

William Parker
520 E. Florida Street
Holbrook, AZ 86025

August 1, 2007

Governor Bill Richardson
Office of the Governor
490 Old Santa Fe Trail
Room 400
Santa Fe, NM 87501

Dear Governor Richardson,

I am writing to bring to your attention concerns I have regarding the publishing practices of the staff of the New Mexico Museum of Natural History and Science (hereafter NMMNH&S) and the conduct of a member of your cabinet when I attempted to bring these concerns to his attention. It is my sincere hope that after you read this letter your office will be able to assist in reaching a satisfactory conclusion for all parties concerned.

Recent articles written and edited by staff of the museum, specifically Dr. Spencer Lucas (geosciences curator and interim director), Dr. Adrian Hunt (ex-director), and Mr. Justin Speilmann (geosciences collection manager), and published in the NMMNH&S Bulletin series have demonstrated a disregard for the intellectual property of several vertebrate paleontologists, including myself, and represent unethical publishing behavior, including potential cases of plagiarism. On June 26th, 2007 I sent an electronic letter detailing these concerns to Mr. Stuart Ashman, cabinet secretary and Chairman of the Department of Cultural Affairs. In this letter I noted that I would also be sending a hard copy of the letter along with supporting documentation regarding my case. On June 28th, 2007 I received a letter via e-mail from Mr. Ashman absolving the authors of any wrongdoing. I am dissatisfied with Mr. Ashman's reply for several reasons.

First, I feel that Mr. Ashman did not clearly or adequately address the concerns listed in my letter. Extremely disturbing to me is that Mr. Ashman's reply was sent to me on June 28th; however, the hard copy of my letter with the supporting documentation was not received by Mr. Ashman until June 29th, one day after his response (see attached delivery notification). Therefore, it is obvious that Mr. Ashman did not seriously investigate my concerns, noting simply that he had discussed the matter with the museum staff members of concern and concluded from this discussion that no unethical behavior had occurred. I feel that it would have been more pertinent to reach a finding based on discussions including additional parties and perhaps those not directly involved with my concerns.

In addition, in his reply letter, Mr. Ashman also refers to a statement made by myself on an internet blog site devoted to biology and paleontology. The author of this site discussed perceived unethical behavior by the NMMNH&S staff members regarding some of my scientific work and that of another scientist. For some reason, Mr. Ashman felt it relevant to

include this in his response and goes further to threaten me with legal action from the New Mexico Attorney Generals' office. I feel that this action is unwarranted and after seeking legal council have been advised that it has no basis as nothing in my statement is untrue.

Mr. Ashman also commends Dr. Lucas and Dr. Hunt for the number of publications that they publish under the museum bulletin series. It should not be the number of publications produced that is important but rather how these publications are received by the scientific community and how they reflect upon the reputation of the institution producing them. It is extremely rare for authors contributing to publications to also be primary editors and publishers. This lack of objectivity and the seeming exclusion of external peer review as required by most scientific publications seriously diminish the validity of those papers. Prospectively, the NMMNH&S bulletin series could be a superior venue to report scientific research, but current practices are preventing the publication from reaching its' full potential.

I am also disappointed in the method to which Mr. Ashman replied to my letter. I was expecting a reply in hard copy, which I have never received, and therefore did not notice my reply via e-mail until almost two weeks after it was sent. This may have been an oversight by Mr. Ashman, but it further signifies the level of importance he has given to my concerns.

Finally, in the closing statement of his reply, Mr. Ashman encourages me to "find a scientific publication outlet to express my ideas." I wrote to Mr. Ashman because I felt that my scientific work, and the work of others, was begin treated unethically by staff members of the NMMNH&S and that this behavior has already damaged the reputation of the museum which is overseen by the Department of Cultural Affairs. I am upset that Mr. Ashman reached a conclusion on this matter before seeing the evidence that I was presenting and that he essentially threatened me for bringing this matter to his attention. Therefore I respectfully request that your office arrange a neutral third party to seriously investigate these cases of plagiarism and to repair the damage done to the Museum's reputation in scientific publication.

I have enclosed a copy of my correspondence with Mr. Ashman for your review which includes my original concerns, as well as copies of the tracking information for my letter.

I thank you for your time and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

William Parker
Vertebrate Paleontologist

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