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Park Addition Permits Approved

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BARTOW - By this time next year, visitors to IMC-Peace River Park should be able to see more of the Peace River's floodplain without getting their feet wet. A new boardwalk is planned for the park south of Bartow. It will connect to the existing boardwalk built in 1996.

Bob Weidrich, a park planner for Polk County Leisure Services, said the \$500,000 project is being paid for with property taxes the County Commission levied in 2005.

Bids should be ready in about 90 days. Weidrich said the project has been waiting for environmental permits, which were recently received.

The addition will run about 3,900 feet, connecting to the existing boardwalk and heading north and west to the parking area near the restroom and to the east to another point on the Peace River.

The original 2,000-foot boardwalk provides a view of the floodplain and offers a perch for fishing from the river when there's enough water to allow fish to swim by. It was constructed with the help of a \$100,000 state grant.

Marian Ryan, president of the Friends of the Parks Foundation, said she recently visited the site where the boardwalk addition is planned.

"The new boardwalk will afford an intimate experience of the Upper Peace River ecosystem by providing access to areas of the floodplain not easily seen from watercraft or hiking trails," she said.

Ryan said Friends of the Parks is seeking grant funds to provide interpretive signs explaining the hydrogeologic features of the river, its importance to wildlife populations and to the Charlotte Harbor estuary.

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