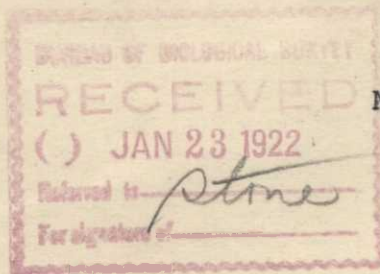


UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
BUREAU OF BIOLOGICAL SURVEY

IN REPLY REFER TO



Niobrara Reservation
In Nebraska

FILE COPY
Game and Bird Reservations

P.O. Valentine January 19' 1922

Bureau of Biological Survey
E.W. Nelson Chief
Washington D.C.

My Dear Sir:

Enclosed I hand you draft of the " Progress Report
1921 Niobrara," as per letter (H.F. Stone) December 29'

Matters are in pretty fair shape now and running smoothly and I
can go ahead with the office work, without interruption, I hope
and get everything to running ~~smoothly~~, promptly, I hope to
follow with the Sully Hill report with next mail,

One feature of these " Reports " is the six
months overlapping with the Reports asked for at end of fiscal year,
It makes repetition and appears as if there was nothing original
to place in them, An awkward way for us to handle them, and which
is appreciated, I am sure, Also there are many little
errors of typewriting throughout my drafts, but you understand
my position with office help and know that I cannot afford to
rewrite this and correct all these little errors,

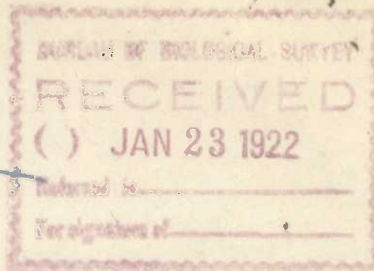
The details, I have missed as asked for in the letter
December 29' I will cover with supplementary e letter,

Most Truly Yours

Jes. M. Dille

Progress Report Niobrara Reservation

For the Calendar Year 1921



FILE COPY

Game and Bird Reservations

Maintenance of Herds
Prime importance.

Considering the actual showing resulting in exchange for the time and funds used on extra labor, it must be borne in mind

that there is one detail, which offers no visible showing - the raising of certain crops and the manipulation of the hay harvest, from the Reserve, to enable us to carry our herds through, under the small pasture conditions. This necessity has become more acute from year to year, with the bison increasing in numbers from 11 to 14, to 18,

to 21, to 28 and to 37 and the elk likewise. I am not making mention of this fact, in contrainess to the big fence with the large pasture now in process of operation but to indicate where our attentions and time and expenses are placed. It is desirable to harvest some diversity of crops in order to ~~break~~ make a break in their feed with the prairie hay and this year, we have good little stacks of cane and oat hay and some alfalfa and corn in the shock besides prairie hay in abundance.

When the herds are turned into the proposed enclosure the farming operations will be much curtailed and but a minimum of crops raised.

No black-leg cases desired, nor anthrax,

In anticipation of the bison occupying the new pasture on the north side of the river, considerable time has to be taken

to ride out on the same in order ^{to keep} the droves of loose stock down to a reasonable number and to watch conditions of grass and disease. Every one and their relatives turn into this region for the summer pastures -

For that matter a strict neutrality has to be maintained on the south side of the river in order to preserve the hay lands, so essential to us under present conditions. This chore will require more time this season than heretofore and for the first time, I am going to enter into grazing permits with the north side people for a price in order to restrict their activities.

Work centering around five cars of posts.

During the early portion of the year, the five car load of posts arrived in town, for the proposed big fence and the unloading and hauling to the Reserve, with the proper

yarding of them at a convenient point proved a chore that required considerable time.

Most of the woven wire was also up town as the cars had arrived so close together that all the regular man was equal to doing was to dump it on vacant lots about the town, in order to release the cars, I had to have this, all brought to the place, and piled properly, working the expense under the regular maintenance labor.

Burn

7 Me. of
Crops of 1921

Barb wire Fencing. The mid-winter season Jan.-Feb. 1921, was somewhat favorable for fence construction and some additional barb wire fence was completed. at the east side, Enclosing another field of 440 acres bordering on the highway and between deeded lands, and placing that portion of the Reserve in better condition This is a tract that has given lots of trouble. by its exposed position with no protection. and the same tract was the centre of the sheep disturbance, The winter weather remained open to such an extent as to prove advantageous for the switching and changing of the fences down the state highway. This was all set once, but on account of the reversal of the firm stand taken by the Chief, was torn out and reset.

During the summer, one additional mile of new barb wire fence was put in. On the east boundary line, beginning at the north east corner, thence south one mile, This used up all our stock of barb wire, but not of posts, We have enough posts to set another mile,

Cash Revenues, During the spring of the year, hay sales to the amount of \$101. were made and the funds returned to the Treasury. Some second hand material to the amount of \$ 3. was also realized upon,

Graded road Through place, While the road construction Company were in operation on the State Highway, an advantageous price was obtained for dirt, by the truck load to be hauled in and a graded road was made through the immediate Enclosures about Headquarters. Some road machinery was borrowed from the City of Valentine, and the road fixed in good shape. This gives the public better facilities for passing through by the buildings and pastures. So much better that signs had to be placed at once, requesting heavy traffic not to use the road.

Deputy State Game Warden, Early in the year, at my request A Deputy State Game Warden, made me a visit and stayed about for a few days in the hopes of stopping so much shooting out of season,, just over the boundary and among the farmers, His presence leaked out however, somehow and the best he did was some cases not directly adjacent to us, Also some cases of illegal beaver trapping. My experience with this beaver trapping permit if the suggestion is of any value to you, is that Laws, should be obtained placing some requirements on the Dealers who purchase pelts. Why are not Dealers required to take note, when beaver pelts and such prohibitive furs are offered them for sale, that they have been taken under proper permit and let them register the permit,

The Laborer also put in considerable time in sorting and putting in shape second hand material resulting from wrecked buildings preparatory for disposal for cash,

The Big
Fence.

Beginning with the first days of september, the dipping plant for the posts was put in operation the site selected being across the river, where the posts had been stacked, and the whole outfit was dipped, in readiness for the work, You recall that there is a steep grade and hill, from the river up, on north side, which is necessary to pull, for the material that goes into over half of the fence, and to state that one half of the posts estimated for that region accessible from the top of the hill, were placed on top, indicates a big item of time and expense, One of the Govt. Trucks on storage with us was borrowed and with but slight expense, placed in order for hauling It was sent to the top of the hill via the long route around and kept there, and used for moving the posts down the north line which is four and one half miles long, But all things considered it was not a saving in expense proposition, on the north side, It is the wrong type of truck for this work and roads but can be used to some advantage on the south side, to move material to the east s end,

The work was actively begun on the big fence September 5th and continued until December 10th There was one interruption of over ten days the latter portion of November and since the interruption of December 10th the weather has not remained open enough to allow resumption, Such a resumption might happen at any time, I expect to be able to do some work in February, The posts are all set to the far north east corner, and this is a little over one half of them. The holes are dug one and one half miles farther than this, The slow part of the work is the preliminary survey, and choosing of the route and setting the stakes, This is particular and so absorbing that the rear cannot be brought up, for lack of men that have the comprehension, of the requirements, The route in advance is fairly well selected and will not absorb so much time, The wire placing does not require the time, that either the post setting or the line staking does,

Game Mammalia

The ✓
Bison.

To date number, calves and all 36 head. 37 head was reported June 30th but the death of the calf a week or so ago has reduced the herd to 36. The condition is fine It is no time to let them run down or to hold them on just the one sort of feed. I am throwing the crops to them in diversity and they have never been in better condition.

The
Elk

The elk as a whole are not in as good condition and probably will not improve until they are in the new pasture. The majority of them look good, It is the odds and ends of the herd that show the inbreeding and poor conditions, As outlined in last yearly report, The supply of browse in the pasture is exhausted and straight grazing followed with the same sort of hay is not enough for the welfare of that class of mammal,

The ✓
Elk, ✓ Number reported June 30' last
Loss this winter

53
3

50

White-tail ✓
Deer, ✓

1

Beaver ✓ Have been estimated along the river at

100.

There are plenty of them throughout the reaches of the Reserve They are cutting down all timber growth, close to the river bank throughout the whole nine miles of River frontage They stay strictly in the river, Use that for going and coming and do not therefore construct any dams, No streams coming from the side are being dammed. Although such dams have been at times placed. I think the poachers scare them back to the river, for as soon as a dam is started, some one is there cutting it or setting traps, Nine miles of river frontage is hard to safeguard, without considerable expense These amateur trappers are not equal to the art of catching them from the swift moving river,

Game Birds, ✓ Quail are exceedingly scarce, and appear to be
shoot them (diminishing) People do not
severe on them and they must have drifted to more expanse of wheat producing acreage. The winters are too

Sharp-tail grouse and ✓
Prairie Chicken, ✓

Are abundant this winter, but this abundance cannot be claimed as a tribute to the Reserve. There are more in the entire region that heretofore. The daily flight is from the Reserve to the corn fields and back to reserve, Putting in so many complete days as I did this autumn on the north side, gave me an opportunity to see how they worked over in that country, which is somewhat different than the south side, and how they made use of the Reserve as a Refuge. There are from 1600 to 2000 birds that frequent the Reserve, perhaps more.

(Sharp-tailed ✓
at Prairie Ch.)

J. M. Dille

January 18-1922

(C O P Y)

The Niobrara Reservation
In Nebraska

February 8,
1921.

Game and Bird Reservations
COPY

Welfare of the
Bison and Elk

The condition of the Bison is very satisfactory, They are not overly fat, as the forced feeding and the quality of this hay in this region is not of the best, but all considered, they are satisfactory. The area on the north side of the river, which is proposed to become their permanent pasture is of hard soil, with the native grama grass, and the herd will no doubt take on a highly healthy condition, when liberated in their pasture. The condition of the elk is not good. There are a good many anemic looking individuals, undersized, and a lack of pep apparent. This is due to two chief causes - the inbreeding of the herd and the gradual consumption of the browsing sort of feed in this small pasture, which confines them to a straight grass and hay diet; a condition not good for their welfare.

The Work

For the past year has been along the lines of a steady drive towards getting the immediate place cleared of the surplus buildings and the ground cleared of the scars. The latter will also be one conspicuous work during the coming year. With the services of but one man available it becomes a persistent, slow, drive.

Revenues

Funds have been returned to the general Treasury

| | |
|--------------------------|---------|
| For buildings sold | \$1266. |
| For second hand material | 59. |
| For hay sales | 205. |

Certain area of the prairie should be mowed for hay each year, account of the fire protection afforded and this necessitates some hay for disposal.

Fencing

Barb wire fencing, four wires and western cedar posts 16 feet apart, have been completed on the south side of the river and particularly bounding the one main road through the Reserve, on each side of the road. This gives us two closed fields of approx. one thousand acres total, easy of control and places the balance of the fencing in formation for continuance. It is highly desirable that this style of fencing be pushed in construction as much as funds become available in order to define the boundaries and simplify the administration. There is no other work of more importance.

The Big
Fence.

The woven wire purchased in fiscal year of 1919-1920 is all on the grounds. Three car loads. The posts are partly here. The balance moving this way. The contract for the hole digging was let and some of the work done before the winter set in. With additional funds, this big fence can go up and the creation of the fourth large enclosure for the perpetuation of the Bison be an established fact.

F. M. DILLE.

BWM

The Niobrara Reservation
In Nebraska

February 8th
1921.

The Native
Birds.

This winter of 1920-1921 finds not less than 1200 prairie hen and sharp-tail Grouse and up to 2000 in number wintering on the Reserve. They leave the boundary daily for feeding in the corn fields that are about us on all sides, flying back into the Reserve in the evening. At times there is illegal shooting on the farms and the birds will fly back on being disturbed. The planting of corn fields close to the centre of the Reserve will be continued this season so as to hold the birds as close to their protection as possible. It is a fact that within a few years the prairie chicken of this region will have to take refuge and make their last stand on this place and on the large Forest Reserve situate south west of here, about fifty miles to the boundary.

Beaver Have taken refuge with us to a large number. With the addition to the Reservation, we now have approx. nine miles of river frontage. From the view point of the beaver, both banks of the river comprise eighteen miles. This brings an immense beaver territory under protection. At the same time, the injury and destruction of the young timber along the course of the river is of some concern. These beaver do not construct dams in the small spring branches that course to the Niobrara River on each side but have their habitat in the banks of the river. Much of the timber they fell, falls into the water and goes down the swift stream. Lost to any economic use.

(signed) FREDERICK M. DILLE,

Inspector.

Niobrara Reserve -

Nebraska, February 8, 1921.

The Niobrara Reservation
In Nebraska

February 8' 1921.

Tally of the Game Animals under fence

| | | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------------|-------|----------|
| <u>Bison</u> | On hand, one year ago | 21 | |
| | Calves of 1920. | 7 | |
| | | <hr/> | ✓ |
| | Total on hand (no loss) | | 28 ✓ |
| <u>Elk</u> | On hand Jan. 1, 1920 | 47 | ✓ |
| | Calves of 1920 | 5 | ✓ |
| | | <hr/> | |
| | | 52 | |
| | Loss of summer and autumn | 3 | ✓ |
| | | <hr/> | |
| | Total on hand Jan. 1, 1921. | | 49 ✓ |
| <u>White-tail Deer</u> | | | |
| | One died in summer | | |
| | Remaining | 1 | (only) ✓ |

* Tally after deducting the loss and killing
which did not occur until after Jan. 1, 1920.

F. M. Dille.