

A scenic sunset over a lake with trees in the foreground. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a warm orange and yellow glow across the sky and reflecting on the water. The trees in the foreground are silhouetted against the bright light of the sunset.

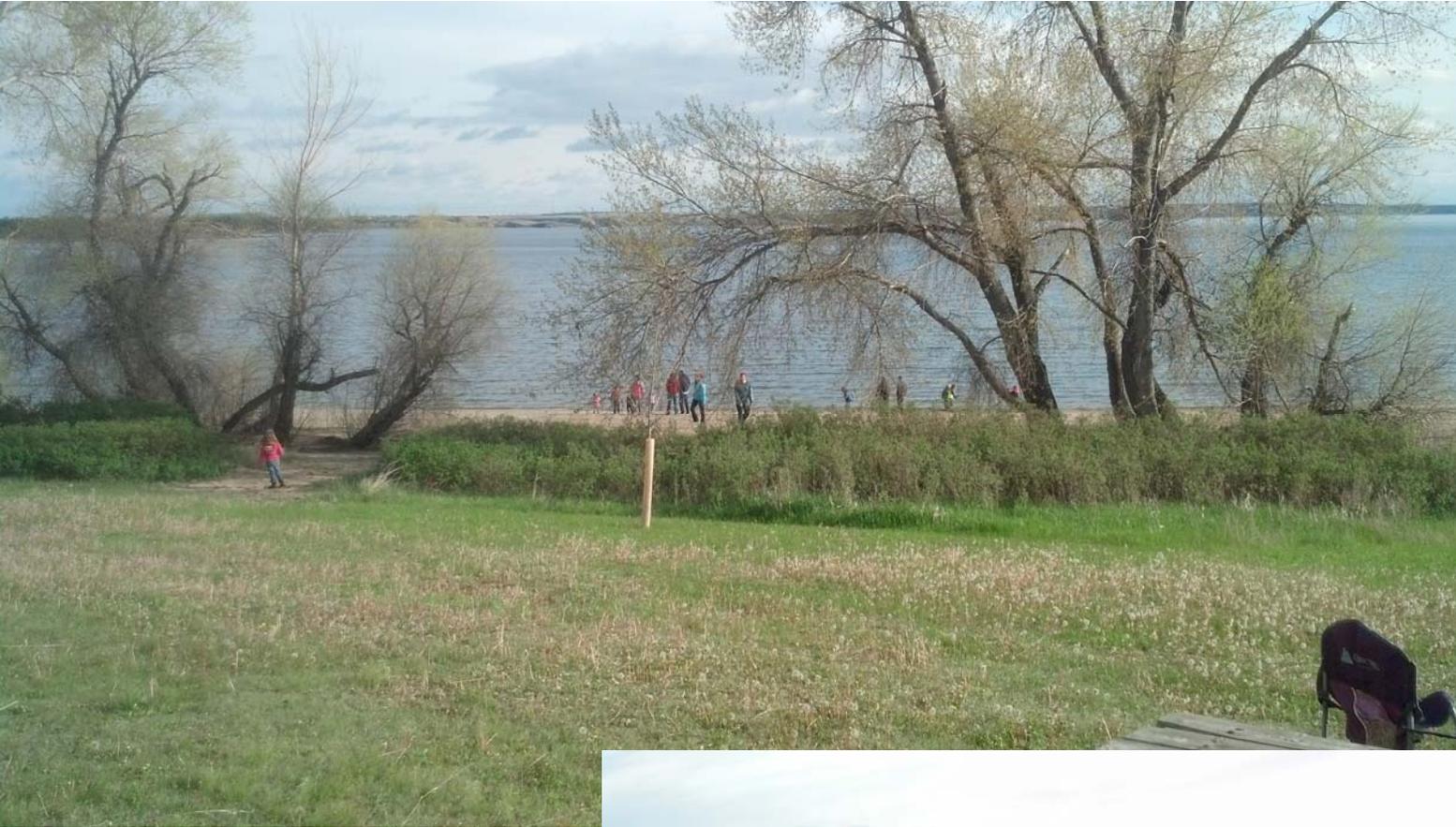
## 2016 DENR SMELT HUNT

Hearty smelt hunters from DENR ventured north to Okobojo Point on Lake Oahe on April 29, 2016, for the annual DENR smelt hunt. Although meteorologists were forecasting rain, wind and cold weather, they missed the mark and pleasant weather was enjoyed by about 50 optimistic adults and 20 kids in attendance. It was noted by at least one attendee that this year's hunt had more kids than dogs. Smelt hunt organizer Brian Gustafson and chief cooks Brad Schultz and Terry Florentz fired up the deep fat fryers early in the evening and soon there were onion rings, mushrooms, zucchini, Brussel sprouts, pickles, jalapeno bites, shrimp, walleye, pizza rolls, egg rolls, chislic, cinnamon-coated donut balls, and plenty of other stuff individuals brought premade such as desserts, salads, dip, and more. Dale Healey, who returned to DENR after a few years away at a different state agency, brought smoked pork and buffalo. Neal Konda brought a truck load of wood to keep the smelt hunters warm. Aaron Leingang organized his crew of smelt hunters to brave the cold water. Their efforts resulted in zero smelt, but they did manage to net a minnow. To ensure smelt would be part of the evening offering, however, Aaron brought some store-bought smelt. With bellies full and enjoyable time spent around the campfire, the crowd made their way to tents, campers or the comfort of their homes. Except, of course, for one who stayed awake to make sure the fire was tended throughout the night. This year's Smelt Hunt concluded the next morning with breakfast burritos and a choice of coffee, orange juice or milk.

The “early crowd” for the 2016 smelt hunt begins to gather at Okobojo Point on Lake Oahe...



...while the cooks start firing up the deep fat fryers and grill.



**Kids play by the water...**

**...the camp fire is stoked in anticipation of cooler temperatures when the sun goes down...**





**As dusk settles, the crowd continues to grow...**

**...and people start settling in for food, fun and fellowship.**





**As the smelt hunters let the food settle, they begin the arduous task of solving at least some of America's and the world's problems.**





**The camp fire grows...**

**...and the kids relish in the fact that they're staying up later than many of them ever have before.**





**And lest we forget why this annual event is held, the real smelt hunters venture into the cold waters in search of, well, smelt. The net result was a minnow...and in keeping with tradition, a DENR staffer ate it raw. Well played, Drew!**



**Smelt hunters begin to settle in to enjoy the fire and camaraderie as the night grows colder.**

**“Hope to see you at next year’s Smelt Hunt!”**

**- Brian Gustafson**  
*DENR Smelt Hunt organizer*



# 2014 DENR SMELT HUNT

Hardy smelt hunters from DENR and other organizations ventured north to Okobojo Point on Lake Oahe on May 2, 2014, for the annual DENR smelt hunt. While the temperature was a bit brisk, the calm wind made for an enjoyable evening. Hunt organizer Brian Gustafson and chief cook Brad Schultz fired up the deep fat fryers early in the evening and soon there were onion rings, breaded mushrooms, venison, elk, shrimp, walleye, catfish, and Lita Magedanz's world-famous egg rolls being enjoyed by all. Meanwhile, Rick Boddicker fired up the grill and added various grilled meats to the menu. After the early crowd was full, the cooks took about an hour off to re-hydrate, and then did it all over again for the late crowd. Around midnight, Aaron Leingang organized his crew of smelt hunters and off to the boat ramp area they went. However, no matter how hard they seined, nary a smelt was found. The walleye may get hungry this year. After enjoying the campfire, most of the crowd had wandered off to their tents and campers by about 5:00 am, but one sleepless soul stayed up and tended the fire all night. The next morning was a little windy, but that did not stop our cooking crew from making all the trimmings for the ultimate breakfast burritos. After breakfast, most went back to town, but a few diehards - dogs, men and women - stayed out for night two. After enjoying another camp fire that night and a great goose chislic breakfast the next morning, camp was tore down and we sadly left the "Land of Sky Blue Waters."

*\*Photos courtesy of Dale Healey from DOT*





The “early crowd” of the 2014 smelt hunt begins to gather on Okobojo Point on Lake Oahe...

...while the cooks start firing up the deep fat fryers and grill.



As dusk settles, the campfire is lit and gradually grows.





**After the smelt hunt team returned from the Okobojo boat ramp area smeltless...**

**...the camp fire was stoked up to warm them back up.**



**The camp fire not only kept the crew warm, it also provided the ultimate atmosphere for...**



**...contemplation and meditation after a hard week at work.**



The next morning, Brad Schultz and Brian Gustafson cook up all the trimmings for the ultimate breakfast burritos...

...while some early risers wait for breakfast as they rehash memorable events of the night before.



As the 2014 Smelt Hunt came to a close, Smelt Hunt Chairman Brian Gustafson was heard to say,

***“Hope to see YOU at the 2015 DENR Smelt Hunt!”***

# 2010 Smelt Hunt

DENR's annual smelt hunt for 2010 took place April 30 on beautiful Lake Oahe. Too bad Mother Nature did not cooperate and decided to be windy after around 7 p.m. Despite the wind and cool temperatures, a hardy crowd participated. This year's "smelt hunters" included a 9-month old girl, college kids who have participated since they were young, college graduates now working for DENR, significant others, and some older gentlemen. As the evening progressed, those that were hungry huddled around the grills and deep fryers or around the warm campfire. Some on the outer edges expressed concern that the onion rings, mushrooms, smelt, donut holes, venison, elk, chicken gizzards, shrimp, antelope, pheasant, buffalo wings, salads, vegetables, egg rolls, and other delectables were not making it to them. Of course a veteran smelt hunter knows enough to stand by the cooks if you are hungry. Although the wind kept us from seining for smelt, Aaron Leingang was kind enough to catch and clean plenty of smelt ahead of time for all to eat. However, the tradition of newcomers to eat raw smelt will have to wait until next year. Saturday morning greeted us with more wind. A huge breakfast - consisting of 15 pounds of hash browns, 5-1/2 pounds of bacon, 5 pounds of pork sausage, 4 dozen scrambled eggs, venison sausage, and all the fixings for breakfast burritos - was cooked. The crowd was still hungry and ate everything except one or two burritos. See you next year!











Hope to see you  
at next year's  
Smelt Feed!



## 2009 Smelt Hunt

DENR's annual smelt hunt for 2009 took place on beautiful Lake Oahe April 24 despite the presence of mid-afternoon rain, snow, and a stiff and cold wind. However, once Mother Nature finished spitting at us, she decided to provide us with a calm, cool night. As darkness began to fall, the crowd kept growing to include more than a half dozen sons and daughters from college who made the trip back to Pierre for this annual event that many have attended since they were old enough to walk. The cooks were kept busy as the festive crowd sat around the fire, played on the beach, and visited while they devoured mountains of onion rings, venison, mutton, elk chislic, barbecued buffalo, pork loin, shrimp, antelope, pheasant, stuffed mushrooms, buffalo wings, salads, vegetables, and the list goes on. Around midnight, part of the crowd went to the beach to seine for smelt, but unfortunately, the dramatic drop in temperature that day made the actual hunt for smelt not very fruitful. Saturday morning greeted us with sunshine and a huge breakfast was cooked up consisting of hash brown potatoes, bacon, pork and venison sausage, and all the fixings for breakfast burritos. As you can tell, no one went home hungry. See you next year!















See you at  
next year's  
DENR Smelt  
Hunt!