



MEDIA RELEASE

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**San Diego Natural History Museum Wins Excellence
Award for Exhibition *Earth, Wind & WILDFIRE*
from the Western Museums Association**

San Diego, CA: September 30, 2005—The San Diego Natural History Museum has received the 2005 Charles Redd Center for Western Studies/WMA Award for Exhibition Excellence for the exhibition *Earth, Wind & WILDFIRE*. The award was given by the Board of Directors of The Western Museums Association (WMA).

Earth, Wind & WILDFIRE was selected because of its excellence in furthering the study and understanding of the American West. Reviewer comments included: "Out of the blackened landscape, enlightenment, and hope... A remarkable gathering of museum resources as well as good interactives in exhibit." This is the second Charles Redd award for an exhibition created by the Museum. *Plant Portraits: The California Legacy of A.R. Valentien* also won the Charles Redd award in 2004, being recognized for high quality, thoughtful presentation and educational components of the exhibition.

Nancy Owens Renner, co-curator, lead exhibit developer and writer, accepted the award at the WMA Annual Meeting on Thursday, September 29, 2005, at the Westin Hotel in Pasadena, CA. The exhibitions' co-curators Anne Fege, Ph.D., and Renner were also featured speakers at the Curators/Exhibit Designers/Educator's Luncheon on Friday, September 30, 2005.

Earth, Wind & WILDFIRE represents a collaborative community response to the immense wildfires in southern California from October 25–31, 2003. In the midst of this intense shared experience, the San Diego Natural History Museum saw a tremendous opportunity for learning, collaboration, and community-building. With assistance from scientists, artists, anthropologists, educators and volunteers, the Museum created this interactive exhibition focused on southern California, with these driving questions: How can nature, fire and people coexist? Why should they coexist?

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Of critical importance was the Museum's relationship with the San Diego Fire Recovery Network which was formed and held meetings at the Museum, starting from less than a week after the wildfires began. This open network has representation from more than 100 scientific and community organizations and public agencies working together to foster the recovery of the human and natural environment through sound science, public education, and land and community restoration. The Museum's decision to produce *Earth, Wind & WILDFIRE* was greatly influenced by the engagement of these professionals in wildfire recovery issues and the immense impact that the wildfires had on the landscapes, communities and politics of San Diego.

The Museum exhibition team for *Earth, Wind & WILDFIRE* includes: Tim Murray, project manager and video editor; Michael Field, exhibition designer and photographer; Duke Windsor, lead exhibition fabricator; Jim Melli, artist, procurement and preparations of exhibition components; Doug Jewell, assistant exhibition developer and fabricator; Mary Lou Morreal, art direction, graphic design and production; Nancy Owens Renner, lead exhibition developer and writer; and Anne Fege, curator. The entire team worked on the installation.

The Western Museums Association (WMA) competition recognizes outstanding achievement of a temporary exhibition from all types of museums as defined by the American Association of Museums, without regard to geographical location, size, budget, discipline or age. The exhibition must have as its principal subject some aspect of the American West, defined as that area west of the Rocky Mountains, including Alaska and Hawaii. General subjects include, but are not limited to: the arts and humanities, social/historical studies, ethnic/native studies, and natural/ecological studies.

Exhibitions are judged using the exhibition standards adopted in 1997 by the Standing Professional Committees Council of the American Association of Museums, "Standards for Museum Exhibitions and Indicators of Excellence."

Included in the *Earth, Wind & WILDFIRE* experience is the Emmy-award-winning video for "Best Photography" *Fragile Web; San Diego's MSCP*, which also won the STAR award for "Best Documentary, Social." *Earth, Wind & WILDFIRE* will be on display at the Museum through summer 2006. Curator tours of *Earth, Wind & WILDFIRE* are available on a limited basis for adults, high school and college-level students during weekdays. For more information and to arrange for a tour, interested readers should call 619.255.0210.

Earth, Wind & WILDFIRE is sponsored by SDG&E with support from State Farm Insurance, the San Diego County Board of Supervisors Greg Cox, Ron Roberts and Pam Slater-Price. Media sponsors are: *The San Diego Union-Tribune* (photography); KGTV 10News (on-air support and video production); KOGO AM600 (on-air support).

The San Diego Natural History Museum is open daily from 10 AM to 5 PM. Visitors see all exhibitions and giant-screen films for one, all-inclusive admission price of \$9 for adults, \$6 for seniors, active military/spouses and college students, and \$5 for children between the ages of 3 and 17. Phone: 619.232.2821; website www.sdnhm.org.

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