

Beluga Slough Trail Replacement

The project consists of the reconstruction of a major portion of the Beluga Slough Trail. This trail connects the Island and Oceans Visitor Center to the beach at Bishop's Beach Park.

The existing trail consists of an on-grade plastic modular "floating" trail that has deteriorated and has in places settled into the wetlands. The new trail will replace the deteriorated sections of trail with an elevated trail (except for a short section of gravel trail within the Bunnell Street right-of-way). The new elevated portion of the trail will allow for restoration of wetlands damaged by the existing trail. The construction of this project will require a permit from the Corps of Engineers.

The project is expected to be ready for construction in the summer of 2011 utilizing DCCED Community Coastal Impact Assistance Program funding, a USF&W Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program grant, and funding provided directly by the City of Homer. All necessary funding may not be available for construction until 2012. The project has been designed to restore and protect the wetland area below the visitor center and along the Beluga Slough. The surface of the elevated trail sections will be constructed utilizing steel grating that will allow vegetation under the trail to receive sunlight and maintain healthy growth.

The purpose of the gravel portion of the trail is to provide access for equipment necessary to maintain the existing storm drain outfall at the bottom of Bunnell Street. This access will further protect and restore wetlands by keeping maintenance equipment out the wetlands and minimizing impacts from future outfall ditch maintenance activities.

The Bunnell Street storm drain discharges runoff from a significant portion of the central business district of Homer, including the Sterling Highway and Main Street. Keeping this pipe outlet clear and maintaining the ditched outfall drainage facility out into the slough will minimize the potential for flooding in the Bunnell Street area, protect properties along Main Street and the Sterling Highway, and protect wetlands in the area from erosion. Currently the outlet pipe is submerged and the rock-lined outfall ditch has filled in. The reason that this situation exists is the lack of access and the significant impact to wetlands that would occur if excavation equipment and dump trucks had to be driven out onto the wetland/slough area to complete maintenance activities. The creation of a gravel access corridor would allow for work to be completed on the outlet/outfall without damaging the wetland/slough environment.

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