

51-32. SAND CREEK WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA (WMA)

Boundaries and ownership:

Boundaries: Boundaries are clearly marked. Sand Creek consists of two distinct parts: Sand Creek Ponds and Chester Wetlands.

Ownership: Idaho Department of Fish & Game, Bureau of Land Management, Idaho Department of Lands. Wetland areas are owned and managed solely by IDFG.

Focal species using the site and timing of use:

Breeding area for various waterfowl (including Canada Geese and Trumpeter Swans), Sandhill Cranes, and Osprey. Also attracts a variety of waterbirds (Common Loon, Western and Pied-billed Grebe, Great Blue Heron, Black-crowned Night Heron, Snowy Egret), shorebirds (Willet, Long-billed Curlew), and Bald Eagles during the summer. During migration, all the above species are present plus Common Loons and marshbirds. During the winter, waterfowl (ducks, Canada Geese, Trumpeter Swans) and Bald Eagles can be found along the river (ponds of the WMA are generally dry or frozen during winter).

Location of type 1 and 2 habitat within the site: The following information is for the Sand Creek Ponds only. This information is not available yet for Chester Wetlands, as it has been recently acquired by IDFG.

Functional Group	Type 1 Habitat	Type 2 Habitat
waterbirds	open water & emergent vegetation	none
large waders	emergent vegetation, riparian areas, pond outlets and inlets	rest of shoreline, upland grain fields
secretive marshbirds	cattail areas around ponds, except along dikes	none
waterfowl	open water, edges during breeding season	none
shorebirds	areas around ponds away from dikes	rest of shoreline
gulls and terns	open water areas, especially Ponds 1-4	all other areas

Access to the type 1 and 2 habitat and visibility of the birds:

Sand Creek Ponds: Most survey work can be done from the shoreline, and all ponds can be accessed by (or by full-sized vehicles if necessary). The best places to view most birds are from the dikes. More secretive species may require a canoe, especially on Pond 4, which is the largest pond. Canoes can be used on ponds after July 1, and no motors are allowed on the ponds at any time. Public use of any type is prohibited until after July 1 on ponds with active Trumpeter Swan nests. However, exceptions may be made for appropriate survey work with permission from IDFG.

Chester Wetlands: A canoe may be necessary to access some of the ponds. Access may be restricted to accommodate the nesting bald eagles and any nesting trumpeter swans. Since most of the ponds are small, shoreline access would be best way to survey. The IDFG owns the property and consequently controls access.

Conservation issues:

- Since IDFG owns the property and the water rights, threats in that regard are minimal for the Sand Creek Ponds. However, development is possible on the adjacent private lands to the east and south that could affect future use by wildlife.
- Development was a major threat to Chester Wetlands, as the property was slated for subdivision into a housing development.
- Water rights are also a big issue for Chester Wetlands since there is some question as to how much is actually associated with the property.

Conservation measures taken, in progress, or proposed:

- The acquisition of the Chester Wetlands by IDFG significantly reduced the threats of development significantly. Some of the adjacent properties have gone into conservation easements on the north side, but development could happen on the west and south.

Past and current surveys:

Sand Creek Ponds:

- A duck brood survey was conducted in the late 1980's
- Goose production surveys are completed annually
- A trumpeter swan nesting production survey is completed annually.
- The above surveys are conducted from the dikes of each pond and in late June and early July.

Chester Wetlands: No waterbird surveys have been conducted. However, some survey work is planned for Spring 2004, and winter swan and eagle use surveys have been initiated.

Potential survey methods:

Sand Creek Ponds:

Description:

- a. Nest searches for grebes and other waterbirds nesting in the emergent vegetation in small colonies from the shoreline. Some areas may require a canoe, such as Pond 4.
- b. Census for waterfowl on the open water from the shoreline
- c. Area searches for migrating shorebirds from observation points near Type 1 habitat.
- e. Systematic sampling, probably including the use of playback calls, for secretive marshbirds.
- f. Census for gulls and terns during waterfowl counts.

Selection bias: Some ponds and some areas around them may be restricted during specific time periods. However, the IDFG does own and manage the property and therefore, can make special provisions as appropriate for wildlife survey work. It would seem that selection bias would be minimal.

Measurement error and bias: Emergent vegetation may be a problem in Pond 4 at times. However, these ponds are relatively small and should not present significant concerns.

Chester Wetlands:

Surveys may be the same as Sand Creek Ponds, but because no work has been done to date, pilot studies will be needed first. However, all surveys likely can be done from shoreline or by canoe.

Needed pilot studies: None may be needed for the Sand Creek Ponds section of the WMA, but pilot studies will probably be needed for Chester Wetlands as no work has been done at this site yet.

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