



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
INTER-OFFICE TRANSMITTAL

Mail stop  
60190

☐ Director, \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ Regional Director, \_\_\_\_\_  
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☐ Regular Mail  
☐ Air Mail  
☐ Action  
☒ Information

☒ Senior Water Rights Chief, Cheryl Willis

FROM

Refuge Manager

OFFICE

Brown's park DDL

DATE

5/18/88

SUBJECT

Master plan for Brown's park as discussed per telecom. on 5/18/88.  
Pages with yellow notes attached relate to proposed development on  
Vermillion Creek.



# BROWNS PARK

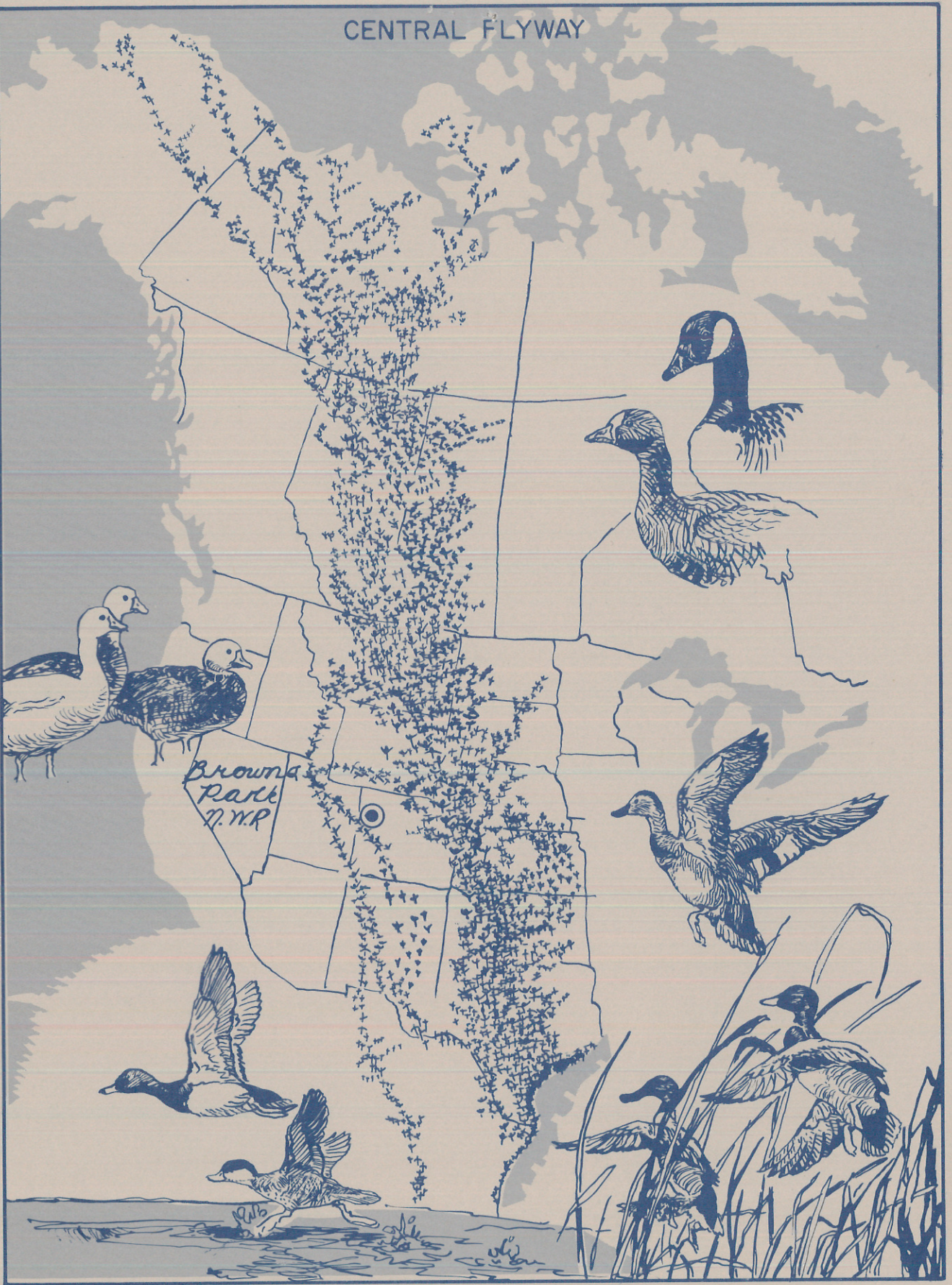


NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

MOFFAT COUNTY  
COLORADO



# CENTRAL FLYWAY





# BROWNS PARK

NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE



## MASTER PLAN

This booklet presents the long-range objectives and proposed development and management of this refuge.

MOFFAT COUNTY  
COLORADO





DUCKS AND GEESE FOR PEOPLE TO ENJOY - THIS IS THE  
PRIMARY PURPOSE OF BROWNS PARK REFUGE



## *PREFACE*

Thirteen miles below Flaming Gorge Dam, between Red Canyon and the Gates of Lodore Canyon, lies Browns Park, a 35-mile long valley where the Green River meanders between saucer-shaped bottoms. Before the dam was constructed in 1962, the Green River flooded annually, creating excellent waterfowl nesting, feeding, and resting marshes in the backwater sloughs and old stream meanders. The dam stopped flooding, destroying much of this productive waterfowl habitat.

On August 20, 1963, the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission approved acquisition of Browns Park National Wildlife Refuge to develop and manage waterfowl habitat in that portion of Browns Park within the State of Colorado. The Utah portion of the Park is being developed for waterfowl and other wildlife by the Utah Department of Fish and Game.

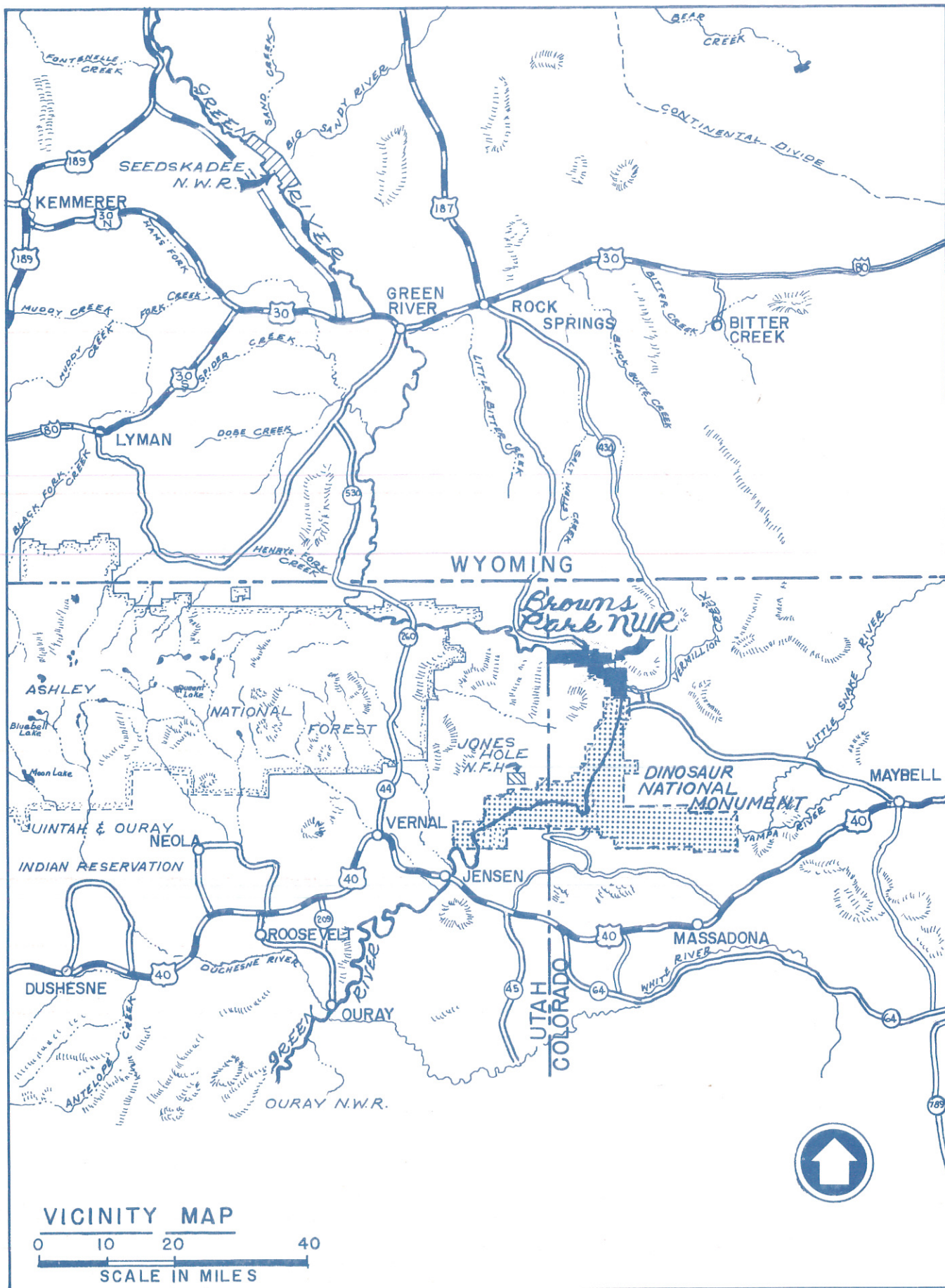
The primary purpose of Browns Park Refuge is to provide high quality nesting and migration habitat for the Great Basin Canada Goose, ducks, and other migratory birds. When the marshes and meadows along the Green River are restored and managed, the refuge will contribute significantly to Pacific and Central Flyway waterfowl populations.

Browns Park Refuge will be developed and managed to preserve the quality outdoor recreational activities it has always been noted for. Distant from centers of population and many miles from any major highway, the refuge attracts people seeking a quality outdoor experience—waterfowl and resident game hunters, fishermen, float boating enthusiasts, and others who appreciate a wild area where wildlife and fish abound.

Browns Park Refuge encompasses 12,833 acres, and an additional 1,036 acres is proposed. The private land is being purchased with funds from the Migratory Bird Hunting Stamp Act. On July 13, 1965, the first tract of private land was acquired.

The total estimated cost of Browns Park Refuge is \$2,414,000: \$570,000 for land acquisition and \$1,844,000 for development.





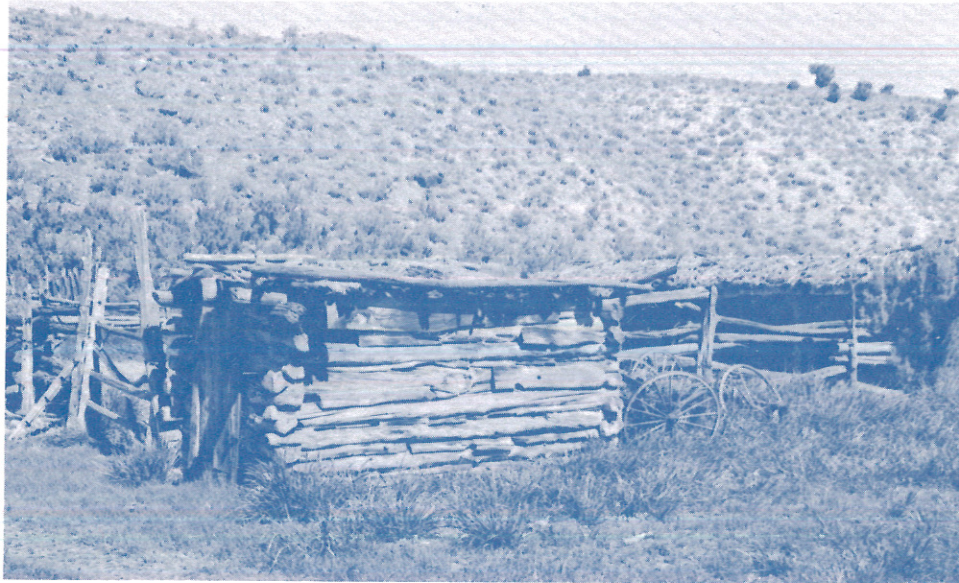


Browns Park has had a colorful past, complete with Indians, mountainmen, cowboys, and outlaws.

## THE PAST

To the red man, the park was a sheltered wintertime haven where waterfowl, sage grouse, bear, deer, elk, bighorn sheep, and antelope were plentiful.

Then came the hardy mountainmen seeking beaver pelts. From 1826 to 1840, Browns Park was the site for the greatest of all the spring rendezvous staged by the fur companies. Jim Bridger, Bill Williams, Kit Carson, and other men famous in American Legend came here to sell their pelts and stock up on provisions. One of these trappers, Baptiste Brown, a French Canadian working for the Hudson Bay Company, grew weary of his life of adventure and settled down in the park.



A few other settlers followed. In 1837 they built an adobe cottonwood log fort and trading post for protection from the hostile Blackfoot Indians. It was named Fort Davy Crockett in honor of the famous frontiersman killed one year earlier in the historic Battle of the Alamo. But even this measure of safety was not enough. In 1840, all white residents left.

For decades only drifters came and went through the park as civilization crept westward. By the late 1800's a large cattle industry had evolved in the vast open range of western Colorado and Wyoming. Browns Park, an isolated pocket on the edge of this range, then became a haven for bad men who preyed on the cattle herds.



Cattle rustling remained the primary industry of the park for many years. Stolen livestock was held in the park while brands were changed and a herd of sufficient size accumulated. They were then driven into Utah for sale. It has been reported that as many as 100,000 head of cattle were wintered in the park at one time.

Robert LeRoy Parker, better known as "Butch Cassidy," was the park's most famous outlaw. Another was "Queen Ann" Bassett. One of her many suitors and Isom Dart, one of the wild west's few Negro outlaws, were found shot by "party or parties unknown," when the ranchers finally decided the park would no longer be a sanctuary for rustlers.

Outlaws were followed by small cattle ranchers, who gave way to sheepmen when the U. S. Forest Service broke the long-imposed cattleman's guarantee against woolies in the 1920's. When the overstocked range ceased to provide year-round feed, the stockmen gave way to a handful of farmer-ranchers who eked out an existence from this land ravaged for years by overgrazing.



HISTORIC SITES LIKE THIS OUTLAW'S CABIN  
WILL BE PRESERVED



Browns Park today? The Green River no longer rampages through the park flooding, depositing, eroding, changing channel and generally behaving as untamed rivers do. Today it is a harnessed, gentle river with saucer-shaped bottoms between the meanders, rimmed by benchlands, nestled between two mountain ranges.

## *THE PRESENT*

Man, in his quest to wrest a living from the river bottoms, attempted to dike out flood water, stabilize the river channel and drain the marshes. They are today grasslands interspersed with willow, cottonwood, and salt cedar.

Within the river channel are many sand bars. Several have become vegetated and are now permanent islands where geese nest.

The benchlands, heavily overgrazed by both cattle and sheep, are eroded with a sparse vegetative cover of spiny hop sage and shadscale. The mountain slopes support a ragged cover of pinon and juniper with aspen in sheltered sites.

The history of this land is regrettably like so many other places in our country—originally a lush land with abundant wildlife—then exploitation resulting in depletion of vegetation and soil erosion—finally a land capable of supporting only a few struggling cattle ranches. Tomorrow it will be restored as a haven for waterfowl and other wildlife.



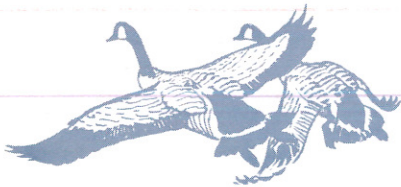


## WILDLIFE GOALS

All National Wildlife Refuges have one main objective—to manage wildlife and wildlife habitat for people to enjoy. Americans today know that only at such places as Browns Park Refuge can ducks, geese and many other forms of wildlife be preserved for future generations to enjoy. At an accelerated rate the arid west's few wetlands and other wildlife lands are disappearing or made unfit for wildlife. Many of today's wildlife lands will tomorrow be lost forever to urban and industrial developments. Others will be altered, yielding lower wildlife populations.

### CANADA GEESE

The Great Basin Canada Goose will again be a very common nester and migrant when marshes and meadows are restored. Goals are:



1,000 goslings raised annually  
7,000 peak number both fall and spring  
600,000 goose use days annually

Browns Park geese are part of a population nesting in and adjacent to the Green River Drainage, which winters in the Yuma and Imperial Valleys of Arizona and California. A decade ago this population decreased alarmingly. Recovery has been slow. To perpetuate this flock, historic nesting areas like Browns Park must be restored and managed.

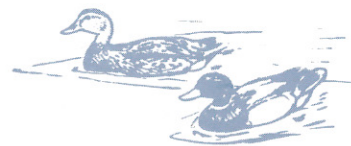


### DUCKS

Marshes and meadows to be developed will be managed primarily to provide prime nesting conditions for ducks. During migration seasons, ducks passing through will find ideal water, food, and cover. Goals are:

15,000 ducklings raised annually  
70,000 peak number both fall and spring  
4,000,000 duck use days annually

The mallard is the main nester and the most common during migration. Other nesting ducks are the redhead, pintail, gadwall, green-winged and cinnamon teals, shoveler, and ruddy. These ducks and the widgeon are common during migration.

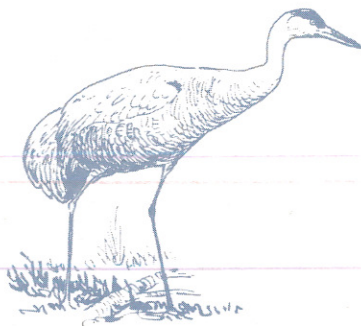
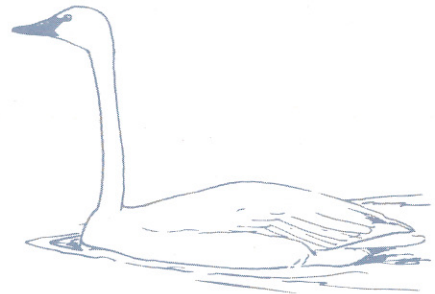




## OTHER MIGRATORY BIRDS

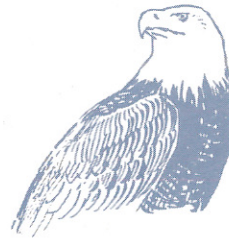
An amazing variety of other migratory birds will use Browns Park in increasing numbers. Some nest here and others stop to rest and feed during migration.

The majestic whistling swan stops both spring and fall.



A rare bird using the park during migration is the greater sandhill crane. Nesting habitat will be created.

Both the bald and golden eagles are year-round park visitors, nesting on cliffs and crags in the adjoining mountains.



Common marsh and water birds include the coot, great blue heron, snowy egret, pied-billed and eared grebes, avocet, killdeer, Wilson's phalarope, and many other shorebirds.

Hawks common in the park are: sparrow, redtail, marsh, Coopers, and the prairie and peregrine falcons.

The mourning dove, a common nester, uses the park in large numbers during migration.





## RESIDENT WILDLIFE

Many native and introduced birds and mammals inhabit the park. These permanent residents will benefit from improved food and cover on the refuge and on Browns Park lands managed by other conservation agencies. The park is where wildlife will always be found in variety and abundance.

Mule deer are common year-round. Hundreds descend into the park from the surrounding mountains to spend the winter.



Elk move into the park from the O-Wi-Yu-Kuts Plateau each winter.



Sage grouse and chukar partridge are common on the benchlands and mountain slopes. On the bottomlands there will be excellent food and cover for pheasants.



Bands of antelope range the benchlands.



Bighorn sheep, inhabitants of Lodore Canyon, occasionally stray into the park.



Other wildlife include the mountain lion, bobcat, coyote, mink, badger, skunk, muskrat, and beaver.





Refuges perpetuate wildlife for people to enjoy.





## RECREATION GOALS

A visit to Browns Park is an inspirational experience. It is a land of outstanding natural beauty relatively unspoiled by man. Inhabited yesterday and today by only a few hardy individuals, it is a primitive place, dominated by the sights and sounds of nature, interrupted by few man-made things. It is a place where one can catch a glimpse of the "Old West," where wildlife is plentiful and man is but a visitor. This is a quality environment where one can relax from the tensions of modern life.

Browns Park Refuge will be developed and managed to preserve and enhance the natural beauty and wild character of this remote mountain valley. Programs and facilities are planned to give hunters, fishermen, and other people who enjoy wild areas where wildlife abounds a quality outdoor experience. Refuge goals are:

### HUNTING — 6,000 hunter days

#### Ducks and Geese

On the marshes and meadows to be developed, waterfowlers will have ideal conditions for a quality hunting experience.



**Quality Hunting**— Lots of wild game, lots of elbowroom, a natural environment.



#### Resident Game

Hunting of resident game, in accordance with State regulations, will be planned in cooperation with the Colorado Game, Fish and Parks Department.



## NATURE ENJOYMENT — 30,000 visitor days

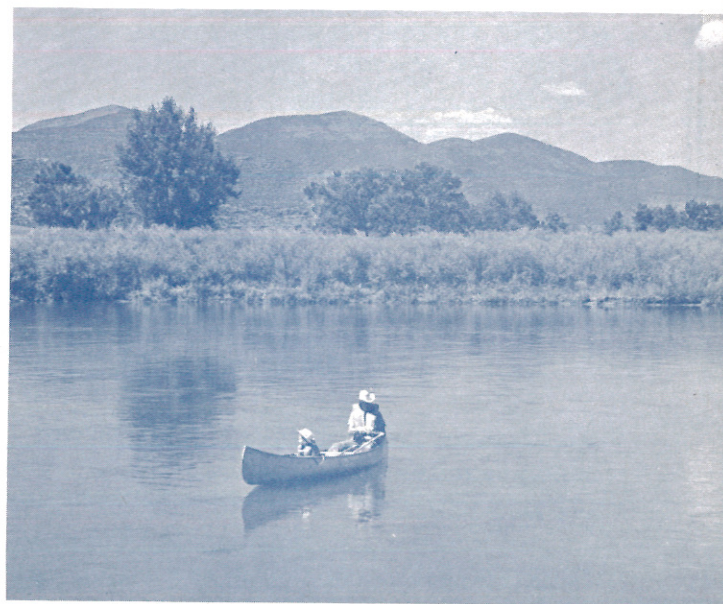
People will be encouraged to visit the refuge to see wildlife, enjoy the park's natural beauty, and learn about the ways of nature.

- Birdwatchers
- Photographers
- Nature enthusiasts
- Nature students
- Hikers
- Float-boaters



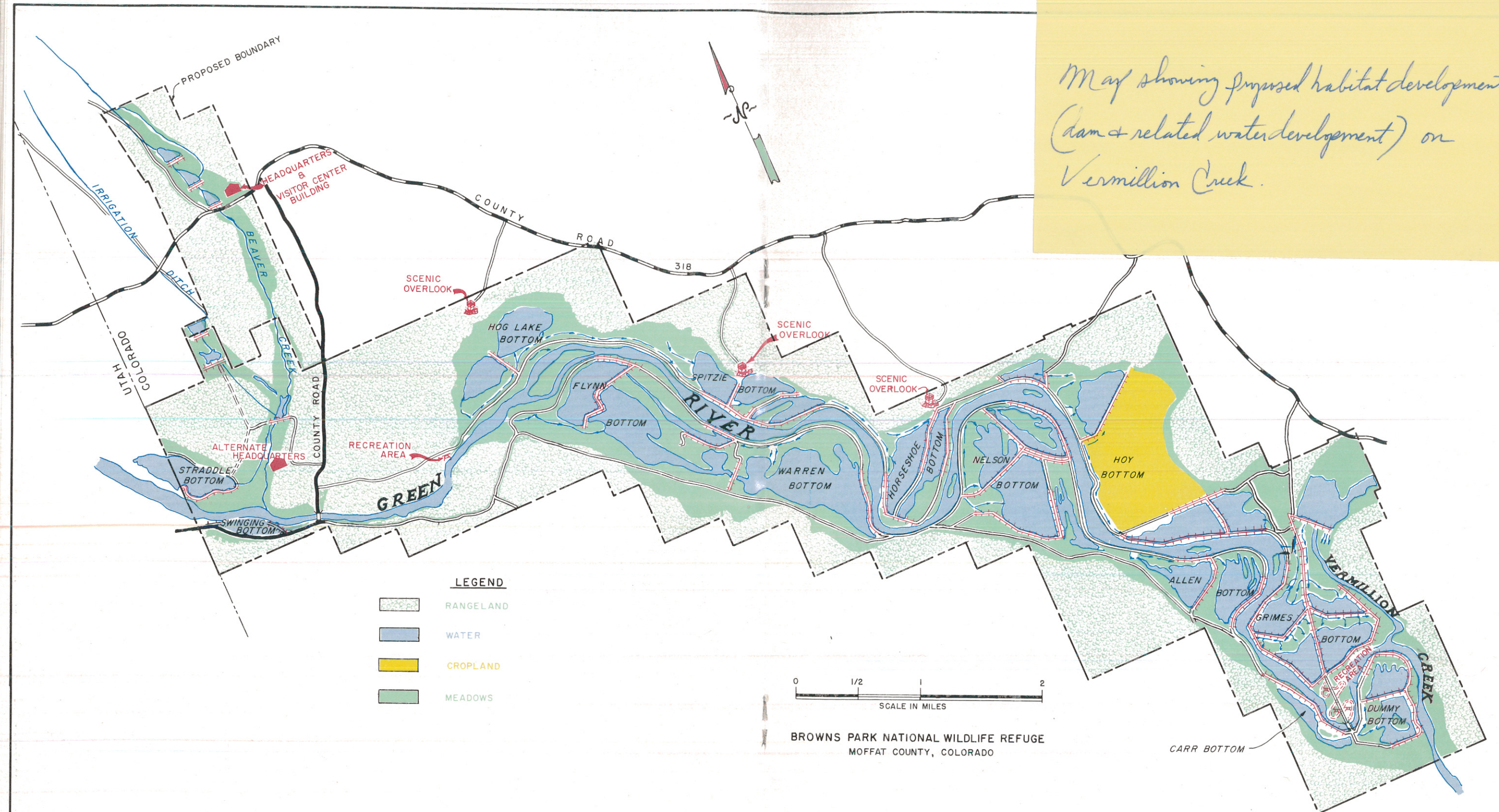
## FISHING — 5,000 fisherman days

The Green River through the park is a quality trout fishing water. "Lunker" rainbows and German browns abound.





Map showing proposed habitat development  
(dam & related water development) on  
Vermillion Creek.



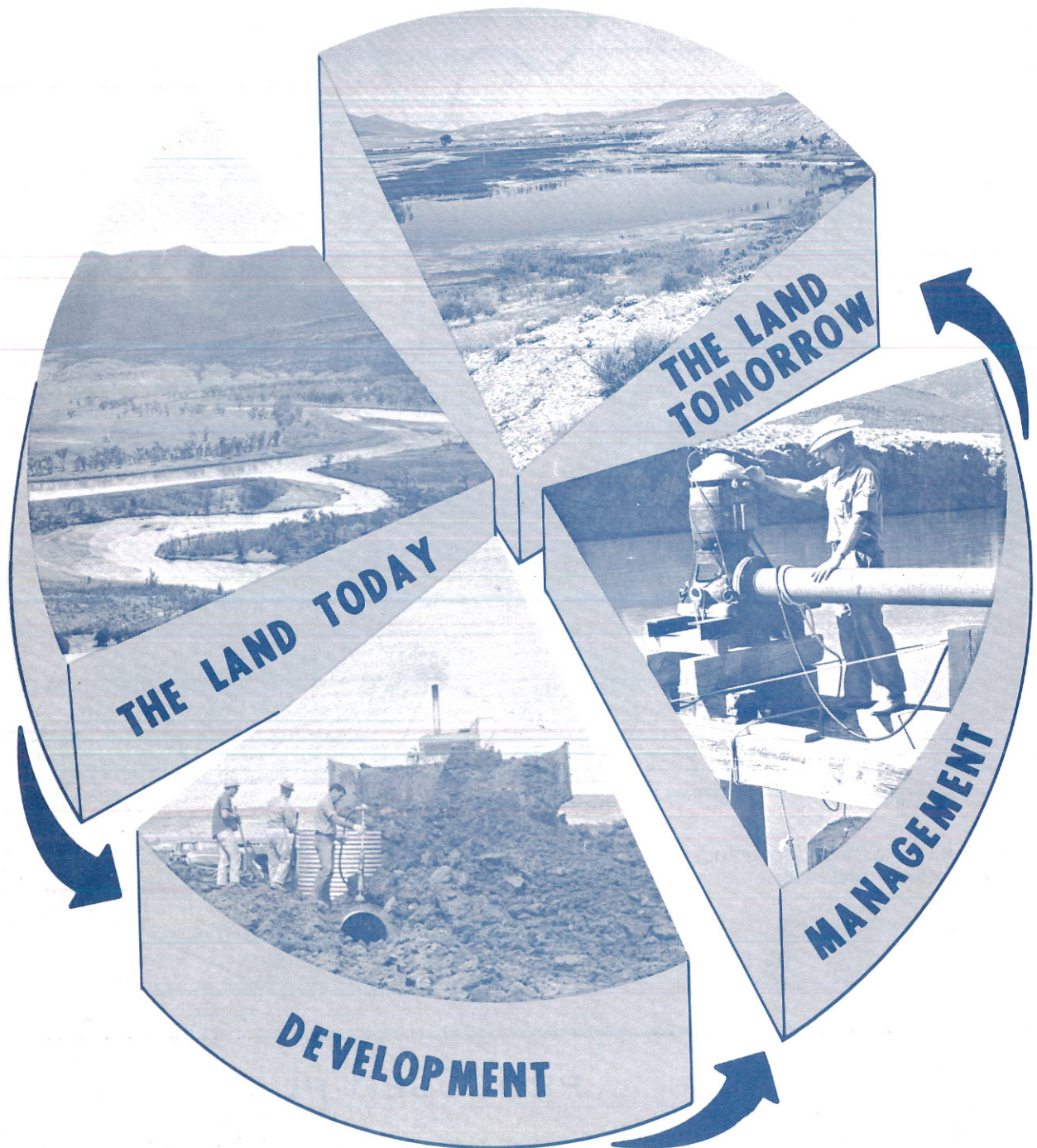
## PROPOSED PLAN

Habitat development, recreational facilities, and operational facilities are needed to achieve refuge wildlife and recreational goals. This map shows the types of habitat to be developed and the location of recreational and operational facilities.



Wildlife is a product of the land. On a ranch or farm, wildlife is a secondary crop. On a wildlife refuge, wildlife is the primary crop. Here land is intensively managed to provide ideal water, food, cover, and living space for wildlife. A particular kind of development and management is required.

## ***WILDLIFE HABITAT***





## MARSH AND MEADOW

Dikes and water control structures will create about 9,000 acres of marsh and meadow habitat on the bottomlands. Ducks and geese will find ideal nesting and migration conditions.

Water pumped from the Green River will be used to irrigate the meadowlands producing a lush growth of vegetation. Aquatic food and cover plants will flourish in the flooded natural depressions and old river channels. Dams in Beaver and Vermillion Creeks and on some of the intermittent streams will create additional aquatic habitat.

In the fall, water will be managed to make available to waterfowl natural aquatic foods and to provide ideal waterfowl hunting conditions. Marsh and meadow units will be grazed by cattle to maintain optimum waterfowl nesting conditions.



SOME MARSHES AND MEADOWS WILL APPEAR MUCH LIKE  
THEY DID WHEN THE FIRST WHITE MEN SAW THEM



## CROPLAND

The marshes and meadows will produce tons of natural food. But additional food may be needed to achieve waterfowl use and hunting goals. Up to 400 acres of the Hoy Bottom may be planted to cereal grains and green browse. Elsewhere small plots will be seeded to food plants.



FARMING  
FOR  
WATERFOWL





## RANGELAND

Above the bottomlands are about 5,000 acres of benchland and steep mountain slope. Vegetation is sparse on this eroded land. This land will be managed to provide improved food and cover for mule deer, antelope, sage grouse, and chukar partridge. Soil and moisture stabilizing devices will control runoff waters. Native shrubs and grasses will be reseeded.

RANGE IMPROVEMENT  
FOR RESIDENT GAME





Facilities are planned to give hunters, fishermen and other people who enjoy wild areas where wildlife abounds, a quality outdoor experience.

- A visitor center
- Scenic overlooks
- Roads
- Nature trails
- Information signs
- Photography blinds
- River access sites

## *RECREATION FACILITIES*



FROM ONE OF THE THREE  
PLANNED OVERLOOKS, THE  
VIEW 200 FEET BELOW  
IS SPECTACULAR





Information signs along nature trails will point out the "signs" of wildlife, identify plant life, and explain wildlife conservation principles and methods.



A visit to Browns Park Refuge—to hunt, fish, or view nature—will be restful, enjoyable, and informative. A number of sites will be developed where visitors can picnic and camp.



Refuge personnel will present scheduled programs in the Visitor Center, conduct guided tours, and assist visitors in other ways to make their stay enjoyable.



Boat launching sites will be developed. Float-boating the clear Green River to fish or merely for pleasure is a unique outdoor experience. Utah and Colorado, after the completion of Flaming Gorge Dam, controlled rough fish and stocked rainbow and German brown trout.

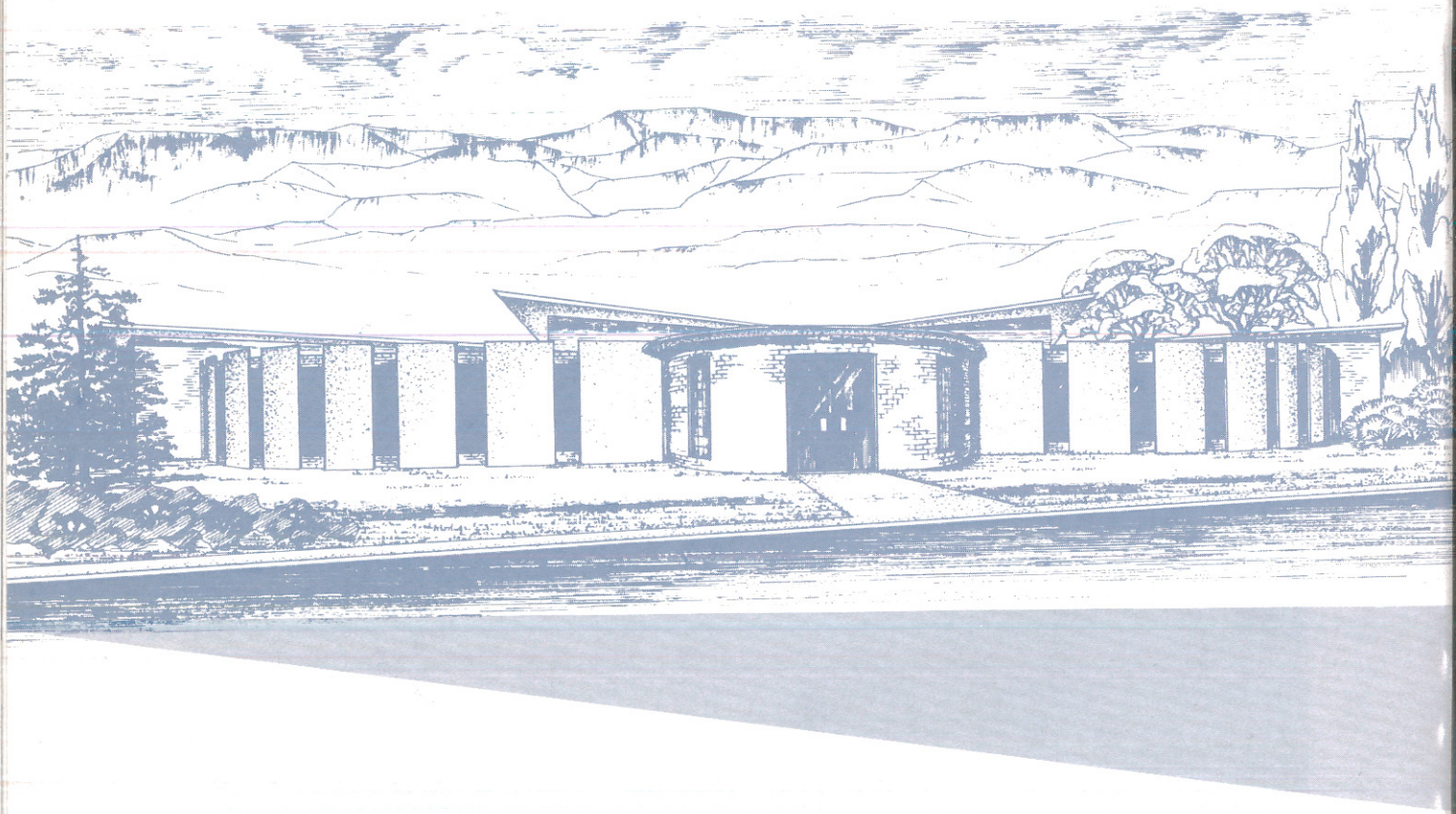




Refuges are outdoor laboratories and living museums where students, grade school through college, learn about nature and conservation of our natural resources.







## CONCEPT OF VISITOR CENTER

Here refuge visitors can gain a knowledge and appreciation of Browns Park Refuge, the conservation of our natural resources, and the programs of other Federal and State conservation agencies in the Green River area.



Refuge offices will be housed in the Visitor Center. Also at the headquarters site will be a shop and service building, oil house, four residences, and a bunkhouse. A building on the Hoy Bottom will be used to store farming equipment and supplies. Other operational facilities include roads, fences, and signs.

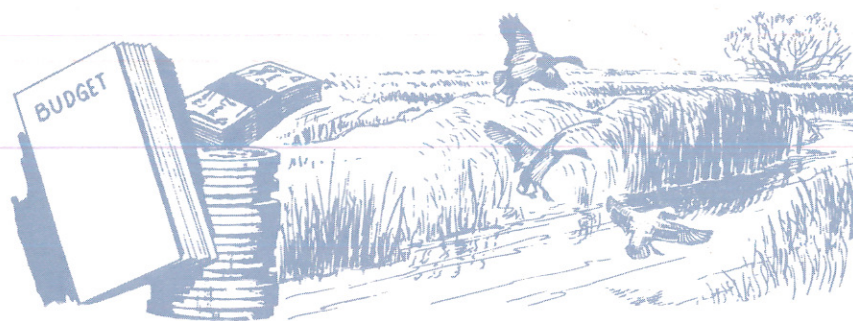
## *OPERATION FACILITIES*





## ESTIMATED DEVELOPMENT COST

Water Facilities .....	\$ 651,000
Biological Improvements .....	140,000
Buildings .....	235,000
Fencing and Posting .....	93,000
Roads and Trails .....	358,000
Structures and Utilities .....	187,000
Recreation .....	180,000
	<b>\$1,844,000</b>



## ESTIMATED ANNUAL OPERATIONS COST

Maintenance .....	\$20,000
Management .....	22,000
Protection .....	2,000
Recreation .....	4,000
Populations Management .....	5,000
Conservation Education .....	3,000
Soil and Moisture Conservation .....	5,000
	<b>\$61,000</b>



Created in 1849, the Department of the Interior—America's Department of Natural Resources—is concerned with the management, conservation, and development of the Nation's water, fish, wildlife, mineral, forest, and park and recreational resources. It also has major responsibilities for Indian and Territorial affairs.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department works to assure that non-renewable resources are developed and used wisely, that park and recreational resources are conserved for the future, and that renewable resources make their full contribution to the progress, prosperity, and security of the United States—now and in the future.





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