

STATE OF IDAHO
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

Ross Leonard, Director

Mentions the
irrigation system

SAND CREEK WILDERNESS DEVELOPMENT

Period: March 1, 1958 to February 28, 1959

By

Richard Wilson
Refuge Manager

COMPLETION REPORT
DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

STATE OF IDAHO

PROJECT NO. W 89-D-8

TITLE: SAND CREEK WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA DEVELOPMENT

Refuge Manager

A full-time refuge manager (Richard Wilson) was stationed on the area to administer it in the best interest of wildlife. Records were kept on wild-life and sportsman use of the management area. Elk were tagged during the fall migration. Beaver complaints in the immediate area were taken care of. Fences were patrolled and kept in repair. Domestic livestock was kept off the area. Big game migrations through the Management Area to the Juniper winter range were recorded in numbers and dates, and also the feeding habits and routes taken to winter range were noted. Year-round observations of moose and elk that migrate through the Management Area involve quite a bit of time off the Management Area, particularly in the vicinity of the Juniper winter range.

Three men were hired from April through November. An extra man was hired from June through September. It was necessary to hire two more men than usual because of the extra work on Project W 116-D-2. One man was kept on through the month of December for elk trapping and tagging.

New Major Equipment Acquired

The following equipment was purchased during the project year: One heavy duty 5-horsepower McCullough chain saw, One Black and Decker $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch drill with stand and bits, and a 22-piece tap and die set.

Building Construction and Maintenance

Buildings were kept in good condition and incidental repairs were made to appliances and plumbing. Grounds around the buildings were kept neat and orderly.

Irrigation System

The earth-filled dam and spillway associated with the Blue Creek Reservoir was kept in repair. Leaks were grouted with cement and trash was removed from the spillway.

Canals and channels were cleaned with a V-type ditcher. A drag line was hired and a drain ditch was excavated through the meadow. It was planned to do this work with our own equipment, but the ground was too soft for the H-D-5 crawler. This ditch was put in to reduce subbing so that the meadow ground could be plowed and leveled. The meadow was too dry for waterfowl and too wet to farm. It is planned to raise crops on the meadow land as soon as

it can be plowed and leveled.

A drain ditch was excavated with a drag line along the south boundary on the Otto Nielson property to keep ground water from the waterfowl impoundment area out of his land.

Roads

The access road from the south entrance of the Project Area to the headquarters site, approximately one mile in length, was maintained by the Fremont County maintenance crew. They also maintained the access road to Jackson Mill Spring on the northern side of the Project Area. The remainder of the roads received very little or no maintenance.

Fences

There is approximately 15 miles of fence to maintain on the project area, about 11 miles of which has been rebuilt since it was initially built in 1949. Two miles of it was rebuilt under Project W 89-D-8 and 11 miles of it was maintained. There is now 13 miles of first-class fence. Fence that has been rebuilt was done by taking wire off the steel posts and straightening it. Wooden posts were put between steel posts and where the ground was not rocky, steel posts were pulled and all wooden posts installed. Where snow drifts were bad and on steep hillsides, wooden posts were put in 5 feet apart. Steel posts that were pulled were added to those in rocky areas. Wooden staves were also used to help hold up the netting. All wooden posts were cut and treated by personnel on the Management Area. Fences that were rebuilt are in good condition.

Public Use Facilities

Brome grass was seeded on the dike of the waterfowl impoundment. The dike was not raised on the west side as this area did not dry up enough to work in. The water level in this impoundment was held at maximum level all summer and it was dropped 14 inches in the fall to facilitate run-off in the spring.

Twenty-five picnic tables were obtained from the Forest Service. After repairing them five were placed in Blue Creek Canyon and the rest of these tables will be sent to other Management Areas where they are needed.

Tree and Shrub Plantings

Approximately two acres east of the headquarters area were planted to Russian olive, Siberian pea, and chokecherry species. Remarkable growth was made during their first growing season

Herbaceous Seedings

Approximately 100 acres of grassland was disced and harrowed, and 90 acres of alfalfa was harrowed with a spring-tooth harrow to conserve moisture and eliminate weeds. Fifty-four acres were seeded to wheat and alfalfa and twelve acres were seeded to wheat and sweet clover. Twenty acres of wheat were left standing in the field for wildlife use and 46 acres of wheat were

harvested with a combine. Grain which was harvested was distributed to other Management Areas and some was taken to the Jerome game farm, a Departmental station. Distribution was as follows:

Market Lake Wildlife Management Area	4,000 lb.
North Lake Wildlife Management Area	10,000 lb.
Sand Creek Wildlife Management Area	5,000 lb.
Jerome Game Farm	25,640 lb.

The Project was reimbursed at fair market value for grain delivered to the Jerome Game Farm.

Approximately 52 acres was planted to barley, which was harvested and the resulting grain was distributed as follows:

Market Lake Wildlife Management Area	4,000 lb.
North Lake Wildlife Management Area	10,000 lb.
Sand Creek Wildlife Management Area	8,000 lb.
Jerome Game Farm	32,540 lb.

Alfalfa hay which had been stored at the Ashton hayshed for use in case emergency winter feeding of big game became necessary was sold by public bidding to the highest bidder. This amounted to 33.425 tons and the monies received from the sale were credited to the Project.

After removal of the old hay from the Ashton hayshed, fifty tons were again stored there in case emergency winter feeding conditions develop in adjacent areas. Five tons of hay were stored in the elk trap for use as bait in the elk trapping and tagging operation and ten tons were stored on the Management Area for emergency winter feeding. Another ninety tons were sold in the field to the highest bidder and monies received were credited to the Project.

Hay production has been reduced from about 400 tons annually to approximately 100 tons and it is planned to reduce this still further to the point where only enough will be produced to provide good soil conservation practices and to supply enough hay in the event it is needed for emergency feeding of big game.

Noxious Vegetation Control Work

Fifteen acres of Canadian thistle were sprayed using 2-4-D at the rate of four quart to the acre, spraying just before the plants bloomed. Through this type of spraying we are gradually cutting down on Canadian thistle.

Some brush spraying was done along fence lines to keep trees out of the fence lines - mostly willow and aspen.

Land Leveling

Fifteen acres of meadow ground were leveled. Department and project equipment were used to level this land, utilizing project personnel.

Wildlife Use of the Wildlife Management Area

Approximately 150 elk stopped on the Management Area during their spring migration in April. They utilized feed in the fields, which was brome and intermediate wheat grass. Observations of spring feeding in this area show that deer and elk feed mostly on spring grass and the new green shoots on browse. By the end of June there were a few elk left on the north end of the Management Area. At least eight of them calved on the Management Area. About 200 deer moved through the area on spring migration and approximately 50 of these stay on the Management Area during the summer.

Twenty-eight broods of mallard ducks hatched and spent the summer on the waterfowl impoundment area. Two broods of Canada geese hatched and spent part of the summer here, and one pair of trumpeter swan stayed most of the summer but did not nest.

Two hundred fifty-six sage grouse utilized the Management Area during July, August, and September. Nine broods of blue grouse and six broods of ruffed grouse were observed on the Management Area in July. Seventy-five sharptailed grouse were observed wintering on the area. Eleven beaver were trapped on the Area. Many gophers, ground squirrels, marmots and badgers live on the project area. Two coyotes were seen on the Management Area this year. There are a few mink but most of them stay on the water areas. In the past three years the refuge manager and neighbor have killed 286 porcupines on the cultivated area of the Management Area and on his ranch.

Two hundred thirty-two head of elk utilized the Management Area during fall migration. They started to move in October 1, building up to a peak in December and all but 28 had left by January 20. Elk utilized the wheat that was left in the fields and fed consistently on browse species north of the headquarters area. This area is becoming more important to elk each year as the stockmen are burning the area west of us every year, and spraying and burning on the east side of the project area. Every year more and more of the area on both sides of the project area is reverting back to a grass type range.

Public Use of the Wildlife Management Area

Fishing is the biggest interest of people visiting the Management Area. The following is an actual count of fisherman who fished on the project area, but as many days were missed on this count the actual number of fishermen would be much greater.

June	- - -	483
July	- - -	129
August	- - -	123
September	- - -	162
October	- - -	<u>153</u>

Total - - 1,050

Thirty-two picnickers and twelve students from the University of Iowa used the area in August. An estimated 350 hunters either hunted on the area or sought information on big game hunting in adjacent areas. Sage grouse hunters were not checked on the area, as the refuge manager was stationed off the area on a checking station. Duck hunting was very good on the Management Area this fall, due partly to an open fall. The area could provide for more duck hunters, but will never be much of a duck hunting area as the waterfowl

impoundments are limited.

Miscellaneous Activities

In addition to the activities listed above, the refuge manager supervised and participated in planting crops at Market Lake Wildlife Management Area and at Montpelier. Posts were cut and stockpiled at the headquarters site for future project needs. Project personnel cooperated in the construction of the new corral at Market Lake Wildlife Management Area. Twenty-five head of elk were trapped and tagged during their fall migration through the project area.

Cooperation was extended in the operation of game checking stations and law enforcement work on, and adjacent to, the project area and time was spent showing range conditions and law enforcement problem areas to conservation officers newly stationed in the area. During the course of checking range conditions and migration routes, snow was shovelled from the roofs of summer fish hatchery and spawning station installations.

Many meetings of sportsmen, land users, and related agencies were attended.

Project equipment was transported to and used quite often at, Market Lake Wildlife Management Area and North Lake Wildlife Management Area. A rather extensive dike was constructed at Market Lake by project personnel utilizing project equipment.

Pocatello Elk Range

Two and one-half miles of fence were repaired on the Pocatello elk range, requiring approximately ten posts and fifty staves. Wires were spliced and tightened. Eighty acres of grassland was cultivated to eliminate weeds and conserve soil moisture.

Recommendations for Improvements

The development of more water areas for waterfowl and the establishment of extensive browse fields for big game species would materially enhance the value of the project area for wildlife.

Approved by:

IDAHO FISH AND GAME DEPARTMENT

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3-1-59

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