



1987

76-An Archaeological Survey of the Eagle Lake and Buchanan Public Access Sites for the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (ER-9381)

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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

WILLIAM M. CREMIN

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF THE EAGLE LAKE
AND BUCHANAN PUBLIC ACCESS SITES FOR
THE MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
(ER-9381)

REPORT OF INVESTIGATIONS NO. 76
1987

DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY
WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

INTRODUCTION:

Pursuant to receipt of authorization from the Michigan

Department of Natural Resources (DPO No. 87-6A8562, dated 3 Apr 87)

for a Phase I archaeological assessment of two properties in

Kalamazoo and Berrien Counties, 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 areas in order to determine if

proposed construction of recreational facilities would have an adverse

impact on potentially significant archaeological resources. There

follows a report of fieldwork undertaken at the Eagle Lake Public

Access in Texas Township, Kalamazoo County on 9 Apr 87 and at the

Buchanan Public Access in Buchanan Township, Berrien County on

22 Apr 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 Supervisor

- Mr. David G. De Fant, M.A., Department of

Anthropology, WMU

Field Assistant

- Ms. Sherry Wykstra, Senior, majoring in

Anthropology, WMU

DESCRIPTION OF THE AREAS EVALUATED:

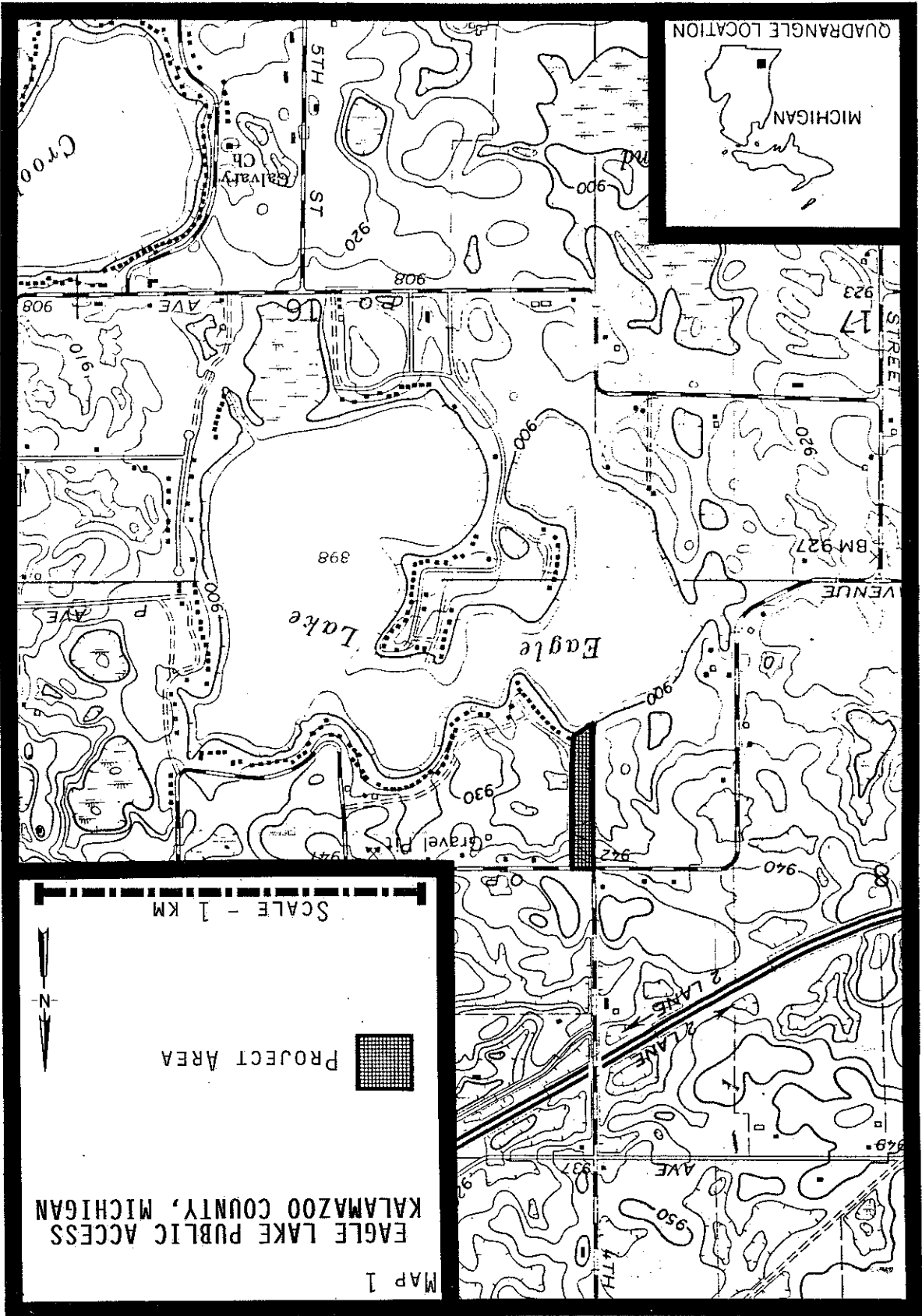
The Eagle Lake Public Access is a 3.8 ha (9.3 acre) parcel of

land located in the NW corner, SW 1/4 of Section 9, Texas Township,

T35 R12W, Kalamazoo County, Michigan (Map 1). It extends from OP Avenue on the north to Lake's edge on the south; a distance of approximate 386 m. Maximum east-west dimensions are 83 m at OP Avenue, with the parcel narrowing somewhat as it approaches the lake. At Lake's edge, the DNR property is bordered by a residential development on the east and with wetlands flanking the access site to the west. As one moves northward from the lake, elevation rises quite noticeably from 270 m - 282.6 m ASL at the intersection of OP Avenue and 4th Street. Nearer to the northern limits of the parcel, fields border it to the west and the eastern edge of the property supports second growth hardwoods and pasture where a neighbor grazes his horses.

Visual examination of this property at the time of fieldwork revealed considerable remodeling of the landscape at some time in the recent past. There has been considerable filling near water's edge, with the land here being raised perhaps one meter or more above the wetlands immediately adjoining the DNR property to the west. It seems reasonable to assume that formerly the lowlying wetland area extended into this parcel, necessitating the removal of fill from the more northerly portion of the property to raise the land fronting on the lake.

While this parcel can be assumed to have formerly supported wetlands along water's edge and oak forest back from the lake (Hodler et al. 1981), we observed the parcel to be largely denuded of forest cover excepting for marginal areas of the property. The DNR has recently planted Austrian pines on a berm created to afford some privacy for neighbors to the east at water's edge. These trees are flanked by a series of royalty crabbles to the west. The only



probable remnants of the former arboreal cover are the rather massive twin red oaks, measuring 36 in (90 cm) in diameter, located immediately to the north of the aforementioned ornamentals.

The Buchanan Public Access occupies the east bank of the St. Joseph River where Sections 13, 14, 23, and 24 of Buchanan Township, T7S R18W, Berrien County, Michigan, meet (Map 2). It comprises 2.5 ha (6.2 acres) of river frontage at an elevation of approximately 188 m (627 ft) ASL, with the ground rising rapidly behind the parcel to an elevation of 195 m (650 ft) at bluff's edge. The USGS quadrangle sheet shows six islands in the river within a short distance upstream of the DNR property. Here, where the river is rather broad and shallow, local tradition records the presence of two fords used by early settlers to cross the river (Betarel and Smith 1973: 3).

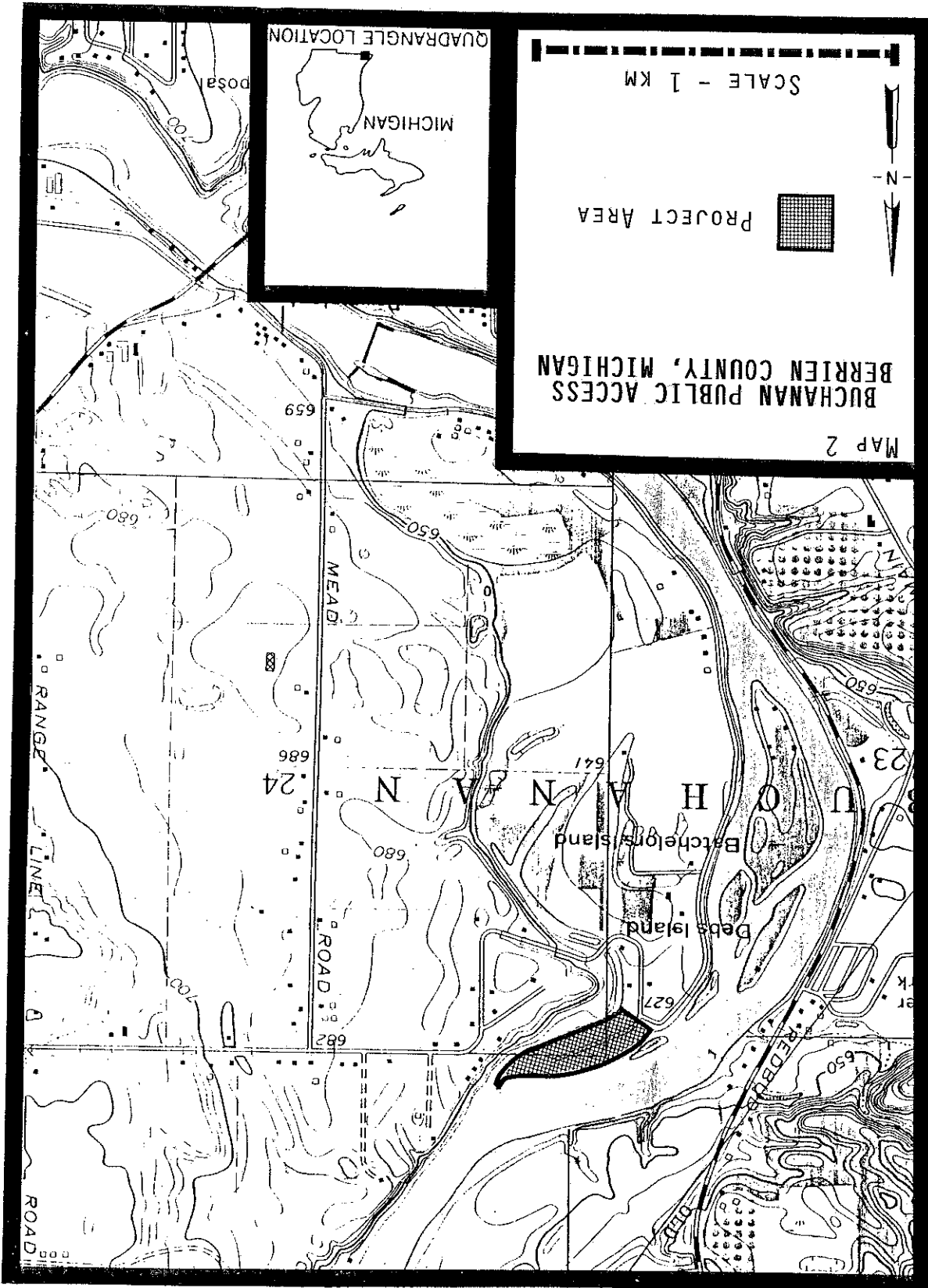
Today, the DNR property actually occupies a spit of land,

separated from the uplands by a narrow channel excavated by former landowners planning to create a marina and residential development. Dredgings from this channel or canal excavation were spread over the parcel under study, raising the level of the land perhaps a meter or more than had formerly been the case for much of its 308 m of river frontage. As will be noted below, the SW portion of the project near East River Road evidences considerably less disturbance than was observed by the survey team throughout most of the study area.

At the time of our survey, the project area supported mainly

grasses interspersed with scrubby hardwoods rarely of notable size. Here and there we observed patches of sumac, briars, and other

"pioneers" of secondary succession. However, given its location



in the floodplain it is most probable that this stretch of the

river was formerly flanked by land supporting either southern

floodplain forest or wetlands. According to Ebberts (in Garland

1984), the floodplain of a mature stream like the St. Joseph would

have been characterized in presettlement times by a mosaic of

vegetative types, beginning with areas of marsh and small patches

of black willow and cottonwood and followed by the establishment

of the dominant elm-maple-ash association. Leading species would

have been American or slippery elm, sycamore, silver maple, red

maple, and white ash. Due to flooding, the understory of this plant

association can be expected to have been characterized by low densities

of saplings and seedlings of the upperstory dominants, with the

ground layer consisting of sedges, grasses, composites, and mints of

many species.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH IN OR NEAR THE STUDY AREAS:

With respect to the Eagle Lake Public Access, our background

study revealed that only two archaeological sites have been recorded

for the entire township and no documentary references of any consequence

occur in the relevant literature (Durant 1880; Hingsdale 1931; Stevens

1923). The aforementioned sites are described in the state site files

as prehistoric lithic scatters (20KZ183 and 184) occurring in the AI

Sabo Preserve on West Fork Portage Creek about 4.8 km east of the

study area.

However, the Buchanan Public Access occurs in a stretch of the

St. Joseph River Valley that can be described as a "hotbed" of Amer-

Indian activity. A number of prehistoric sites and historic Indian

villages have been documented between the communities of St. Joseph

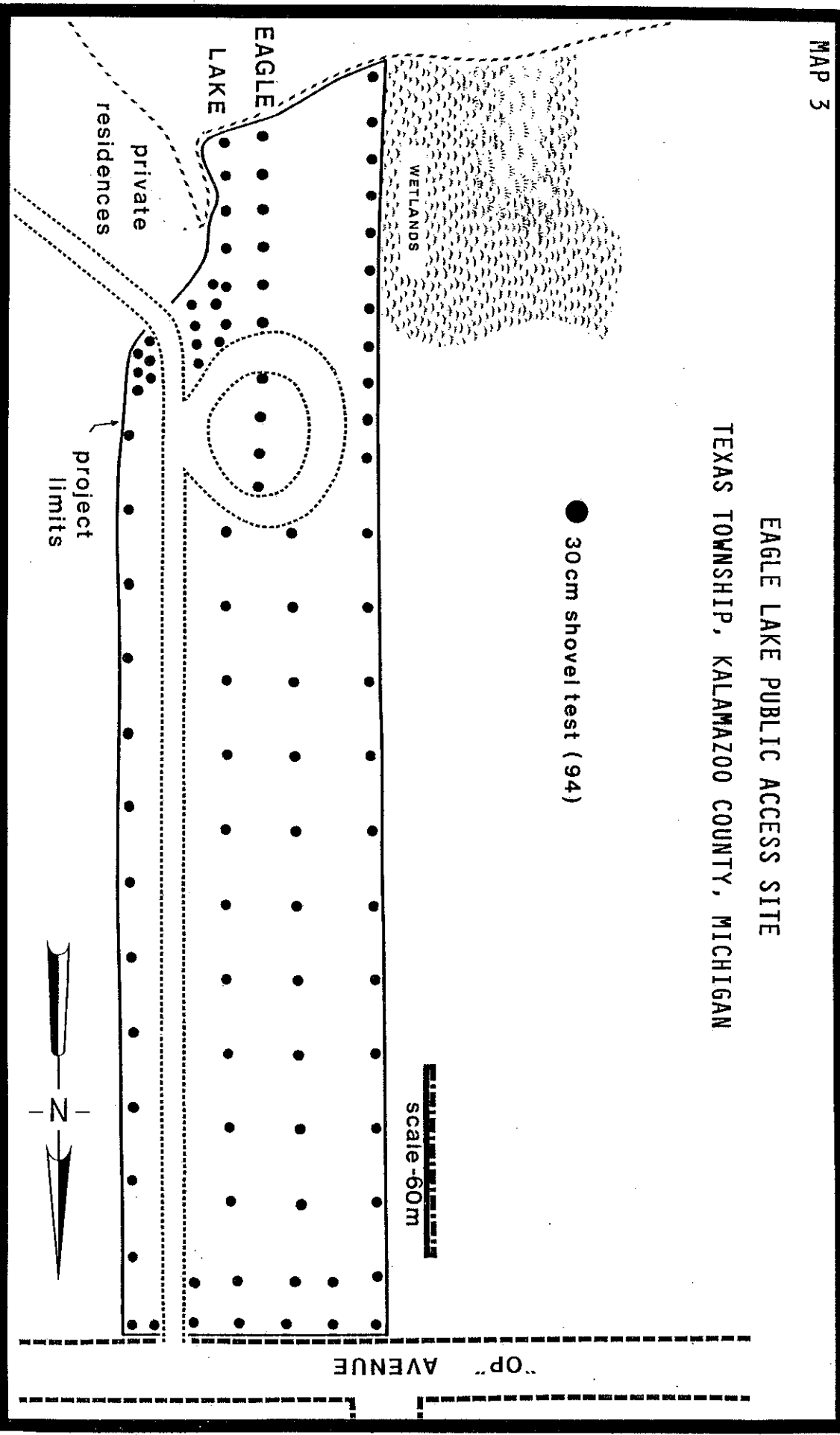
and Niles, Michigan (Ellis 1880; Garland 1984), but from the

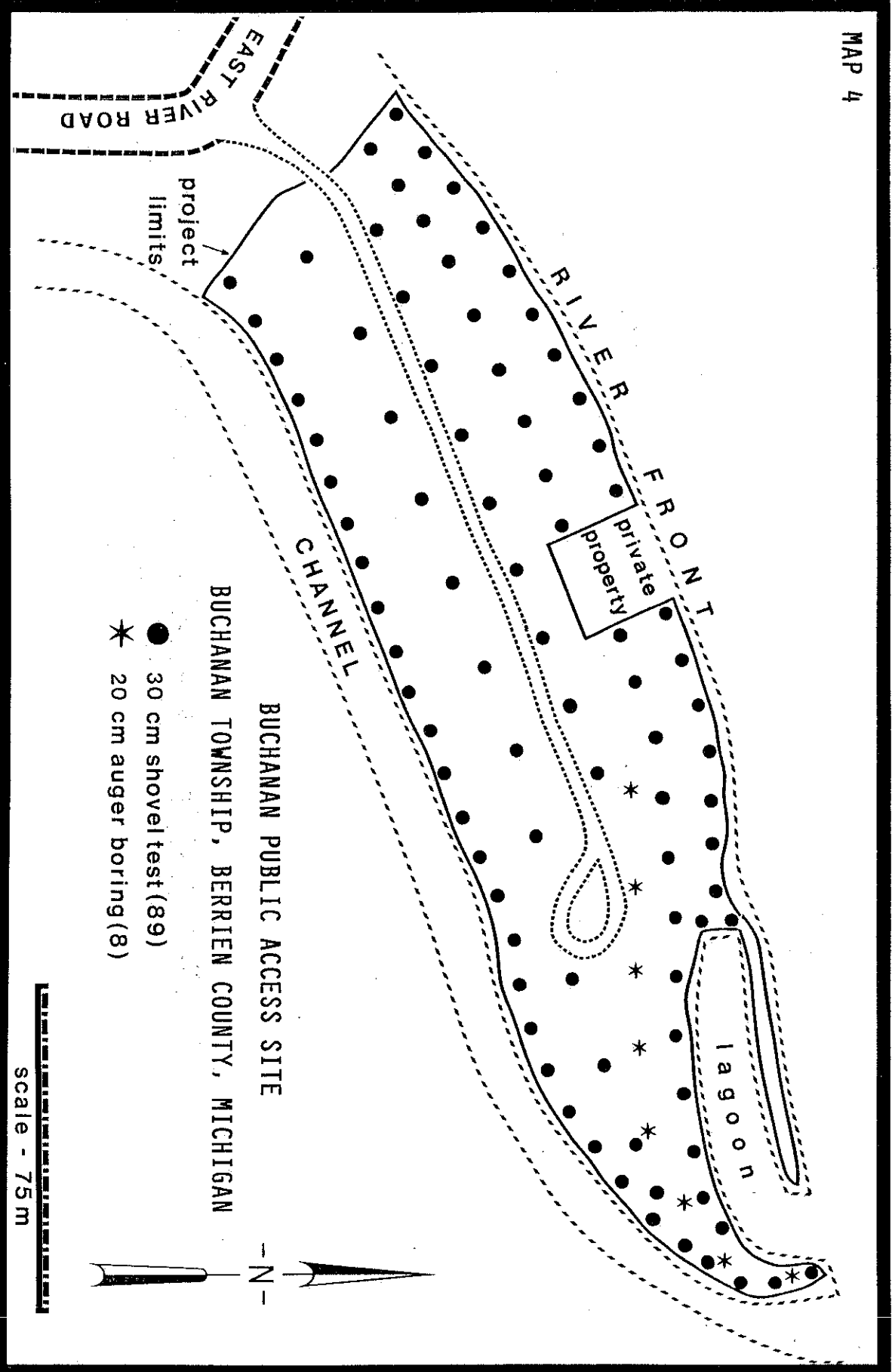
The objective of our fieldwork in both instances was to perform a systematic survey of sufficient intensity to result in a conclusive recommendation with respect to the presence/absence of potentially significant archaeological resources. Inasmuch as both parcels afforded the survey team only minimal surface visibility, the two study areas were evaluated by means of shovel testing along transects. In addition, an auger was employed at the Buchanan Public Access site to probe a number of locations to a depth of 140 cm below the surface in search of buried cultural deposits. The locations of all shovel tests and auger borings are illustrated in Maps 3 and 4.

SURVEY FIELD PROCEDURES:

river in such close proximity to Moccasin Bluff. Carefully examine a parcel of land occupying the low bank of the considerable anticipation that I looked toward this opportunity to 1948 University of Michigan excavations at this site, it was with at the late prehistoric/historic "interface" and the results of the and Smith 1973: 3). Given my strong interest in Amerindian adaptation the site of the Potawatomi chief Cogamocassin's village (Betarel Joseph from the Buchanan Public Access was, around the year 1828, a point about 1.2 km upstream and on the opposite side of the St. interest that this location on a terrace overlooking the river at to be duplicated elsewhere in southwest Michigan. It is also of their strong suggestion of an agricultural adaptation that has yet occupations assigned to the Moccasin Bluff and Berrien phases, with especially noteworthy are two late prehistoric (Upper Mississippian) (Betarel and Smith 1973). This is a multicomponent site, but us as being potentially more important than the Moccasin Bluff site perspective of the current program of research none was viewed by

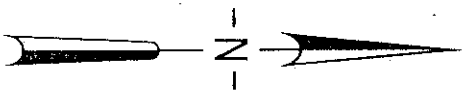
EAGLE LAKE PUBLIC ACCESS SITE
TEXAS TOWNSHIP, KALAMAZOO COUNTY, MICHIGAN





- 30 cm shovel test (89)
- * 20 cm auger boring (8)

scale - 75m



Typically, surveyors traversed the parcels along lines of survey spaced 20 m apart, with shovel tests being excavated at intervals of 20 m along each transect. These intervals were reduced by one-half as surveyors approached to within 30 m of water's edge. The shovel tests were routinely excavated to a depth of 40-60 cm below the surface in an attempt to determine the depositional history of local soils. In many instances, shovel tests were excavated to somewhat greater depths. But in the case of both parcels of land, a depth of 40-60 cm proved most adequate to ensure that we had probed deeply enough in areas where recent disturbance was either absent or minimal to have made contact with deposits of human origin. Parenthetically, auger borings in the northeastern portion of the Buchanan Public Access served only to establish the fact that dredgings from the excavation of the channel had been deposited on the landscape under study to a depth in excess of one meter, after which the dredgings were apparently bladed and leveled out over a considerable area. Typically, the auger borings revealed a very thin humus zone underlain by a deep layer of unconsolidated and unsorted gravely material that extended as far down as the auger could penetrate (140 cm). On no occasion could we distinguish anything resembling a natural soil profile in the northeastern area of the project.

RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS DERIVED FROM THE PHASE I STUDIES:

In summary, thorough examination of the literature, documents, and state site files pertaining to the Eagle Lake and Buchanan Public Accesses revealed that no archaeological sites had previously been recorded for these properties. However, in the case of the latter study area, a very significant archaeological site occurs within

1.2 km of the DNR property. Moreover, on-site evaluation of the two properties revealed considerable prior disturbance due to excavation and filling activities. At Eagle Lake, only the northern, eastern and, to a lesser extent, the western margins of the parcel held some promise of undisturbed context. But here as elsewhere, we did not recover a single object or make an observation that could be construed to suggest the presence of archaeological resources.

At the Buchanan Public Access, the survey team began its evaluation at the downstream end of the parcel where the manmade channel joins the river. For almost one-half the length of the study area, we noted only massive disturbance due to the dumping of spoil and leveling of same during excavation of the channel. The land surface here as elsewhere in the project was littered with recent debris discarded by users of the access site. However, shovel tests did begin to reveal a natural soil profile evidencing only occasional disturbance from the project midpoint to the entrance to the access site from East River Road. For this portion of the study area, the interval between both transects and shovel tests was reduced. Be that as it may, shovel tests continued to produce absolutely no evidence of potential value; our observations continued to be confined to occasional (and usually surface) discoveries of objects (e.g. bottles, cans, particles of plastic) of recent origin. In the final analysis, we have only negative information to report from our study of these two DNR access sites. Therefore, in light of the findings from our systematic and intensive examination of the Eagle Lake and Buchanan Public Access sites, it can be recommended without reservation on our part that the proposed construction

activities be permitted to proceed as planned.

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