

NDG&F March 7th Newsletter

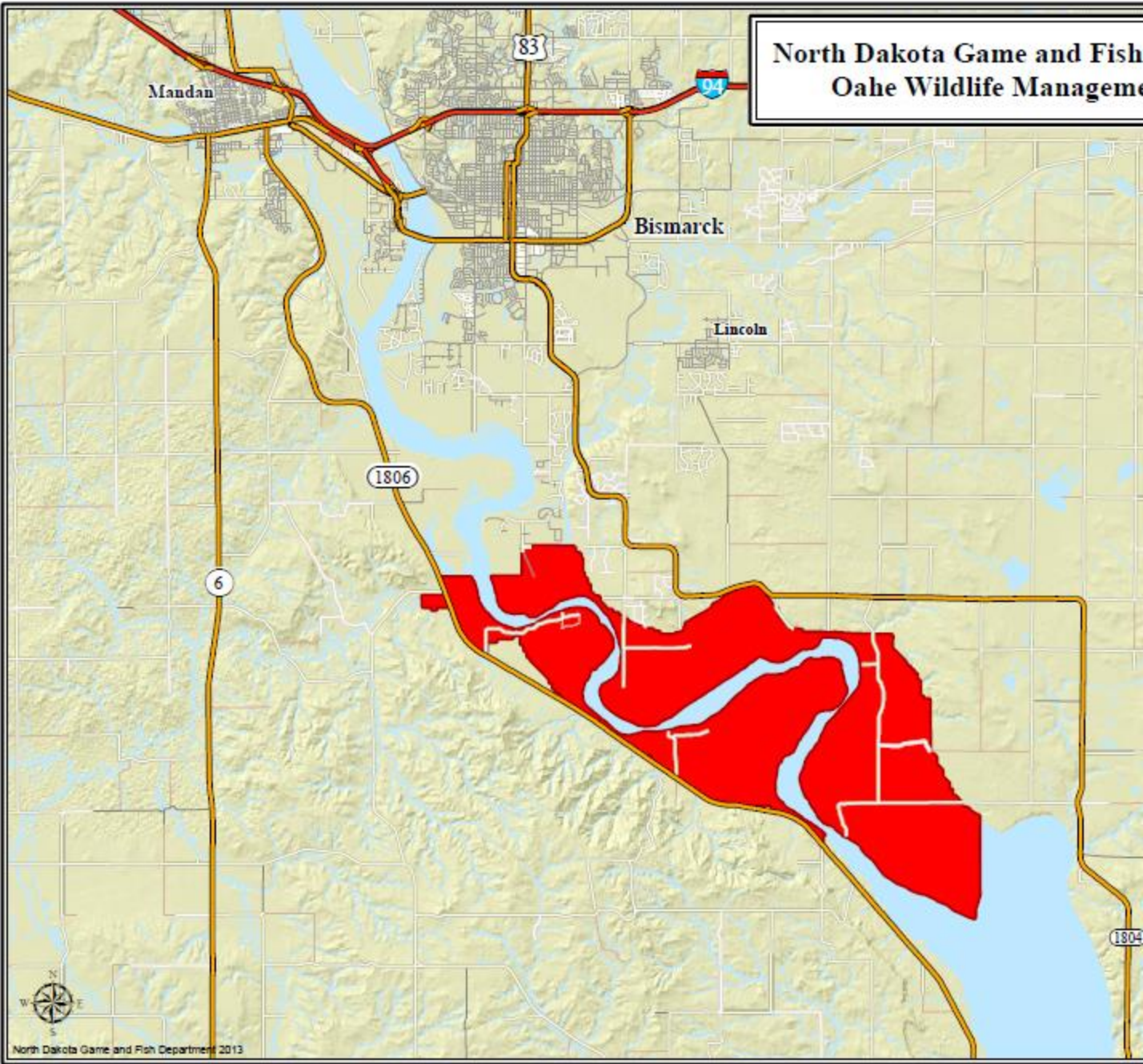
Open Fires Banned on Oahe WMA

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department is prohibiting open burning this spring on property managed south of Bismarck and Mandan, as a means to reduce potential for wildfires on a heavily wooded recreation area along the Missouri River.

Bill Haase, wildlife resource management supervisor, said all open burning, including campfires, is banned until further notice on the Oahe Wildlife Management Area along both sides of the Missouri River. While the use of portable grills is allowed, extreme caution is advised due to the heavily vegetated area.

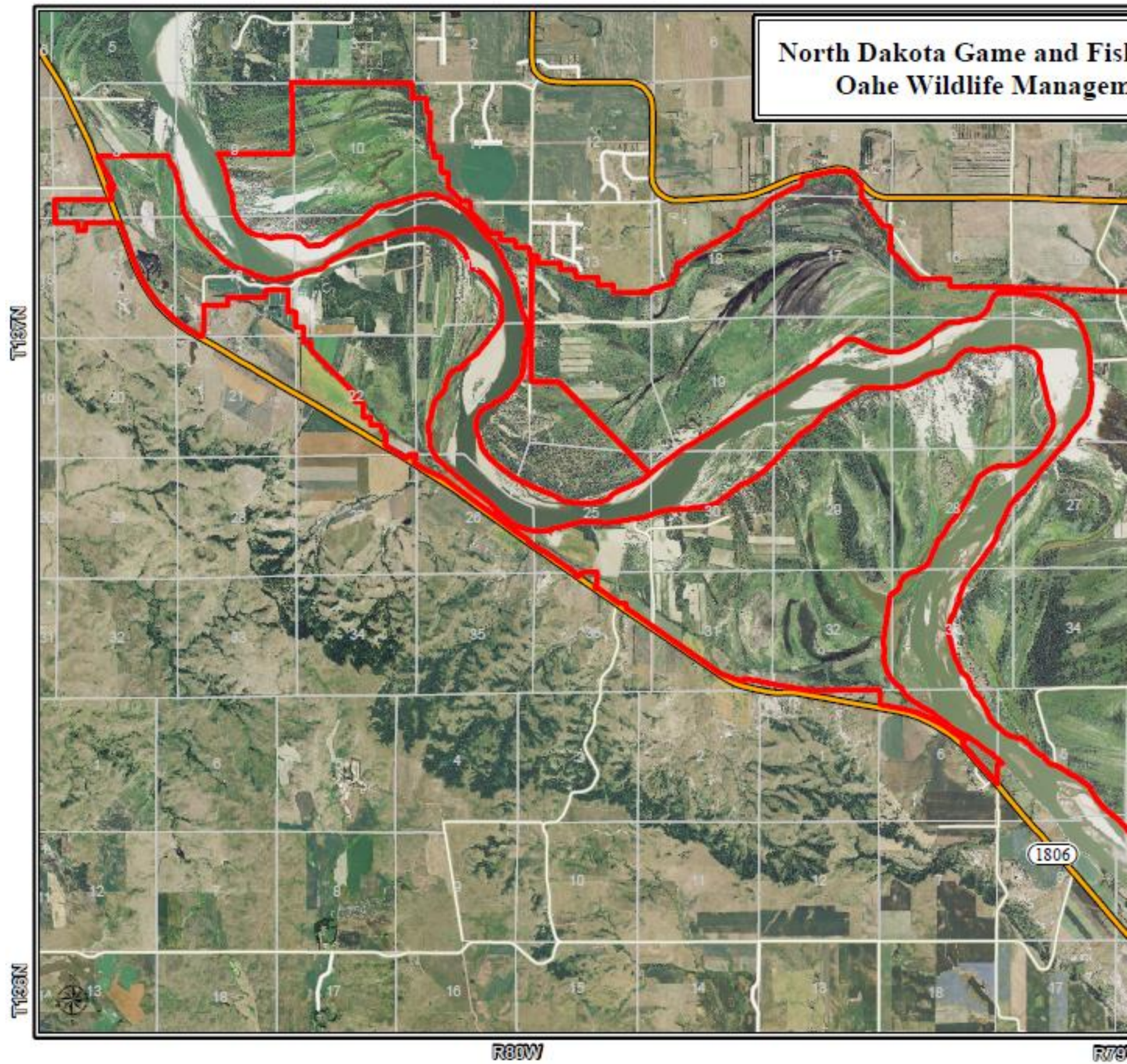
Haase said these woodlands are prone to wildfires prior to spring green-up. Mild temperatures and a high fuel load in the river bottoms are a cause for concern, he said, in addition to being a high use area for anglers, campers and other outdoor recreationists.

Oahe WMA covers more than 16,000 acres along Lake Oahe south of Bismarck-Mandan, in portions of Burleigh, Emmons, and Morton counties. Burning restriction signs are posted at all entrances to the WMA.



Quick View

[Oahe WMA Map 1](#) - printable version



Quick View

[Oahe WMA Map 2](#) - printable version

[Fire Danger Index](#)

Elk, Moose, Bighorn Sheep Apps Available

North Dakota's elk, moose and bighorn sheep applications are [available online](#) at the State Game and Fish Department's website, gf.nd.gov. Paper applications are scheduled to arrive at license vendors the week of March 7. The deadline for applying is March 23.

A total of 338 elk licenses are available to hunters this fall, an increase of 37 from last year. Unit E2 has an additional 10 any-elk licenses, and unit E3 has an increase of 10 any-elk and 15 antlerless elk licenses. In addition, one elk license is allocated to Annie's House at Bottineau Winter Park and one to the Outdoor Adventure Foundation. Sioux County, previously part of Unit E5, is closed to elk hunting in 2016.

A total of 202 moose licenses are available in 2016, an increase of 70 from last year. Most of the increase is antlerless licenses in Units M9 and M10, due to an increasing moose population in these units. In addition, one moose license is authorized to the Outdoor Adventure Foundation.

Unit M6 is expanded to address landowner depredation issues. Hunting units M1C and M4 will remain closed due to a continued downward trend in moose numbers in the northeastern part of the state.

A bighorn sheep hunting season is tentatively scheduled to open in 2016, unless there is a recurrence of bacterial pneumonia, which closed the season in 2015. The status of the bighorn sheep season will be determined Sept. 1, after summer population surveys are completed.

Applicants will still apply for a license at the same time as moose and elk, but not for a specific unit. Once total licenses are determined for each unit in late summer, the bighorn lottery will then be held and successful applicants will be contacted to select a hunting unit.

Because the bighorn sheep application fee is not refundable as per state law, if a bighorn season is not held, applicants would not receive a refund.

Elk, moose and bighorn sheep lottery licenses are issued as once-in-a-lifetime licenses in North Dakota. Hunters who have received a license through the lottery in the past are not eligible to apply for that species again.

Deer Samples Negative for CWD

Samples taken from North Dakota deer during the 2015 hunting season have all tested negative for chronic wasting disease, according to Dr. Dan Grove, wildlife veterinarian for the State Game and Fish Department.

Last fall, samples for CWD testing were taken from more than 1,200 deer harvested by hunters in the western third of the state.

Since the Game and Fish Department's sampling efforts began in 2002, more than 27,000 deer, elk and moose have tested negative for CWD. A total of seven deer have tested positive for CWD, all since 2009 and all were from the same general area within unit 3F2 in southwestern North Dakota.

The hunter-harvested surveillance program annually collects samples taken from hunter-harvested deer in specific regions of the state. In 2016, deer will be tested from the eastern third of the state.

The Game and Fish Department also has a targeted surveillance program that is an ongoing, year-round effort to test animals found dead or sick.

CWD affects the nervous system of members of the deer family and is always fatal. Scientists have found no evidence that CWD can be transmitted naturally to humans or livestock.