

Mammoth Tusk Fossil Section Found on MTA Property

- **Discovery of 10,000 to 70,000 year-old tusk section donated to the Museum of Natural History of Los Angeles County**

Paleontologists on MTA property have unearthed a small section of a Mammoth tusk approximately 10,000 to 70,000 years old. MTA has donated the fossil, which is believed to date to the late Pleistocene era, to the Museum of Natural History of Los Angeles County for study and preservation.

The fossil was found earlier this month in West Los Angeles. To protect fossil sites from trespassing and vandalism, MTA does not release the exact location of its discoveries.

The fossil provides additional information about where the Mammoths lived and the extent of their range in the area.

"Any fossil found in Los Angeles County is going to provide a significant amount of new information to science," said museum paleontologist Howell Thomas. "Even though we know Mammoths lived in the area, we don't know the extent of their range, either geologically or geographically. This find gives us another point on the map."

MTA has long been dedicated to fossil preservation. The agency has worked with the museum in preserving artifacts discovered in Chinatown and North Hollywood during Metro Red Line construction. Construction workers helped paleontologists collect scores of these fossils and artifacts found within the subway tunnels. Items recovered include seven million year-old sea life fossils, 46,000 year-old incense tree fossils, and thousands of artifacts such as tooth brushes, bottles, bowls and spoons from the first Chinatown from 1880 to 1933.

"MTA has a long history of working with the museum to preserve Los Angeles' legacy," said Steve Brye, transportation planning manager at MTA. "We have been actively involved in doing the right thing in making sure fossils are preserved for posterity. It's something MTA really believes in."

All of MTA's construction projects include mitigation measures for paleontology and archeology to protect fossils and other artifacts where possible. The agency will even halt construction until all discoveries are safely removed, often going above and beyond what is required by law. Discoveries are often donated to museums for research and display.

"I wish everyone who finds a fossil would work as hard as the MTA did to make sure the fossil was collected and preserved correctly," Thomas said.



PHOTO BY DAVE SOTERO

Paleontologists prepare fossil segment for removal and transport to the Museum of Natural History in Los Angeles.

John Alderman, a local resident and retired geologist, discovered the fossil.

MTA has created a Web site that highlights the fossils it has helped preserve. The site, called "Los Angeles Underground," is available on the MTA Web site under Other MTA Information, Los Angeles Underground.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Digital photos of the Mammoth fossil excavation are available. Contact MTA Media Relations at (213) 922-2700.

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