

The Great Missoula Floods of the Last Ice Age

Dr. Jim O'Connor, US Geological Survey, and Sigma Xi Distinguished Lecturer

The Missoula Floods of the last Ice Age in the Pacific Northwest were the largest freshwater floods yet known on the surface of the Earth. The flood-formed landscape is a spectacular example of the power of geologic processes, one that has inspired new insights into planetary landscapes. But the Missoula Floods are also a story of controversy; an example of dogma and personality obscuring and facilitating the quest for knowledge. This is science in action, not always pretty, but continuously motivated by the wonderment of discovery.