

National Elk Refuge News

Road and Bridge Enhancement Project Update – July 24, 2015



Trucks line up on the Refuge Road, waiting to unload material at a site approximately two miles from the refuge's Broadway entrance. Work will move further south in late July and early August.

This is the fourth 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.

Two portions of a major road improvement project on the National Elk Refuge are steadily moving along this month, bringing the public closer to enhanced wildlife viewing opportunities and giving refuge staff additional options for equipment use and travel.

Crews have staked and prepared several new pullouts across from Miller Butte on the Refuge Road. Located near rocky outcroppings where bighorn sheep can frequently be seen during the winter, the new turnouts are designed to improve traffic movement. The roadway often becomes congested with wildlife viewers who stop to watch or photograph animals. The additional parking areas will allow drivers to exit the flow of traffic and let other vehicles continue traveling along the road.

In late July and early August, the contractor expects heavy truck traffic to be at its peak on the southern end of the refuge. Refuge Manager Steve Kallin announced earlier that pedestrian and bicycle traffic would be restricted for

four days during the work phase to maximize safety. Originally, the restrictions were scheduled for July 27–28 and August 3–4. However, those dates have now shifted back one week so the contractor will be better prepared for the incoming loads of aggregate material. "It will have the least impact on the public if all the prep work is completed before we start hauling material for this portion of the road," said Troy Price of Evans Construction.

Pedestrians and bicyclists should plan to use alternate recreation areas on August 3–4 and August 10–11 when a road grader, water truck, roller, trucks carrying loose material, and other large equipment will be steadily working on the first mile of the Refuge Road.



The former sleigh bridge was removed in late June and will be replaced with one that has a much greater load capacity.

During the construction phase, the Refuge Road will remain open for general vehicle use. The historic Miller House, located approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ mile north of the refuge's Broadway entrance, will remain open during the regular hours of operation, from 10:00–4:00 daily. Visitors are encouraged to keep a trip to the homestead in their travel plans despite possible short traffic delays to the site. The historic site gives guests a glimpse into Jackson Hole's settlement history.

Within the interior of the refuge, workers continue to prepare for the installation of a new bridge over Flat Creek, near the area where sleigh rides depart during the winter season. The previous bridge was removed on June 30. The new bridge will substantially increase the load capacity from five tons to a highway grade standard, allowing for a wider range of equipment and vehicles to utilize the access route. Most

notably, delivery trucks bringing alfalfa pellets for the refuge's supplemental feeding program will be able to minimize traffic impacts within the Town of Jackson by hauling their loads north of town and across the refuge to storage sheds behind Miller Butte.

The Lower Flat Creek and Nowlin Creek fishing seasons begin on August 1. Anglers are asked to avoid any areas that are flagged or signed as they near the Flat Creek construction site.



The historic Miller House will keep its regular seasonal hours of 10:00–4:00 daily despite the road construction nearby.