

# OREGON PALEO LANDS CENTER

June 2018

## **Our Mission Statement**

*The Oregon Paleo Lands Institute works with the Gateway Communities of the John Day Fossil Beds National Monument to build social and economic vitality through efforts:*

*To conserve and promote the region's ancient and living landscapes, including the Earth's most complete record of the Age of Mammals (past 65 million years).*

*To develop and connect, with partners, the region's visitor services, recreational services, and natural history education, that support Eastern Oregon's top destination.*

*To welcome visitors and area residents at the Oregon Paleo Lands Center.*

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

**(541) 763-4480  
paleolands@gmail.com  
www.paleolands.org**

## **Presidents Message:**

Dear OPLI supporters;

Thank you for your past support. Each quarter the Board and Emily Fernandes, our office coordinator, have focused efforts to get the word out on the Center's needs. And you have responded. Again, we seek your assistance.

Working to better utilize your visitor center, for 2018 we have secured a volunteer Visitor Center Host with assistance from Oregon State Parks. This has allowed us to increase the time the Center is open to 4 days a week in July and August. However, OPLI is still seeking applicants for the rest of the summer. Go to the home page: [www.paleolands.org](http://www.paleolands.org) to see the announcement. Our resident paleo lands expert Karen Masshoff will staff the Center on Fridays and Saturdays throughout the summer. Our partnership with Oregon Parks and Recreation (OPRD) continues to strengthen. Partnering with OPRD, OPLI has submitted grant applications to fund shared employees to work on implementing the John Day Basin Joint Interpretive Strategy. OPLI is also working with OPRD to develop an exhibit plan and welcomes community input.

Travel Oregon Tourism Studio instructors recommend that "if you don't have a YouTube video you don't exist for most travelers". OPLI assembled a short video and will be producing a few more this year which can be viewed on [www.paleolands.org](http://www.paleolands.org). The word is getting out to visitors and schools about the useful information OPLI provides year-round to explore our unique region of geologic marvels and natural resources. OPLI just bought a new printer, has committed to paying for an RV spot at the local fairgrounds for our Visitor Hosts and is distributing 10,000 copies of our updated Find Time map and service directory. The Find Time map is available in .pdf format on our website so you can download it for your next trip.

Plan on stopping at the Center in Fossil this summer. Also, while you are here be sure to sign up for a chance to win a framed poster of "Fossils of Oregon" by noted paleo-artist Ray Troll. No cost to enter and every visitor has a chance to win. Everyone, individuals and/or businesses who donate to OPLI will be automatically entered to win for a chance to win the "Fossils of Oregon" poster. With your continued assistance we will continue to maintain a fine visitor center and staff it with knowledgeable employees and volunteers.

Thanks again, soon,

Jeffrey Kee

President Oregon Paleo Lands Institute [jkee@hevanet.com](mailto:jkee@hevanet.com)

## Why the John Day Has No Dams - Part One

By Richard N. Ross

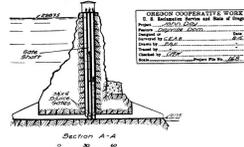
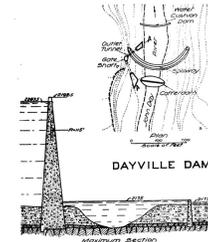
The John Day River is the Columbia River's longest free-flowing tributary (285 miles). In 1916 the State of Oregon and US Reclamation Service planned an ambitious John Day Irrigation Project, that included a 140-ft. Dayville Dam, without fish passage, at Picture Gorge (Mile 205), plus a 75-mile supply canal through Gilliam Co., and reservoirs at Clarno, Twickenham, and Kimberly. This project promised to export water to 200,000 acres of dryland west of Hermiston, outside the John Day Basin, and to change the John Day River forever.



Twickenham Reservoir Site Today

1916 was Oregon's golden age of irrigation. Large irrigation projects attracted settlers to the Deschutes, Crooked, Klamath, Umatilla, Harney, and Owyhee Basins but the John Day Project never penciled out. The rugged John Day Basin had less hydropower and irrigation potential. The project, oddly, planned to irrigate distant lands that were already productive, for dry land wheat farming.

The costly 1916 project, would have required nearly \$400 million in 2018 dollars.



Dayville Dam Plan (1916 report)

The 1916 plan warned that hydropower is not "attractive" on the John Day, due to its "long, low, summer and fall flows". Early farms and ranches on the John Day did not need a project, as they irrigated directly from the river. Much of river runs in a deep canyon, with limited pastures to irrigate. The John Day Basin saw relatively less flood damage than other basins, due to its sparse settlement and narrow valley floors.



Picture Gorge Today (Oregon State Archives)

Mitchell, hit by repeated flash floods, just moved part of town uphill. The Corps of Engineers studied a Picture Gorge Dam in the 1940s, as local rancher Bill Mascall recalled. Corps plans were shelved by World War II.

By the 1920s, conservation arrived in the Basin. John Merriam of the University of California organized a crusade to protect the John Day fossil beds, with a series of parks and a scenic parkway. In 1931, Oregon created Picture Gorge State Park (now the Sheep Rock Unit), next to the Dayville dam site, to protect rock art, and then developed Painted Hills and Clarno State Parks. Oregon transferred these parks to create the John Day Fossil Beds National Monument in 1975. In 1970 Oregon voters designated the lower John Day below Service Creek as one of Oregon's original Scenic Waterways. In 1988 other river segments became a National Wild and Scenic River. Today's free-flowing John Day is known as a "salmon sanctuary", with healthy native populations of spring chinook and summer steelhead. While its summer flow drops low, upper tributaries keep the natives alive.

SEE: "Why the John Day has No Dams - Part 2" in OPLI August Newsletter Dams and Massive Floods of the John Day

- Nancy Benguerel
- Donna Enz
- Molly Kee
- Wayne Kee
- Lee Walker
- Donita Walker
- Carmen Almodovar
- B.L Kavan
- M.E. Kavan
- Marni Henrickson
- David Burton
- Peter Dalke
- Kathleen Dalke
- Susan Hammond
- John Hammond
- David Griffith
- Fletcher Frisch
- Page Frisch
- Jan McGowan Nonprofit Consulting
- Trailing Edge Enterprises
- Jenny Young
- Jeanette Kloss
- Stephen Carlson
- Peter Fry
- Wolfgang Grote
- Richard Strebin
- Richard Ross
- Jeffrey Kee
- Bonnie Lofton
- Lee Bouchard
- The Fossil Cartel

### 2018 Grantors

- Wheeler County Cultural Heritage Coalition
- Oregon Community Foundation

**Thank you for your ongoing support!**

## Oregon Paleo Lands Center Needs You!

You can support the Oregon Paleo Lands Center in a variety of ways. Your financial support now in 2018 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](mailto:paleolands@gmail.com) or [www.paleolands.org](http://www.paleolands.org) or at PO Box 104, Fossil, Oregon 97830 (541) 763-4480.