

OREGON PALEO LANDS CENTER

June 2021

Our Mission Statement

The Oregon Paleo Lands Center (OPLI) works with the Gateway Communities of the mid-John Day Basin (Condon, Antelope, Fossil, Service Creek, Spray, Mitchell, Kimberly, Dayville and Monument) to build social and economic vitality through efforts:

To conserve, interpret, and promote the natural and cultural history of the John Day Basin/Blue Mountains through time.

To develop and connect, with partners, the John Day Basin/Blue Mountains' visitor services, recreational services, natural and cultural history education opportunities.

To welcome, educate, and connect visitors, schools, area residents and businesses at the Oregon Paleo Lands Center (OPLC), and through other media.

**Contact OPLI at:
Post Office Box 104
333 Fourth Street
Fossil, Oregon 97830**

(541) 763-4480

paleolands@gmail.com

www.paleolands.org

Presidents Message

CENTER HOURS AND VIDEO SHOWINGS:

June October Thursday Sunday AM PM

We are pleased to see Oregon turning the corner on community health. A return to normalcy would be welcome, but I think we all realize there has been a permanent shift in how people vacation and information is shared. A River Flows Free, the Center's first historic and first video exhibit, just opened May 28 at the Center and is also online at www.paleolands.org. A River Flows Free is funded by the Oregon Heritage Commission/Oregon State Parks. Wheeler Fdn., and by donors like you. It reveals the 10,000-year history of the John Day Basin (in 28 minutes), from its natural origins to its cultural heritage.

We are also pleased to welcome back previous Park Hosts, Marcia and Chris Bordagaray. OPLI pays for their RV spot at the Wheeler County RV Park in Fossil, while they staff the Paleo Lands Center. It looks like it's going to be another hot dry summer, so be mindful about fire danger. Visitors should always carry a shovel, a bucket and at least a gallon of water all of which are required if travelling on Forest Service roads.

Thanks again for your continued support.

If you have an interest or any questions, please drop me a line.

jkee@hevanet.com 503-939-7939 cp

We need ongoing donations for operations and upkeep, especially exterior staining, and we invite you to become a Board Member or Sponsor, to support our work.

ALL DONATIONS ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE.

You can donate online at www.paleolands.org Home Page

Jeffrey Kee, President OPLI, Certified Interpretive Guide, NAI



A River Flows Free: EXHIBIT PREVIEW

For the past year the Center has worked with Alchemy of Design, a skilled exhibit contractor, and other partners, to create A River Flows Free, a unique exhibit on John Day Basin History. The video is visually stunning, using many little-seen historic images. It takes you through eight historic Frontiers in the John Day Basin. You may have seen Alchemy's work at the Kam Wah Chung Center. U of O Museum/Paisley Caves, Depoe Bay Whale Watch Center, Silver Creek Falls, or Tryon Creek State Park.

Feel free to contact Richard Ross, OPLI Project Manager about A RIVER FLOWS FREE at: richardnross@earthlink.net

Wheeler High School Fossil Beds (By Steve Lundgren)

The unassuming knoll above Wheeler High School's football field holds an opportunity few other places in the West have—the chance for everyday folks to touch 33 million years of history. Buried in the buff and rust colored rocks not far from the 50-yard line are the fossils of a forest that included the metasequoia (Oregon's State Fossil) oaks, alder, maple and other plants that once flourished in a warmer, wetter climate here. That isn't unusual. Fossils abound in north Central Oregon. What is unusual is that for a small fee anyone can dig up a few fossils here. And that's a fact that draws people from all over.

Jim Smith, School Superintendent said he has met visitors from England, France, Germany, Japan, The Netherlands and elsewhere, as well as from all over the United States, who come to dig fossils here. He said many visitors have done their research well before arriving. The site is especially popular with families with children, from ages 5-17.



On a blustery day in late April, as Smith explained this, a family from the Seattle area pulled up, plunked a few bucks in the honor bucket, and happily climbed the hill. The sweet spot for fossil hunters lies close to the top of a low but steep hill. It is the end of a long ridge that arcs down from the hills to the east of Fossil.

This small school district is well aware of the unique gift geography has provided. This K-12 school hosts about 25 pupils and serves as a natural resources charter school, with a focus on the resource economy of the Columbia River Basin. Science class can go beyond a textbook when there's a hill full of hands-on learning in the backyard. Digging Fees provide a small windfall for the district every year, about \$5,000. Fees are collected on the honor system. Smith said the school district plans to improve the access and interpretation of the site. A small onsite display case shows local fossils. The school keeps a small supply of buckets and hand tools for digging.

The Paleo Lands Center welcomes folks who want to identify all of the High School fossils and to enjoy two terrific geology exhibits, High Desert Geology and the Mitchell Plesiosaur. For more information, call the Paleo Lands Center, 541-763-4480 or check it out at www.paleolands.org.

To arrange a group fossil dig visit, call Wheeler High School, 541-763-4303.

DIGGING FEES: \$5 per individual, or \$15 for a family of four, with a \$3 fee per additional child.

Group rate is \$25 for up to 20 people

Oregon Paleo Lands Center Needs You!

You can support the Oregon Paleo Lands Center in a variety of ways. Your financial support now in 2021 is vital to continue our mission of exploring, teaching about, and protecting Oregon's paleo lands. Donor benefits include a 10% discount on retail merchandise at the Oregon Paleo Lands Center in Fossil, a regular newsletter with information about scientific discoveries, history, and news of the Paleo Lands, and advance notice of upcoming OPLI and partner organization events. All donations are tax deductible.

Interested in volunteering at the Center or serving on the Board?
Contact us at paleolands@gmail.com or www.paleolands.org or at PO
Box 104, Fossil, Oregon 97830 (541) 763-4480.