



NEWS RELEASE

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ATHABASCA LANDING TRAIL CELEBRATES NEW TCT PROJECTS IN 2017

Progress on building bridges and trails to connect the Athabasca Landing Trail (ALT) are happening in five of the municipalities along the trail this year. The projects are prompted in part by the Trans Canada Trail (TCT) push to connect *The Great Trail*, which includes the Athabasca Landing Trail, for TCT and Canada 150 anniversary celebrations in 2017.

Athabasca: The MRM Wildlife Habitat access will be refurbished with a graveled staging area with parking and amenities as well as trail approaches to the new Tawatinaw River bridge, which was installed on February 14, 2017. Funding for the bridge construction came from the Governments of Alberta and Canada and from TCT donors and sponsors. The Athabasca Rotary Club has stepped up to contribute work on developing the staging area and a section of new connecting trail this summer, and the local Lions Club has agreed to build a picnic area. The entrance to the MRM staging area is just before the highway 813 access bridge. The MRM land is currently owned by the Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation. Once complete, the new trail and bridge will provide access from Athabasca and the wildlife park to 13 km of ALT trail in Athabasca County. The trails here and in the Town of Athabasca will eventually be linked to the Peace River Trail to the north.

Athabasca County: A decommissioned bridge over the Redwater River was removed a few years ago and is being repurposed as a pedestrian bridge in Colinton. A camping/staging area at the former ball diamond is proposed for future development; a picnic shelter on the old station grounds nearby was installed by the Athabasca Recreational Trails Association in 2012. A second bridge over the Tawatinaw River in south Colinton will be built this fall. These bridges will complete the section of ALT from Athabasca to Colinton, which was constructed in 2014. Interpretive signs are up in Rochester and Colinton and a new one is planned for Perryvale.

Westlock County: Work on the 2.5 km trail between Redwater Bridge 246 and the Echo Lake campsite is complete. A staging area was constructed near the bridge, and a plaque and traditional trail markers (lobsticks) honoring the Metis and First Nations people who lived and worked along the historic trail will be installed.

Sturgeon County: Work on developing an asphalt trail from Highway 15 to the new ALT staging area northeast of Lamoureux resumed in May and is due for completion in August. This staging area was completed last year and has parking, a picnic table and interpretive signage. The new Lamoureux Trail will incorporate the river walk and historic markers previously installed by the County and passes by the old Lamoureux Church. Northeast of Lamoureux, the 2.5 km Fort Augustus Heritage Trail and staging area is also under construction for completion this summer. (Fort Augustus was built in 1794-95 by the North West Company to support the thriving fur trade.)

Fort Saskatchewan: The Government of Alberta recently announced a commitment to “twin” the Fort Saskatchewan Highway 15 Bridge across the North Saskatchewan River linking to Sturgeon County. Discussions on incorporating a pedestrian crossing into this new bridge are underway so that this important link in TCT’s *The Great Trail* will be complete. The project is expected to take five years to complete. A provincial historic site plaque recognizing the history of the Athabasca Landing Trail is being developed for installation near the beginning of the ALT.

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Fort Saskatchewan's existing section of trail will connect south to the City of Edmonton and River Valley Alliance TCT system via new sections of trail being built in Strathcona County this summer. The County has completed one section of the trail north of Sherwood Drive, the Petroleum Way Trail has been started, and work on the other Sherwood Drive sections will commence shortly.

Once complete, the trails will have interpretive and wayfaring signs installed, and will be officially opened at local community events, many of which are planned in coordination with other TCT events on August 26th.

The Athabasca Landing Trail is a multi-use, non-motorized trail that is part of The Great Trail (TCT). Wherever possible, the trail follows the original 100 mile trail built by the Hudson's Bay Company in 1876, which was an important conduit for settlers, supplies and trade, and exploration. To honour this history the trail accommodates horse drawn wagons wherever practical and is also used by hikers, cyclists, horseback riders, cross-country skiers, snowshoers and dog sleds.

Redevelopment of the trail for recreational use began in the 1990's. With the formation of a regional project steering committee in 2008, extensive community consultation, research and ALT master planning occurred, along with the initiation of new trail projects. The trail route deviates from the historic route in areas where the original route is unavailable or to connect to communities and services along the way.

The planning and redevelopment is guided by a steering committee that has representation from four trail groups (Athabasca Recreational Trails Association, Alberta TrailNet Society, Great Canadian Wagon Train and Rainbow Equitation Society), five municipalities (Town of Athabasca, Athabasca County, Westlock County, Sturgeon County and City of Fort Saskatchewan) and Alberta Culture & Tourism. Its work is supported by grants from the federal, provincial and municipal governments, Alberta TrailNet, and Trans Canada Trail, as well as by the work of volunteers and in-kind donations from local residents and businesses.

For additional information, go to www.athabascalandingtrail.com

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