

Buffalo Guard Station (Buffalo Ranger Station)
U.S. Highway 20/191 at Buffalo River
Island Park
Fremont County
Idaho

HABS No. ID-65

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22-ILPA,
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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Western Region
Department of the Interior
San Francisco, CA 94102

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
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PART I. GENERAL INFORMATION

A. Location

The Buffalo Guard Station is located in the rural community of Island Park, Fremont County, Idaho, approximately 60m east of U.S. Highway 20 and 191, and 90m south of the Buffalo River. The station is a component of what is now called the Island Park Ranger Station. The nearest Post Office is the Island Park Office, located in Pond's Lodge approximately 230m north of the station on the highway. Maps 1 and 2 show the general and specific locations.

B. Ownership and Occupancy

The station is owned by the USDA, Forest Service, Targhee National Forest, and has been since its construction in 1936. It was initially occupied by the Forest's Big Springs Ranger District, then by the Buffalo Ranger District. It is now occupied by the Forest's Island Park Ranger District, Island Park, Idaho 83429.

References to the chain of title to the land upon which the station stands are in the Supervisor's Office, Targhee National Forest, 420 N. Bridge Street, St. Anthony, Idaho 83445.

- 1905 Included in Henry's Lake Forest Reserve, established by Presidential proclamation on May 23, 1905. 34 Stat. 3502.
- 1908 Included when Henry's Lake Forest Reserve was combined with a portion of the Yellowstone Forest Reserve to establish the Targhee National Forest on July 1, 1908. E.O. 871.
- 1950 Withdrawn as a National Forest Administrative Site, December 26, 1950. E.O. 9337.

C. Present Use

The Buffalo Guard Station buildings served as year-round residences for Forest Service employees until 1984. The buildings were removed by sale on June 15, 1984.

D. Significance:

The Keeper of the National Register has determined that the station is eligible under the criteria set forth in 36 CFR 60.4 a&c. The Keeper stated:

"The Buffalo Ranger Station is associated with a significant theme in American history, the major/Federal recovery effort during the Depression era, and is of sufficient age to permit an objective evaluation of its significance. The ranger station is locally important because it is the only extant complex constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the Targhee National Forest that utilized log siding as a building material. A standard plan was followed in the construction of the major buildings and a landscape architect designed a site plan for the placement of the structures. The property retains sufficient integrity of design, materials and workmanship to reflect this conscious planning process and represents both the land management philosophy of the Forest Service and the material accomplishments of the Civilian Conservation Corps during the Depression era."

Civilian Conservation Corps enrollees constructed Buildings 1101, 1102, 1201, and 1308. The Corps was a key element in the Depression recovery effort, integrating an entire generation into the American economic system and rehabilitating the Nation's natural resources. About three million men between the ages of 18 and 23 were employed, with significant stabilizing effects on society. They were rewarded for hard work and given experience that facilitated their entry into more conventional jobs. Had they not been so employed, it is likely that they would have felt little loyalty to traditional economic and political institutions and would have pressed for radical, even revolutionary, change (Salmond 1967: 3-25, 102-134; Lacy 1976: 19-20).

The impact of the C.C.C. on American forestry, and on the Forest Service in particular, was immense. The Emergency Conservation Work Act, which established the Corps, made funds and labor available to undertake resource management and facility development projects that had been deferred for years. Over half of the trees ever planted in the United States were planted by the Corps. At least 65,000 miles of telephone line and 97,000 miles of road were constructed, and four million man-days were spent in fighting fires for the Forest Service alone.

Strict limits on construction funds had limited the size and quality of Forest Service facilities constructed prior to the 1930's. For many years building construction expenses were limited to \$500, although by the early 1930's the limits had been raised to \$2500. There were no limits on the costs of buildings constructed with Emergency Conservation Work funds.

The Corps constructed over 3,400 buildings for the Forest Service. During the 1930's the Targhee Supervisor's Office and each of the Ranger District offices were rehabilitated or constructed by the C.C.C. This work corrected defects in earlier construction and made adequate office and residential space available for the first time in the Forest's history.

Intermountain Region construction standards of the C.C.C. era (USDA, Forest Service 1935) emphasized harmony with the surrounding environment and economy of construction and maintenance. Frame or log buildings were most often constructed, to underscore the Service's role in the production and utilization of wood. Frame construction was specified where timber on or near the site was broad-leaf, and log construction was specified where the timber was coniferous (USDA, Forest Service 1935: BP-25). Building standards discouraged the use of log siding on a frame building. The Buffalo Guard Station is located in a lodgepole pine timber stand, and thus log construction was the specified type. No documents explaining the selection of log siding have been found. It is possible that the C.C.C. enrollees were not perceived as being adequately skilled in log construction. Building standards allowed the use of frame buildings in situations in which it was difficult to employ someone who could build a good log structure.

The use of standard building plans, created by Forest Service architects, reduced design costs and created economies of scale in the procurement of building supplies. They also made it possible for a relatively small organization to supervise the large C.C.C. labor force (Steen 1976: 216). For example, in 1936, the year of construction of the Buffalo Guard Station, the Targhee had a staff of about 18 permanent employees. There were at least two C.C.C. csmps on the Forest, each with 200 enrollees supervised by four Army officers. Project supervision was provided by the Forest staff. The use of standard plans freed personnel for supervision by reducing design time, and also reduced the amount of supervision required by making experience gained on one project directly relevant to another.

The Keeper's reference to the land management philosophy of the Forest Service alludes to the changing balance between custodial and multiple-use management throughout the organization's history (Frome 1984: 75-96). For the first third of this century, management of National Forest land was primarily custodial. However, by the 1930's the timber, range, recreation and other values of National Forest lands were evident, and the agency was developing a policy of multiple-use management, attempting to balance commodity production and non-commodity values. As re-

source shortages have occurred since World War II, this policy has come increasingly to the fore, accompanied by the need to expand the Service to employ the specialists needed to gather and analyze information about Forest resources. In the 1930's Forest and Ranger District staffs were small. Ranger Stations of that time provided residential, office and storage space for a District Ranger and perhaps a seasonal assistant. Present-day facilities must be much larger. For example, the present-day Island Park Ranger Station accommodates 23 permanent and 29 seasonal employees, larger than the entire Targhee National Forest staff of the 1930's.

PART II. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical Context

The Buffalo Guard Station was constructed in a stand of lodgepole pine timber. Lodgepole (Pinus contorta) was the only tree species in the overstory, and once formed a continuous cover. This cover was largely removed in the 1960's and 70's as a result of infestation by mountain pine bark beetles and by building construction. Huckleberry (Vaccinium scopularum) dominates the understory in undisturbed timber stands, and pinegrass (Calamagrostis canadensis) and elksedge (Carex geyerii) are also abundant. The pinegrass and elksedge dominate cutover areas.

The station was constructed to be visible from Highway 20/191, through a screen of lodgepole pine. This screen has been eliminated by the recent cutting. The distance of the buildings from the highway, 60m, is the maximum permitted by Regional standards at the time of construction (USDA, Forest Service 1935). This may have been because of the heavy traffic on the highway and the fact that the station is downwind. The approach to the station led the visitor to a parking area in front of the office, which was also in keeping with design standards. The house was set somewhat closer to the driveway than was the office, which reflected recommendations that the residence be the most prominent building in a station group. A view of the Buffalo River, 90m north, seems to have been an insignificant consideration in the station layout. The view was partially screened by lodgepole, and most living room windows faced the highway and the office.

When the station was constructed, the area to the south and east was also a lodgepole timber stand and was undeveloped. The bark beetle infestation of the 1960's and 1970's resulted in the removal of large numbers of trees from these areas. In addition, administration of other salvage timber sales throughout the District as a result of the infestation necessitated expansion of the facilities, and there are now 15 other buildings in the vicinity. Much of the recent construction has employed prefabricated buildings. Where the station once appeared forested, rustic and isolated, it now appears open and suburban.

B. Historical Context

Development of the Buffalo Guard Station has primarily responded to the economy of the Island Park area. Initial development of Island Park occurred when the Union Pacific Railroad constructed a spur to Yellowstone National Park in 1905-1907. The railroad brought much of the Forest's commercial timber within 16km of its rails, and many small logging operations were established. In addition, several resorts catering to Yellowstone tourists sprang into

existence. Early Forest Service facilities were constructed close to the logging and recreation use and thus close to the rail line. The Big Springs Ranger Station, predecessor to the Buffalo Guard Station, was constructed in 1908 within 1.6km of the railroad tracks.

The increasing popularity of the automobile in the years following World War I led to a decline in railroad traffic. Timber was hauled on the highway that eventually became U.S. 20/191, and increasing numbers of Yellowstone tourists arrived by car. The level of activity along the highway made it necessary to construct a toolhouse for fire equipment storage at the Buffalo site in 1921. A summer home area, a campground, and a popular resort were all adjacent to this site. Eventually, a decision was made to construct a station at this location, to house a seasonal Forest Guard who would handle fire prevention and suppression. By the 1930's, the buildings at Big Springs were hadly in need of repair. Rather than rebuild them, the Ranger's headquarters were moved to the Buffalo site, closer to the new focus of activity (the Big Springs station was about 6.5km from the highway). With the change in location went a change in name, from Big Springs Ranger District to Buffalo Ranger District.

Both the Big Springs and Buffalo Ranger Stations were used in the summer only. Until the 1970's, winter recreational use was limited, and average snow depths of over two meters make logging impractical. During the winter, operations were moved to Ashton, about 40km south of the Buffalo Ranger Station on Highway 20/191. There, the Buffalo Ranger shared offices with the Ashton and Porcupine Ranger Districts.

A mountain pine bark beetle epidemic began in Island Park in the late 1950's. Attempts at control of the insect began in 1962 and resulted in both the expansion of the Buffalo Ranger Station site and its conversion from a summer-only to a year-round facility in 1966. The name was again changed, this time to the Island Park Ranger District. The beetles spread in spite of the control efforts, resulting in the need to salvage the dead and dying timber. The timber workforce increased, and further expansion of the facilities was necessary in the 1970's.

Additional information on the historical context of the Buffalo Station can be found in the Significance section of this report, above.

C. Specific History and Physical Description

Planning for construction of the Buffalo Ranger Station began in about 1935. The initial intent was to construct a station to house a Forest Guard engaged in fire prevention and suppression in the recreation areas along the highway. There are no original site plans (which at the time were called Improvement Plans) for the station in Forest Service files. The original landscape plan is

for a Guard Station (Photograph ID-65-3). Field work for the plan was done by D.B. Partridge, Recreation Planner for the Inter-mountain Region, and was checked by H.L. Curtiss, Regional Landscape Architect. This plan shows three buildings, an office, house and garage, discussed in detail in Part II. A D-shaped driveway approached the station from the highway (west), and led to a public parking area to the south of the office, now Building 1201. A driveway off the east end of the parking area provided access to the residence, Building 1101, and the garage, Building 1308.

The three original buildings of the station were constructed in 1936 by Civilian Conservation Corps enrollees. The buildings were laid out in an L-shaped plan, open to the southeast. The office was the southernmost and was constructed on an east-west axis. The residence, lay about 15m to the north. This was the distance recommended in Regional standards. The residence was constructed on a north-south axis, which again conformed to Regional standards calling for an alternation of rooflines. The garage was located about 8m east of the residence and was constructed on a north-south axis. Neither the distance from the house nor the axis of the roof conformed to standards. The reasons are not documented, but in the case of the roofline this seems to have been necessitated by the location of the driveway.

At this time, the buildings at the existing Ranger headquarters at Big Springs were in disrepair. Rather than rebuild them, a decision was made to relocate the District Office to the Buffalo site, which was more accessible to the public. A residence, Building 1102, was added to the station plan, north of the guard residence. It was constructed in 1939 and 1940 with Civilian Conservation Corps labor. A pumphouse, Building 1306-A, was constructed east of the second residence in 1940. The source of the labor for construction is not known, but does not seem to have been the C.C.C. No improvement or landscape plans documenting this phase of the station's history are available, and the names of the individuals responsible for the layout are not known. The axis of Building 1102 is north-south, in common with that of Building 1101. However, a prominent gable on Building 1101 preserves the appearance of alternation in the rooflines.

With the onset of the bark beetle epidemic several additional buildings were constructed or moved to the site and placed to the east and south of the existing buildings. An expanded office and three-bedroom house were constructed in 1962, and a warehouse, pumphouse, bunkhouses, trailer shelters and additional residences have since been added to the site. During this period, a former trailer shelter was moved to the east side of Building 1306-A to serve as a garage for the occupants of Building 1102. The date of this alteration is not known, other than that it occurred sometime after 1960.

The recent development has relocated most activity away from the early buildings. When the new office was constructed, the original driveway was blocked and removed, and access relocated well to the south of the original Buffalo buildings.

PART IV. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Unpublished Documents

U.S. General Services Administration, Seattle Federal Archives and Record Center. Record Group 95, Accession No. 61-A452, FRC Container No. 12157. U-Administrative Sites.

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Intermountain Region.
File 7300 "Buildings".

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Targhee National Forest
File 1680 "History" and File 7300 "Buildings",

B. Publications

Frome, Michael. 1984. The Forest Service, second edition. Boulder: Westview Press.

Lacy, Leslie Alexander. 1976. The Soil Soldiers: The Civilian Conservation Corps in the Great Depression. Radnor: Chilton Book Co.

McDonald, James A. 1983. Cultural resource evaluation, Targhee National Forest administrative sites of the Civilian Conservation Corps era, TG83-122. St. Anthony: Targhee National Forest.

Salmond, John A. 1967. The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942: A New Deal Case Study. Durham: Duke University Press.

Steen, Harold K. 1976. The U.S. Forest Service: A History. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service. 1928. The National Forest Manual. Regulations and Instructions. Washington D.C.

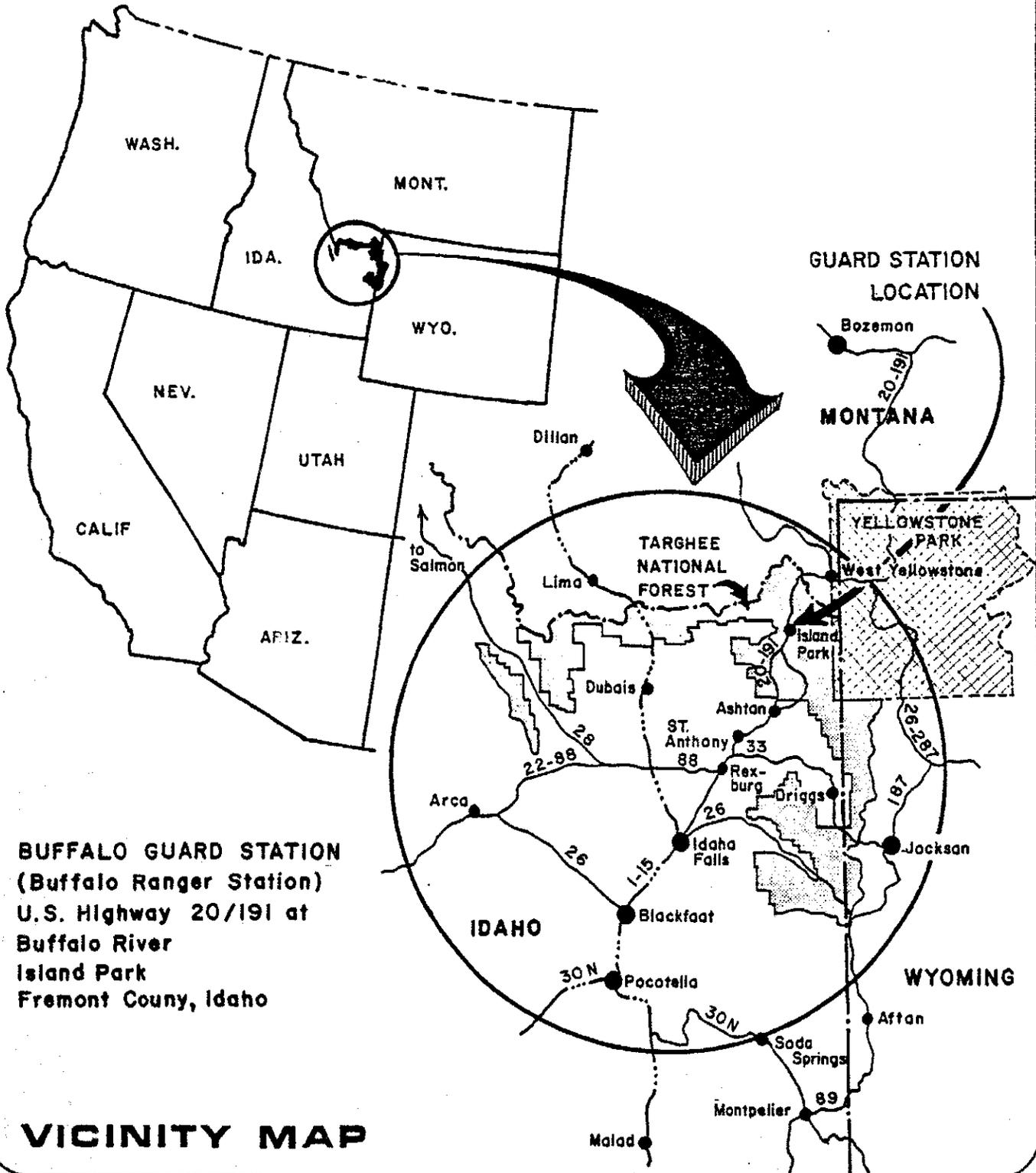
_____. 1935. Building Construction Manual. Ogden: Region Four.

PART V. PROJECT INFORMATION

Three of the Buffalo Guard Station Buildings (ID-65-A, B and D) were removed by sale to the general public on June 15, 1984. Two (ID-65-C and E) were relocated within the Island Park Ranger Station compound. ID-65-F was demolished. The project causing these actions is the Island Park Ranger Station expansion, undertaking of the USDA, Forest Service, Targhee National Forest. The purpose of the project is to increase the residential space at the Island Park Ranger Station.

Written documentation for the Buffalo Guard Station was compiled by James A. McDonald, Archeologist, Targhee National Forest, P.O. Box 208, St. Anthony, Idaho 83445. Photographic documentation of the buildings was produced by Clark Reglar, 678 1/2 Willard Avenue, Pocatello, Idaho 83201.

TARGHEE NATIONAL FOREST

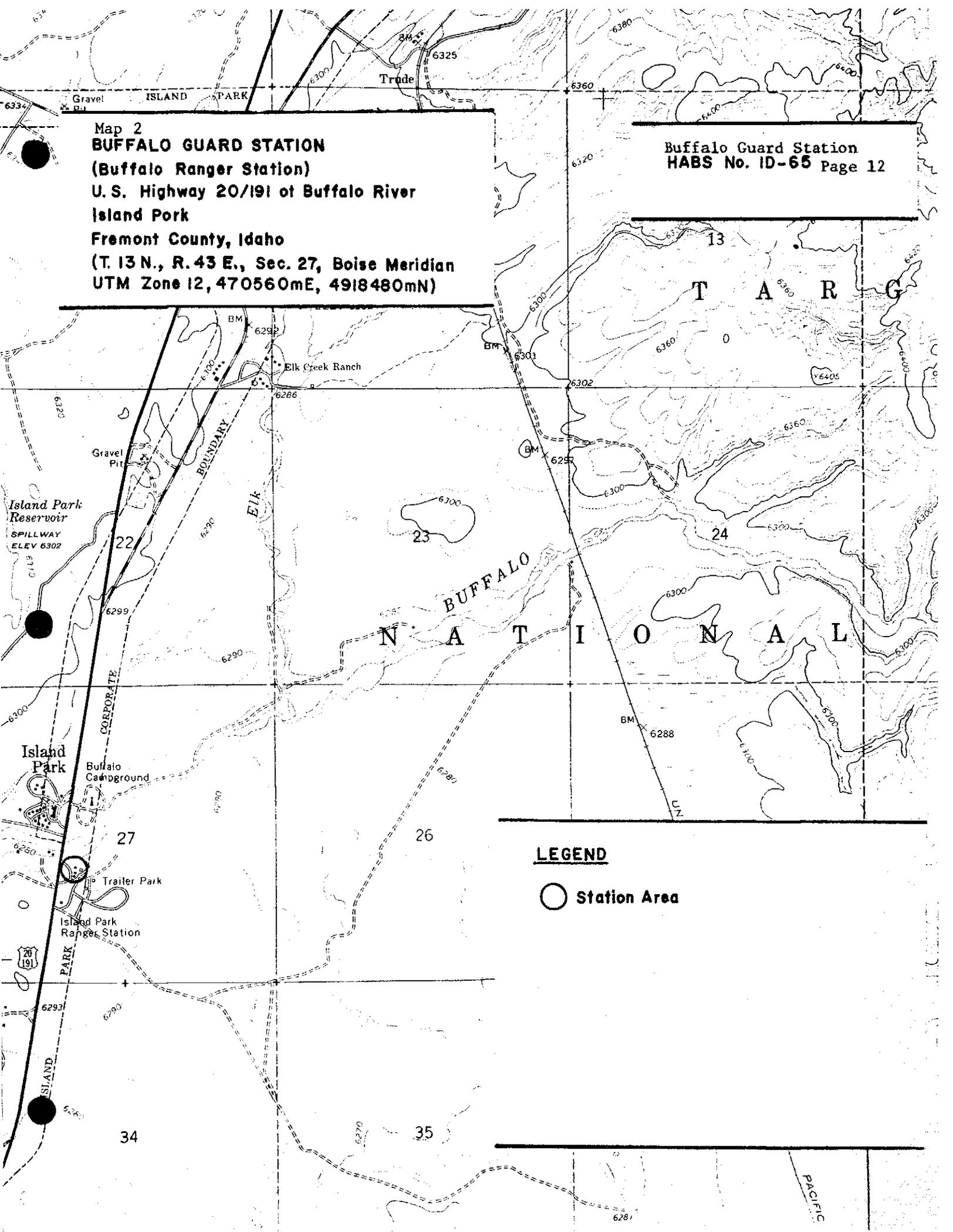


BUFFALO GUARD STATION
(Buffalo Ranger Station)
U.S. Highway 20/191 at
Buffalo River
Island Park
Fremont County, Idaho

VICINITY MAP

Map 2
BUFFALO GUARD STATION
(Buffalo Ranger Station)
U. S. Highway 20/191 of Buffalo River
Island Park
Fremont County, Idaho
(T. 13 N., R. 43 E., Sec. 27, Boise Meridian
UTM Zone 12, 470560mE, 4918480mN)

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LEGEND

○ Station Area

Buffalo

River

