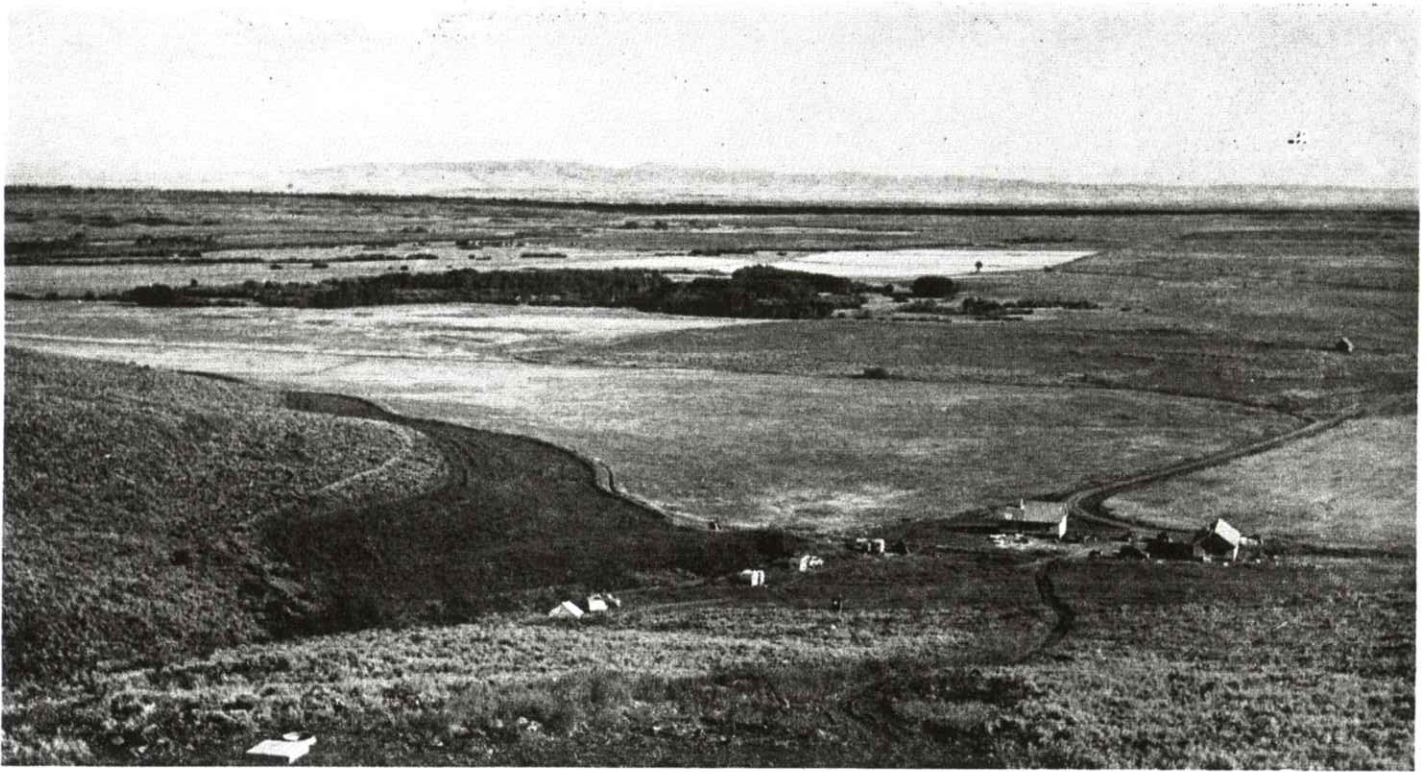




A view of the Sand Creek Wildlife Management Area headquarters during construction. A pipeline leads from small concrete structure in left foreground supplying water to the house.

The Sand Creek Wildlife Management Area

The Sand Creek Wildlife Management Area includes 4,761.82 acres purchased from private owners in 1947 at a cost of \$65,000, and 1,040 acres of federal lands which have been withdrawn from disposition and reserved for wildlife use.

The area is located in Fremont County. It lies approximately 24 miles northeasterly of St. Anthony and 20 miles northwesterly of Ashton. A graveled road provides access to the area, leaving U. S. Highway 191 near St. Anthony.

Approximately 480 acres are of farm type land. Range lands in the area are primarily in the hills north of the farm property. These are of sagebrush and native grass type, with quaking aspen and willow along creek bottoms and gullies.

The valley soil is a fertile, clay-loam type. The area to the south and west is semi-arid grazing lands. Irrigated and dry farm lands are adjacent to the area on the east and south.

The management area lies at an approximate mean elevation of 5,300 feet above sea level and is semi-arid with snow depths of several feet in

the winter. Rain may be expected along the foothills and mountain regions, and extending part way into the desert type land until late June.

Blue Creek and Sand Creek rise in the hills to the north, flowing southeast through a portion of the project. Several small springs contribute additional water for irrigation and domestic water supply. A portion of the water from the creeks is stored in a small reservoir which was constructed for irrigation, wildlife use, and fishing.

Purpose

Several objectives were included in the proposed use of this area. Perhaps the most important was to provide an unobstructed migration route for big game animals from summer ranges to important, key winter ranges. It was also felt that unrestricted passage of elk to their winter areas would reduce, or eliminate, damage to private land and crops.

Another objective was to retire domestic livestock associated with this ranch which were competing with big

game animals for food and space on the adjacent ranges.

Other objectives included: Prevention of damage to haystacks and private farm crops and lands; a refuge for wildlife when deemed necessary; crop production for emergency feeding of big game on the area and surrounding lands, and benefits for upland game birds, waterfowl and fish.

Refuge

The original project was designated "Sand Creek Elk Refuge." In October, 1951, this was changed to "The Sand Creek Wildlife Management Area" to conform with other management areas throughout the state.

A separate refuge was not established for this area as all lands within the project were already inside the boundaries of the Ashton Big Game Refuge. (Limited number of elk and moose are harvested from the Ashton Refuge by means of "special," or "controlled" hunts.)

Upland game bird hunting has been permitted on the area for the past several years.



Elk are trapped and tagged at the area each season. Hay is placed in the trap to attract the animals during the night. The entrance gate is closed by pulling a wire which leads from the trap to the headquarters house in the background.



A cow elk in the tagging chute. Tag is shown in left ear. The narrow runway permits tagging without handling or injuring the animals.

Development

A part-time caretaker and work crews attended to development and maintenance work for several years after the property was acquired. This included fence construction and repair, and crop production and harvest.

A full-time refuge manager was stationed on the area in 1952 and has been in charge since that time. His duties include planting, irrigation and harvest of crops; maintenance of fences, roads and machinery; study of game migrations and census of winter

populations; assisting with elk trapping, and tagging; recording wildlife use on the area and general administration of the project.

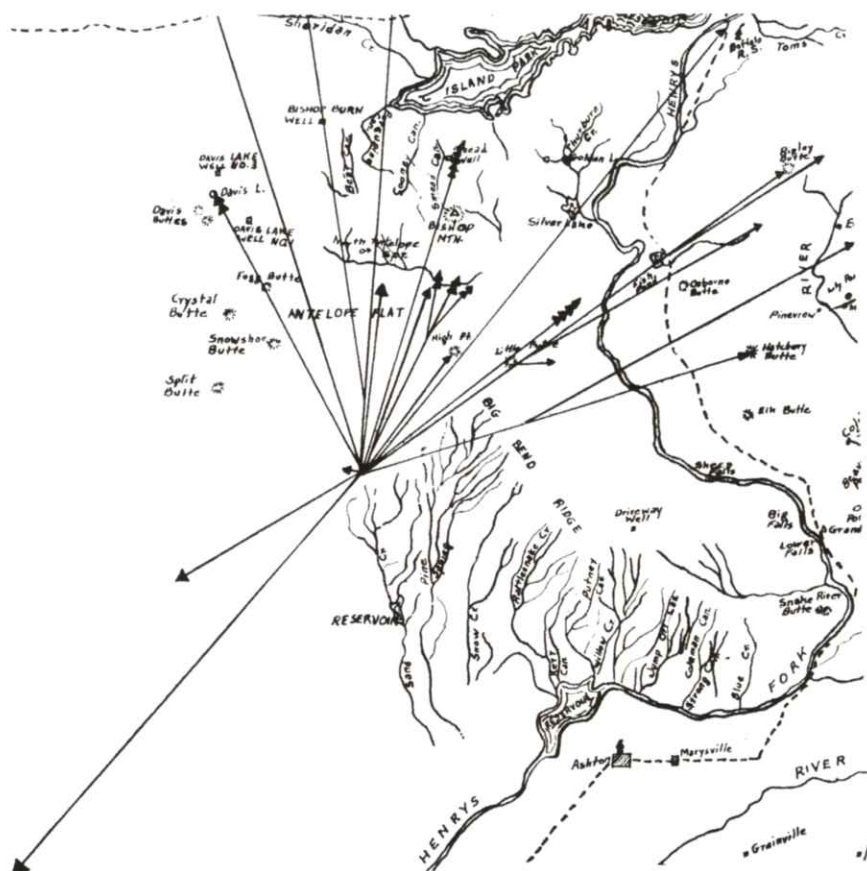
Approximately 16 miles of access road were constructed and improved in cooperation with the Fremont County Road Commission. This reduced travel distance, increased the time the area was accessible to automotive equipment, and aided operation of the area.

An elk trapping corral was constructed in 1949. Elk were trapped, ear tagged, and released during winter months as a part of the management work on the Fremont herds. Tag recoveries provided information regarding the extent of the range used by this herd, migration routes, and distance traveled.

From 1949 to 1954, 247 elk were tagged and released at this site. Eighteen per cent of the tags have been recovered. Of this number, 80.5 per cent were obtained from elk killed on the special hunt area; 13 per cent outside the special hunt area, but in Idaho; and 6.5 per cent were returned from elk taken in Montana.

Sixteen miles of perimeter fence were constructed to protect the area from trespass by domestic stock. Cattle guards were installed, irrigation canals cleaned and enlarged, and prefabricated concrete irrigation controls were installed to facilitate irrigation of meadow lands.

A two-bedroom house and combined garage and bunkhouse were built and a spring developed for domestic water supply. The old dam on Blue



This map shows movement of elk from the Sand Creek area after they were tagged and released. The three lines extending from the top are for elk that moved into Montana.

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.

Roads on the area were renovated to provide proper drainage and a lawn and trees planted at headquarters site. Several old buildings were removed and a log workshop and the former house were utilized for equipment storage and temporary living quarters for harvest labor.

Approximately 150 acres of agricultural land has been planted to perennial grass, including smooth brome, tall and intermediate wheatgrass. Several smaller acreages have been devoted to growing clover, oats and wheat which are left unharvested for wildlife use. Alfalfa and meadow hay are grown on approximately 350 acres each year.

Wildlife

Deer, elk and moose use the area in varying numbers throughout the year. For example, approximately 150 deer and 125 elk were observed feeding on the grassland area in May, 1955.

Blue, sharptailed and ruffed grouse are frequently observed on the area. Records showed approximately 150 sage grouse in July, 70 blue grouse in August, and 50 Canada geese and 500 ducks on the area in August, 1955.

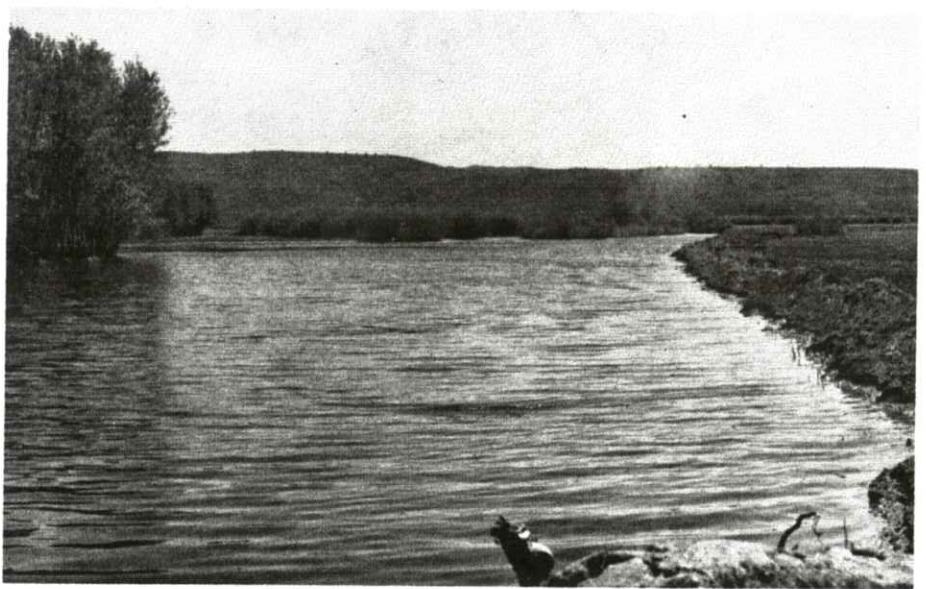
Above-average fishing was experienced at the Blue Creek reservoir during the early part of the trout season this year with several fishermen bringing out their weight limit of eastern brook trout.

Future

Future operation of this area is based on many of the original objectives. It calls for management to provide as much wildlife as the habitat will maintain while keeping the range in a healthy, productive condition.

Continued inspection of adjacent winter ranges is planned in cooperation with other federal and state agencies, sportsmen and private landowners, with the object of determining proper land use practices, and game populations that may be safely carried on the ranges.

The maximum number of elk that the Sand Creek area and ranges to the southwest will support under

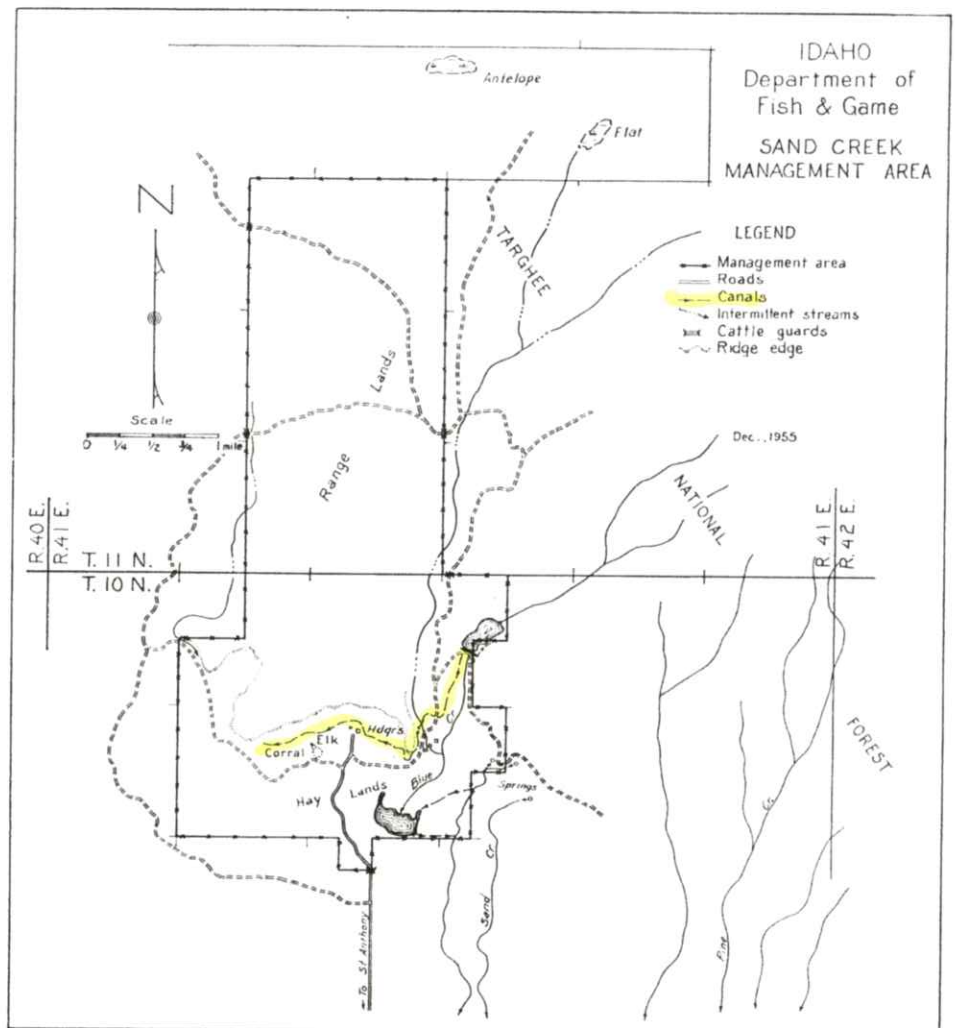


A low dike was constructed (right of picture) to impound water and create additional wildlife habitat on the area.

present conditions is believed to be about 700 animals.

Public use of the area for hunting and fishing consistent with good wildlife management, also is of primary

importance. This is a part of overall policy designed to provide access for license holders, and to provide better hunting and fishing whenever possible.



Map of the Sand Creek Wildlife Management Area