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**San Diego Natural History Museum Presents
West Coast Premiere of *Water: H₂O = Life*
Exhibition Explores Earth's Precious and Vulnerable Resource**

San Diego; April 7, 2008—Beginning July 19, 2008, visitors to the San Diego Natural History Museum will explore the culture, history, and future of water—the essential ingredient in life—in a captivating new exhibition entitled *Water: H₂O = Life*. The exhibition runs through November 30, 2008 and is the exhibition's only West Coast venue. A special section of the exhibition devoted exclusively to southern California's water issues will be on display at the Museum for at least two years. That section, titled *Water: A California Story*, was designed and developed by the Museum.

Water affects the lives of every creature and plant on Earth. Every language has a word for water, and this ubiquitous yet precious substance influences art and cultures around the globe. And even though two-thirds of the Earth's surface is covered by water, only three percent of it is fresh water. Out of that three percent, only a small fraction is usable water to sustain life on Earth—much of the Earth's fresh water is either ice or underground.

Water: H₂O = Life is curated by Dr. Exequiel Ezcurra, provost and director of the Museum's scientific research division, the Biodiversity Research Center of the Californias. "We are part of a complex ecosystem," says Dr. Ezcurra, "and we need to remember that water is a service provided by nature. Just like any other species, we cannot survive without water. However, in order to have water in the future, we need to change how we use water now."

The exhibition is organized by the American Museum of Natural History and the Science Museum of Minnesota, in collaboration with the San Diego Natural History Museum, Great Lakes Science Center, The Field Museum, Instituto Sangari (São Paulo, Brazil), National Museum of Australia, Royal Ontario Museum, and Singapore Science Centre with PUB Singapore.

In *Water: H₂O = Life*, visitors will be astonished by the power and natural beauty of water, and will also be exposed to the serious issues that our planet faces with regard to water conservation and worldwide availability. Today, more than a billion people still cannot get enough safe drinking

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water to keep them healthy. Global climate change intensifies as fossil fuels are burned to transport water to cities that don't have their own water source. Locally, recent legislation restricting southern California's access to water from the Delta and multi-state renegotiations for water from the Colorado River illustrates the fragility of water systems in the US.

The Exhibition

Using innovative technology, hands-on activities, live animals, and captivating imagery, the exhibition allows visitors to explore water in its many forms and uses. The physical characteristics and nature's use of water are examined; for example, on display will be a piece of 3.8-billion-year-old Isua schist (medium-grade metamorphic rock found in present-day Greenland) that illustrates the story of water's origin and age on Earth. Also, visitors can see the history of the relationship between humans and water throughout time with examples such as a section of nearly 1500-year-old water pipe from Oaxaca, Mexico, that helps tell the history of irrigated agriculture in arid parts of Mesoamerica.

Water: A California Story

In southern California, most of the water—about 85%—is imported from either the Colorado River or northern California. Since recent drought conditions have affected the water supply from the Colorado River, and because San Diego is in the driest two-year period since yearly rainfall began being recorded in 1801, the issue of water conservation and infrastructure is at the forefront of many people's minds.

To connect the issue of global water supply with the day-to-day life in southern California, the San Diego Natural History Museum will create a 2800-square-foot regional water exhibit called ***Water: A California Story*** that will remain on view for at least two years in the Museum's Discovery Room. The exhibition will present the subject of water in the region within the overarching theme that we are part of an ecosystem defined by an arid climate. Photos, maps, video, and activities will show that water, while it may seem abundant, shouldn't be taken for granted. Natural history specimens and live animals will serve as reminders that the natural environment and its inhabitants are also legitimate users of water resources.

"The exhibition will address where our water comes from, how we use it, and where it goes after we use it," says Jim Stone, Vice President of Public Programs. Using water as an organizing principle, the exhibition will also link with issues on land (increasing wildfires due to prolonged drought) and in the ocean (urban run-off, ocean pollution, and overfishing). ***Water: A California Story*** will serve to engage visitors of all ages in thought and communication about how water affects us and how we affect water in return.

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Celebrating its 134th year, the San Diego Natural History Museum is the second oldest scientific institution in California; third west of the Mississippi. A binational Museum, its mission is to interpret the natural world through research, education, and exhibits; to promote understanding of the evolution and diversity of southern California and the peninsula of Baja California and to inspire in all a respect for nature and the environment. Located in Balboa Park at the intersection of Village Place and Park Blvd., the Museum is open daily except for Thanksgiving and Christmas. Phone: 619.232.3821. Website: www.sdnhm.org.