

II. EXISTING USES AND RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

A. Land Use

Agriculture and recreation are the predominant land uses in Ogemaw and Arenac counties. Approximately 91,000 acres, or almost 38 percent of Arenac County is in agriculture. In Ogemaw County over 80,000 acres, or 22 percent, is in agriculture. Much of the agricultural use is in dairy and cattle.

Recreation is also a major use in the area. Approximately 700,000 people live within one hour's drive of the Rifle. In Arenac County, recreation lands account for approximately 28,000 acres, and in Ogemaw County, federal, state and local recreation lands total almost 100,000 acres.

B. Private Recreation Facilities

In Ogemaw and Arenac counties, there are almost 1,200 private campsites available. In addition, in 1978 there were over 900 rental canoes available in the two counties through 15 canoe livery owners. This makes the Rifle River one of the most popular in all of Michigan.

C. Public Recreation Facilities

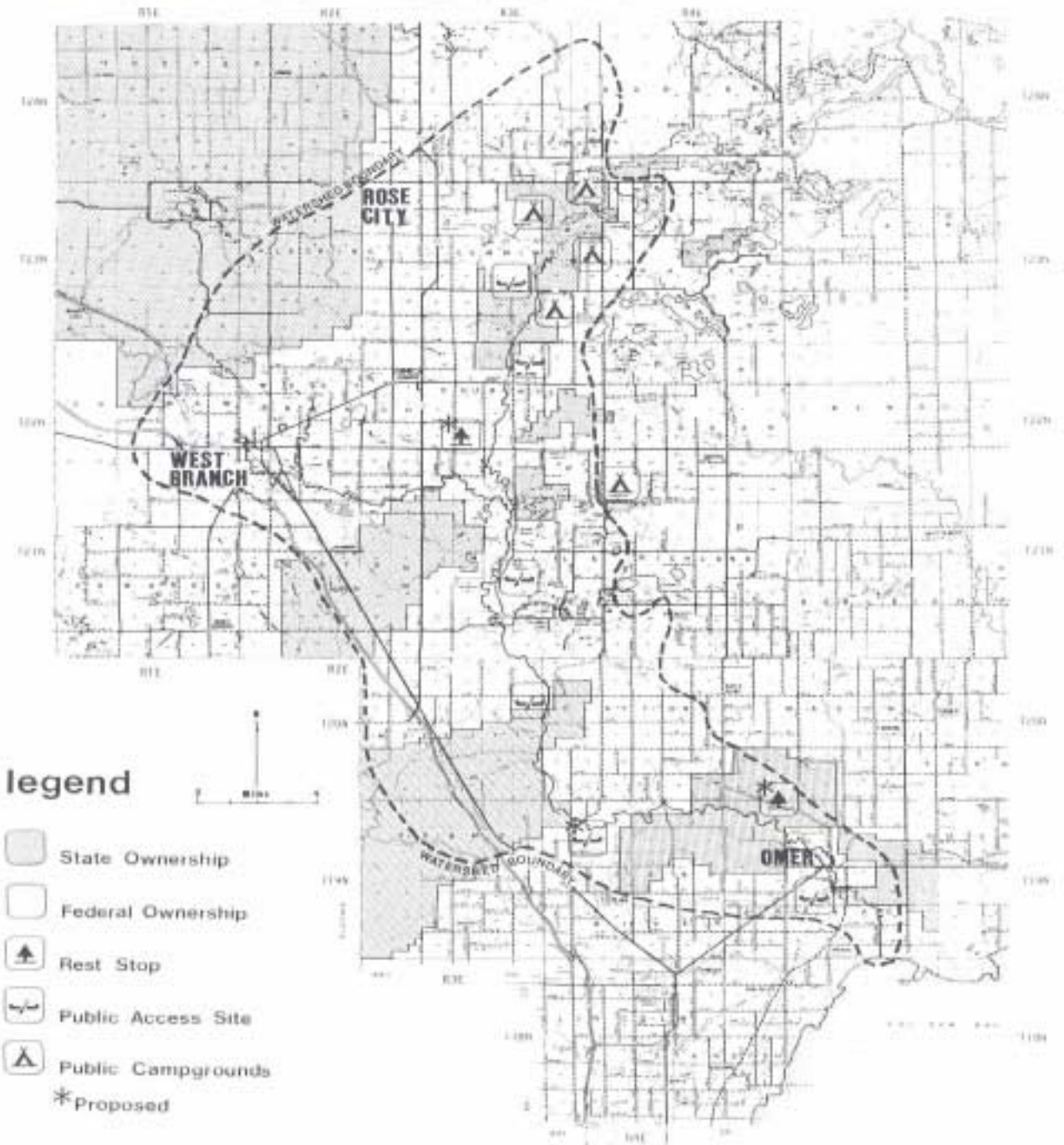
The Rifle River Recreation Area covers 4,329 acres in Ogemaw County, and is the most predominant recreation facility in the watershed. The park offers 159 campsites, has several hiking trails and several lakes in its boundaries.

Also in the watershed are two state forest campgrounds. The Rifle River campground provides 40 campsites and is located on both sides of the Rifle River. Hardwood Lake State Forest Campground has 22 campsites available.

Currently under development just outside the watershed is Pinconning State Park which will add further to the recreational opportunities of the area.

Public canoe access to the Rifle Rive is fairly good. Access sites are located in the Rifle River Recreation Area, the state forest campground, near Skidway Lake, Moffatt Bridge, and at Omer. In addition, there is a partially developed access site near the confluence of Klacking Creek with the Rifle.

RECREATION FACILITIES



D. Fishing

The Rifle provides fair to good brown trout fishing during the spring until about the last week of June, and again from about Labor Day until the end of the trout season. At these times, spin casting with hardware and streamer fly-fishing are productive methods. The slack fishing period which occurs during the summer appears to be the result of high water temperatures coupled with low stream flow.

Except for Skunk Creek and Ammond Creek, most tributaries north of Selkirk can be described as good to excellent trout streams. Of these, Klacking, Houghton, Gamble and Wilkins creeks are the best. Clacking Creek has an excellent population of brown trout with many fish larger than 14 inches and with some going over 20. Fishing is usually a challenge on this stream due to its extreme clarity.

Gamble Creek is a good brown trout tributary, and enters the Rifle via a diversion ditch around the northwest end of Devoe Lake.

Houghton Creek is an excellent feeder stream to the Rifle River and is large enough to support fly-fishing, after it is joined by Wilkins Creek. A previous state record brown trout of 36 5/8 inches, weighing 17 pounds five ounces, was taken from this stream in 1952.

Although brown trout typically predominate in the tributaries of the Rifle, some fine brook trout are also present.

Of the tributaries which center below Selkirk in Ogemaw County, only Eddy Creek can be considered a good trout stream. The West Branch of the Rifle, a sizable tributary, supports fair to good trout populations above Flowage Lake. From Flowage Lake to its confluence with the mainstream, the West Branch is considered nontrout. At this point, the West Branch represents about a third of the Rifle's drainage area.

Each spring, the Rifle supports a tremendous sucker run from Saginaw Bay and Lake Huron. While most of the excitement and activity relative to this sucker run takes place in the lower Rifle near Omer, the run extends to nearly all the waters in the system. For example, both Klacking and Prior creeks receive heavy runs.

E. Wildlife Observation and Hunting

Game species in the area include white tailed deer, cotton tailed rabbits, ruffed grouse, woodcock, squirrels, raccoons, mink, fox, beaver and muskrats.

The Wigwam Bay area is heavily used during spring migrations of waterfowl. Two duck hunt clubs are found in the Bay area.

Hunting for both large and small game and waterfowl are popular recreational activities. Nonconsumptive uses of wildlife for photography and observation are gaining in popularity. Most participants in these activities come from the metropolitan areas to the south and provide a major source of revenue to the local economy. Trapping of furbearers is popular with local residents.

F. Canoeing and Boating

In terms of numbers of rental canoes available and combined with those of the Boy Scouts of America Camp, the Rifle River is one of the most popular rivers in Michigan. Its proximity to the population concentrations of the Saginaw Bay area, the river's scenic beauty, the moderately fast water with numerous rapids, and the cold clear waters all add up to an extremely popular river for canoeists.

Through most of the year the entire Rifle River mainstream is floatable. During the low water period of mid-summer, the river can still be negotiated, although dragging of the canoe should be expected through the shallow areas.

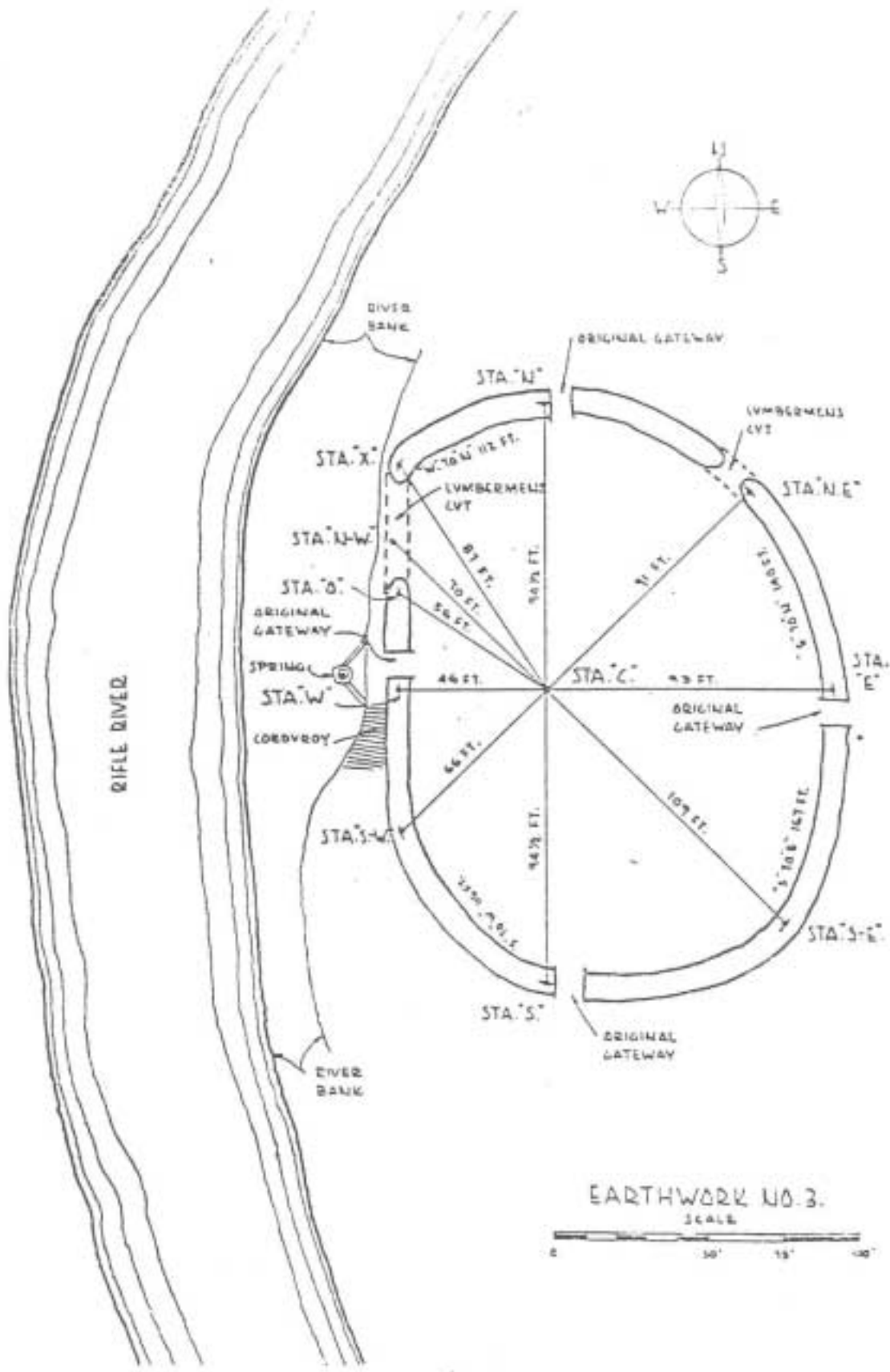
There are numerous canoe liveries throughout the Rifle system. Many of these operators not only provide canoes, but for those wishing to take a trip more than one day, they offer overnight camping areas. The Detroit area Boy Scouts also have a camp located on the river, and provide overnight camping areas along the mainstream as well.

G. Historic and Archaeological Sites

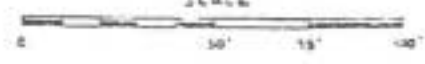
There are two archaeological sites immediately adjacent to the Rifle River, both are on private land located in Churchill Township, and both would qualify for National Historic Site designation. Such designation does not open these sites to public use, and can assure the sites will be protected for future generations.

The two archaeological sites in question are the Rifle River Earthworks #3 and #4. These are two of a group of five similar sites near Selkirk in Churchill Township. All contain circular or semi-circular earthworks consisting of earthen embankments two to three feet high inside a ditch several feet deep. The embankments once supported log palisades.

Such sites were used as winter villages during the period AD 1100-1400. The earthworks were not necessarily defensive structures; the palisades may have served primarily as protection from wind and snow. No evidence of warfare has as yet been found on this type of site. The people who lived in these villages were horticulturists who lived near Lake Huron or perhaps in the Saginaw Valley in warmer seasons. The drawing on the following page shows one of these sites.



EARTHWORK NO. 3.
SCALE



DESIGNATED PORTIONS

