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Provincial Funding To Cover Protection of River of Death Bone Bed



Hon. Lindsay Blackett, Minister of Culture and Community Spirit (right), presents a cheque of \$1 million to (right to left) Everett McDonald, Reeve for the County of Grande Prairie No.1, Honourable Wayne Drysdale of the Grande Prairie-Wapiti constituency, and Division 4 Councillor Jack O'Toole for the County and committee chair for the River of Death and Discovery Dinosaur Centre project.

Funding in the form of \$1 million from provincial coffers will go to protecting the “River of Death” bone bed in the Pipestone Creek-Wapiti River area, while opening it up for further research, education and tourism.

Economic Development Officer Walter Paszkowski for the County of Grande Prairie No. 1 said the funding will go to the first phase of development and construction of the River of Death and Discovery Dinosaur Centre.

“After discussions, the project committee felt that in order to move the project forward, the bone bed had to be developed first,” he said.

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“That meant creating easier access to the bone bed, securing the site, opening it up by removing the top layer of soil and rock so the fossils could better accessed for research, education and tourism purposes, and providing shelter that protects the bone bed from erosion while giving the paleontological excavation team a more suitable site for research,” he said.

The first stage of the project is expected to be completed by 2010.

The \$1 million funding was provided through Major Community Facilities Program (MCFP) operated under the provincial Culture and Community Spirit department. Local funding providers are expected to match the province’s contribution to the River of Death project in the coming weeks.

Overall, the goal is to raise \$21 million for the development of an interpretative centre above the bone bed site with a stairwell and gondola system leading down to the bone bed itself. The River of Death and Discovery Centre would complement the Royal Tyrrell Museum in Drumheller and eventually be part of a north-south route for local and international tourists to explore and learn about Alberta’s prehistoric past.

For ten days in late July, Dr. Phil Currie of the University of Alberta and his research team will continue the multi-year excavation of the, yet to be described, Pachyrhinosaurus bone bed along the Wapiti River. In addition to the Wapiti River site, Dr. Currie and the local Paleontological Society of the Peace (PSP) will be conducting extensive prospecting trips throughout the Wapiti formation.

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