

# North Highway 89 Pathway

## *Preliminary Interpretive Concepts*

### Entrance to Pathway at North Park

#### Wayfinding Kiosk: one or two panels

A wayfinding kiosk will be located near the entrance to the pathway, showing a “You Are Here” location in relation to designated parking areas for cyclists and connections to other pathway segments in and near the Town of Jackson. The single panel will generally consist of an area map but will also include safety information:

- Travel single file in the right side lane; share the pathway.
- Notify other recreators before you pass. Be aware of others passing you.
- The use of portable audio devices is strongly discouraged. (Should we say why?)
- Obey all traffic signs. Yield to all vehicles.
- Yield to slower recreators.
- Wear a helmet.
- Stay on paved pathway.



*Portion of panel located near Gros Ventre Junction*

#### Orientation and Introduction to the National Elk Refuge: three panels

Similar to the design near Gros Ventre Junction, the orientation / introduction panels exhibit will consist of three panels. This will provide a consistent look along the pathway and provide enough space to cover key messages to interpret the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) mission.



### *Panel 1 (left) - Refuge-specific map*

Whereas the map at the wayfinding kiosk will concentrate on the Town of Jackson, parking areas, and other pathway connections, the map located in this three-panel exhibit will show the approximately 7-mile stretch from North Park in Jackson to Gros Ventre Junction. The map will include:

- mileage points
- landmarks such as the National Museum of Wildlife Art and the Jackson Fish Hatchery
- natural features like Miller Butte and the Gros Ventre River
- pathway bump outs where interpretive panels are located

### *Panel 2 (middle) – Mission*

This panel will explain the unique mission of the USFWS.

Sample text:

- National Wildlife Refuges are different than national parks and national forests. The National Elk Refuge (NER) is often viewed as a parcel of federal land similar to Grand Teton and Yellowstone national parks and the Bridger-Teton National Forest. It's important to understand how the NER is different than these federal properties because it helps to understand why certain activities may or may not be allowed.
- The mission of the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) is to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. Simply put, the mission can be summarized as “wildlife first.” The FWS offers fewer recreational opportunities than our federal neighbors in order to carry out this mission and protect critical habitat in an area that sees high visitation and heavy recreational use.
- A seasonal pathway closure within the refuge boundary is necessary to make the activity compatible with the refuge mission and decrease human interactions with animals.

The panel will also answer the summer's most common question: “Where are the elk?” Text will explain that the NER provides winter habitat for elk and bison herds, but protection of the resources is necessary year-round.

Additional sample text:

- Much of the wildlife in the western U.S. requires extensive undisturbed lands free from development for resting, feeding, breeding, raising of young, and migrating.
- As towns, developments, farms, ranches, and roads spread across the region, wild lands shrink and are broken up into smaller fragments. National Wildlife Refuges, along with other Federal and State lands in the Greater Yellowstone Area, preserve critical habitat and travel corridors for the area's wildlife and for people's enjoyment.

### *Panel 3 (right) – natural scape of Jackson Hole and other NER wildlife*

The final panel will discuss some of the natural features in the area that can be seen from the pathway, such as Sleeping Indian, Flat Creek, and the Teton Range. Interpretive text will also highlight the diversity of other wildlife on the NER, including trumpeter swans, coyotes, wolves, bighorn sheep, bison, and songbirds.

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## Flat Creek Pullout

### Waterfowl / Trumpeter Swans – one panel

The large existing pullout at Flat Creek is a dynamic location to educate pathway users about birds in the wetlands area. A new panel on trumpeter swans would replace an outdated and faded exhibit on the same topic. Placed near the observation deck, readers would learn that the nearby wetlands support a large population of ducks, geese, and trumpeter swans.

Sample text:

- The National Elk Refuge supports a year-round population of trumpeter swans.
- In the early 1900s, the trumpeter swan was hunted nearly to extinction for its skin, feathers, meat, and eggs. Passage of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 gave protections to trumpeter swans and other birds and helped curb illegal killing.
- The Greater Yellowstone region is the largest breeding area for trumpeter swans in the lower 48 states. Many trumpeter swans migrate south from Canada to winter in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem to join year-round residents.

To mitigate concerns outlined in the pathway Environmental Assessment, interpretive information may also encourage to keep a safe distance from swans during the spring and summer months as human activities can cause breeding swans to abandon a nest site.



*Flat Creek pullout and existing trumpeter swan panel*

### **National Wildlife Refuge System Big 6 – first of three panels – Wildlife Dependent Recreation Defined**

Three panels spread out along the pathway would continue to expand on the mission of the USFWS by explaining the six uses considered to be “wildlife dependent.” The first of the three panels would be located on the west side of the existing viewing deck at the Flat Creek pullout.

#### *Panel 1 – Introduction to Wildlife Dependent Recreation*

The six wildlife dependent uses, often referred to within the Service as the Big 6, were established as priority public uses on refuges. They include hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing, wildlife photography, environmental education, and interpretation.

Additional sample text:

- Recreation is a way to introduce the public to the value of wildlife and the beauty of its habitat. Because the Refuge System promotes “wildlife first” management, recreational opportunities on refuges focus on wildlife and other natural resources.
- Wildlife dependent recreation is directly related to the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System.
- Activities on the NER are more restrictive than those on neighboring Federal lands because of the strong conservation mission of the organization and its critical role in habitat protection.



## Between Flat Creek Pullout and Existing WYDOT Turnout

### National Wildlife Refuge System Big 6 – second and third of three panels

#### *Panel 2 – Wildlife Viewing and Wildlife Photography*

The NER offers outstanding wildlife viewing and photography opportunities. Whether by observing thousands of elk in the winter or bird watching in the spring and summer months, visitors to the NER can find wildlife viewing opportunities during all seasons of the year.



#### *Panel 3 – Hunting and Fishing*

Visitors are often surprised to learn that hunting and fishing are allowed on wildlife refuges. In addition to providing wildlife dependent recreation, hunting and fishing on the NER are management tools to protect species and reduce numbers to meet set objectives.

Sample text:

- Hunters and bird enthusiasts were among the first to take a public stand for habitat conservation because habitat was essential to their recreation. Even today, hunters and anglers are a core constituency in the wildlife conservation community.
  - Hunting on the NER is more than just a recreational activity. It's an important management tool to achieve optimum herd size as determined through a cooperative effort between State and Federal wildlife managers.
  - Fishing also has benefits for wildlife populations. Anglers on the NER can harvest non-native trout in order to reduce their impact on the native cutthroat trout population.
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## **Irrigation**

Refuge grasslands are managed to produce natural forage for elk and bison. During the summer months, Refuge personnel seed and irrigate grasslands in order to enhance winter habitat and reduce the need for supplemental feed.

Sample text:

- Natural foraging by elk disperses the herd and reduces the risk of disease transmission between animals.



## **Fish Hatchery Hill**

### **Jackson Fish Hatchery – one panel**

Text to be determined by Hatchery staff.

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