



WHERE PEOPLE ARE THE KEY

MEDIA RELEASE

March 9, 2010

Blindman River Pedestrian Bridge to be completed over two weekends by Army Reservists.

Lacombe County – A new footbridge is about to be completed over the Blindman River South of Blackfalds, between Highways 2 and 2A. The project is an undertaking of Lacombe County, in cooperation with the Central Alberta Regional Trails Society (CARTS). In support of the project, Army Reservists of the 25 and 33 Engineering Squadrons, 41 Combat Engineer Regiment (41 CER) will install the wood handrails and bridge decking over two weekends, the 12-14 and 19-21 of March 2010. The handrails and decking will be the final stage in completing the steel and concrete structure, which was recently installed under the supervision of Lacombe County.

Media and the public are invited to view the Engineers at work between the hours of 1:30 p.m. and 3:30 p.m. on both Saturday, March 13th, and Saturday, March 20th, 2010.

For some time now, Lacombe County has been working with the Central Alberta Regional Trails Society (CARTS) on a plan to build a walking and biking trail to link communities in Central Alberta. One of the first steps in building the Trail will be the completion of the Blindman pedestrian bridge this month by local Canadian Army Reservists.

41 Combat Engineer Regiment was created to provide engineer support to 41 Canadian Brigade Group. The home station of the Regiment is in Edmonton and it consists of a Regimental Headquarters and three sub-units: 25 Engineer Squadron in Edmonton, 33 Engineer Squadron in Calgary and an Administration Squadron staffed by both Edmonton and Calgary personnel.

The project is being funded by the Government of Canada, the National Trails Coalition (NTC), Alberta TrailNet (ATN) and Lacombe County.

See the backgrounder on the next page for more information.

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Backgrounder – Blindman River Pedestrian Bridge

A new footbridge is being built by Lacombe County in cooperation with the Central Alberta Regional Trails Society. Army Reservists of the 25 and 33 Engineering Squadrons, 41 Combat Engineer Regiment (41 CER) will finish construction of the bridge by assembling the decking timbers and rails to the steel structure, which is being bolted on to four steel pilings on either side of the river, so as not to interfere with canoeists or snowmobilers who regularly use the Blindman River for recreation. The new bridge will be approximately 6 feet wide and is designed for foot or bicycle traffic only. It will serve as an essential link for the Regional Trails system.

The Government of Canada announced \$50,000 in funding for the development of a pedestrian bridge over the Blindman River last fall. The project is being supported by the Government of Canada's \$25 million investment in recreational trails, part of the Government of Canada's Economic Action Plan. This investment will be matched by the National Trails Coalition (NTC) and Alberta TrailNet (ATN).

Lacombe County demonstrated its commitment to the project earlier in the year by donating \$50,000 worth of building materials for the bridge, while the Canadian Military engineers will donate approximately \$50,000 of their time and expertise to the project by installing the decking and handrails. In addition, Alberta TrailNet provided \$100,000 towards the project, while Trans Canada Trail (TCT) provided \$67,000.

A request for \$225,000 will be coming forward in the County's 2010 budget to construct a trail from the Blindman River to Blackfalds. This trail will provide a link from the Town of Blackfalds to the pedestrian bridge, with the goal of eventually extending the trail to create links with other communities.

The Trans Canada Trail in Central Alberta will eventually stretch from Penhold to Ponoka and beyond, the trail within Lacombe County extending from the Blindman River to Morningside. The bridge crossing the Blindman River is situated between Red Deer and Blackfalds at the end of the C&E trail, just down from the rail bridge. It is expected the regional trail will eventually extend through Red Deer County, the City of Red Deer, and the Towns of Blackfalds and Lacombe, and will connect with regional trails throughout the Province.

The original Blindman River Bridge was part of the old Calgary & Edmonton (C&E) Trail, and was torn down in years past, with the only remaining structures the earthworks on either side of the Blindman River. The new bridge will serve as an essential link for the Regional Trails system.

Located on the historic Calgary & Edmonton (C & E) Trail, this bridge will form part of the Trans-Canada Trail (TCT) System, a trail that touches every province in Canada and forms the world's longest recreational pathway. Although substantial sections of TCT trail are already in place in other provinces, Central Alberta is leading the way when it comes to linking Alberta communities.

The project partners are particularly excited about the fact that the trail is being developed on and near the historic C & E Trail. Once a major north-south stagecoach route between Calgary and Edmonton, portions of the C & E Trail will now become a beautiful walking and biking area for Central Albertans.