

OREGON PALEO LANDS CENTER

November 2023

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.

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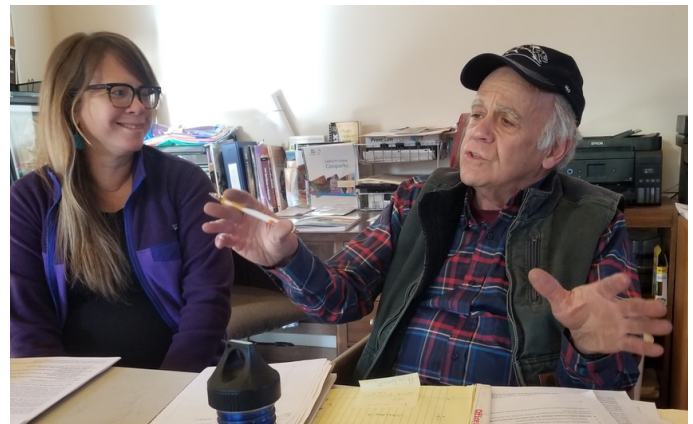
Richard Ross steps down from OPLI Board

The Oregon Paleo lands Institute's greatest steward stepped down from the Board at the end of September. Ross has held leadership roles since the inception of the Institute in 2007 serving most recently as the Treasurer. Ross decided that 15 years was enough time to guide the organization.

Ross who currently resides in Bend also has a home in Service Creek in the John Day Basin. His dedication to sharing and conserving the natural wonders of the Basin, began as an outdoor education teacher and is boundless.

Richard was on the leadership team that developed the first published bike tour guide in the County and was instrumental in securing the Oregon State Scenic Bikeway routes through Wheeler County. He has regularly assisted Wheeler County administrators in writing proposals to plan for improvements to roads and parks in the region.

Ross worked with Oregon State Parks in 2019 to write a new exhibit plan for the Oregon Paleo Lands Center and secured access to the States Camp Host program to recruit volunteers to staff the Center over the last 4 summers. Without support from these volunteers the Center would not have been open to the public.



"A River Flows Free" was Ross's latest contribution to share the history of the Basin. He secured an Oregon Cultural Heritage grant and led the effort to create an outstanding, 20 minute video that chronicled cultural and natural history on the John Day Basin including the last 10,000 years of human occupation.

Ross's contribution to the Paleo Lands Center can not be fully acknowledged, but I can say if not for his dedication to its mission and the Fossil Community, it would likely not exist today.

Thanks Richard. Look for the announcement of a community dinner in Fossil in January to acknowledge Richards contributions to the community.

Jeffrey Kee
President Oregon Paleo Lands Insitute

Fossil Site Receives Conditional Recognition as State Natural Heritage Site

The Oregon Parks and Recreation Commission recently granted conditional recognition of the public fossil collection site on School District land in Fossil. At the September meeting the organization acknowledged the heritage value of the area but placed the condition of creating an updated management plan for the site.

The Oregon Paleo Lands Institute (OPLI) and the Fossil School District have been working together to improve the visitor experience at the collection site. This conditional designation gives the School District 5 years to develop a management plan for the site and meet the State's criteria for inclusion in the Natural Heritage Registry.

This registry identifies Oregon's most important locations of natural heritage resources. There are over 100 sites on the registry currently in the State. Most sites have been recognized to protect a unique living plant or wildlife community. Sites currently registered include Cape Meares, Hart Mountain, Juniper Hills Preserve and Zumwalt Prairie. The full list is maintained by the Institute for Natural Resources on the website at inr.oregonstate.edu.



OPLI presented the case to the state that the fossil collection site, which has exposed an ancient plant assemblage, is an important part of Oregon's heritage. Fossils have been collected from the site for over 70 years. Visitors can collect 2 handfuls of fossils there for a small fee. Ancient sycamore, maple and sequoia leaves can be excavated and retained for personal collections. The geology is part of a 30 million year old lakebed and is part of the larger John Day Formation that covers 800 square miles in central and eastern Oregon.

State and federal law require that only plant material or invertebrates (insects) may be taken without a permit. Any fossilized bones are supposed to left in place and the authorities notified. Recent support from the Oregon Department of Geology and Mineral Industries (DOGAMI) is providing an email address for visitors to share their finds and get information on the species excavated. dogami-info@dogami.oregon.gov. A more systematic access and inventory program is being developed. Eventually the site will provide scientists, researchers and students better knowledge of the site, the formation and ancient communities. Formal inclusion into the registry will require a written plan that addresses safety, access, waste management and restoration of disturbed areas.

OPLI is recruiting community members to assist in developing new systems for the site. Contact the Paleo Lands Center if you are interested in joining the effort.

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Oregon Paleo Lands Center Needs You!

You can support the Oregon Paleo Lands Center in a variety of ways. Your financial support now in 2023 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.