



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

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Evidence from the Channel Islands of Major Cosmic Impact 12,900 Years Ago

University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB), Professor James Kennett will be the featured speaker at the “From Shore to Sea” June lecture. Kennett will talk about the remarkable, widespread geological and archaeological evidence researchers have discovered of a major extraterrestrial collision over North America from their work at the Channel Islands and other locations.

An extraterrestrial impact could have caused a massive energy release leading to continent-wide wildfires and other extreme environmental changes. Kennett’s research into sedimentary layers of California’s Northern Channel Islands and the Santa Barbara Basin has provided some of the evidence in support of this controversial hypothesis.

His research into the 13,000 year-old Younger Dryas Boundary layer led to a new hypothesis which seems to explain three major events that occurred during this time period. First, what caused the massive, abrupt extinction over North America of many large mammal (e.g. mammoths, camels, sloths, saber-tooth cats) and birds? Second, what caused the abrupt disappearance of the Clovis culture, the first widely distributed peoples of North America? Third, what triggered the abrupt cooling over broad areas of Earth and associated major change in ocean circulation?

Kennett is Professor Emeritus in Earth Sciences at UCSB and Research Professor with the Marine Science Institute, of which he was Director from 1987 to 1997. A native of New Zealand, Kennett’s work in marine geology and paleoceanography over the last 45 years has assisted with a more comprehensive understanding of major paleoenvironmental and biotic changes that shaped the Cenozoic Era and its geological record. Recently he has focused on the studies of abrupt climate change in the ice age period, especially in Santa Barbara Basin, and on the Younger Dryas Boundary cosmic impact hypothesis.

The “From Shore to Sea” lecture series is jointly sponsored by Channel Islands National Park and Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary with generous support from Santa Barbara Maritime Museum. The purpose of the series is to further the understanding of current research on the Channel Islands and surrounding waters. The lectures occur at 7:00 p.m. on Tuesday, June 9, 2009, at Santa Barbara Maritime Museum, 113 Harbor Way in the Santa Barbara Harbor and Wednesday, June 10, 2009, at the Channel Islands National Park Robert J. Lagomarsino Visitor Center, 1901 Spinnaker Drive in the Ventura Harbor. The programs are free and open to the public.

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