

THE STUDY AREA

A. Study River Area

The Jordan River including its major tributaries and all adjoining lands for at least one-quarter mile on each side has been considered. Sharper focus on section of river considered for designation will be brought out later in the report.

B. Ownership and Status

The Jordan River watershed comprises approximately 100,000 acres. Roughly one-quarter (24,000 acres) is in state ownership contained in the Jordan River State Forest. The remaining 75,800 acres is in private ownership. Almost 800 persons own property in the watershed, with roughly 500 non-resident property owners. A land use survey prepared by the Jordan River Watershed Commission indicates that approximately 20 percent of the land is in farms or permanent residential, 23 percent in summer cottages and the remainder undeveloped.

Most of the land along the major tributaries (Green River and Deer Creek) is in private ownership. On the mainstream the state owns roughly 23 miles of the total 33.5 miles of stream. Most of state ownership is found along the upper river. Below Graves Crossing the state owns only 5.0 miles of the 20 miles of stream frontage.

C. Existing Uses

1) Scenic or Aesthetic Areas and Features:

The hardwood-forested hills surrounding the upper Jordan River Valley offer spectacular scenery, especially in the fall. The view from Dead Man's Hill is particularly beautiful. Here one can look down on the dark green swamps, the reds, oranges, and yellows of the hardwoods and the silver ribbon of the Jordan River. History also adds to the aesthetic value of the area. Old railroad grades snake through the hills and are reminiscent of the early logging days. Grassy openings with old unkept apple trees mark the locations of early homesteads. Along the river one can see the swamp conifers, lowland hardwoods, and brush that is productive of wildlife. The few cabins along the lower part of the river interfere but little with the wild scenic character of the river. At least six trout ponds have been built on tributaries.

2) Fishing:

The Jordan River above its junction with the Green River is prime spring fed brook trout water. This headwater area of the mainstream is interlaced with countless downed cedars and a few beaver dams. Bait fishing predominates, although fly fishing is also rewarding. The water is very cold; and brook trout, although numerous, run small – a 10 incher considered a good one. Occasional 14 to 16 inch brookies are taken in beaver ponds.

The numerous short spring-fed tributary streams harbor schools of brook trout, but most are sublegal. Conditions for natural reproduction in these headwater creeks are favorable, except where trout ponds stop the free passage of fish.

The Green River, the upper Jordan's only major tributary, is similar to the upper Jordan River in water quality and temperature. It is generally fast and shallow with occasional holes and is a lightly fished brook trout stream.

The Jordan River below the mouth of the Green River changes abruptly in character. The river deepens and remains confined to a single channel. Numerous bend holes with undercut banks, submerged logs, and logjams provide excellent cover for large trout.

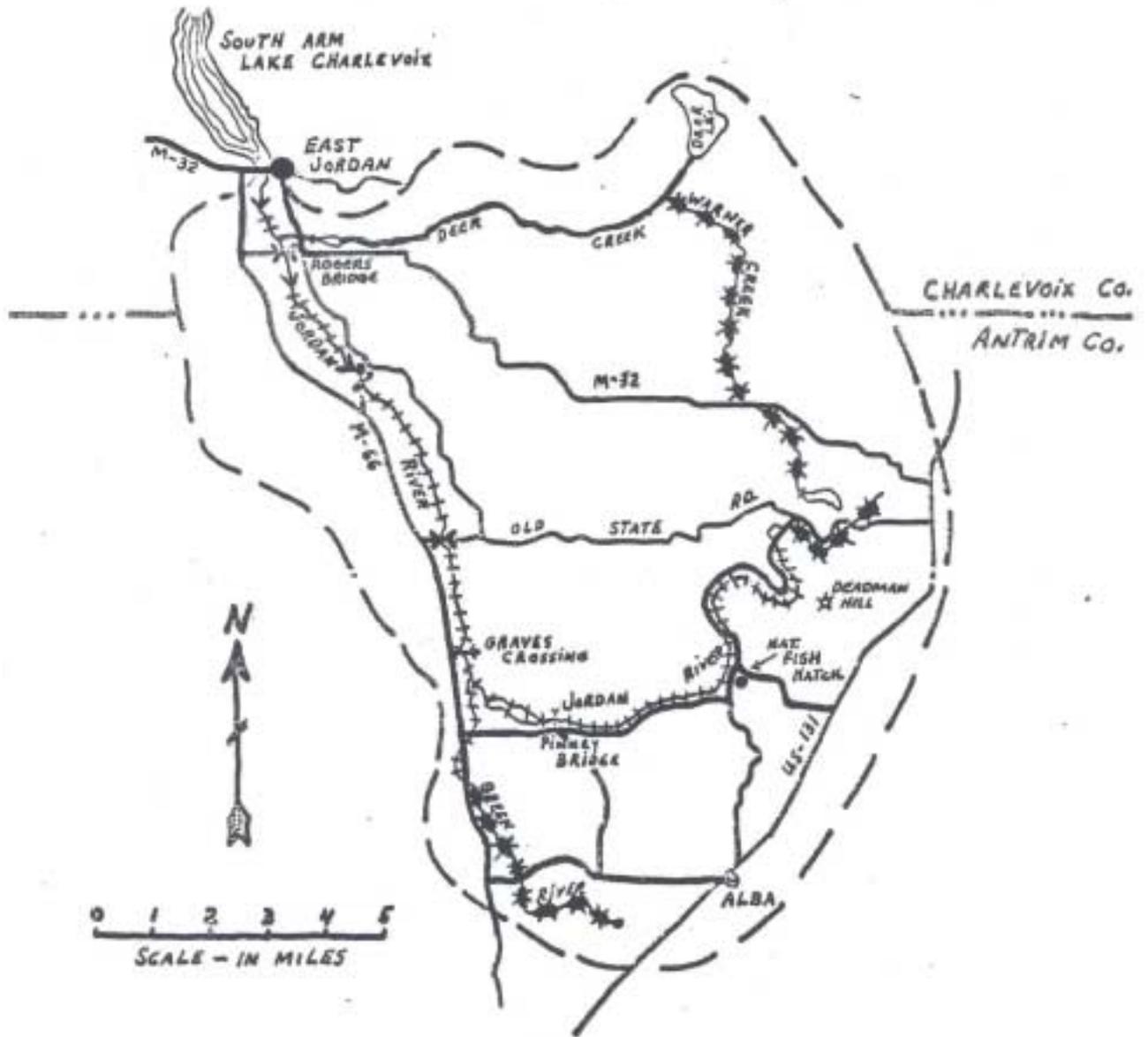
In the spring and fall the lower river has a fine steelhead run which provides good angling particularly in the area from Webster's Bridge to the mouth. Although the lower Jordan is quite sandy, there are enough gravel riffles to provide for steelhead spawning.

In the early 1900's brook trout dominated the entire river and some large brook trout up to three and four pounds were taken. Although some steelhead spawned in the river, brown trout were scarce. Since the 1940's, however, brown trout have gradually taken over the lower river and their upstream influence seems to be continually increasing at the expense of brook trout. Some of these browns are migratory and may range from four to 13 pounds. They provide exciting fishing for the trophy angler during late June and July and again in September and October.

3) Wildlife Observation and Hunting:

The wildlife in the Jordan River Valley provide many hours of recreation for the hunter, sightseer, and naturalist. Deer are common in the area, but not abundant because the climax-type forest vegetation provides little food and cover. Grouse and woodcock can be found in the lowland brush and forests along the river. Cottontail rabbits and snowshoe hares also frequent the area. O'Brien's Pond provides favorable habitat for ducks, as do other marshy sections of the river. The patient observer can also see beaver, otter, mink and several species of rodents and other small mammals. Resident species of songbirds abound in the brushy areas and can be seen along the entire river summer and winter, and during migrations.

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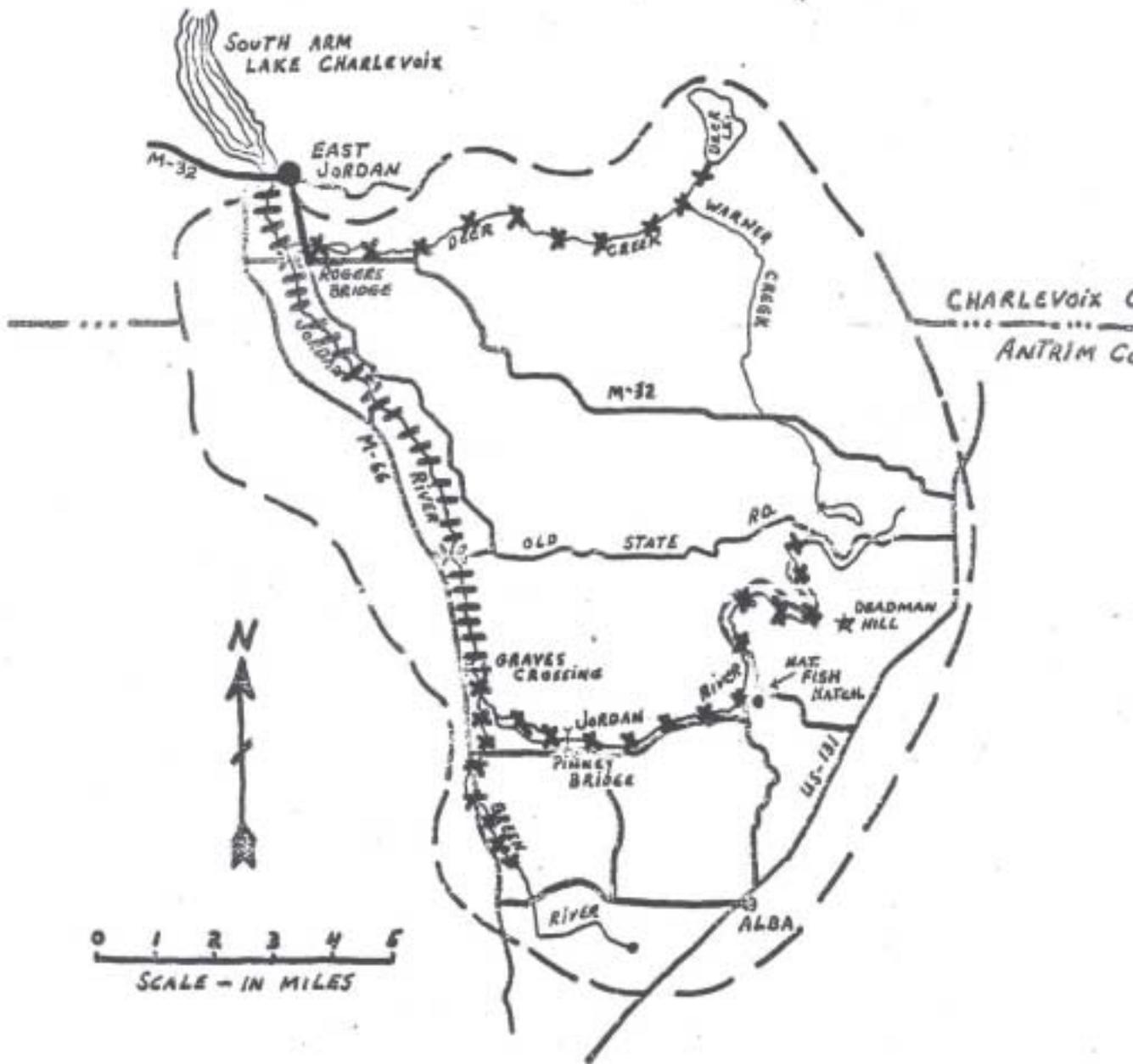
FISHERY	MAIN. TRIB.
TOP QUALITY TROUT	— +++++ * * *
2ND. QUALITY TROUT	— ——— — — —
ANADROMOUS RUNS	— ———>>>>

4) Canoeing and Boating:

The upper Jordan River is interlaced with countless downed cedars and numerous beaver dams which makes canoeing almost impossible. The best canoeing water extends from Graves Crossing downstream to the mouth. This stretch of the river has a drop of only 70 feet to the mouth although during the first mile below Graves Crossing, there are a number of riffles and obstacles that will challenge the novice canoeist. The flow is swift and combined with the relatively undeveloped swamp conifer forest border provides a “northwoods-type” experience for the canoeist.

Below Rogers Bridge the river becomes slow, wide and deep. It meanders through a marshy area where numerous species of waterfowl can be observed.

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STREAM SIZE

- CANOEABLE WITH DIFFICULTY ***
- CANOEABLE +++++

5) Historical Interests:

The Hinsdale Archaeological Atlas does not show any archaeological sites along the Jordan River, most probably indicating that the area has not been investigated. In fact, the general terrain and character of the Jordan Valley strongly suggests that it is rich in Woodland Indian occupation sites, and possible burial sites. A team of archaeologists from Michigan State University proposed making an archaeological survey of the valley in the summer of 1971 but it was not implemented. Plans are still active to do so.

No historical sites are identified on either the national or state registers in the valley as yet. The statewide survey has not been completed and some sites may be discovered. There is little doubt that the main significance of the valley in relation to our country's heritage lies in the discovery, analysis, and development of Woodland Indian prehistoric archaeological sites.

6) Ecologic Systems and Stages:

The vegetation of the Jordan River Valley is progressing toward a climax forest. Hard maple and basswood are the dominant tree species in the uplands and the canopy of this forest is so dense that little sunlight reaches the forest floor. Without sunlight few tree seedlings can survive. Only maple, basswood and other shade-tolerant tree seedlings can survive and thus the climax maple forest perpetuates itself.

Evidence of the maturing forest can be seen in other vegetation types as well. The swamp conifers, cedar, spruce and balsam, have grown so tall and their canopies so dense that little sunlight reaches the lower limbs. These lower limbs die and in time fall off. This self-pruning process soon results in little food or cover near the ground for terrestrial forms of wildlife.

7) Other Amenity Resource Uses:

The upper valley is especially noted for its scenic beauty and is used extensively by hikers, cyclists, and snowmobilers. The Jordan River Road and Penny Bridge Road have also been designated as a state forest scenic trail with designated points of interest. The Hawk Lake Snowmobile Trail is located a short distance away in southeastern Antrim County.

Swimming in Jordan River waters cannot be recommended because the water temperature rarely exceeds 60 degrees.

D. Existing Facilities (July-1972)

1) Structures for Natural Resources Management:

Manmade structures for natural resources management are minimal in the study area. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service operates the Jordan River National Fish

Hatchery in the Upper Jordan Valley, which lies generally 100-200 feet from the Jordan River between Five and Six Tile Creeks. Lake trout are produced here for stocking the Great Lakes.

2) Public Recreation Areas:

Camping facilities along the river include Graves Crossing State Forest Campground and a township park at East Jordan. In addition, there are five public access sites (four developed and one undeveloped) between Graves Crossing and the mouth of the river. The City of East of Jordan maintains two municipal parks on the lower river. In addition to these developed facilities, camping is allowed on state lands in the Jordan Valley provided camps are not set up on the river side of the road.

3) Private Recreation Areas:

A private canoe livery with 28 rental watercraft is located in East Jordan. A private recreation area near Graves Crossing has nine rental watercraft and in winter rents snowmobiles. A resort at nearby Walloon Lake has 20 canoes available which are used on the Jordan probably four times a year. Three group camps in the area have 31 canoes which contribute a total of roughly 100 trips on the Jordan per summer. Camps and homes along the river have about 15 to 20 canoes.

4) Accessibility:

The Jordan River is accessible by improved state or county roads. The lower 10 miles of mainstream is paralleled in various places, within one-quarter mile to one-half mile, by M-66 on the west and by Alba, Freeman and Mount Bliss Roads on the east. There are four road crossings along this lower stretch. The upper Jordan is paralleled most of its length (within 100-660 feet) by the Jordan River State Forest Trail. This county road originates at US-131 on the east side of the watershed, winding along the river, culminating on the west side of the watershed at M-66.

E. Land Uses Which Weaken the Wild-Scenic Concept

1) Timber Cutting and Agriculture:

Historically, the Jordan River Valley has been the site of considerable logging activity dating back to the late 1800s when the river was used extensively as a log-driving stream. Subsequently, the stream banks along the upper reaches were clearcut for cedar products and the scars are still very much in evidence. At the present time, cutting in close proximity to the river is very limited and none is permitted within 200 feet of the stream bank on state-owned land.

Only about 10 percent of the land in the watershed can be classified as agricultural land and of this acreage, less than 5,000 acres are probably actively

farmed. Very little farming takes place within one-quarter mile of the river in the study area.

The private acreage along the lower half of the river could, if improperly subdivided and developed, likely be incompatible with the criteria of the Natural Rivers Program.

From Deer Creek to the mouth of the river, the current diminishes and the river extends into wide marshes with adjacent pasturelands which change the aesthetic qualities of the river.

2) Residential Uses:

Twenty cottages are visible along the Jordan River below Graves Crossing. Most are seasonal dwellings, set back from the river and do not detract greatly from the wild scenic atmosphere. Some however are aesthetically out of character with a wild scenic setting.

3) Water Uses:

At least seven trout pond operations, including the Federal Lake Trout Hatchery, currently are on the cold feeder streams of the Jordan River. These operations do not seem to be adversely affecting water temperatures at present, but unrestricted construction of ponds in the future may warm water temperatures. Additional nutrients are added to the river from the out falls of the ponds, however, new settling basins at the Federal Hatchery have alleviated a major source of this material.