

Colorado man gets probation in fossil importation case

October 7 2015, by Ben Neary

A federal judge on Tuesday sentenced a Colorado man to one year of probation for understating the value of unspecified fossils imported from China to the United States.

Charles Magovern, 67, of Boulder pleaded guilty in July to filing false customs statements in 2010 with two other men, including a [fossil](#) dealer who pleaded guilty to federal charges last year.

Lawyers stipulated Tuesday that the loss to the government from the [false statements](#) in Magovern's case was \$115,500.

Federal prosecutor Thomas Andrew Szott told U.S. District Judge Nancy Freudenthal in Cheyenne that Magovern had forfeited fossils in the case. Szott said fossils Magovern forfeited will be returned to China.

Szott said Magovern had provided investigators with information about who had purchased other fossils.

Defense lawyer Kevin McGreevy declined comment after the hearing about what sort of fossils were involved.

A customs agent declined to comment after the hearing. Attempts to get information from federal officials about the type of fossils Magovern forfeited were not immediately successful.

A charging document states that one of the other men involved in

making false statements with Magovern was John Richard Rolater.

A [federal judge](#) in Wyoming last year ordered Rolater, of Eagle, Colorado, to pay a \$25,000 fine and serve two years of supervised probation on a federal felony conviction of conspiring to smuggle fossils from China into the United States.

Rolater had sold fossils through two stores, one in Jackson, Wyoming, and one in Avon, Colorado. Under his plea agreement, he agreed to forfeit several fossils to the government, including a Tyrannosaurus skull that authorities said would be returned to Mongolia.

McGreevy said in court that Magovern's cooperation with the government played a role in resolving Rolater's case.

McGreevy said Magovern is credited with the important discovery of an intact fossil dinosaur embryo among fossils that came from China. That discovery was featured on the cover of National Geographic Magazine in 1996.

"He spent over 40 years helping preserve fossils," McGreevy told Freudenthal, saying his client's contributions in the field far outweigh the mistake that brought him to court.

Magovern and his relatives continue to display a traveling fossil exhibit at museums in the United States and other countries, McGreevy said.

Magovern addressed Freudenthal briefly, saying he appreciated the court's time and that he took responsibility for aiding and abetting in the offense.

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Citation: Colorado man gets probation in fossil importation case (2015, October 7) retrieved 3 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2015-10-colorado-probation-fossil-importation-case.html>

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