

Friends Forward



Special Issue:
Transportation

National Wildlife Refuge System



Special Edition Contents

This special edition describes programs in the surface transportation act and how they benefit the Refuge System. The act—known as the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU)—is up for reauthorization in 2009.

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Arapaho National Wildlife Refuge, Colorado

Roads and Trails: Getting Around the Refuge System

When Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge near Portland, Oregon, celebrated the opening of its new visitor center in 2008, it was the culmination of years of work by the refuge’s Friends group. The refuge had been founded 16 years earlier as an urban national wildlife refuge with a focus on providing a natural educational legacy, especially for children. But in the beginning, there was no access road off a busy highway, no trails and no visitor facilities, much less a visitor center. Tualatin River Refuge was closed to the public.

“How do you do education when you can’t get the refuge open?” asks past president of Friends of Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge Joan

Patterson. But opening this urban refuge was a problem, because the Refuge System is not allowed to use its road money to build access roads. The solution turned out to be a transportation program called Public Lands Highway Discretionary (PLHD) that funds any public road or trail providing access to or within federal lands.

PLHD is one of seven major funding programs in the massive federal surface transportation bill that benefit national wildlife refuges (See “Contents” at left). The programs provide funding to maintain 4,800 miles of public roads in refuges and over 2,500 miles of

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The Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center was dedicated last March. The refuge was opened to the public after a transportation grant made it possible.

Reauthorization: Refuge System Hopes and Fears

Many expect that the next surface transportation bill will be a major overhaul of the transportation funding program. There is a growing consensus that the current \$286.5 billion bill is poorly organized to address current transportation needs. Others believe that the federal highway tax used to fund the current bill, SAFTEA-LU, is inadequate. The federal gas tax of 18.4 cents per gallon was last raised in 1993 and has not kept up with the increased costs of the transportation infrastructure, changing fuel efficiency and driving habits.

As part of the reauthorization process, a special 12-member bipartisan commission studied surface transportation needs between May 2006 and July 2007. The National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Commission concluded that funding should be increased. The commission also recommended that 108 programs in the current bill be reduced to 10.

The good news for refuges is that one of those 10 programs would maintain and improve the transportation infrastructure on federal lands. The National Coordinator for the Refuge Transportation Program, Sean Furniss, thinks this bodes well for the Refuge Roads Program, which maintains and improves public use roads and trails within national wildlife refuges. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service would like to see the program expanded in two ways:

- The last transportation bill allocated \$145 million for the Refuge Roads program, or about \$29 million a year. The money covered less than 20 percent of the funding needs. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has recommended funding of \$136 million a year.



The reauthorization of the surface transportation act is critical to maintaining roads like this access road to Ernest F. Hollings ACE Basin National Wildlife Refuge.

- FWS would also like the new bill to expand the program to include national fish hatcheries and the National Conservation and Training Center. These facilities have less than 80 miles of roads, but they are currently unfunded.

These points have been included in a white paper that FWS provided to the Federal Highway Administration, as well as to members of Congress and Refuge System proponents, such as the Cooperative Alliance for Refuge Enhancement (CARE). The white paper can be viewed at refugedata.fws.gov/roads/2008WhitePaper.

The reauthorization process began in 2008 with the convening of the committee and the writing of draft legislation by the Department of Transportation. Here is what may happen in 2009:


- The president is expected to send a proposal to Congress sometime in March or April.

- After the bill's introduction, the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and

the Senate Environmental and Public Works Committee will evaluate the legislation, hold hearings and recommend changes to refine the bill. The committees' hearing schedules can be found at epw.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?FuseAction=Legislation.Home.

- When the committees approve their versions of the bill, they are reported out to the full House and Senate, which then debate and amend the bills before voting. After both chambers approve their versions of the bill, a conference committee works to resolve differences.

- A compromise bill is submitted to the House and Senate for final passage.

“House and Senate committee staff indicate that their chairmen hope and expect to have legislation passed by September 30, 2009,” Furniss says. But wrangling over the contents of SAFETEA-LU kept the bill from being signed into law until August 2005, almost two years year after the previous bill expired. 

High Priority Projects: Making Refuge Wishes Come True

The current surface transportation bill includes:


- \$1.8 million to acquire land for the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge in Michigan.
- \$4.2 million to raise the road surface of a state scenic tour route so that the marsh at Bandon Marsh National Wildlife Refuge in Oregon could be restored
- \$3.25 million to build a visitor center, along with a \$1.25 million Public Lands Highway Discretionary project for the access road, at Red River National Wildlife Refuge in Louisiana.

These were among some 5,000 High Priority Projects (HPPs) approved in the bill. HPPs are proposed and added by members of Congress to meet the needs of their districts and constituents. “Sometime during the

(re-authorization) process, in March or April, the committee chairs may be asking members if they have any needs,” says Furniss, adding that in the past, HPPs supported a wide range of transportation related projects.

HPP projects do require matching funds that vary by state up to 20 percent of a project’s total cost. Matching funds can come from federal or state grants or privately raised money. HPP funds are given over the life of the transportation bill so recipients get only one fifth or one sixth per year. Grants are also likely to be 10 to 15 percent less than the amount requested. Congress routinely reserves a percentage of HPP funding.

National Coordinator for the Refuge Transportation Program Sean Furniss says some refuges had

good luck with HPP projects during the last reauthorization. “Congress understands we’re doing projects that benefit the public in a cost efficient manner, making our money go a long way.” 



Bandon Marsh Refuge in Oregon.

High Priority Projects at a Glance

- Distributed over five-year span of the transportation bill
- Requires matching money; amount varies by state
- Members submit requests to House and Senate Committees
- For more information visit <www.fhwa.dot.gov/safetealu/factsheets/highpriproj.htm>.

What Friends Can Do

Friends can inform and educate Congressional staffs as to what projects are needed and supported by the constituents in their district and state.

In the case of Bandon Marsh Refuge, which got HPP funding to raise a highway over a marsh, Oregon Coast National Wildlife Refuge Complex Project Leader Roy Lowe says, “A local conservancy group talked to the Congressional delegation about Bandon Marsh.”



USFWS

The Kettle Pond Visitor Center at Ninigret National Wildlife Refuge in Rhode Island was a high priority project in the 1998 transportation bill.

Refuge Roads Program: Maintaining Roads and Trails

In 2008, the auto tour route at Reelfoot National Wildlife Refuge in Tennessee was reconstructed, and funds were allocated to rehabilitate four trails at Okefenokee Refuge in Georgia in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service and to rebuild a bridge at Mattamuskeet Refuge in North Carolina. These projects and others in the Refuge System's Southeast Region were paid for with money from the **Refuge Roads Program**, which maintains and improves public use roads and trails in national wildlife refuges.

The Refuge Roads program is a partnership between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Federal Lands Highways Program (FLHP). FLHP does inventory and condition assessment of the Refuge System's 4800 miles of roads. FLHP also does more than two thirds of all

construction projects funded by this program.

Refuge Roads projects begin as proposals submitted by refuge managers. From those proposals, refuge road coordinators from each of the Refuge System's eight regions draw up lists of priority road and trail projects. Refuge supervisors and regional refuge chiefs use the lists to decide which ones will be funded. In accordance with Federal Highway Administration guidelines, they make their selections once every five years. Refuge Roads Coordinator for the Southeast Region, Jo Ann Clark already has a list drawn up until 2013, and she is working on the two years after that. With over 2,500 miles of road in 128 refuges, the Southeast Region has more road mileage than any other region.

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Friends of Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge raised \$32,000 to design and build this trail at the refuge. The Refuge Roads Program contributed \$500,000 for a parking lot and access to it.



JOANN CLARK

Refuge Roads at a Glance

- Projects proposed by regional roads coordinators, approved by regional chiefs
- Requires long-term planning because projects are assigned on five-year time line
- Only covers maintenance of public use roads and trails
- Five percent may be used for interpretive or road enhancement projects
- May be used as matching money
- Money is given directly to the Refuge System with no matching requirements

What Friends Can Do

Friends need to understand the Refuge Roads program for several reasons:

- Friends can play an important role by informing their Congressional delegations of refuge road needs.
- The program is important to refuges to meet their own internal goals. It helps reduce refuge maintenance backlogs, which consist largely of road and trail projects.
- Refuge Roads money can be used as matching money to obtain other funding. This requires planning to get projects on the five-year Refuge Roads priority list, at the time the list is being drawn up.
- Refuge Roads will pay for road enhancement projects, perhaps fund a road or trail-side interpretative kiosk.

Transportation Enhancements: Opening a Refuge to the Public



When the Pacific View overlook at Nestucca Refuge was opened last year, it opened up the refuge to the public for the first time.

A sweeping view of Nestucca Bay, the Coast Range and, in the distance, the Pacific Ocean can be seen from the new Pacific View observation deck at Nestucca Bay National Wildlife Refuge. Until the deck and a trail were opened last October, the refuge was closed to the public. What made the deck and trail possible, along with parking lots and road improvements, was a 2004 **Transportation Enhancement (TE)** grant of \$559,100 from the Oregon Department of Transportation.

States are required to set aside 10 percent of their yearly surface transportation funds for the TE program, making over \$800 million available nationwide annually. The money is used for community-based projects that expand travel opportunities and enhance the travel experience. There are 12 eligible categories. TE grants require matching funds and the amount varies by state. In this case, Nestucca

Bay Refuge had submitted a plan for Refuge Roads money to improve a gravel access road. The refuge was able to use that funding as a match for the TE grant.

Because TE grants are community-based, they require community support. Roy Lowe, Project Leader of the Oregon Coast National Wildlife Refuge Complex which includes Nestucca Bay Refuge, says when refuge staff began to generate local support and ideas for the project, he wished Nestucca Bay Refuge had had a Friends Group. “Friends would have been essential in building early support and expanding support for the project,” he says.

Lowe says the refuge applied for a relatively modest grant, having heard that state TE funding was limited. After the application and support letters were in, the state visited the site without notifying refuge staff. “They liked the project

Transportation Enhancements at a Glance

- Community-based projects that expand travel choices and enhance travel experience
- Twelve eligible categories
- Matching money required; percentage depends on state, usually no more than 20 percent
- Apply through state department of transportation
- More information <www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/te/index.htm>

What Friends Can Do

Friends can generate support, key to obtaining TE grants. This can be a strictly promotional role; it can also involve coordination of all the parties involved in TE funding: local community, state, refuge and other interested parties.

Friends can help provide a match. This has a cross-pollinating effect. States are more willing to allocate TE funds, if they see that money raised by the community is already on the table.

so much, they called and asked if they could increase our grant request to include funds for paving the access road.” Lowe thinks one reason for the state’s enthusiasm is that it had previously worked with the refuge complex. Another advantage from the state’s perspective is that the new Pacific View observation deck provides a view of the Pacific Coast Scenic Byway and All American Road.

The completed project includes two paved parking lots; a paved, wheelchair-accessible trail that leads to an elevated viewing deck; road improvements; interpretive panels; and a single vault restroom. 

Public Lands Highway Discretionary: Helping Visitors Get to Refuges

Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge in Michigan is about to get a rehabilitated and improved auto tour route. The 7.5-mile Wildlife Drive will meander through a variety of habitats and along the Shiawassee River. It will give visitors the opportunity to view the refuge's waterfowl, eagles and other wildlife. To be constructed mostly with \$2 million in Refuge Roads money, the auto tour route is expected to attract at least 30,000 additional visitors to the refuge every year.

But there is a hitch. While visitors will be able to see the refuge itself from Wildlife Drive, getting there remains difficult. The two county roads leading to the refuge are so eroded that would be visitors are likely to get stuck on them. Unless the roads are improved, the refuge will be forced to open the new auto tour route only when the access roads are passable.

Getting funding to fix the county access roads has become a priority both for the refuge and the Friends of Shiawassee. Together, they are working to obtain a \$2 million **Public Lands Highway Discretionary (PLHD) award**. PLHD funds any public road or trail providing access to or within federal lands. PLHD funds are often completely Congressionally designated and can be used for projects that have some relationship with federal lands, like visitor centers.

Shiawassee Friends President Chuck Hoover became aware of the possibility of PLHD funding at the Friends Academy in 2008. When he met with his Congressional delegation at the end of the



Visitors to Shiawassee Refuge are restricted to times when roads leading to the refuge are passable. The refuge is hoping to change that with a Public Lands Highways Discretionary Grant.

conference, he found the legislators supportive, although they said there was little they could do until after the election.

Back in Michigan, Hoover worked with his board and the refuge staff to expand a previously rejected grant proposal to include repair of both county roads and extension of a non-motorized trail to reach the refuge. He says the Friends group will be contacting Congressional representatives again.

It all “comes down to whether the Congressional delegation wants it or not,” says Refuge Manager Steve Kahl. But he is hopeful the funding

Public Lands Highway Discretionary at a Glance

- Dedicated to projects that provide access to or within federal lands
- Also, Congressionally designated projects that relate to federal lands
- Applications must be made through state transportation departments
- No matching requirement, but can be used as a non-federal match
- Projects range to about \$2 million
- Find more information at: www.fhwa.dot.gov/discretionary/plhcurr3.cfm

What Friends Can Do

Friends can ask for Congressional support for PLHD projects, which are almost entirely Congressionally designated.

Since this money can be used as a non-federal match, it can be used to obtain other kinds of funding.

The odds of getting a PLHD grant are good since this funding is limited to projects that relate to federal lands.

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Scenic Byways: Putting Refuges on the Map

State and federally designated scenic byways convey stories as they crisscross the United States. Whether the tale is historic or cultural or simply scenic, these roads provide the traveler with a sense of place.

In the northwest corner of North Dakota, the Des Lacs National Wildlife Refuge Backway (the state designation for a byway that is unpaved) travels the rolling hills and wooded draws of the Des Lacs Valley. During the months the 19-mile scenic backway is open—from April to November—travelers may spot five species of nesting grebes, as well as other wildlife. While other scenic byways go through or pass by national wildlife refuges, the Des Lacs byway is the only one wholly contained within a refuge.

“We get a lot of publicity from it,” says Des Lacs Refuge Manager Dave Bolin, adding that the backway is always mentioned in state brochures and often shows up in travel magazines.

Byways are also eligible for special funding. There are eight categories

of potential projects including byway-related facilities, safety improvements and interpretive information. Decisions on these awards are made at the federal level, but applications are made through the states.

Any qualified organization along a state- or federally-designated byway may apply for a **Scenic Byways** grant; the money is not earmarked and there is no formula for distribution. “This is a bottoms up, grassroots, merit-based program,” says Trails, Byways, Transportation Enhancements, and Alternative Transportation Coordinator Nathan Caldwell. Projects must have support from a network of people who volunteer their time and effort for the nonprofit organization supporting the byway.

In 2008, the Upper Mississippi National Fish and Wildlife Refuge was awarded \$96,000 for an overlook along a segment of the Great River Road National Scenic Byway in Iowa. The Creole Nature Trail Byway in Louisiana, which goes through two national wildlife refuges, received over \$500,000 to develop a video tour guide and build restroom facilities. *W*

Scenic Byway Grants at a Glance

- Apply online at <www.bywaysonline.org/grants> and with a hard copy
- State application process and calendar
- Eight categories of projects
- \$43,500,000 for FY 2009
- Twenty percent match required; can be federal, state or local government funds, as well as privately raised donations.
- Visit <www.bywaysonline.org> for Byways program contacts, grant or designation information

What Friends Can Do

Community support is key to qualify for Byways funding. Transportation officials are looking for quality programs and demonstrated community support. Friends can join the support group for their local byway or start their own group. Friends can also raise matching funds.

Friends groups can nominate a roadway for designation as a scenic byway. The road must have one of six intrinsic qualities and have support from volunteers. Applications are made through a state’s scenic byway program in the state’s Department of Transportation. Nomination procedures can be found at: <www.fws.gov/refuges/roads/pdfs/DRAFT_9-2005_NSBGuide.pdf>

Thousands of snow geese may be spotted from the Des Lacs National Wildlife Refuge Backway, the state designation for a byway that is unpaved.



Paul S. Sarbanes Transit in the Parks Program: Clean, Quiet Transportation

From mid-March to mid-November, Maryland's Patuxent Research Refuge's electric tram winds quietly through eastern hardwood forest. Visitors travel through various habitats, prompting discussion of animal inhabitants, habitat change and the refuge's conservation efforts. Carrying over 10,000 riders, the tram is one of the refuge's most popular features and Visitor Services Manager Nell Baldacchino says it is the best method the refuge has for communicating conservation messages.

The tram is run by the Friends of the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center and Patuxent Research Refuge. Friends raise money with the tram. They also pay for drivers, operate ticket sales and help pay for repairs. But Baldacchino says the tram, which was donated by the Department of Defense in 1994 as part of a research project, always needs repairs. In 2006, when it needed new brakes, a new battery monitoring system, new tires and paint, among other things, the refuge had to look beyond the Friends for funding.

It turned to the **Paul S. Sarbanes Transit in the Parks Program**, formerly known as the Alternative Transportation in Parks and Public Lands. The program was established under the Federal Transit Administration to reduce congestion

Friends of the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center and Patuxent Research Refuge operate the refuge's tram, which is the best method the refuge has to communicate conservation messages.

in and around national wildlife refuges, national parks and other public lands through alternative transportation.

Through Transit in the Parks, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service obtained a \$108,000 grant. A little over half was to be used to repair the tram and the rest went to improve the gravel road the tram runs on. The improvements were made during the winter of 2007 when the tram was down for the season. They are expected to keep the tram going for four to five years.

Transit in the Parks grants are limited to projects that get the public from one place to another using an alternative mode of transportation—transit, ferries, bikes, walking, etc.—instead of using private cars. The grant applications are submitted electronically in accordance with due dates published by the Federal Transit Administration in the Federal Register. In 2009, up to \$27 million may be awarded.

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Paul S. Sarbanes Transit in the Parks Program at a Glance

- Projects can be motorized or non-motorized such as pedestrian or bike trails
- Projects must get the traveler from one place to another
- Most awards are small
- Only applies to federal lands
- Federal agencies may apply, as well as local governments and tribal authorities with consent
- No match required
- More information <www.fta.dot.gov/funding/grants/grants_financing_6106.html>.

What Friends Can Do

Only federal agencies may apply for this funding. But Friends should be aware of it since they often benefit from it. Patuxent Friends operate and keep the profits from the refuge's tram, as does the Friends group at Santa Ana Refuge in Texas.



Recreation Trails Program: Promoting Foot and Boat Access



*Prime Hook
Refuge used
a Recreation
Trail grant to
rehabilitate
canoe trails.*

In 2006, Prime Hook National Wildlife Refuge in Delaware used volunteer labor to connect four individual hiking trails into a single loop. Some of the volunteer help came from the Friends of Prime Hook Refuge. Their labor not only contributed to the trails' actual construction, it was also part of the project's funding.

That is because in-kind contributions, such as labor and materials, can be used as a match to obtain grants through the Recreation Trails Program (RTP). The program, which provides funds for states to develop and maintain recreational trails and trail-related facilities, requires a 20 percent match of which five percent must be non-federal.

Prime Hook Refuge used its volunteer labor to obtain a \$19,100 grant that paid for the trail loop, a brush mower for trail construction and maintenance, and improved signage. Five years earlier, the refuge

had received \$15,000, also through Recreation Trails, to enhance walking and canoe trails. Combined, the grants allowed Prime Hook Refuge to rehabilitate more than eight miles of walking and canoeing trails and to add three miles of walking trails.

Each state develops its own RTP procedures. Some allow private groups, like Friends organizations, to apply for the funding. To find out if your state is one that allows applications from private groups, go to <www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/rectrails/rtpstate.htm> and click on your state. If your state does allow private applications, Trails, Byways, Transportation Enhancements, and Alternative Transportation Coordinator Nathan Caldwell recommends the day long training programs most states hold. He says they help applicants get to know RTP staff and develop projects that will compete well. Workshop schedules can be found through individual states at the Web address above.

Recreation Trails at a Glance


- Provides money for states to develop and maintain recreational trails and trail related facilities
- Requires 20 percent match, 5 percent must be non-federal.
- Refuges may apply in all states except California, where refuges must partner with local, regional or state government to quality. Some states allow private groups to apply.
- Most projects range from \$10,000 to \$300,000.
- For more information: <www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/rectrails>.

What Friends Can Do

In some states, Friends groups may apply for this money directly. State agencies that administer the Recreation Trails program can be found at <www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/rectrails/rtpstate.htm>, where daylong workshops are also listed.

Friends can help provide the required match, which doesn't have to be cash. It can be materials or in-kind donations. In the case of Prime Hook Refuge, Friends provided labor.

Friends can also show their support. States are looking for partners, and when it comes to allocating RTP money, the more people involved, the more likely they are to respond favorably.


In all states but California, refuges are eligible to apply for the \$85 million in RTP funding that is available in 2009. In California, refuges must partner with local, regional or state government. There are over 2,500 miles of land and water trails in the National Wildlife Refuge System. 

Attend a Transportation Workshop to Learn More

If you would like to learn more about transportation funding for national wildlife refuges, Fish and Wildlife Service transportation officials are available to put on workshops for Friends groups and regional Friends conferences on request.

National Coordinator for the Refuge Transportation Program Sean Furniss says these workshops are most effective when local transportation officials are included, because transportation funding is “all about partnerships.” He also stresses the need to work with local and state transportation departments at the planning level to be sure things are done smoothly and impact on wildlife is minimized. “If you get in early and work with people, they can accommodate it in their design.”

Workshops include an overall introduction to FWS transportation programs showing how refuges and regions fit in. They cover funding sources and potential partners. They also explain how to work with local government planning organizations.

If you are interested in a workshop, contact the Refuge Roads Program coordinator in your region. 

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The Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge in California.

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The competition for grants is generally limited to projects that relate to the four primary land management agencies (Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, Forest Service), although states, local governments and tribes may apply with the agencies' consent.

Other recent Service Transit in the Parks grants include an alternative fuel tour bus, a pedestrian/bike path and a study of alternative transportation systems to alleviate overcrowding at J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge. The refuge Friends group, the “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society will be consulted, along with other interested groups as the study progresses. 

Roads, continued from page 1


land and water trails, establish alternative transportation that is both efficient and environmentally friendly, develop interpretive kiosks, and provide access to refuges, like Tualatin River.

When applying for a PLHD grant was first proposed by the Tualatin River Refuge Manager, Patterson says the 100-member Friends group began learning what it could do to help by attending a National Wildlife Refuge Association workshop in Washington and by consulting with the Southwest Region Roads Coordinator in nearby Portland. PLHD grants are almost always congressionally designated (See more on PLHD, page 6) which meant that Friends had to educate their senators and representatives about the refuge and its mission. Patterson says congressional aides were not always aware that a PHLD grant could be used for refuges.

Because Congressman David Wu was on the House Committee on Education and Labor, Friends stressed the refuge's educational role. When Patterson and other Tualatin River Refuge Friends went to Capitol Hill, they took with them a refuge guidebook written by 5th and 6th graders who had visited the refuge quarterly and recorded what they saw. Patterson says the wire bound book impressed aides and also demonstrated that the refuge should be open and accessible to school buses.

At Congressman Wu's request, the refuge was granted \$750,000 in 2003 for the design and construction of an access road, visitor parking, a network of trails and interpretive kiosks. With that infrastructure in place, the refuge was able to open to the public three years later.

The Friends continued to encourage the Fish and Wildlife Service to keep the Tualatin River visitor center at the top of its regional priority list. In 2005 and 2006, the Service allocated \$4.6 million in construction funds to build the Wildlife Center and an associated administrative building. In addition, with Congressman Wu's sponsorship and the support of both Senators Wyden and Smith, the refuge received another transportation grant, this one a High Priority Project (See story, page 3) of \$793,600 which will be used to build an environmental education shelter.

In 2008, Patterson, who has left Oregon, returned to the refuge with her family to see the new Wildlife Center. She says she has only seen her husband cry three times. The first two were when their children arrived and the third was when he saw the new center. "He said, 'It's everything you worked for,' recalls Patterson. She says she did it for the kids: "We believed our kids deserved to be inspired by nature and learn to take care of it." 

FLICKR / JAY PERRY



The new Wildlife Center at Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge in Oregon was the culmination of years of work by the refuge's Friends.

**Refuge Roads Program,
continued from page 4**

In making their choices, regional road coordinators are required to consider road condition, Comprehensive Conservation Plans, existing transportation facilities and the need for access. Clark says she also looks for something else, “I always tell refuge managers they have a better chance of getting a project elevated if they have community support. If they have political support, it really elevates their project.”

In 2005, Clark allocated \$500,000 for a parking lot and parking lot access at Florida Panther Refuge. Friends of Florida Panther Refuge had raised \$32,000 to design, contract and build a universally accessible foot trail at the refuge, as well as an additional \$8,000 for a boardwalk and overlook. Another \$10,000 for the boardwalk and overlook was donated by the local Safari Club International. With that kind of involvement, Clark was happy to add a parking lot to her list of project proposals.

Something else that makes projects attractive to coordinators is opportunities to use Refuge Roads money as matching money to win other kinds of transportation funding. If the money can be leveraged, it goes further. Nestucca Bay Refuge in Oregon used Refuge Roads money as matching for a state grant to build an overlook (see story, page 5) and Shiawassee Refuge in Michigan hopes to leverage its refuge roads dollars to obtain funding for the improvement of the country roads that access the refuge (see story, page 6). ❧



This unpaved road winds through the Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge in southeastern Oregon.

Public Lands, continued from page 6

will come through because “the economy is not doing great and 65 percent of our visitors come from outside the county.”

Hoover sees no reason why the funding should not be approved. “The money’s there,” he says, “and these are good projects.”

Visitor centers at Blackwater, Chincoteague and Bear River Refuges were built all or in part with PLHD funds. In other cases, PLHD funding has been used as a match to obtain other kinds of funding. Red River and Ningret refuges used PLHD funding as matching money to qualify for funding to build their visitor centers. Tualatin Refuge Friends successfully advocated for PLHD funding for a refuge access road. ❧

**FriendsForward
Special Issue**

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recycled paper using soy-based inks.*