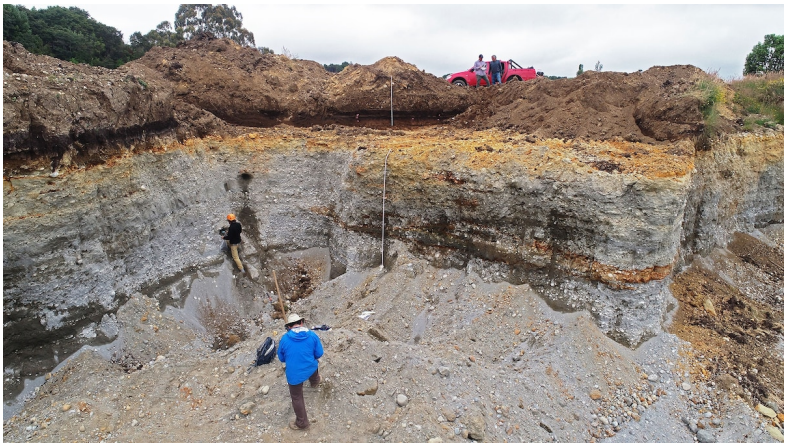
COULD THIS NEW STUDY CHANGE WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT THE FIRST AMERICANS?



WHAT'S HAPPENING?

Scientists are debating the age of Monte Verde, an important archaeological site in southern Chile. When the site was studied in the 1970s, researchers found stone tools, wooden objects, animal remains and a human footprint. They concluded that people had lived there about 14,500 years ago. This was surprising because many historians and archaeologists had believed that the Clovis people of North America were the earliest known inhabitants of the Americas. A new study argues that some of the old wood used to date Monte Verde may have been much older than the human settlement. Rivers could have carried ancient wood into the area, making the campsite seem older than it really was. The new researchers suggest that the site may be less than 8,000 years old. Some of the original archaeologists strongly disagree. The argument matters because the date of Monte Verde affects ideas about when people reached the Americas and whether some groups travelled along the Pacific coast by boat.

WHY IS THIS INTERESTING?

This story shows that historical knowledge can change when people examine old evidence in a new way. Dating evidence is not always simple, especially when objects have moved through rivers or layers of soil. The debate also connects with bigger questions about migration, travel and how humans spread across the world.

THINK LIKE A HISTORIAN

“Why can dating an archaeological site be so difficult?”

Source: National Geographic

https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/monte-verde-redated