

Senator Ron Wyden Breaks Ground for Oregon Paleo Lands Field Center

Fossil, Oregon, Sunday August 3, 2008 2:00 PM

Groundbreaking Event

On August 3, 2008 at 2:00 PM, Senator Ron Wyden, D-Oregon, will break ground for the long awaited Paleo Lands Field Center in Fossil Oregon. The Field Center is the new home of the Oregon Paleo Lands Institute, a hub for hands-on natural history education, exploration, and ecotourism, in Oregon's spectacular John Day Fossil Beds region. It complements the National Park Service's new Thomas Condon Paleontology Center in Kimberly, whose focus is the Age of Mammals and fossil research.

The ceremony takes place at the southwest corner of 4th and Adams in Fossil, across from the historic Wheeler County Courthouse. Jeanne E. Burch, Wheeler Co Judge, and Richard N. Ross, President of the Oregon Paleo Lands Institute Board will assist Senator Wyden. A short reception hosted by Wheeler County and the Oregon Paleo Lands Institute follows immediately, in the Family Services Building across Adams St. from the site.

Starting at 1 PM, Senator Wyden is holding his annual Town Meeting in Wheeler County, also in the Family Services Building. The public is welcome to all parts of these events.

A Brilliant Beginning in Fossil

Senator Wyden helped secure a \$250,000 Congressional appropriation for this phase of the Field Center. The Institute aims to match and double this phase with more classrooms and exhibits. One planned exhibit is a metal sculpture of a Plesiosaur, a 100-million year old marine reptile, developed by Mitchell High School students.

Since 2006, the Institute has launched new Oregon Adventures education programs for all ages, assisted by a major \$180,000 grant from the Meyer Memorial Trust, and other generous grants and donors. This year Wheeler County granted the Paleo Lands Institute a 99-year lease for the Field Center site. The Institute has also opened a new Paleo Lands Bookstore and Travel Center at 680 Main St., Fossil 541-763-4420. It is developing a new Travel section of its website www.paleolands.org. The Field Center, Store, and Website all help travelers and residents explore and understand the Paleo Lands region.

Oregon Paleo Lands Institute, supported by Wheeler County and a coalition of 15 federal, state, and local partners, has worked since 2005 under an Oregon Solutions agreement, to develop a regional "Paleo Project". The Institute, with local communities and businesses, is building low-impact eco-tourism, as a new niche in the region's economy. The Oregonian hailed this as "A Brilliant Beginning in Fossil" (Editorial 11-18-07) The paper stated: "Using natural history as a springboard for eco-tourism and economic development is a brilliant strategy, deserving all the support Oregonians can muster. If we can give generously and visit often, the Institute will succeed and etch a unique place for itself in the Fossil record".

For More Information:

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Courtesy Bureau of Land Management

The Plesiosaur was a 25 ft long marine reptile. It hunted the shallow seas that covered Oregon 100 million years back. Found near Mitchell in 2004, this sea monster relative of the dinosaurs is the first of its kind found in Oregon. The geologic record of the John Day Basin, renowned for its complete record of the more recent Age of Mammals, also holds some of Oregon's oldest fossil residents and terrain, dating back 400 million years.