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### **Exciting Renovation Underway at Alda Crane Viewing Site this Spring**

(GRAND ISLAND, NE) - The Alda Crane Viewing site near Alda, Nebraska, will undergo renovations this spring to enhance accessibility and visitor experience. Renovations will include a new viewing platform, paving the recreational trail and two parking lots to make the area fully ADA accessible. Other improvements will include angler access to the pond and bank stabilization.

Renovations will begin on February 19, 2024, and the site will not be accessible until June 1, 2024. Permitting complications did not allow construction to begin until this spring. Project improvements are scheduled to be completed by June 2024.

The CPNRD received two grants for the improvements. \$250,000 was awarded through the Recreational Trails Program (RTP) administered by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission; in which CPNRD will provide a 20% match. The Nebraska Environmental Trust Fund (NET) awarded CPNRD \$75,000 to be used exclusively for repairs on the stream bank near the deck.

The site was developed in 1993, when Central Platte Natural Resources District (CPNRD) initiated a task force in response to concerns about safety for local residents, farmers and crane watchers in the Central Platte valley, especially during early morning and late afternoon hours on local roads. Since safety was the primary objective of the task force, the project prioritized redirecting traffic away from county roads and bridges during the crane viewing season. A portion of the cost was paid under the Nebraska Department of Transportation's Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) and the remaining cost was contributed by CPNRD, Hall County and Buffalo County.

Each spring, more than 80% of the world's population of Sandhill Cranes – around 1,000,000 birds – converge on the Platte River in central Nebraska as they migrate north to their nesting grounds. National Geographic named this annual migration as one of North America's two greatest natural wildlife phenomena. Millions of migrating ducks and geese arrive with them. This one-of-a-kind experience draws visitors including avid birders, scientists, and casual tourists from across the country and the globe.

The Sandhill cranes typically arrive at the end of February in the eastern portion of the Central Nebraska Flyway and linger in the western portion of the Flyway until mid-April. The Alda site saw a historic number of the endangered whooping cranes last November. Up to 95 whooping cranes, one of the most endangered bird species in the world, spent several days on the Platte River in central Nebraska. It was the largest group ever documented in the United States outside of the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge in Texas.

Locations of CPNRD's other free crane viewing sites:

- Richard Plautz Crane Viewing Site: 1.5 miles south of 1-80 at Exit 285 near Gibbon
- Roadside turnouts are located south and east of the Alda interchange on Platte River Drive and west of Rowe Sanctuary on Elm Island Road.

For additional crane viewing opportunities in Nebraska, the public is encouraged to contact tourist and wildlife viewing information centers in Grand Island, Alda, Gibbon, Kearney, Hastings and Funk.

To learn more call (308) 385-6282 or visit <https://www.cpnrd.org/conservation/crane-viewing>. Follow Central Platte NRD on Facebook and Twitter for updates on the project.