



## NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Progress made on East River Spur Road access dispute**

(SANDPOINT) – Bonner County completed repairs to a deteriorating bridge on East River Spur Road after a longstanding access dispute with private landowners.

Bonner County contacted the Idaho Department of Lands (IDL) last fall requesting termination of the East River Spur Road easement, which crosses State endowment lands and is used solely by two local landowners to access their private property.

Since then, IDL made several attempts to facilitate a solution between the county and the private property owners to address needed bridge repairs and private access needs prior to the county relinquishing the easement.

Bonner County agreed to repair the bridge and restore it to its original 7-ton load rating set by the Idaho Transportation Department in 1997. The IDL offered to assign the easement to the private landowners at no cost after Bonner County completed the bridge repairs. Under the terms of the easement, the private landowners would be responsible for future maintenance of the road and bridge. To date, the private landowners have been unwilling to accept the offer and any future responsibility for maintaining the road and bridge.

The IDL did not build the East River Spur road and has no need for it or any record of ever using it for endowment land management purposes. The IDL cannot use money intended for Idaho's public schools to fix or maintain a private road or bridge.

Like any grantee, the county may request termination of an IDL easement if it determines the easement is no longer needed or warranted and all liabilities have been addressed. With the bridge repairs now complete, Bonner County has terminated its easement across endowment lands, and IDL has offered the private landowners two options for access to their properties. One option would provide permanent access while the second option provides only temporary access. Both options are at no cost to the private landowners. However, the permanent access option would require the landowners to maintain the road and bridge moving forward.

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