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**Public invited to comment on  
Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge Access Improvement Project**

The Western Federal Lands Highway Division (WFLHD) of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), in partnership with the US Department of Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), is proposing to improve access by replacing a deficient bridge with a new bridge over Lake River to provide access to the River S Unit of the Ridgefield Wildlife Refuge. Additional improvements (roadway design, facilitating multimodal transportation uses) to the access point will also be considered in the proposed action. The project addresses identified safety and mobility issues of the current access conditions to the Wildlife Refuge River S Unit.

The Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge was established (along with 3 other refuges in the Willamette Valley of Oregon) in 1965, in response to a need to establish vital winter habitat for wintering waterfowl with an emphasis on the dusky Canada goose whose nesting areas in the Copper River Delta of Alaska were severely impacted by the violent earthquake of 1964. Ridgefield Refuge is currently approximately 5,300 acres of marshes, grasslands and woodlands.

The project is being developed as part of the FHWA Public Lands Highway Program, which is financed by the Federal Highway Trust Fund. The USFWS is the lead agency and WFLHD is a partner agency in addressing National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance for this project.

Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966 states that “the Secretary shall not approve any program or project which requires the use of any publicly owned land from a public park, recreation area, or wildlife and waterfowl refuge of national, state, or local significance as determined by the Federal, State, or local officials having jurisdiction thereof, or any land from an historic site of national, State, or local significance as so determined by such officials unless (1) there is no feasible and prudent alternative to the use of such land, and (2) such program includes all possible planning to minimize harm to such park, recreation areas, wildlife and waterfowl refuge, or historic sites resulting from such use.”

Because Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge is categorized under a ‘wildlife and waterfowl refuge’, the project is subject to Section 4(f). However because of the criteria set forth by Department of Transportation a *De Minimis* Section 4(f) evaluation will be prepared by FHWA.

The purpose of this action is to provide for long-term access that addresses visitor demand and meets the operational and management needs of the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge Complex. When compared to the no-build alternative, the proposed action is intended to achieve the following objectives: a) improve the reliability and mobility of public access to and from the River ‘S’ Unit, b) improve the USFWS’s ability to efficiently carry out their operations consistent with their management goals within the Ridgefield Refuge Complex, and c) provide for a transportation solution that is sustainable for the resources on the refuge and the community of Ridgefield.

To comply with the Transportation Act, we are providing information to the public and affording an opportunity to review and comment on the effects of the project on the protected activities, features, and attributes of the Section 4 (f) resource.

The *de minimis* Section 4(f) determination is available for review at:  
<http://www.wfl.fhwa.dot.gov/projects/wa/ridgefield-wildlife-refuge/>

Comments may be directed to Steve Morrow at (360) 619-7811, by email to [stephen.morrow@dot.gov](mailto:stephen.morrow@dot.gov), or in writing to the address below by September 26, 2014.

Federal Highway Administration  
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