



Hog Point Bridge spans the Tippecanoe River near Americus. (PHOTOS BY MICHAEL HEINZ/JOURNAL & COURIER)

Hog Point Bridge isn't finished but is carrying traffic again

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Kevin Emslander is one of many northern Tippecanoe County residents who is happy to see construction equipment cleared off the Hog Point Bridge.

Nearly everything except the historic arches were replaced over the past two years on the bridge that takes Pretty Prairie Road across the Tippecanoe River near Americus.

The work isn't quite done, but workers from Hog Point Bridge have been reassigned to the Lindberg Road bridge project in West Lafayette for the time being in hopes of getting that one wrapped up quickly. When that one's done, a small crew will return to Pretty Prairie Road to patch and stain the underside of the arched bridge, using dark



Pretty Prairie Road crosses Hog Point Bridge.

brown and beige paint.

Emslander lives on nearby Goldsberry Road and had his most-direct access to the west side of the river cut off during

the construction process, which has taken longer than expected as crews ran into challenges.

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BRIDGE

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Tippecanoe County Highway Director Opal Kuhl compared the work on Hog Point Bridge to rehabbing an old house as compared to building one.

"We ran into a lot of unforeseen things," she said. "But it's a historic bridge."

Work ramped up in early 2010 and was expected to be done last May. Instead, it will likely be October before the job is complete.

One major hiccup occurred when crews dug fill from the east side of the bridge to build a more gradual slope up to Grant Road. Kuhl said the soil there was very wet and in bad shape, which required the workers to dig deeper and bring in new soil as replacement. This delayed the project and contributed to a higher price tag.

The final cost will be around \$2.64 million instead of the original bid of \$2.37 million, Kuhl said. She said the county had the money needed for the project.

Arch bridges were common in the early 1900s, but nowadays the structures are often torn down and replaced. To fortify the Hog Point Bridge for its new, wider deck, crews filled the arches with slag, a by-product of steel mills that is lighter than soil. This allowed the overall weight of the structure to remain

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similar to what it was before the bridge expansion.

Beyond the bridge work, crews moved the intersection of Pretty Prairie and Grant roads a couple hundred feet to the east, adding a curve to improve the sight distances for drivers.

Sue Kurtz lives in Burlington but frequently travels on Hog Point Bridge, especially during Purdue's football season when she attends weekly luncheons at The Trails banquet facility in West Lafayette. She's happy to have her shortcut back in operation.

"It looks fantastic," Kurtz said. "It looks like they did a wonderful job, though it did seem like it was closed for a really long time."

The good news for drivers is that Hog Point Bridge will remain open to traffic even when a crew returns to put on the final touches.

"I'm glad it's open," Emslander said.