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SAN DIEGO NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM RECEIVES \$200,000 GRANT FROM THE LEGLER BENBOUGH FOUNDATION

GIFT WILL COVER A MAJOR EDUCATIONAL COMPONENT OF MUSEUM'S
NEW PERMANENT EXHIBITION *FOSSIL MYSTERIES*

San Diego, CA: December 1, 2005—The San Diego Natural History Museum has received a \$200,000 grant commitment from the Legler Benbough Foundation to support a major educational component of the Museum's new permanent exhibition *Fossil Mysteries*, scheduled to open in July 2006.

“The Legler Benbough Foundation's support of *Fossil Mysteries* will greatly strengthen K–12 science education and expand the availability of high-quality science education materials and programming in the San Diego region, benefiting millions of people over the next 20 years,” said Executive Director Dr. Mick Hager.

In recognition of the Foundation's generous partnership, the Museum will commemorate the Foundation by naming a major component of *Fossil Mysteries*—the OmniGlobe—in memory of Mr. Benbough. The eight-foot-tall OmniGlobe globe depicts 600 million years of seismic and plate tectonic dynamics that created the landforms of Southern California and the Baja California peninsula.

The OmniGlobe has an 80" spherical display screen that provides a 360° viewing access, giving visitors an interactive, three-dimensional illustration of both regional and global phenomena, which includes meteorological data, the geologic and oceanographic history of California, distribution of biodiversity around the world, and geo-political maps. The OmniGlobe's high degree of interactivity provides the engaging, hands-on experience visitors requested in focus groups conducted by the Museum.

“The OmniGlobe serves as the entry point to the larger *Fossil Mysteries* exhibition, providing visitors with a knowledge base to understand how geologic changes set the stage for the subsequent development of Southern California's incredible biological diversity,” explains Dr. Hager.

Designed by the exhibition staff of the San Diego Natural History Museum, *Fossil Mysteries* is the Museum's first new permanent exhibition. Exploring a 75-million-year time period, from the age of dinosaurs to the Ice Ages, visitors will experience an unfolding of the prehistory of southern California and the peninsula of Baja California, Mexico. Filling 9700 sq. ft. of space in the Museum's new wing and original building, the exhibition showcases abundant regional fossils and rocks, modern plants and animals for comparison, recreation of rock strata, and visualizations of scientific data. Dr. Hager noted that *Fossil Mysteries* will provide a new kind of museum experience with nothing else, content-wise, like it anywhere else in the world.

In 1988 the Legler Benbough Foundation funded the planning and conceptualization of a seismic display in the Museum's original 1933, 60,000-square-foot facility. Surveys recently conducted by Museum staff showed that geology and climate rank at the top of the two concepts that the public is the most interested in, yet the least confident in explaining to someone else. The OmniGlobe illustrates both concepts in an easily understood and visually compelling manner. "This exhibition will be a wonderful vehicle for helping citizens of California understand the special role of tectonics in forming the dramatic landscapes and natural challenges of this unique state," commented Dr. Hager.

To develop the exhibition, the Museum was awarded a \$2.8 million grant from the first round of California Cultural and Historical Endowment awards (CCHE funds come from Prop. 40) and a \$2 million grant from the National Science Foundation, with \$1.1 million additional funding required from private sources.

About Legler Benbough

Legler Benbough was a man of diverse interests and talents. A native San Diegan, for many decades as a businessman, civic leader, philanthropist and rancher, he helped shape this city.

He was born at the family home on 10th and C. His father was a pioneering businessman who established the Benbough Mortuary and served as San Diego's mayor from 1935 until his death in 1945. His mother, a gracious and talented lady, was involved in a variety of community activities, many of which benefited from her philanthropy. Mr. Benbough succeeded his father in his mortuary business and developed a number of other successful ventures. Over time, he expanded his business to become owner of the largest group of mortuaries in the United States.

In the early 1940s, Mr. Benbough settled in Rancho Santa Fe. For many years his home, furnished with distinctive antiques, was a popular gathering place for San Diego charitable and social events.

With no direct heirs, Mr. Benbough made a decision in 1985 to establish a charitable foundation that would perpetuate his interest in helping improve the quality of life for the people of San Diego. The Legler Benbough Foundation was initially funded with assets

from his business activities. In 1987, Mr. Benbough sold his ranch and contributed the sale proceeds to the Foundation. Following his death in 1998, the bulk of his estate passed to the Foundation.

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