

NEWS RELEASE: May 5, 2009

### **Ribbon-cutting ceremony for Riverbluff Cave Field House Annex today**

The Greene County Commission, in conjunction with the Missouri Institute of Natural Science, is hosting a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Riverbluff Cave Field House Annex at 2 p.m. today, May 5, at 2327 W. Farm Road 190, Springfield.

The 2,500-square foot building provides additional space for accommodating groups who are studying Riverbluff Cave and the thousands of ice age-era fossils and specimens found within it.

Matt Forir, Executive Director of the Missouri Institute of Natural Science and an environmental specialist with Greene County, said the annex makes learning about Riverbluff Cave, and studying fossils found within it, more accessible to school groups, scientists and the general public.

“This new building serves the community better,” said Forir. “We’re be able to accommodate bigger groups of people who come to study fossils, use our equipment and do research on Riverbluff Cave.”

The \$168,000 project was funded entirely through a grant from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, secured in 2006 with the assistance of Sen. Jim Talent. The building was designed by Butler Rosenbury & Partners, Inc., and built by Lacey Bros. Commercial Construction, Inc. Ground was broken in June, 2008.

Riverbluff Cave is the oldest fossil cave in North America, dating to the Pleistocene epoch, when glaciers covered most of North America. The oldest specimens found in the cave have been dated as 1.1 million years old. The cave remained untouched by humans and animals for 55,000 years before it was discovered the morning of Sept. 11, 2001, while Greene County was blasting a path for a new road south of Springfield. The cave contains snake skeletons, fossilized turtle shells, numerous small rodent tracks and skeletons, peccary (a type of ice age-era pig) tracks, and numerous bear and large cat claw marks. In order to protect the pristine condition of the cave from outside air and intruders, Greene County sealed the entrance with an airtight passageway system soon after its discovery. Because of its extremely delicate nature, Riverbluff Cave is not physically open to the public, but visitors may view fossils and other specimens in the Riverbluff Cave Field House, built in 2005, and now the Field House Annex.

For more information, call Matt Forir, Executive Director of the Missouri Institute of Natural Science and environmental specialist with Greene County, at 883-0594, or Jenny Fillmer Edwards, Greene County Public Information Officer, at 829-6019 or 379-5713, or visit [www.riverbluffcave.com](http://www.riverbluffcave.com).

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