

National Elk Refuge News

Road and Bridge Enhancement Project Update – June 15, 2015



Crews finish road work near the Curtis Canyon intersection, smoothing and grading the road where two new culverts were installed.

This is the second in a series of updates about a road and bridge enhancement project on the National Elk Refuge. The first article can be found at <http://1.usa.gov/1csn3hI>.

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.

Road work continues on the Refuge Road this month, part of a large project to expand and add turnouts in key wildlife viewing areas, add and enlarge culverts, and enhance the gravel surface.

The project is designed to increase safety for travelers and improve road drainage. The work involves approximately 10 miles of Refuge road and bridge work and is expected to cost \$2.5 million.

Crews are wrapping up work this week near the County Maintenance line just south of the Curtis Canyon intersection. The area frequently floods due to poor drainage during cycles of winter freezing and thawing, leaving standing water across the road. As mitigation, workers replaced one 14" diameter culvert with two 30" culverts that will move the water from Sheep Creek more efficiently through the area.

Later this month, work will shift to areas of the Refuge Road closer to the Refuge's entrance at the end of East Broadway Avenue. Crews will focus on reconditioning the road surface and completing more culvert work between East Broadway and the Twin Creek corner, approximately 3½ miles from the Refuge entrance. Travelers on the Refuge Road should expect reduced speeds and short delays as work continues. Both flaggers and cautions signs will be in place to alert travelers of the activity. The public is asked to reduce speeds and use additional caution when driving by work areas or large equipment. Trucks carrying loose aggregate construction material will also be present on the roadway.



Drainage will be improved on the Refuge Road on the east end of Miller Butte with additional culverts and a raised road surface.

Crews will suspend work from Friday, July 3 through Sunday, July 5 to reduce traffic impacts over the Independence Day holiday weekend.

A second crew will move to the interior of the National Elk Refuge next week, focusing on the bridge that crosses Flat Creek near the area where sleigh rides depart during the winter season. The current bridge has a weight limit of 5 tons, adequate for single vehicle travel but not substantial enough to accommodate most Refuge equipment. The replacement bridge will significantly increase the capacity to a highway grade standard, letting significantly heavier loads cross the stream.

The increased weight limit will also allow for pellet deliveries to be made more directly to Refuge storage sheds. The National Elk Refuge uses alfalfa pellets in its elk and bison winter supplemental feeding program. When pellet



As many as 20,000 people travel over the bridge each year as part of a wildlife viewing interpretive tour via horse-drawn sleighs.

deliveries are made, trucks carrying 30 tons of feed drive through Jackson, past the hospital, down the Refuge Road, and behind Miller Butte where the pellet storage sheds are located. With the new bridge in place, delivery trucks will be able to minimize traffic impacts within the Town of Jackson during the busy seasons.

Pellets are generally delivered in late summer to early fall.

The bridge work will not impede an ongoing Flat Creek habitat restoration project on the stream. The restoration work, led by the Wyoming Game & Fish Department, is upstream from the bridge's location.