

For Immediate Release:
July 6, 2007

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CHINESE SEA CREATURE SCULPTURE PROJECT PROPOSED FOR BLM'S YAQUINA HEAD OUTSTANDING NATURAL AREA

Newport, OR – The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Salem District has received a proposal to create the first Han Dynasty style stone carvings in the United States at BLM's Yaquina Head Outstanding Natural Area in Newport. Professor Hong Shiqing, one of China's most famous artists, would provide the artistic creation and guidance for the work. Professor Hong resides in Hangzhou, China and is regarded as a Chinese art treasure with tremendous artistic diversity. In addition to his sculpture, he is regarded as the preeminent Chinese authority on Han and Qin Dynasty stone sculpture. He is an official Panda Artist, having been commissioned to live with panda bears for purposes of painting them. He is a highly regarded calligrapher, carving his own wood chops. He is also a master of the ancient one finger Chinese water color painting.

Earlier in his life, Professor Hong was commissioned to carve Han Dynasty style sea creature sculptures on Dalu Island, a previously deserted island on China's sea coast creating the basis of a cultural tourist attraction. Sometimes called "earth art" Han Dynasty carving style utilizes very simple lines to suggest essential features of creatures found in nature.

Mr. Al King, in partnership with USA Pacific LLC Management Group is responsible for conceiving this project and for bringing Prof. Hong to the Oregon Coast. "When I first brought Professor Hong to Yaquina Head, he became very enthusiastic about the possibility of working in the area" said King. Project management would be the responsibility of USA Pacific LLC and the Oregon Coast Council for the Arts. The Bureau of Land Management would provide oversight and retain ultimate control over allowable activities, safety concerns, and the timing and scope of work done on the project. While Professor Hong and his representatives would be given a certain amount of freedom to create his sculptures, the BLM would have final say in the designs of the sculptures. This is to assure that what is created is in concert with the objectives and primary marine and tidepool ecosystem interpretive themes of Yaquina Head. It is anticipated that the majority of the work would be accomplished during good weather months in 2008.

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The sculpture work is proposed to take place in what was once an abandoned commercial rock quarry called Quarry Cove. In 1994, the BLM constructed the first ever handicapped accessible tide pool area. This area has not developed the tidepools that were originally envisioned. Although Quarry Cove provides handicap access, parking, rest room facilities, gated access, and informative, illustrated signage, it is under utilized.

The project is expected to be funded through a variety of grants and charitable donations. Oregon Coast Council for the Arts (OCCA), a nonprofit organization based in Newport, has agreed to partner with BLM. OCCA would provide program coordination to supervise different aspects of the project as well as seek grant funding from both regional and national foundations. "Local artisans are becoming excited about the possibility of providing valuable assistance to BLM managers and park staff in planning and monitoring the implementation of the sculptures," said OCCA Development Consultant Frank Geltner. Over time there is likely to be a need for some oversight and maintenance of the project and local artisans would be excellent artistic advisors to BLM managers," said Geltner.

The Han Dynasty style sea creature sculptures will contribute in a meaningful way to cultural exchange between Oregon and China and will likely be an important attraction to many Americans, especially those of Chinese descent. "Cultural exchanges through projects such as these, lead to greater friendship and exchange in many ways and ultimately contribute to greater economic cooperation and prosperity to both Oregon and China," said King. It is likely that Oregon dignitaries visiting China will point to this example of cultural sharing during future trade delegations.

In the coming months, the BLM will prepare an environmental assessment outlining the social and environmental impacts of the proposal. It is expected the artist would only carve rocks that have previously been impacted by gravel mining and human activities. The rocks in Quarry Cove have recently been inspected for hardness and found to be acceptable for carving. Similar to his work on Dalu Island, the proposed carvings would represent local sea creatures. The public will be given the opportunity to submit formal comments to the BLM on the project.

The Oregon Coast is a scenic and environmental United States treasure. Work on the sculptures would represent and enhance this resource and contribute to the appreciation of the Oregon Coast and awareness of its wildlife. It is anticipated these sculptures would encourage visitors to the Yaquina Head Outstanding Natural Area to explore the Quarry Cove area.

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For more information about these and other activities at Yaquina Head, contact the BLM at 541-574-3100 (8AM - 4PM daily), or visit Yaquina Head's web site at www.blm.gov/or/resources/recreation/yaquina/index.htm.

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