

# News Release

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**January 29, 2019**

**For Immediate Release**

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## **Refuge Announces Partial Trail Closure Due to New Construction**

Officials at the Parker River National Wildlife Refuge have announced that, beginning on Tuesday, February 5<sup>th</sup>, the entire Marsh Loop section of the Hellcat Boardwalk Trail will be closed to public access in order to allow for replacement of a 300 foot-long section of boardwalk. While Hellcat's Dune Loop (and parking lot 4), will remain open during construction of the new boardwalk segment, officials expect the Marsh Loop closure to last for 5 – 6 months.

Beginning in the early 1970s, The Hellcat Boardwalk Trail was constructed by a succession of summer Youth Conservation Corps workers. While the trail remains extremely popular among a diversity of refuge visitor groups, the 40+ year old structure is showing its age. Refuge staff have been working on a plan to replace the entire boardwalk – a replacement that, due to cost and complexity, will occur in phases over a number of years.

The new section of boardwalk will incorporate recycled plastic decking and other “green” materials to ensure its longevity while minimizing environmental impacts. The new boardwalk framework will be supported by metal, ‘helical piles’ that are screwed into the ground. The new design calls for a wider boardwalk, replacement of stairs with gradual inclines and, overall, a more efficient connection between the Marsh and Dune Loops. The new boardwalk trail will also provide much greater access for those with mobility challenges.

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