

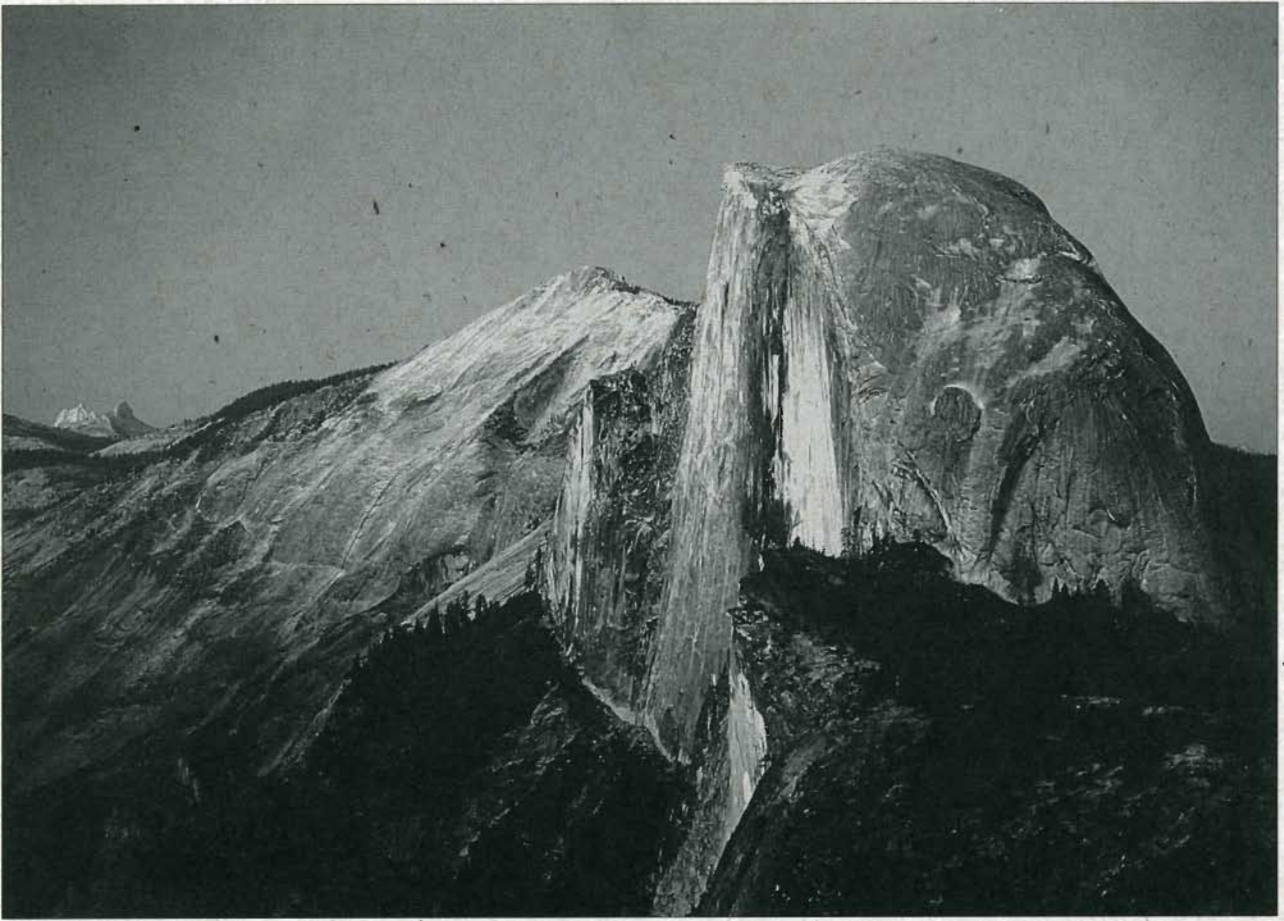


The Economic Importance of National Parks:

**Effects of the
1995-1996
Government
Shutdowns
on Selected
Park-Dependent
Businesses and
Communities**



**A Report of the
National Parks and
Conservation Association**



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The National Parks and Conservation Association (NPCA) is America's only private nonprofit citizen organization dedicated solely to preserving, protecting, and enhancing the U.S. National Park System. An association of "Citizens Protecting America's Parks," NPCA was founded in 1919 and today has 500,000 members.

Cover photo © Larry Ulrich: Half Dome, Yosemite National Park, California

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The Economic Importance of National Parks:

Effects of the 1995-1996 Government Shutdowns on Selected Park-Dependent Businesses and Communities

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Preface and Acknowledgments

During the winter of 1995-96, budget disputes between Congress and the President closed the National Park System for the first time in its 80-year history. All across the country, thousands of people who depend on the parks—employees of the National Park Service, of concessions operations, and of businesses in neighboring communities—found themselves out of work or without customers. This report tells their story, focusing on the closure of nine national parks. In all, 369 parks were closed.

The National Parks and Conservation Association (NPCA) has always believed that the most important purposes of our National Park System are preservation and education. We cherish the parks because they keep our history alive, preserve our nation's wildlife and natural wonders, and safeguard our cultural icons.

At the same time, however, we acknowledge that the National Park System provides for the livelihood of thousands of working men and women around the country. These are people who work in the parks or whose businesses depend on them—people in Tusayan, Arizona, and Everglades City, Florida, who know that the health of their businesses and communities depends on the vitality of the parks.

The National Park Service has a “Money Generation Model” that tells us the national parks generate roughly \$10 billion a year in their surrounding economies. Similarly, the Interior Department has estimated that communities surrounding the parks lost \$14 million in tourism sales each day that the parks were closed. Such staggering figures are difficult to visualize on a personal level. Fortunately, with the support and guidance of former Ambassador L.W. “Bill” Lane, Jr., NPCA has been able to record the impact of the shutdowns on ordinary citizens.

Some of the communities investigated for this report were financially devastated by the shutdowns. Mariposa County, California, for example, lost \$10,000 per day in tax revenue due to the closure of Yosemite National Park. In a county of 14,000 people, 1,600 men

and women temporarily lost their jobs. Similar losses were recorded elsewhere around the country.

As you read these stories, remember that the issue here is larger than merely avoiding another government shutdown. If our national parks are to continue providing economic support to families, businesses, and communities across the country, we must commit ourselves to not only keeping them open, but also to assuring that they are adequately funded—in order to preserve the parks' natural, cultural, and historic resources that attract visitors from around the world.

Seventy-seven years ago, a small group of conservationists saw the need to create a public association that would fight to protect America's fledgling National Park System. Today, NPCA has grown to half-a-million members with eight regional offices around the country. However, accomplishing our mission of building and protecting a National Park System that embraces the finest of America's natural and cultural heritage depends on the dedication of committed individuals.

Among those, NPCA wishes to acknowledge the hard work of Associate Director for Policy Development Phil Voorhees and Adam Mednick. We also would like to thank Michael McQueen for researching and reporting from the field, Sue Dodge for designing the report, as well as Kenneth Hornback and Tom Wade of the National Park Service and Glen Gill of the NPS/University of Idaho Visitor Service Project, for providing invaluable park visitation data. Most of all, we wish to sincerely thank the hundreds of people who took the time to speak candidly with us, recounting experiences that were often painful for them.

Over its 80 years, the National Park System has become a revered American institution, hosting more than 260 million visitors a year and contributing to the livelihoods of countless others. Unbelievably, there are still those who argue that “we can't afford to have all of these parks.” As the stories in this report show, the real truth is that we can't afford not to.

—Paul C. Pritchard
President, NPCA

Our national parks preserve the very best of the values that created our nation, made it strong and free, and make life in America so rewarding. Their critical mandate is to preserve and interpret our nation's most significant natural and cultural resources. At the same time, the collective treasures of the National Park System are an economic engine generating jobs, retail income, and personal and business taxes totaling billions of dollars annually.

This report by the National Parks and Conservation Association (NPCA), which I have encouraged and had the pleasure of helping to sponsor, is an attempt to produce a more complete measure of the economic losses that occurred when our parks were closed during the winter of 1995-1996. What was found is simple yet compelling: *Directly and indirectly, numerous political and business interests were adversely affected by the closure of the national parks. Conversely, all benefit when the parks are open and thriving.* That positive awareness is the real objective of this report.

Our national parks are among the most popular destinations for tourists at home and from around the world. Visitors to the parks crisscross every state in America, leaving behind millions of dollars, pounds, marks, yen, and francs to pay for their hotel rooms, rental cars, gasoline, plane fares, gifts, food, and hundreds of other services. These expenditures are a catalyst for economic benefits that spread through every region of the country and add greatly to our balance of trade. They also foster an entrepreneurial environment in areas surrounding the parks.

This report offers an insight into the extent of these effects through the words and experiences of real people who were hurt by the closure of the parks. The information gathered, however, represents only the tip of the iceberg of the total loss to our economy that occurred when the parks were closed. For every observation, fact, and personal experience in this study—reflecting only those losses which occurred in communities near nine national parks in three regions—there are thousands of untold stories.

Granted, some disappointed tourists may have simply postponed their visits or spent their money elsewhere in response to the closure, thereby lessening its impact. For the most part, however, losses to the U.S. economy and those businesses serving the public in the economic zones surrounding the parks were extensive and long-term in effect. In the tourism business, an empty bed, plane seat, or unserved meal is revenue lost forever.

This study highlights the economic impact of a temporary closure of the national parks. The flip side of the coin, however, is that when parks are open and providing visitors with the opportunity to explore the natural and cultural resources preserved therein, they produce a constant stream of economic benefits. Sadly, as is so often the case, we appreciate something only after we have felt its loss.

NPCA and I hope that this report will lead to further documentation of how important national parks are to our national, state, and local economies. In order to continue providing economic benefits, the parks must be well maintained, adequately staffed, efficiently managed, and administered to further the conservation purposes for which they were created. And those uniquely valuable conservation and economic benefits can happen only when their gates are open and welcoming the public to America's greatest natural and cultural treasures.

—The Honorable L.W. "Bill" Lane, Jr.

The Honorable L.W. "Bill" Lane, Jr., is the former publisher of Sunset Magazine, Ambassador to Australia, and Ambassador-at-Large to Japan. He has served on many state and national commissions on tourism and the national parks. He chaired the President's National Parks Centennial Commission in 1972 and served on the Steering Committee for the National Park Service's 75th anniversary in 1991. He has also received numerous honors and awards for his outstanding service on behalf of the parks, including the Secretary of Interior's Conservation Service Award, the National Park Foundation's Theodore and Conrad Wirth Environmental Award, and NPCA's William Penn Mott, Jr., Conservationist of the Year Award.

Contents

Executive Summary	7
Introduction	10
California	12
Yosemite National Park	13
Joshua Tree National Park	16
Death Valley National Park	18
South Florida	20
Everglades National Park	21
Dry Tortugas National Park	25
The Colorado Plateau (Nevada, Arizona, Utah)	26
Grand Canyon National Park	27
Lake Mead National Recreation Area	29
Zion National Park	30
Bryce Canyon National Park	32
Conclusion	34
Appendix. Estimated Economic Impact of Utah's National Parks	35
Sources	36

Executive Summary

The 374 units of the National Park System are storehouses of priceless treasures preserving our most beautiful and beloved places, our cultural heritage, and our natural wonders. They are, in addition, the economic lifeblood of tourism-dependent businesses and park gateway communities across the country. Local revenue and employment generated by park visitors who stop in neighboring towns such as Tropic, Utah (just outside Bryce Canyon National Park) to shop, eat, lodge, and buy fuel and supplies are important economic benefits of national parks. These local and regional benefits are provided *in addition* to the immeasurable benefits that all Americans receive either directly or indirectly from the parks.

With more than 260 million annual visits, national parks play a key role in the U.S. travel and tourism industry. In 1994 this industry generated an estimated \$417 billion in business receipts nationwide and supported roughly 6.3 million jobs.¹ Revenue and employment benefits generated by park visitors are pervasive in many regions of the country and are critical to the well-being of park-dependent businesses and communities. Unfortunately, it took an extended shutdown of the federal government for this importance to be fully realized.

During the summer of 1996, the National Parks and Conservation Association (NPCA), in an attempt to better understand the economic dynamic between parks, their related businesses, and neighboring communities, set out to investigate the impact of the winter 1995-96 government shutdowns on nine national parks and 21 gateway communities. Hundreds of such communities and thousands of such businesses exist across the country. Many of them depend almost entirely on park visitors for their livelihood. At the same time, however, they support the national parks by providing visitors with goods, services, and accommodations that the parks alone cannot provide. In conducting this study, NPCA reached out to park-related busi-

ness owners, employees, and community leaders in California, south Florida, and the Colorado Plateau region of Nevada, Arizona, and Utah, asking them to describe, in their own words, the negative effects brought about by the shutdowns. From their stories we can sense the extent and severity of the shutdowns' impacts on the daily lives of actual individuals.

By themselves, the revenue and employment impacts of the shutdowns are impressive. Nationwide, according to the U.S. Department of the Interior, the shutdowns cost park-dependent communities an estimated \$14 million *a day* in business receipts.² In Mariposa County, California, 25 percent of adults found themselves temporarily out of work as a result of the closure of Yosemite National Park. The loss of park visitors led to an overall loss of up to \$8.9 million in direct tourism sales in and around the park, as well as up to \$10,000 a day in county tax revenue.

Elsewhere, businesses and gateway communities lost upwards of \$600,000 in direct sales in and around Joshua Tree National Park in California, \$1.4 million in and around Everglades National Park in Florida, and \$5.6 million in and around Grand Canyon National Park in Arizona.³

Such figures alone, however, do not adequately portray the impact of the shutdowns. To many of the business owners surveyed for this study, the loss of a few thousand dollars in a season can define the boundary between success and failure, survival and bankruptcy.

Businesses and communities in each of the three regions investigated were noticeably affected by the shutdowns. Fortunately, the most severe impacts occurred only in areas that traditionally receive heavy park visitation during the winter. Had the shutdowns occurred in July or August, the damage would have been much more severe.

Nationwide, the shutdowns cost park-dependent communities an estimated \$14 million a day in business receipts.

There remains a widespread fear, particularly in the West, that the shutdowns have had a lingering effect on visitation by foreign travelers. Planning a trip to the U.S. national parks requires long-term planning. Many of the men and women we spoke with believed that uncertainty associated with the shutdowns led British, German, and Japanese tourists to go elsewhere during the spring and summer of 1996. Many speculated that the loss of those visitors would be particularly hard on their communities because foreign visitors tend to spend more per day, on average, than American tourists.

Reports of anger, frustration, and heavy losses were the norm among those interviewed for this report. However, the magnitude of the impacts varied from region to region.

CALIFORNIA

Impacts were substantial in and around California's national parks, in spite of the fact that they were not in their peak seasons when the shutdowns occurred. Joshua Tree and Death Valley national parks normally experience their peak visitation in the spring, when the desert blooms. However, cooler fall and winter temperatures usually bring about a modest upsurge in visitation. The fall of 1995 was looking especially promising in and around Joshua Tree and Death Valley because of both areas' "elevation" from national monument to national park status in 1994. The shutdown abruptly ended the visitation boom, causing substantial business losses. At Yosemite National Park, an off-season hardly exists. Impacts in and around the park, which normally receives more than 120,000 visitors in December, were the worst encountered in our investigation.

■ Gilbert Ghyselinck, owner, Yosemite Gateway Inn, Oakhurst, California (south of Yosemite).

Estimated loss: \$45,000.

"That Christmas and New Year's shutdown was the toughest on us. We're close to full that time of year—90 percent occupancy. I think we barely made 50 percent. It was only ten days, but it was the ten days you want. It's also had some lingering effect. I didn't think there would be. It's been kind of a soft year."

■ Jim Houtz, owner, Cedar Lodge and Parkline Restaurants, El Portal, California (south of Yosemite).

Estimated loss: \$40,000–\$50,000.

"We put about 50 people on unemployment. It was pretty rough. The part that hurt us the worst was putting those people on unemployment when they were trying to put away for the winter..."

■ Cheryl Tyler, manager, Oasis of Eden Inn, Yucca Valley, California (north of Joshua Tree).

Estimated loss: \$30,000.

"It really killed us. They were canceling as fast as they could get on the phone. People booked for five days. They stayed one night and left. We lost half our business. We couldn't even fill up Christmas Eve."

SOUTH FLORIDA

Of the three regions we investigated, anger over the shutdowns was strongest among people in south Florida. The peak tourist season was just getting started when the parks were closed, and many of the region's tourism-dependent businesses were pushed to the brink. The Park Service's closing of waters in Florida Bay within the boundaries of Everglades National Park was extremely unpopular and helped to compound this frustration. The closing of Dry Tortugas National Park primarily affected boat and float plane operators, who transport people to the island park from Key West.

■ Captain Hank Brown, backcountry fishing guide, Islamorada, Florida (east of Everglades).

Estimated loss: \$5,000.

"I think it had an effect on everyone in business on this island.... We had people who had made reservations months in advance. I didn't know what to tell them; nobody did. If they [close the park] again, they will have to recruit the entire navy to keep guides out."

■ Captain Alan G. "Jerry" Hill, owner, The Yankee Fleet, Key West, Florida (70 miles east of Dry Tortugas).

Estimated loss: at least \$68,250.

"The downside, besides the anxiety, was that we had a couple good people bail out. There are five people on the ship and three others on

land. Several went on unemployment. Others would have but it was so day-to-day. Everybody was hanging by their teeth.”

THE COLORADO PLATEAU REGION OF NEVADA, ARIZONA, AND UTAH

Businesses and communities surrounding the heavily visited Lake Mead National Recreation Area in Nevada and Grand Canyon National Park in Arizona suffered heavy losses in spite of the fact that the shutdowns occurred outside of their peak tourist seasons. Likewise, communities surrounding Zion and Bryce Canyon national parks in Utah were at the end of their tourist season when the shutdowns hit. However, the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays—seen there as the last two chances for businesses to save up money for the off-season—were ruined by the shutdowns.

■ **Thomas Kelley, executive director, Williams-Grand Canyon Chamber of Commerce, Williams, Arizona.**

“This town is about 90-some percent dependent on the Grand Canyon. Williams has 1,300 hotel rooms and a dozen restaurants. At the time of the closure, business dropped 75 percent. There’s a feeling that there’s been long-term damage, too.... Summer [was down] 30 to 40 percent.”

■ **Chris Holmstead, owner, Oscar’s Cafe & Deli, Springdale, Utah (south of Zion National Park). Estimated loss: \$10,000.**

“That’s the time of year people are trying to get money to get through the winter. For the waiters, the only reason a lot of them stay here for the winter is those weeks: Thanksgiving through Christmas and New Year’s. It wiped out their whole winter base.”

These three regions, and the parks and communities surveyed therein, were not the only areas economically affected by last winter’s federal government shut-

downs. Yet, an important difference between these communities and others that depend on direct federal spending and contracts for their revenue and employment is that park gateway communities derive most of their revenue and employment from *private* spending. Federal dollars spent on national parks are matched and multiplied in value many times by the steady stream of tourists from around the world who visit them for recreation, education, and wonderment. Thus, in spite of the anger that many people felt toward the National Park Service during the shutdowns, most people we talked to realized that it was the national parks that would ultimately bring back business and reverse the damage done by the shutdowns.

As painful as the shutdowns were, they clearly demonstrated ...the economic importance of national parks to the businesses and communities to which they are connected.

■ **Sammy Hamilton, mayor, Everglades City, Florida.** (northwest of the Everglades)

“Just the name Everglades National Park means millions to this little city. The national park has really done a lot for this town. The park is what’s going to save it.”

If any good is to come of the park shutdowns of 1995-’96, it will be a broader and deeper recognition of the value of the 374 units of our National Park System, including the economic benefits they provide to their gateway communities and related businesses. Parks are more than isolated patches of land that preserve our natural wonders, wildlife, and cultural heritage; they are parts of complex systems that include human communities as well as habitat, scenery, and national icons.

As painful as the shutdowns were, they clearly demonstrated this dynamic, as well as the economic importance of national parks to the businesses and communities with which they are interconnected. The stories included in this study remind us that the social and economic stability of communities across the nation is directly linked to the health and vitality of the National Park System.

Introduction

The 374 units of the National Park System preserve our most beautiful and beloved places, our cultural heritage, and our natural wonders. They are storehouses of priceless treasures. They are, in addition, the economic lifeblood of hundreds of gateway areas and tourism-dependent communities across the country.

In 1995, our national parks received an estimated 269 million visitors⁴—entering through neighboring towns such as Tusayan, Arizona, and Homestead, Florida. The local revenue and employment generated by park visitors who stop in these and other communities to eat, lodge, shop, and buy fuel and supplies are secondary or incidental benefits of national parks. These economic benefits should not overshadow the primary benefits that all Americans receive from our national parks—the myriad natural and cultural resources preserved therein, which add to our quality of life. Nonetheless, secondary economic benefits of parks are pervasive in many regions of the country and are critical to the well-being of the businesses and communities that count on park visitors for their livelihood.

In this light, national parks play a key role in the massive U.S. travel and tourism industry, drawing tourists from across the country and around the world. In 1994, the travel and tourism industry generated an estimated \$417 billion in business receipts nationwide and supported roughly 6.3 million jobs.⁵ According to a nationwide survey conducted in 1991, 68 percent of Americans have visited at least one national park.⁶

In certain regions of the country, park visitors are critical to the health of the tourism economy. For example, visitors to the state of Utah generated \$3.5 billion in travel and tourism sales in 1995—roughly 10 percent of the state's gross product—and 73,000 jobs.⁷ Of this, visitors to Utah's national parks were responsible for an estimated \$554 million in statewide sales and more than 30,000 jobs (see Appendix, p. 36).

As impressive as these figures are, they do not do justice to the national parks' significance to individual communities

and businesses. Unfortunately, it took an extended shutdown of the federal government for this importance to be fully demonstrated. When the National Park System was shut down from November 14 to November 19, 1995, and then again from December 16, 1995, through January 5, 1996, the media were filled with stories of frustrated people—among them foreign tourists who just as easily could have visited other countries—who were denied the opportunity to experience America's parks.

The most intense reaction to the shutdowns, however, came from people who depend on the parks for their livelihoods—people such as Thomas Gatley of Florida City, whose Coral Rock Motel lost more than \$6,000 during the

shutdowns, and Jim Goff of Henderson, Nevada, a fishing guide who lost \$3,000. According to the Interior Department, the shutdowns cost park-dependent businesses and communities across the country an estimated \$14 million per day in sales.⁸ Businesses inside the parks received no revenue at all during the shutdowns. Some of the private park concessioners that we talked to experienced losses in the hundreds of thousands of dollars.

During the summer of 1996, NPCA reached out to community leaders, business owners, and employees

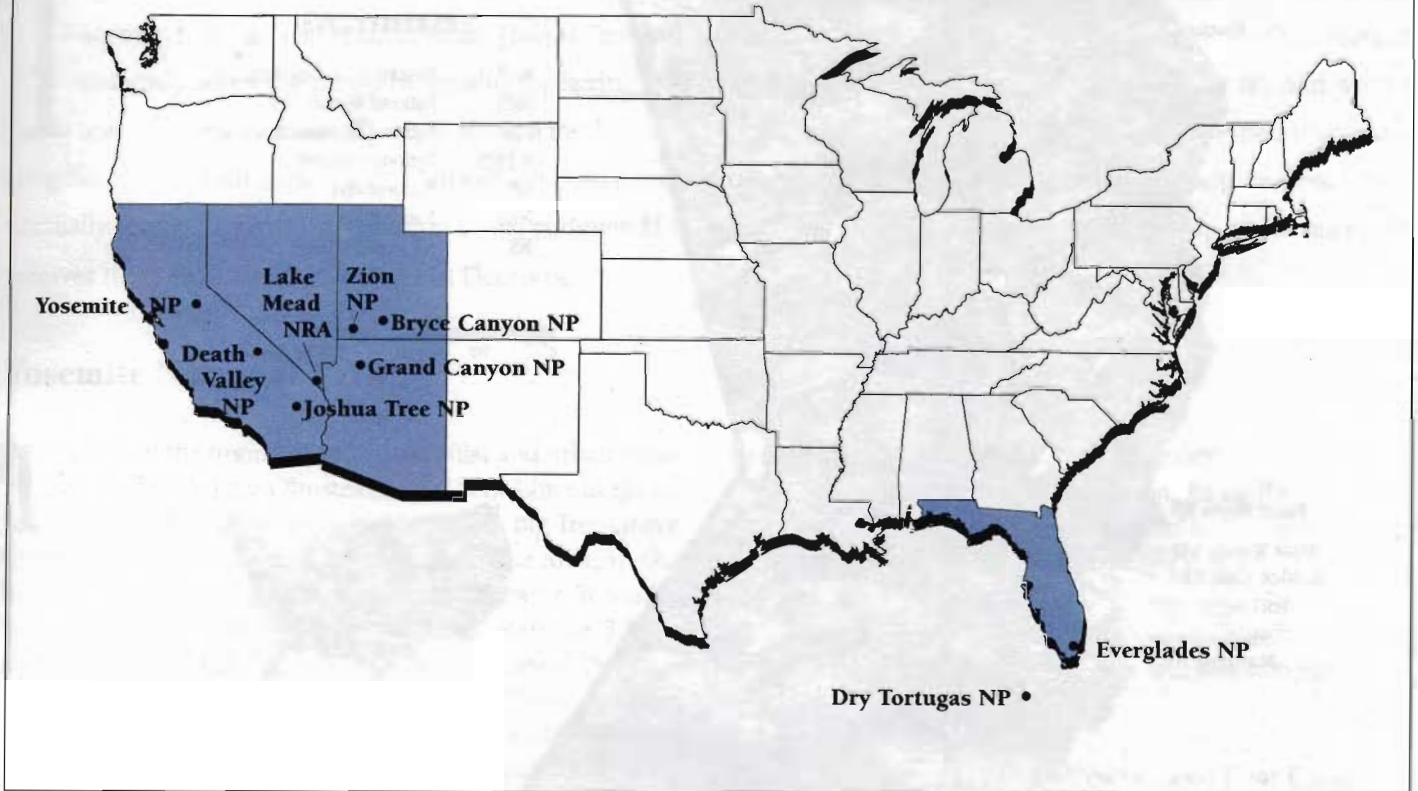
in and around nine national parks and 21 gateway communities to determine the extent of the shutdowns' impacts. People were asked to define, in their own words, the impacts of the shutdowns on their lives as well as on their balance sheets. Economic figures and statistics are provided for context; however, they are not the emphasis of this report.

Over the next year, economists contracted by the National Park Service will analyze and quantify the economic impacts of the two shutdowns on targeted regions of the country. In the future, other social scientists may also analyze the shutdowns in an attempt to further understand the dynamic between public lands and regional economies. This report should be viewed as complementary to those studies.

From the perspective of most of the businesses and com-

People in and around nine national parks and 21 gateway communities were asked to define, in their own words, the impacts of the shutdowns on their lives as well as on their balance sheets.

Study Areas



munities surveyed for this report, the closure of the National Park System was unfortunate, if not devastating. Severe economic impacts occurred in areas that traditionally receive heavy park visitation during the winter. In such areas, reactions to the shutdown bordered on desperation. For example, the closing of Arizona's national parks prompted Governor Fife Symington to lead National Guard troops to the Grand Canyon in an attempt to reopen the park. (A small portion of the park was eventually opened using state funds). In Mariposa County, California, the closure of Yosemite National Park led county officials to declare an "economic emergency" and formally request disaster relief.

Fortunately for many of the communities that we investigated, the shutdowns came during the end of the tourist season or during a moderate visitation period. Impacts in these areas were relatively modest considering the losses that could have occurred. Had the shut-

downs taken place in July or August, the damage would have been much more severe.

From the perspective of most of the businesses and communities surveyed for this report, the closure of the National Park System was unfortunate, if not devastating.

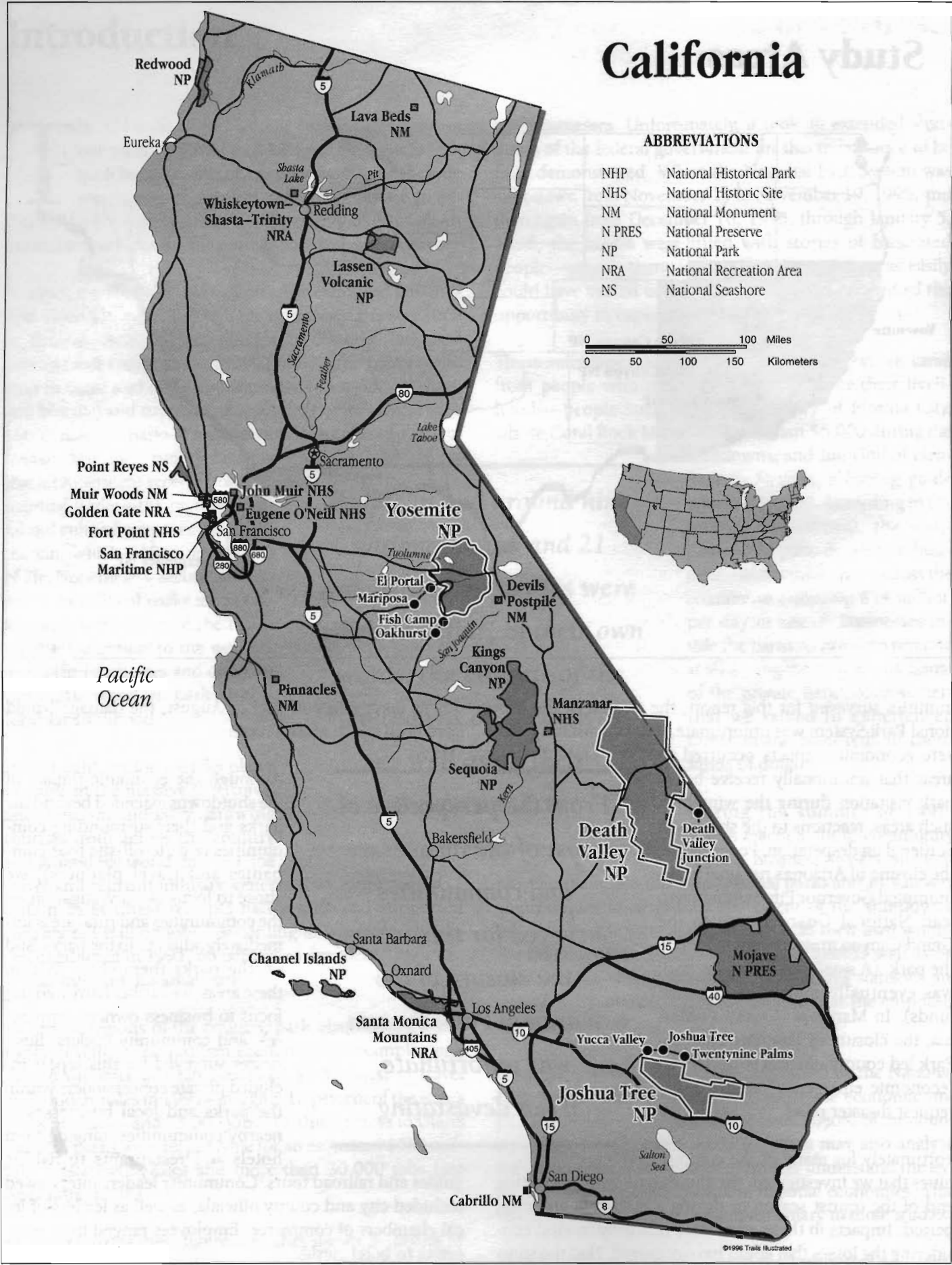
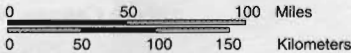
Although the economic impact of the shutdowns extended beyond the parks and their surrounding communities (e.g., to off-site tour companies and travel planners), we chose to focus our investigation on the communities and rural areas immediately adjacent to the parks, and on the parks themselves. Within these areas, we further narrowed our focus to business owners, employees, and community leaders. Businesses surveyed for this report included private concessioners within the parks and local businesses in nearby communities, ranging from hotels and restaurants to fishing

guides and railroad tours. Community leaders interviewed included city and county officials, as well as leaders of local chambers of commerce. Employees ranged from waitresses to hotel clerks.

California

ABBREVIATIONS

NHP	National Historical Park
NHS	National Historic Site
NM	National Monument
N PRES	National Preserve
NP	National Park
NRA	National Recreation Area
NS	National Seashore



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California

In spite of the fact that California's national parks were not in their peak tourist season when the shutdowns occurred, impacts were substantial. Joshua Tree and Death Valley national parks normally experience their highest visitation when the desert blooms in the spring, and 1995 was not an exception. However, cooler fall and winter temperatures traditionally bring about a modest upsurge in tourist activity. Late 1995 was looking especially promising because of both parks' recent "elevation" from national monument to national park status. Yosemite National Park normally receives its highest visitation in the summer. However, an off-season hardly exists at Yosemite, which normally receives more than 120,000 visitors in December.

Yosemite National Park

In 1864, at the urging of conservationist and urban planner Frederick Law Olmstead, President Lincoln transferred the Yosemite Valley and Mariposa Big Tree Grove to the state of California for protection. The area, in the heart of the Sierra Nevada mountains, became Yosemite National Park in 1890. Anyone who has seen the 3,600-foot granite face of El Capitan in the glacier-carved Yosemite Valley knows the grandeur of the 760,000-acre park. Yosemite offers its 4 million annual visitors 2,000-year-old giant sequoia groves, alpine wilderness, and 2,000-foot waterfalls and cliffs.

Ground zero for the impact of the 1995-96 shutdowns was Mariposa County, California, home of Yosemite National Park. One in four adults found themselves temporarily unemployed, prompting the county board of supervisors to declare the county an economic disaster area. The county government, which gathers \$6.3 million of its \$20 million budget from hotel room and sales taxes, estimated it lost up to \$10,000 a day. Yosemite Concession Services (part of Delaware North Companies, Inc.), which operates the mammoth 1,800-room lodging, restaurant, and tour concession in the park, reported losses of \$250,000 a day. Major hotels along the park's southern entrances also reported staggering losses.

■ **Mike Coffield, administrative officer, Mariposa County.** Mariposa County's \$20 million general fund depends on tourism. Annually, the county's 10 percent tax on hotel rooms generates \$5 million, with another \$1.3 million coming from its sales tax.

Estimated county revenue loss: \$200,000.

"We're really a one-company town. It's up the road—the park. It was a wasteland here. It was such a foolish gesture.... The people that got pounded here were the business interests. That business is gone for good. We're still feeling the effects of the shutdown. It's been a decent summer but not a good one."

GATEWAY COMMUNITIES: EL PORTAL AND FISH CAMP

Located just outside of Yosemite's two southern entrances are the towns of El Portal and Fish Camp. El Portal has a population of approximately 630, while Fish Camp has only 100 or so residents. Both rely heavily on Yosemite's visitors. Before the shutdown, 1995 visitation at the park already was down slightly from that of 1994. Because of the shutdowns, December visitation was down a staggering 38 percent (more than 54,000 fewer visitors than in December 1994).⁹ This led to the estimated loss of up to \$8.9 million in direct tourist sales in and around the park, including the communities of El Portal and Fish Camp.¹⁰

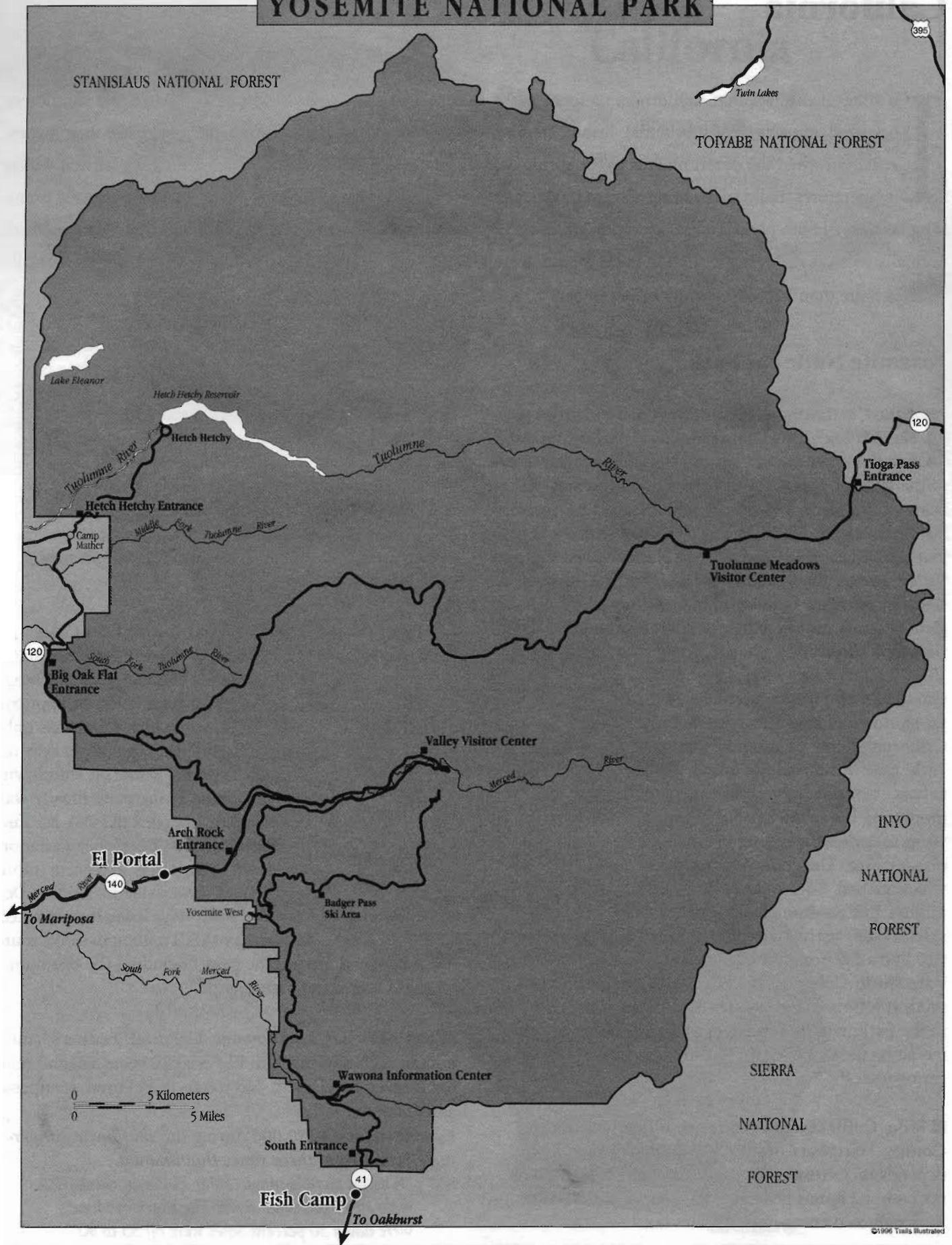
■ **Jerry Fischer, hotel owner, El Portal.** Fischer's family bought a 12-unit motel in El Portal 20 years ago and now owns seven hotels with 720 rooms in El Portal, Mariposa, and Oakhurst.

Estimated loss: \$250,000 during the shutdowns; lingering effects two to three times that amount.

"It had a terrible impact. Our El Portal hotels were effectively shut down. The Mariposa hotels were down 50 percent. Sales were off 85 to 90

*"The people that got
pounded here were
the business interests.
That business is gone
for good."*

YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK



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percent. A lingering [effect] has gone on. It was one more instance when you question whether it's going to be open. A lot of wholesalers said the hell with it. We've felt a significant hit coming out of the wholesalers..."

■ **Paul Ratchford, general manager, Tenaya Lodge, Fish Camp.** Ratchford spent almost \$100,000 in advertising in 1996 in an effort to draw people back to the 244-room lodge.

Estimated loss: \$1 million.

"I believe Mariposa County was the hardest hit county in the United States. It's pretty historic, the economic damage for the gateway communities. It would be similar to Disneyland closing and its impact on Anaheim. We rely on the park for our economic base. That's why we're here."

"I think there [have] been some residual impacts. You would think it would build up residual demand. But that didn't happen. We have not recovered from the first-quarter closing. We've had our softest spring, summer, and now fall in the six years since we've been open. The business hasn't rebounded. We've had plenty of availability throughout the summer months."

■ **Jim Houtz, owner, Cedar Lodge and Parkline restaurants, El Portal.**

Estimated loss: \$40,000–\$50,000.

"We put about 50 people on unemployment. It was pretty rough. The part that hurt us the worst was putting those people on unemployment when they were trying to put away [savings] for the winter..."

■ **Letty Carolyn Barry, owner, Yosemite Redbud Lodge, El Portal.** The lodge has eight rooms as well as a gift shop.

Estimated loss: \$18,000 in canceled reservations.

Some people came in with radios and watches to trade for Christmas presents for their wives. People bought groceries in Mariposa and ran out of gas on the way home. The waiters and the cooks... had terrible Christmases.... Until August [1996], when a lot of foreign visitors arrived, occupancy was off 40 percent. From the week before Thanksgiving until after New Year's, I lost 200 room reservations. You count on those holidays to get you through the winter months. I had to go to my mortgage company and ask for an abeyance. I just repaid them..."

GATEWAY COMMUNITY: MARIPOSA

A little over 20 miles southwest of the park, along Califor-

nia Route 140, lies the town of Mariposa. A community of 1,500 people, Mariposa owes its existence to the California gold rush of the mid-nineteenth century. Today, however, the town has one hotel room for every two residents, a reminder that tourism has replaced gold panning as the town's mainstay. Mariposa boasts a mining museum as well as one of the oldest continuously operating courthouses west of the Mississippi. One of the community's claims to fame—no chain fast-food restaurants—recently ended with the opening of a Burger King.

■ **Jackie Metcalf, manager, Miners Inn Restaurant, Mariposa.**

"Three to four days after we opened under new management, the park closed. I'm still not sure how we managed to stay afloat. We were down \$1,000 to \$1,500 every day. I think there [have] been some long-term effects. Europeans changed their plans."

■ **Kaps Desai, manager, Holiday Inn Express, Mariposa.**

"It did hurt us a lot. One day we had reservations for 36 people. I checked two days later on the computer. We had 16. Two tours canceled—20 and 24 rooms for four days. That's \$3,120 right there. Even after it opened, they were slow to come. The whole year has been like that. Our housekeeping and desk clerks were hurt, too. Instead of working six days, they worked two. There goes their paycheck."

"It was our worst nightmare..."

**We didn't make any money
from Thanksgiving until April."**

■ **Frank Cozzolino, owner, Mariposa Indian Art Gallery, Mariposa.**

"It was our worst nightmare. It could have put us out of business. We didn't make any money from Thanksgiving until April. If I'm not making money, I'm not spending money. I'm not going to the restaurants. If we didn't live in the back, we would have gone out of business."

GATEWAY COMMUNITY: OAKHURST

Just south of the park on California Route 41, Oakhurst lies 29 miles southeast of Mariposa in neighboring Madera County. With a population of more than 13,000, Oakhurst

is much larger than Mariposa, Fish Camp, and El Portal. It also has a broader economic base, including several small computer software companies and two shopping centers; however, the shutdown confirmed that tourism remains Oakhurst's primary industry.

“If the park closes again, we will stand at the gates and...take it over, one way or the other.”

■ **Noreen McDonald, executive director, Eastern Madera County Chamber of Commerce, Oakhurst.** McDonald helped organize a multicounty effort to use county funds to keep the park open. The effort fizzled after the state refused to take part.

“It was devastating. There wasn't a car on the road. The businesses lost 75 percent of their winter revenue. It's definitely still ongoing. I estimate it will take us three years to recover from it. We still get calls every day from people who ask if the park is open.

“We've had only a trickle of our international travelers. They spend an average of \$173 a day compared to \$68 for Americans. And 15 percent of our traffic is international. If the park closes again, we will stand at the gates and...take it over, one way or the other.”

■ **Gilbert Ghyselinck, owner, Best Western Yosemite Gateway Inn, Oakhurst.**
Estimated loss: \$45,000.

“That Christmas and New Year's shutdown was the toughest on us. We're close to full that time of year—90 percent occupancy. I think we barely made 50 percent. It was only ten days, but it was the ten days you want. It's also had some lingering effect. I didn't think there would be. It's been kind of a soft year.”

■ **Judi Lord, owner, Mountain House Restaurant, Oakhurst.**

“We were down about 20 percent at the beginning of the summer as a result of the park closure, and we're now playing catch up. It extended a long time after the park closure. People are very leery of coming to the park. The hangover lasted until April or May. It affected the whole economic system here...”

Joshua Tree National Park

Designated a national park in 1994 after 58 years as a national monument, Joshua Tree preserves the meeting place of two great American deserts. Creosote bushes, ocotillo, and cholla cactus dominate the lower Colorado Desert in the eastern half of the park. The higher, moister, and slightly cooler Mojave Desert in the western half gives rise to the gangly yucca trees, known as Joshua trees, which give the park its name. The 800,000-acre park lies 140 miles east of Los Angeles.

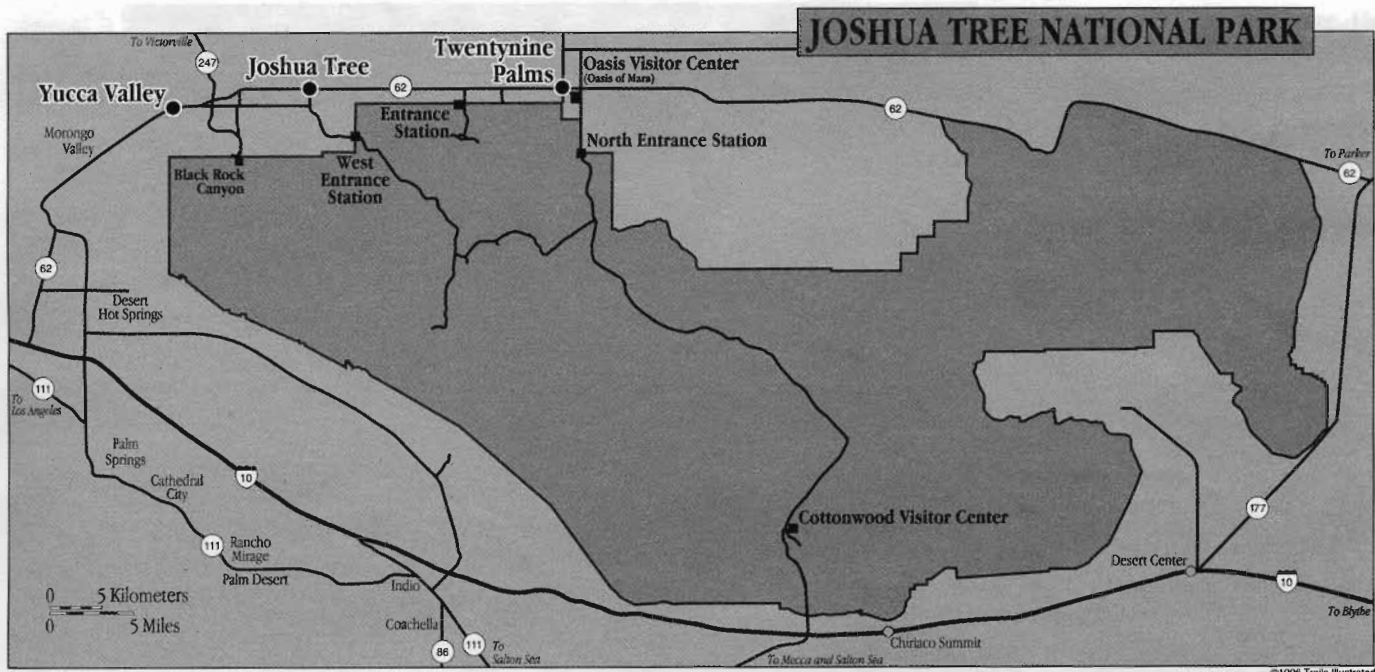
The park had been enjoying an increase in popularity following its “elevation” to national park status late in 1994; however, the shutdowns dramatically reversed the trend. Compared with monthly totals for the previous year, November 1995 visitation was down 9 percent (8,875 visits), and December 1995 was off 48 percent (37,468 visits)¹¹ The total November-December visitation dropoff led to an estimated loss of direct sales of up to \$613,000 among businesses in gateway communities and surrounding areas.¹²

GATEWAY COMMUNITIES: YUCCA VALLEY, JOSHUA TREE, AND TWENTYNINE PALMS

The communities of Yucca Valley, Joshua Tree, and Twentynine Palms are more or less sandwiched between Joshua Tree National Park and the Twentynine Palms Marine Corps Base. Yucca Valley has a population of 13,700, Joshua Tree 4,000, and Twentynine Palms 11,800. The park provides 500 campsites but has no concessions. Tourist accommodations, food, and supplies are all provided by local businesses in these communities.

“It really killed us. They were canceling as fast as they could get on the phone.... We lost half our business.”

■ **Linda Blissmer, Yucca Inn, Yucca Valley.** 74 rooms.
“We lost a lot of revenue, thousands of dollars. People were chewing me out on the phone and I didn't have anything to do with it. It hurt business here for everybody. Even the maids were hurt because their hours were cut back. 1995 was the worst year we've had in years, and '96 is even slower.”



■ Cheryl Tyler, manager, Oasis of Eden Inn, Yucca Valley.

Estimated loss: \$30,000.

"It really killed us. They were canceling as fast as they could get on the phone. People booked for five days. They stayed one night and left. We lost half our business. We couldn't even fill up Christmas Eve. It hit us at the biggest part of our season."

■ Bruce Campbell, manager, Carrows Restaurant, Yucca Valley.

"That first weekend it cost me \$3,000 in gross sales. After that, business was down but I don't have any way of knowing how much. We had quite a few disappointed people from out of state and out of the country, including one group from Australia."

■ Neal Hoogenduijk, owner, High Desert Motel, Joshua Tree.

Estimated loss: \$8,000.

"It was disastrous for us. We had just bought the place. Business dropped 30 percent. The name Joshua Tree National Park has helped us a lot. We're now on the touring plans. A lot of [foreign tourists] land in LA. This is the first stop."

■ Jane Smith, owner, Twentynine Palms Inn. The 30-acre oasis that gave the city its name has been family-owned since 1928.

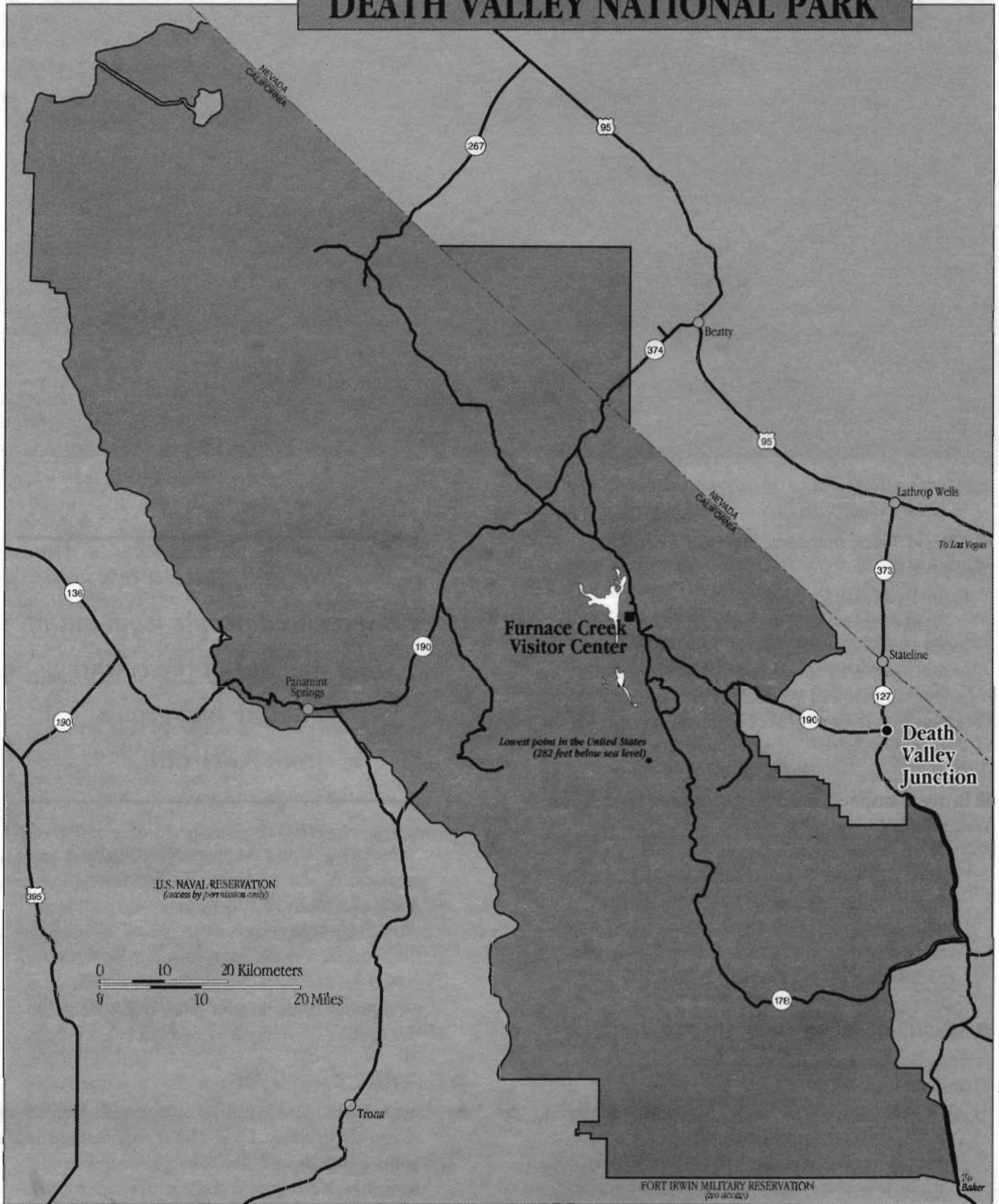
"We had quite a few disappointed people from out of state and out of the country, including one group from Australia."

"It had a big impact. Many people called and canceled. We did our best to develop alternate desert excursions. Mostly it was embarrassing when the foreign visitors came. We all felt it was ridiculous. It was not hospitable. For the foreign visitor, it was especially unfortunate. For six months afterward, we got calls asking if the park was open."

■ Jan Peters, Roughley Manor, Twentynine Palms. The five-bedroom bed and breakfast sits on a 25-acre ranch.

"Yes, it did affect us. I had a lot of cancellations. That's a time of year [the holidays] when people really like to come up here. People [who] come to the area come here because of Joshua Tree. It was difficult for me because I was new. It's that first five years that make or break a business..."

DEATH VALLEY NATIONAL PARK



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Death Valley National Park

The 3.3-million-acre Death Valley National Park is a land of extremes. The 11,049 foot Telescope Peak overlooks Badwater, which, at 282 feet below sea level, is the lowest point in the Western Hemisphere. Temperatures normally top 100 degrees Fahrenheit during all but four months of the year (November through February). Rain is most plentiful in February, when the valley receives an average one-third of an inch. Proclaimed a national monument in 1933, the area was “elevated” to national park status in 1994.

Hardest hit during the shutdowns were the privately owned businesses *within* the sprawling 140-mile-long park. Some of the motels on the fringe of the park had a temporary one-day boost when the park’s 1,516 campsites were closed and people left. Decreases in overnight visitation led to an estimated loss of up to \$816,000 in direct sales.¹³ People who normally visit the park for the holidays stayed away.

■ **Bonnie Preston, general manager, Stovepipe Wells Village, Death Valley National Park.** The private concessions operation, run by Amfac Resorts, includes 83 rooms, a restaurant, bar, store, gift shop, and service station.

Impact: *December income was down \$47,000 from the previous year.*

“It hurt. They closed us on the 22nd of December and they let us open on the 29th. By that time, people were booked somewhere else. Our business was nil all that week and about 50 percent for New Year’s.”

■ **Jerry Graham, owner, Panamint Springs Resort, Death Valley National Park.** The resort covers 40 acres of privately owned land inside the park and includes a 14-unit motel, restaurant, RV park, camping, fuel, and a gift shop.

“At first we had a temporary increase in our business in the campground and the motel... As the days wore on, it started to impact us. People started to stay away.

“In the long term, people just...wrote off the national park. Eighty-five percent of our business is international travelers. All these people had to go on were the horror stories in the European newspapers. That created a long-term bad taste. I think it had a bigger impact than most people give it credit for. As far as the financial impact on the park, park visitorship is down. My customer count is down.”

■ **Lora Novak, manager, Amargosa Opera House, Death Valley Junction.** The opera house includes 15 overnight rooms, and showcases ballet, pantomime, and comedy performances.

“We had a bunch of very unhappy campers out here the first time. We were right on their escape trajectory. They just left the area. It was a mass exodus. We had a few hundred stop in here and complain... A lot of them said they won’t come back. I’m sure that it’s going to have a residual effect. I think it was a very bad move, tourist-wise.”

“We had a bunch of very unhappy campers out here. We had a few hundred stop in here and complain. A lot of them said they won’t come back. I think it was a very bad move, tourist-wise.”



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South Florida

Of the three regions we investigated, anger over the shutdown was strongest among people in south Florida. The peak tourist season was just getting started when the parks were shut down, and many businesses were pushed to the brink. The Park Service's closing of waters in Florida Bay that lie inside the Everglades National Park boundary was extremely unpopular and helped to compound this frustration. The closing of Dry Tortugas National Park primarily affected boat and float plane operators in Key West who transport people out to the island park.

Everglades National Park

Everglades National Park was established in 1947 to preserve South Florida's famed "River of Grass." Within its 1.5 million acres are massive fresh and saltwater wetlands, the largest continuous stand of sawgrass prairie in North America, the largest designated wilderness east of the Rockies, the largest mangrove ecosystem in the Western Hemisphere, and a number of rare and endangered species, including the Florida Panther. The park draws more than 1 million tourists a year to South Florida from around the world. According to a 1995 study prepared by two south Florida universities, visitors to Everglades National Park generated an estimated \$83.2 million in total (direct and indirect) sales in 1994, supporting 3,444 jobs throughout the south Florida economy.¹⁴

The two federal government shutdowns resulted in a 30-percent dropoff in November-December park visitation. More than 40,000 fewer people visited the park in November and December 1995 than during the same time period in 1994.¹⁵ The result was an estimated decrease in direct sales of up to \$1.4 million in and around the park, including the communities of Florida City, Homestead, Everglades City, and surrounding areas.¹⁶

GATEWAY COMMUNITIES: FLORIDA CITY, HOMESTEAD

Together, Florida City and Homestead serve as the eastern gateway to Everglades National Park. Florida City has a population of 5,800, Homestead 26,800. Florida City is the last stop for visitors heading to the Florida Keys. Virtually everyone passing through these two cities is headed for either the Everglades or the Keys.

■ **Robert Moehling, owner, Robert Is Here, just outside Florida City.** The outdoor fresh fruit and vegetable

stand is a landmark for tourists visiting the park. Now 43, Moehling began selling fruit at the crossroads after school when he was seven. On the first day, nobody stopped to buy anything. On day two, his father put out a sign, "Robert is Here." Robert has been in business ever since. Sales

dropped 80 percent during the shutdown. *"It killed us. There was just nobody here. We always realized [we depended on tourists], but when the park closed, it demonstrated it real well. It's a matter of turning the water off and on. It was the first of March before business picked up."*

■ **Thomas Gatley, Coral Roc Motel, Florida City.** Gatley has owned the 17-unit motel since 1988. Business was off

20 to 25 percent during the shutdown. Estimated loss: \$6,630.

"We had lots of cancellations. Some people showed up and after one day, they took off. You can't charge them. It wasn't their fault the park closed. It didn't put us out of business. But it hurt us..."

■ **Steve Ballard, Don's Bait & Tackle, U.S. 1, Homestead.**

Estimated Loss: Live bait sales dropped to \$20,500, from \$52,500 the year before (a loss of \$30,000). Don's suffered a 62 percent drop in business during a key ten-day period surrounding Christmas and New Year's.

"It was a real killer. Historically, it is the biggest boating week of the year. Last year was the slowest ten-day period in the six years I've owned the business. Boaters are the ones that really spend the money on beer, tackle and ice. Business was way down. It was a bust."

■ **Flamingo Lodge, Marina and Outpost Lodge, Everglades National Park.** The resort is located 38 miles inside the park, on the southern tip of the Florida mainland. Owned by TW Recreation Services, the 127-room lodge is the park's largest concessions operation. Of its 165 employees, 135 went without pay during the shutdowns.

Estimated loss: \$600,000.

"It was a big disservice to the public.... Most of the visits were planned well in advance. To the local community [as well], they really depend on the park to be open."

—Steve Tedder, vice president, national parks operations, TW Recreational Services.

GATEWAY COMMUNITIES: EVERGLADES CITY/ CHOKOLOSKEE ISLAND

The western water entrance to the park, Everglades City was the original seat for Collier County and was a major center for cypress logging until Hurricane Donna swept through in 1960. The town's population is roughly 500 in the summer and more than 3,000 in winter. Chokoloskee Island, located a few miles south of Everglades City, is connected to the mainland by a causeway built in the mid-1950s.

■ **Sammy Hamilton, owner, Everglades National Park Boat Tours, Canoe Rentals and Gift Shop, Everglades City.** Hamilton is also the mayor of Everglades City. His five boats carry people through the mangrove wilderness to see bald eagles, manatees, osprey, and dolphins.

Estimated loss: more than \$250,000.

"All summer we go backwards. Christmas rush, you make your money. That was the first time in 38 years we lost the Christmas rush. That's something you're not ever going to get back. All of a sudden, we're told: 'Everglades City, you've got to shut down.' It's one of the most disgusting things that happened in this area in a long time... Just the name Everglades National Park means millions to this little city. The national park has really done a lot for this town. The park is what's going to save it."

■ **Kenny Brown, manager, Outdoor Resorts of America, Chokoloskee Island.**

Brown's grandfather started a tackle shop on the island in the 1930s. Brown started renting boats when he was a boy. Today, he manages a highly rated condo RV resort with 283 sites, 3 swimming pools, lighted tennis courts, and a waterfront. He also rents canoes and leads eco-tours. For Brown, the shutdown's impact didn't end on January 6 when

the park reopened. Besides the RV rental loss, Brown also lost about \$1,000 a week because boaters didn't stock up on bait, ice, food, and tackle.

Estimated loss: \$25,000.

"They sent all these people on their way. That hurt. It would have hurt anybody. I had a lot of Europeans who were terribly disappointed. They flew into Orlando, and two or three days later the park closed. You talk about crying. That ruined their vacation."

"It had a tremendous impact on our economy. I never realized what the park tour concession meant economy-wise. We don't have a whole lot to pull from around here. The tourists...keep this place going."

■ **Cecil Oglesby, councilman, Everglades City.** Oglesby is a former president of the local chamber of commerce and a semi-retired fishing guide. In 1958 he appeared in the movie "Wind Across the Everglades," starring Burl Ives, Gypsy Rose Lee, and Christopher Plummer.

"It had a tremendous impact on our economy. I never realized what the park tour concession meant economy-wise. It filters down into the restaurants, the boat tours, the guide boats. With that closure, it was really panicky around here. We did a lot of praying about this thing at my church. We don't have a whole lot to pull from around here....The tourists are the people that keep this place going..."

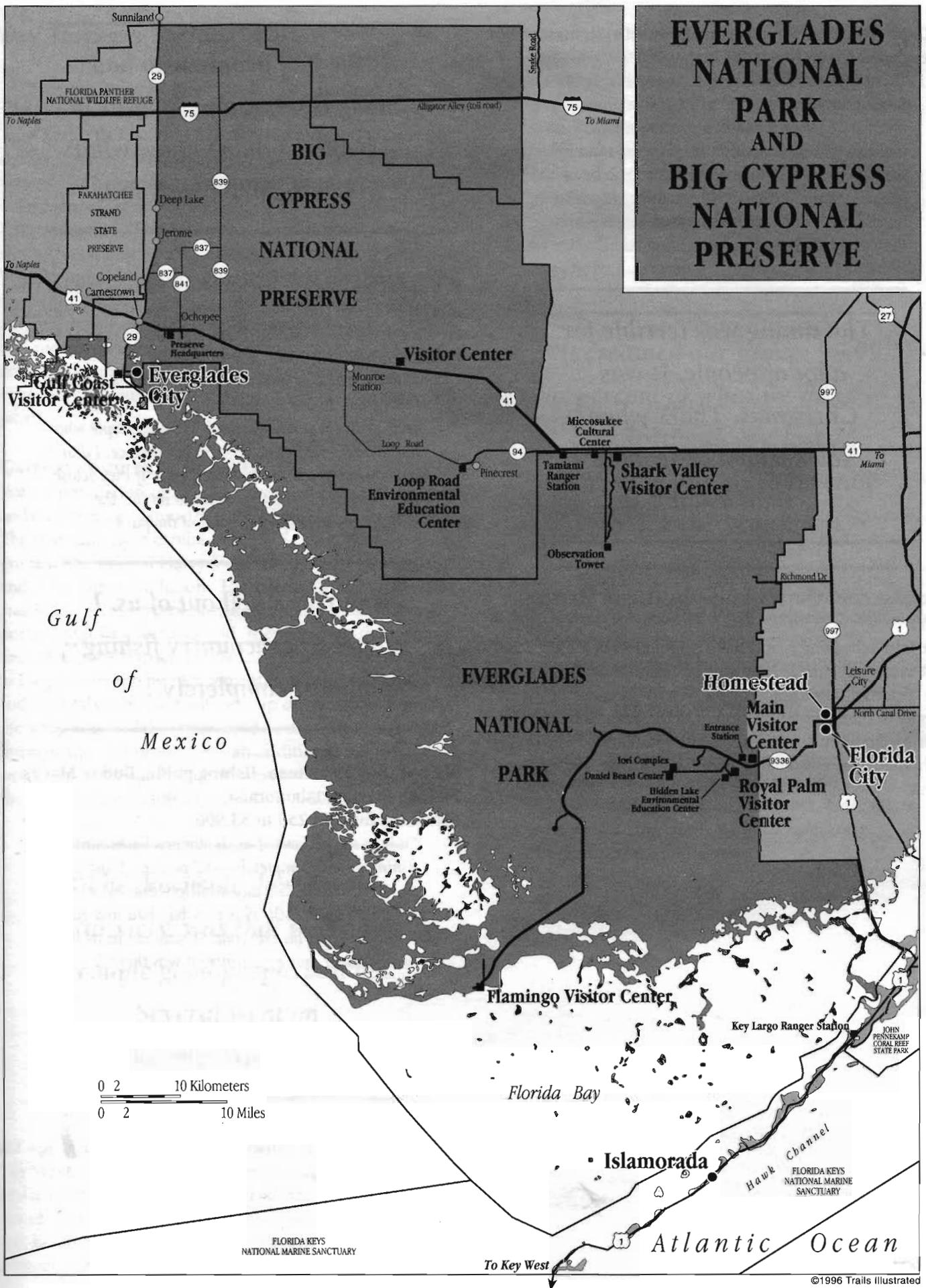
■ **Dave Daffin, Everglades Oar House Restaurant, Everglades City.**

A 20-year resident of Everglades City, Daffin opened the Oar House in 1989.

Impact: Business was down 75 percent.

"The public got the impression that Everglades City was closed down. Tourists quit coming. I usually run 500 to 600 people through here. I was doing 125."

EVERGLADES NATIONAL PARK AND BIG CYPRESS NATIONAL PRESERVE



■ Capt. Tim Brady, fishing guide and firefighter, Everglades City.

"I lost 10 to 12 trips during the two closures. At \$350 a day, that's \$3,500 to \$4,200 in gross revenue lost. I do 80 to 90 percent of my business in the park. Snook, redfish, tarpon, and trout are the big four. The timing was terrible for a lot of people. It was Christmas. I have three kids. It's a tough time. That's when you spend a little more than usual. It did get real quiet around here."

"The timing was terrible for a lot of people. It was Christmas. That's when you spend a little more than usual."

GATEWAY COMMUNITY: ISLAMORADA (UPPER MATECUMBE KEY)

The four-mile-long island has a population of 1,220, 75 of whom are full-time fishing guides. Islamorada is known as the "Sportfishing Capital of the World" because of the diversity of the fisheries offshore. On the ocean side are blue marlin. Between the Keys and the mainland, Florida Bay is home to an abundance of snook, tarpon, redfish, and trout.

"We had people who had made reservations months in advance. I didn't know what to tell them. Nobody did."

■ Capt. Hank Brown, backcountry fishing guide, Islamorada. One of the town's legendary backcountry guides, Brown once took President Bush and his entourage fishing. Estimated loss: \$5,000.

"I think it had an effect on everyone in business on this island. In our business, there's no way to recover it. I was booked solid. We had people who had made reservations months in advance. I didn't know what to tell them. Nobody did. If they [close the park] again, they will have to recruit the entire navy to keep guides out of the park."

"It hurt the hell out of us. It stopped backcountry fishing almost completely...."

■ Capt. Bob Reineman, fishing guide, Bud n' Mary's Fishing Marina, Islamorada.

Estimated loss: \$3,250 to \$3,900.

"It hurt the hell out of us. It stopped backcountry fishing almost completely—80 percent. I lost 10 to 12 trips at \$325 a day. Multiply that by 50 to 60 guides [\$16,250]. Plus they buy bait and gas. It had an effect on everyone. It may not be as big or as evident, but I guarantee it was there."

Dry Tortugas National Park

Seventy miles off Key West lies Dry Tortugas National Park, a remote cluster of coral islands discovered by Ponce de Leon in 1513. Rich in bird and marine life, the park covers 64,657 acres, including its surrounding waters. The park's main attraction is Fort Jefferson, the largest masonry fort in the Western hemisphere. The fort was built in the mid-19th century to protect ocean-bound trade ships and later served as a Union prison during the Civil War. Abandoned by the Army in 1874, the islands became a wildlife refuge in 1908, a national monument in 1935, and a national park in 1992. According to a 1995 study that measured the economic impact of south Florida's national parks and public lands, visitors to Dry Tortugas generated an estimated \$10.5 million in 1994, supporting 315 jobs¹⁷.

GATEWAY COMMUNITY: KEY WEST

With a population of 24,832, Key West claims more bars and churches per capita than anywhere else in the country. The one-time cigar capital of the U.S., Key West has been home to the likes of Harry S. Truman, Ernest Hemingway, and John James Audubon. The island's professional boat and seaplane operators provide the only means of transportation to Dry Tortugas and, therefore, felt the brunt of the shutdown's impact. Before the closure, 1995 visitation to the park was up by 115 percent. Visitation in November and December, by contrast, was up only slightly from the previous year. Had the initial trend continued uninterrupted through the end of the year, an additional 3,000 visitors would have traveled from Key West to Dry Tortugas.¹⁸ The shutdown caused a loss of up to \$260,000 in direct sales.¹⁹

“The downside, besides the anxiety, was that we had a couple good people bail out. Several went on unemployment.”

■ **Capt. Alan G. “Jerry” Hill, owner, The Yankee Fleet, Key West.** The Fleet is a 98-passenger high-speed boat that ferries tourists to Dry Tortugas. Hill has offered overnight charter trips to the islands since the mid-1970s. Two years ago, he borrowed \$190,000 to outfit one of his boats with a bigger engine to make the trip in one day.

Estimated loss: a minimum of \$68,250.

“We start to build around Thanksgiving, which coincided with the first shutdown. When they first reopened, we did terribly. We reopened, got going good, and then they shut us down again...”

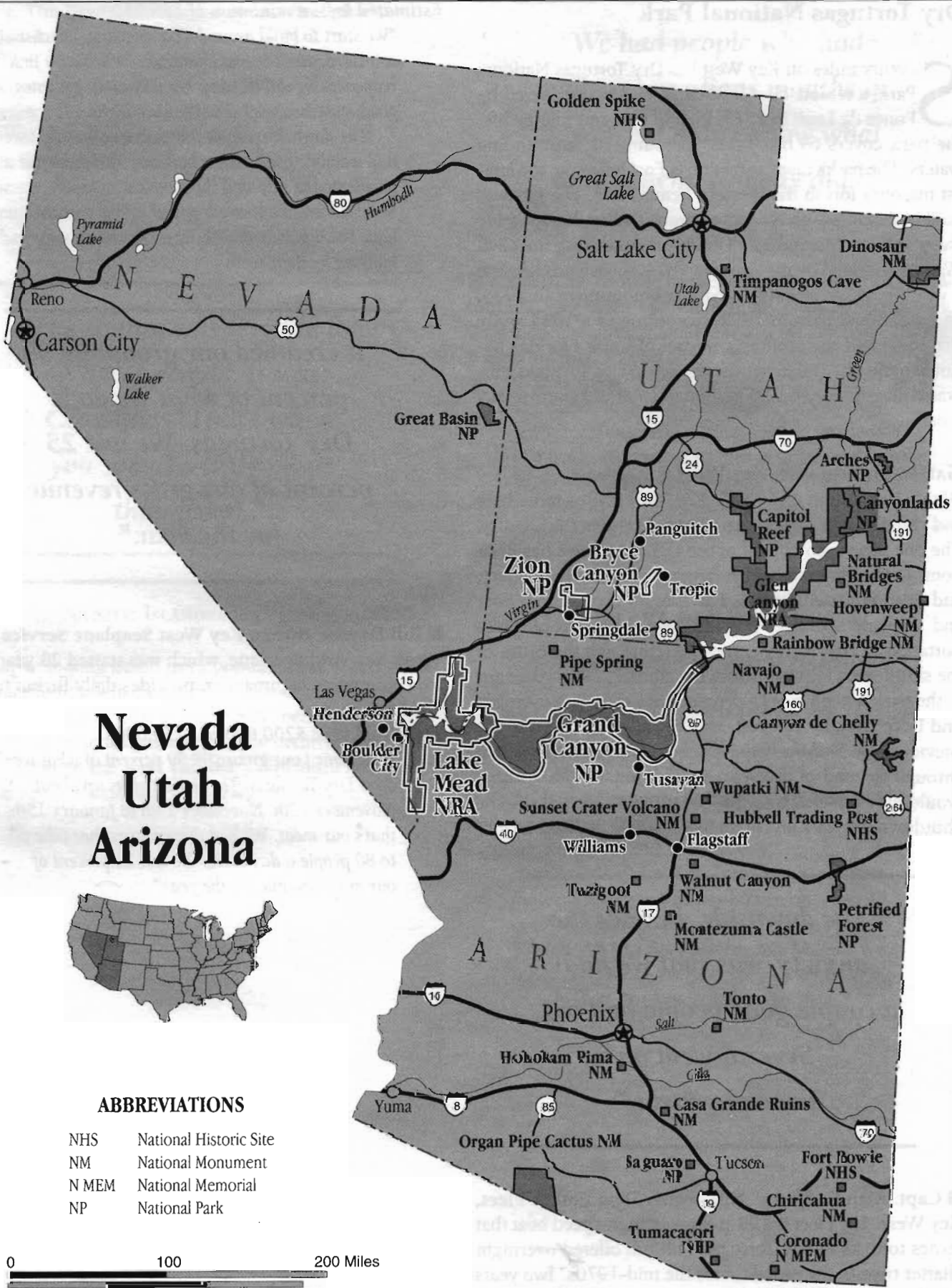
“The downside, besides the anxiety, was that we had a couple good people bail out. There are five people on the ship and three others on land. Several went on unemployment. Others would have but it was so day-to-day. Everybody was hanging by their teeth.”

“It creamed our group: 99.99 percent of what we do is Dry Tortugas. We lost 25 percent of our gross revenue for the year.”

■ **Bill Dayner, owner, Key West Seaplane Service, Key West.** Key West Seaplane, which was started 23 years ago by a submarine commander, provides daily flights to Dry Tortugas.

Estimated loss: \$200,000 to \$250,000.

“It creamed our group: 99.99 percent of what we do is Dry Tortugas. The season picks up about November 15th. November 15th to January 15th, that's our meat. We had three planes that take 60 to 80 people a day there. We lost 25 percent of our gross revenue for the year.”



The Colorado Plateau

National parks in much of the Colorado Plateau region of Nevada, Arizona, and Utah were gearing down for the winter off-season when the first shutdown occurred in November. Thanksgiving and Christmas—seen as the last chances for businesses to make money to carry them through the off-season—were more or less ruined by the shutdowns. This was especially true in Zion and Bryce Canyon national parks in Utah. The effect on businesses in and around Grand Canyon National Park in Arizona was more severe, despite the partial reopening of the canyon's popular South Rim with state funds. Normally, more than 300,000 people visit the Grand Canyon in November and December. During the same period, more than a million people typically visit Lake Mead National Recreation Area in Nevada. Businesses providing goods and services to boaters, fishermen, and water sport enthusiasts were especially hurt by the closure of the lake.

Grand Canyon National Park

At certain places within the 1.2-million-acre Grand Canyon National Park, the awe-inspiring canyon reaches a depth of over one mile and a width of more than 18 miles. At the bottom, where temperatures reach 115 degrees Fahrenheit in the summer, the Colorado River carves through rock that is up to 1.7 billion years old. People from all over the world visit the park to take in the hundred-mile views and see the layers of pink and brown sandstone and granite. First set aside as a forest reserve in 1893, the area was established as a national park in 1919.

Although the park's peak month for visitation is July—with roughly 700,000 visitors in July alone—the park continues to attract more than 150,000 visitors a month during the winter. That fact wasn't lost on Arizona Governor Fife Symington, who led National Guard troops to the park during the first shutdown in November to emphasize the point that the park is an economic engine for northern Arizona. An agreement between the state of Arizona and the federal government reopened a portion of the heavily visited South Rim during the second 21-day shutdown over the Christmas and New Year's holidays.

Despite the reopening, concessions operations within the park lost hundreds of thousands of dollars, and gateway cities such as Williams and Flagstaff were seriously affected. Overall, November-December visitation to the park was down 10.8 percent because of the shutdowns. Some 37,000 fewer people visited the park than during the same period

in 1994. This sharp decline followed a ten-month period during which visitation was up 6 percent from the previous year.²⁰ The loss of visitors led to a decline in direct sales of up to \$5.6 million among concessions operations in the park and businesses in surrounding communities.²¹

■ **William Bohannon, general manager, Grand Canyon National Park Lodges.** This concessioner operates all the

hotels and restaurants on the South Rim, the mule rides, and the Phantom Ranch at the canyon floor.

Estimated loss: several hundred thousand dollars.

"At that time of year, we run close to 500 rooms a day. We were gearing up for Thanksgiving. We kept all [900] employees on staff. We had to keep them. Up here there's no employee market. They come here from other areas. We were losing revenue, but we weren't cutting the payroll. We were bleeding."

"We kept all [900] employees on staff. We were losing revenue, but we weren't cutting the payroll."

GATEWAY COMMUNITY: FLAGSTAFF

Situated 90 miles south of the canyon on U.S. Route 180, Flagstaff is a railroad, university, and tourist town. Flagstaff's population stands at 55,000 people. Wagon trains, the Santa Fe Railroad, U.S. Route 66, and now two interstates have brought successive waves of travelers through town. The area is rich in Native American culture stretching back to the pre-Columbian Anasazi and Sinagua tribes. Today, Navajo, Hopi, Havasupai, Hualapai, and Paiute Indians still populate the surrounding regions.

■ **Karen Vollmer, co-owner, Navajo-Hopi Tours, Inc., Flagstaff.** Vollmer's company provides sightseeing tours and charter rentals and has run a bus daily to the canyon since 1928.

"Our tour counts plummeted 80 percent. We were running buses empty... Normally they are full; instead there were just two or three people. The charters were just canceled. Even though the park reopened, the fear that the park was going to close down caused visitation to drop. We saw a very slow first quarter."

■ **Tim Kennedy, general manager, Woodlands Plaza Hotel, Flagstaff.** Kennedy is also president of the Flagstaff Innkeepers Association.

"We got \$42,000 worth of cancellations in the first five days: five or six bus tours. It caused the whole area to be soft for the rest of the year in tourism and occupancy."

"Even though the park reopened, the fear that the park was going to close down caused visitation to drop."

GATEWAY COMMUNITY: TUSAYAN

The town of 350 residents has sprung up one mile south of the South Rim entrance to Grand Canyon National Park. Tusayan is a short strip of hotels, restaurants, and gift and tour shops backed by mobile home parks and apartments for employees. Year-round residents use the grocery store, schools, banks, post office, and medical clinic in Grand Canyon Village within the park.

■ **Barbara Fischer, front desk manager, Quality Inn, Tusayan.** Estimated loss: \$1,890 to \$6,300.

"I told people not to come. Once people were here, we dealt with them. They drove along Highway 64. Instead of staying two nights, they stayed one."

■ **Don Bremner, co-owner, South Rim Travel, Tusayan.** Estimated loss: \$6,000 to \$7,000 in refunded hotel reservations plus an additional \$4,000 in tours.

"The governor's action was great theater... Most of us were on the governor's side, but the superintendent is our friend. Had they done this in the summer, it would have been different. Business is

times ten in the summer. It made our winter tough. But we survived."

GATEWAY COMMUNITY: WILLIAMS

Founded in 1880, this community of 2,700 is named after Old Bill Williams, a famous trapper, scout, and mountain man whose statue stands in the city's west end. At an elevation of 6,770 feet, Williams is located within Kaibab National Forest, 60 miles directly south of the Grand Canyon on Arizona Route 64. The city's two main streets are lined with dozens of motels and restaurants that owe their livelihood to the park.

■ **Thomas Kelley, executive director, Williams-Grand Canyon Chamber of Commerce, Williams.**

"This town is about 90-some percent dependent on the Grand Canyon. Williams has 1,300 hotel rooms and a dozen restaurants. At the time of the closure, business dropped 75 percent. There's a feeling that there's been long-term damage, too.... Summer is [down] 30 to 40 percent."

■ **Marshal Bryant, president, Grand Canyon Railway, Williams.** The railway revived passenger train service to the canyon in 1989 after a 21-year absence. Three months before the shutdown, the company opened an 89-room hotel in Williams next to the train depot.

Estimated loss: the railway and hotel lost several hundred thousand dollars.

"It certainly did have a big impact... We went from 85 to 90 percent occupancy the night before the closure to 8 percent the next night. That obviously was a big impact. Accounting and reservations employees were working overtime. Accounting was giving people back their money instead of taking it in..."

■ **Raj Patel, manager, Park Inn International, Williams.**

"We are normally 50 percent full then; we were 20 percent full instead. People were hanging out to see if the park would reopen. There are more foreigners that time of year. They come to find the different beauty of the canyon in the winter... If there wasn't this tourist traffic, all these hotels and motels would have to go."

■ **Doris Uebel, waitress for 13 years, Parker House and Hoffman House, Williams.**

"From a waitress' point of view, it affected us big time and it hasn't bounced back very well. We still have a lot of people who ask if the park is open... I think Williams in general suffered a lot."

Lake Mead National Recreation Area

The 1.5-million-acre Lake Mead National Recreation Area straddles the Nevada-Arizona border along the Colorado River, less than 30 miles from Las Vegas. The recreation area is actually made up of two lakes. The 110-mile-long Lake Mead was created when the Hoover Dam was completed in 1935. Downstream, the 67-mile-long Lake Mojave took shape in 1953 with the completion of Davis Dam. Together, they draw up to 10 million people a year, making Lake Mead National Recreation Area one of the most heavily visited national park units. Power boaters, jet skiers, water skiers, anglers, and divers frequent the two desert lakes, where temperatures can reach 120 degrees Fahrenheit in the summer and waters are up to 500 feet deep.

Lake Mead's heavy visitation is largely due to its proximity to Las Vegas. Because of the shutdowns, however, December visitation was down 16 percent (more than 76,700 visits) from December 1994.²² This decrease in visitation led to a loss of up to \$3 million dollars in direct tourism sales.²³ Gateway towns such as Henderson and Boulder City were among the areas directly affected.

GATEWAY COMMUNITY: BOULDER CITY

Once a tent city for Hoover Dam builders in the 1930s, Boulder City today is home to more than 12,500 people. Power boat storage, repair shops, dive shops, sailing shops, motels, and restaurants dominate the city's downtown.

■ **Vaughn Piper, manufacturer, Vogue Water Skis, Vogue Marine Center, Boulder City.** Piper runs a marine products store and a 200-boat storage yard. The store caters to anglers and jet skiers.

"It stopped it. They just stopped it totally. The walk-in traffic, it killed it. Normally in November, we average 25 to 30 people a day getting their boats. In December, 15 a day."

■ **Dave Cheney, A&M Marine, Boulder City.** A&M has been in business since 1975. It is one of the largest boat repair businesses in the area.

"It affected us quite a bit. We couldn't pull out the boats for major repairs. November, December, and January are big sales times for major repairs.... [The shutdowns] put us behind by 30 to 45 days. We did small-time, walk-in tune-ups instead of major repairs, like bottom repairs, blister repairs. Bottom repairing costs \$7,000 to \$8,000—we had a lot of angry customers...."

GATEWAY COMMUNITY: HENDERSON

West of Lake Mead National Recreation Area, along U.S. Route 93, is the town of Henderson, just over ten miles northeast of Las Vegas. Many of Lake Mead's visitors stop in Henderson on their way from Las Vegas to the recreation area.

"The lake is our business. When the lake closes, it shuts down our business. Loss was in the thousands."

■ **Jim Goff, retired police chief, fishing guide since 1982, Henderson.**

Estimated loss: \$3,000.

"The first week they closed down, I had charters booked every day. I lost \$1,200. It was right in the heart of our best season. I couldn't accept any charters. Everyone was in limbo. There's no way to catch up. You just have to bite the bullet."

■ **Tina Yost-Spencer, general manager, instructor, American Cactus Divers, Henderson.** American Cactus Divers certifies divers, rents scuba equipment, and leads tours.

"The lake is our business. When the lake closes, it shuts down our business. Loss was in the thousands. It's a five-year-old family business. We do it because we love it. We thoroughly enjoy it...."

■ **William "Scotty" Scott, Sunset Bait & Tackle, Henderson.** The shop provides bait, drinks, snacks, and gas for shoreline and boat anglers.

"We've had some lean winters but not like that. You might as well shut down for three months; it had the same effect. Fishing is always fair. That time of year, it can be good or it can be in-between. People didn't have the chance to find out."

Zion National Park

The area that is now Zion National Park was proclaimed a national monument in 1909 and was established as a national park in 1919. The park's 146,560 acres of colorful canyons and mesas are the product of ancient volcanoes, rock faults, wind erosion, and 13 million years of relentless carving by the various forks of the Virgin River. The narrow river cuts 3,000 feet deep within the canyon as it descends from the plateau country in the northeast to the desert downstream.

Zion actually experienced heavier than normal visitation in late 1995, in spite of the two shutdowns. The amount of revenue that would have been brought in were it not for the shutdowns will never be known. Thanksgiving and the Christmas/New Year's holidays are seen as the last two chances for businesses and employees to store up money before they begin drawing on savings to get through the lean first quarter. The November shutdown affected Thanksgiving sales considerably. The second shutdown ruined Christmas/New Year's business.

■ **John Shafer, general manager, Zion Lodge, Zion National Park.** The private concessioner has 121 rooms.

"It had a very negative impact on sales. December 18 to January 5 is our prime selling season; 95 percent is advanced bookings. Thanksgiving weekend, we're normally full. For Thanksgiving, we feed 1,300 normally. We only served 800. Even though the park reopened, everybody had made other plans..."

GATEWAY COMMUNITY: SPRINGDALE

This town of 350 people at the park's south entrance was settled by Mormons from Salt Lake City during the Civil War. The original settlers grew cotton to replace eastern supplies that were blocked by the war. Tobacco, fruit, and vegetables were grown along the Virgin River on the canyon floor, while cattle and sheep grazed the upland plateau. Today tourism provides the town's livelihood, as evidenced by the tiny community's 300 hotel rooms.

■ **Phillip Bimstein, mayor, Springdale.**

"The population of the town is 350. But with 300 hotel rooms and 150 campsites, as a psychological thing, we're a town of tourists. It hurt. Hotels were getting cancellations. Almost all of the businesses are family-owned and locally owned. So it hurt people, not corporations. There was less work for those people. One of the saddest things was many of the people in town had stories of an encounter

with tourists who had come from [far] away. A lot of people witnessed some sad faces."

■ **Chris Holmstead, owner, Oscar's Cafe & Deli, Springdale.**

Estimated loss: \$10,000.

"That's the time of year people are trying to get money to get through the winter. For the waiters, the only reason a lot of them stay here for the winter is those weeks: Thanksgiving through Christmas and New Year's. It wiped out their whole winter base. The Christmas shutdown hurt the most. That's the only busy time in the winter. Instead of pulling in \$600 a day, it was more like \$120 to \$150. That one cost a lot. I had to use \$5,000 of savings at the end of January to pay bills. I usually take six weeks off in January and February and go to Mexico. I hire two people to run the place. Instead, I laid them off and worked myself. No vacation."

■ **Barbara Rhodes, manager, Best Western Driftwood Lodge, Springdale.** The 47-room lodge has been family-owned since 1958.

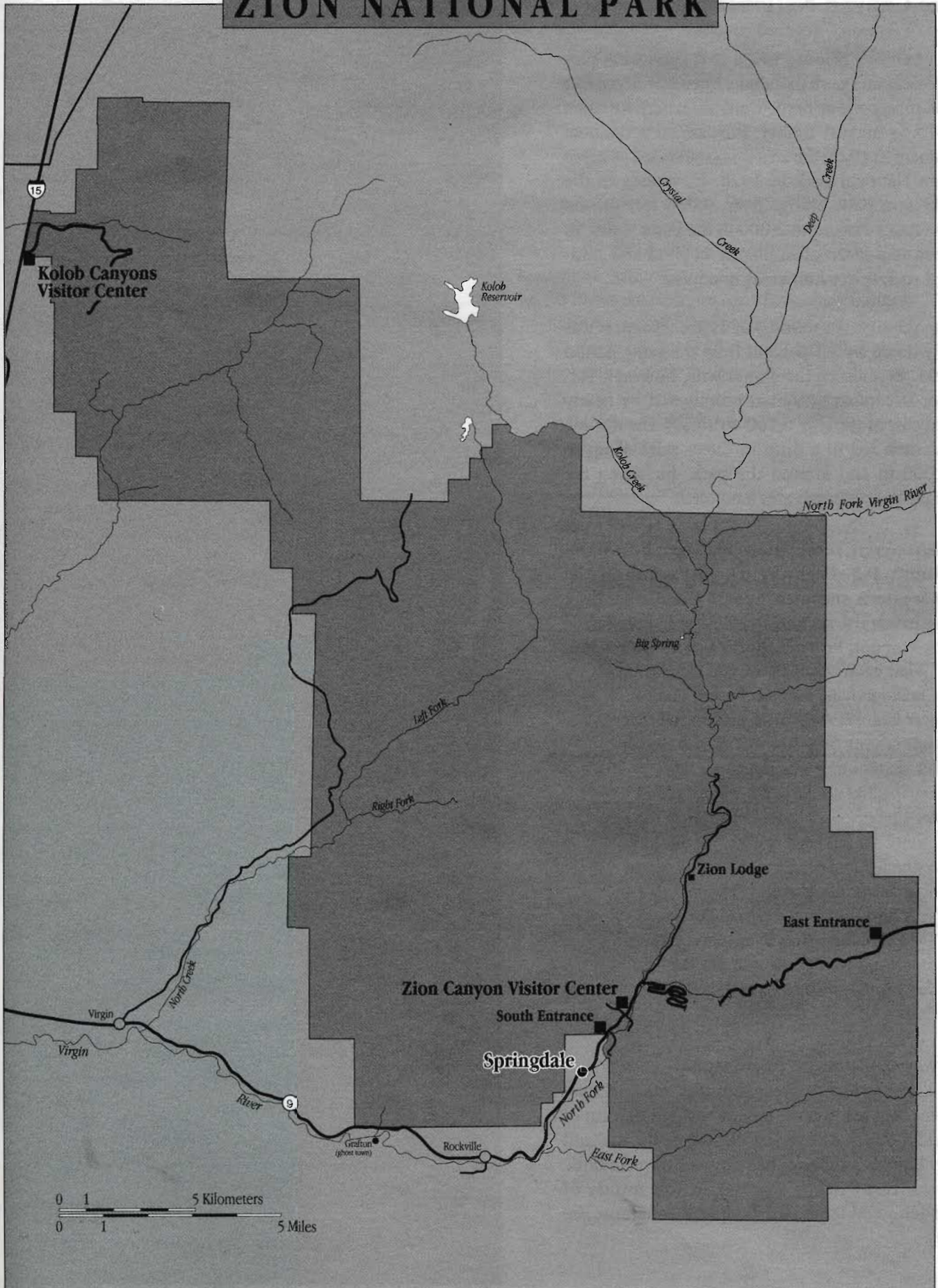
"It was horrible. [The park] reopened before Thanksgiving but not in time. Business was down 50 percent. Thanksgiving and Christmas is a busy time for us. It is our only busy time in the winter. After the New Year's holiday, it's pretty dead. There were a lot of unhappy people. European travelers...were already committed, not like people popping up from California. We had the worst November and December for years as far as sales and occupancy."

■ **Brett Ferguson, manager, Zion Canyon Cinemax Theatre, Springdale.** Tourists pay \$7 to see a 37-minute film about the park. About 150 people a day typically attend during the off-season winter months.

"The November shutdown didn't really affect us at all. December, we were down about 14 percent for the month. Typically we've been up 10 to 15 percent each month. So to us that's like we're down 25 percent. We felt that it rippled into January and February as well. People still thought the park was closed."

"...it hurt people, not corporations."

ZION NATIONAL PARK



Bryce Canyon National Park

A hell of a place to lose a cow," was what pioneer and park namesake Ebenezer Bryce had to say about Bryce Canyon, where he came in 1875 to harvest timber. Proclaimed a national monument in 1923, the area was established as Bryce Canyon National Park in 1928. Elevations in the 36,000-acre park plunge from 9,000 feet on the Paunsaugunt Plateau to 2,000 in the Paria Valley. In between is a maze of brilliantly colored and odd-shaped rock spires known as hoodoos.

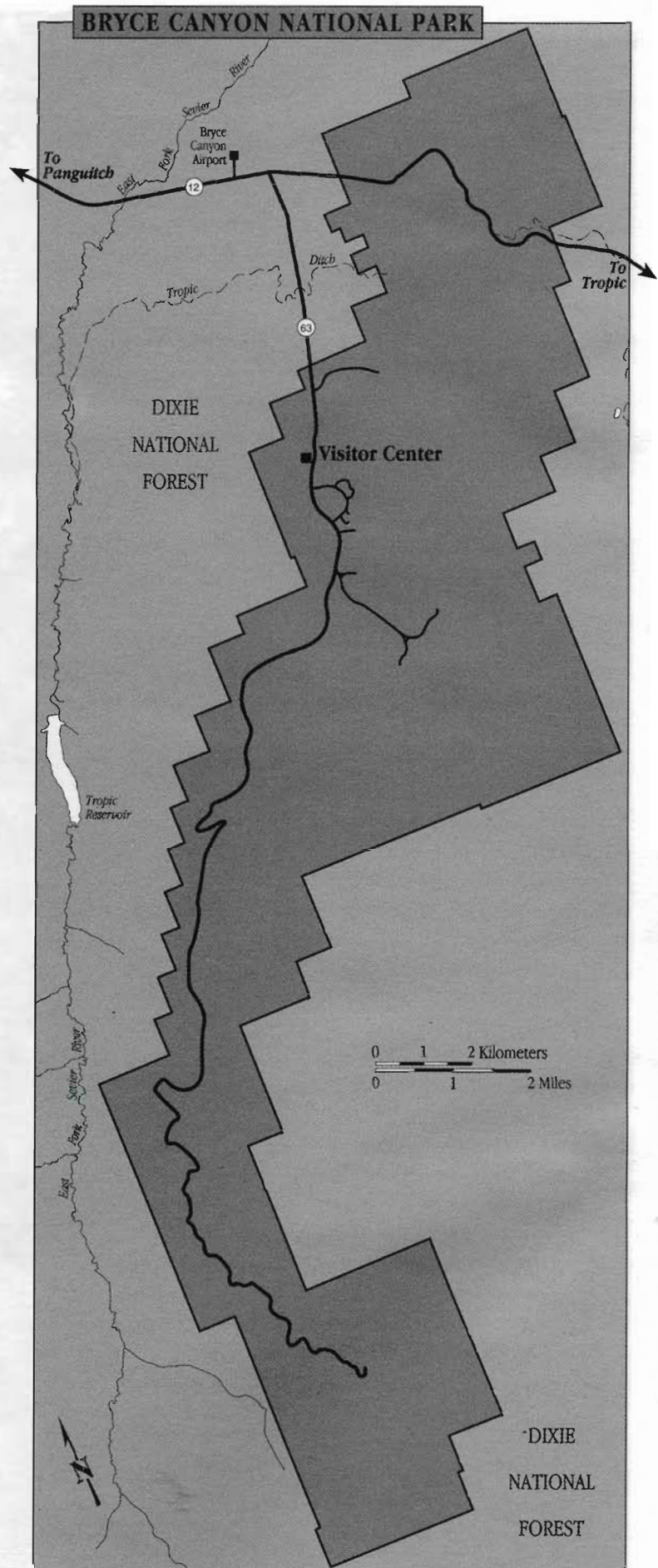
During the first ten months of 1995, visitation was already down by 2.7 percent from the same period in 1994. Because of the shutdowns, however, November-December visitation plummeted by nearly 20 percent, or roughly 6,700 visitors.²⁴ The decline in visitation led to a drop in direct sales of up to \$119,000 in and around the park, including the communities of Tropic and Panguitch.²⁵

■ **Robert Syrett, reservations manager, Best Western Ruby's Inn, Highway 63, just south of the park's western entrance.** Syrett's grandfather built a lodge inside the park in 1916. After Union Pacific bought him out, he built the 369-room Ruby's Inn.

"What made it so bad, we had the best Christmas hotel business booked that we ever had. We're 85 to 90 percent full that time of year, only 30 to 40 percent during the shutdown. It was ridiculous. We employ 200 people in the winter, 400 in the summer, the biggest employer in the county. We cut back to 100.... If this had continued into March and April, it would have been catastrophic.... The ones that were hurt the worst were the Europeans. They plan these trips in advance. The Americans were frustrated, but the Europeans—picture yourself going to France...."

GATEWAY COMMUNITY: PANGUITCH

With 1,500 residents, Panguitch (the Paiute Indian word for "big fish") is the largest city and the seat of Garfield County. The recent closing of the sawmill run by Kaibab Industries has elevated the economic importance of Bryce Canyon in the minds of Panguitch's residents and people throughout the county.



■ **Brian Foy, Foy's Country Corner Restaurant, Panguitch.** Foy's has been a family-owned business since 1957.

"You could see a dramatic change right then: a 40 percent drop in business. After that, business just didn't get started. It's a big deal to us—the park. It's really about the only thing that we've got going. Especially now that the mill closed."

"It's a big deal to us—the park. It's really about the only thing that we've got going. Especially now that the mill closed."

■ **Charlotte Clark, co-owner, Bryce Way Motel and Restaurant, Panguitch.** The 26-room motel has been in business for more than 18 years.

"We don't get that much that time of year anyway. We had zilch. Instead of five or ten, we had two or three or zero. The first two weeks of December, we rented ten rooms...."

"It's unfortunate because we've spent years trying to build up winter sports at Bryce—snowshoeing, cross-country skiing. People come from halfway around the world. It's a whole different vacation in the winter..."

■ **Barbara Sheen, owner, Bryce Canyon Trading Post, Highway 12, between Panguitch and Bryce Canyon National Park.**

"We closed a month early. It ruined the season. We normally stay open through Thanksgiving. It was a shame because it was the mildest fall we have had in years. A lot of the clientele is European and if you think they understood it, you're nuts. We lost thousands of dollars and we're just a little store. I can only imagine what it did to everybody else."

GATEWAY COMMUNITY: TROPIC

Just a few miles east of Bryce Canyon National Park, on Highway 12, is the town of Tropic, population 500. This small town owes its existence to a canal that brings irrigation water into the valley from the plateau above Bryce Canyon. People still farm the area; however, the park has become the area's dominant revenue source.

■ **Doug Ahlstrom, owner, Doug's Place, Tropic.** Ahlstrom helped his father start up a small Texaco gas station in 1963. He took over the operation 24 years ago and has since added a restaurant, general store, country inn, and motel.

"Without the park, we don't have much business. Business was off between one-third and one-half. We usually do 15 to 20 rooms; we did half that. It took quite a while for it to bounce back. It never regained strength. A Japanese woman asked me, 'Is America broke?' It really put the United States in a bad light."

"If we didn't have the national park, the area wouldn't have anything. People back in Washington think this is nothing but wasteland."

■ **Gaya Greenhalgh, city council member, Tropic.**

"There was no one anywhere. It was like someone closed the door. If we didn't have the national park, the area wouldn't have anything. People back in Washington think this is nothing but wasteland."

Conclusion

The businesses and communities investigated for this study were not the only ones economically affected by the 1995-96 federal government shutdowns. Communities that depend on federal spending for contracts, revenue, and employment were also affected; however, park gateway communities are unique in that they derive most of their revenue and employment from *private* spending. As evidenced by the stories in this report, federal dollars spent on national parks are matched and multiplied in value many times by people from all over the world who visit them for recreation, education, and wonderment. To a degree, therefore, communities such as El Portal, California, and Tropic, Utah, owe their existence to the national parks.

Although our memory of the 1995-96 shutdowns will inevitably fade, we must retain an understanding of their effects on park-dependent businesses and communities. Often, we are impressed only with gains and losses in the millions of dollars; impacts in the *thousands* fail

to attract our attention. Yet, to many of the men and women interviewed for this study, the loss of a few thousand dollars in a season can easily define the boundary between success and failure, survival and bankruptcy.

Without the personal stories highlighted in this report, economic figures would not fully demonstrate the impact of the national park closures on neighboring businesses and communities. By themselves, sales and employment figures do not help us understand the dynamic between national parks and the people who count on them for their economic well-being.

The following letter, delivered to officials at Zion National Park during the first shutdown, admonishes us to pay closer attention to the economic, as well as the natural and cultural, significance of our national parks.

"The national parks of America are one of the greatest attractions for tourists from other countries to visit. After planning a trip to the states and being overwhelmed by the hikes, trails, views and animals we've seen so far, I can only say how disappointed we are, now at Zion National Park, Utah, that they have been closed. ... I am not aware of the politics behind the closure but perhaps the people involved should visit some of their own national protected parks and appreciate the beauty they have to offer visitors as well as the safe habitat they hold for wildlife. These things should not be taken for granted. They are a prime tourist market as well as a treasure to any American."

— Hazel Rothery and Suzanne Barnes, Yorkshire, England.

More than 20 gateway communities in three regions of the country were surveyed for this study. Across the nation there are hundreds of such communities, simultaneously depending on and supporting the 374 units of the National Park System. If any good is to come of the park shutdowns of 1995-96, it will be a

broader and deeper recognition that national parks are more than isolated patches of land that preserve natural wonders, wildlife, and our cultural heritage. They are the core components of complex systems that contain human communities as well as wildlife, scenery, and cultural icons.

National parks are the economic lifeblood of their surrounding communities. At the same time, businesses and individuals in and around the parks provide park visitors with crucial services. As painful as the shutdowns were, they have highlighted this dynamic and provided a demonstration of the economic importance of national parks. The stories told by the men and women interviewed for this report remind us that the health and vitality of the National Park System are directly linked to the economic stability of communities across the nation.

***Although our memory
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Sources

- ¹Travel Industry Association of America, 1995.
- ²U.S. Department of the Interior news release: "Impacts of the Interior Department Shutdown." December 28, 1995.
- ³Direct sales impacts were estimated using the National Park Service's Money Generation Model, which estimates the impact of national parks on sales, employment, and tax revenue in park gateway communities and surrounding areas.
- ⁴National Park Service Statistical Abstract, 1995.
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- ⁶Citibank MasterCard and Visa Report: "Our National Parks: Preserving a Priceless Heritage," 1991.
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- ⁹Monthly visitation statistics were provided by the National Park Service (NPS) Public Use Statistics Program Center (PSPC) in Denver, Colorado.
- ¹⁰Direct sales impacts were estimated using the National Park Service (NPS) Money Generation Model (MGM).
- ¹¹Monthly visitation statistics were provided by the NPS-PSPC.
- ¹²Direct sales impacts were estimated using the NPS-MGM and visitor expenditure data collected by the NPS/University of Idaho Visitor Service Project.
- ¹³Direct sales impacts were estimated using the NPS-MGM.
- ¹⁴Florida Atlantic University/ FL International University Joint Center for Environmental and Urban Problems: "Economic Impact Study of Federal Interest Lands in South Florida," 1995.
- ¹⁵Monthly visitation statistics were provided by the NPS-PSPC.
- ¹⁶Direct sales impacts were estimated using the NPS-MGM.
- ¹⁷Florida Atlantic University/ FL International University Joint Center for Environmental and Urban Problems: "Economic Impact Study of Federal Interest Lands in South Florida," 1995.
- ¹⁸Monthly visitation statistics were provided by the NPS-PSPC.
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- ²⁵Direct sales impacts were estimated using the NPS-MGM and visitor expenditure data collected by the NPS/University of Idaho Visitor Service Project.



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