



News Release

Rhode Island National Wildlife Refuge Complex

Block Island NWR □ John H. Chafee NWR at Pettaquamscutt Cove □ Ninigret NWR □ Sachuest Point NWR □ Trustum Pond NWR
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Portion of Third Beach Parking Lot to Close in Support of Marsh Restoration Work

The non-paved, gravel portions of Third Beach parking lot in Middletown will be temporarily closed to the public from early January through February in order to accommodate ongoing saltmarsh restoration efforts in the area. The paved portions of the parking lot closest to the beach will remain open for public use throughout the winter.

In cooperation with a variety of partners including the Town of Middletown, Save the Bay, Norman Bird Sanctuary, RIDEM and many others, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has been working in the Maidford River saltmarsh to enhance drainage and salt water flows, controlling the invasive plant species phragmites, removing a large amount of trash, and monitoring water quality and flooding.

The next step is to apply clean sand with some organic material directly onto the marsh surface near the Third Beach parking lot, increasing the elevation of the marsh so that it will have a chance to keep up with sea level rise. This requires stockpiling the material in the parking lot, which will then be transported onto the marsh and spread across the surface. The areas will then be planted with native saltmarsh plant species this spring.

In addition to the temporary closure of a portion of the parking lot, dump truck traffic along Paradise Avenue, Second Beach Road, and the Connector, or Campground Road will also occur as materials are transported to the site. “We apologize for any inconvenience this next phase of saltmarsh restoration may cause, and appreciate everyone’s patience” Charlie Vandemoer, Refuge Manager for the Sachuest Point National Wildlife Refuge said today. “ We really appreciate the Town’s willingness in allowing us to temporarily use a portion of the parking lot to conduct this task, and we will be complete the work as soon as possible in order to minimize the impact on folks” he added.

The work is being funded from the Disaster Relief and Appropriations Act which the Rhode Island Congressional delegation was instrumental in both developing and passing to address impacts from Superstorm Sandy. “We are lucky to have this opportunity to enhance the saltmarsh’s resiliency to future storms and for the wildlife species that depend on healthy marshes” Jennifer White, Hurricane Sandy Resiliency Coordinator for the Service said today. Additional benefits of the restoration work include improving water quality and reducing mosquito production.

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 www.fws.gov.