

# Workers find prehistoric bones in Prineville

Tusk, cranium and other bones are believed to be those of a mammoth or mastodon

By **MICHAEL KOHN**  
*EO Media Group*

BEND — The tusk poking out of the earth looked distinctly out of place in the gravel seam where Reid Comstock was maneuvering his excavation digger last March.

“Something looked a little funny in the ground,” said Comstock, an employee of Knife River Corp., a construction materials supplier that specializes in rock, sand, asphalt and concrete. “I grabbed a couple of guys to see what we had discovered.”

What Comstock found in the 15-foot deep pit near Prineville was the tusk, cranium and other bones belonging to a prehistoric mammoth or mastodon. After relaying news of the find to his three daughters, the family called it “Peaches” after one of the young mammoths in the animated movie “Ice Age.”

Mammoths and mastodons survived on the American mainland until about 10,000 years ago. Scientists do not have a

definitive reason for their extinction, although climatic changes and hunting by prehistoric people are believed to be the two most critical factors.

“I have been doing this work my whole life, and you always believe you might find something. It’s just a once in a lifetime opportunity,” said the 45-year-old Comstock, an operator of heavy digging equipment since the age of 12.

Knife River contacted Craig Woodward, the owner of the sand and gravel field, to report the find.

“It was (Woodward’s) mammoth, and we wanted him to be able to see it as it was found. He was very impressed,” said Tony Spilde, director of communications for Knife River.

Woodward, a graduate of Eastern Oregon University, contacted his alma mater to assist in the recovery of the specimen. The 72-year-old died just a month after the discovery of the site. Shortly afterward, university faculty visited the area and agreed to conduct an excavation of the partially



Eastern Oregon University Photo  
**Eastern Oregon University microbiology professor Joe Corsini, left, shared his paleontology expertise, assisting anthropology professors Rory Becker and Linda Reed-Jerofke in leading a dig of a prehistoric mammoth or mastodon in mid-October near Prineville.**

fossilized bones at a later date. Faculty and students returned in the fall to perform the dig.

“It would have been great if he could have watched the faculty and students from EOU — they were true professionals, and it was great to work with them,” Spilde said.

Following the discovery, the specimen was reburied by the construction workers. Knife River declined to provide a specific location as the site is owned by the Woodward family, and the company wants to prevent people from making

intact, but the tusks in general are in poor condition, said Becker, adding the animal was probably a juvenile, based on the structure of the long bones.

Becker, who in recent years has been part of teams that studied Neanderthal cave sites in Croatia, said it’s not clear why the majority of the bones went missing. Further analysis of the bones and the sediment around them could provide answers, he said.

Other questions, such as what killed the animal and how many years ago it lived, are yet to be determined. Becker believes the research could last three to five years.

The team will try to determine if the animal was a mammoth or a mastodon — the two are distinct animals but remains of both have been found in North America.

Mastodons were shorter and stockier than mammoths, with shorter tusks. Scientists pay particular attention to the teeth — mammoth molars had flat surfaces designed for chewing grass while mastodon molars have pointed cones adapted for munching on leaves, twigs and branches.

Peaches’ mandible and teeth are covered with sediment. The next stage of project will reveal that part of the specimen.

The remains of the animal are expected to go on public view upon completion of the research. No official name has been given yet to the specimen, but Becker said “The Woodward Mammoth” is being considered.

In addition to the science that can be learned from the find, Becker said the project served as an outstanding, real-world project for students, and one that may help a few decide on a career path.

“As is generally the case with doing fieldwork for the first time, some folks really take to it, and for others, once is probably enough,” said Becker, adding the experience could help students make education and career choices.

The partial skeleton is so far the only such specimen discovered at Woodward’s gravel site. Comstock, the excavator who dug up the bones, believes there could be more.

“We have a lot more digging out there so who knows what we’ll find next,” he said. “You never know what the next scoop of the digger will give you.”

Forecast for Pendleton Area

TODAY

Sun and some clouds

SUNDAY

Mostly cloudy

MONDAY

Sunshine and patchy clouds

TUESDAY

Cloudy, a shower in the p.m.

WEDNESDAY

Times of clouds and sun

PENDLETON TEMPERATURE FORECAST

|     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 55° | 42° | 56° | 33° | 48° | 32° | 50° | 35° | 55° | 32° |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|

HERMISTON TEMPERATURE FORECAST

|     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 52° | 35° | 57° | 33° | 49° | 29° | 50° | 32° | 53° | 32° |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|

AccuWeather

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OREGON FORECAST

Shown is today's weather. Temperatures are today's highs and tonight's lows.

ALMANAC

PENDLETON through 3 p.m. yest.

|           |            |            |
|-----------|------------|------------|
| TEMP.     | HIGH       | LOW        |
| Yesterday | 53°        | 26°        |
| Normals   | 53°        | 35°        |
| Records   | 68° (1995) | 20° (1936) |

PRECIPITATION

|                        |        |
|------------------------|--------|
| 24 hours ending 3 p.m. | 0.00"  |
| Month to date          | 0.00"  |
| Normal month to date   | 0.32"  |
| Year to date           | 11.31" |
| Last year to date      | 8.25"  |
| Normal year to date    | 10.31" |

HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.

|           |            |            |
|-----------|------------|------------|
| TEMP.     | HIGH       | LOW        |
| Yesterday | 50°        | 23°        |
| Normals   | 54°        | 34°        |
| Records   | 71° (1978) | 11° (1936) |

PRECIPITATION

|                        |       |
|------------------------|-------|
| 24 hours ending 3 p.m. | 0.00" |
| Month to date          | 0.00" |
| Normal month to date   | 0.29" |
| Year to date           | 4.94" |
| Last year to date      | 6.46" |
| Normal year to date    | 7.57" |

WINDS (in mph)

|                   |        |
|-------------------|--------|
| Today             | Sun.   |
| Boardman E 3-6    | NE 4-8 |
| Pendleton WSW 4-8 | NW 4-8 |

SUN AND MOON

|                |           |
|----------------|-----------|
| Sunrise today  | 6:46 a.m. |
| Sunset tonight | 4:32 p.m. |
| Moonrise today | 3:44 p.m. |
| Moonset today  | 3:32 a.m. |

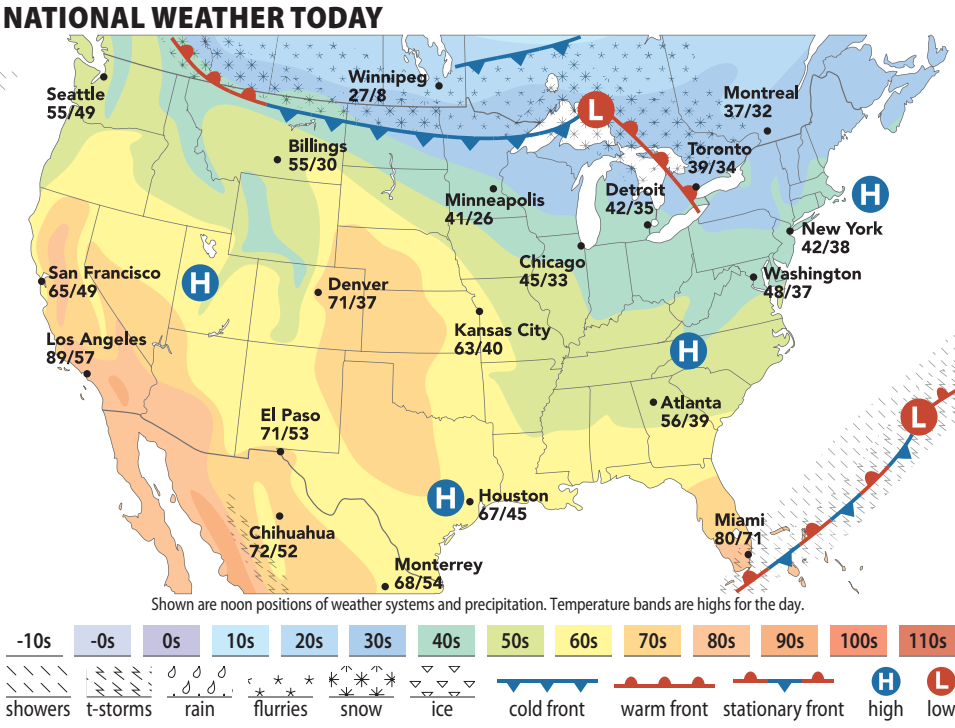
Full Last New First

Nov 12 Nov 19 Nov 26 Dec 3

NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)

High 95° in Thermal, Calif. Low -8° in Black River Falls, Wis.



## Bend to remove billboard some found offensive

By **EMILY CURETON**  
*Oregon Public Broadcasting*

BEND — Days after putting up a billboard, the city of Bend agreed to take it down. City officials chose the image to advertise an online survey about transportation priorities, but some people got a very different message.

The billboard shows a covered wagon drawn by a white horse.

“Traveling East to West still tough?” it asks — a reference to white settlers moving into the American West.

At this week’s city council meeting, several people showed up to explain why they found the imagery offensive.

Sareli Beltrán said ad campaigns like this one “remind communities like mine of how naive, ignorant, and oblivious the dominant culture of this city remains. And how equity is just a performance in government spaces.”

“The fact that November is Native American history month makes this campaign theme more charged,” Beltrán added.

Joanne Mina told the council: “When we tell a history that is incomplete, we are lying to ourselves.”

Mina used her 90 seconds at the podium, the time allowed for each public commenter, to drop a brief, but dense history of how 19th

### Air quality advisory over smoky conditions extended

PORTLAND — The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality says smoky skies and stagnant air are expected to hang around Oregon and Southwest Washington for another week.

The *Oregonian*/Oregon Live reported the agency initially issued an air quality advisory Monday, but on Wednesday extended the warning. The agency now expects the air quality advisory to be in effect until at least Nov. 12.

Stagnant air conditions are trapping smoke and other contaminants near the ground where people breathe. Several county and local health agencies have issued burning restrictions.

DEQ asked people to follow burn restrictions in their areas and avoid unnecessary outdoor activity, especially those with lung or heart problems and young children.

**Washington apple crop one of largest in history**

YAKIMA, Wash. — This year’s Washington apple crop is one of the largest in history. The Washington State Tree Fruit Association estimates the crop at 138.2 million 40-pound boxes.

The *Yakima Herald-Republic* reports that figure is well above the 116.7 million boxes harvested a year ago. But this year’s crop is smaller than the record 141.8 million

boxes of 2014.

The association says the harvest is nearly complete statewide. The crop estimate only includes apples expected to be sold fresh, rather than sent to a processor for conversion into juice or applesauce.

Gala was the top variety, making up 23.5% of the overall Washington crop. Red Delicious was No. 2 at 19.7%.

**Jury: Man guilty of murder in stabbing death of roommate**

PORTLAND — A Clackamas County jury has found a man guilty of murder in the stabbing death of his roommate at a Milwaukie residence for people overcoming substance abuse addiction.

The *Oregonian*/OregonLive reported the case against Dean Boettcher relied on witness accounts, DNA evidence on the murder weapon and his own statements about the death of Matthew Timmons. Timmons was fatally attacked Oct. 18, 2016.

Authorities say Timmons was stabbed 19 times.

Jurors reached a verdict after one hour and 45 minutes. The trial began Oct. 22 in Clackamas County Circuit Court.

Boettcher’s motive was not clear; witnesses said he was upset about a variety of mundane things before Timmons was stabbed.

His attorney, Ronald Gray, did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

— *Associated Press*

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