

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Projects

National Elk Refuge — April 27, 2010



A semi truck hauls irrigation pipe from the delivery site to a staging area closer to the head of the project near Flat Creek. Trucks are using a temporary road cut in to accommodate the large vehicle traffic. The road follows the basic route that will be excavated for pipeline installation, minimizing disturbance and the need for additional restoration.

Three American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) projects on the National Elk Refuge are now under way, with two of them moving from the planning stages to construction work this month.

Irrigation Expansion Project

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service approved plans for an enhanced Irrigation Expansion Project on the National Elk Refuge in 2009, part of a comprehensive plan to improve the production and management of winter forage for the benefit of elk and bison populations. The increased forage production is a means to benefit the long term

health of wintering wildlife by reducing reliance on supplemental feeding and reducing the risk of disease transmission by dispersing concentrations of bison and elk.

The National Elk Refuge received \$3.2 million in ARRA funding for the project in April 2009, with an additional \$1.1 investment allocated in October. The Irrigation Expansion Project is one of the largest ARRA habitat enhancement projects in the nation for the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. Yerba Buena Engineering and Construction, a minority-owned small business, was selected as the contractor, with locally-owned Westwood Curtis Construction

hired as the subcontractor to install the main line underground pipeline that is central to the irrigation system.

Earlier this month, representatives from the two companies, along with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service personnel, participated in a session to incorporate partnering principles and specifications into the construction project. The partnering session was facilitated by Global Leadership Alliance, Inc. Together, the organizations identified key goals of the project and noted assets the group could capitalize on during the project. Most importantly, the group discussed at length potential

Travis Forbush, Project Manager for Yerba Buena, leads a small group discussion during the partnering session held in early April.



project challenges and solutions, pre-planning to help mitigate issues before they arise. “Everyone agreed the session was helpful,” explained Lee Barrus, Program Manager for Yerba Buena. “It provided a great opportunity for the stakeholders to enhance existing strong working relationships, foster effective communication and identify solutions to project delivery goals.”

Crews have taken advantage of favorable weather by beginning to move large diameter pipe to a staging area closer to the head of the project, a process that was scheduled to start on May 3. Kirk Hayenga, Refuge Project Lead, noted shuttling the pipe two weeks

earlier will not only save time but will reduce congestion on the roadway in the upcoming weeks.

Delivery of smaller diameter pipe will begin soon, with heavy truck traffic expected on the Refuge Road for most of May. As a safety precaution, all pedestrians, bicyclists, and persons driving motorized vehicles are asked to use extra caution when using the roadway. The contractor will provide additional safety signs asking groups to drop to single file when construction equipment is present. “We’re really depending on the cooperation of Refuge Road users to help safely accommodate the large equipment traffic,” said Don Sowell, Yerba-Buena Project Supervisor.

North Highway 89 Pathway Project

Ground breaking will begin in early May on a section of the multi-use, non-motorized pathway connecting the Town of Jackson to Grand Teton National Park, a project that received \$1 million in ARRA funding through the Wyoming Department of Transportation. The project will be divided into



Large diameter pipe that was delivered to the Refuge in December is unloaded and piled at a designated staging area.

two stages, both of which will be partially completed this year. Phase I includes construction of the pathway on the east side of Highway 89 between the Town of Jackson and the Grand Teton National Park south boundary turnout; Phase II will continue the pathway north from the turnout to the Gros Ventre River, joining the approved Grand Teton National Park pathway system currently under design. While ARRA funds will be used for construction of Phase I, funding through the Federal Transit Administration Alternative Transportation in Parks and Public Lands (ATPPL) will be used for design and construction work on the entire project. Two locally-owned businesses, Evans Construction and Westwood Curtis Construction, were selected as contractors for the two phases.

Teton County engineers began slope staking last week, a process that involves marking the point where the finished side slope of an excavation or embankment (cut or fill) meets the original grade of the landscape. They also used

engineering plans and survey equipment to pre-position erosion control devices. Straw wattles, or tubes of straw wrapped in netting or biodegradable burlap, will be used to control sediment and storm water runoff. Silt fencing made from geosynthetic fabric will also be used, allowing water to run through while retaining soil particles and helping to control erosion.

Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center Exhibits

The National Elk Refuge also received \$211,000 in ARRA funding in April 2009 to develop a conceptual design plan for new exhibits in the Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center and the surrounding outdoor area. The funds will pay for the design, fabrication, and installation of a portion of the interpretive panels and exhibits outlined in the plan. Formations, Inc., a Portland-based firm specializing in interpretive exhibits and thematic interiors, was



Teton County Engineers Dave Gustafson (left) and Ted Kyle (right) consult plans to determine where to preposition erosion control devices.

awarded the contract. The updated displays will feature theme-based interpretive material that will enhance the visitor experience.

Pre-design work began in September 2009, including a site visit by the Formations, Inc. team assigned to the project. The contractor worked with U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service personnel from the National Elk Refuge and Region 6 Education & Visitor Services Division to assess current displays at the site and discuss the interpretive experience objectives for the broad and diverse public that visits each year. The Visitor Center has an annual visitation of approximately 300,000 people.

The team met on site again in early March 2010 to review the exhibit design, which is now 60% complete. Senior Exhibit Designer Stephen State expressed Formations's excitement to be teaming with

the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to create a new and dramatic attraction at the Visitor Center. "Having recently completed the first step of Schematic Design for the project, we're well on our way to developing exhibit elements we feel will unify the exhibit experience both from a thematic and design perspective," State explained.

One of the project goals identified by the team is to create an introduction to Federal lands within the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, inspiring families and other visitors to learn more about the resources, spend time outdoors, and identify ways they can be good stewards of their public lands.

The final design plan will be completed in September 2010, with fabrication scheduled to begin later that month. The exhibits will open to the public in April 2011.



Clockwise from left: Dave Carlson and Stephen State from Formations, Inc. meet with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service representatives Shannon Heath and Lori Iverson to discuss exhibits during a review of materials in March.