



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:
Ryan Barber
(276) 666-8659

New World-Class VMNH Facility Nearing Completion *New museum, "Chinasaurus" have revised opening date*

Exact MARTINSVILLE, Va. (October 9, 2006) – Considerable progress continues to be made despite delays in construction, which have led the Virginia Museum of Natural History to postpone staff relocation and educational programs at the new facility from October 28, 2006 by 45 to 60 days. The opening of the new facility is contingent upon issuance of a certificate of occupancy by the Commonwealth of Virginia.

The special exhibit "Chinasaurus: The Great Dinosaurs of China" has also been rescheduled from October 28, 2006 to January 2, 2007. The museum will host the exhibit through June 17, 2007. The museum's grand opening of March 31, 2007, which features state-of-the-art permanent exhibits, will not be affected.

The preview opening will give visitors a first look at The Harvest Foundation Great Hall, which features a 14 million-year-old fossil whale skeleton and the skeleton of an *Allosaurus*. The museum's Hooker Furniture Corporation Theater, which is the first site in Virginia to offer CineMuse high-definition digital cinema, and the Mr. and Mrs. L. Dudley Walker Lecture Hall, will also be available to visitors.

With the preview opening, visitors to the museum will also get the rare opportunity to glimpse the installation of the museum's new state-of-the-art permanent exhibits. The museum will hold a grand opening celebration to unveil the new permanent exhibits on March 31, 2007. The permanent exhibits: "Uncovering Virginia", "How

Nature Works: Rocks”, and “How Nature Works: Life” will offer visitors an extraordinary, interactive and walk-through experience that few museums present.

ABOUT THE VIRGINIA MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

The Virginia Museum of Natural History in Martinsville seeks to increase understanding of and appreciation for the natural history of the Commonwealth through education, research, collections, publications and exhibits. The museum – an affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution – is accredited by the American Association of Museums, a distinction earned by fewer than 10 percent of museums in the United States. A new, \$28 million museum currently is being built in Martinsville. When fully completed in early 2007, the new museum will offer five times the exhibit and public space of the current facility.

The museum is a member of the Association of Science-Technology Centers, Virginia Association of Museums, Heritage Preservation, and an agency of the Secretary of Natural Resources for the Commonwealth of Virginia. With over 22 million objects in its collection, the museum reaches nearly 1 million people annually through on-site and traveling exhibitions, classroom outreach programs, the museum’s Web site, public events and publications.

The museum is currently closed, as we transition to a new world-class facility opening January 2, 2007. The current museum facility is now the Virginia Museum of Natural History Research and Collections Center. The new museum will be open Monday through Saturday from 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. and Sundays from Noon to 5:30 p.m. Members are always admitted free. Admission is \$7 for adults; \$6 for senior citizens and youth 12-18; \$5 for children 3 to 11; and free for children 2 and under. For more information about membership or volunteer opportunities, please call 276-666-8600 or visit the museum’s Web site at www.vmnh.net.

###