

For Immediate Release

AN ARTWORK SPANNING 450 MILES BEGINS TO UNFOLD, BRINGING

TOGETHER ART AND NATURE, PEOPLES AND CULTURES

April 22 Event at Cape Disappointment State Park, Washington, Celebrates

Achievement of the First of Seven Permanent Installations by Artist Maya Lin

ILWACO, WA – The place where Lewis and Clark reached the end of their westward journey now marks the starting point of the Confluence Project.

On Saturday, April 22, 2006, where the Columbia River flows into the Pacific Ocean, dignitaries from Native American tribes and the State of Washington will celebrate the achievement of the first of seven ambitious installations, designed by world-renowned artist Maya Lin for the non-profit Confluence Project. Drums will sound and songs will rise, as guests go in procession through an historic site that Lin's art has renewed and transformed.

From here, at Washington's Cape Disappointment State Park, the Confluence Project is working eastward along the route taken two centuries ago by Lewis and Clark's Corps of Discovery. When the last of the installations is finished, in 2008, Lin and the Confluence Project will have achieved one of the largest environmental art initiatives in history, and one of the most significant. The Project will help restore habitats in federal and state lands in Washington and Oregon—from the rich salt-water estuary at Cape Disappointment to the arid steppe some 450 miles up river—while creating new ways to think about, and experience, the changing life of this landscape.

Launched in 2000 through a collaboration of Native American and other groups, the Confluence Project is an initiative to reclaim and reimagine the landscape along the historic Columbia River basin through permanent art installations by Maya Lin. Each site along the course of the Project is a place where waterways merge, indigenous peoples have gathered, or contact occurred between Native Americans and Lewis and Clark's Corps of Discovery. Through Maya Lin's creative interventions into their history and terrain, these sites will now offer new points of encounter between the natural world and the built environment, the past and the present, for people of all backgrounds.

Participants in the April 22 ceremony will be the first to appreciate fully how Lin has drawn together two areas of Cape Disappointment—the bay side and the ocean side—into a single, steadily unfolding experience. Contemporary in character but deeply sensitive to its environment, Lin's installation is a subtle yet powerful arrangement of indigenous materials and natural forms, Native American words and symbols and texts from Lewis and Clark's journals, leading visitors into a new relationship with this landscape and its ongoing story.

On the bay side, where visitors previously found a utilitarian sink and asphalt parking lot, there are now restored wetlands, an open platform that invites you out to the waters of Baker Bay, and a massive, elegant fish-cutting table, made of polished native basalt inscribed with a Chinook creation legend. On the opposite side of the park, a redesigned amphitheater offers views out to the Pacific Ocean. From one side of the amphitheater, a boardwalk inscribed with texts from Lewis and Clark's journals (summarizing their entire westward journey from St. Louis to the Pacific) brings visitors to the beach. From the other side of the amphitheater, a pathway of crushed oyster shells,

inscribed with a Chinook praise song recited on this site in 2005, 200 years to the day after the arrival of Lewis and Clark, leads to a secluded grove, where Maya Lin has erected a circle of silvery cedar driftwood found nearby. Six cedar columns surround a cedar tree trunk that is older than the history of Lewis and Clark, to evoke the seven directions of Native American tradition: north, south, east, west, up, down, and in.

Connecting the bay side and ocean side of the site is an “ecological trail,” now being developed by Washington State’s Park Services, which will traverse five ecosystems and reveal to visitors the teeming life, and incalculable importance, of an area that has been one of the world’s great salt-water estuaries.

Celebrating the achievement of this first stage of the Confluence Project on April 22 will include Gary Johnson, Chairman of the Chinook Tribal Council; Kathleen Sayce, Confluence Project Board representative from Pacific County; Jane Jacobsen, Executive Director of the Confluence Project; and Maya Lin.

“What if you were to think of a place not as a still, fixed point in time,” Maya Lin asks, “but rather as a moving, fluid site? You can see the Confluence Project this way, not just as seven separate artworks but also as one, which encompasses the life and flow of the whole Columbia River Basin and the story of Lewis and Clark’s journey through this land. Each area along the way is designed as a walk, a passage, in itself, and each is embedded with texts from Lewis and Clark’s journals. The historic record is pulled apart, distributed over a 450-mile route, and incorporated into the real space and time of the river.”

“The Confluence Project is truly an expedition of its own, undertaken by many different people, with Maya Lin as the visionary guide,” states Jane Jacobsen. “We have

begun our trip here, at Cape Disappointment, because Maya saw this was the best place to hold up a mirror to Lewis and Clark's journey—as if we were looking back not in time but in space, along the route they traveled. We may see it from different perspectives, depending on who we are. But for all of us who have come together through this Project, that route has now acquired a second meaning, as the direction in which we're heading.”

The other sites selected for the Confluence Project, from west to east, are the confluence of the Willamette and the Columbia in Clark County, WA; Fort Vancouver National Historic Site, Vancouver, WA; the Sandy River Delta, near Troutdale, OR; Celilo Falls Park, near The Dalles, OR; Sacajawea State Park, Pasco, WA; and Chief Timothy Park, west of Clarkston, WA. Each will benefit from ecological restoration, and at each Ms. Lin will use the site's historic and ecological identity to frame a new way of experiencing the place, giving visitors a different and closer connection to the land. Her interventions will vary from a “sky bowl” amphitheater inscribed with a Nez Perce text, to a bird-viewing platform etched with the names of the species Lewis and Clark encountered, to an arc-shaped “land bridge” designed in collaboration with the Seattle-based architect Johnpaul Jones.

The Confluence Project is the result of collaboration among the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla, the Nez Perce Tribe, the Lewis and Clark Commemorative Committee of Vancouver/Clark County, and the Friends of Lewis and Clark of Pacific County. Each group identified Maya Lin as the artist who could best imagine, and realize, this unprecedented initiative.

Materials relating to the Confluence Project are one element of the exhibition *Maya Lin: Systematic Landscapes*, on view from April 22 through October 1, 2006, and

the Henry Art Gallery in Seattle, WA. Encompassing large-scale installations, recent sculptures, and drawings, the exhibition is the first that has carefully translated the scale and coherence of Maya Lin's outdoor installations to the interior space of a museum. For information on *Maya Lin: Systematic Landscapes*, the public may phone 206.543.2280 or visit www.henryart.org.

To learn more about the Confluence Project, visit www.confluenceproject.org.

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