

PALEONTOLOGICAL RESEARCH INSTITUTION

# Strategic Plan

2020-2024







# Who We Are

Since its founding in 1932, the Paleontological Research Institution (PRI) has been true to its provisional charter, granted by the State of New York in 1933:

*“...as an educational institution to receive, collect, preserve and make accessible to students and scientists paleontological and geological type specimens and exhibits; to make and conduct scientific explorations, research, investigations, and experiments, to collect and preserve scientific data, reports, graphs, maps, documents and publications; to make available publications, exhibits, lectures and otherwise, all information at its disposal to hold in trust or properly disburse funds provided by benefactors for research or scholarships; and to stimulate interest in and increase and disseminate scientific knowledge particularly in paleontology.”*

In 2003, to further enhance its charter, the Museum of the Earth (MOTE) was opened to provide a focal point for museum-based exhibits and informal education. In 2013, the Cayuga Nature Center (CNC), a long-respected local institution focused on outdoor learning, was acquired by PRI along with Smith Woods, an outstanding example of old growth forest in the region. These new venues allowed PRI to bridge the Earth history record from deep time to the present, to a more diverse audience.

With more than seven million specimens, PRI’s fossil collection is one of the ten largest invertebrate paleontological collections in the U.S., and is consulted frequently by experts throughout the world. In addition to physical collections in a museum setting, PRI stewards an assemblage of living collections on lands under its custodianship.

*Cornell students viewing fossils in PRI’s collection.*

**On the cover:** *PRI research scientist collecting oyster samples in Florida.*

# Mission

Utilizing its unique collections, staff, physical facilities and digital presence, the Paleontological Research Institution pursues and integrates education and research, and interprets the history and systems of the Earth and its life to increase knowledge, educate society, and encourage wise stewardship of the Earth.

# Vision

PRI serves its global and local communities through scientific information and education allowing its audiences to achieve a better understanding of the Earth and its life through time, and to become empowered with this knowledge to create solutions to societal challenges.

# Values

- We believe in the power and promise of science to elevate the human condition.
- We are committed to using our resources and talents to serve all of our diverse audiences.
- We believe that we have an important role in preserving the Earth's ecosystems.
- We will respect and honor the unique contributions of all staff members, interns, students, and volunteers.
- We will follow best practices in human resources and support the well-being and professional development of all with whom we work.
- We believe that knowledge of Earth's past can inform appropriate personal and policy decisions affecting the wise use of Earth's resources in the present and future.

*The old-growth forest in Smith Woods.*







# Impact

PRI, through its research and collections, provides important scientific insights to the larger research community on Earth dynamics and processes. It also educates its audiences, across a range of physical venues and digital platforms, about the importance of understanding Earth and their place in it. By providing accurate and timely information, PRI can help the public better participate as citizens in solving society's pressing science-based issues.



# Our Key Activities

PRI organizes its activities around four broad focal areas:

## Collections

PRI acquires, preserves, records, and makes available information about specimen collections that serve as a systematic record of life on Earth. PRI's collections are global in their extent, but of particular strength are two areas: Cenozoic marine invertebrates (especially mollusks) from the southeastern U.S., Caribbean, and northern Latin America, and Paleozoic marine invertebrates from New York State.

## Research

PRI is a center of scholarship in paleontology, evolutionary biology, and conservation paleobiology.

## Education/Outreach

PRI interprets the research of its own staff and others, as well as collections and other data, to teach Earth systems science to its audiences, including K-12, undergraduate and graduate students, and the general public.

## Publications/Science Communication

PRI disseminates its own research and that of the research community through a variety of mechanisms, including *Bulletins of American Paleontology*, *Special Publications*, *Digital Atlas of Ancient Life*, and *Teacher-Friendly Guides™*.

*PRI education staff member leading a geology tour.*

# Our Key Issue Focuses

As an organization, PRI addresses the following societal challenges:

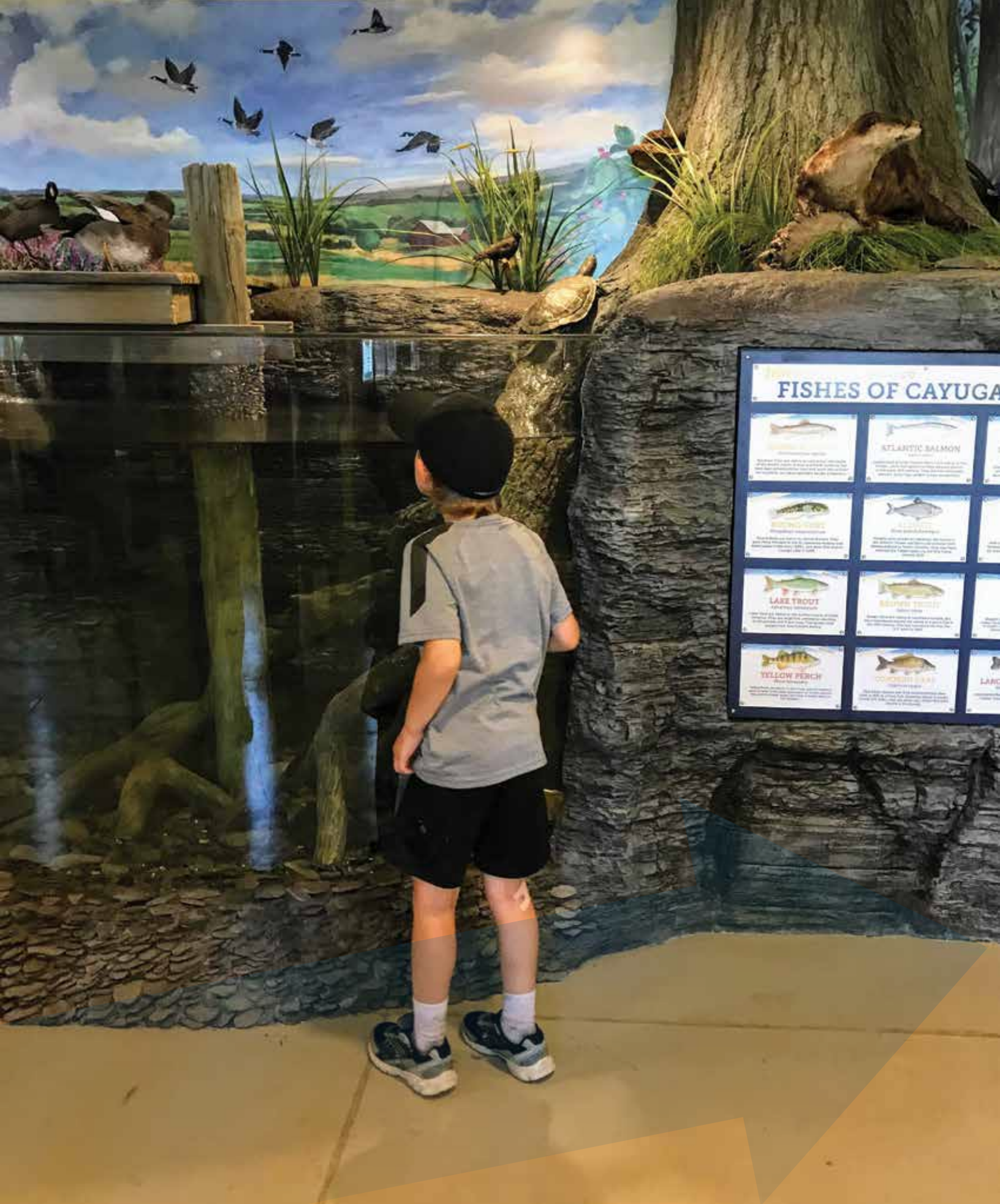
- Evolution
- The Anthropocene
- STEM Education
- Biodiversity
- Conservation Paleobiology
- Sustainability

# Our Key Strengths

- Internationally recognized collections
- Unique and valuable scientific and educational content
- *Bulletins of American Paleontology*, one of the world's oldest paleontology journals
- A visionary director, dedicated staff and board
- Nationally recognized geosciences education program
- Museum of the Earth and Cayuga Nature Center
- Nationally recognized scientists
- Service to a worldwide network of scientists who utilize PRI resources
- Pioneering role in conservation paleobiology
- Accessible digital educational tools
- Affiliation with Cornell University

*Cayuga Nature Center visitor viewing the live fish in the "Cayuga Lake: Past and Present" aquaria.*





FISHES OF CAYUGA		
 <p><b>ATLANTIC SALMON</b> Salmo salar L.</p>	 <p><b>ATLANTIC SALMON</b> Salmo salar L.</p>	 <p><b>ATLANTIC SALMON</b> Salmo salar L.</p>
 <p><b>BROOK TROUT</b> Salvelinus fontinalis M.</p>	 <p><b>BROOK TROUT</b> Salvelinus fontinalis M.</p>	 <p><b>BROOK TROUT</b> Salvelinus fontinalis M.</p>
 <p><b>LAKE TROUT</b> Salvelinus namaycush M.</p>	 <p><b>LAKE TROUT</b> Salvelinus namaycush M.</p>	 <p><b>LAKE TROUT</b> Salvelinus namaycush M.</p>
 <p><b>YELLOW PERCH</b> Perca flavescens M.</p>	 <p><b>YELLOW PERCH</b> Perca flavescens M.</p>	 <p><b>YELLOW PERCH</b> Perca flavescens M.</p>
 <p><b>COMMON CARP</b> Cyprinus carpio L.</p>	 <p><b>COMMON CARP</b> Cyprinus carpio L.</p>	 <p><b>COMMON CARP</b> Cyprinus carpio L.</p>
 <p><b>LARGEMOUTH BASS</b> Micropterus dolomieu M.</p>	 <p><b>LARGEMOUTH BASS</b> Micropterus dolomieu M.</p>	 <p><b>LARGEMOUTH BASS</b> Micropterus dolomieu M.</p>








# Our Goals

The strategic planning process described in this document was extremely inclusive, encompassing all staff and Board members and extensive outreach to current and past stakeholders of PRI. The resulting data have shaped our desire to transform PRI to the next level of service to science and society. Utilizing advances in science and technology, PRI will increase its engagement with the public at a national level while maintaining its historical scientific mission and important connections to its local community.

The strategic plan provides a roadmap for PRI over the next five fiscal years (FY 2020-24) and is intentionally aspirational. The current Capital Campaign (“Discover and Preserve: 2018-2021”) has provided the beginning of the resources needed to fulfill this plan, and PRI will lay out a larger pathway for resourcing the necessary activities contained in this plan.

The plan has four goals which will be achieved over this five-year period.

1. Investing in Our Future
2. National Leadership
3. Building Capacity
4. Serving Our Local Community



*Cornell graduate student utilizing the PRI collections for her research.*

# Goal One— Investing in Our Future

To achieve its new vision, PRI will achieve financial sustainability and build a broader base of financial support.

## Objectives:

- Create an endowment.
- Successfully conclude the current PRI Capital Campaign.
- Ensure that all financial systems and staffing are in place to support a growing PRI.
- Aggressively pursue external funding opportunities that broaden and increase our base of support for annual giving and the areas of focus outlined in this plan.



Education staff teaching first-graders how scientists do their work.

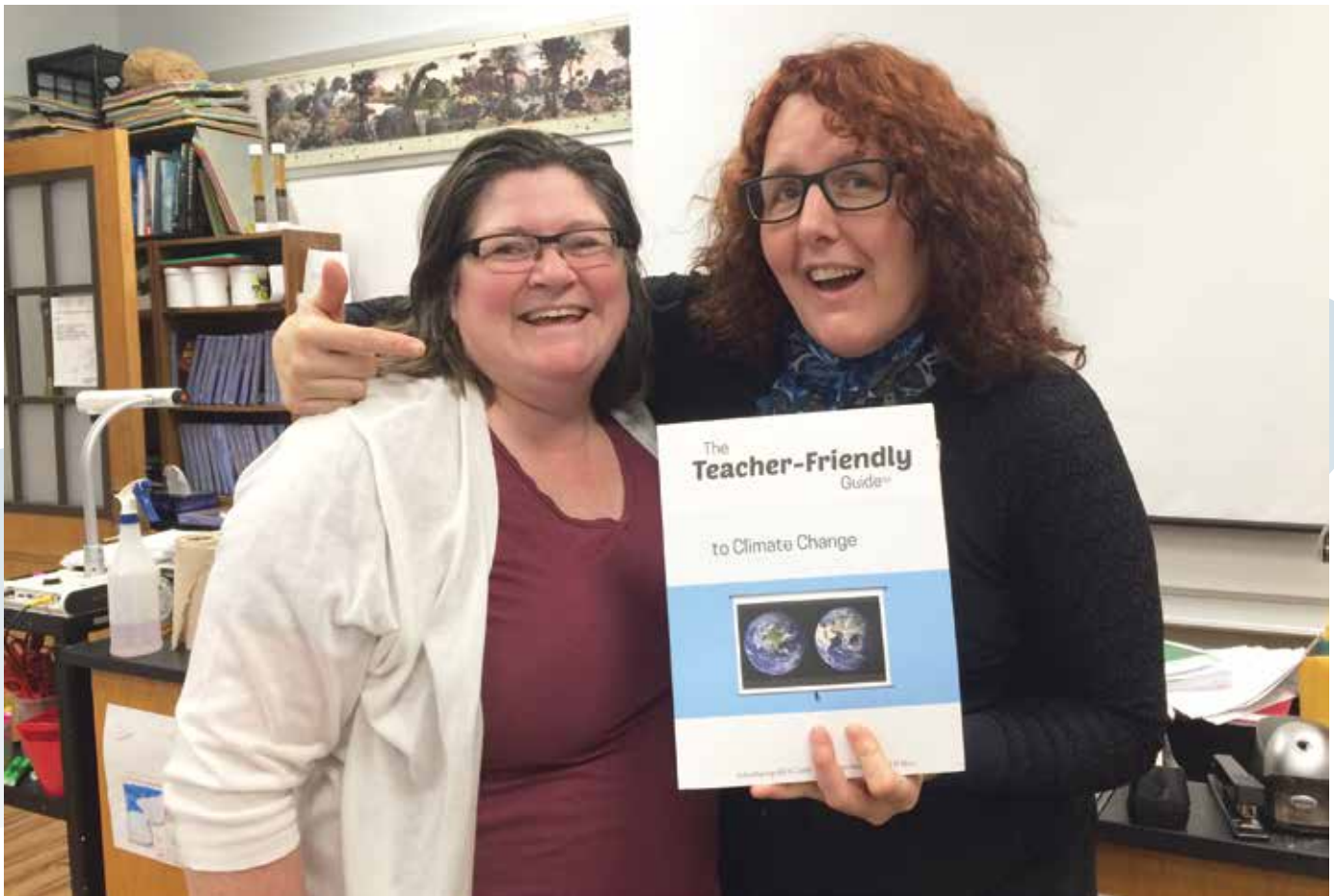


# Goal Two— National Leadership

PRI will be a national leader in research in conservation paleobiology and in global climate change education.

## Objectives:

- Establish the “Earth@Home” online platform.
- Create the Center for Conservation Paleobiology.
- Create a new and dynamic PRI website.
- Establish a series of national symposia, conferences and events.
- Create a content marketing program for national audience.
- Accelerate digitization of collections.
- Improve the physical organization of the collections.
- Reorganize and begin digitization of the Library and archives.







# Goal Three— Building Capacity

To achieve its programmatic objectives, PRI will build an appropriate staff with the necessary skills to execute on the strategic plan, strengthen organizational structure, and build/maintain necessary facilities and web-based tools to succeed.

## Objectives:

- Implement Capital Improvement Program.
- Create a plan for acquisition and utilization of the “Future PRI” (FPRI) property on the West Hill Campus.
- Renovate a new space for the PRI Library.
- Add support staff positions.
- Improve reporting and decision-making lines.
- Strengthen Board governance.
- Establish succession management planning for key positions.
- Ensure necessary human and financial resources to support enhanced development activities.

*The “future PRI” building, part of the same complex of buildings as our Palmer Hall headquarters.*

# Goal Four— Serving Our Local Community

PRI will maintain its commitment to the communities of Ithaca, Tompkins County, and central New York through enhanced programming at the Museum of the Earth and the Cayuga Nature Center.

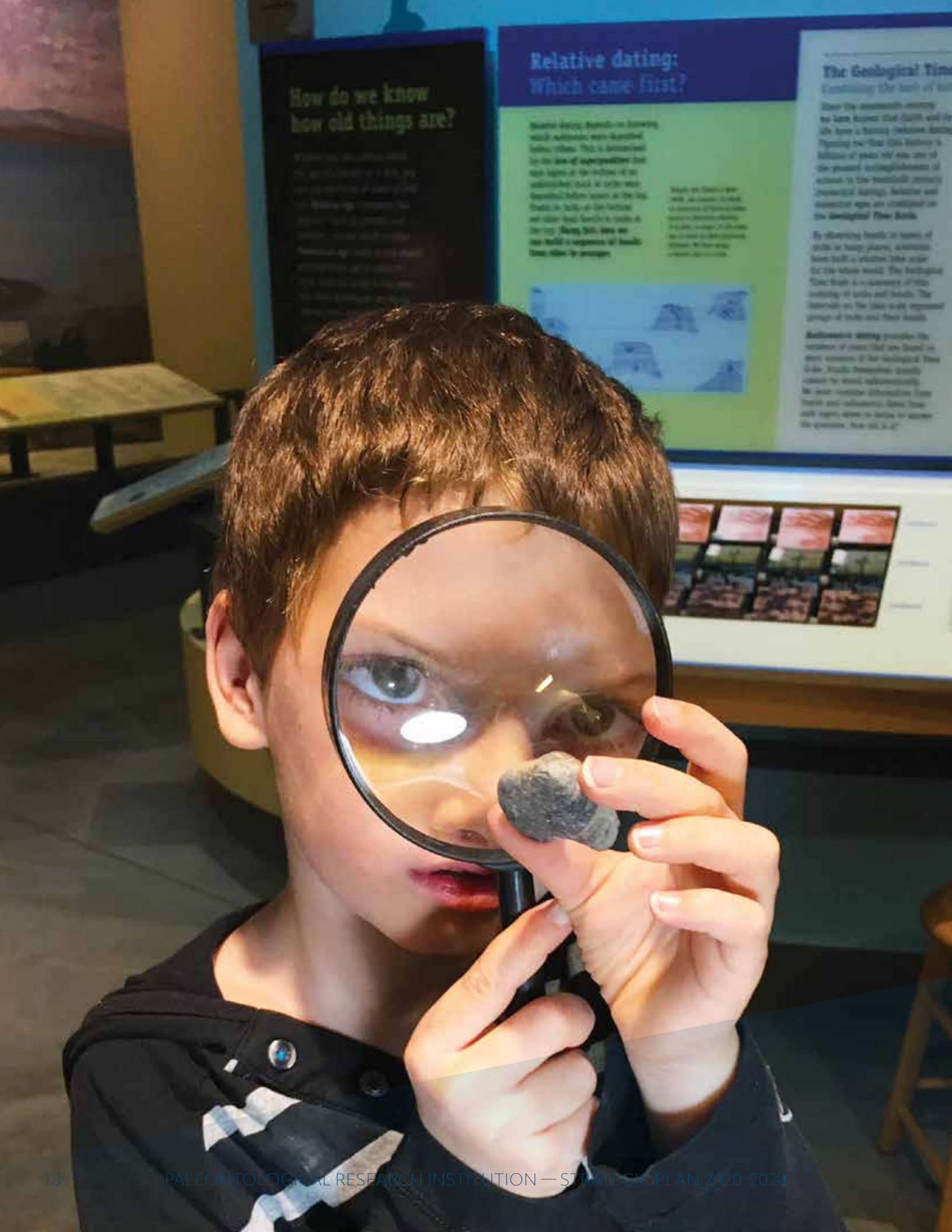
## Objectives:

- Improve education and exhibit spaces at the Museum of the Earth (MOTE).
- Improve education and exhibit spaces at the Cayuga Nature Center (CNC).
- Increase attendance over the next five years at both MOTE and CNC through improved exhibits, facilities infrastructure, and marketing.
- Utilize new technologies to enhance the visitor experience.

*Future scientists in the Museum of the Earth.*







### How do we know how old things are?

### Relative dating: Which came first?

### The Geological Time

Containing the bulk of our

Over the past century, many scientists have known that Earth and the life have a history billions of years old. This is because of the gradual accumulation of evidence in the scientific community. Geological dating, relative and absolute ages are considered on the Geological Time Scale.

By observing fossils in layers of rock in many places, scientists have built a relative time scale for the whole world. The Geological Time Scale is a summary of the ordering of rocks and fossils. The intervals on the scale are an important group of rocks and their fossils.

Relative dating provides the number of years that are based on their positions in the Geological Time Scale. Fossil remains are usually found in rock layers. The order of the rock layers and the fossils in them are called relative ages. The relative ages are used to determine the sequence of events. See page 27.

Relative dating is based on the principle of superposition. The top layer of the rock is the youngest. The bottom layer is the oldest. The layers in between are in the middle. The layers are called strata. The layers are numbered from top to bottom. The layers are called strata. The layers are numbered from top to bottom. The layers are called strata. The layers are numbered from top to bottom.

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# Our Future

This plan represents the next major transformation in the history of PRI. It builds upon historic strengths in collections, research, publications, and education.

## Our Public

We are committed to broadening our service to the public nationally through web based initiatives designed to provide research, education, and conservation materials in an accessible form to diverse audiences.

## Our Facilities

We are committed to a modernization program of our physical facilities to ensure stewardship of our current resources.

## Our Resources

We are committed to building a national base of donors that strengthens our resource base.

## Our Research

We are committed to being a national leader in both paleontology in general and conservation paleobiology in particular.

## Our Staff

We renew our commitment to teach, inform, and promote a better understanding of the Earth and the impact that we as humans can and do have upon it and develop the next generation of scientifically literate and involved citizens.

*Exploring fossils up close at the Museum of the Earth.*



**PALEONTOLOGICAL  
RESEARCH INSTITUTION**

*Find out more at*

[www.priweb.org/strategicplan](http://www.priweb.org/strategicplan)

**PRI (Palmer Hall)**

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Ithaca, NY 14850  
(607) 273-6623

**Museum of the Earth**

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Ithaca, NY 14850  
(607) 273-6623

**Cayuga Nature Center**

1420 Taughannock Blvd  
Ithaca, NY 14850  
(607) 273-6260

**Henry A. Smith Woods**

8825 Falls Road  
Trumansburg, NY 14886

