

Buffalo Bill Dam Visitor Center, Yellowstone Park open Friday



Park Service plows clear snow on Sylvan Pass in preparation for the May 2 opening of the East Entrance. (Courtesy photo)

Yellowstone's East Entrance and the Buffalo Bill Dam Visitor Center both are scheduled to open at 8 a.m. Friday, May 2.

Because Yellowstone experienced a more normal snowfall this winter than in recent years, park spokesman Al Nash said there is several feet of snow on the ground throughout the park.

This will give early visitors less opportunity to access trails and boardwalks, he said.

The winter also appears to have brought a higher than usual number of winter-killed game animals, which have been attracting emerging grizzly bears to lower elevations.

Nash said visitors should carry pepper spray.

"Even our rangers carry bear spray," Nash said. "In fact, each ranger carries two cans."

He said the East Entrance is not the last to open in the park. The south gate won't open until May 9, along with the road to Old Faithful, West Thumb and Lake.

Beartooth Pass and the Canyon to Tower road are scheduled to open Memorial Day, said Nash.

He said wildlife viewing is good in Yellowstone this spring, with a concentration of grizzlies spotted around Old Faithful.

The dam's visitor center is scheduled to be open 8 a.m.-6 p.m. May-September, but will open 8 a.m.-8 p.m. June-August, according to the Cody chamber.

The center will be open 8 a.m.-6 p.m. Saturdays and 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Sundays throughout the season.