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WYOMING'S NEWEST MUSEUM BRINGS 500 MILLION YEARS OF HISTORY TO LIFE

Open to the public May 15, 2010

WORLAND, WY—MAY 5, 2010—The Big Horn Basin can finally show off its claims to international fame. The Basin, renowned worldwide as likely the best place on Earth to study the history of life on our planet, now features the new **Washakie (Wash-a-key) Museum and Cultural Center**. Opening May 15th, the Museum will delight visitors with its interactive and state-of-the-art exhibits. The 14 million-dollar facility creates an educational and cultural resource of major importance for northern Wyoming, and will appeal to families and schools in the area, along with tourists passing by on their way to Yellowstone.

MAKING SCIENCE & HISTORY FUN

The Museum's interactive galleries portray highlights of the Big Horn Basin's unparalleled scientific discoveries and human history. Exhibits include astonishing examples of the area's famous fossil finds—dinosaurs, early mammals and other prehistoric plants and animals; fun interactive games about fossil hunting; breath-taking custom photographic murals created by internationally famous, award-winning photographer, John Weller; custom produced HD videos, interactive dioramas depicting ice-age mammoth hunters; firearms from the old west; and much more!

STATE OF THE ART EXHIBITS AND BUILDING SPAN 26,000 SQ. FEET

ECOS Communications, based in Boulder, CO, spent nearly three years master planning, developing, designing, and producing over two million dollars of customized educational and interactive displays for Wyoming's newest cultural attraction. The project was designed by Billings, MT architects CTA and made possible with generous support from the Newell-Sargent Foundation.

About ECOS Communications: *Founded in 1991, this award winning planning and exhibit design firm is located in Boulder, Colorado. ECOS plans, designs, and creates innovative museums, nature centers, self-guided interpretive trails and tours for natural and cultural history institutions across the country and the globe.*

About Washakie Museum: *a non-profit community arts and cultural center in Worland, WY., founded in 1984. Located at 2200 Big Horn Avenue, Worland, WY 82401*

Hours: *May 15 through September 15, Monday—Friday, 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Saturday, 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Sunday, 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.*

Admission: *General Admission: \$8.00, Seniors (62 and over): \$7.00, Children (7-12): \$6.00, Children (6 and under): FREE*

The Museum is located 1.5 hours from the Cody/East entrance to Yellowstone.

For a press photos or additional information,
call ECOS Communications: 303-444-3767

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE WASHAKIE MUSEUM

A MISSING LINK—FINALLY COMING HOME

One of the most exciting and interesting fossils found in the Big Horn Basin is Deinonychus (die-NON-a-cuss), or “terrible claw” in Latin. Bones of this 150-pound, fiercely clawed, carnivore were discovered in the Big Horn Basin in 1960, by Dr. John Ostrom (**Ostrom’s discovery and subsequent study of this dinosaur led scientists to conclude dinosaurs are related to birds**). This prevailing scientific theory makes these 150 million-year-old fossils some of the most important ever to be found.

GLOBAL WARMING ALSO HAPPENED 55.8 MILLION YEARS AGO!

Long before humans, the Earth experienced a period of global warming similar to our own present-day climate change. And, **the best place on the planet to see evidence from this time is in the Big Horn Basin!** Visitors watch an eye-opening video to learn about this fascinating event, and the ways scientists are applying what they learn to global climate change today. Paleontologists and soil chemists work together to piece together what happened during this highly significant time known as the Paleocene-Eocene (PALE-e-o-scene-E-O-scene) Thermal Maximum, or “PETM”.

HOW WOULD YOU KILL A MAMMOTH 12,000 YEARS AGO?

Not far from the Museum is one of the most significant mammoth kill sites in North America. With seven mammoth skeletons, the site demonstrates that the earliest residents of the Big Horn Basin were skilled mammoth hunters, and they saved the meat for later use. It’s the oldest evidence of meat storage in North America, more than 12,000 years before refrigeration.

OLD WEST TALES FEATURE NEW TWIST

The exhibit called “The Last West” takes visitors on a journey through life in the old west, beginning in 1870s when the Basin “opened” for settlement. This dynamic gallery includes: giant photo murals; an HD video recreating a cattle baron’s prickly interaction with his cowboys; a snow-covered dead cow from the brutal winter of 1886-1887; an original sheep wagon outfitted for life on the range; a pair of sheep shears visitors can squeeze to see if they have the brawn of a Basin sheep shearer; a full-size, walk-in pioneer dugout home; and audio listening stations with excerpts from settlers’ journals bringing the story of the old west to life.

TOWN ON THE MOVE

The Big Horn Basin town of Worland pulled up its roots and moved from the west side to the east side of the Big Horn River to be close to the railroad when it was built. See artifacts and hear stories of the town’s leaders who helped bring the railroad—and prosperity—to the Big Horn Basin.

INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNIZED EXPERTS WERE GUEST CURATORS

ECOS Communications, and the Museum's curator, Robert Stottler, worked closely with the subject-matter specialists to develop the story. Guest Curators include:

UNIVERSITY of WYOMING ARCHAEOLOGISTS

Dr. George Frison and Dr. Marcel Kornfeld

SMITHSONIAN PALEOBOTANIST

Dr. Scott Wing

JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY PALEONTOLOGIST

Dr. Kenneth Rose

UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA PALEONTOLOGIST

Dr. Jonathan Bloch

NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY GEOCHEMIST

Francesca Smith McInerney

UNIVERSITY of CINCINNATI PALEONTOLOGIST

Dr. Glenn Storrs

DENVER MUSEUM of NATURE and SCIENCE, PALEONTOLOGY and GEOLOGY

LEAD CURATOR: Dr. Ian Miller, and CHIEF CURATOR/VICE PRESIDENT: Dr. Kirk Johnson

WYOMING STATE HISTORIAN and UNIVERSITY of WYOMING HISTORY PROFESSOR

Dr. Phil Roberts

LOCAL HISTORIAN

John W. Davis, Esq.

WASHAKIE MUSEUM FAST FACTS

- **Three spacious galleries:** The first is about paleontology, and includes custom videos, elaborate commissioned illustrations, and casts of fossil plants, mammals, and dinosaurs. The second is about archaeology, including the study of early humans and the mammoth meat and bones they left behind, a buffalo kill site, cliff art, and prehistoric cooking. The third is about the non-Native settlement of the Big Horn Basin: ranching, farming, and the sometimes violent struggles between settlers.
- **Colorful graphic panels,** including a visual depiction of every rock layer in the Big Horn Basin. A fun, interactive game where visitors pull out drawers to see original fossils and learn what types of things are found in different layers of the Earth's rock.
- **Amazing cast skeletal displays** of Diatryma (DIE-a-try-muh), a six-foot Eocene bird and Deinonychus (die-NON-a-cuss), a fierce meat-eating theropod from the Morrison formation, Carpolestes (car-PO-less-tease), a tiny creature, one of the earliest primates known anywhere on Earth, and a partial fossil display of Hyracotherium (Hi-RACK-o-thear-e-um), also known as Eohippus (E-o-HIP-us) or Dawn Horse, an ancestor of modern horses (all specimens were found in the Big Horn Basin).
- **Highly interactive multi-media** with video and audio components in every gallery.
- **An entertaining touch-screen interactive** that teaches visitors how to decode cattle brands or allows visitors to create their own brand using their initials and branding symbols. Visitors can then email their cattle brand to their home computer.
- **High-tech animation** showing how the geography of the Big Horn Basin formed.
- **High-definition video** of a "Cattle King" (wealthy cattle owner) speaks to visitors as if they are his cowboys just returned from a round-up.
- **Step-by-step video** showing how early humans made arrowheads.
- **Life-size, touchable, bronze interactive** of a Diacodexis (DIE-a-co-dex-us) skeleton cast from fossils found in the Big Horn Basin.
- **Centerpiece diorama & mural** of early humans hunting Columbian Mammoths.
- **Moving documentary** video of scientists who work in the area talking about why there is no place on Earth like The Big Horn Basin.

Photos available upon request

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