

NEWS RELEASE – for immediate release

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South Slough Visitor Center Entrance Improvement Project Begins January 2026

CHARLESTON, Ore. – The South Slough Reserve will begin construction on a major entrance improvement project at its Visitor Center this January. Originally built in 1985, the Visitor Center receives over 3,000 visitors a year from school groups and community members.

The improvements will alleviate traffic issues, create needed space for school buses, and improve pedestrian paths. In addition, electric vehicle (EV) charging stations, bioswales for stormwater management, and native plant landscaping will be added to support sustainability and habitat restoration.

The project is funded by a \$1.62 million NOAA Procurement, Acquisition and Construction (PAC) grant, and will be led by Morello Construction.

“This project is a critical investment in the future of the Reserve,” said Reserve Manager Patricia Fox. “It will make the Visitor Center safer and more accessible for all.”

Construction will run through May 2026, with initial work starting in January. Visitors should expect changing parking locations, selective tree removal, and temporary one-lane access. Trails remain open daily from dawn to dusk and the Visitor Center will remain open Tues-Sat 10-4 pm.

Interested members of the community can visit the Reserve website at southsloughestuary.org or following South Slough Reserve on Instagram or Facebook. The Visitor Center can also be reached by phone at (541) 888-5558.

About South Slough Reserve: South Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve is a protected estuary and natural area located on state-owned land in the Coos estuary on Oregon’s southern coast. It is managed in partnership by the Oregon Department of State Lands and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The first of 30 National Estuarine Research Reserves around the nation, South Slough Reserve is a leader in improving understanding of estuaries and coastal watersheds. The Reserve manages and studies nearly 7,000 acres of natural area, including open water channels, tidal and freshwater wetlands, riparian areas, and forested lands. A portion of this area includes waterways, trails, and a visitor center that are open to the public.

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