

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

RS19691

Title 33, Chapter 30, Section 33-3012 creates a state museum of natural history to be known as the Idaho Museum of Natural History (IMNH). IMNH is charged with protecting paleontological resources and maximizing the value of those resources for research, education and tourism. IMNH has two highly qualified paleontologists currently on staff.

A problem exists because another section of code, Title 67, Chapter 41, Sections 67-4119, 67-4120, 67-4121, and 67-4122, makes reference to vertebrate paleontological sites, resources, and deposits. This section of code was enacted in 1963, prior to the creation of IMNH, when it seemed appropriate to place historic, archaeological, and paleontological resources within the scope of the Idaho State Historical Society.

It is now clear that any excavation on or near a vertebrate paleontological site should be permitted and regulated under a qualified professional with appropriate training, education, and resources. These resources only briefly overlap human history in Idaho, and their care, study, and interpretation are outside the purview of the Idaho State Historical Society.

To date, the existing language has only been a minor problem. However, it is anticipated that with stimulus-driven increases in energy corridor activity across much of the state, permits for excavation of vertebrate paleontological deposits on State land will become more common. The proposed legislation makes changes to the code to clarify and assign that responsibility to the Idaho Museum of Natural History.

FISCAL NOTE

IMNH has determined that fees collected for issuing permits will cover any additional future expense. Therefore, there is no impact to the general fund of the state.

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