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**Contact:** Shell Amega | samega@cscmail.org  
Paula Wagner | pwagner@cscmail.org  
or Kristina Kurasz | kkurasz@cscmail.org  
(213) 744-7446 | www.californiasciencecenter.org

## **California Science Center Opens New Ecosystems Experience** New Permanent Exhibition Wing Features Innovative Exhibits Combined with Live Habitats

**Los Angeles** -- The California Science Center will unveil a new permanent exhibition wing, Ecosystems, at a ribbon-cutting ceremony on March 25, 2010. The major expansion nearly doubles the amount of exhibition space at the Science Center and features an unprecedented blend of live plants and animals, and hands-on science exhibits in 11 immersive environments – unique among science centers in the United States. From walking through a living kelp forest to experimenting on a polar ice wall, explorers will investigate some of the Earth's most fascinating ecosystems. Highlights include a 188,000-gallon kelp tank populated with more than 1,500 live fish, kelp and other marine life; a desert flash flood; and a special gallery dedicated to the urban ecology of Los Angeles. Ecosystems occupies 45,000 square feet and contains more than 250 species of plants and animals. This new experience is the centerpiece of Phase II of the Science Center's Master Plan.

"Ecosystems will give our guests an appreciation for how the living world and physical world are interconnected as well as how scientists use the key principles of ecology to explain ecosystem processes. We believe that Ecosystems will provide guests with the knowledge to become better stewards of the environment," said Jeffrey N. Rudolph, President & CEO of the California Science Center.

The journey begins as guests enter an introductory gallery that surrounds them with the sights and sounds of the environments featured in Ecosystems. Once inside, here's a sample of what they will find:

### **Kelp Forest**

Walk through a 24-foot long transparent acrylic tunnel and see the life that exists in our coastal Kelp Forests. "Rain Forests of the Sea," the 188,000 gallon kelp habitat illustrates the incredible diversity existing in our sea forests. The exhibit demonstrates how kelp forests depend on four basic factors: a rocky substrate, sunlight, moving water and high nutrient levels. Horn sharks,

swell sharks, giant sea bass, wolf eels and bat rays will be among the more than 1,500 fish seen in this habitat.

### River Zone

See how the Steelhead trout's body has adapted to swimming in a current. The River Zone lets visitors discover the power and impact of currents. Interactive wind machines illustrate how air currents create rippling patterns on a wall of sequins. Currents under water affect how plants and animals adapt to their habitats and the physical shape of the ocean floor. Explorers will also learn how the flow of lava, glaciers, wind and water distribute nutrients and change the face of landscapes through erosion.

### Island Zone

Imagine cruising off to a remote island to observe the flora and fauna. Darwin, on his voyage to the Galapagos Islands off the Pacific coast of South America, noticed that isolated species evolve to fill empty niches in their habitats. Hands-on exhibits in the Island Zone will let visitors see the difficulties species face getting to an island, how bird beak size and shape can offer a window on the evolutionary process of adaptive radiation, and how isolation can foster characteristics such as dwarfism and gigantism. Anole lizards and indigenous tropical Hawaiian fish are featured in this ecosystem.

### Extreme Zone

Switch from one radically different environment to another in the Extreme Zone, a series of 4 different ecosystems —the Desert, Rocky Shore, Poles and Deep Ocean Vents. The Extreme Zone shows how environmental factors test the limits of plants and animals—and how they have adapted to flourish.

Rocky Shore: The surface of the Kelp Forest in the area where the ocean meets the air and land is where visitors will meet the Rocky Intertidal Zone. The view from the top will showcase the rich and varied life that thrives between high and low tides. Artificial waves are created using a wave machine. A touch tank with sea stars, sea urchins, sea cucumbers, snails and more will let explorers learn first-hand about how different organisms have adapted to this extreme environment.

Desert and Flash Flood: Explorers will hear the sounds of the desert and discover how this ecosystem abounds with life by watching a variety of creatures including tortoises,

chuckwallas, scorpions and more. The harsh conditions of extreme heat during the day, and cold nights combined with limited water have resulted in some impressive adaptations. A 3,500 gallon flow of water will roar through a desert canyon every 10 minutes to illustrate how powerful a flash flood can be upon an arid landscape. Guests can use an infrared camera to see how the body temperatures of reptiles change as they move around their habitat. They can also see the differences between reptiles and their warm-blooded observers.

Deep Sea Vents: Discovered only 30 years ago, life in Deep Ocean Vents springs from the process of chemosynthesis. Ambient temperatures can be up to 760 degrees Fahrenheit and sunlight is non-existent in the depths of the Deep Ocean Vents. Visitors will learn how organisms have adapted to this harsh climate by using the Earth's own internal heat to replace sunlight, and other adaptations. Real preserved specimens collected from Vents, including shrimp, tubeworms and crabs, are on view.

Poles: Organisms, including humans, have adapted to the cold and windy deserts of the Poles. On a large cold ice wall, explorers get to try out different mittens simulating how animal fur and feathers provide insulation to keep warm. Displays also illustrate how humans from indigenous peoples to more recent arrivals developed clothing to withstand the severe climate.

### Rot Room

Discover how the continuity of life depends upon the processes of rot and decomposition. Through interactive exhibits and time-lapse video, guests will discover how rot and decay cycle nutrients and energy back into the environment. On view will be live animal and plant decomposers including maggots, flesh-eating beetles, camel crickets, sow bugs, millipedes and roaches at work in a rotting log.

### Global Zone

Travel around the world via one of the largest and the first ever internal projection high definition Magic Planet<sup>®</sup> exhibit. Six feet in diameter, the Magic Planet<sup>®</sup> projects images onto its global map from within the sphere itself. This interactive exhibition lets visitors discover how the Earth transfers matter and energy across the globe through ocean currents, atmospheric circulation and the carbon and water cycles.

## L.A. Zone

Pan around the Los Angeles Basin using a multi-touch map to see weather patterns, wind currents, geologic make-up and more in the L.A. Zone. Find your house and other landmarks on a gigantic floor map spanning the gallery. Help a bobcat cross the city to a wilderness area in a marble maze. Interactive exhibits invite guests to explore how cities function as ecosystems, but with unique challenges in the issues of energy, water, waste and wildlife.

## Family Discovery Room

Learn how conditions we create in our homes make ideal habitats for other creatures. The Family Discovery Room makes ecology approachable for young learners by linking it to an environment they recognize: the Home. Visual and interactive exhibits showcase worms in a backyard garden compost pile and mice munching on crumbs in the kitchen. Books, toys, puppets and crafts will reinforce the learning-fun connection.

In addition to the new Ecosystems exhibits, Phase II also expands the *World of Life* exhibition hall, and provides new administrative offices and animal care facilities, making the California Science Center one of the largest science centers in the country.

Since opening in 1998, the Science Center averages 1.4 million visitors annually, including nearly 400,000 youth on field trips. In 2007, *ForbesTraveler.com* ranked the Science Center among the 15 most-visited museums in the U.S., and in the August 2008 *Parenting* magazine, it was cited as one of the Top 10 science centers in the country. The Science Center is one of the first learning institutions in the nation to house an innovative family-based science center with interactive exhibits, an IMAX 3D theater, a neighborhood science-focused elementary school and a professional development resource center for teachers, parents and community organizations – all at one location.

The California Science Center has become a national model for successful public/private partnerships. A comprehensive \$165 million Campaign is still underway to help support the construction of Ecosystems. The Campaign is led by five exceptional community and business leaders: Wallis Annenberg, G. Bradford Jones, Melanie Lundquist, Margo Leonetti O'Connell and John Sussman. As of February 2010, \$136.3 million has been raised with the support of individuals, foundations and corporations.

**Ecosystems Info:** Admission to Ecosystems exhibits is free; however, to provide a quality guest experience, entry will be regulated with advance reservations which can be acquired online, by phone or in person at the Box Office. A service or convenience fee will apply. There will also be a line for those who do not make an advance reservation. Priority entry to Ecosystems will be available with an IMAX ticket purchase or for Science Center members. For details, please visit our website at [www.californiasciencecenter.org](http://www.californiasciencecenter.org) or phone (213) 744-2019.

**General Info:** The California Science Center and IMAX Theater are located in historic Exposition Park just west of the Harbor (110) Freeway at 700 Exposition Park Drive, Los Angeles. Open daily from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., except on Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day. For recorded information, including IMAX show times, call 323.SCIENCE (323.724- 3623). IMAX ticket prices range from \$5.00 to \$8.25. For advance ticket purchases, group rates, or to make reservations for any visiting group of 15 or more (required), call 213.744-2019. Parking is available in the guest lot at Figueroa and 39th / Exposition Park Drive at \$8 per car, \$10 for school buses and \$25 for commercial buses or oversize vehicles. Both the Science Center and IMAX Theater are wheelchair accessible. For further information, please visit our website at [www.californiasciencecenter.org](http://www.californiasciencecenter.org).

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