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DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY
WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

REPORT OF INVESTIGATIONS NO. 77
1987

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
PROPERTY INCLUDING PROPOSED BOATING FACILITIES AT PRESQUE ISLE
HARBOR, PRESQUE ISLE COUNTY, MICHIGAN
(ER-2036)

WILLIAM M. CREMIN

A Report Prepared For:

Recreational Facilities Division
Department of Natural Resources
P.O. Box 30028
Lansing, Michigan 48909

Attention:

Mr. Bruce Walker
Assistant Operations Supervisor

INTRODUCTION:

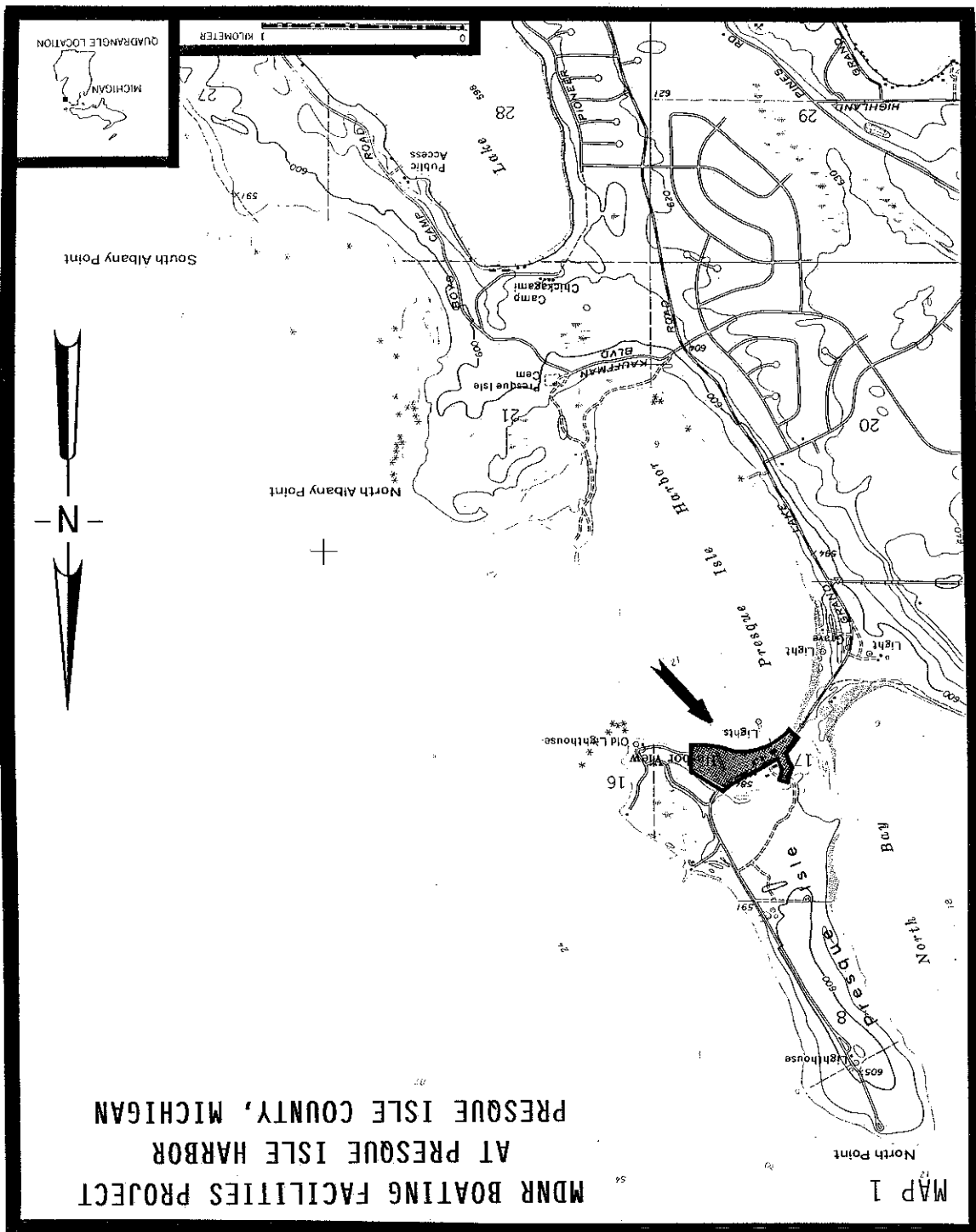
Pursuant to receipt of authorization from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DPO No. 87-GA8903, dated 17 Jul 87) for a Phase I archaeological survey of property including proposed boating facilities at Presque Isle Harbor in Presque Isle County, Michigan, archaeologists from the Department of Anthropology, Western Michigan University began a literature, documents, and site files search and prepared to conduct on-site evaluation of the project area in order to ascertain whether proposed construction of recreational facilities would have an adverse impact on potentially significant archaeological resources. There follows a report of fieldwork undertaken at Presque Isle Harbor on 2-3 Sep 87, together with appropriate background information and the recommendations derived from our program of research.

PROJECT PERSONNEL:

Principal Investigator - Dr. William M. Cremin, Associate Professor,
Department of Anthropology, WMU
Field Assistant - Mr. Dale W. Quattrin, M.A. Candidate in
Anthropology, WMU

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT AREA:

The MDNR boating facilities project at Presque Isle Harbor comprises an irregular tract of land estimated to encompass 7.5 ha of the north shoreline of this small bay on Lake Huron in northeastern Lower Michigan. More specifically, the research area of this study is located in the center of the E 1/2 of Section 17, Presque Isle Township (T34N R8E), Presque Isle County, Michigan (Map 1).



The study area commences on the shoreline at a point about

300 m west of the old lighthouse and follows water's edge to a

point some 150 m south of the large building (Portage Restaurant)

occupying a beach location in front of the existing boat slip with

beacon lights. From the shoreline, project limits extend to Grand

Lake Road, excepting for an extant parking lot and adjacent heavily

wooded ridge across the road just opposite the restaurant. Here,

surveyors evaluated a 90 m wide by 180 m long "arm" of the project

extending north and away from the harbor. Precise project limits

are shown on Map 2.

That area of the project lying between the bay and the road

is low, seldom reaching an elevation of more than a meter or two

above the bay (The U.S.G.S. quadrangle sheet shows the elevation of

Lake Huron and the bay to be approximately 174 m ASL). With the

exception of the restaurant building, which is owned by the MDNR,

extant structures are abandoned or have been removed in preparation

for the expansion of boating facilities. The area of beach lying

to the south of the restaurant features a shallow layer of fine sand

underlain by coarse gravels, and much of this area adjacent to the

road is covered by roadbed materials moving downslope toward water's

edge.

To the north of the restaurant and several former house sites,

we observed much disturbance resulting from heavy equipment having

bladed the area, a pond, and a shoreline heaped with gravel piled

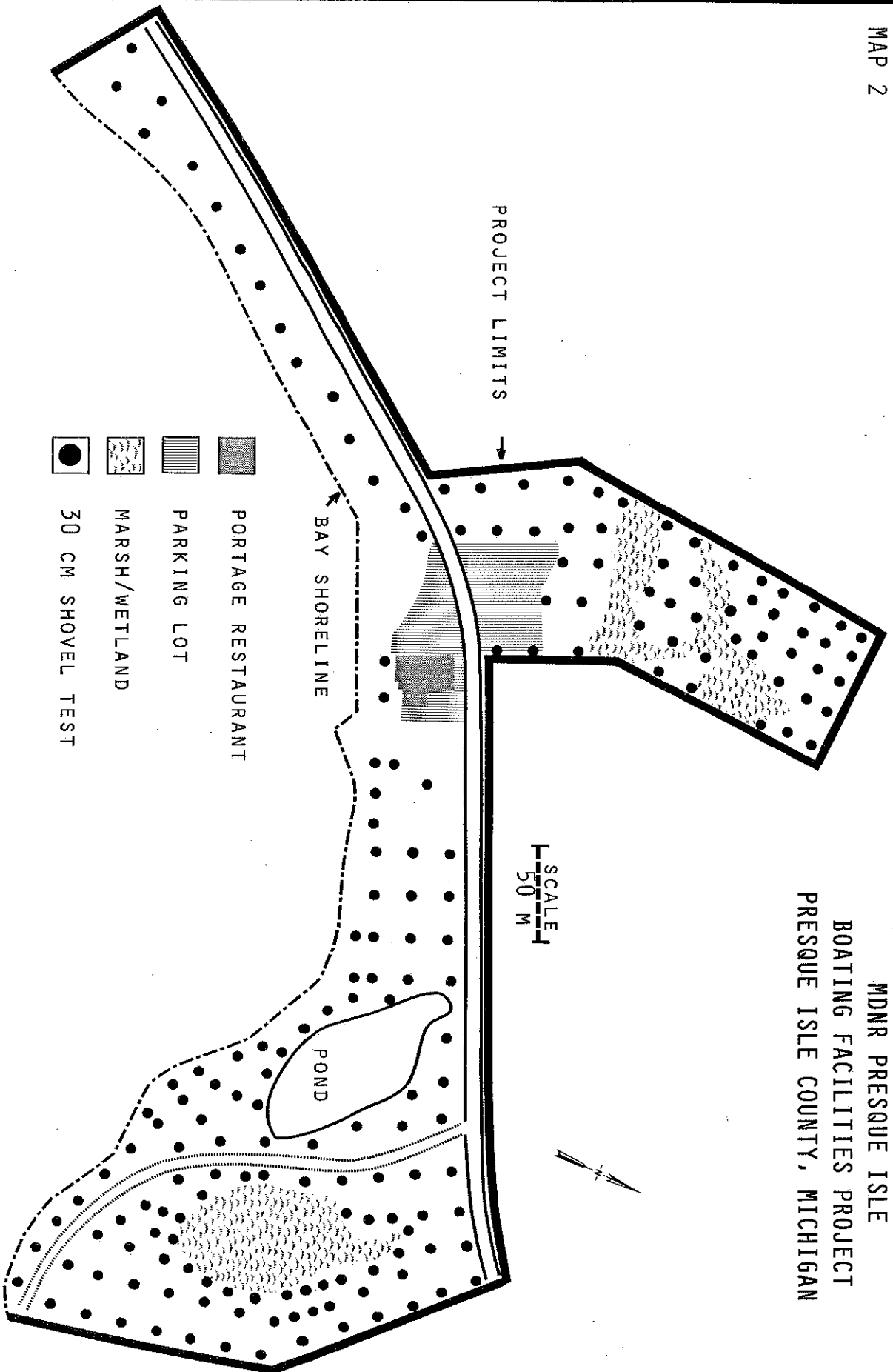
here through the action of winter ice. The only area evidencing

minimal recent disturbance lay across the road providing access to

the old lighthouse from Grand Lake Road. The easternmost portion

of the study area featured dense dark woods surrounding a remnant

MDNR PRESQUE ISLE
BOATING FACILITIES PROJECT
PRESQUE ISLE COUNTY, MICHIGAN



marsh. The "ridge and swale"-like topography occurring around the

marsh revealed a humus layer consisting entirely of coniferous

forest litter underlain by a much deeper and sandier soil profile

than was observed elsewhere in the project area. Ground cover was

generally sparse under the canopy of pine, spruce, and arbor vitae,

but where the sun reached the forest floor we did encounter a dense

growth of juniper, yew, and arbor vitae interspersed with moss.

The portion of the project lying across Grand Lake Road from

the restaurant also evidenced disturbance resulting from the prior

construction of a parking lot and blading/leveling of land where the

arm of a pond approaches the road from the north. Here, aside from

these disturbed areas, we observed several remnant marshes supporting

a dense cover of grasses interspersed with thin stands of trees

backed by a ridge rising to an elevation of ca. 178 m ASL. Dense

forest cover, again consisting principally of pine, spruce, and

arbor vitae, dominated this landform, excepting for an open area of

grasses and shrub growth flanking the path that bisected the parcel

from north to south. In this as well as the previously mentioned

densely forested portion of the project, we observed considerable

evidence of recent dumping activity; trash in the form of bottle

glass and metal containers being strewn over the forest floor.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH IN OR NEAR THE STUDY AREA:

Our background research has revealed only two references of any

consequence, and neither pertains to the area under study. Examination

of Hinsdale's (1931) Archaeological Atlas of Michigan shows an Indian

trail of questionable accuracy paralleling the shoreline from Rogers

City to the north and passing south of the narrow neck of land that

links Presque Isle with the mainland, where this trail presumably

joined one running from Grand Lake to Lake of the Woods. And the only archaeological site presently recorded for Section 17, the Presque Isle Dump site (20P126), lies in the SW 1/4, NE 1/4, SE 1/4, SE 1/4, NW 1/4 of this section at a distance of about 300 m to the west of the MDNR project (Smith 1985).

SURVEY FIELD PROCEDURES:

The objective of our fieldwork was to perform a systematic survey of sufficient intensity to result in a conclusive recommendation with respect to the presence/absence of potentially significant archaeological resources. Inasmuch as the project area afforded us only spotty surface visibility, reconnaissance level survey procedures were augmented by the application of shovel testing along transects; this being especially the case in areas of dense forest cover.

Typically, in those instances where shovel testing was employed, we traversed the project along lines of survey spaced 15-20 m apart, with shovel tests being excavated at intervals of 15-20 m along each transect. As we approached areas of wetland development and the bay shoreline, the interval between shovel tests was further reduced. The shovel tests were routinely excavated to a depth of 40-60 cm below the surface, excepting in those numerous instances along the shoreline where we encountered an impenetrable layer of large rocks at depths varying between 8-20 cm below the surface. The typical soil profile revealed where probing was effective consisted of a thin humus layer of forest litter extending to a depth of 6-8 cm underlain by a lens of sand that continued beyond the depth to which we probed. The occasional shovel test that we excavated to a depth of 80-100 cm afforded observations supporting our decision to routinely terminate tests across the project at the shallower depth of 40-60 cm. The 187

shovel tests excavated in those areas where we anticipated that prior disturbance would be minimal are located on Map 2.

RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS DERIVED FROM THE PHASE I STUDY:

In summary, our thorough examination of the pertinent literature and information in the state site files revealed that no archaeological sites had previously been recorded for the MDNR property at Presque Isle Harbor. Moreover, on-site evaluation through the application of both surface reconnaissance and shovel testing procedures showed much of the study area to have been previously disturbed. In those portions of the project which we felt would afford promise of undisturbed context, shovel testing along transects and at tight intervals produced not a single cultural item or an observation that could be construed to suggest the presence of archaeological resources. In the final analysis, we have only negative information to report from our research at Presque Isle Harbor. Therefore, in light of our systematic and intensive examination of the MDNR boating facilities project it can be recommended without reservation that the proposed construction activity be permitted to proceed as planned inasmuch as no significant archaeological resources will be impacted.

REFERENCES CITED:

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