

# News Release



**U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
Valentine National Wildlife Refuge  
39983 Refuge Road  
Valentine, NE 69201**

*For Immediate Release*

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## **Valentine and Fort Niobrara National Wildlife Refuges Initiate Construction Projects to Enhance Public Access**

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**VALENTINE, Neb.** – This fall and winter, construction projects will begin at two Nebraska national wildlife refuges to enhance public access, visitor experience and visitor safety. At Valentine National Wildlife Refuge, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) will add gravel and recondition the existing roadway surface of the Little Hay Wildlife Drive. At Fort Niobrara National Wildlife Refuge, the Service will renovate the Fort Falls Trail trailhead and parking area. The projects will result in temporary closures of the affected roads and trails at the refuges.

The Little Hay Wildlife Drive is a 10-mile auto tour route at Valentine National Wildlife Refuge that allows visitors to learn about refuge management, wetland conservation, wildlife and plants. The road is a primary travel route used to facilitate hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, wildlife photography, environmental education and wildlife interpretation.

However, the road has become very rough due to insufficient gravel and may pose a safety hazard to visitors as large rocks and sharp edges have become exposed. There will be significant construction traffic on the Little Hay Wildlife Drive beginning approximately Oct. 27, through the end of November. Sections of the wildlife drive will be closed throughout the duration of the project. Please consult the refuge website, [www.fws.gov/refuge/valentine/](http://www.fws.gov/refuge/valentine/), and refuge kiosks for updated information on closures.

The Fort Falls Trail at Fort Niobrara National Wildlife Refuge is a strenuous, roughly one-mile nature trail that descends from the trailhead parking lot, through a wilderness area and to the base of Fort Falls, then continues to the river before circling back to the trailhead via the top of the canyon rim. The existing facility consists of a gravel and concrete parking area and an asphalt sidewalk.

The Service will rehabilitate the existing trailhead and parking facility to improve safety, parking and the overall visitor experience. The Fort Falls trailhead and parking area will be closed for the duration of the project, which is expected to begin in late October and continue through mid-December. Visitors should access the Fort Falls trail and waterfall via the Bur Oak parking area.

Please consult the refuge website, [www.fws.gov/refuge/fort\\_niobrara/](http://www.fws.gov/refuge/fort_niobrara/), and on-site kiosks for updated maps and information on closures.

The Service will continue to monitor refuge road and trail conditions and post updates to refuge websites. For your safety, please respect “Road Closed” and “Trail Closed” signs. For more information, visit refuge the websites or call 402-376-3398 for Valentine and 402-376-3789 for Fort Niobrara.

*The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service.*

*For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit <http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/>. Connect with our Facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/USFWSMountainPrairie>, follow our tweets at <http://twitter.com/USFWSMtnPrairie>, watch our YouTube Channel at <http://www.youtube.com/usfws> and download photos from our Flickr page at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/usfwsmtmprairie/>.*

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