



PRESS RELEASE

BUFFALO MUSEUM OF SCIENCE ENDING PALEONTOLOGICAL DIG IN BYRON, NEW YORK AFTER 29 YEARS

BUFFALO, NY (August 3, 2011) – The Buffalo Museum of Science (BMS) has announced that it will end its seasonal paleontological dig in Byron, New York after 29 dig seasons. The current, and final, dig season is currently underway and ends this weekend.

When a farmer in Genesee County dug up large bones and teeth on his land in 1959, he called on experts at the Buffalo Museum of Science to identify the specimens. Once BMS determined the remains to be those of mastodons, it purchased the land from the farmer and has held annual dig seasons – three weeks every summer since 1983 - in search for additional fossils and artifacts.

The site has proven to be one of the richest Ice Age Paleontological sites in North America. However, after 27 years of museum overhead- and foundation-supported research, and a steady decline in discoveries since the dig began, the Museum tasked the science and research team with securing the entire funding for the Byron Dig.

In 2009, the team was able to secure 25% of the funding, 50% in 2010 and 75% for the current 2011 dig season. It was determined by the science and research staff that they would be unable to secure 100% of the funding for future years and that the dig should be closed.

“It is unusual for an organization of our size to be able to run a research program such as the Byron Dig for twenty-nine years,” said Mark Mortenson, president and CEO of the Museum. “It’s very common for research projects of this nature to end if researchers are unable to secure funding, and we are proud to have sustained the dig for this length of time.”

The protected dig site will be filled up after the current season ends. The museum is considering the possibility of offering the dig site to other organizations and institutions for teaching and education purposes, but no decisions have been made at this time.

Museum guests can view mastodon teeth, tusks, and other paleontological specimens discovered at the Byron Site by visiting the museum’s permanent exhibit, *Digging Into WNY’s Past*, which is included with general museum admission and free for Museum Members.

ABOUT THE BUFFALO MUSEUM OF SCIENCE

The Buffalo Museum of Science is the non-profit educational institution dedicated to the study and interpretation of the natural and physical sciences. Its extensive collections of over 700,000 specimens and artifacts represent all facets of the natural world with an emphasis on Western New York as well as man-made objects spanning the globe. Based at 1020 Humboldt Parkway and anchoring Buffalo’s East Side in Olmsted-designed Martin Luther King, Jr. Park since 1929, the Museum presents a wide variety of programs and services for children, teachers, families, adults, and community organizations throughout each year. The Museum also operates Tiff Nature Preserve in South Buffalo, a 264-acre urban wetland preserve on reclaimed former industrial land. For further information on the Museum and its upcoming activities, call 716-896-5200 or visit www.sciencebuff.org.

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