WINTER RECREATION AND THE NATIONAL PARKS --
A MANAGEMENT POLICY AND A DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

National & Historic Parks Branch

1965

National and Historic Parks Branch
Direction des parcs nationaux et des lieux historiques
WINTER RECREATION AND THE NATIONAL PARKS

A MANAGEMENT POLICY AND A DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

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Natural and Historic Resources Branch,
Department of Northern Affairs
and National Resources.
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WINTER RECREATION AND THE NATIONAL PARKS
A Management Policy and a Development Program

Part I: Review of Present Concepts

Over the last decade, growth of winter recreation demand has outpaced even the overall rapid demand for general outdoor recreation. This has been primarily due to the great emphasis on skiing activity brought about by increased economic and physical ability for large segments of the population to participate in the sport. Growth rates of 15 to 20 per cent over the last few years have not become uncommon; and, in Banff National Park, since the 1960-61 season, the growth rate of skiing participation has averaged 24.7 per cent each season.

Even though these growth rates are spectacular the skier nevertheless represents a very small part of the population in most regions and a small part of total park attendance. It has been estimated that in the Calgary-Edmonton region about 2 per cent of the population are active skiers, and it is expected this will grow only to about 2.8 per cent by 1976. This is comparable to the rest of Canada and the United States. The prime reason for this low percentage is that skiing is an expensive sport; and, in a region such as Calgary, the distance factor adds a further expense, pushing opportunity for skiing beyond the financial capability of the great bulk of the population.
As a proportion of annual park attendance, the skiers now make up about 8 per cent of that total. This is a small but significant proportion which will continue to grow rapidly in numbers over the years ahead, but will always be a relatively small per cent of the total annual visitation.

Although skiers in the western parks make up a small percentage of total attendance, an even smaller percentage of local populations and of the Canadian population, their impact on the scenic resource can be great, due to the specialized facilities required and the extensive slope-and-cover modifications necessary to accommodate the primarily downhill skier of today.

The above trends were recognized by the Department several years ago, leading to a careful analysis of the implications to basic national park purpose. It was apparent that several guidelines were possible in facing these demands. The Department could have taken the stand that mass skiing with attendant permanent uphill equipment and major slope clearing was not compatible with the "use without impairment" management concept of national parks. (This is the stand taken by the United States National Park Service.) At the other extreme, the Department might have permitted development of a multiplicity of ski centres, risking serious and permanent defacement of important scenic attractions. A middle course and the one decided upon was to define certain areas of high potential for ski development but of limited scenic value, and, in effect, zone these for intensive development of skiing facilities.
Once this principle was accepted of providing for modern ski developments in suitable settings in national parks, then the next step was to analyze systematically all existing ski developments and their use. This was carried out during the intervening years and was further broadened into a full-scale consultant study in the late winter and early spring of 1964. Canadian Resort Services carried out this comprehensive study which took into consideration the broad spectrum of supply and demand of ski facilities in the northwestern region. The study dealt specifically with Banff, covering such subjects as:

1. The present status of winter sports.
2. Potential and feasibility in terms of need, demand, markets.
3. A phased master plan for winter sport facilities.
4. Visitor and revenue projections.

The consultant's report gave a good background of statistical information on the skiing industry of the northwest portion of the continent and also provided good information on ski layout, particularly as related to the long-term needs of Banff. From this and earlier studies and reports, it is now possible to advance a fairly specific long-term winter development program for Banff National Park. These are covered under two main headings in the following: General Policy, and Development Programs in Banff.
Part II: General Policy on Development for Winter Recreation Facilities

Item I

An extended use season is a desirable objective in national parks both from the point of view of public benefit through outdoor experience and considering the economics of public and private investment in facilities.

Policy

The management of national parks shall encourage winter use of the park lands as much as possible without detriment to the prime scenic and environmental values.

Item II

Most winter activity in mountainous country centres around ski developments which by their very nature involve a major disturbance of the natural scene through slope clearing, provision of uphill equipment, parking lots and other related facilities.

Policy

The sites selected for ski developments must not encroach on important natural features or intrude on the wilderness character of the park. Site and slope development must be carried out with due regard for the natural values of a location within a national park.

Item III

Ease of access and proximity to accommodation centres are important factors in the usability of winter recreation developments and in their success as sound business ventures.
Policy

As a general rule, major ski developments shall be located in close proximity to highway-and-rail-access points and close to established or planned visitor service centres.

Item IV

Well-selected, properly planned sites can accommodate large numbers of today's predominantly downhill skiers. The initial services and facilities are very costly, but once established in a well-integrated plan, further slope capacity can be provided at relatively low per user cost and relatively minor disturbance to the natural scene, as compared to opening up new developments.

Policy 1

The development of a small number of well-designed ski areas is to be encouraged rather than a multiplicity of sites.

Policy 2

The first objective must be to improve the quality of existing developments and expand them as demand requires to their ultimate capacity before initiating development in new areas.

Policy 3

Overall plans of each site shall be prepared and approved before new facilities are added or major renovations of existing facilities take place. Normally such overall plans shall be prepared by the Department in co-operation with the area operator, but this will not preclude initiation of an overall plan by an area operator or other entrepreneur.
Item V

The development operation and maintenance of a winter recreation area in a national park is very much a joint endeavour of government and private enterprise. It is essential that the responsibilities of each principal be clearly understood and that leaseholds continue to provide for sufficiently secure tenure for long-term investment yet provide the degree of governmental control necessary to protect the parks' natural values and ensure good public services.

Policy 1

In general, the Department shall be responsible for selection and definition of boundaries of the site, preparation of an overall plan showing in broad terms the capacity of the site and the development pattern, and development of primary access and parking. The Department shall be responsible for the design and development of basic utilities - sewer, water, power - at designated Visitor Services Centres; however, outside such centres utilities and services shall be the responsibility of the entrepreneur.

The Department shall be responsible for general supervision of all slope clearing and other terrain modification.

Development of ski runs, lifts, lodges and all other public facilities, with the exception of trails and shelters outside the main development area, shall be the responsibility of the area operator working according to an approved development plan.
Policy 2

All aspects of the operation shall become the responsibility of the area operator. This includes slope maintenance, ski patrol, first aid and evacuation of the injured; however, the Department will set the standards for these facilities and services.

Item VI

The "après-ski" social life is part and parcel of the more successful ski developments. This is associated with a variety of day and evening activities contributing to an atmosphere of colour and gaiety consciously cultivated by the better area operators. Facilities additional to basic ski facilities are essential to the success of such a program. These are usually overnight accommodation near to or on the ski site, good dining and entertainment facilities. Location of such facilities outside the planned visitor service centres usually offers severe complications of construction, servicing, maintenance, and economics of short-season occupancy.

Policy 1

The Department shall encourage development of overnight accommodation and related facilities within visitor service centres. Developments orientated toward both the summer and winter demands shall be encouraged. Evening entertainment facilities generally associated with a holiday ski centre shall be permitted in these developments, provided these are integrated components of the hotel, motel or lodge accommodation.
Policy 2

Limited overnight accommodation centres of the lodge type with associated dining and evening entertainment facilities will be permitted on or adjacent to ski developments which are not reasonably accessible from a visitor service centre and where those accommodations will also serve to encourage a summer use of the adjacent park land. In this case the entrepreneur will be responsible for providing all utilities to acceptable safety and sanitation standards.

Item VII

In winter recreation centres, the ice-skating sheet can assume much the same purpose in relation to overnight accommodation facilities as does the swimming-pool during the summer months.

Policy

Hotel, motel or lodge operators in areas suited to winter recreation shall be permitted to develop and operate open air ice-skating sheets as an integral part of their facilities.

Item VIII

The national parks offer outstanding opportunities for ski touring, particularly during the spring season; however, such activity is severely limited by the lack of designated safe trails, absence of strategically placed simple day and overnight shelters and lack of a program to encourage such activity.

Policy

That a system of ski-touring trails be laid out, generally adjacent to main ski developments and that such trails be designated in the field by a recognizable marker system showing grade of trail
and distances to shelters. In the first stage, the emphasis could be on short trails not requiring shelters. That a simple prefabricated shelter be designed for strategic placement along the ski-touring trails. These may also serve a summer use as well. That the warden service include these trails in a regular winter patrol and generally encourage and assist in their use.

Item IX

Although improved quality of winter facilities will be a major factor in encouraging winter use of the national parks there is need also for much greater variety of activities both indoor and outdoor. The winter evening is long in Canada, therefore, this gives added reason for some form of organized activity and evening entertainment for the winter vacationist.

Policy

That the Department will welcome the formation of a Visitor Activity Committee among the various businessmen involved in serving the public in the national park. The purpose of this voluntary committee would be to explore and advance methods and programs for making the winter tourist's visit more enjoyable and meaningful. This would not involve departmental sponsorship since this is an area for which the business community should be responsible.

Item X

The purpose of the national parks is to provide healthful recreation and relaxation for the citizens in general. Hence the emphasis is on recreational skiing for all ages and degrees of ability. It is normally not departmental policy to provide special
facilities for major competitive events. However, it is recognized that the national parks contain some of the outstanding skiing areas in the country. Therefore, while some major competitive events may be held in national parks, planning and development should be governed by the requirements of recreational skiing.

Major competitions naturally give rise to requests for costly programs for the development of special facilities geared to the needs of competitors and specialists. If it met these requests, the Department could well find itself carrying and maintaining a massive winter sports plant, suited to competitive skiing, but uneconomic to operate and quite unsuited to the needs of the primarily recreational skier.

Policy

All planning for major competitions shall anticipate the subsequent utilization of facilities, maximizing the benefits to future park recreation skiers both in terms of scale of permanent facilities and type of facilities. Structures which have little or no relationship to park needs or are grossly over-scale for park-visitor demand shall be either of temporary construction or shall be located outside park boundaries. This principle will apply to planning for any major competition sporting event.
Part III: Preliminary Plan and Program for Development of

Winter Recreation Facilities in Banff National Park

The recent comprehensive consultant study of winter sports facilities in Banff National Park showed that there was no need to develop additional winter sports centres in Banff in the near future. It was shown that the primary problems were:

(i) Need to up-date present facilities through preparation of integrated long-term development plans for each area, taking into account the character and volume of today's skiing demands and those of the future.

(ii) Need to improve quality of facilities rather than quantity.

(iii) Need to improve access to two of the three present skiing centres.

(iv) Need to provide a broader scope of activities both in the visitor service centres and at the ski site.

(v) Need to up-date and generally improve the quality of ski area management.

It has been estimated that demand for ski facilities will triple by 1971; but the three present areas have ample undeveloped capacity to accommodate demand up to at least 1976, provided the sites are developed properly and managed efficiently.
The proposed development plan and program for each site is as follows:

A. Banff Townsite

- To serve as the primary visitor service for all three ski developments and the overnight accommodation location for Mount Norquay ski development.

- Formation of a voluntary visitor activity committee will be welcomed. Such a committee could animate the many attractions and features of interest for the benefit of winter visitors. An effort could be made by this committee to provide basic accommodation of various prices and to develop programs for visitors to participate in during the day-time and in the evenings.

- The departmental role must be that of assuring good development of the physical plant for these facilities and activities. In general this means continued implementation of the Urban Development Plan for Banff Townsite with a high priority for establishment of an all-season pedestrian mall.

- Long-term development must also provide for a new and much-improved park and information centre located on Banff Avenue as shown in the Urban Development Plan.
B. Mount Norquay Ski Area

Objective - To develop a day-skiing centre with an ultimate capacity of 3,000 skiers.

The immediate needs at Mount Norquay are:

(i) Correct the imbalance in the ratio of expert runs to intermediate and novice slopes by expanding the latter two categories.

(ii) Develop several properly signed touring trails to capitalize on the Bow Valley View and to provide a safe, easy wilderness ski travel opportunity. This program could start with development of the shorter trails.

(iii) Update and expand day-lodge facilities.

(iv) Provide better quality supplementary winter recreation facilities to include a supervised toboggan run and children's sledding hill.

(v) Encourage one overall management of the commercial services, with the objective of improving the financial position of the marginal operations such as food and shelter services.

The Longer-term Objectives - To eventually double the capacity of the ski area and bring related services in balance.

Planned Facilities at Mount Norquay

1. Access and Parking

   - Present road is adequate for present and immediate future.
Ultimate design capacity of Norquay ski area (3,000 skiers) will necessitate upgrading of the present access road. Now that the load or capacity of the area has been estimated, a road capacity and design analysis is required to determine the ultimate road standard required to meet the peak capacity demand of about 3,000 day visitors. Due to the conspicuous location of the access road any change in standards must, as much as possible, be based on the existing right of way. The ultimate winter or summer use capacity of the Norquay area does not warrant a second road.

2. Parking Lots

- Present parking lot capacity is adequate to meet needs of the present and immediate future.

- About a 15 per cent increase in present capacity could be achieved when necessary through extension of the most easterly lot and through minor redesign and enlargement of existing lots.

3. Lifts, Slopes and Trails

(1) Wishbone No. 1

A recently completed double T-bar (1964) on the Lower Wishbone slope opens up more downhill capacity in the novice-intermediate range. To benefit fully from this equipment, additional slope clearing north of the lift is recommended (about 8 acres clearing). An interconnecting trail from Pomalift No. 2 to the Lower Wishbone is also recommended.
(ii) Wishbone No. 2

An additional T-bar serving the lower area between the Wishbone slope and the Poma hill is shown on the plan. In view of the recent avalanche experience, the possibility of this T-bar will require further study. Two other factors will determine its installation, ability of present equipment to serve these slopes (not known until a season or two operation of the new Hall T-bar), and rate of increase of skier population. It was recommended by the consultant's study to be installed in 1966. At this stage it should be indicated as a long-term possibility, subject to the above factors.

(iii) Memorial T-Bar

A further lift to serve intermediate and novice skiers is shown on the Louer Memorial slope. The suggested installation date was 1968. Again this should be approved in principle, subject to demand factors.

(iv) Chairlift

Any redevelopment should take place in the present location. Any increase in capacity or changes in basic equipment will depend on demand factors in the future. It is not warranted at present.

(v) Upper Wishbone

Servicing of this upper slope is not warranted in the near future due to the excess of serviced expert runs already existing. Awarding of the 1972 Olympics to Banff may change this situation. (Designated for Ladies Giant Slalom in the 1964 proposal.)
4. Day Lodge

The present day lodge is inadequately attempting to serve the multiple role of shelter, cafeteria and bag lunch room. There is need for separation of incompatible activities and also need for dining facilities. Consolidation of the three different concessions on Norquay is essential to provide the level of service now required. This could be encouraged by making a new lodge site available if and when this consolidation takes place.

- The planned site for the new lodge is directly north of the present lodge overlooking the main practice hill. It should provide for both dining room and cafeteria service, with the old lodge serving primarily as a warming shelter and lunch room.

- It is not recommended that this new lodge provide overnight accommodation nor is there other provision for overnight accommodation at Norquay, in view of the abundance of winter accommodations in Banff Townsite, only four miles distant.

- Eventually a supplementary warming shelter and snack bar will be required in the northern half of the development in the vicinity of Wishbone runs.
C. Sunshine Ski Area

Objective - To develop a self-contained alpine ski centre with overnight accommodations for 350 guests and skiing facilities for 1,245. A secondary purpose is to provide a summer alpine centre for trail trips.

Early Needs at Sunshine

(i) Public vehicle access to the Borgeau cabin area (two-thirds of distance to Sunshine from Trans-Canada Highway).

(ii) Expanded day lodge facilities.

(iii) Development of a summer trail system with primitive shelters at strategic points.

Long-term Needs

(iv) Increased lift capacity.

(v) Expanded overnight accommodation.

(vi) Management for all-season operation of lodge and chalets.

Planned Facilities at Sunshine

1. Access and Parking

   - Present access is inadequate due to grades and alignment which limit travel to special buses, reducing the number of visitors possible in any one day.

   - Ultimate design capacity of Sunshine will necessitate construction of a two-way road for six miles from Healey Creek to a 300-car parking lot at Borgeau cabin, a two-way bus road
for three miles from the parking lot to the lodge area, and a bus parking turn around area at the proposed day lodge site.

Survey and design should start as soon as possible to permit a staged development, with a completion date to coincide with the next major expansion of lift capacity which should be about 1968 to 1970. During the interval, improvements should be made to the existing grade to ease the present grinding bus climb and speed up the travel time.

2. Lifts, Slopes and Trails

Ultimate capacity of Sunshine is about 1,245 skiers per day and 350 overnight guests or about three times present capacity. This should be considered the design limit.

Two additional lifts are proposed in the long term as demand warrants. (Either or both of these must be correlated with provision of public vehicular access to the Borgeau cabin with a shuttle bus service on the three-mile remaining distance.)

(a) Mount Standish chairlift is the next priority in lift development and will likely be required by at least 1970 and preferably sooner to give a little better balance in the present class of ski runs by providing some intermediate expert terrain.

(b) Mount Brewster T-bar is a long-term proposal probably not justifiable before the early 1970's.
3. **Accommodations**

- The plan is to ultimately triple overnight accommodation to about 350 persons as demand warrants, and to provide for a separate day lodge to accommodate the expected greatly increased day visitation upon completion of the road to Borgeau cabin.

- A site is designated for a new day lodge at the northwest corner of the development, adjacent to the bus parking turn around. This would provide warming space, lunch rooms, cafeteria and possibly some staff accommodation. This is an early requirement to meet present and expected demand. The present lodge could continue to serve a dining and cafeteria function primarily for overnight guests.

- As to overnight facilities, a plan of development by the current area operator has already been approved. Further expansion should be contingent on adequate provision for employees and early construction of the day lodge.

D. **Lake Louise (Temple-Whitehorn Ski Areas)**

Objective - Development for the purpose of the primary vacation ski centre for Banff, with an ultimate capacity of 3,500 skiers, overnight accommodations in the vicinity of 2,000 serving a summer and winter use, and a satellite alpine vacation ski centre with a secondary summer-use function in the Temple area. It is also planned to develop a third major ski slope in the Lookout area below Temple Lodge. This, along with expansion of the Temple area, would overcome the present deficiency of novice and intermediate ski terrain.
Early Requirements

(i) Acceleration of the current development at Lower Lake Louise, with the objective of providing overnight accommodation and related facilities for 400 persons in the next two-year period. Provision should be made for integrated supplementary facilities for dining, evening entertainment, and ice-skating.

(ii) Improved access to Temple-Lookout area.

(iii) Linking of existing and proposed ski slopes.

(iv) Development of novice intermediate ski slopes to overcome the present imbalance favouring the expert skier.

(v) Development of a summer trail system emanating from the Temple area with primitive shelters at strategic points.

Long-term Requirements

(i) Development of road access, parking and day lodge to service the Olympic runs.

(ii) Installation of the Olympic chairlift.

(iii) Installation of a connecting lift between the Temple and Lookout ski areas (Larch Chairlift).

(iv) Installation of the Whitehorn aerial tramway - second leg of sedan lift.
Planned Facilities at Whitehorn-Temple Ski Areas

1. **Access and Parking**

   - Present access (bus only to Temple and sedan lift to Whitehorn) limits the potential development of these ski areas.
   - Significant further development of ski runs and facilities must be premised on public vehicle access to the Lower Ptarmigan Valley to a point about 1/2 mile below Temple Lodge. This is a five-mile road using grades up to 10%. Terminal parking for an ultimate capacity of 500 vehicles will be required by the mid-1970's.
   - Of lesser priority is a 1/4 mile spur off the Temple Road to service a future 300-car terminal parking lot at the foot of the Olympic runs.
   - (If Banff is awarded the Olympics at the 1966 decision date, then the above priorities will be reversed and the road to the base of the Olympic runs will be most urgent.)

2. **Lifts, Slopes and Trails**

   (i) **Eagle Chairlift:**

   This is the connecting link between the two present ski areas of Whitehorn and Temple Lodge areas, and consequently the highest priority ski lift in the area.
   - It has a second important function of linking the proposed Lookout ski development, adjacent to and below Temple Lodge, to the Whitehorn facilities.
- Location of the Eagle lift is critical in regard to the existing and potential ski areas it will be serving; hence, an actual layout of Ptarmigan terminal parking and related facilities is essential before the lift is sited.

(ii) Lookout Chairlift:
- Development of the Lookout ski area would help to overcome the present deficiency of novice-intermediate terrain. It also ties in with the Ptarmigan terminal parking and related facilities which are being assigned a high priority.

(iii) Silvertip T-Bar:
- Since this facility would further emphasize the much needed novice and intermediate category of ski slope, it also is assigned a high priority.

(iv) Whitehorn Sedan Lift:
- Even with road access to Ptarmigan Valley, it is expected that with the development of overnight facilities in Lower Lake Louise there will be a steady demand for access to Whitehorn and Ptarmigan via the sedan lift.

(v) Olympic Chairlift, Whitehorn Tram (second leg of sedan lift).
- Both of these service very advanced ski runs for which there is not a great need in the immediate future.
Awarding of the Olympics for 1972 would change this picture, however, requiring early priority on these two facilities.

(vi) Richardson T-Bar:
- Shown on the plan of Temple-Lookout area for long-term development as needed.

(vii) Trails and Signing:
- Some modifications are required in existing trails to improve safety and skiability. These are mainly Ptarmigan II and five-mile trails in the Temple area.
- New lifts will involve new trail patterns to disperse crowds and give the variety required. In all cases these must be designed with safety in mind and with greater emphasis on novice and intermediate grades than was the case in the past.
- A trail signing system is essential to sort out the fairly complex pattern now evolving in the Temple-Whitehorn area. A system of coloured trail markers to designate the class of trail must also be devised and installed as soon as possible now that greater numbers of people unfamiliar with the terrain are being attracted to the area.
- A summer trail system emanating from the planned Ptarmigan parking lot is proposed. This could be the jumping-off point for extensive wilderness trail trips or even short trips to alpine terrain in the vicinity.
A program of signing, shelters and self-service information along with an interpretative program could help to make all-season operation of the day lodge economically feasible.

3. Accommodation

- It is planned that the Lower Lake Louise Visitor Centre, now being developed, will be the accommodation centre for the Whitehorn-Temple Lookout ski complex. It is being planned to serve both summer and winter visitor demands, with an early objective of 400 persons and an ultimate capacity of about 2,000 persons.

- The Temple area will continue to be a limited satellite overnight accommodation serving both summer and winter needs.

- Day lodges are planned for the Temple Lookout area and the Whitehorn area, adjacent to the parking lots in both cases. Highest priority is on the former, the latter probably not being necessary for ten years or more, unless the Olympics are awarded to Banff.

- The day lodge should perform a multiple function of warming shelter, cafeteria, lunch room, ski shop and rest-rooms. Provision for expansion should be made in the design.
Part IV: Gross Expenditures

The long-term plans advanced in Part III show integrated developments in which the capacities of ski slopes, lodges, parking lots and access roads are related one to the other, the controlling factors on scale being the area of land available for development as ski runs and the desirable density of skiers.

The overall plan for each area showing development to a desirable capacity, with each facility the proper size in relation to others, plus past and proposed expenditure figures, can be a rough guide in judging the suitability and scale of a proposed development scheme.

Further use studies and economic studies are presently being carried out with the objective of determining, with greater assurance, the probable timing of the various proposed developments to ensure economically sound investments.

The attached chart shows in table form the present capital investment and probable future expenditures to meet the scale of development planned over the long term. These are gross figures adapted from the Canadian Resort Services 1964 Survey. The figures on government investment do not include road access costs and are generally low due to the unavailability of many of the earlier cost figures.
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<th>Ski Area</th>
<th>Present Development</th>
<th>Early Development Requirements</th>
<th>Long Term Development Requirements</th>
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* Gross figures; adapted from Canadian Resort Services 1964 Survey

** Up to June, 1964 Government Investment figures are low by departmental calculations and do not include road access costs.
SKETCH PLAN #2

SUNSHINE
BANFF NATIONAL PARK
PROPOSED LONG TERM DEVELOPMENT

ADAPTED FROM CANADIAN RESORT SERVICES PLAN
JULY 10, 1964
SUMMIT OF WHITEHORN

WHITEHORN TRAM

WHITEHORN POMA

OLYMPIC CHAIRLIFT

NOVICE LIFT

SEDAN LIFT

ROAD TO TEMPLE
5 Miles
Lower Lake Louise to Temple

PARKING

SKETCH PLAN #3

WHITE HORN
BANFF NATIONAL PARK

PROPOSED LONG TERM
DEVELOPMENT

ADAPTED FROM
CANADIAN RESORT SERVICES PLAN
JULY 10, 1964

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