



WGFD

Conserving Wildlife, Serving People

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News Release

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JACKSON- The Wyoming Game and Fish Department would like to inform wildlife enthusiasts of its plan to make a seasonal vehicle closure permanent on the west end of the South Park Wildlife Habitat Management Area (WHMA) south of Jackson. Officials say the decision was made based on repeated resource damage, reports of wildlife disturbance and the desire to provide users a higher quality wildlife experience.

Historically, vehicle access had been allowed west of the Flat Creek bridge on the WHMA from July 16 until its closure on December 1. Vehicle access will still be allowed to all the other traditional areas and as far west as the parking area at the hay sheds at the Flat Creek bridge. Foot access to the entire area will still be allowed from May 1 - December 1.

“Unfortunately, in recent years we’ve been experiencing a lot of off-road damage to the habitat by vehicles, illegal campfires and so on,” said Wyoming Game and Fish Habitat and Access Crew Leader, Matt Miller. “Plus, we’ve created some nice wetlands on that west end of the WHMA with more work planned this fall and we’d like to take steps to reduce disturbance to those water birds when their nesting and raising their young.” Miller noted that they had their first pair of trumpeter swans nest and raise a brood of four cygnets on the developed wetlands this year.

The Department also cited a number of calls from disgruntled hunters complaining of vehicles disturbing game during the fall hunting seasons. “Unfortunately, the area is not that big and it only takes one vehicle driving through that west end to push the wildlife off the area,” added Miller.

The South Park WHMA is comprised of 1200 acres of cottonwood bottomlands along the Snake River. It was purchased in 1939 with money from the Pittman-Robertson Act, a federal excise tax on hunting and fishing equipment.

“In the end, we have to remember that the area was purchased with hunter and angler dollars to provide quality fish and wildlife habitat,” said Miller, “Of course, we want the public to enjoy that to the extent possible, but sometimes an area becomes so popular that it begins to compromise the original intent, which is wildlife habitat.” Game and Fish has documented an average of 2,500 vehicles visiting the area on a monthly basis in the summer.

“We hope people will understand the reasoning behind our decision and respect the vehicle closure,” said Miller. “We’ve gotten a lot of support for this approach and believe it will create a higher quality experience for all wildlife enthusiasts, whether you’re hunting, photographing or just viewing wildlife.”

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