

National Forests in Alabama

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For Immediate Release

40 MILLION YEAR OLD MANATEE FOSSIL DISCOVERED IN THE CONECUH NATIONAL FOREST

(Montgomery, Al) June 20, 2006--- The USDA Forest Service with assistance from numerous scientists is recovering the remains of a 40 million year old manatee that was recently discovered in the Conecuh National Forest in Andalusia, Alabama. According to Miera Crawford, acting forest supervisor for the National Forests in Alabama, the Forest Service is collaborating with paleontologists from the McWane Center in Birmingham and students from Auburn University to adequately collect and preserve the fossil that will be used for science and public education. A full excavation of the fossil is taking place this week on the Conecuh Ranger District.

A preliminary investigation has resulted in the collection of rib and vertebra fragments of the approximately 40 million year old mammal. “It’s very important that everybody work together while the Forest Service goes through the examination process with scientists to study and protect this valuable resource,” said Crawford. Forest Service specialists are assessing the area to ensure other resources will not be impacted during the recovery of the fossil.

The discovery of this fossil was made by Jimmy Stiles, a herpetologist at Auburn University, who reported his findings to the local Forest Service district office in Andalusia. Conecuh District Ranger Steve Lee said, “This is a wonderful example of how citizens can help us leave a legacy for present and future generations.”

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The Forest Service is dedicated to the protection and management of paleontological (fossil) resources. Regulations are in place that prohibits anyone from removing fossils from the national forest. Fossils are unique resources that provide a better understanding of prehistoric life. Anyone who makes a fossil discovery on a national forest should make sure of its location and report it promptly to the nearest Forest Service office.