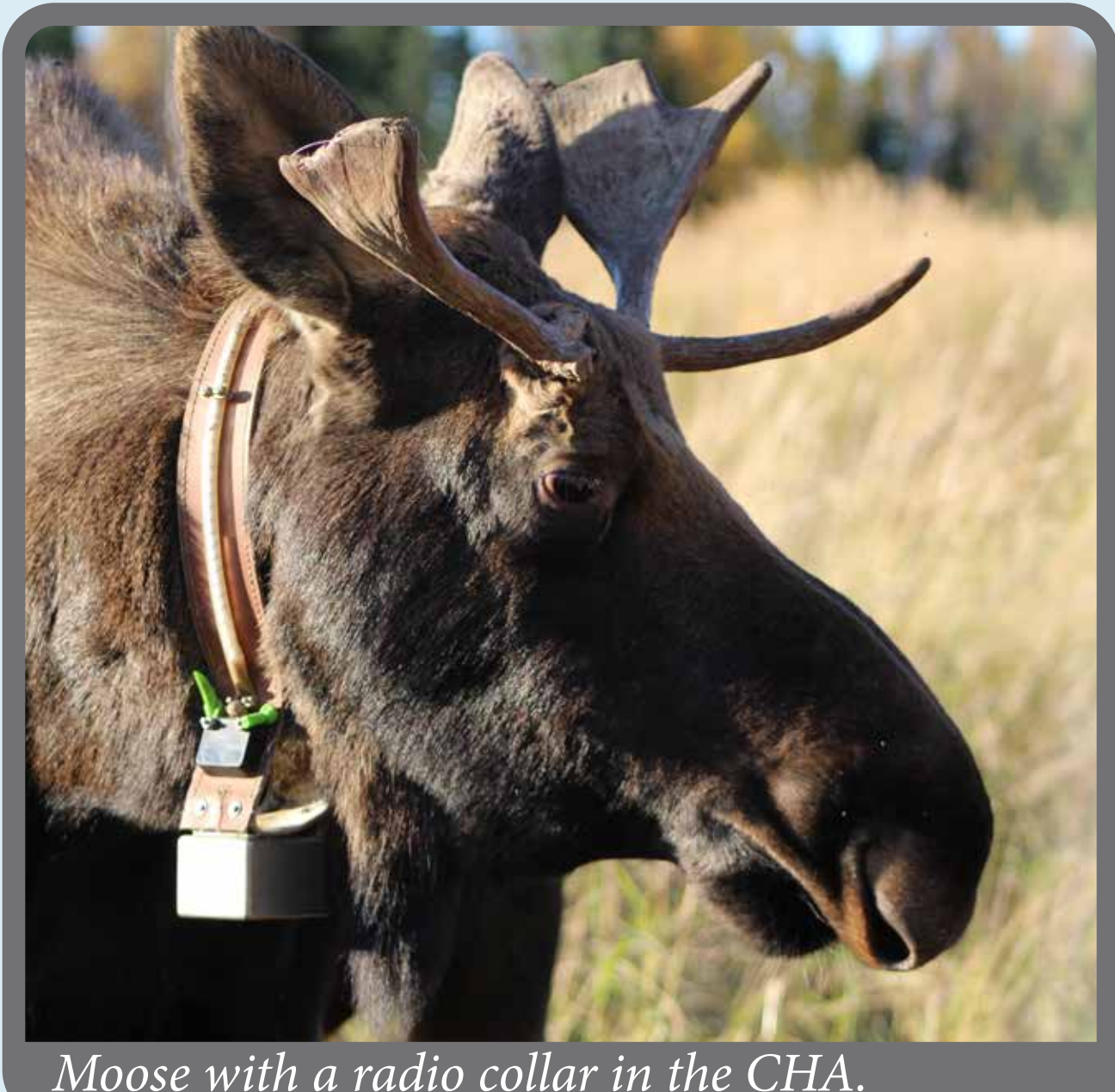


Welcome to the Anchor River and Fritz Creek Critical Habitat Area

...we are enhancing moose habitat in these woods and wetlands



Moose with a radio collar in the CHA.

Supporting moose along the Anchor River and Fritz Creek

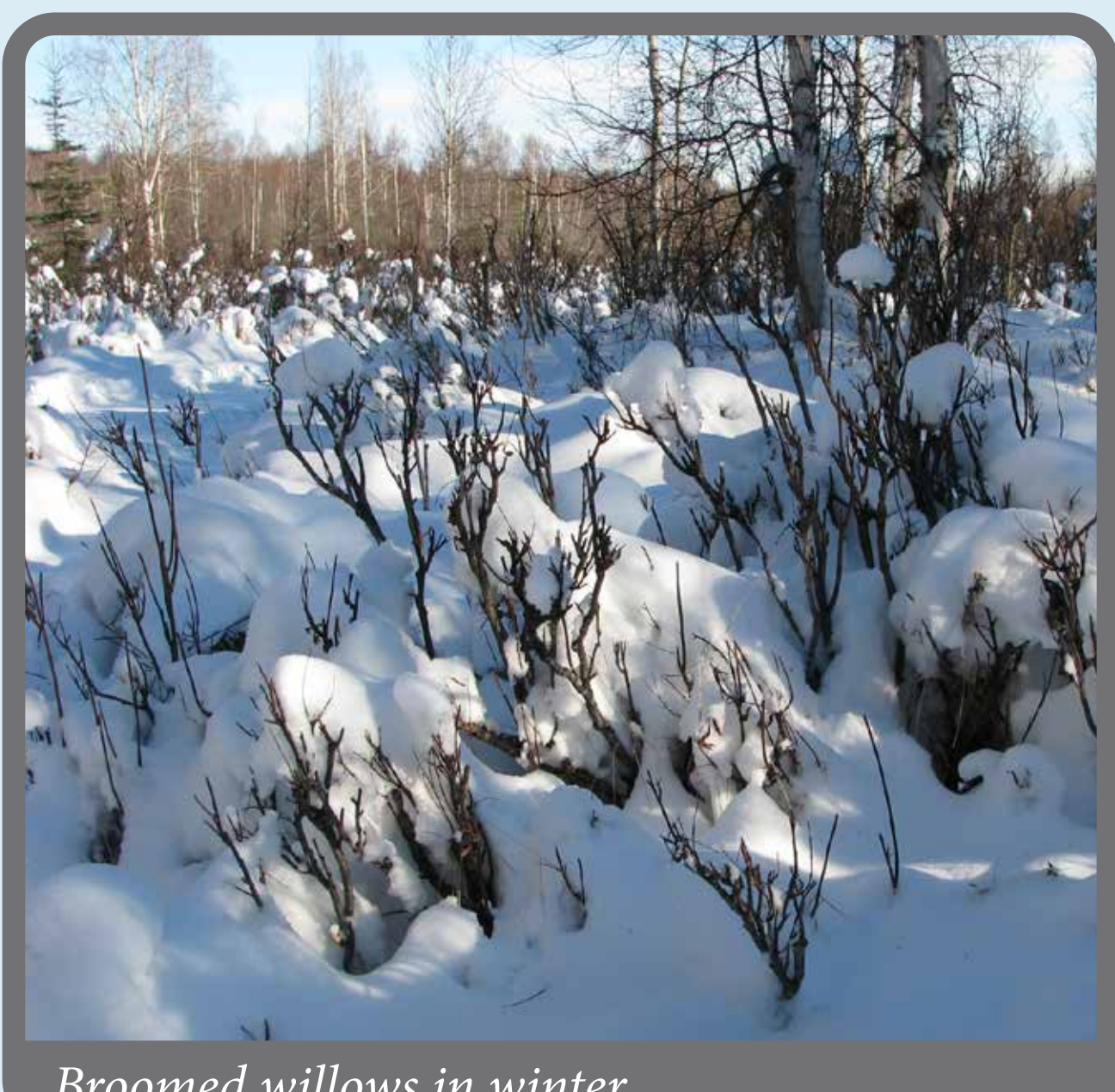
Moose require access to high quality habitat to survive in winter. The best winter habitat is found at lower elevations, often in the same areas that people like to build communities. As the footprint of urban development expands, there is a resulting decline in available moose habitat. The Anchor River and Fritz Creek Critical Habitat Area (CHA) was established in 1985 to protect habitat important for moose and other wildlife species. Maintaining high quality winter habitat in areas like the CHA is one way to support healthy moose populations.

Winter moose browse

Moose feed on the twigs of plants such as willow, birch, aspen, and cottonwoods during the winter. As these plants age, twig diameters grow larger and become less nutritious because of the increase in undigestible fiber content. Heavy browsing can damage plants and result in "broomed" growth forms that are less appealing to moose. Over the long term, intense browsing pressure can alter the composition of plant communities and reduce the available nutrient content of winter moose foods.

Disturbance and plant regeneration

Natural and human-caused disturbances such as fire, floods, and mechanical cutting can initiate the regeneration of healthy, nutritious plant communities important for moose in winter. Areas around the CHA have experienced few recent large-scale natural disturbances capable of initiating of widescale regrowth. In 2005, a fire along the northeastern edge had only a small impact due to fire suppression efforts. Spruce bark beetle outbreaks in the late 1990's and 2010's killed many spruce trees, converting previously forested areas to open grasslands. Beetle-killed trees can also increase fuel loads and fire severity to the extent of damaging soil and plant roots, which hinders rather than helps moose browse regeneration.



Broomed willows in winter.



Skid steers used for mechanical cutting.



Imitating nature to benefit moose

Mechanical cutting can imitate the effects of natural disturbances and stimulate the regrowth of plants. Mechanical treatments were applied at three sites in the CHA starting in 2021, and more may occur in the future. Treatments consisted of mowing mature willows in winter to regenerate healthy plants from roots left intact and frozen in the ground. Other hardwood trees, such as cottonwoods, were top-killed or felled to encourage new sprouts to grow from remaining stumps. Small bulldozers and skid steers were used in winter to minimize the impact to roots and soils.

Mechanical treatment was most feasible for these sites to limit possible impacts to surrounding homes and private lands. These mechanical treatments in the CHA are part of a Wildlife Habitat Enhancement program on the Kenai Peninsula, which also supports prescribed fire applications, wildfire fuel reduction, fuel break development, and research on moose responses to natural and human-caused disturbances.

For more information, visit:
www.lands-waters.adfg.alaska.gov



scan with your smartphone camera



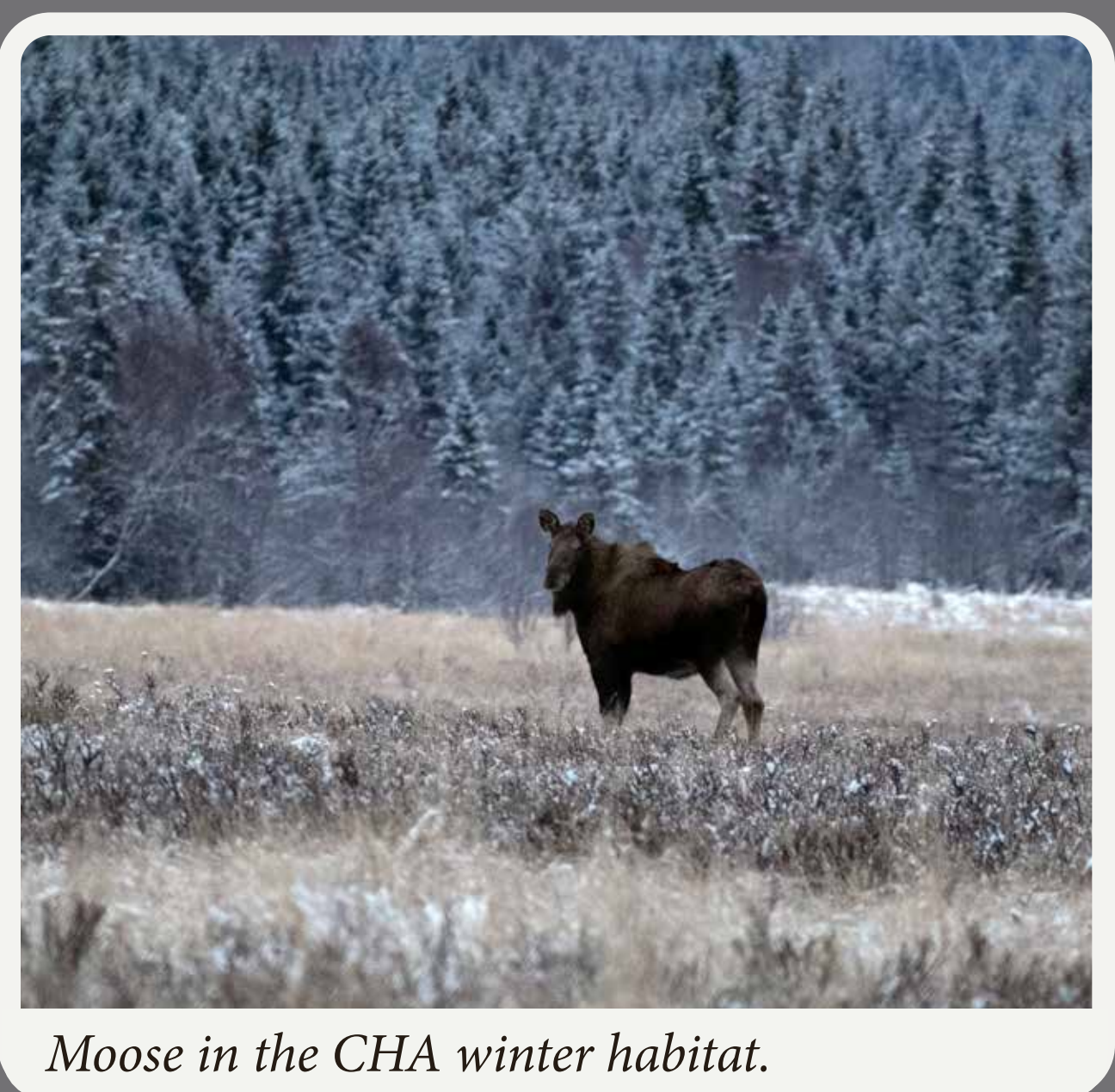
Help care for the CHA

You can help the CHA and moose populations in this area thrive:

- 🦌 Avoid disturbing moose in winter
- 🦌 Operate ATV's only on designated trails
- 🦌 Abide by all CHA regulations intended to protect habitat

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game manages a network of 34 wildlife refuges, sanctuaries, ranges, and critical habitat areas (CHA). The Anchor River and Fritz Creek CHA was created with wide community support to protect habitat necessary to the well-being of the local moose population, especially in winter when deep snow pushes them to lower elevations. Moose need quiet habitat in winter to rest and conserve energy reserves.

Off-trail use of ATVs can create ruts that often cause run-off, impacting water quality in the Anchor River, which is renowned for steelhead trout and Dolly Varden sportfishing.



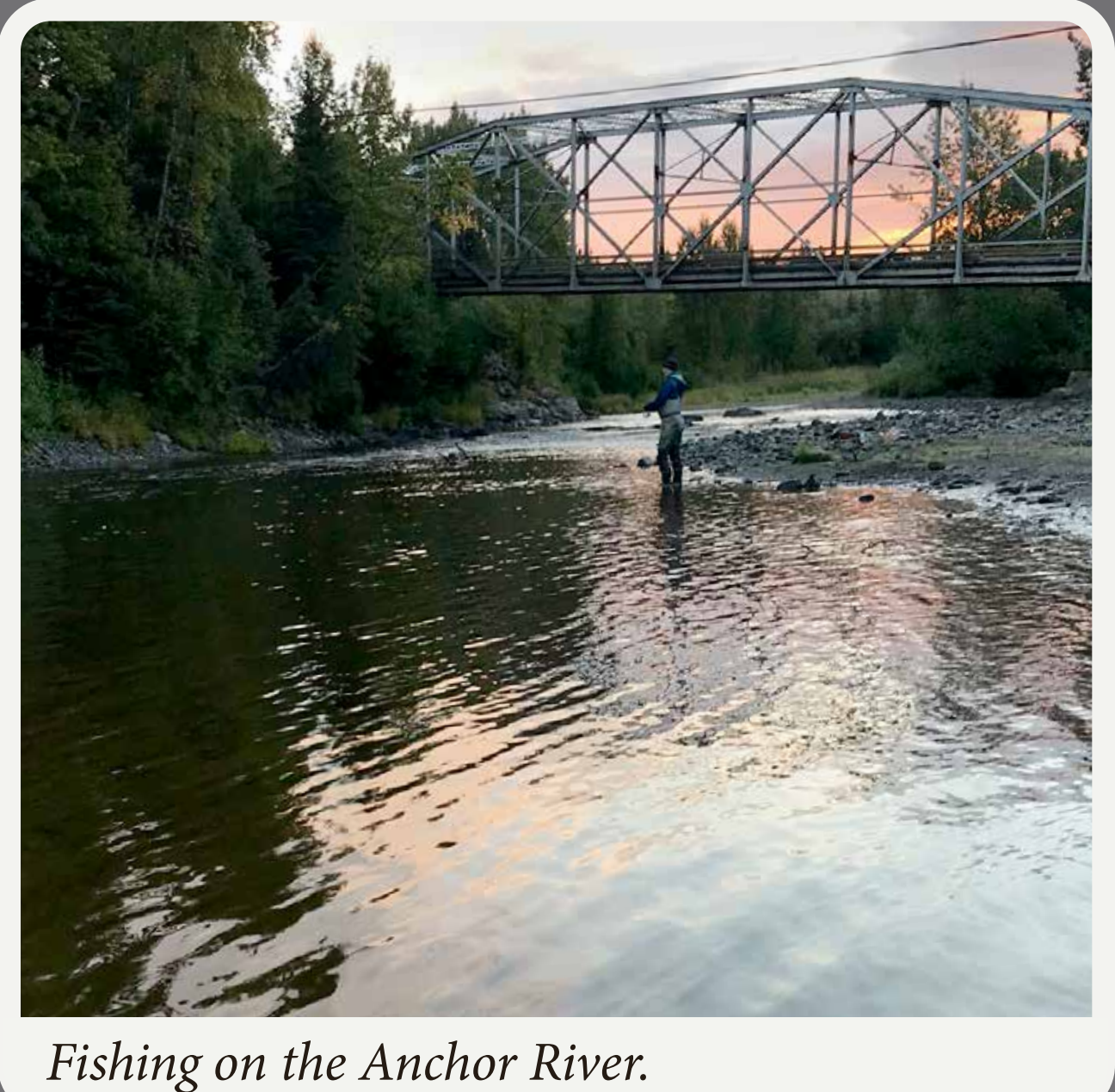
Moose in the CHA winter habitat.



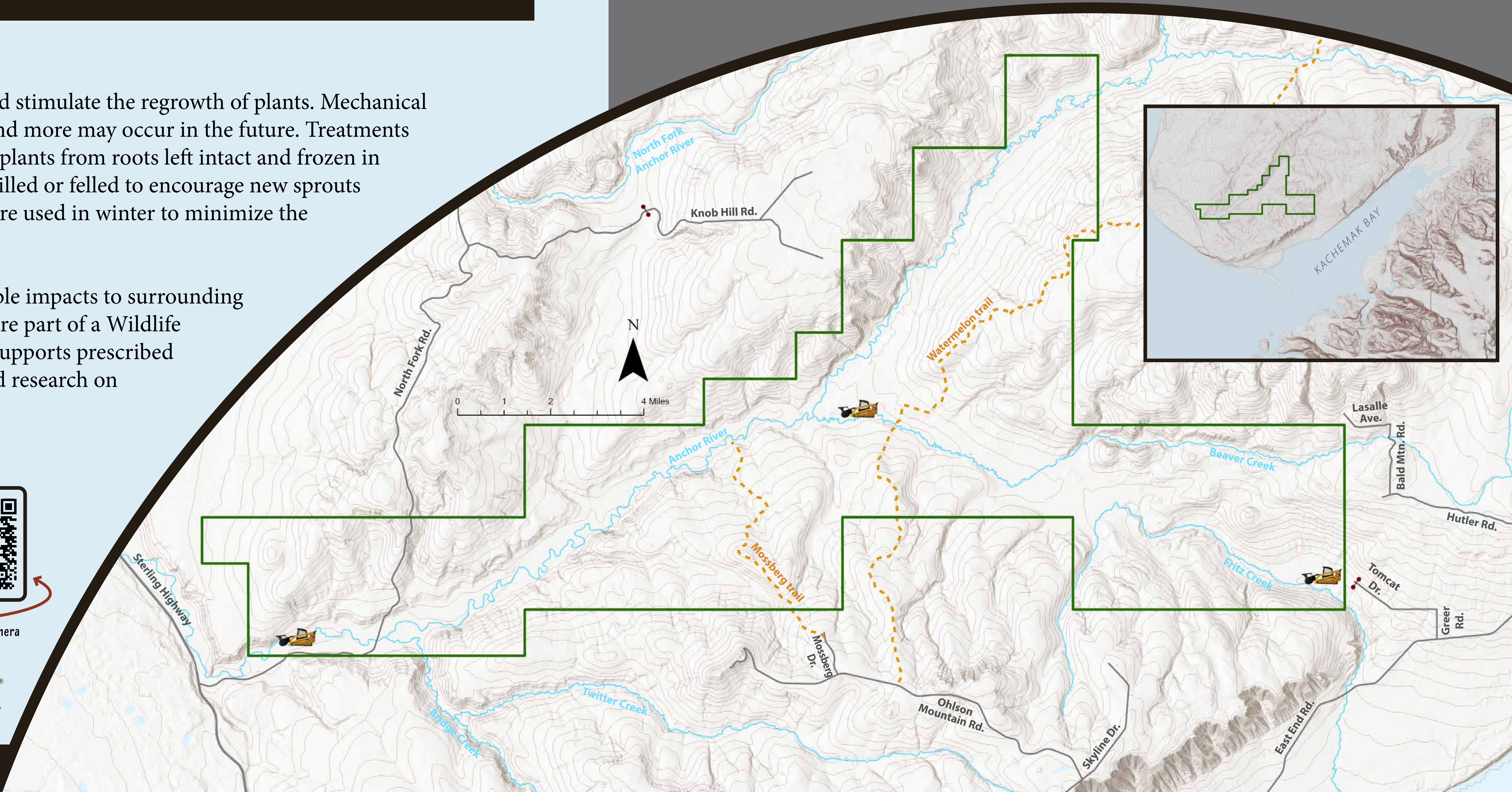
Ruts caused by all-terrain vehicles (ATVs).

CHA map features

- Habitat enhancement sites
- CHA boundary
- Trails
- Roads
- Gates



Fishing on the Anchor River.



Bull moose in the CHA in fall.