

PRESS RELEASE

(Provided by the ATS – “Val d’Alpone – Cenozoic fauna, flora, and rocks”)

(For immediate release)

UNESCO BID FOR BOLCA AND VAL D’ALPONE: EVALUATION BODY’S EVALUATION MISSION BEGINS

For a full week, an expert appointed by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) will be on-site to examine the bid to designate the paleontological site as a Natural World Heritage Site.

Today marks the first technical-scientific session and the official welcome addresses.

Verona, September 21, 2026 – The international phase of the bid to include the “Bolca and Val d’Alpone – Eocene Marine Ecosystems” property in the UNESCO World Heritage List is now in full swing. Starting today and continuing for a full week, an expert appointed by the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) — UNESCO’s official advisory body for natural sites — will be on the ground to conduct the evaluation mission of the nomination.

The official opening will take place in the “Sala Industria” at the Verona Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Craft, and Agriculture, featuring a day of technical-scientific analysis reserved for the evaluator and the team of experts who prepared the nomination dossier.

The day will be structured into two distinct technical closed-door sessions: the first will analyse in detail the distinctive characteristics constituting the site’s proposed Outstanding Universal Value, while the second will address protection and management requirements. Between the two sessions, an official ceremony will mark the start of the visit, featuring welcome addresses from the national, regional, and local authorities who strongly support the project. The technical visit marks one of the most important and significant stages in the overall evaluation process, which began earlier this year after the Executive Board of Italy’s National Commission for UNESCO selected Bolca and Val d’Alpone property in January 2026 as Italy’s official nomination for 2027 — a bid submitted by the Ministry of the Environment and Energy Security, the body responsible for natural heritage nominations. Given the site’s paleontological significance, the nomination has also received technical and scientific support from the Ministry of Culture.

During the site visits, the evaluator will closely examine the state of conservation, the integrity of the fossil deposits, and the effectiveness of management measures for this serial site, which spans the municipalities of Altissimo, San Giovanni Ilarione, Roncà, and Vestenanova. The paleontological deposits of Val d’Alpone — including the famous Pesciara and Monte Postale sites — are regarded by the global scientific community as some of the world’s most extraordinary examples of Eocene marine **Fossil-Lagerstätten** (exceptionally preserved fossil deposits) which have been studied since the 16th century. They constitute a true “natural archive” housing an exceptional variety of perfectly preserved faunal and floral specimens, enabling a comprehensive and detailed reconstruction of coastal and shallow-marine ecosystems from a geological period spanning 50 to 38 million years ago.

The evaluation mission will continue over the coming days with technical site visits to the fossil outcrops and targeted meetings with local institutions — including the Veneto Region, the Lessinia Regional Natural Park, universities, and local stakeholders such as various **Pro Loco** associations, cultural groups, and schools. Accompanying the evaluator is a delegation comprising expert officials from the Ministry of the Environment and Energy Security, the Ministry of Culture, the Veneto Region, and Lessinia Park, alongside members of the Technical-Scientific Committee

of the Val d'Alpone Association — the organization that with passion and dedication championed this ambitious scientific and cultural goal for the past 12 years.

IUCN evaluation missions focus on technical discussions and site visits. Thus, experts deployed in the field usually do not engage in interviews and will not make any public statements or provide any conclusions as the evaluation process will continue in the coming months. The official opening event attended by the authorities will be the only occasion open to the media. The field inspection mission represents a particularly intense and significant phase of a purely technical dialogue with the IUCN, which is set to conclude by February of next year.

Press kit contents:

- Press release from the “Val d'Alpone – Cenozoic fauna, flora, and rocks” Association
 - Bid presentation brochure (taken from the website of the promoter, in Italian)
 - Photographs
- a_Autumnal view of Val d'Alpone © ATS Valdalpone (photo: Portinari).jpg
b_Bolca Fossil Museum © ATS Valdalpone (photo: Portinari).jpg
c_Spectacular *Eoplatax papilio* specimen © MIC SABAP (photo: Portinari).jpg
d_*Eoeuscorpius ceratoi* fossil © Oleschinski-Ce

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