

"BUFFALO RIVER: A MINNESOTA STATE PARK  
DEVELOPMENT PROJECT RECONNAISSANCE SURVEY"

BY

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Prepared for the  
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## Abstract

An archaeological reconnaissance survey was undertaken in October of 1979 on a well in the beach area and on bank stabilization on the Buffalo River in Buffalo River State Park, Clay County, Minnesota. Both surveys were negative.

## Buffalo River State Park

The 1979 development projects for Buffalo River were listed in the Scope of Work as "Well-Beach Area" and "Picnic Area and Major Stream Bed Improvement." Both projects are in the vicinity of the swimming pool, the well to the west and the bank improvement to the east behind the dam.

### Background

There was very little early archaeological work done in Clay County. A land survey being done for the Northern Pacific Railroad in April of 1872 found an Indian burial mound in the northeast part of the county. And in 1939 and 1945 Lloyd Wilford of the University of Minnesota visited the county to ask if he could excavate the above reported mound. He was denied permission at that time by the land owner.

Over the years, isolated artifacts were reported from around the county. In 1959 a prehistoric site was reported near Glyndon, just west of Buffalo River State Park.

In 1978 Mike Michlovic of Moorehead State University undertook an archaeological survey of Clay county for the State Historic Preservation Office. Its purpose was to sample the county randomly to determine prehistoric occupation. Michlovic recorded forty-four sites found on his survey, most of which were along the Red and Buffalo Rivers. The survey team did not work in the park, but sites were found outside the park boundaries along the Buffalo River.

### The 1979 Survey

The survey was conducted on 25 October 1979 by field director Jan E. Streiff. Park Manager Bernie Dohmann took the author to the picnic grounds where, although he did not know the exact location, he pointed out the general location where the well would be dug. He also showed the author the area on the north bank of the Buffalo river which will be cut back and on the south bank which will be riprapped for bank stabilization.

## Buffalo River State Park

### Location

Both projects lie within the SE 1/4 of Section 10 Twp 139N R 46W. (See Map 1). The well will be somewhere along the extreme east edge of the SE 1/4 on a flat, grassy terrace west or southwest of the swimming pool. It will lie along tall mature hardwood trees, screened as much as possible from public view. The river is approximately 150 meters to the south and east. The bank stabilization area is in the center of the SE 1/4 of the SE 1/4 of Section 10. The south bank is high (10 meters) and eroding badly. The bank top is grass covered with scattered small oak trees. The bank is completely exposed, showing a natural stratigraphy of sands and sands mixed with gravel. The north side of the river is low (1 meter maximum) and is mostly washed in river deposits with a growth of hardwoods and underbrush. There is erosion at the redeposited bank on the north.

### Methodology

Shovel tests were dug every fifteen meters as recommended by the Council for Minnesota Archaeology, unless otherwise noted. All tests (50cm x 50cm) were excavated to a depth of at least 50cm; if no cultural material was appearing, a soil auger was used to reach depths of two plus meters. All soil was put through a 1/4" mesh screen.

### The Results

#### The Well

Five tests were dug on the west side of the picnic ground, west and southwest of the swimming pool. (See Map 2). The tests started south of the walkway from the picnic area to the campground and, following the tree line, continued around the southwest end of the swimming pool to the river. All tests showed a deep accumulation of water laid sand to a depth of over two meters. No cultural material was encountered although it is possible that a deeply buried site exists below the test depths.

## Buffalo River State Park

### The High Bank

Three tests were placed on the high eroding bank on the south side of the Buffalo just above the dam (See Map 2). All side profiles from the tests were consistent with the stratigraphy observable in the 8m high exposed bank. No features were seen in the bank and no cultural material was uncovered from the tests.

### The North Bank

The area directly across from the high bank, on the north side of the Buffalo River, is primarily redeposited river sediments. The area is low, rising to a maximum of only one meter above the river. Erosion is severe at the bank. Most of the river bank is a mud flat running directly down to the river. Three tests were placed along the north shore as well as an exposed bank examined. The same flood deposit stratigraphy was present and no cultural material found.

The preliminary field report was submitted to the DNR, the State Archaeologist and the SHPO on 26 October 1979.

Jan E. Streiff

Archaeology Laboratory  
University of Minnesota  
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455  
26 January 1981

## Bibliography

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- 1979 "Preliminary Report on the Archaeological Survey of Clay  
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### University of Minnesota Site and County Files

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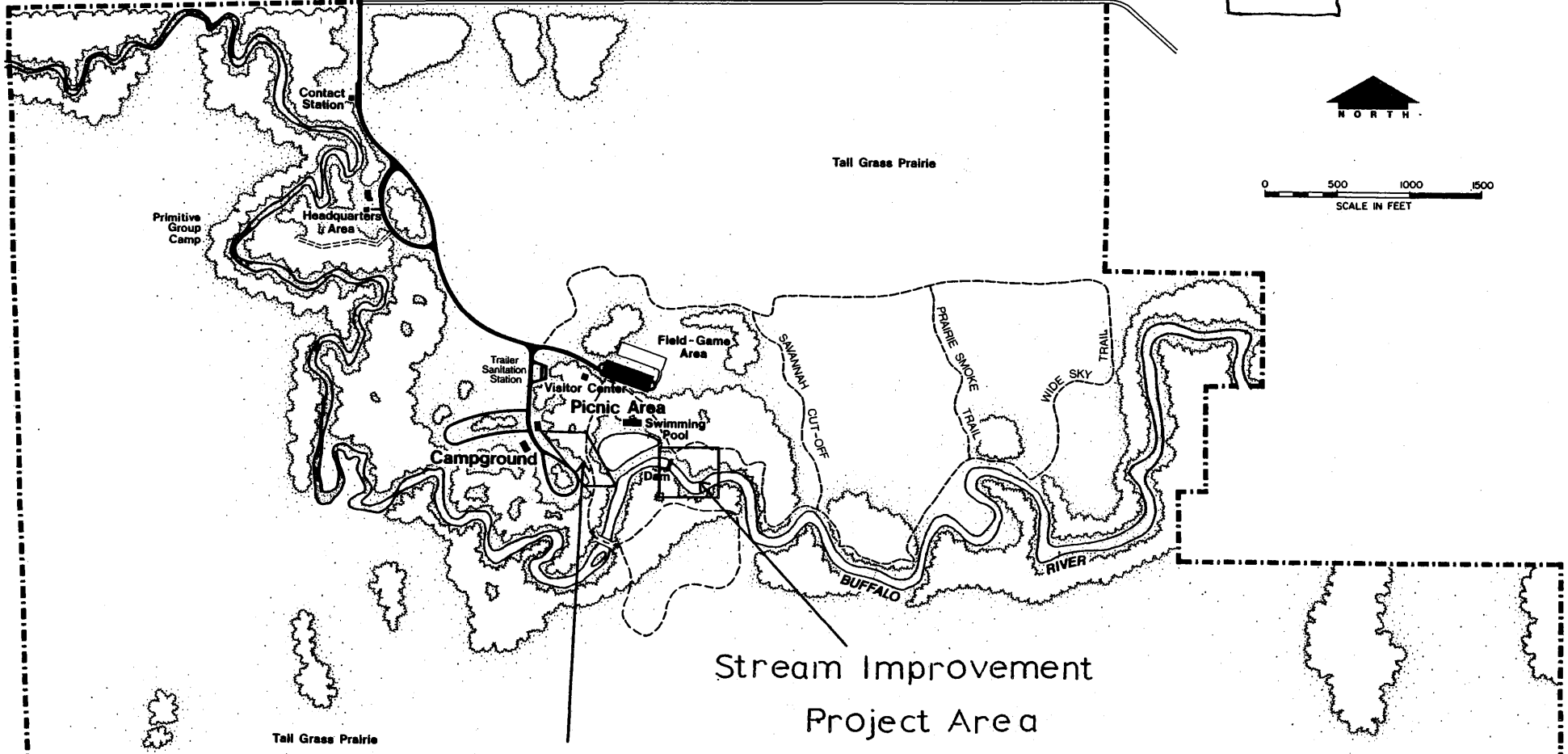
# Buffalo River State Park

JANUARY, 1978

MOORHEAD 13 MILES ← 10 → 30 MILES DETROIT LAKES



0 500 1000 1500  
SCALE IN FEET



Stream Improvement  
Project Area

Well Project Area

Because lands exist within the boundaries of this park that are not under the jurisdiction of the D.N.R., check with the park manager if you plan to use facilities such as trails & roads other than those shown.



# BUFFALO RIVER STATE PARK

## TEST UNIT SOIL PROFILE

TEST 1



dark humus sand

lighter  
flood deposit  
sand

sandy clay  
flood sand

sandy clay  
flood sand  
hard pan

river sand

TEST 2



dark humus sand

dark mottled  
flood sand

light mottled  
flood sand

light beach sand  
mineral stained  
sand

light sand

light sand  
with water

TEST 3



dark humus sand

dark  
flood sand

lighter sand

dark  
flood sand  
water pipe

TEST 4



dark humus sand

light sand

dark  
flood sand

light  
flood sand

0 10 20 40 60 80 100

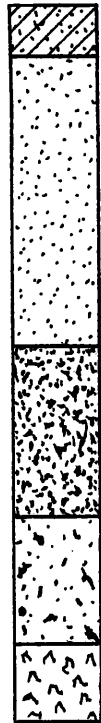
scale in centimeters



# BUFFALO RIVER STATE PARK

## TEST UNIT SOIL PROFILE

TEST 5



dark humus sand

light  
flood sand

beach sand

mineral  
stained sand  
(light hardpan)

beach gravel

TEST 6



dark humus sand

dark  
fine sand

light  
fine sand  
rock

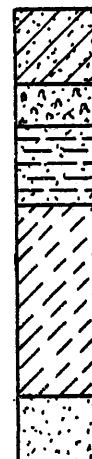
TEST 7



dark sandy humus

dark  
fine sand  
rock

TEST 8



dark sandy humus  
(roots)

mixed light sand &  
dark small gravel

small boulders/ large  
cobbles mixed with  
reddish sand

cobbles

light white sand  
with small pebbles

0 10 20 40 60 80 100

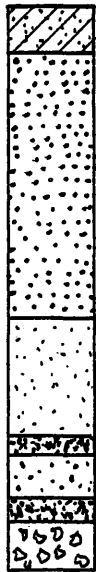


scale in centimeters

# BUFFALO RIVER STATE PARK

## TEST UNIT SOIL PROFILE

TEST 9



dark humus sand  
 medium dark fine sand  
 light sand  
 dark sand mineral stained sand  
 dark sand  
 bed rock

TEST 10



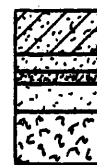
dark humus sand  
 medium dark sand  
 boulder

TEST 11

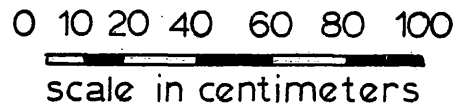


dark humus  
 medium dark sand  
 light sand  
 dark sand  
 very light sand  
 grey beach sand/gravel

TEST 12



dark humus sand  
 light sand  
 yellow sand  
 light sand beach gravel





# MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

690 Cedar Street, St. Paul, Minnesota 55101 • 612-296-2747

December 5, 1979

Mr. John Winter  
Department of Natural Resources  
Parks and Recreation  
Box 39  
Centennial Building  
St. Paul, Minnesota 55155

Dear Mr. Winter:

RE: Review of the archaeological survey  
work conducted at Buffalo River State  
Park - Well - Beach Area, Clay County,  
Minnesota.

MHS Referral File Number J590

This letter is to inform you that our office has received a statement regarding the above referenced project. No archaeological sites were located in the two areas that were tested (south of pit toilets and north east of pool). Consequently, in these areas, there are no sites of historic, architectural, cultural, or archaeological significance which are on the National Register or eligible for inclusion on the National Register which may be affected by the proposed development. However, if the construction plans are altered, the project archaeologist should be consulted as additional testing may be needed.

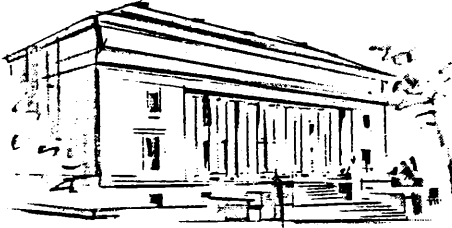
Thank you for your support in preserving Minnesota's cultural resources.

Sincerely,

Russell W. Fridley  
State Historic Preservation Officer

RWF/cjb

cc: ✓ Ms. Jan Streiff  
Department of Anthropology  
Ford Hall  
224 Church Street S.E.  
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455



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December 5, 1979

Mr. John Winter  
Department of Natural Resources  
Parks and Recreation  
Box 39  
Centennial Building  
St. Paul, Minnesota 55155

Dear Mr. Winter:

RE: Review of the archaeological survey  
work conducted at Buffalo River State  
Park - Major stream bed improvements  
Clay County, Minnesota.

MHS Referral File Number J589

This letter is to inform you that our office has received a statement regarding the above referenced project. No archaeological sites were located. Consequently, there are no sites of historic, architectural, cultural, or archaeological significance in the area which are on the National Register or eligible for inclusion on the National Register which may be affected by the above proposal.

Thank you for your support in preserving Minnesota's cultural resources.

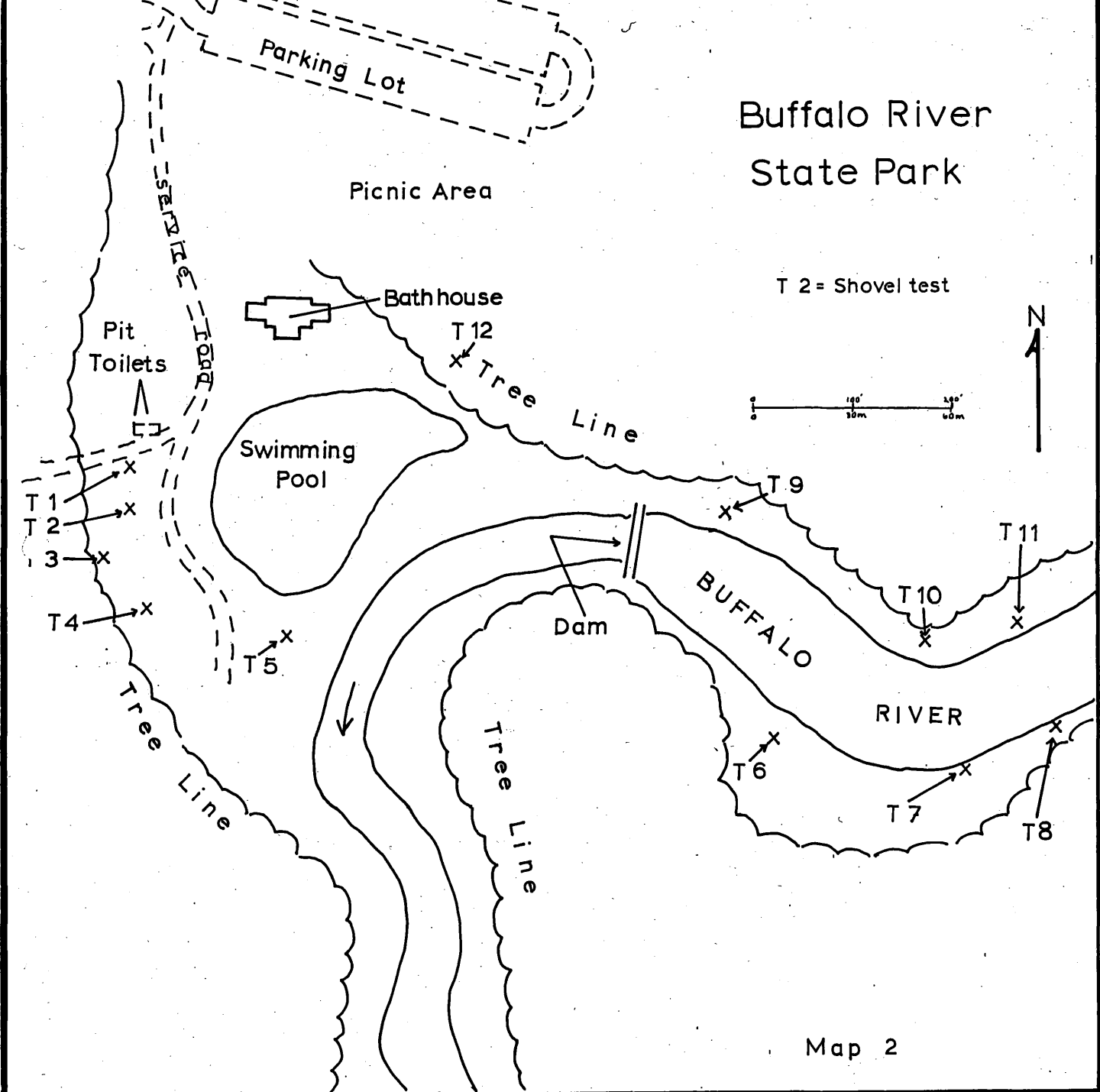
Sincerely,

Russell W. Fridley  
State Historic Preservation Officer

RWF/cjb

cc: ✓ Ms. Jan Streiff  
Department of Anthropology  
Ford Hall  
224 Church Street S.E.  
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455

# Buffalo River State Park



Map 2