

River's fate depends on Reagan Administration

By Betty French
JOURNAL Staff Writer

The National Park Service study of the Loxahatchee River went forward this week when members of the study team met with county officials, then visited the river.

"We have made a tentative proposal that would have a cooperative management plan between the county, state and the Department of the Interior working together," said Fred van Vonno, National Park Service Outdoor Recreational Planner, when he visited the river Tuesday morning, Jan. 27.

If all goes well and the study team makes a recommendation that the river be designated part of the national "Wild and Scenic River" system, it would be the only such river so designated in the state. The report would then be submitted to the Secretary of the Interior for his approval, and then to Congress for final confirmation.

"You realize we now have a new Secretary, James Watt," Van Vonno pointed out. "He may make a difference. Things have



FRED VAN VONNO

changed at the national level, and there may be a change in emphasis."

Basically, though, the study leader said, the team is still proceeding in the same directions.

"It is hard to read the mood of Congress," van Vonno said, "It has really changed a lot, but even given this conservative legislature, the state still has a good chance of getting it through."

The area under consideration for designation as a "Wild and Scenic River" stretches from the county-owned Riverbend Park near Indiantown Road to a point a little south of the concession area in Jonathan Dickinson State Park. The area around Riverbend Park is proposed for classification as recreational, and the stretch from there to a point a little north of the Florida Turnpike is proposed under a scenic classification. Then, the next stretch, to a point near Trapper Nelson's Place, is proposed under a wild designation, while the final stretch, to the point past the state park concession stand, is proposed under a scenic classification.

The best protection, van Vonno said is outright purchase, and he hopes this recommendation will be included in the final draft.

"At the present time, we are trying to determine who should do the purchasing," van Vonno said.

He was not aware, he said, that some sections of the river presently in private

hands have already been approved for subdivision by the county.

"Everyone here seems to be crazy about the Loxahatchee. We've had tremendous community support," van Vonno said.

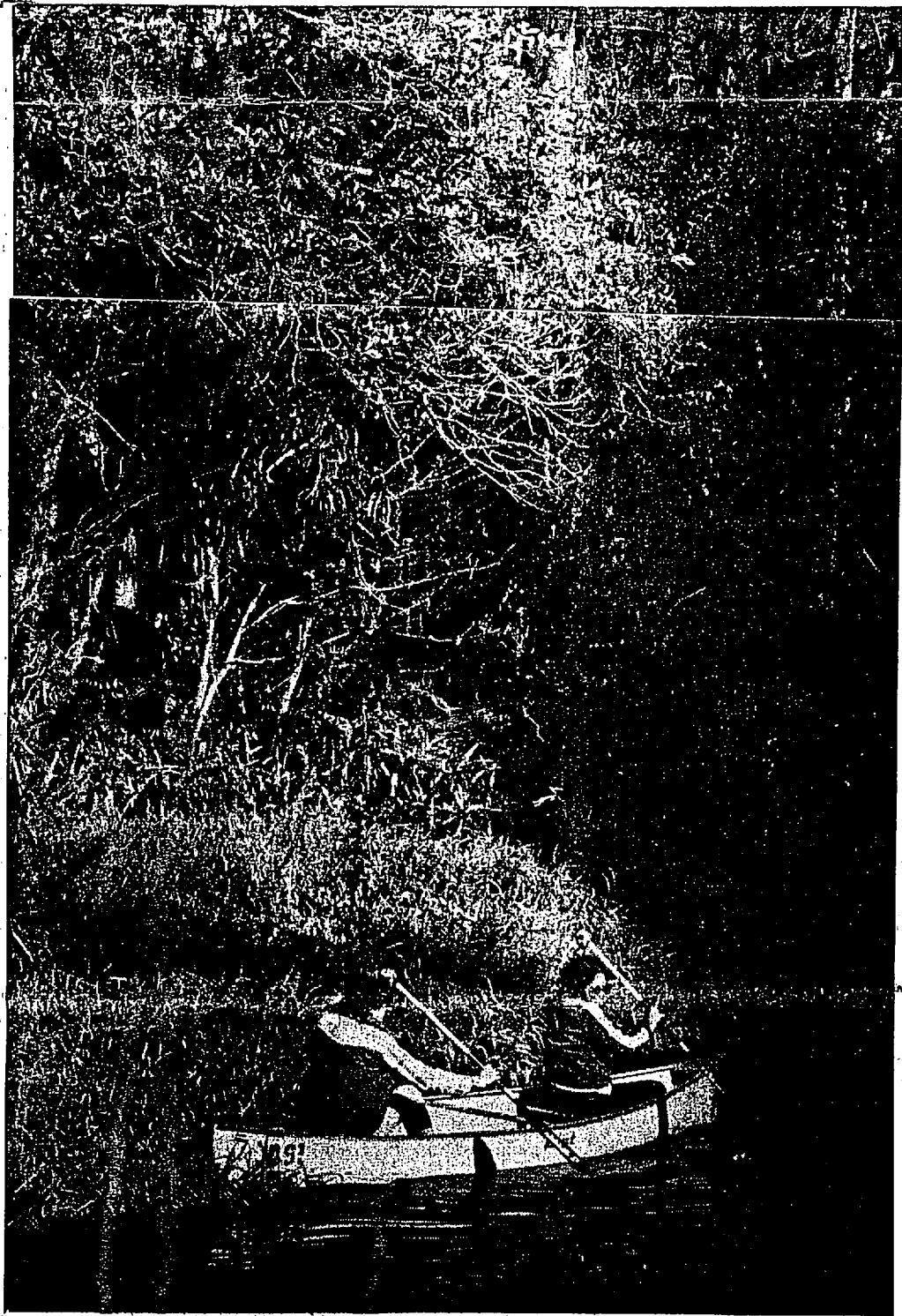
Staff photos by Phil Skinner



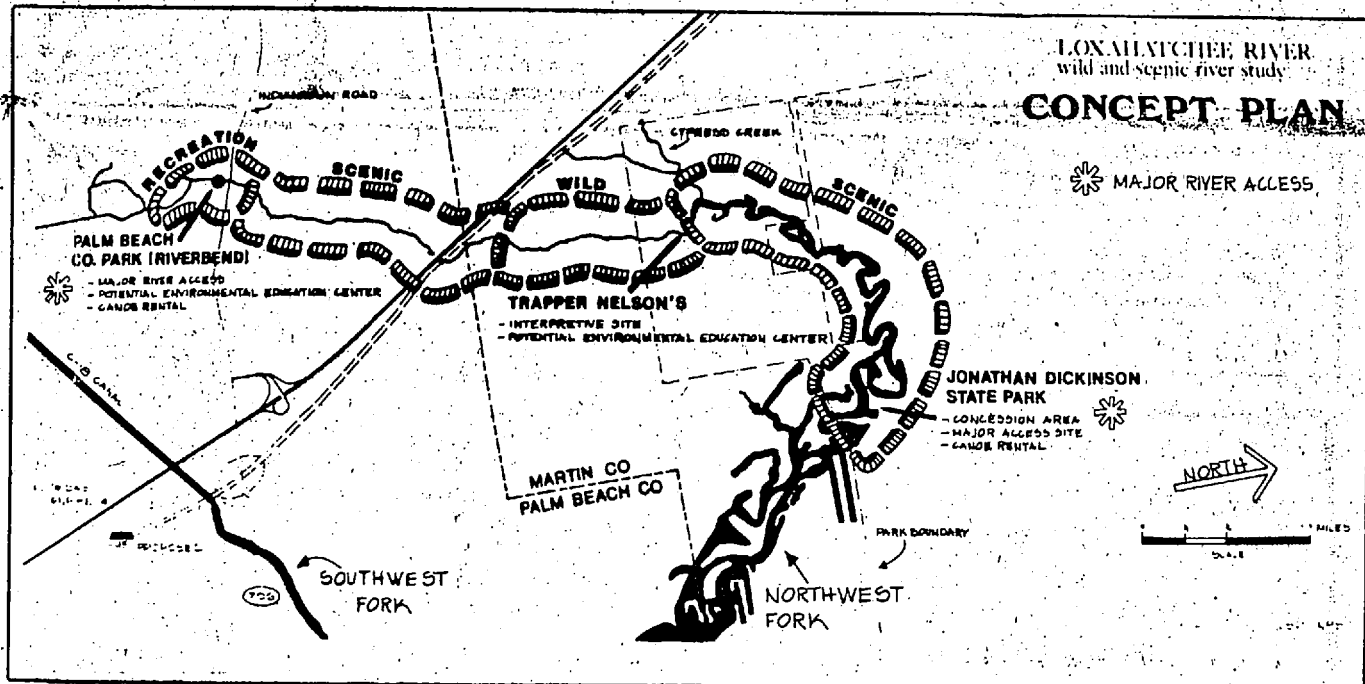
The National Park Service team takes time off from their visit with county officials to view the river. The Loxahatchee River is being proposed for inclusion in the national "Wild and Scenic River" system. It will be up to the new Reagan administration and the new Secretary of the Interior, James Witt, to give their approval.



A canoe party from the National Park Service shoves off from the site on the Loxahatchee River. They prepare to paddle toward Trapper Nelson's



Fred Van Vonno and Sharon Keene, Chief of Area Resource Studies for the National Park Service, shove off for a canoe trip down the Loxahatchee River to view the river, which is proposed for inclusion in the "Wild and Scenic River" system.



The planning diagram above is used by the National Park Service to explain their proposal for the possible inclusion of the Loxahatchee River in the federal "Wild and Scenic Rivers" system. The study team, which met with county officials Monday, Jan. 26, have proposed River-

bend Park as a "recreational" area; the river from the park to just past the turnpike as "scenic"; the "wild" area from the turnpike to Trapper Nelson's site; and to the Jonathan Dickinson easternmost park boundary as "scenic."