



For Immediate Release

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Great Plains Communications Completes Fiber Optic Cable Project to Ashfall Fossil Beds State Historical Park

October 25, 2017 (Blair, Ne.) - Great Plains Communications, the largest independent communications provider in the state of Nebraska, has completed a seven-mile fiber optic cable build to Ashfall Fossil Beds State Historical Park near Orchard, Nebraska. The 360-acre park is home to numerous skeletons of prehistoric animals – including rhinos, camels, three-toed horses and birds - preserved in the area where volcanic ash killed them 12 million years ago.

Because of the park's remote location, access to adequate communications services to support their mission of virtual education was not a possibility. The park relied on Satellite Internet services and struggled with poor telephone audio quality. To solve these issues, Ashfall, which is part of the University of Nebraska State Museum and the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, worked with Great Plains Communications to install fiber optic cable to the facility. Funding for the project which was completed in late August was provided by a grant from the Nebraska Environmental Trust.

The newly installed fiber services provided by Great Plains Communications will allow the park to educate students all over the world through virtual field trips. In addition to high-speed Internet benefits, the facility will experience a clear, more reliable connection via fiber-based phone service.

Todd Foje, CEO of Great Plains Communications had this to say. "We are honored to bring the dedicated Ashfall paleontologists and staff these improved technology resources to share their fossil discoveries with students both on a national and international level. We look forward to hearing more about this Nebraska treasure as they implement their virtual field trip program."

"These virtual field trips will be a win-win addition to our educational services," said Rick Otto, Superintendent, Ashfall Fossil Beds State Historical Park. "Schools will benefit by being able to give students the feel of visiting the park without the time and expense of travel. The park will benefit by furthering its mission of sparking

interest in the natural world by reaching classrooms across the state and beyond its borders to tell the story of the amazing fossil finds in addition to bringing in revenues from virtual field trip fees.”

Ashall Fossil Beds State Historical Park is open seven months a year and hosts about 20,000 annual visitors. It is a National Nebraska Landmark.

About Great Plains Communications

Great Plains Communications is the largest privately-owned telecommunications provider in Nebraska. The company provides 92 communities across the state with high-speed Internet, Cable Television, and Voice services. Business solutions range from traditional Voice and data products to installation and support of large business networks with scalable Internet and Ethernet solutions.

At the core of their service offering is an extensive 9,500-mile regional fiber network including over 400 fiber miles in the Omaha Metro area. The network offers community access rings, last-mile, and middle-mile solutions, fully supported by their 24x7x365 Network Operations Center. The company is financially strong with a 107-year history of providing reliable and innovative solutions. For more information visit www.gpcom.com.

About Ashfall Fossil Beds State Historical Park

Ashfall Fossil Beds, a cooperative project of the University of Nebraska State Museum and the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, is a national natural landmark with complete skeletons left in place for viewing. The research center and active dig site allow visitors to watch as paleontologists unearth barrel-bodied rhinos and other animals entombed by ash from a super volcanic eruption 12 million years ago. It is two miles west and six miles north of Royal. Admission is \$7 per person, with children 2 and under admitted free. A valid Nebraska State Park Permit is required and may be purchased on-site. For more visitor information and directions, call 402-893-2000 or <http://www.ashfall.unl.edu> .