NPS Form 10-900
(Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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NATIONAL REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Burgess Falls Hydroelectric Station
other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number Hwy 135 and Falling Water River/Burgess Falls S.N.A. [N/A] not for publication
city, town Cookeville [X] vicinity
state Tennessee code TN county Putnam code 141 zip code

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
[ ] private	[ ] building(s)		buildings
[ ] public-local	[X] district	2	sites
[X] public-State	[ ] site	1	5 structures
[ ] public-Federal	[ ] structure		objects
	[ ] object	3	5 Total

Name of related multiple property listing:
Pre-TVA Hydroelectric Development in TN, 1901-1933

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this [X] nomination [ ] request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property [X] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria. [ ] See continuation sheet.

Herbert L. Harper — 5/22/90

Signature of certifying official — Date

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer
Tennessee Historical Commission

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property [ ] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria. [ ] See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official — Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

[✓] entered in the National Register. [ ] See continuation sheet.
[ ] determined eligible for the National Register. [ ] See continuation sheet.
[ ] determined not eligible for the National Register.
[ ] removed from the National Register.
[ ] other, (explain:) _____

Mark D. Baker — Entered in the National Register — 5 July 1990

for

Signature of the Keeper — Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)	Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)
INDUSTRY: energy facility	Not in Use

7. Description

Architectural Classification (enter categories from instructions)	Materials (enter categories from instructions)
N/A	foundation Concrete walls Concrete roof N/A other N/A

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Burgess Falls Hydroelectric Station is located in Putnam County (population 47,690), on the Falling Water River, on the Cumberland Plateau in Central Tennessee. (See Appendices A and B.) It is situated some nine (9) miles south of Cookeville just off Tennessee State Highway 135, and within the boundaries of the Burgess Falls State Natural Area. The dam forms a bridge across the Falling Water River within the Natural Area. The remaining penstock and flume supports and remnants of the 1922 and 1929 powerhouses are reached by following the River Trail downstream from the dam, along the banks of the Falling Water River, past Burgess Falls. Access to the site is gained by a perilous climb down the bluff to the floodplain and then downriver. "Old Access Road" within the Natural Area, intersects the River Trail Loop near the nearly vertical bluff overlooking the Falling Water River. (See brochure, Appendix C.)

The Burgess Falls Hydroelectric Station is another example of a publicly-owned hydroelectric facility in Tennessee. It was owned and operated by the City of Cookeville, the seat of Putnam County. Cookeville had its first steam powered generator in 1904. In 1919, the city officials, realizing that more power was in demand, bought Burgess Falls for $6,500. John A. Switzer, Professor of Engineering at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville, took a temporary position as City Engineer in 1921 to oversee the construction of the hydroelectric utility. By January 1922, the system began operating by diverting water through a flume to a powerhouse located just below Burgess Falls. The original dam was 310 feet long and twenty-six feet high and consisted of a concrete gravity section and an earthfill section with a concrete core wall. The intake was located close to the left abutment and maneuvered water into a wood stave penstock, which was thirty inches in diameter. The penstock conveyed the water about a half mile (2,631 feet) to the powerhouse. The course of the penstock twice crossed the course of the Falling Water River on suspension bridges and, at one point, went through a tunnel dug into the rock of a bluff. The powerhouse was a concrete structure measuring eighteen feet by twenty feet and contained one turbine manufactured by the Wellman-Seaver-Morgan Company. A nineteen inch bronze runner developed 650 horsepower under a head of 220 feet, giving the plant a rating of 360 kW. This facility operated until the flood on June 29, 1928 which washed out the earthen portion of the dam (see Historic Views, numbers 1 - 5) and subsequently inundated and destroyed the powerhouse.

☒ See continuation sheet

A new steel-reinforced-concrete dam and power house were built in 1929 along essentially the same plan (except that in 1929 the penstock arrangement changed slightly so that water was conveyed on the south side of the Falling Water River - see Historic Views 1 and 2, and photograph number 13) and the plant operated continually until 1944 [see Appendix D]. In 1951 its contents were sold for salvage. The current dam (1929) is approximately 370 feet in length and forty feet high. The reservoir is controlled by seven - twenty-two feet by ten feet spillway gates, four of which are presently secured in the open position. There is a low level sluice and a thirty inch steel penstock located in the left section of the overflow portion of the dam. The mobile spillway gate motor is non-operative.

The remains of both powerhouses can be seen along the Falling Water River just below Burgess Falls. All that remains are the concrete floor and supporting foundations members, a few mammoth penstock supports and the remnants of a turbine from the 1929 facility. In 1973 the City of Cookeville sold its interests in the property to the State of Tennessee which has developed the domain as a state natural area.[1]

[1] Tennessee Valley Authority, Technical Report Series, Small Hydro Program Feasibility Report for Burgess Falls Dam, (Knoxville, Tenn.; TVA, February 1982) and; Kelly Thompson, "Burgess Falls Dam Revival Eyed Again," Cookeville Herald-Citizen, May 20, 1988, and Ibid., February 5, 1975, and; Carl F. Ledbetter, "Burgess Falls, Indians, Industry, Intrigue," Current Lines, the Newsletter of Upper Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation, Vol. 7, No. 1, January, 1989, pp. 1-3, and; Mary Jean DeLozier, Putnam County, Tennessee: 1850-1970, (Nashville, Tenn.; McQuiddy Printing Company, 1979), pp. 230-231. Also see, pp. 149-150.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

☐ nationally ☒ statewide ☐ locally

Applicable National Register Criteria ☒ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G N/A

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)	Period of Significance	Significant Dates
Commerce	1922-1933	1922-1929
Planning		

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Significant Person: N/A

Architect/Builder: Switzer, J. A.

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Burgess Falls Hydroelectric Station is significant under criterion A because it represents the kind of local hydroelectric engineering projects typical of the kind being constructed on Tennessee's smaller rivers in the early twentieth century. The engineering is conceptually similar in design to the first hydroelectric station in Tennessee, the now inundated Loop Plant near Winchester (1901), the massive Great Falls site (1917) in White County, and at the colossal Calderwood site (1930) in Blount County, all of which utilize tunnels augured though solid rock to direct water through a river bend to a powerhouse. The site is also significant under criterion A in that it was a municipally built, owned, and operated facility. That is, it is closely associated with the so-called "Progressive Era" in Tennessee's and America's early twentieth century history. It was a time when citizens, reacting to a widely held distrust by the voting public concerning the destructive power of monopoly, frequently opted for the alternative of community rather than private ownership of public utilities.

The Burgess Fall Hydroelectric Station meets the registration requirements set forth in the MPDF, "Pre-TVA Hydroelectric Development in Tennessee, 1901 - 1933." This site retains sufficient integrity in that the 1929 dam is intact. Although its component parts - the penstocks, wooden flume, penstock supports, and power houses - do not retain the same degree of integrity as the dam, the loss of parts of these secondary elements does not compromise or diminish the significance of this pre-TVA hydroelectric site. Loss of these components do not irreversibly compromise the integrity of the facility since the surviving features communicate the significance of the site on the state level as set forth in the cover form.

☐ See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

[X] See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS): N/A

- [ ] preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- [ ] previously listed in the National Register
- [ ] previously determined eligible by the National Register
- [ ] designated a National Historic Landmark
- [ ] recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- [ ] recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- [X] State historic preservation office
- [ ] Other State agency
- [ ] Federal agency
- [ ] Local government
- [ ] University
- [ ] Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 58 acres

UTM References

	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	16	625820	3989820
B	16	626810	3989820
C	16	626820	3989280
D	16	625310	3989820

[ ] See continuation sheet

Burgess Falls, Tennessee 326 SE

Verbal Boundary Description

[X] See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundaries are sufficient to protect the historic integrity of the site.

[ ] See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title James B. Jones, Jr. Historic Preservation Specialist
organization Tennessee Historical Commission date May 1990
street & number 701 Broadway telephone 615-742-6718
city or town Nashville state Tennessee zip code 37243-0442

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Cookeville Herald-Citizen, February 5, 1975, May 20, 1988.

DeLozier, Mary Jean. Putnam County, Tennessee: 1850-1970, Nashville, Tenn.: McQuiddy Printing Company, 1979.

Ledbetter, Carl F. "Burgess Falls, Indians, Industry, Intrigue," Current Lines, the Newsletter of Upper Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation, Vol. 7, No. 1, January 1989, pp. 1-3.

Tennessee Valley Authority, Technical Report Series, Small Hydro Program Feasibility Report for Burgess Falls Dam, Knoxville, Tenn.: February 1982.

BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:

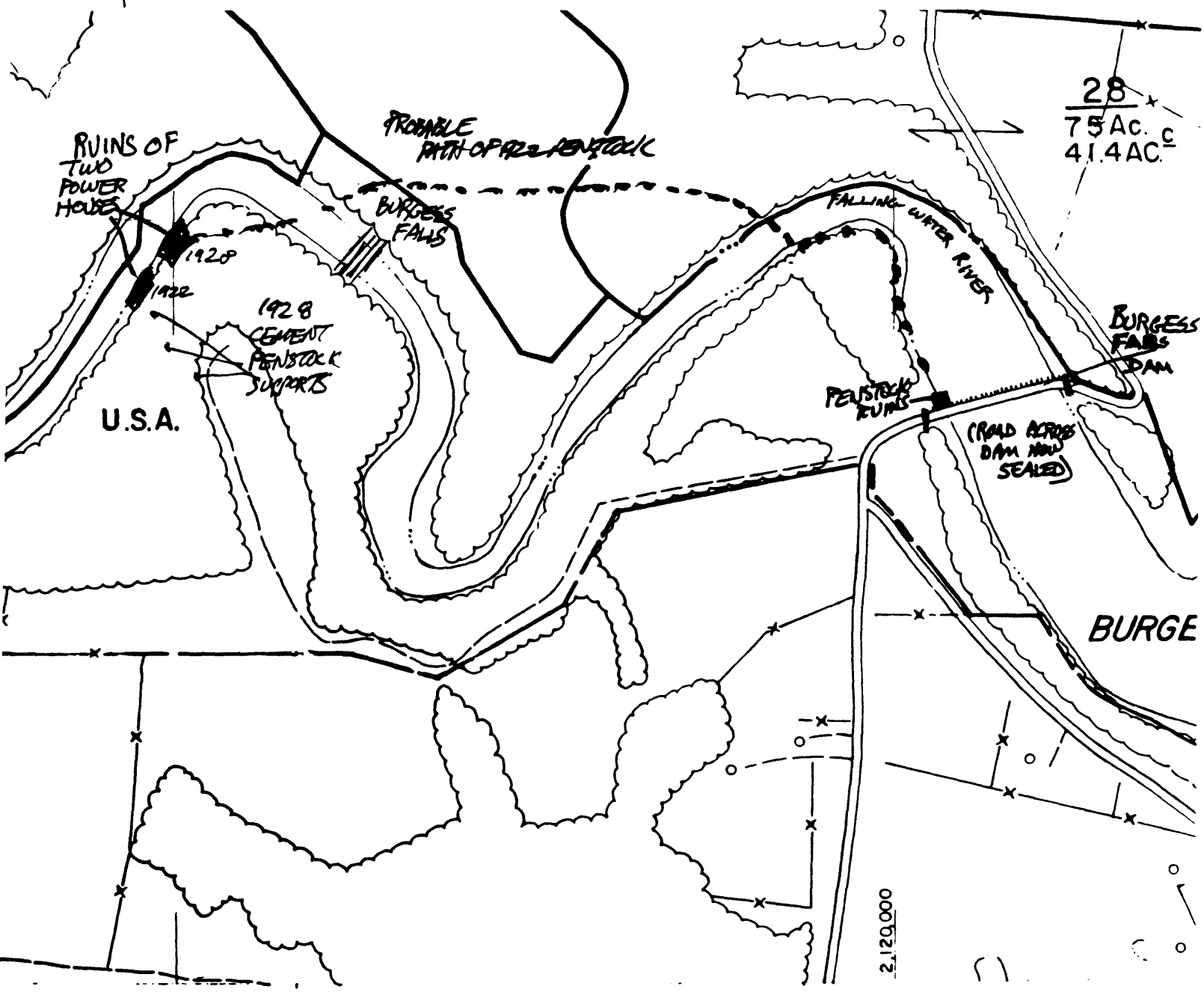
The boundaries for the Burgess Falls Hydroelectric Station include the footprints of the dam, then follows the old road across the dam to the northern boundary of the State Natural Area, thence along said boundary to the western boundary, thence along an imaginary line to the western part of the river trail, thence along said trail to Old Access Road, thence along Old Access Road to the point of beginning at the dam. See attached map.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 **Page** 2 Burgess Falls Hydroelectric Station

Map 1 of 2



Putnam Co. Tax Map No. 118
Scale 1" = 400'

Burgess Falls Hydroelectric Station
Near Highway 135 over the Falling Water River
Cookeville vicinity, Putnam County, Tennessee
Photos by: James B. Jones, Jr.
Date: March 1989
Negs: Tennessee Historical Commission
Nashville, Tennessee

1 of 15 - 1929 Burgess Falls Dam, as it appears now, looking northeast.

2 of 15 - 1929 Burgess Falls Dam, as it appears now, looking northwest.

3 of 15 - 1929 Burgess Falls Dam as it appears now, showing floodgates, looking northeast.

4 of 15 - 1929 Burgess Falls Dam, showing floodgates, looking upstream, southeast.

5 of 15 - Penstock remains and sluice gate, Burgess Falls Dam, right bank of the Falling Water River, looking southeast.

6 of 15 - 1929 Burgess Falls Dam, showing floodgates, looking southwest.

7 Of 15 - 1922 concrete flume supports, along Falling Water River, looking southwest.

8 of 15 - Flume support structure from 1922 facility,looking across Falling Water River, looking northwest.

9 of 15 - Penstock supports for 1922 facility, along Falling Water River, just below and adjacent to Burgess Falls. Note present use as support for hiking trail steps.

10 of 15 - Remains of 1922 hydroelectric facility. Looking northwest.

11 of 15 - Remains of hydro-turbine at the 1929 site, looking southwest.

12 of 15 - Remains of 1929 hydroelectric station, mammoth penstock support, turbine collar, and assorted machinery and gears, looking southwest.

13 of 15 - Penstock supports for the 1929 hydroelectric station running up the hill, looking southeast. (See Historic View 2 of 5)

14 of 15 - Foundation supports for 1929 hydroelectric facility, looking upstream, northeast.

15 of 15 - Penstock support and broken machine parts of 1929 hydroelectric facility; historic preservation specialist to add scale. Looking downstream, southwest.

HISTORIC VIEWS:

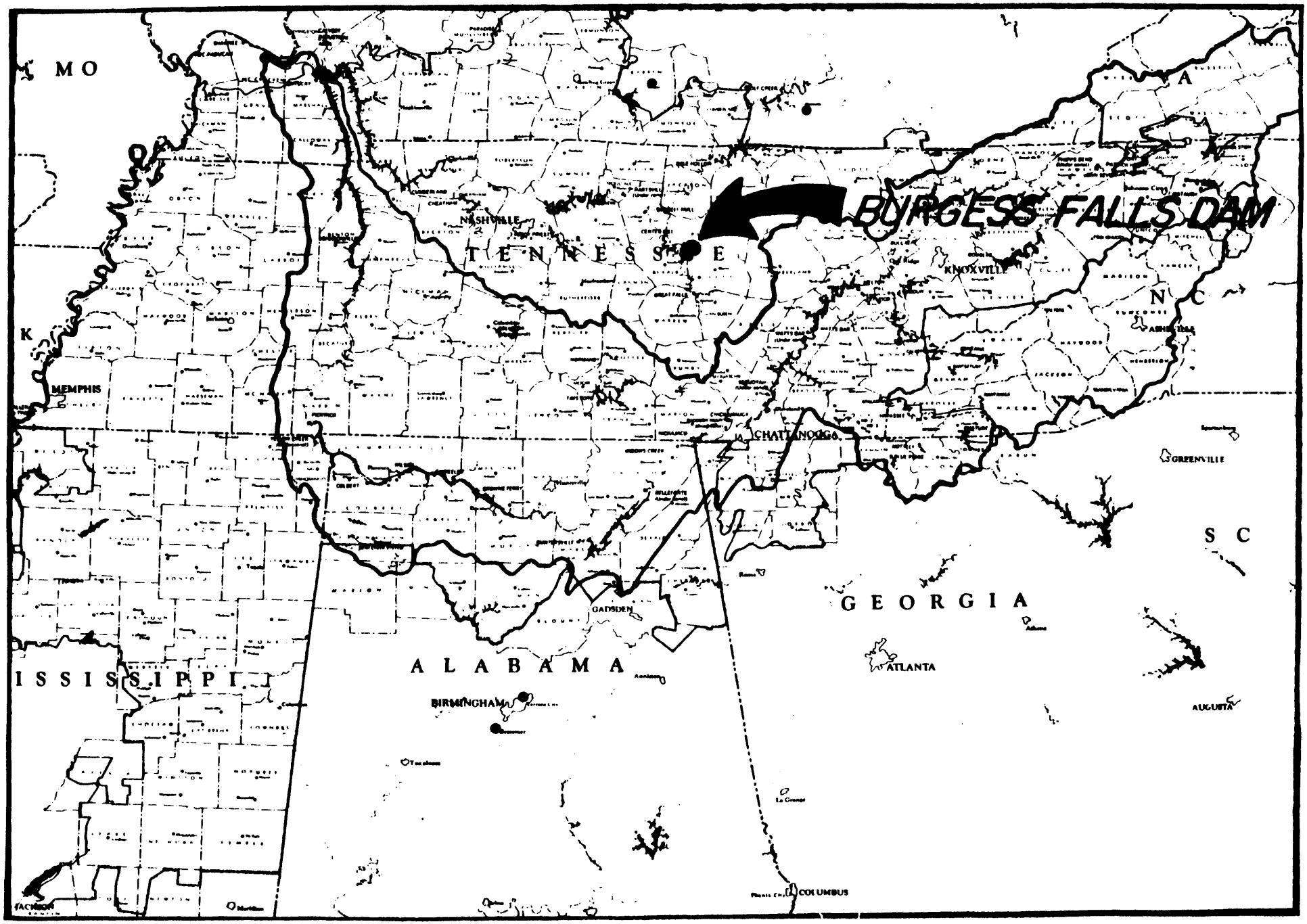
1 of 5 - 1922 hydrostation below Burgess Falls, looking east.

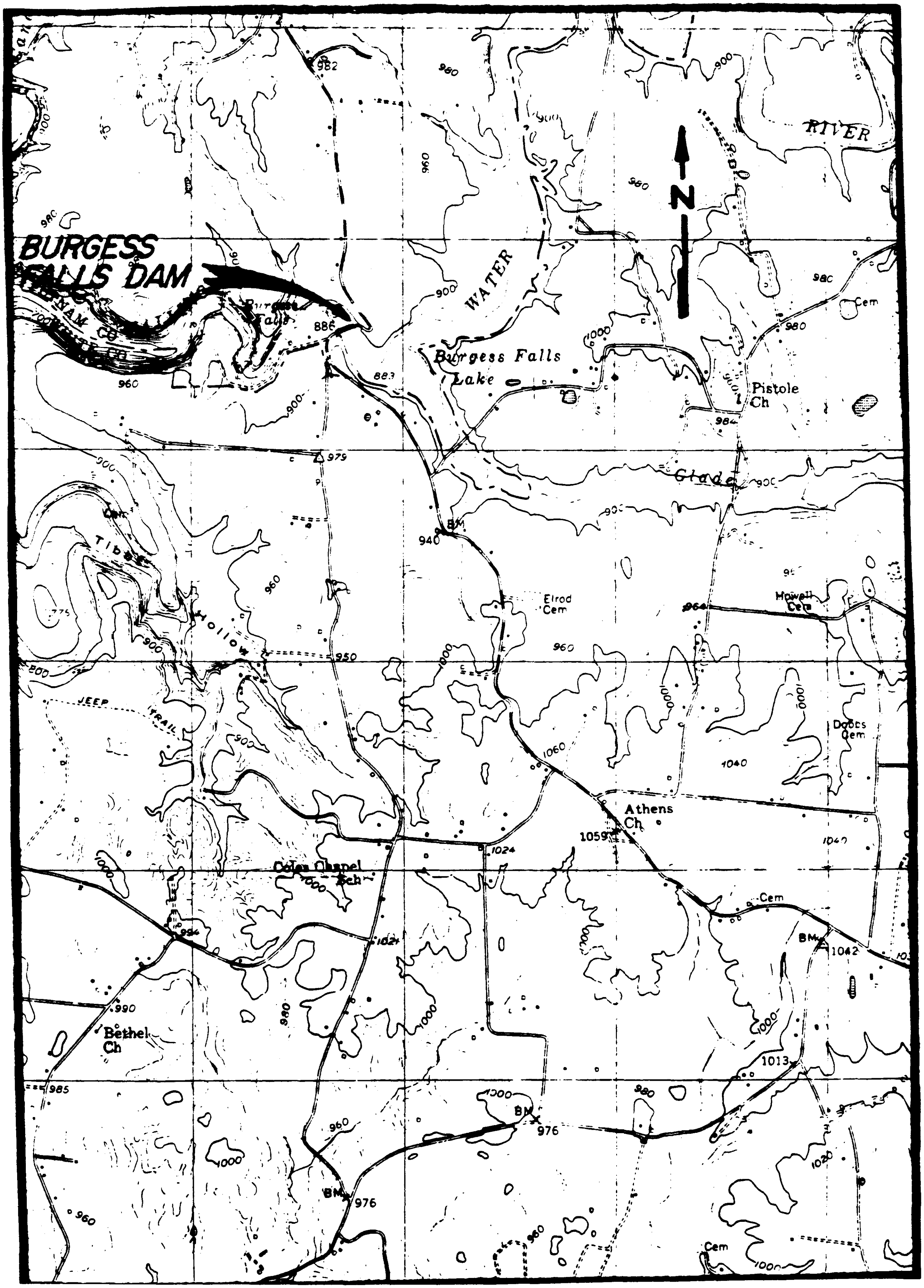
2 of 5 - 1929 hydrostation below Burgess Falls, note penstocks, looking southeast. (See photo 13 of 15)

3 of 5 - Burgess Falls Dam before 1928 flood; note earthen embankment, looking southwest.

4 of 5 - Burgess Falls Dam during 1928 flood, looking northeast.

5 of 5 - Burgess Falls Dam during 1928 flood, looking southwest.


BURGESS FALLS DAM
MO
NASHVILLE
TENNESSEE
KNOXVILLE
N C
MEMPHIS
CHATTANOOGA
GREENVILLE
S C
GEORGIA
GADSDEN
ALABAMA
ATLANTA
BIRMINGHAM
AUGUSTA
COLUMBUS


BURGESS FALLS DAM
N
RIVER
WATER
Burgess Falls Lake
Pistole Ch
Glade
Elrod Cem
Howell Cem
Dobbs Cem
Tibbs Hollow
JEEP TRAIL
Athens Ch
Coles Chapel Sch
Bethel Ch
Cem
BM
982
980
960
900
886
883
979
984
940
950
964
1000
1060
1040
1059
1024
1021
994
990
985
976
1042
1013
1020

BURGESS FALLS STATE NATURAL AREA

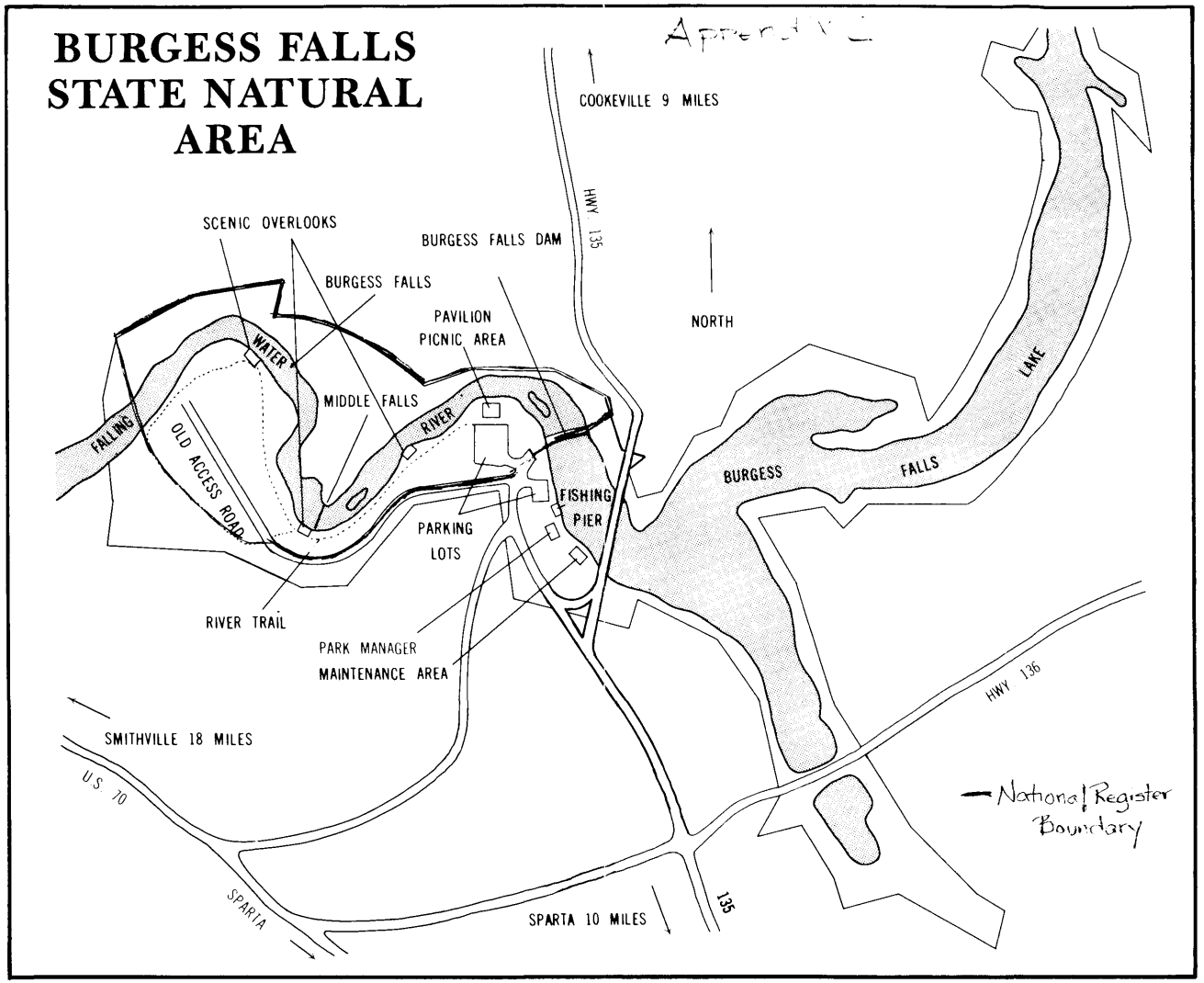
HISTORY

Burgess Falls State Natural Area, located in Middle Tennessee, lies on the eastern edge of Tennessee's Highland Rim adjacent to the Cumberland Plateau. This is characterized by sheer bluffs, narrow ridges, rolling water, and abundant mixed forest. The Falling Water River runs through the area, providing breaktaking scenery and numerous waterfalls. The area was named for Tom Burgess, who was deeded the land in 1793 by the U.S. Government as partial payment for his services in the Revolutionary War.

The Falling Water River played a very important role in the development of the surrounding region. This river provided a source of energy that, in the past, promoted this area as an important industrial region. Along this river there once stood a grist mill operated by the Burgess family, which provided meal and flour to many settlers of the region. Also, powered by the river, there stood a sawmill that provided lumber instead of the hand-sawn lumber that took so long for the settlers to cut.

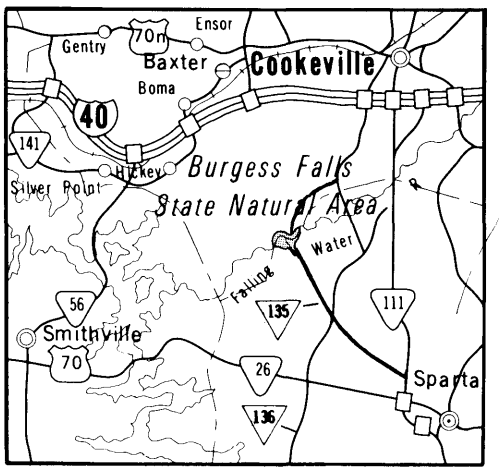
Probably the most noted industry here was the production of electricity. The City of Cookeville acquired the land in the early 1920's, and constructed a dam and powerhouse in order to produce electricity for the city. In 1928 though, a torrential rain caused the dam to wash out. When the dam broke, the resulting rush of water completely demolished the powerhouse. However, within a year a new, stronger dam was built and a new powerhouse constructed. This new dam and powerhouse produced electricity until 1944, at which time it became obsolete due to TVA's massive new dams and powerhouses.

Today, the Burgess Falls dam still exists, and some remains of the old powerhouses can be seen. The character of the area has changed, however. After many years of neglect and abuse, the area is once again being allowed to return to its proud and natural state. The Department of Conservation now manages the area and, through a cooperative effort of federal, state, and local governments, this area has been restored, preserved,and developed for the enjoyment of everyone. This area, having uncommon scenic, biologic, and geologic features, is operated as a state natural area, protecting all plants, animals, and natural features.



WE HAVE NOT INHERITED OUR PARKS FROM OUR GRANDPARENTS; WE HAVE ONLY BORROWED THEM FROM OUR GRANDCHILDREN.

Department of Conservation, Authorization Number 327241, 10,000 copies. Aug. 1989. This public document was promulgated at a cost of 9.9¢ per copy.



RECREATIONAL USE

On our trails you will find the focal point of the park. A scenic, ¾-mile riverside trail will lead you to a distant rumbling. At the trail's end, you will discover from an overlook the beauty and splendor of nature that has come to be known as Burgess Falls, a 130-foot waterfall located in a large gorge on the Falling Water River.

Burgess Falls Natural Area also offers picnicking below the dam, with a scenic view of the river. Tables, grills, and trash cans are available for your use. There is a large picnic shelter ideal for large groups. The shelter is equipped with a fireplace, tables, grills, restrooms, and handicap facilities. Shelter reservation are recommended.

Fishing is available on Burgess Falls Lake and also on the river below the dam. The tailwaters of Center Hill Lake reach to the base of Burgess Falls and are noted for their excellent spring fishing. There is no charge, but a valid Tennessee fishing license is required for those 16-64 years of age.

GENERAL COMMENTS

We hope you will enjoy your visit to Burgess Falls, and we invite you to explore our other Tennessee Outdoor Recreation Areas. There is one within an hours drive of every point in the state.

Remember, Burgess Falls Natural Area is a sancturay. All areas features, including plants and animals (living and dead), rocks, minerals, and artifacts are protected by state law. Violators are subject to prosecution. Fires are allowed only in grills and firepits. Please help us to keep your park neat and natural.

OUR COMMITMENT

As a land and resource management agency, it is the purpose of the Department of Conservation to preserve and protect our Tennessee heritage, interpret its natural and cultural significance, and provide its citizens a wide range of outdoor-oriented recreation opportunities for this and future generations.

HOURS OF OPERATION

Summer: 8:00 a.m. until Sunset
Winter: 8:00 a.m. until Sunset

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT:

Park Manager
Burgess Falls Natural Area
Route 6, Box 380
Sparta, Tennessee 38583
Phone: (615) 432-5312 Cookeville South
or (615) 761-2299 Sparta

OR WRITE OR CALL:

Tennessee Department of Conservation
Division of State Parks
701 Broadway
Nashville, Tennessee 37219-5237
Phone: (615) 742-6667

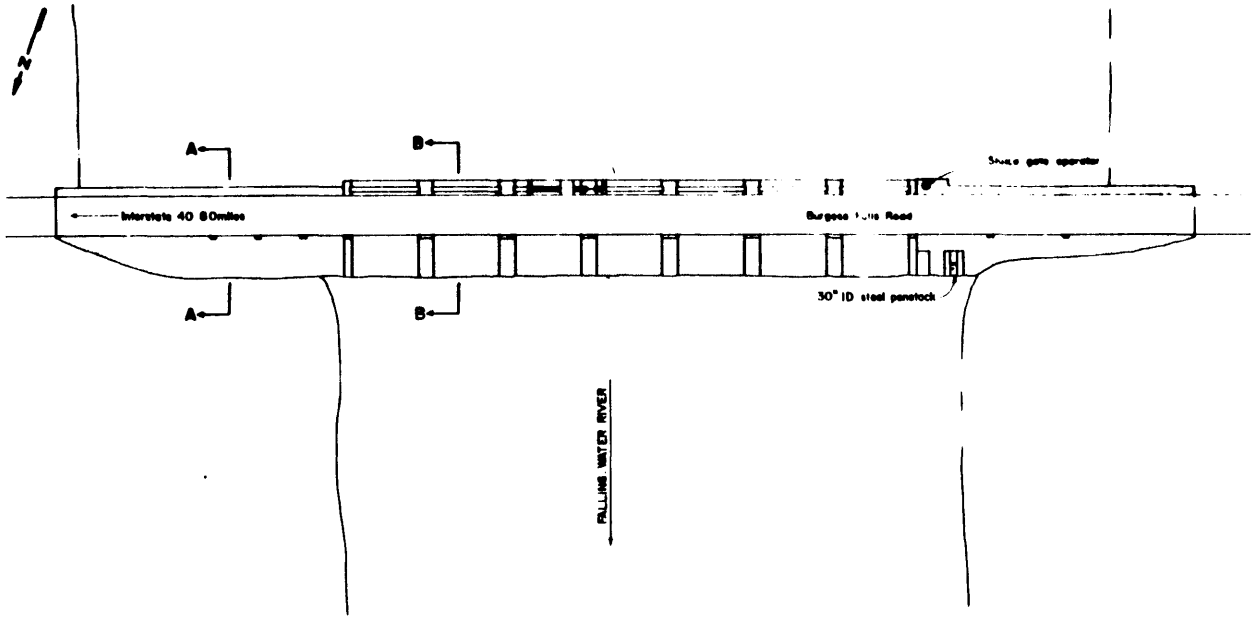
We're making it easier than ever to take advantage of our good nature!
(for general Parks information, call (615) 742-6667)

Tennessee STATE PARKS

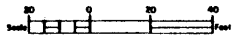
Come Share Our Good Nature

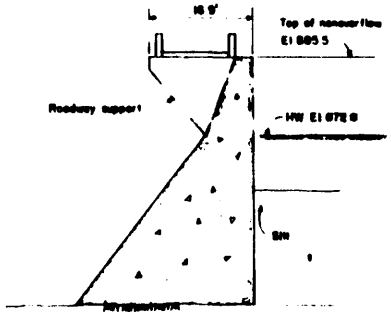
BURGESS FALLS
STATE NATURAL AREA

Tennessee STATE PARKS

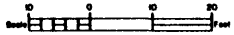


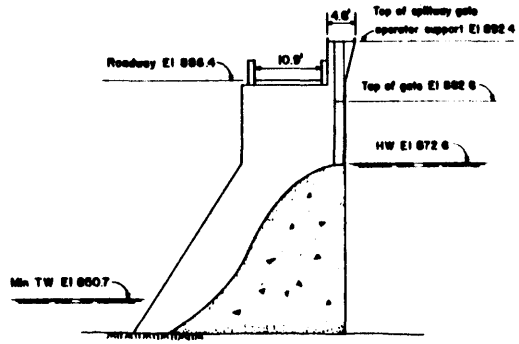
PLAN



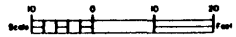


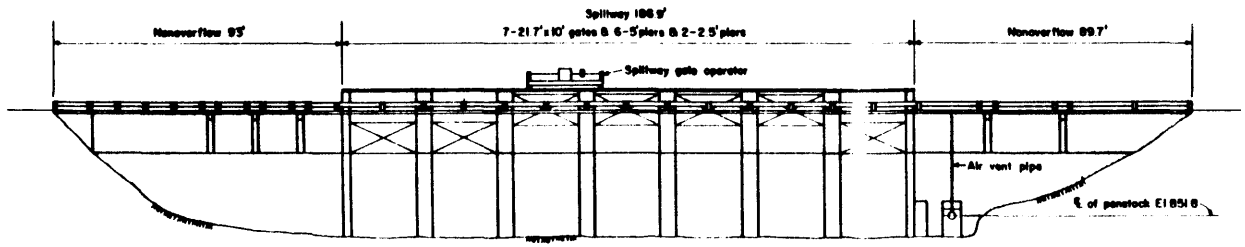
SECTION A-A





SECTION B-B





DOWNSTREAM ELEVATION

Figure 3 Existing Facilities-Burgess Falls Dam