



**NEWS RELEASE** | **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** | December 18, 2023

## **Rare Mammoth Specimen Discovered by Coal Miners at Freedom Mine near Beulah, North Dakota**

Partial mammoth skeleton with complete tusk will be the focus of scientific research and educational outreach

BISMARCK, ND - In the early morning hours over the Memorial Day weekend last May, coal miners at the Freedom Mine near Beulah, North Dakota made an extraordinary find: a well-preserved, seven-foot-long tusk of an ancient mammoth. Recognizing the importance of the discovery, the mine roped off the site until representatives of the North Dakota Geological Survey, the State Historical Society of North Dakota, and the Bureau of Land Management could visit the site to document the discovery.

Over the course of twelve days, a team led by paleontologists from the North Dakota Geological Survey excavated the old streambed where the fossils were buried thousands of years ago. They recovered more than twenty bones from the skeleton, including ribs, a shoulder blade, a tooth, and parts of the hips.

"Most of the mammoth fossils known from North Dakota are isolated bones and teeth," said Clint Boyd, Senior Paleontologist for the North Dakota Geological Survey. "This specimen is one of the most complete mammoth skeletons discovered in North Dakota, making it an exciting and scientifically important discovery." It should be noted that without the mining of coal in this area, this important discovery would never have been made.

After being stabilized in protective plaster jackets, the bones were transported to the Paleontology Lab at the North Dakota Heritage Center & State Museum in Bismarck. There they will undergo the slow and meticulous process of cleaning off the attached sediment and stabilizing the delicate bones.

While that work continues, staff from the North Dakota Geological Survey and the Freedom Mine are working together to develop a plan to integrate these fossils into an educational outreach program and discussing possible locations where they could be put on public display.

The goal is to ensure as many people as possible can see this specimen and learn what it tells us about life in North Dakota during the Ice Age.

Mammoths lived in North Dakota during the Pleistocene Epoch, commonly called the Ice Age, and went extinct in this area around 10,000 years ago. Several species of mammoth lived in North America, including the Woolly Mammoth and the Columbian Mammoth. They lived alongside other iconic animals like saber-toothed tigers and giant sloths. Once the bones are fully cleaned, paleontologists will be able to identify which species was collected from the mine.

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