

National Elk Refuge News

Road and Bridge Enhancement Project Update – May 7, 2015



This is the first in a series of updates about a road and bridge enhancement project on the National Elk Refuge. The majority of the project is funded by the Federal Lands Transportation Program within the Federal Highways Administration. The work is being done in cooperation with Teton County, Wyoming, which obtained additional funding through a Federal Lands Access Program grant.

Winter closures on the National Elk Refuge were lifted on May 1, again giving the public seasonal access to the Curtis Canyon and Flat Creek roads.

This season, travelers on Refuge roads can expect to see construction crews and large equipment activity as part of a substantial road and bridge

enhancement project that began on the National Elk Refuge last month. The work includes expanding and adding turnouts in key wildlife viewing areas, improving road drainage, adding and enlarging culverts, and enhancing the gravel surface, all of which are designed to increase safety for travelers.

The first 3½ miles of the Refuge Road are maintained by Teton County, Wyoming through an easement agreement that allows the public to use the Refuge Road.

Teton County receives money each year from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service through the Refuge Revenue Sharing Act. Lands acquired by the Service are removed from the tax rolls, but the Refuge Revenue Sharing Act

offsets tax losses that would have been collected if the same lands had been in private ownership. Annual payments are made to the county or other local unit of government where the federal lands are located.

The remainder of the Refuge Road, as well as the Flat Creek and Curtis Canyon roads, is maintained by the National Elk Refuge through federal funding.

In late April, crews replaced a concrete box culvert on Flat Creek near the McBride Management Area intersection. The majority of the work was finished by the time the area opened to the public on May 1, but crews will continue working in the area and complete the final land reclamation and hydroseeding in the fall.



Travelers should watch for posted warnings, regulatory signs, flaggers, or other workers as they travel through the Refuge.

This week, workers began the reconditioning phase on the Flat Creek Road north of the Curtis Canyon junction. Traffic has been confined to one lane of travel only in some sections of the road, with both flaggers and caution signs in place to alert travelers of the activity.

Anyone using the Refuge Road this spring or summer should expect reduced speeds and delays in some sections of the roadway as work continues. Currently, road crews plan to minimize impacts to the public on weekends when more public use is expected.

More information will be available as work progresses south of the Curtis Canyon junction into areas more commonly traveled by the public.

The project is expected to cost \$2.5 million and includes approximately 10 miles of Refuge road and bridge work.

