

National Elk Refuge News

Road and Bridge Enhancement Project Update – July 13, 2015



With Miller Butte in the background, culvert work moved closer to East Broadway Avenue last week.

This is the third in a series of updates about a road and bridge enhancement project on the National Elk Refuge. The previous articles can be found in the Refuge's news archive.

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.

After weeks of progressing along the National Elk Refuge, work on the extensive road improvement project is moving closer to the southern end of the refuge and will become more visible to the public. The road work is 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 improvements, which will increase safety for travelers and enhance road drainage, involves approximately 10 miles of Refuge road and bridge work and is expected to cost \$2.5 million.

During the week of July 20, crews will prepare parking lots and pullouts along the popular Refuge Road. The roadway often becomes congested in the winter with wildlife viewers who stop to watch or photograph animals. The traffic and frequent sudden braking in the roadway can lead to unsafe driving conditions, especially when the roads are icy or snow-covered. The addition of pullouts and improved

parking areas will allow drivers to exit the flow of traffic and let other vehicles continue traveling along the road.

Later this month, up to 11 oversized trucks will be hauling rock, gravel, and other construction aggregate material along the first 1.5 miles of the Refuge Road. In addition to the trucks, each hauling up to 44 tons of loose material, a road grader, water truck, roller, and other large equipment will be present on the roadway. Though the road will remain open for general vehicle use, pedestrians and bicyclists will be restricted for four days when truck traffic is expected to be heaviest. The restrictions are scheduled to be in place Monday and Tuesday, July 27–28, and



Additional pullouts will ease traffic congestion during the winter when bighorn sheep and other animals are visible from the Refuge Road.

again on Monday and Tuesday, August 3–4. “With the amount of machinery, noise, dust, and loose material being hauled and placed on the road surface, we wouldn’t expect recreationists would want to use the road at that time,” explained Refuge Manager Steve Kallin. “However, our primary concern is for the safety of travelers not in enclosed vehicles,” he added. “After consulting with the contractor, we believe the short-term inconvenience is appropriate.”

Other walking and cycling opportunities will still be available to the public during this phase of the road project. The North Highway 89 multi-use pathway along the Refuge’s west boundary offers a quality alternative, while those with pets can use several Forest Service trails adjacent to the Town of Jackson. Staff at the Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center, located at 532 N. Cache Street in Jackson, can assist with suggesting alternate recreational locations.

Traffic has been limited at times to one lane with short delays on the Refuge Road since the project began this spring. “We appreciate the patience and respect to our workers that’s been extended thus far,” said Troy Price with Evans Construction. As work moves south into the more heavily

traveled section of the Refuge, users of the road are asked to continue to use caution and slower speeds. Regulatory signs and traffic control monitors will be in place during this next phase of the work.



The North Highway 89 Pathway is an option for recreationists during the four-day period when restrictions on foot traffic and bicycles will be in place on the Refuge Road.