

Summary of Water Rights
Sand Creek Ponds

Sand Creek Wildlife Management Area

Compiled by Dennis Aslett
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General:

The Sand Creek Wildlife Management Area was created in 1947 with the Chapman Ranch. Habitat projects began soon afterward and included development of the Sand Creek Ponds. The construction of the Sand Creek Ponds began in 1955 with the enlargement of Blue Creek Reservoir and initiation of Pond #4 and terminated in 1978 with the completion of Pond 1. All of the construction was supervised by Richard Wilson, the manager of Sand Creek WMA from 1950 to 1985. His monthly summaries are used as sources for much of the information provided in this document. Copies of cited documents are included for reference.

Pond History

The enlargement of Blue Creek Reservoir and the initiation of Pond #4 are outlined in the following two sources:

1. Summary of Operations 1955, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Dated December 30, 1955, page 24, "Improvements at the Sand Creek Management Area are making the land increasingly productive for wildlife. Enlarging the reservoir on Blue creek increased the number and size of the fish and accommodated more fishermen than any previous season. To provide additional habitat suitable for ducks, geese, sandhill cranes, moose and other species in addition to fish, a pond that will cover approximately 35 acres is being constructed." This new pond was referred to as the "lower impoundment" for a number of years and eventually became known as Pond 4.
2. Idaho Wildlife Review, January-February 1956 entitled, "The Sand Creek Wildlife Management Area." From pages 6 and 7, "The old dam on Blue Creek was enlarged, reinforced and strengthened. Water control structures were installed and a new emergency spillway was provided. Some marshlands were improved when a low dike was constructed impounding water and creating additional wildlife habitat." The "low dike" was the beginning of Pond 4.

In the late 1950's a plan was initiated to increase the size of Pond 4 and also consider development of an additional pond (Pond 3, also known as the "upper impoundment"). In 1960, the Arcadia Canal Company, owner of most of the water rights associated with Sand Creek itself, filed a protest to additional pond construction on the WMA and work was discontinued until weirs were placed on the incoming and outgoing sides of Pond 4

Irrigation is listed
as one of duties.
Map shows old canal
from Blue Cr. Reservoir

Idaho Wildlife Review
1956

to measure water inflow and outflow. The incoming weir was installed in August of 1961 and the outgoing weir in 1963. Subsequent weir measurements indicated that Arcadia Canal Company would not be adversely affected by additional pond construction since most of the additional water to be used would come from Blue Creek rather than Sand Creek.

Pond 4

The original pond construction was begun in 1955. Water right permit 21-2159 was filed to allow storage of 150 acre/feet of water. The priority date is May 13, 1960.

In 1960, Pond 4 was enlarged by raising the dike 3 feet in height. This work was completed in 1961 and water right Claim A21-4006 for an additional 240 acre/feet of storage was filed with a priority date of April 1, 1962. This is outlined in more detail below.

Pond 3

Pond 3 was initiated in June 1964 and completed in November 1965. Water right Claim A21-4007, with a priority date of October 1, 1965 was submitted for use of the water. More information on Pond 3 is also outlined below.

Pond 2

Construction on Pond 2 was started in 1967 and was completed in 1968. Water right Claim A21-4008 was filed with a priority date of April 1, 1969. More information is available below as well.

Pond 1

Pond 1 development was started in 1969 with the removal of top soil and trees from the site location. However, actual work started in 1974 and was completed in 1978. Use of the water was filed under Permit 21-7151 with a priority date of May 16, 1978. This work is outlined in the following reports:

- Annual Completion Report, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, July 1, 1974 to June 30, 1975: "Construction on a new dike that will impound another 25 acres was started."
- Final Segment Report, Sand Creek Wildlife Management Area, September 1978: "Impoundment number one was completed. The pond area is 16.1 acres and contains 62.8 acre feet of storage water. This impoundment was filled in May 1978."

Pond Numbering

The ponds are numbered in reverse of their construction. That situation is explained in Richard Wilson's Monthly Report for August, 1967,

"Impoundments will have to be named or numbered to understand which one is being worked on. Starting at Blue Creek Reservoir moving down stream, pond number 1. This pond is proposed, it will be for waterfowl and down stream water supply. Pond number 2 is being built now, this pond will be for waterfowl and down stream water supply. Pond number 3 is built and has been known as upper impoundment. Pond number 4 is built and has been known as the lower impoundment. Pond number 5 is partially built, its primary purpose will be for waterfowl and to be a buffer in event of upstream dike failure. Work is progressing on impoundment number 2 at present time."

The numbering system is also explained in the Final Segment Report, Development and Operations, Sand Creek Wildlife Management Area, July 1, 1967 to June 30, 1968, page 1. There is also a map on page 5 showing the ponds as they existed at that time.

Pond 5, mentioned above, was constructed west of Pond 4. Richard Wilson's Monthly Report for June 1965 further explains Pond 5, "Made a new dike West of the present impoundment area. This will impound about 50 acres more water with very little more works. Plan to use this area to get rid of excess water in the Spring when High water endangers other dikes. Water could be safely dumped in this area and would not flood anyones property but our own."

The dike is still there, but the pond would not hold water and a water right application was not filed. This area is still used to get rid of excess water in the spring.

Additional General Information on the Sand Creek Ponds

- 32nd Biannual Report, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, 7/1/66 to 6/30/68, page 39, "Four water impoundments consisting of about 142 surface acres, provide excellent trout fishing as well as producing waterfowl and muskrats." (This would be Blue Creek Reservoir and Ponds 4, 3, and 2.)
- A map dated September, 1968 is included. This map shows all of the ponds and proposed ponds as well as the other water rights attached to the Sand Creek WMA at that time. The water rights numbers that are hand written and highlighted in yellow indicate which water right goes with which pond or stream. These were added by me in the early 1990's when the Department was filing its water rights.

Specific Documentation for water claims A21-4006, A21-4007, and A21-4008:

1. A21-4006—Pond 4 addition. Priority Date: April 1, 1962

The Pond 4 addition was started in 1960 and completed in 1961.

- State of Idaho, Department of Fish and Game, Federal Aid In Wildlife Restoration, Completion Report Project No. W 89-D-10, Period: 3/1/60 to 2/28/61, "Three hundred feet of dike on the west side of the waterfowl impoundment area (Pond 4) was increased three feet in height by the use of a dragline. Considerable difficulty was encountered in accomplishing this work as the fill material was very wet. For this reason, the top and sides could not be sloped as desired, but this work will be done in 1961 after the fill material has dried and settled."
- Richard Wilson's Monthly Report, July 1961--"Water measuring weir just about completed, weir plate has to be bolted on and weir gauge installed." Weir was finished in August, 1961.
- Richard Wilson's Monthly Report for August 1961--"Finished dike on Waterfowl Impoundment area."

2. A21-4007--Pond 3. Priority Date: October 1, 1965

Pond 3 was started in June 1964 and completed in November 1965.

- Richard Wilson's Monthly Report for June, 1964: "Got started on the new impoundment area the last of the month."
- Wilson's Monthly Report for October, 1964: "The new impoundment was started this fall, approximately 400 feet of dike has been constructed and the culvert installed. The canal check will be constructed from a 30 inch culvert... The rest of the dike and spill way will have to be constructed under next years project....."
- Richard Wilson Monthly Report, July 1965, "Work on new impoundment is being done...and is going to take most of the next two months to complete this dike and make nesting islands..."
- Richard Wilson's Monthly Summary for October, 1965, "Work on the new impoundment was continued, this impoundment will be finished up in two more days."
- Richard Wilson's Monthly Summary for November 1965: "The new water impoundment was finished up except for installing the canal check."
- Richard Wilson's Monthly Summary for April 1966, "The new dike was checked every two or three days for possible leaks and cracks due to settling. At the present time it is about 90% full and dike appears to be stable."

- Richard Wilson's Monthly Report, May 1966: "The new impoundment for fishing and for waterfowl was completed last fall and filled with water during the winter and spring. After filling this impoundment it was found that it will be necessary to rip-rap the dike."
- Summary of Operations 1966, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, page 15: "Another 30 acre fishing and waterfowl impoundment was completed at Sand Creek W.M.A. The ten islands constructed in the new pond site were used the first year by ducks and geese for nesting and loafing."
- Final Segment Report, Development and Operations for period July 1, 1965 to June 30, 1966, "A new impoundment for fishing and for waterfowl was built upstream from the existing shallow impoundment. A dike, 3,425 feet long and 8 feet high, with 3 to 1 slopes was completed. Ten nesting islands were pushed up inside the impoundment area. Each of these islands is approximately 15 feet wide and 40 feet long. Water source for this impoundment is from Blue Creek. Riprap on the front slope and grass planting on the back slope will be accomplished under the next project segment."
- Annual Report 1965, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Dated June 1, 1966, Page 36, "A third impoundment (about 90 surface acres) was completed this past year to provide even more good fishing area and good waterfowl production habitat."
- Idaho Fish and Game Department Annual Report-1966 (Dated June 1, 1967), Page 38, "In 1966, another small lake was created with the completion of a 3,425 foot dike. Ten waterfowl nesting islands were 'pushed up' before flooding."

3. A21-4008—Pond 2. Priority Date: April 1, 1969

Construction on Pond 2 was started in 1967 and completed in 1968.

- Richard Wilson's Monthly Report for August 1967, "Work is progressing on impoundment number 2 at present time."
- Project Annual Report, July 1, 1968 to June 30, 1969, page 2, "A new 22 acre impoundment for waterfowl and fisheries was finished under this segment of the project. This will be known as impoundment number two."

Additional References

The following sources may provide additional information, if needed:

1. John Smith (JP Smith), Rexburg. John is a former Conservation Officer for IDFG and was in this area when much of the pond construction work was being done. He is very familiar with Sand Creek WMA.
2. Lisa Wilson, St. Anthony. Lisa is Richard Wilson's daughter and grew up on the Sand Creek WMA.
3. Rich Wilson, St. Anthony. Rich is Richard Wilson's son and also grew up on the Sand Creek WMA.
4. Connie (Wilson), address unknown. Also Richard Wilson's daughter.