOREAL FOREST
EXISTING CONDITIONS

**LIARD HIGHWAY CORRIDOR
DEVELOPMENT & INTERPRETIVE PLAN**

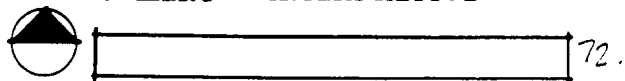


71.



BOREAL FOREST
DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT

**LIARD HIGHWAY CORRIDOR
DEVELOPMENT & INTERPRETIVE PLAN**



4.16 Mackenzie Highway Jet. (# 1) (km 258.4)

It is recognized that a **visitor/information centre** should be located along the highway to welcome visitors entering the **Liard** region and to introduce them to the interpretive opportunities along the upcoming portions of the road. The precise location for such a **centre** has not been decided as several options exist. These include locating the **centre** in Fort Nelson where it could be combined with other tourism facilities or **locating** it at the junction of the **Liard** and Alaska highways in **the Northwest Territories**. The following **discussion** will focus on the later option. Should the **centre** be **located** in Fort Nelson, there will **still** need to be a significant feature **placed** at the junction to make an impression on the **passerby** and to pique **their** imagination on what lies up the road. A sculpture or display sign of large size and an imaginative design would be appropriate. Additional **travel** information should also be presented.

The highway junction **is** an important site in the context of the **Liard** Highway Corridor. Travelers reaching this point have already been **travelling** in the Northwest Territories but may still not be sufficiently aware or assured of the connecting route down the **Liard Highway** to the Alaska Highway. More importantly there is the opportunity to recharge their enthusiasm for the new and different **character** of the **Liard** Region compared to **their** previous exploration in the Territory. This information site must communicate both the information **needed** for **travellers** of the **Liard** Highway and **the excitement of this** diverse region **'On the Edge'**.

1. Existing Site Conditions and Resources

Two alternative locations should be considered further for this important facility location. A choice between the two will be dependent upon the potential **agreement** for joint use of land presently on **the** site of **the service centre** at the junction of Highway # 1 and '7. If the property and business is sold and an agreement can be reached with the new owner for **the** use of a distinct segment of the property for information displays clearly recognizable as GNWT highway information, then this site would be preferable. On **the** other hand if **the** property remains unsold or if a mutually acceptable agreement cannot be reached with **the** new owner, then a **site** just east of the junction, across Jean Marie **Creek** at the crest of the rise is **the alternative** location.

Service Centre:

- service station
- restaurant
- access roads and large parking areas

- service buildings **behind**
- preferred areas on the site for information display **location**
 - a) pull-through parallel to **the creek**
 - clearly visible from **the** highway
 - b) pull-through parallel to **the** highway
 - **between** the access roads **onto the** property

Highway Site:

- undeveloped
- flat terrain just before **sight slope** to the **creek** crossing
- minimal grade differential **all** from highway
- mixed forest cover
- well-drained

2. Subthemes and Messages

- introductory **signage** to Liard Highway system
- create an interest and anticipation of the broad theme of "On the Edge"
- a sense of entering a new and different area is **important**

3. Proposed Development (Secondary)

a) Purpose and Scope

- **to** develop an enthusiasm for **the** recreational and interpretive opportunities of the **Liard** Highway corridor
- **to** provide current and comprehensive information about the **highway** corridor from the junction in both directions: **to** Fort Simpson and to the B.C. border

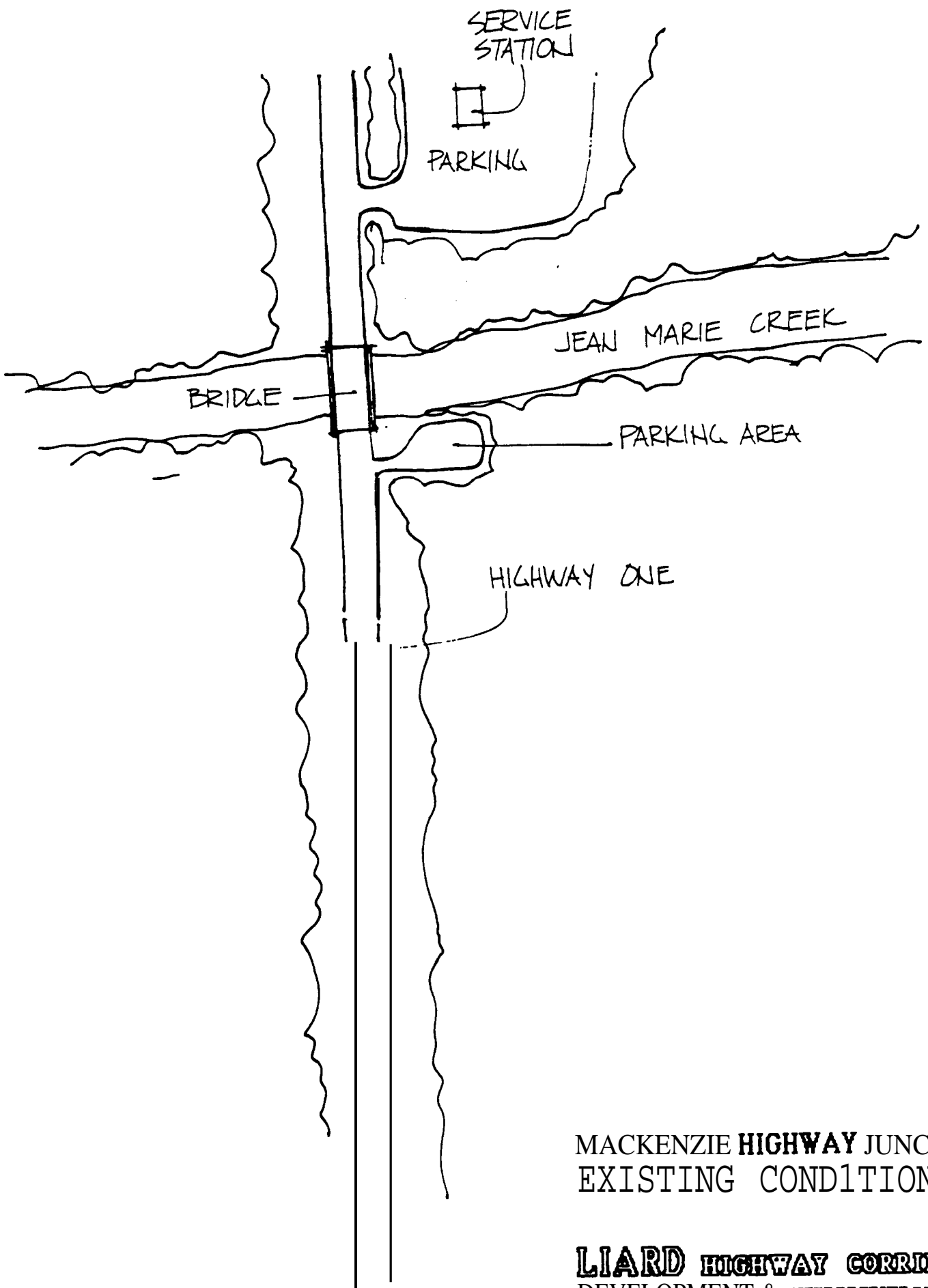
b) Interpretive Media

- large **signage**: welcome **to the Liard** region
- outdoor display complex
- cassette **tapes** available for use along the highway and as souvenirs
- information displays
- general interpretive brochure on **all** aspects of the region including natural history and human **history**

c) Facilities

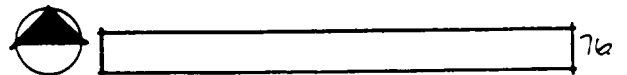
- loop access road from the highway
- parking area
- **interpretive** display with dispensing facilities for brochures and cassette interpretive tapes (may be associated **with** service **centre**)

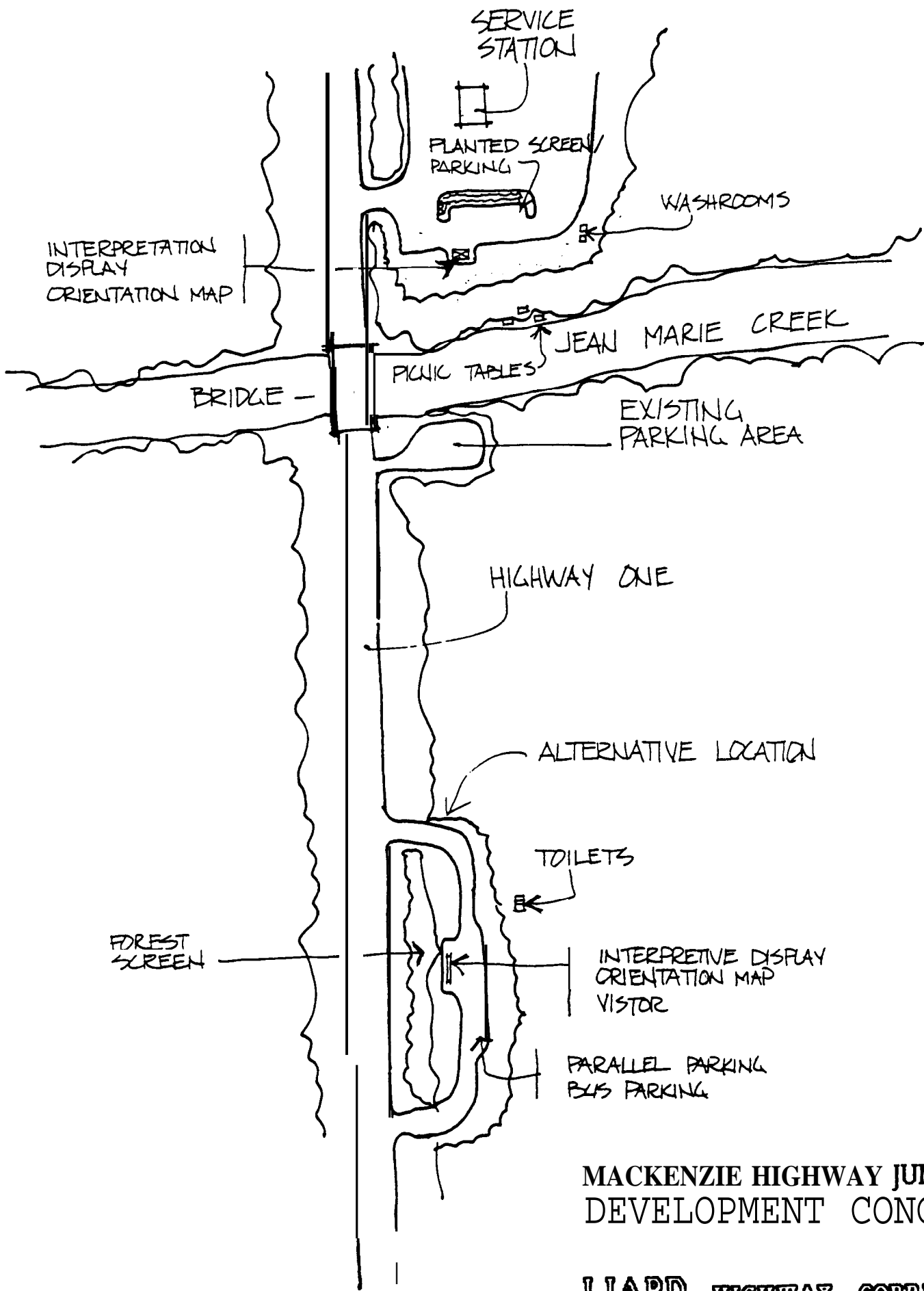
d) Costs: Capital	
- road & parking	40.
- interpretive displays	40.
- services (water, pit toilets)	30.
TOTAL	110.



**MACKENZIE HIGHWAY JUNCTION
EXISTING CONDITIONS**

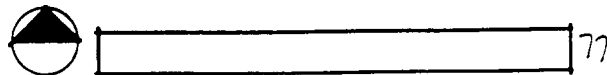
**LIARD HIGHWAY CORRIDOR
DEVELOPMENT & INTERPRETIVE PLAN**





**MACKENZIE HIGHWAY JUNCTION
DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT**

**LIARD HIGHWAY CORRIDOR
DEVELOPMENT & INTERPRETIVE PLAN**



4.17 Liard River Ferry Crossing

1. Existing Site Conditions and Resources

- existing **loop** access road into picnic site
- four picnic sites with tables and **firepits**
- washrooms (pit toilets)
- three sites along **the** edge of **the** river bank
- river bank site high and removed from the existing **water** course
- **site** facilities in poor repair
- entrance **to** ferry along the road right-of-way is bulldozed and the road constantly regraded from the height of the bank **to** the winter
- **service area** for gravel and heavy equipment adjacent **to** the road at **the** height of **the** bank

2. Subthemes and Messages

ON THE **EDGE** OF THE RIVER

- Changes in **transportation**
 - history of **Slavey transportation** on **the Liard** River in various seasons of the year
 - **contemporary** transportation of **Dene** people **today**: skidoos and dog **teams** in winter, boats and **motor vehicles** in summer
 - change to **highway** oriented travel
 - history of the ferry crossing
 - ice road in **winter**
 - periods of no road access in spring and fall

3. Proposed Development (Tertiary)

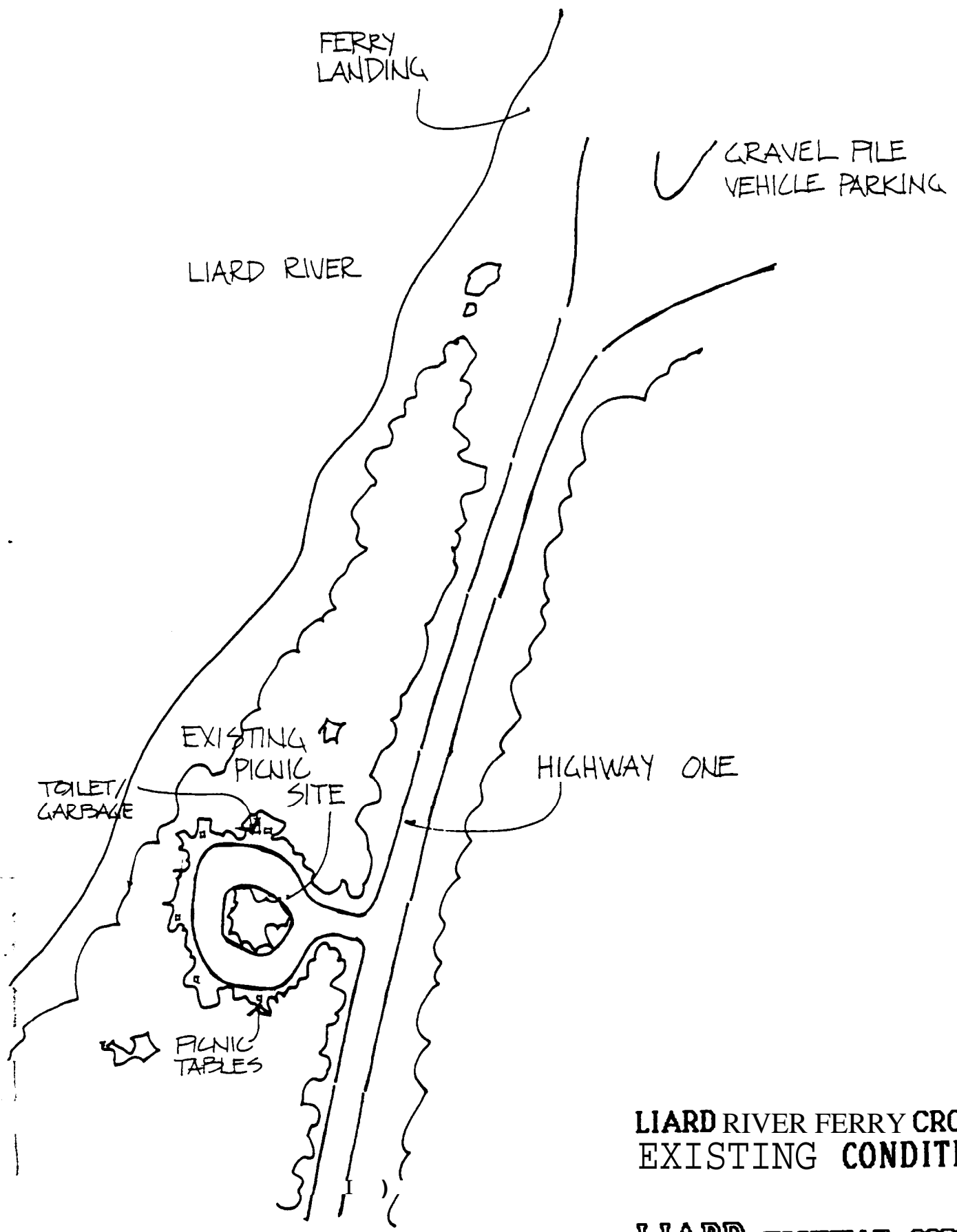
- a) Purpose and Scope
 - brief highway rest stop or unexpected overnight **stop**
 - interpretive site of a specific feature of interest
- b) Interpretive Media
 - interpretive display
 - **transportation** history and changes **to** modern **day**

c) **Facilities**

- **interpretive** displays
 - one display in picnic area between sites along the river edge
 - one display adjacent to the road at the crest of the bank opposite **to** the sign for holding **traffic** until loading
- utilize existing road access and **facilities**
- improvements and redesign of picnic area
 - more clearing for river **views**
 - improved site design allowing better turning and moving of vehicles and providing sites that are separated and **protected** from vehicular movement

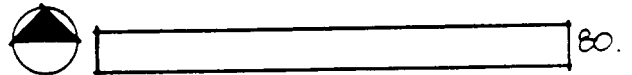
d) **Costs: Capital**

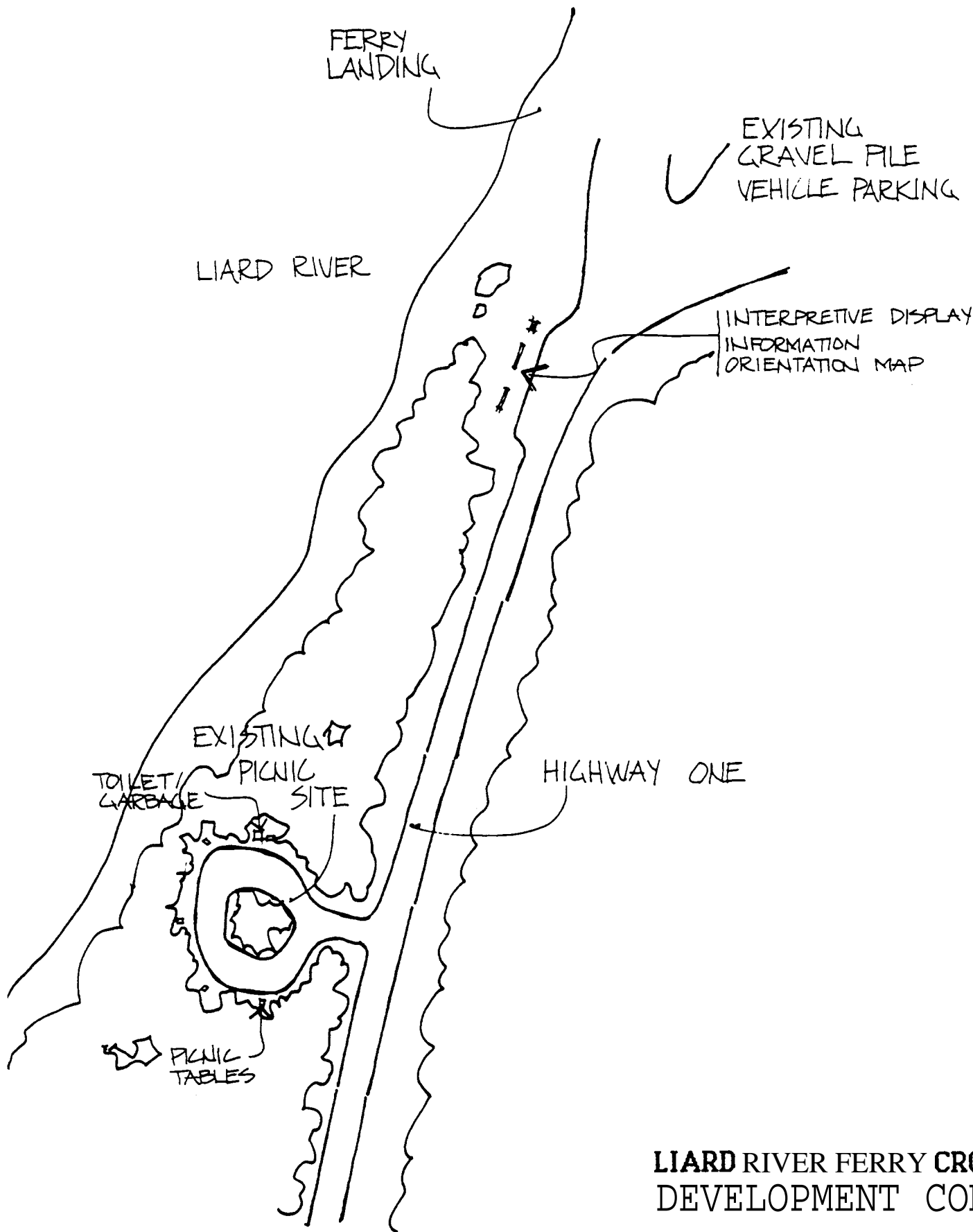
- road & parking	10.
- interpretive displays	40.
- improved services	30.
 TOTAL	 80.



**LIARD RIVER FERRY CROSSING
EXISTING CONDITIONS**

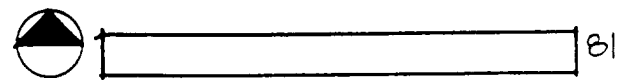
**LIARD HIGHWAY CORRIDOR
DEVELOPMENT & INTERPRETIVE PLAN**





**LIARD RIVER FERRY CROSSING
DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT**

**LIARD HIGHWAY CORRIDOR
DEVELOPMENT & INTERPRETIVE PLAN**



4.18 Marten River

1. Existing Site Conditions and Resources

- no facilities
- bridge/highway crossing
- attractive, steep-sided valley
- mixed forest cover with poplar on **the higher** ridge areas and spruce in the valley

2. Subthemes and Messages

ON THE **EDGE** OF THE RIVER

- Seasons of a river
 - spring run-off
 - high water effects
- **World** scale river **system**
 - tributary **characteristics**
 - relationship to the Mackenzie River
- Traditional lifestyles
 - hunting and trapping

3. **Proposed** Development (Tertiary)

a) Purpose and Scope

- a minor day **use** stop
- attractive site: **trail** use along **the** river
- major focus of **interpretation** on tributaries of Mackenzie River
- secondary interpretive focus on native activities

b) Interpretive Media

- self-guiding interpretive trails (with brochure)
- viewpoints along the river with some signage
- use of trails for guided interpretive **walks** by interpretive staff based in Fort Simpson

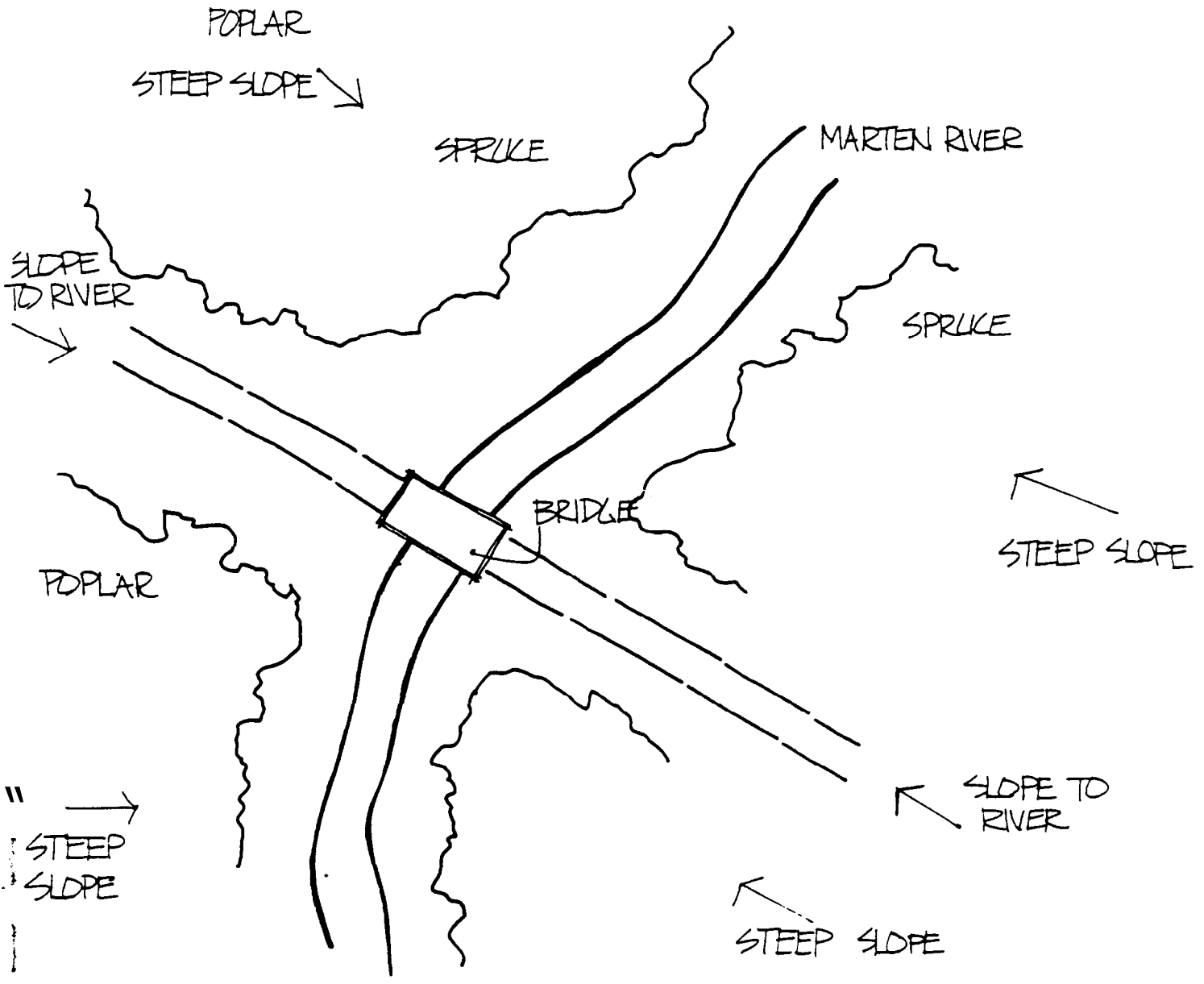
c) Facilities

- road **exit/entrance**
- parking area
- washrooms (**pit** toilets)
- interpretive display including brochure dispenser
- interpretive **trails**: natural **surfacing**: (utilize troth sides of river)
- viewpoints cleared along trails at key points
- interpretive brochures

d) Costs: Capital

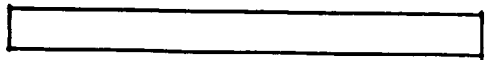
- | | |
|-------------------------------|-----|
| - road & parking | 40. |
| - brochure | 8. |
| - trails | 30. |
| - displays | 20. |
| - services (washrooms) | 15. |

TOTAL	113.
-------	------

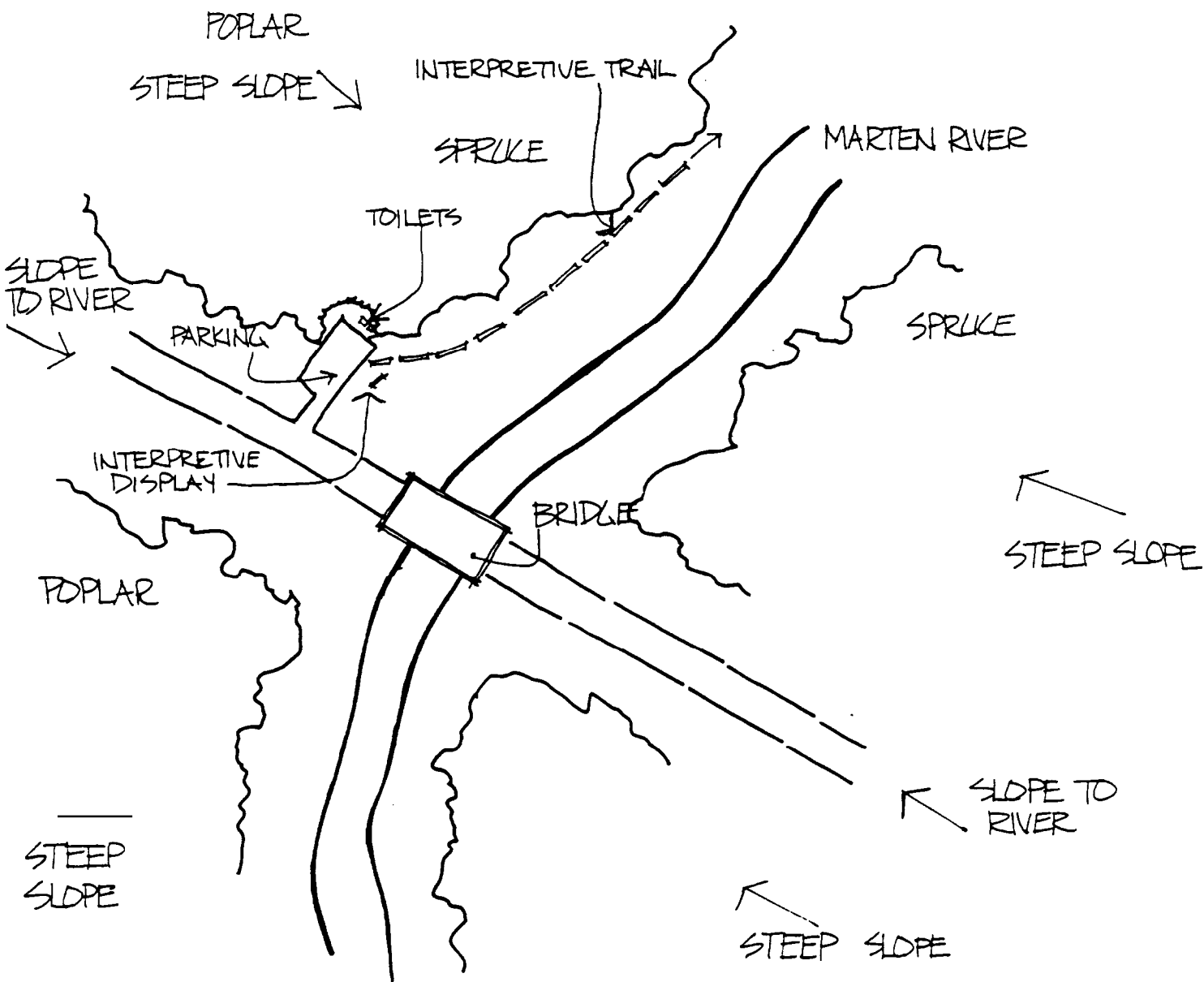


MARTEN RIVER
EXISTING CONDITIONS

**LIARD HIGHWAY CORRIDOR
DEVELOPMENT & INTERPRETIVE PLAN**



84.



MARTEN RIVER
DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT

**LIARD HIGHWAY CORRIDOR
DEVELOPMENT & INTERPRETIVE PLAN**



65.

4.19 Mackenzie River Valley

Traveling **this** section of road **north** from Fort Simpson, **the traveller** is somewhat removed from **the** Mackenzie River. It is **the** most important **landscape** feature in the region and this site is **located** to reinforce people's understanding and appreciation of **the** magnitude and influence of the river. The **site** provides some limited views which give a sense of the immensity of **the** country and the scale of **the** Mackenzie Valley.

1. Existing Site Conditions and Resources

- no facilities
- **mixed** forest of spruce, poplar and birch
- significant local relief
- **well** drained site
- road relatively high **compared to** the river
- approaching the ferry crossing it is the nearest point of relatively high terrain
- some viewing potential **because** of elevation of the area

2. Subthemes and Messages

ON THE EDGE OF THE RIVER

- The boreal forest
- World scale river system
 - morphology of the Mackenzie River Valley

3. Proposed Development (Secondary)

a) Purpose and Scope

- minor day use stop and possible overnight stop
- attractive area providing long distance views of the Mackenzie **River** valley

b) Interpretive **Media**

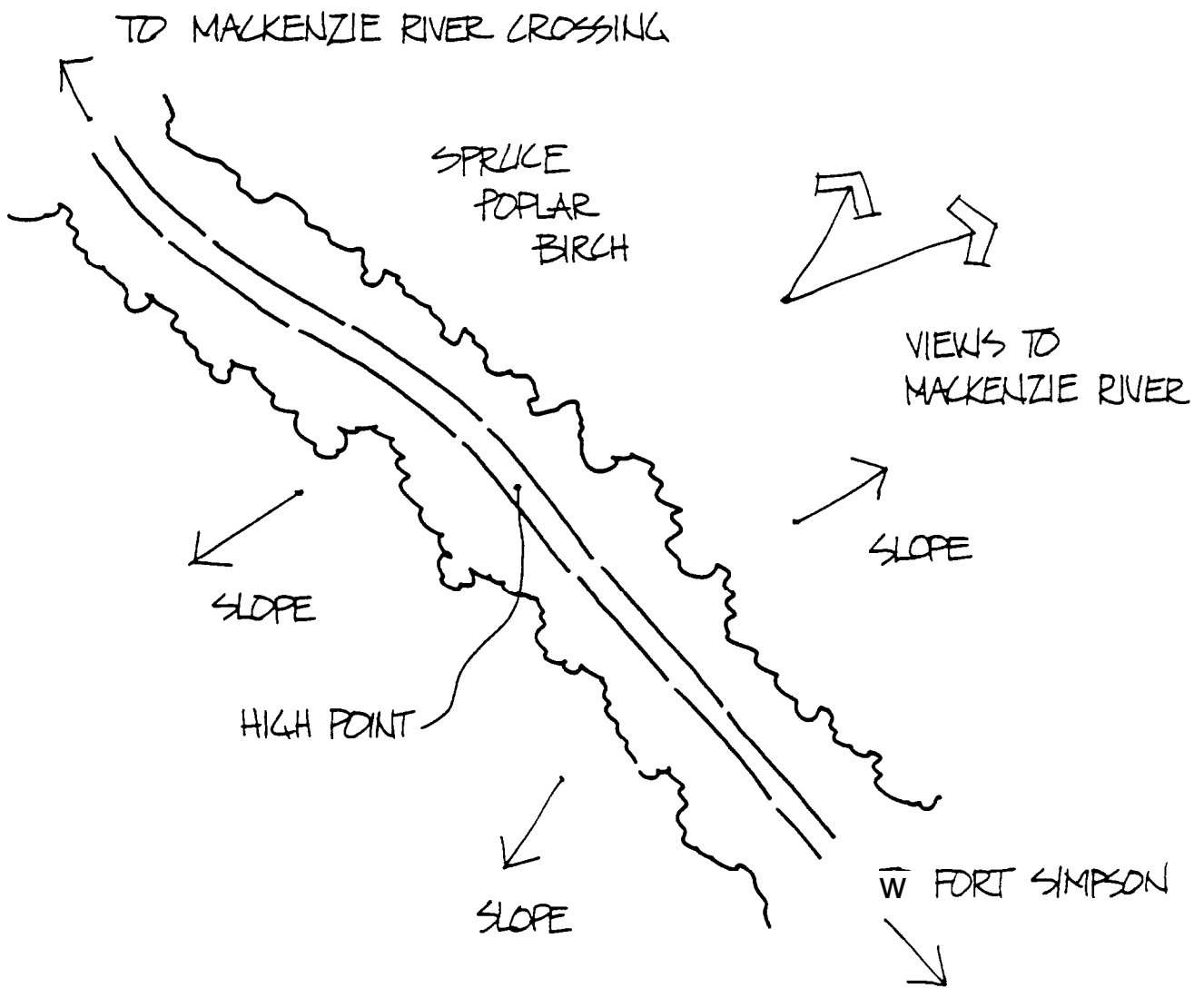
- display
- viewpoint with displays on viewing platform

c) Facilities

- **access** road **to** the highway at approximately its highest point
- parking area
- picnic **sites** with tables and fire pits
- washrooms (**pit** toilets)
- drinking **water** (well) (**possibly** in **the** future)
- short **trail to** viewing platform (maybe **slightly** raised)
 - utilize slope **to** facilitate access
 - views can be enhanced with selective **cutting**

d) Costs: Capital

- road & parking	40.
- viewing platform	30.
- interpretive displays	30.
- picnic sites and facilities	25.
- services (washroom,)	15.
TOTAL	140.

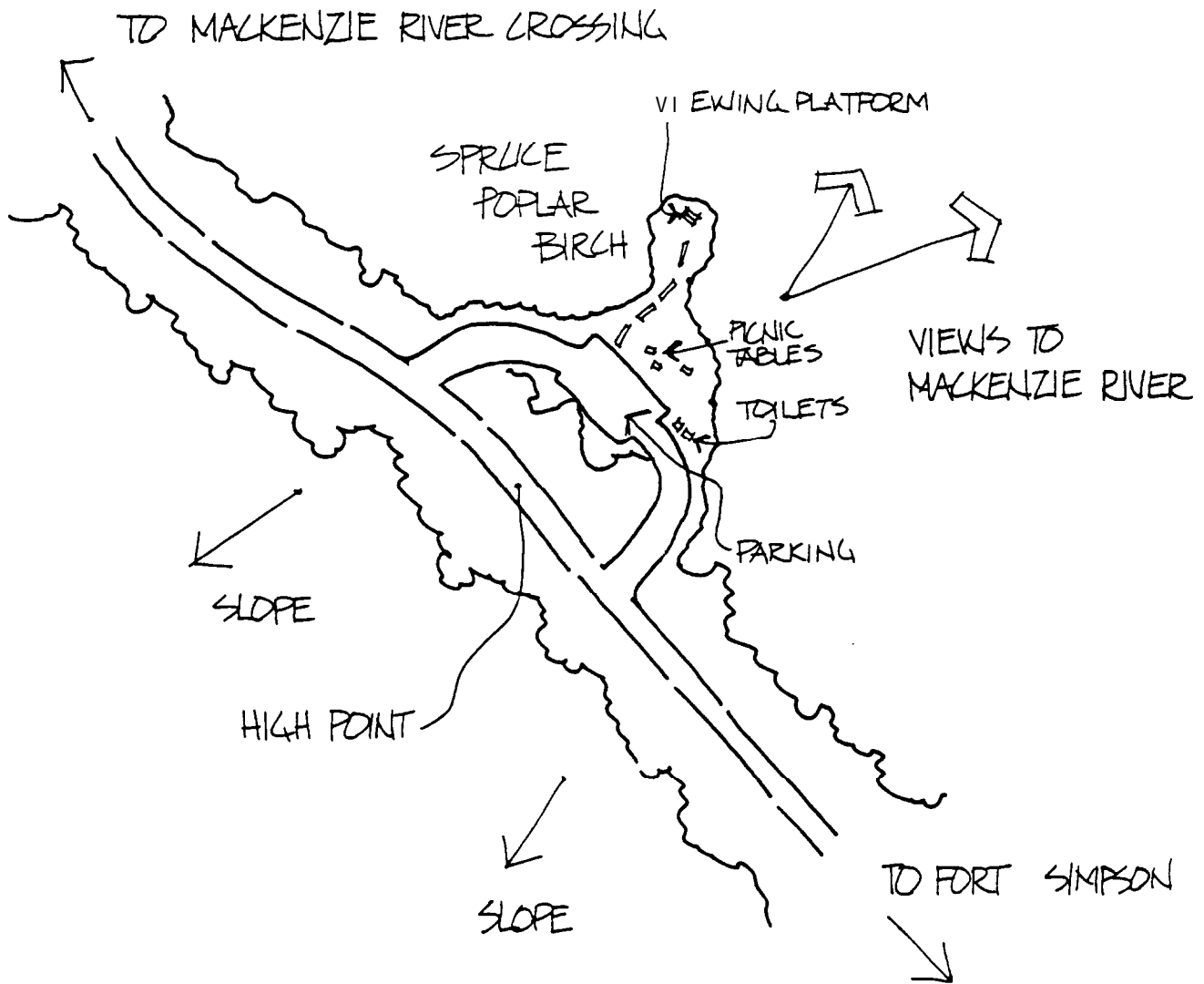


MACKENZIE RIVER VALLEY
EXISTING CONDITIONS

LIARD HIGHWAY CORRIDOR
DEVELOPMENT & INTERPRETIVE PLAN



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MACKENZIE RIVER VALLEY
DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT

**LIARD HIGHWAY CORRIDOR
DEVELOPMENT & INTERPRETIVE PLAN**



5.0 Signage Plan

5.1 Message Communication

It is **necessary** to convey three broad categories of information to the **traveller** along the **Liard** Highway. These are:

1. Directional/functional **signage**;
2. Informational/interpretive **signage**; and
3. Commercial **signage**.

Each **category** is briefly discussed **below**.

1. Directional/Functional Signage

Signage of this nature **communicates** information on places, mileage to other **locations**, and services available at specific places. Also included **in** this **category** are specific signs that **the ordinary traveller** may not **relate to** but are important **to** highway operation such as the signs **indicating boundaries** for highway contracts, legal boundaries, and direction to operation and **maintenance** of utilities.

There are signs representative of this **category** along the **Liard** Highway Corridor. At certain **locations**, such as the N.W.T./B.C. border, **the traveller** is greeted with an array of signs of various size, shape and location over a relatively short **interval**. This presents an **incohesive** and confusing **introduction to the** north. It is important therefore that coordination of **signage** be undertaken between the Department of Highways and the Department of Tourism. An **open** line of communication between individuals responsible for signs in each department must be established. A short list of guidelines regarding installation of signs would ensure a clear process is followed that is satisfactory **to** both departments.

2. Information/Interpretive Signage

This type of sign is of **greatest interest to the tourist**. Information **signage** indicates services and **sites along** the highway which are important in a recreational context. Detailed orientation maps and signs **denoting site** activities or locations fall **into** this category. The interpretive signs create interest, educate and can also serve as a recreational **tool**, all **focussed** on stimulating the **traveller's** interest and creating an enjoyable trip. Interpretive **signage** is instrumental in creating an atmosphere for the region through the **story** themes it portrays.

3. Commercial Signage

Commercial signage exists along the corridor at present and will increase in quantity in the future. Guidelines regarding sign design and location, developed now, will allow for organized framework for commercial signage, meeting the needs of business and complementing the natural landscape of the corridor. The guidelines will minimize conflict with between the direction/function signs and information/interpretive signs as highway development progresses.

5.2 Design Criteria

The following design criteria is made in addition to the standard outline in the N.W.T. Parks Sign Manual. It is intended to complement the ideas expressed in that publication.

1. Theme and Character

While a sense of unity should exist throughout all the regions in terms of design standards (signage included) it is important to create a special quality to distinguish regions as well. With signs, the use of colour, logos representative of the region (not the polar bear) and sign materials are ways of creating distinction. In Blackstone Territorial Park, the use of rough sawn wood posts complements the wood structure theme used throughout the park and is representative of the forested De Cho region. Highway #7 signs may follow some similar variation, keeping in harmony with the ideas established in corridor plan.

2. seasonal Signs

In addition to the above mentioned permanent signs, consideration can be given to a temporary seasonal sign programme. These signs will promote themes, messages or images as part of the annual tourism programmes. These temporary signs used in conjunction with permanent signs will add colour to the sites. They may also be used to represent the regional character or logo. These signs may be in the shape of a recognizable image (animal or human) and will be of flexible construction (cloth banner material; flag type design).

3. Construction

Construction must allow for easy removal and replacement due to weathering and vandalism. This applies to all signs. The directional/functional signs will be in place year round. The exhibit/interpretation signs need to be modular for easy removal and storage during the winter season. The modular design takes into

consideration the Possibility the circulation of exhibits between different sites and different regions.

6.0 IMPLEMENTATION

6.1 Highway Improvement Concerns

One of the most important aspects about developing facilities for visitors along the **Liard Highway** corridor and encouraging them **to stop** and enjoy their time in the Northwest Territories is the condition of the highway. It is an extremely important element of the planning for tourism since people must feel safe and comfortable if they are **to** take an active part in the **recreational** opportunities of the region.

During the consultation **process** of the **study**, many concerns were raised regarding the condition of the highway and the appropriateness of encouraging **tourist** travel and activities. The concerns have been grouped into three general areas and are briefly described below. They should be carefully considered as facility development progresses along the corridor. Improved highway conditions and **the** associated perceptions of comfort and safety were felt by many **to be** prerequisites **to** tourism development.

1. Highway Construction

The condition of **the** highway is relatively **poor** by comparison to other regional highways of similar importance as tourist travel corridors. The surface conditions vary considerably with the weather from a **very** slippery and soft surface **to** a very dusty and dry roadbed. Rounded and soft shoulders **create** the visual impression and practical reality of a one lane highway. Such conditions discourage visitors as they are unable **to** relax and enjoy their travel through the region. Maintenance of the highway is also a concern. Regular maintenance of **both** the road surface and the right-of-way is **critical to** the improvement of the facility and will dramatically impact **tourism** in the region.

2. Highway Safety

Current and accurate information on highway conditions and services is essential. Visitors depend on this information **to** make their plans and **to** feel confident in undertaking their journey. **It must be** readily accessible from a reliable source and there must be a system of maintaining its currency. Additional **services** along the route **would also** be helpful in making **the** highway less ominous **to visitors**.

3. Communicating to the Visitor

The facilities, services and recreational opportunities along the highway **convey a great deal to visitors** about **the** region - its accessibility, its comfort and its character. **Services** and facilities should be well **developed if** people are **to** feel at ease and encouraged **to** spend more **time** along the highway corridor. In particular, services involving personal contact are very **important**. Efforts should be made to incorporate such services wherever possible.

6.2 Development Costs

The costs for development of each of the **nineteen sites** have been detailed in Section 4. The total costs are outlined in table format **below**:

Interpretive Site	Development Cost (1000 \$)
4.1 Junction of Liard and Alaska Highways (B.C.)	700.+?
4.2 B.C. Border Crossing	90.
4.3 Border Viewpoint	240.
4.4 Ft. Liard Highway Visitor Centre	----
4.5 Muskeg River Valley	200.
4.6 Rabbit Creek	95.
4.7 Bison Viewing Area	150.
4.8 Highlands Park	378.
4.9 Nahanni Butte Winter Road	70.
4.10 Blackstone River Day Use Area	----
4.11 Blackstone Park	----
4.12 Tank Site	195.
4.13 Birch River Crossing	138.
4.14 Poplar River Uplands	200.
4.15 Boreal Forest	100.
4.16 Mackenzie Highway Jct.	110.
4.17 Liard River Ferry Crossing	80.
4.18 Marten River	113.
4.19 Mackenzie River Valley	140.

6.3 Implementation Schedule

The schedule for implementation of development is grouped **into** three phases. They are **listed below**:

Phase 1: 4.1 Junction of **Liard** and Alaska Highways

4.2 B.C. Border **Crossing**

4.3 Border **Viewpoint**

4.8 Highlands Park

4.16 Mackenzie Highway Junction

4.5 **Muskeg** River

4.12 Tank Site

Phase 2: 4.17 **Liard** River Ferry Crossing

4.7 Bison Viewing Area

4.13 Birch River

4.9 **Nahanni** Butte Winter Road

Phase 3: 4.6 Rabbit Creek

4.15 Boreal Forest

4.14 **Poplar** Uplands

4.18 Marten River

4.19 Mackenzie River Valley

In order **to** create a cohesive and **unified** site **programme** along **the** highway, enough **sites** must be **developed** initially **to** create a strong framework. Rationale for phase 1 priorities are presented below:

* Beginning and end **points** are represented by the Border Viewpoint and the Mackenzie Highway Junction. Both of these sites are points of orientation and direction which must be developed in the first phase **to demarc the** corridor.

* The Junction of the **Liard** and Alaska Highways is a strategic '**satellite**' point essential to the promotion of the corridor as a whole. Of all **the sites** this is the most crucial and is therefore the first priority. It will plant the seed for **N.W.T.** travel in **the** tourist mind so that plans **can** be made for visits in the future.

* **me border** is **an** important location as people **want to** know **exactly** at-at **point** they have arrived. This is the place **to** make that statement in a clear and definite manner.

* The Highlands represents a series of recreation and interpretive opportunities that can be enjoyed in a compact park setting - proximity to the Liard River and Mountains are the special features here.

* The Muskog River represents a good recreational area of interest to locals and travelers alike, as well as having significant interpretive potential.

* The Tank Site is a natural viewpoint, providing an expansive view; an area that can be easily developed due to the existing natural conditions.

With these sites developed, Highway will present a strong, varied and interesting recreation and interpretive programme to travelers. Over the succeeding years, phase two and three will proceed to round out the framework. Should the road to Wrigley be completed and a ferry crossing instituted, then the Marten River and Mackenzie River Valley should receive a higher priority.

In implementing each of the developments, whether together or in groups, the following stages will be followed:

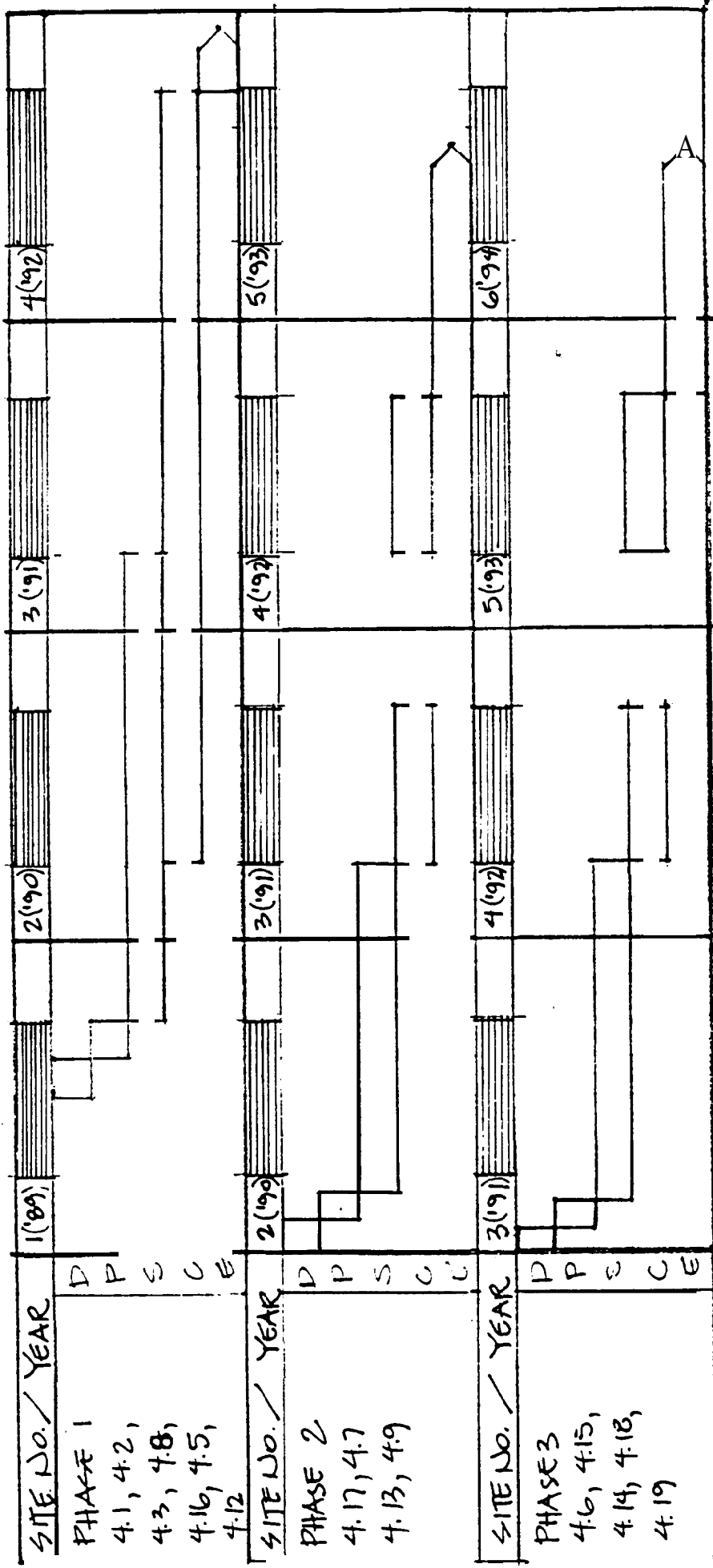
- 1) Definition/Planning
- 2) Design - site analysis/inventory
 - preliminary concepts/alternatives
 - final concepts/cost estimates
 - master plan/concept details
- 3) Working Drawing - design detail
 - construction drawings
 - specifications
 - cost estimates
 - tender documents
- 4) Tender Process
- 5) Site Supervision/Inspection
[CONSTRUCTION]

A general site development programme will apply to all sites with minor variations in the placement of detail items. Irrespective of the site size, the following series of phases will be followed once the design is developed and working drawings/tendering are complete:

1. survey of site
2. construct access road across right-of-way
3. site clearing and grading

4. road **construction/parking** area
 5. selective forest clearing where required
 6. installation of toilets, **water** facilities
 7. installation of picnic tables/shelters, camping facilities
 8. instigation of viewing **towers**, platforms
 9. installation Of interpretive exhibits/displays, trails
- * highway signage will **be** installed in succession with site development

IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE



- LEGEND
- D DEFINITION
 - P PLANNING
 - S DESIGN
 - C CONSTRUCTION
 - E EVALUATION
- '89 refers to 1989....
- ▨ OPTIMUM OUTDOOR CONSTRUCTION PERIOD
- SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

6.4 Operational Requirements

It is recommended that **the** operation and maintenance of the sites identified in this plan be **coordinated** from the central **location** of **Blackstone** Territorial Park. The following annual staffing and financial commitments are required:

Staffing Requirements	\$30,000.
Supervisor	
Maintenance staff - cleaning/supply - repairs/upkeep	
Interpretive staff (Blackstone staff)	
Supplies and Operating Costs	<u>\$50,000.</u>
	TOTAL \$80,000.

Daily maintenance of toilet/garbage facilities is recommended during peak season travel, twice **weekly** in the shoulder season. It is anticipated the **sites** will be closed during the winter season with **the** exception of **strategically** located sites chosen to contain first aid/highway rescue equipment. These sites will be cleared to **facilitate** easy access to **equipment**.

Following the **Blackstone** Territorial **Park** Plan, the **operation/maintenance programme** for the **Liard Highway sites** will also be maintained on a daily, weekly, monthly and seasonal basis. A **total** of four positions are required:
one area supervisor
two maintenance **people**
one **interpretive** staff.

These positions already exist at **Blackstone** Park. It will be possible to combine some of the duties of the highway staff noted **above** with **those** of the park staff, reducing overall expenditures.

The employment periods are as follows:

June - September (124 days or 18 full time **weeks**)

* one maintenance **staff**

* one **interpretive** **staff**

May - **October** (186 days or 27 full time weeks)

* one area **supervisor**

* one **maintenance** **staff**

Daily Maintenance

Refers to maintaining the site in a clean, orderly and restocked **state**. This includes maintenance of **the toilets**, garbage, **firewood**, and sewage station. Although work may not be required every day at every site they should be checked especially during the tourist season when large groups may put **pressure** on the facilities for short periods of time e.g. bus **tours**.

Estimated person/days required: 186 days

Weekly Maintenance

Special equipment installed at specific **sites** need to be **monitored** on a regular basis to ensure consistent **operation** and health standards are maintained. The following items will be **attended** to on a weekly basis:

- * **check water supply (water tanks, wells)**
- * **check fire fighting and first aid equipment**
- * **check communication equipment**
- * **revegetation care and upkeep**
- * **site maintenance to buildings, furnishings, signs**

Estimated person/days required: 20 days

Monthly Maintenance

The following items need to be **monitored** and maintained on a regular basis.

- * trail maintenance
- * **site grading, roads/access points**
- * **revegetation** conditions

Estimated person/days required: 30 days

Seasonal Maintenance

Seasonal maintenance refers to the startup and shutdown of sites at the beginning and end of **the** tourist season. Maintenance **includes** minor repairs, **painting**, securing with protective shutters or screens and locking of facilities, draining and **winterize** equipment, notice to indicate site closure.

Estimated person/days: 50 days

7.0 HIGHWAY BEAUTIFICATION

For the most part the Highway 0, corridor has a relatively attractive appearance. In a few areas selective **thinning** of tree growth **along** the highway will improve views **to** distant mountains and valleys. These sites need further **study to** identify means of obtaining **the** best views by altering the environment the least. Any **tree** thinning **will** require extensive site analysis prior **to** cutting to ensure **the** natural qualities of the site remain unimpaired. Thinning should only be undertaken under **the** guidance of a knowledgeable **site** superintendent. .

One of the **unattractive** features of the highway corridor is the slash-burn programme **carried** out by **the** highways department to control roadside vegetation. The remaining sticks and twig-like **trunks** with frayed ends **stick** up in disarray. In addition branches, **twigs** and trunks of various size and shape are left **scattered** along the roadside. The remains of **the** cutting operations when freshly cut are a bright whitish **colour** making them **strongly visible**. After a few years of **weathering**, the **colour** has dulled but the sense of destruction is still evident. Slash-burn evidence can be seen in **the** slides included at **the** back of this report.

It is recommended **that** another form of growth control be used, or the technique improved so that a cleaner **site** is **left**. The sense of traveling through **the wilderness** is constantly disrupted by the appearance of the roadside areas.

APPENDIX I Historical Resources - Notes

Along the Liard Highway Corridor but **not** within the study zone are places of potential interest **that relate** directly to the objective of this study. They are mentioned here as a source for future study and possible development to augment or provide a focus for highway activities. Some of these places include the following:

1. Ole and Anna Lindberg's log cabin
2. Albert Faillie's house
3. Fort Liard Trading Post

On part of Edwin Lindberg's property is **the** log cabin site of his father and mother's, Ole and Anna Lindberg's. The log cabin has fallen into ruin. Some of the **log** outbuildings **still** are standing although they are roofless. **None-**theless the site represents a way of life that has **recently disappeared** from **the** north with the advent of airplane travel and road travel. A reconstruction of the log building (**with squared** corners) and **the** outbuilding makes an attractive setting for **discussing** the hunting/trapping lifestyle in a **historical** context. A series of interpretive themes can be **developed** around **the** setting. In addition to seeing **the** old way of life, **located** next door is the Edwin Lindberg farm. This **carries** the story **into** modern times allowing for an interesting comparison and contrast (**the** gardens, **building, equipment,** daily routines) between the two periods.

Another building that has potential for creating a link with the past is the Albert Faillie house in Fort Simpson. In Fort Liard, **research into** possible remains of **the** trading post or other significant structures should be conducted. This research might prove **fruitful** and would help **to** bring the historical **aspects** of human occupation of the region to life for **the** visitor. A common interpretive theme relating **to** the human history of the area could be **linked through** the creative use of these and other historical resources.